



Bits & Bytes

Newsletter of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association

DECEMBER 2013

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ISFAA Guidance Counselor Workshops Top 500 Attendees

Over 500 people attended an event in the 2013 ISFAA guidance counselor workshop series! The workshops concluded a few weeks ago with the event at Purdue University Calumet. Not only were the events well attended across the state, hundreds of survey responses show attendees were very pleased with the series. Just as in past years, many ISFAA members volunteered their time and expertise to make the workshops a success.

The 2013 events once again were divided into 4 sections. ISFAA presenters discussed Federal Financial Aid Information and FAFSA changes as well as a section covering data about the

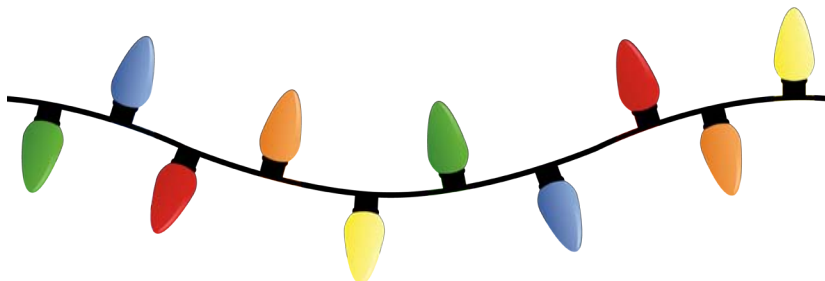
current state of how education is being funded. Presenters from SFA once again were in person at each workshop and spoke about Indiana Financial Aid information and changes to the state programs in addition to a section specifically devoted to the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program.

The workshops were offered at 14 locations in 2013, the same number of locations as 2012. Many counselors remarked how the events are a great opportunity for them to interact with ISFAA's members to discuss ways to better help Indiana students.

Here are just a few pictures from the 2013 events:



Continued on page 2



2013 ISFAA Guidance Counselor Workshops



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President's Perspective

Hard to believe that the holidays are almost here and we are on our way to a New Year! I want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hope that you enjoy some downtime for the holidays. Even though our offices will be closed I will still find my way to the office to spend time organizing and cleaning the office and preparing for the new cycle of aid.

I have enjoyed my role as ISFAA President and feel grateful to have met so many wonderful colleagues this year. It has been a great year and how exciting was it to be the host state for the MASFAA conference. I am sad that I won't see everyone at our winter conference this year as we decided hosting MASFAA this year that we would not have a winter conference but look for exciting things at our spring conference in April. FSA was a huge success and I was happy to see many of my Indiana colleagues attending.

ISFAA continues to do so many great things for the students, families and aid offices all across the state. So much volunteer time from all of our members in a variety of areas and I am so happy to be a part of those efforts. High School Guidance Counselor workshops were a huge success this year. Financial aid nights are going on as we speak and College Goal Sunday is just around the corner. NASFAA fall training is wrapping up too. We do so many wonderful things for the students and families within our communities.

I look forward to seeing everyone again at the spring conference. It is almost time for us to get busy with the new FASFA's that are just waiting to be loaded into our software systems. Stay tuned to the ISFAA list serve for updates coming to the membership.



Kim Bennett

So much
volunteer time
from all of our
members in
a variety of
areas and I
am so happy
to be a part of
those efforts.

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!**

**2014 ISFAA
Spring Conference
Tuesday, April 22nd, 2014
IUPUI**

Information on Proposed By Law Changes

This year ISFAA will be voting on changes to the By Laws and a change to our fiscal year. The By Law changes are mainly updating phrases and words to reflect what we use currently. There are seven changes that I would like to highlight here.

The first change to the By Laws would be changing everything that refers to memberships as institutional memberships to individual memberships. ISFAA no longer charges by institution but by individual for membership. This change would then match our fiscal policy.

The second change would be removing anything that states "May 1 through April 30" and replacing it with "the beginning of the approved fiscal year to the end of the approved fiscal year". We are asking for this change since we are also asking for a change in our fiscal year. With changing the wording we would not have to vote on this in the future if we would decide to change the fiscal year again.

The third change would be changing the wording to refer to Commission Directors as Commissioners. We have changed how we refer to Commission Directors to Commissioners and want to update the wording in the By Laws.

