



DECEMBER 2023

Bits & Bytes

Newsletter of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association

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2023 Counselor Workshop Series Wrap-Up

The 2023 Counselor Workshop series was very well attended, and it's no surprise that questions asked by attendees may have hit an all-time high! With so many changes for financial aid at both the state and national levels, attendees received a great deal of information in jam-packed morning events.

The events once again took place from Hammond to Evansville, and Hanover to Fort Wayne, with over 730 counselors registered for one of the 13 workshops. Presenters from the Commission for Higher Education along with ISFAA experts delivered the latest updates.

ISFAA as always shares a "thank you very much" message to our partners and friends from the Commission who presented at every workshop and a thank you as well to the ISFAA experts who gave their time for this important initiative at such a chaotic time.

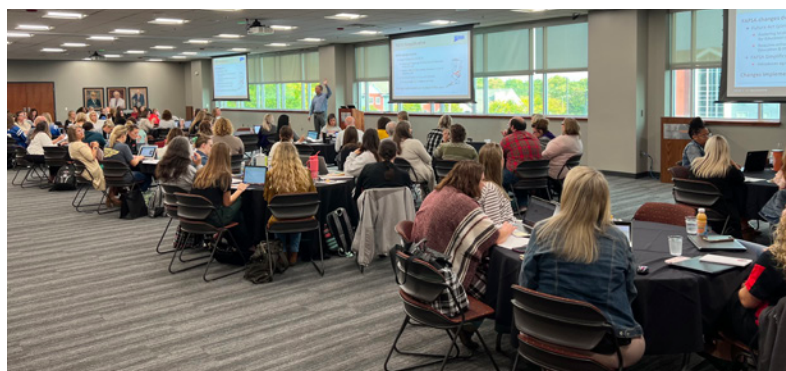
Of course we have to give a big thank you to the schools that made it all possible again in 2023 by opening their doors and rolling out the red carpet. Without the hospitality of the host sites, there could not be a workshop series of this magnitude.

Survey responses and emails have been extremely positive (with the possible exception of wishing ISFAA could launch the FAFSA on its own) and the plan for 2024 is an even more successful series of workshops!



more photos on page 2

Over 730 counselors attend 2023 ISFAA Counselor Workshop series in a very interesting time in financial aid . . .



Planning a conference – Indianapolis and ISFAA the site host for MASFAA's Annual Conference

By Lisa Bridgewater

Indianapolis and ISFAA recently had the honor to host the MASFAA Annual Conference. As the host state, Indiana MASFAA members had the ability to serve on the Local Arrangements Committee, and be an integral part of the planning process. Planning began late in 2022 for the conference held October 22-25, 2023.

Alex Delonis and myself were the co-chairs to the Local Arrangement Committee selected by the MASFAA president, Craig Slaughter. We were charged with finding a committee that would help plan the conference. We were the ones in charge of the hotel arrangements, the decorations, the entertainment, the audio/visual arrangements, all registration items, ordering the food, communicating to the MASFAA members, and selecting and fundraising for a charity. It was very interesting to see all the moving parts that go into planning a conference. Did you know there are special websites to order badge ribbons? I do now. And it was amazing to see the costs of food and audio/visual equipment.

We had an awesome and hardworking group of MASFAA members that all contributed to the success of the conference. Kelly McGuire, Ron Herrell, Donnette Cassman, Steve Queisser, Melinda Middleton, Kevin Jacobs, Monique Ware, Deb Gossman, Heidi Carl, Kimberly Million, Monica Taylor, Maralee Clayton, Holli Hunter, and Robert Sommers. As a committee, we were presented an award for Committee of the Year, recognized by the President of MASFAA for our outstanding work. (Sorry, had to brag a little)

Throughout the year we met monthly to report our progress. We started with a 2-day meeting at the conference hotel to get a tour, and understand the layout for planning purposes. Over the course of a year, we divided up tasks and got to work. The first part of the planning was deciding on a budget. We had to figure out how to best spend money on a conference that needed to meet the needs of our members. We worked alongside the Program Committee to ensure they had the rooms they needed and the set up that would work best to deliver all the important FAFSA Simplification changes.

We were happy that Craig agreed with our committee's choice to support Foster Success. MASFAA was able to raise \$10,000 to donate to Indiana's Foster Success program, which was an amazing feat. We raised money with silent auction baskets, and an envelope drawing. It was incredible!

Many ISFAA members attended, which contributed to the over 400 attendees. Our own ISFAA President, Megan Watson, welcomed our guests on the first day of the conference. We also saw some ISFAA apparel in the crowds on Sunday.

