



FEBRUARY 2022

Bits & Bytes

Newsletter of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association

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2022 Winter Conference Wrap-Up

When ISFAA leadership started the planning for this winter conference, an Olympic-style theme was selected due to it being the same week as the start of the Olympics. Little did we all know that it would be the biggest storm of the season and by Wednesday night those who were commuting would need their ice skates to get home and those who made the trek back and forth daily would feel as though they were as laser focused as a skier navigating their path.

Through the years each conference has been unique and this one quickly reminded us all that to be in financial aid is synonymous with being flexible at all times in all situations. The program committee quickly pivoted and jumped into action, trying to figure out which sessions would be able to remain in person and shifting to an online format for those who could not. Many colleagues came in Tuesday night to be sure they were on site and others ended up with an unexpected hotel stay after evaluating their chances of safely traveling home.

Our presenters and panelists were gold medal material, and we were educated further on a wide range of topics including specific Title IV aid processing, state and federal policy, revamping offices into a one-stop shop, and managing policies and procedures. Other topics

were explored as well such as emotional intelligence, intersection of emotions and money habits, building credit, staying motivated and de-stressing in the office which will be used not only in our interactions and education for our students but in our own lives as well. The Access, Equity, and Diversity Co-chairs shared their results of the survey and it allowed for open and honest discussion which will ultimately continue to lead us to a higher standard. As well, a session on ISFAA's planning for the future shows that we are not content to remain stagnant even as we embark on our 87th year as a profession.



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2022 WINTER CONFERENCE WRAP-UP— CONTINUED

A special thank you for the dedication of the presenters and panelists who shared their knowledge, to the vendors and sponsors who support us and our students, and to the Program Committee who pulled such great talent together for the benefit of our members. For those in attendance, it was wonderful to see where old friends can pick up where they left off and how quickly new friendships can form. We are stronger together and make a beautiful team.

Best wishes from your ISFAA Site Conference Program Committees!

ISFAA Conference Program Committee: Melinda Middleton, Darla Hopper, John McPherson, Stan Werne, Deb Gossman, Kevin Jacobs, and Brooke Moreland

ISFAA Site Committee: Donette Cassman, Kristina Delbridge, Angie Snapp, Brandon Kuntz, and Heather Lisco



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Past President's Perspective

When thinking over the last year in some instances I can honestly say "Where has the time gone", but with the various obstacles that were placed in front of our organization I can also say, "It has been a long year". When I was selected as President-Elect in the fall of 2019, my main goal has been to get more people involved in ISFAA. Although there were a few more items that I wanted to tackle this past year, I still feel I accomplished my main goal. I may not have had more members involved in 2021, but I feel the ground work was laid for more people being involved in 2022. This past year proved to be a little challenging with half of the year being virtual and then

the other half people requesting more face to face interactions. I am pleased with the communications and new members (to me) that I met during the Brown Bag Lunch Series. I also really enjoyed the in-person interactions at both the Leadership Symposium in the fall and most recently our annual conference. I know there are some new and exciting things on the horizon for ISFAA so stay tuned!

I will close with saying Thank You to all those people who volunteered their time during my presidency. I know this added to your plate and I truly appreciate all that you have done for ISFAA.



Candice Sutliff

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Educator Guide, 2nd Edition is on the Way

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education will be releasing soon the second edition of its Educator Guide. This year's edition will be about the [Indiana College Core \(Core\)](#). The Core, formerly known as the Statewide Transfer General Education Core, or STGEC, is a block of 30 credit hours of general education college-level coursework that can be transferred between all Indiana public institutions and some private institutions.

Students can earn the Core in high school for \$750 or less, saving themselves and their family thousands. Earning the Core gives students a jumpstart on their college degree or certificate, allowing them to focus on major-specific coursework earlier which may open the possibility of adding a minor, studying abroad and more.



Students who earn the Core are more likely to graduate on time or even earlier than their peers.

The Core's popularity has grown since its creation in 2012, with more than 2,000 high school students earning the Core during the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, more than 100 high schools throughout the state are officially able to offer the Core.

The Educator Guide provides guidance for high schools that are interested in becoming a delivery site for the Core.

For those schools that already offer the Core, the new guide contains information for counselors and teachers to inform students about the Core, how to earn it and how to transfer the completed Core upon graduation.

The Commission has also developed a toolkit for high schools to communicate the benefits of earning the Core to students and families. The toolkit contains an email template, sample social media posts, newsletter and website template, and FAQs about the Core.

The Commission will formally roll out the Educator Guide and toolkit in early March. These resources will be housed on [LearnMoreIndiana.org](#) and will be sent to counselors and educators via email.