The fourth change would be removing "fall and spring" from Article IX – Meetings, Section 1. In this section ISFAA talks about having two regular meetings, one in fall and one in spring. Removing this would allow us the flexibility to adjust the meetings to fit ISFAA's needs and to better align with our new fiscal year, if it is approved.

The fifth change would be removing anything that refers to ISFAA mailing out items to the membership and leaving in that items will be emailed to the membership. This change will follow what our practice is.

The sixth change would be to update our fiscal year to July 1 through June 30. This change will only need to be made if the vote for the fiscal year change passes.

The seventh and last change would be removing that it takes a majority of the membership voting to approve changes and elect positions. We are recommending that the By Laws just states that it has to be approved by membership. This request is being made because we do not have 30% of our members voting. Changing this would allow that ISFAA can accept the votes received by those members that vote.

The Executive Committee is putting before membership a request to change our fiscal year from May 1 – April 30 to July 1 – June 30. This recommendation comes from conversations with members that have stated it would match their schools' fiscal year. ISFAA did approve two years ago to change our membership year to run from July 1 – June 30. This change would also then match our membership year.

When voting is posted online in a few weeks you will be able to look at the changes Article for Article if you wish to read them all. If you have any questions about the changes please contact one of the Executive Committee members who are all willing to answer any questions you may have. Don't forget to vote!

*Important
DATE!*



College Goal Sunday 2014

We are very excited for 2014 College Goal Sunday!! The event will be held Sunday February 23, 2014 from 2-4 EST. The volunteer site is up and ready for you to volunteer.

If you have not volunteered please go to www.volunteerindianacgs.org and sign up today!!

The color this year is sea foam. All volunteers that sign up by January 1st will receive a sea foam long sleeve t-shirts. So don't delay sign up today!

SFA News



Mary Jane Michalak

As we welcome in the New Year, the General Assembly again returns to Indianapolis to consider new laws. For our part, the Commission does not plan to submit any suggestions for financial aid changes this year, although we have heard there will be a few bills filed that affect some of our programs, so we will still be active participants in the legislative process. This session is considered a “short” session – scheduled to end in mid-March (rather than the end of April) – so we will have a good idea of where things stand in February, and by the time the Spring conference rolls around, I will be able to give a final summary.

On February 13, the Commission

will adopt the new grid format and award amounts for the first time. The recommendations from SFA will be heard on January 16 during our Budget Committee meeting from 3-5 p.m. Information about the Committee location, time and call-in numbers will be available at <http://www.in.gov/che/2616.htm> in the coming weeks. The February Commission meeting will take place at IUPUI, and will begin at 9 a.m. We will make copies of the grid available immediately after the adoption.

We are also in the process of finalizing the appeals process and guidelines we will use for students who do not meet the completion requirements. We have asked for information from schools on the Government Relations committee about their SAP appeals processes and have asked for their feedback on the draft guidelines. As soon as those are vetted with our Student Success Committee membership, we will send the final guidelines out via our listserv and post the information on our website.

Finally, I wanted to let you know that the State will be participating in a FAFSA Completion Initiative this year. This is part of President Obama’s college completion agenda. FSA is hoping that states will participate by sharing FAFSA

completion information with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) within their respective states. Indiana will be using our high school database system, CHIPS, to generate a list of contacts at each high school in Indiana. We will use that list of contacts to provide to high schools lists of students who have completed the 2014-2015 FAFSA during the critical FAFSA filing period – before the March 10 deadline.

In the coming weeks, we will be sending information to the high schools to let them know about this initiative, and we have asked the Indiana Youth Institute to assist us in getting the word out to counselors, but we wanted you to be aware, too, since this may increase in the number of students’ FAFSA records you receive.

If you have not already done so, please sign up for our listservs at go to <http://www.in.gov/sfa/2564.htm>, and select the listserv of your choice so you can stay up to date on our initiatives. You can sign up for multiple listservs, and the listservs are open to anyone who would like to join.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Amanda Stanley at ajstanley@che.in.gov.

2014 Support Staff Workshop

ISFAA will be offering a Support Staff Workshop on Tuesday, March 11, 2014, at the University of Indianapolis. Please seriously consider offering your support staff the opportunity to meet with their colleagues from around the state and participate in training on various financial aid topics as well as professional development topics. This training is only held every other year.

As counselors and directors we have several opportunities to get out of the office for conferences, but our support staffs don’t always have the same opportunity. So, this is a good way to provide them with training and to network with others.