If anyone was ever interested in event planning, this is the type of committee you should consider. You could start as a volunteer on the ISFAA conference program or site committee. Planning the conference gave me insight to something I would never know, and I got to see first-hand what it takes to pull off a large event, and it was for my professional colleagues in Financial Aid.



President's Perspective

We deserve a vacation! At least that is what I am telling myself these days as I bounce from meetings to webinars and digest all of the information presented at the Federal Student Aid Training Conference. It's a bit overwhelming these days and I'm sure I'm not the only one who is feeling it. Just in case you haven't been told lately, you are doing great work! Take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding effort that you have given along with recognizing your colleagues and staff around you who are also doing a fantastic job!

The last couple of months our ISFAA committees have been busy. An email went out on our listserv recently promoting the upcoming conference. Registration will officially open on January 2nd, and a draft agenda has been posted on the conference page. I hope you find the agenda offers opportunities for everyone to learn, network with colleagues, and engage with our exhibitors. A NASFAA Representative will be joining us at the conference which will provide a valuable opportunity for attendees to get firsthand information and insights as we navigate the upcoming 2024-2025 cycle. This won't happen again for 5 more years, so don't miss out on asking all your questions!

The membership committee recently sent membership renewal emails. In an effort to maintain transparency it's important to share that after much consideration and discussion the board made the difficult decision to increase membership fees by \$10. Membership rates have remained steady for many years and with recent increases to operating expenses it became necessary to make an adjustment to our

membership pricing. If you have not yet renewed your membership, now is the time! We want everyone to stay up to date on all of the upcoming conference festivities, trainings, and opportunities that are coming in the new year. Rest assured that our board is committed to being fiscally responsible and exploring alternative revenue sources to help offset rising costs. With that being said, if you find yourself shopping at Kroger, please consider selecting ISFAA as your community rewards recipient!

Earlier this month Alex held his president retreat. I was energized to hear all of the wonderful plans that committees are already working on for the upcoming year! Soon our volunteer form will open on the website. I hope that you consider volunteering for a committee next year and getting involved. Our volunteers are our lifeblood and make so many wonderful things happen. Volunteering is also a great way for new members to meet fantastic people across the state and build connections in our organizations. I have met so many ISFAA friends who now have a place in my core memories. I don't know what I would do without them.

Lastly, I want to congratulate the winners of our recent election, and express gratitude to those who participated. Anyone who is considering running for a position in a future election is welcome to reach out to myself or a board member with any questions. Great things happen when we push ourselves out of our comfort zones.

As we wrap up 2023, I hope our members enjoy a happy and healthy holiday season and take time to relax and recharge. It won't be long before



Megan Watson

I hope our
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we have a new FAFSA, and we get to say things like "Remember when it used to be called the EFC" or "Remember when we could calculate Pell by looking at a grid"!

Wishing everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

-Megan

Indiana's Statewide FAFSA Requirement and Waiver



**INDIANA COMMISSION for
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During the 2023 legislative session, the Indiana General Assembly passed [Senate Enrolled Act \(SEA\) 167-2023](#) which requires high school seniors to file the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) or affirmatively opt out of filing by April 15.

High school administrators and counselors can see which of their students have completed the FAFSA in real-time in [ScholarTrack](#) via the [FAFSA Completion Project](#). Additionally, high schools will be able to report the students who choose to opt-out and those waived by the high school after April 15 via the Graduation Details upload in ScholarTrack. High schools will not be asked to verify their two attempts to contact students.

The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) (Commission) will report the number of students who complete the FAFSA, opt-out and are waived by the high school to the Indiana Department of Education for inclusion on the Indiana [Graduates Prepared to Succeed Dashboard](#).

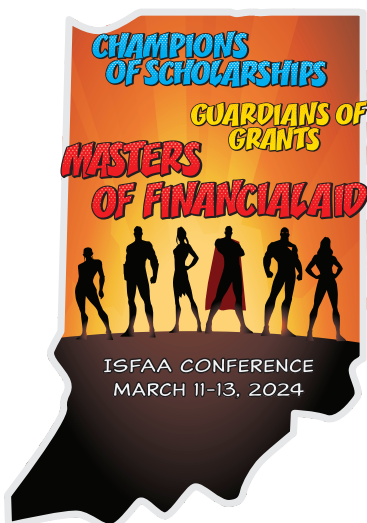
Students who do not wish to file the FAFSA may opt out in one of the following ways:

- **a parent/guardian** of the student submits a FAFSA Waiver Form certifying the student understands what the FAFSA is and declines to complete it;
- **the student**, if the student is an emancipated minor or is at least 18 years old, submits a signed waiver certifying the student understands what the FAFSA is and declines to complete it; or
- **the high school principal or counselor** of the student waives the requirement due to not being able to reach the family of the student by April 15 after at least two reasonable attempts.