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President's Perspective

I recently took the gavel at the annual conference in Plainfield, and I'm very excited to get to work. I've been working hard to prepare for this year, and I think it's going to be great. I'm writing this just after our annual conference and I still feel all the warm fuzzies after being around such wonderful people in our profession. The conference was exactly what I needed to continue to energize me for this upcoming year- and I'm ready!

I do want to thank Candice Sutliff for all her hard work as president this past year. In a year where covid still exists and may be here for a while, Candice brought us through and was a strong and positive leader for our organization. She was hard at work all the way leading to the day of conference as we made final plans to hold it in person, despite the winter storm warning for much of our area.

In preparing for my role as president, Candice and I sent out a member survey to ask some questions of the membership, which has helped me prepare for the year. The results were not surprising, but reassuring that we are headed in the right direction.

Almost 85% of the people that answered the survey said it is important to them to have a professional organization for their career, and their membership is valuable to them. However, there are still members that do not know what some of our hard-working committees do for the organization. Many of our members have been able to form professional relationships with other members, but not everyone has had the same experience. Members also want to hear what's going on. We already

brought the newsletter back, and we love Bits & Bytes! (76% said they read it, so thanks for reading)

Our membership also likes the trainings we offer and our conference. It gives us the ability to keep up with the ever-changing world of financial aid while discussing the impacts with our peers. We need the opportunity to meet and network, so we can share problems and solutions we encounter in our office. We are also seeing the effects of the Great Resignation, which many offices report being short staffed, unable to hire (hiring freezes), and people generally leaving the profession, through retirement or just moving on. And we know there has to be financial aid training and understanding before a new employee off the street can be effective in our offices.

It is more important than ever to strengthen our organization to make sure we are helping our financial aid colleagues retain their people- not just to make sure we are serving our students, but also to make sure we are still in compliance with having the appropriate number of staff to administer financial aid.

Although most responses to the membership survey were positive, we do have some work to do.

As a result of the membership survey and conversations with the board, we've partnered with two consultants to help us create the next strategic plan for the organization. Throughout the year, the strategic planning committee will meet and create a plan for us to roll out at the next annual conference.



Lisa Bridgewater

*If you are
waiting for
someone to
reach out and
ask if you want
to be involved,
please take this
as your sign.*

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE— CONTINUED

With a combination of their guidance and your input, we will together create a plan for how to continue to improve our organization to help retain our staff and to help us better serve the students who need our help.

We have so many great things planned, including the Support Staff Workshop, multiple opportunities for Trainings, College Goal Sunday, Counselor Workshops, as well as continuing to expand our Access, Education, and Diversity committee work and planning the next conference. These activities are only possible because of our members and volunteers. We need you to volunteer for our committees.

I've heard it before, the same people are always on the board, the committees, etc- that we are too cliquey. I thought that too before I joined ISFAA and became more active. I would love to have anyone that wants to be involved, and I will find a place for them to become active. If you are waiting for someone to reach out and ask if you want to be involved, please take this as your sign. Every year we try and get new people involved, and I'm asking for you to give us a shot. If you have members in your office that would be great for a committee or a position on the board, let me know. We need your help in developing the next leaders to come up in our organization and to keep our rich history alive.

Come and be a volunteer for ISFAA!



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Executive Committee Member Focus

Danielle Hayden



Danielle Hayden

1) Please tell Bits and Bytes about your current position at Purdue.

I am the Assistant Director of Packaging and Funds Management, which oversees our packaging strategy and weekly process of awarding financial aid. I have been in this role for almost 2 1/2 years and have enjoyed the critical thinking and data analysis involved in the position.

2) How did get your start in Financial Aid?

Similar to many financial aid professionals, I started as a federal work study student at Purdue University my junior year of undergrad. Our office has an incredible peer counselor program where I received extensive training and a detailed overview of financial aid. Once I finished my undergrad degree, I swore I would leave the profession but we see how well that intention worked out.

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

My delegate-at-large term ends this year and I now start my Treasurer-Elect term which is a three-year commitment. While these roles vary in their responsibilities on the executive board, my overall intention for my service is to ensure that ISFAA serves our membership and our students in a comprehensive way. We have an incredible group of professionals dedicated to ISFAA and the financial aid community and it's important that the executive board continues to offer new opportunities for growth and involvement, both personally and institutionally.

4) You have been involved with financial aid since 2013. Do you have a memory about a student(s) you helped that stands out in your mind that shows the good work that FA folks do?

My most rewarding conversations have centered around the discussions with first-time students and their families. Their excitement about attending college is contagious and it's rewarding to know that our roles in financial aid can help ease some of the burden for them. I have found that simply asking a "How are you?" to students (and often parents) at the beginning of meetings typically results in more than a response of "fine!" and they tend to share their concerns openly. This initial relationship has helped make conversations more meaningful for myself and the student/family.