Registration forms will be made available the first week of January. Look for an email with the registration form and agenda attached at that time.



Using Credit Smartly Can Mean Good Credit...And More

Doug Hess, Senior Marketing Associate, Great Lakes Educational Loan Services, Inc.

Credit is financial trustworthiness. It's an opportunity to build relationships with lenders that allows you to get the things you need, like loans for a car or a home, based on your promise to pay later. Therefore, establishing good credit ensures you're able to retain those important relationships, and can even offer additional perks, like lower interest rates, for future purchases.

What is Good Credit vs. Bad Credit?

Each line of credit (e.g., a car loan, a house loan, student loans, a credit card) is factored into an individual's overall credit rating. The life of each line of credit is recorded over the amount of time it takes to pay off, and then rated to get an overall credit report.

Having a good credit report means that an individual is making the agreed-upon amount of payments on the agreed-upon date as necessary until the line of credit is paid-in-full. Alternately, bad credit means an individual has issues keeping up their end of the bargain; they may not pay the full minimum payments or not make required payments on time.

Credit reports are also used to generate a credit score; the number averaged from the three major credit bureaus that track an individual's credit rating. General credit score averages are:

350 (very bad)

650 (fair)

850 (good)

How Does Credit Affect Me?

Credit ratings affect many aspects of life, not just whether an individual can obtain future loans. Credit ratings:

May determine whether employers extend job offers. Some employers use credit to assess a person's character.

Determine whether approval will be obtained on consumer loans (e.g., car loans), and influences the interest rates and fees that are assessed. Good credit can mean lower interest rates on future lines of credit.

May determine whether an individual can rent an apartment. Many landlords use credit to decide if an applicant is a good risk and may even reduce the security deposit if the applicant has good credit.

May determine whether an individual is eligible for financial aid for student loans.

Helps an individual receive lower insurance rates, since some insurance companies set premiums based on credit history.

Credit Card Tips

Credit cards can be a great way to build and maintain good credit. However, they can also be one of the fastest ways to damage credit if not used properly. Here are some basic dos and don'ts for credit cards.

Do use for extraordinary purchases (e.g., purchasing new furniture) like a temporary loan, but only if you can pay the amount of the purchase off within the billing cycle (usually 30 days).

Why? Credit cards include interest that builds on each purchase. If you charge large amounts to credit cards and can't pay it off right away, the amount of the purchase acquires interest that adds to the overall amount you have to pay back.

Do keep balances at, or under 25 - 30% of your total limit, and never max out cards.

Why? Keeping a low, or no, balance on a credit card shows lenders that an individual is more capable of paying back the overall amount. Even if the balance is paid off after maxing a card, reaching the maximum amount allowed is bad for credit. It's a better idea to use two cards on which a lower, or no, balance can be maintained. That way, the risk of not being able to pay the full amount is decreased, and there's also the added benefit of keeping good standing on an additional card.

Do keep a low balance, if any, but don't necessarily cancel credit cards that are paid-in-full.

Why? If an individual has available credit in good standing, it can actually damage their credit score to remove that card, since it's basically removing credit options. It's a better idea to keep the card open and only use it when/if necessary.

Why Maintaining Good Credit Matters

The good news is that bad credit can always be fixed, and maintained. Here are some of the best ways to achieve good credit.

FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW TO MANAGE DEFAULT - CONTINUED

Always pay bills on time. Payment history is the most important factor in credit ratings.

Keep low balances on credit cards.

Know your credit rating; companies that record credit submit individuals' credit history to the three main bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion), but they can make mistakes. Individuals can pay to obtain reports through these bureaus or visit <https://www.annualcreditreport.com> for a free report once every 12 months; additional inquiries require payment.

Avoid too many credit inquiries in a short period (e.g., inquiries of credit report for taking out loans for cars, homes, personal reasons, credit cards, etc.). Too many inquiries can

indicate an individual is looking for multiple lines of credit, and may be too much of a risk for a lender.

Protect finances! Keep financial records in order and always watch for fraud and scams.



Doug Hess is a Senior Marketing Associate with Great Lakes, serving schools in Indiana and Illinois. You can reach Doug at (800) 308-0161, or by email at dhess@glhec.org. Additional information about Great Lakes can be found online at www.mygreatlakes.org/web/FAP

Financial Aid Outreach Committee Update

Since October, six Financial Aid Nights have been reported. I anticipate in the next month or two a majority of the presentations will be conducted. I will be sending an email through the listserv to remind presenters to submit their presentation info to the committee chair (myself) so that we can keep track of what is being done. If you have a Financial Aid Night scheduled please remember to use the evaluation forms. The evaluation forms are an easy way to report your presentation and get feedback. If you are conducting a presentation promoting the FAFSA, whether it is through ISFAA or your place of employment, we ask that you please report the presentation to the committee chair so we can count it in our statistics.

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Executive Committee Member Focus

Rob Wirt



Rob Wirt

1) Please tell Bits and Bytes about your current position at Ball State University...

I am currently one of three Associate Directors in our office (well, one of three as we just had a position open up). My main responsibilities focus on oversight of scholarships, outreach, and advising. We really have a good, veteran

group of employees in the office, and I think our customer service for our students is excellent.

2) How did you get your start in Financial Aid?

Completely by accident. My wife and I had both earned degrees at Ball State, and I was teaching 4 freshmen composition courses while she worked part time in the language lab and a kitchen/bath remodeling store when we decided that this wasn't really the future we wanted. I was surprised at how little contract faculty without a Ph.D. were paid, so even though I enjoyed teaching very much, financially it would have been very hard to do anything but scrape by, so we signed up for the Peace Corps--we didn't know what we wanted to do exactly so this would buy us some time to figure it out--and went through all the training, physicals, shots, etc. and were just waiting to be placed. I couldn't commit to teaching another semester, so we moved up to Elkhart to live with my folks until we were placed. Well, you might think placement would be easy but it is much harder for two people to be placed than one in the Peace Corps, so finally, after a few months (and being offered only one placement, and in a country where our "safety could not be guaranteed") we had to look for "real" jobs. So I started working as a part-time lab assistant at Ivy Tech in Elkhart. Literally my second week on the job, the person who had been doing financial aid there for about a month, suddenly quit. I think out of desperation I was offered the position. I accepted the position and ended up working there as a one person office for eight years. And I have been in financial aid ever since.

3) Tell us about your current role with ISFAA and being on executive committee...

Earlier in the year I was asked to take over the Pat Wilson

Scholarship Committee, which was very exciting as I had coordinated quite a few Silent Auctions for the Michigan Student Financial Aid Association (MSFAA) when I worked up there. I really have high hopes that we make this even more successful than it has been. Not long after I agreed to accept this position I was approached when a vacancy presented another opportunity, this time to be the Internal Operations Commissioner. I'm excited about becoming involved in ISFAA and really looking forward making new connections and providing support and services to our members.

4) You have been involved with financial aid since 1990. Do you have a memory about a student you helped that stands out in your mind that shows the good work that FA folks do?

Honestly, there have been so many students that have been thankful over my career, it is hard to say one stands out. Oh sure, like everyone else, I have found that the vast majority of students and families do not appreciate all that we do, but I would have to say that there have been so many that have sent me "Thank You" cards or stopped by to tell me how much they appreciated my help--these are the ones that touch your heart and the reasons you keep coming back to work each day.

5) Please tell us about other leadership roles you've had involving financial aid...

All of my previous state association positions were up in Michigan (I was too new when I worked in Indiana my first 10 years to honestly be very interested in ISFAA and travel budgets for Ivy Tech and IU-South Bend were pretty tight anyways). In fact, I didn't consider financial aid to be my "career" until I became a Director of an office in 2001. I spent 10 years as a Director at two different Michigan institutions. One thing I enjoyed in Michigan was that the state was divided into regions and we had regional meetings in addition to state conferences. This provided a nice opportunity to network with colleagues from other institutions on a more frequent basis. As I mentioned previously, I have worked on many silent auctions but first served as the Secretary of the Executive Board of MSFAA. After a few years of learning about the association and how things worked in Michigan (many similarities but also some notable differences), I served

as a Regional Representative, Vice-President, President-Elect, and even President. I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Board, and working with some very committed and knowledgeable colleagues taught me so much.

6) You joined ISFAA in 2011. Please share your thoughts about the organization after a few years as a member...

Honestly, I was so new to Indiana, to Ball State, and my new role there, that I was not really focused on ISFAA until just recently. Also, we just went through a conversion to Banner, which again, was a very time consuming project. I think I'll defer my comments until I've been involved a little more. Any opinion I would have at this point would be premature.