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

I co-chaired the ISFAA Training Committee with Lisa Bridgewater and then Sarah Owen for several years, I currently co-chair the Access, Equity, and Diversity Committee with Alex DeLonis, and I serve as the co-chair of MASFAA's Professional Development committee with Heidi Johnson from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Serving on committees has introduced me to so many people throughout the state and region and those relationships mean a lot to me! It's fun to work toward a common goal together in each of the committee roles.

6) You joined ISFAA in 2014. Please share your thoughts about the organization after 8 years as a member...

The membership makes this organization worthwhile. As I reflect on the ISFAA conference last week, I think about the conversations I had (both professional and personal) with new individuals and the connections that were made. As an organization, we are honest with each other and we hold ISFAA accountable to be the best association it can be. We constantly strive for improvement and it makes me proud to represent the organization.

7.) What is your favorite thing about your profession?

Financial aid is an exciting mix of so many skills and responsibilities, so every day is different, which I love. I am able to counsel students and families regarding difficult situations, but also problem solve to create solutions to access and affordability efforts. Higher education is at a critical point where the industry is being asked to prove its worth to potential students and I think our role specifically will continue to grow in importance at each of our campuses.

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

I often think that the negativity surrounding student debt casts a shadow on the financial aid profession as a whole. Since we often hear from the frustrated students/parents and not the overjoyed families, it can take a toll. My hope is that students and families have supportive conversations in each of our offices so that we can prove our profession intends to help students achieve their larger goals and not delay their progress.

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

The return on investment for volunteering is immeasurable. From the relationships built, to the leadership experience gained, to the ability to impact the larger membership, it has been one of the most rewarding decisions I have made. ISFAA has many options to be involved in different capacities based on personal comfort and interests, and I am happy to facilitate those connections if/when anyone is interested in being more involved!



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Viewpoint: Delegate-At-Large

By Melissa Smurdon



Melissa Smurdon

I have been in financial aid since working as a student at University of Indianapolis – a LONG time ago! I knew I'd found my place in the balance of numbers and formulas and helping students get an education. I have been at Butler University almost 28 years, serving as Director of Financial Aid since 2010.

When I began my career at Butler, I enjoyed ISFAA and relished the opportunities. I served as sponsorship chair for several years and had a blast expanding my circle of financial aid colleagues. This was before Direct Loans and there were virtually no student private loans so the loans landscape was a lot different but people who cared were at the heart of it all, just as they are now.

I've also served on several committees and co-chaired the Membership Committee just a few years ago. I started the Delegate-at-Large position with the Executive Committee in January of 2021. Not only have I gotten to re-connect with a great group of Indiana aid administrators, I've gotten to experience the inner workings of ISFAA.

As a volunteer-led organization, we all take on additional work to participate on committees and to lead within ISFAA. This experience has really reminded me how dedicated financial aid professionals are – to students and their

institutions but also to one another. Few professional fields allow for the type of sharing and support we offer one another in navigating complex Federal guidelines, changing state aid policies, and keeping up with it all!

It has been great to be on the Board and understand the budget of ISFAA and how thoughtfully our first-of-its-kind state association has been managed all of these years. Understanding what goes into arranging every piece of a conference makes me appreciate it all the more. There were many useful sessions to attend and the facility was really nice – albeit the hallways of the conference center a bit drafty. Plus it was wonderful to be back in person in for the January conference – even with most of us snowed in at the hotel. (Truth be told, a few of us relished that aspect!)

I have been reminded too of the great work we do and how important volunteerism is to supporting our profession. The collaboration of the Board members including those who represent and help support all Committees is impressive and obvious. As delegate-at-large, my role has some specific responsibilities but for the most part is to represent our ISFAA members. It has been a great experience to help think through the various types of institutions and the even broader types of students as we discuss important topics.

I am so happy I accepted the chance to run for executive committee. After many years closely aligned with our software provider rather than our profession, it feels like coming home to the very best people! You would enjoy being involved too!



A Look Back at the 2021 Leadership Symposium

By Megan Watson, Leadership Symposium Committee Chair

The Leadership Symposium is one of my favorite events that ISFAA puts on every other year. Over the years I have had the pleasure of volunteering and serving on this committee. It is a wonderful way to meet new people, build a professional network, and learn more about our historic association.

This year the ISFAA Leadership Symposium was held at the Drury Inn Plaza on September 30th & October 1st in Indianapolis. We had 11 members join us from a variety of institutions across the state. We covered topics such as Building Your Personal Brand and Access, Equity, and Diversity. Justin Draeger made a guest appearance and spoke to us about the importance of getting involved in our associations.

The planning committee always tries to come up with a fun activity that everyone can enjoy and bring the group together. This year we went axe throwing! Axe throwing proved to be a friendly competition. Only one person admitted to watching YouTube videos prior to the event to gain a slight advantage. By the end of the night everyone was cheering for one another and enjoying themselves.

There are a few people who deserve recognition for donating their time and expertise. Our committee members: Sara

Lambie, Lisa Bridgewater, and Candice Sutliff as well as presenters: Danielle Hayden, Alex Delonis, and Donette Cassman. Thank you for volunteering your time, we couldn't have done it without you!

Those of you who attended, thank you! Your presence reminds me of the community that ISFAA has created. On behalf of the committee we look forward to seeing all the ways you get involved

with ISFAA in the future. Volunteers are one of the biggest assets our association has. Our volunteers allow ISFAA to provide leadership opportunities, training and professional development, assist families with filing the FAFSA, and so much more.

Lastly, if you have not attended an ISFAA Leadership Symposium please consider attending in 2023. It will most definitely be a great time!



**Registration is now open for the
NASFAA 2022 National Conference
taking place June 26-29th
in Austin, Texas**

Comings and Goings

...and other tidbits of association news

Sue Allmon

Goings

Andee Huxhold resigned from IU-South Bend staff as their Financial Aid and Scholarship Counselor on December 20, 2021.

Retirements

Pat Garvin, Operations Coordinator, Indiana State University, retired on February 25, 2022 after 21 years in financial aid. Her friend and co-worker Darla Grigg sent this along: *put in a piece telling everyone at ISFAA that my wonderful co-worker, walking buddy and right-hand lady is retiring after 21 years in the financial aid office. Her last day is Feb 25, 2022. Everyone in the office is truly going to miss her wealth of knowledge in our field. We have tried to pick her brain before she leaves but you just can't get 21 years of experience out. Over her tenure, she's had titles such as, Counselor, Verification Specialist, (and in 1999, we did verification the old fashion way!) and most recent Operations Coordinator. Many titles, but always one goal, to make sure our students receive their financial aid. I can't forget to brag on her since 1999, she's only missed a couple of College Goal Sundays and those missed Sundays were due to her health. She's got a wardrobe of different colored sweat shirts and tee shirts through the years Jim won't need to ever buy another. ☺*

Carrie Bishop, Director of Financial Aid Training and Compliance for Ivy Tech Community College, Systems

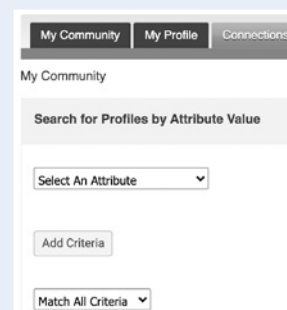
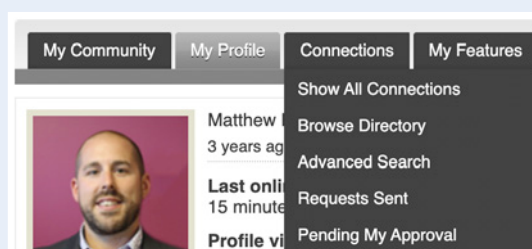
Office has announced her impending retirement. She has told me her last day with the College will be September 2, 2022. We shall miss your positive attitude and helpful spirit you have brought to Ivy Tech and to ISFAA.

Deaths

Marilee Taylor, Assistant Director overseeing scholarship processing for IUPUI, passed away on January 20, 2022. Here is what Lisa Bridgewater submitted to the listserv at the time: *Marilee served the IUPUI community for just over 43 years. During her tenure she has filled various roles. She began her journey in the Office of the Bursar and eventually found her true calling in the Office of Student Financial Services, most recently in the role of Assistant Director overseeing scholarship processing. Marilee will be remembered as someone who truly cared for people. She was always one to celebrate staff birthdays, jump in to help a colleague in need, and offer her assistance whenever possible. Marilee was critical in revamping our scholarship processing and ensuring her team was setup for success. Her unwavering work ethic came from her immense empathy and desire to see others flourish and accomplish their goals. Marilee's hard work and dedication have been recognized over the years—she has been the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award presented by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association and our own IUPUI Bepko Spirit Award. Marilee will be remembered fondly as an exemplar employee, a mentor, and a friend.*

ISFAA.org Website Tip:

Update your profile, connect with colleagues, exchange ideas, and get answers. Make connections and start a community online at [ISFAA.org](https://www.isfaa.org).



Upcoming Trainings

Professional Judgment: Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Time/Location: 10 a.m. – Noon (CST) @ IU-Northwest

To register, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/professionaljudgment>

Registration will close Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 5pm.

Return of Title IV Funds: Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Time/Location: 10 a.m. – Noon (EST) @ IUPUI

To register, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R2T4>

Registration will close Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 5pm.

Verification: Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Time/Location: 10 a.m. – Noon (CST) @ IU-Northwest

To register, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FederalVerification>

Registration will close Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 5pm.



Bits and Bytes

Matt Krieg, Editor
mkrieg@investedindiana.org
Phone (317) 914-7136

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