7) What is your favorite thing about your profession?

Hands down it is the people I have met. The giving, caring, committed, and yes, fun, people. My own experiences have taught me that people make all the difference. The right people can make a horrible situation bearable, and the wrong people can make a wonderful situation horrible.

8) Do you have a least favorite thing about your profession?

The glory—really all the glory and recognition bestowed upon our profession is just too much. Move along people, nothing to see here but Mr. and Mrs. Integrity, just doing their job: fighting for truth, justice, and the American Way. Ok, seriously, the slow pace of progress and improvements, coupled with the lack of having a strong voice in policy and decision making. Like everyone else I'm left scratching my head wondering "what were they thinking?" one some of these programs and regs come out. Certainly I've gotten used to these things after so many years, but they are still frustrating.

9) Do you have any thought or message that you would like to pass along to the other ISFAA members?

I am horrible with names—if I've met you before, come up and introduce yourself—if I look bewildered (or maybe more bewildered than usual) don't take it personally! And if we haven't met, come up and introduce yourself. Who knows, you might be the next person getting involved in ISFAA. Oh, and keep those silent auction items coming!



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For more information contact Bill Wozniak:
wwozniak@ismloans.org

Remembering 2013...



College Goal Sunday



2013 Spring Conference



2013 Spring Conference



2013 Spring Conference



2013 Spring Conference



MASFAA in Indianapolis



2013 President's Retreat



MASFAA in Indianapolis

Remembering 2013...



MASFAA in Indianapolis



ISFAA presents at IACAC Fall Conference



2013 ISFAA Guidance Counselor Workshops



2013 ISFAA Guidance Counselor Workshops

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Comings and Goings

...and other tidbits of association news

Sue Allmon

Comings

Michelle Concepcion joined the financial aid team at Calumet College of St. Joseph as a Financial Aid Counselor in July. She comes to Indiana from Miami, Florida with about 7 years of financial aid experience working almost 4 years at Carlos Albizu University and 3 at Keiser University. Michelle is new to the area and trying to adjust to the cold winter weather!

Transitions

LaToshia Everson returns to her alma mater and rejoins the DePauw family as the new Associate Director effective January 6th. She comes to us from Wabash College where she was an Assistant Director.

Promotions

Angie Dawson has been named the Acting Director of Financial Aid at the University of Evansville. She assumes these duties on January 2nd. Angie has worked for UE since 1986.

Jill Murat, University of Indianapolis has been promoted to Sunni Manges' job as Coordinator for Gift Aid Programs and System Operations.

Goings

Seth Kilty, Assistant Director of Financial Aid is leaving University of Saint Francis on January 3rd to begin working at Indiana Wesleyan University in a department other than Financial Aid.

Goings continued...

Sunni Manges moved to the new academic counseling center for the University of Indianapolis where she now is an academic adviser to students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Retirements

From **Joanne Laugel** "I think it's old news that I'm retiring but thought I'd mention it. Judy Parent is also retiring. I think we both just want to do some other things. Good luck to all of you still plugging along. I admire each and every one of my colleagues who fight the good fight for the students. It's always been for them no matter how frustrating. I'll try to keep up with everyone. ---Joanne

Joanne Haymaker, Associate Director, retires after 27 years at DePauw.

Judy Parent, Loan Counselor, retires after 25 years at DePauw.

Births

Christine Lucas, Associate Director of Financial Aid from Franklin College writes "I welcomed grandbaby #8 this morning 12-10-13 @ 12:53 a.m. Her name is Mya. She joins sisters Madison, McKenzie, and Macyn. My son Christopher and his wife Michelle now have four daughters. Almost a basketball team all on their own.

Good News Announcements

Katie Dudek, Financial Aid Officer, Indiana Institute of Technology "got hitched" to Collin Gayde on October 12th at The Rathskeller in Indianapolis. Katie writes "A fantastic time was had by all, particularly the Bride and Groom"



For the latest ISFAA information, or to check out previous editions of Bits & Bytes, visit www.ISFAA.org!



Bits and Bytes

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Bits and Bytes is published quarterly
on behalf of the
Indiana Student Financial Aid Association

Deadlines for Article Submission

Jan. 25 for February Issue
 Apr. 25 for May Issue
 Sept. 25 for October Issue
 Nov. 25 for December Issue

Thanks