The [FAFSA Waiver Form](#) will be released on an annual basis on the opening day of the FAFSA. However, the Commission released this year's waiver early due to the United States Department of Education delaying the release of the 2024-25 FAFSA until December 2023. Additional information about the FAFSA requirement and waiver can be found on the [Commission's website](#).

Students and parents can get a head start on filing by creating Federal Student Aid IDs (FSA IDs). A legal guardian of a student does not need to create an FSA ID – a parent is only required for dependent students. Visit www.FAFSA.gov to get started.

High school partners may send questions to schools@che.in.gov or their [Regional Outreach Coordinator](#).



SAVE THE DATE
THE 2024 ISFAA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
WILL BE HELD
MARCH 11TH – 13TH, 2024
AT THE
RENAISSANCE HOTEL IN CARMEL, IN

Membership Renewal for 2024

by Amber Phillips, Membership and
Ethics Committee Chairperson

As we bid farewell to 2023, we extend our sincere thanks to each of you for contributing to a fantastic year. To those who have already renewed their membership for 2024, your prompt response is greatly appreciated, and we look forward to another exceptional year together.

For those who haven't yet renewed, there's still ample time to do so. We have a couple of updates regarding the 2024 membership. The annual rate has been adjusted to \$60, and renewal emails were dispatched on December 1, 2023, reflecting this new rate. If you didn't receive a renewal email or require assistance in renewing your membership, please reach out to us at membership@isfaa.org.

We encourage you to spread the word and inspire colleagues in your offices who aren't members to make joining ISFAA their New Year's resolution for 2024! We're eagerly anticipating the opportunity to share exciting updates with you all at the upcoming conference.



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Executive Committee Member Focus

Sara Lambie



Sara Lambie

1. Please tell Bits and Bytes about your current position at IU Online

I am currently the Associate Director of Online Student Financial Services, for Indiana University Online. Our programs are hosted, collaboratively, at all Indiana campuses across the state. I support new and prospective students in determining their costs, applying for aid, and

figuring out payment options. I'm an office of one, responsible for strategic communications and support for our prospective students.

2. How did get your start in Financial Aid?

I started working for Nelnet, after college, in loan origination. Once the Indianapolis office of Nelnet closed, I transitioned to work for Chase student loans. I discovered pretty quickly that working at the bank was not really aligned with the environment I enjoyed working in. I left Chase to work for the dreaded ITT! I can say dreaded, because I was there! But there, I learned a lot about what I liked about financial aid and what I didn't like in financial aid. After about a year, I left ITT behind to work for Indiana Business College, which then promptly changed their name to Harrison College. Despite the rocky road to working in financial aid, once I got going, I really enjoyed it. Yada, yada, yada, I began working for IU in 2018.

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

I am currently serving as the Secretary for the board, and am in the middle of a two-year term. It's been great seeing how all the of the committees and positions come together to serve the organization.

4. You have been involved with financial aid for 19 years. 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?

There are countless instances that showcase the good work of FA folks. I don't have one specific moment. But I'll say having spent years on the training and compliance side of things, I have so much respect to those working in those roles now. It's never a popular role, but it's so pivotal to ensuring we serve our students in the best ways possible.

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

I am a certified FAAC, since 2020. I have served on various committees within ISFAA and MASFAA and also serve on NASFAA's Rapid Response network. I also had the pleasure of serving on the planning committee for last year's FAAC Forum at NASFAA's Legislative and Leadership conference in Washington, D.C. I've held lots of different roles in different Institutions, from an assistant to associate to director of financial aid.

6. You joined ISFAA in 2010. Please share your thoughts about the organization after 13 years as a member...

ISFAA is a great place to connect with colleagues across all types of Institutions. It's also a great place to reconnect with those you left behind. The conference is the culmination of the ISFAA year for me. I always look forward to it.

7. What is your favorite thing about your profession?

Honestly, I know the easy answer here is service to our students. But selfishly, It's also about work/life balance for me. Higher ed has been a great place to find balance. Yes, you're busy but there's also a lot of space for taking time away and resetting. I've worked outside of higher ed and you really don't find a lot of "space" like we have. Although as you're reading this right now, you might not remember what taking time away feels like, with the impending FAFSA coming... It IS coming, right? Haha!

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

It can be challenging explaining what you do to those outside of FA. I think it is getting better, but sometimes being the translator to non-FA speaking folks can be exhausting.

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

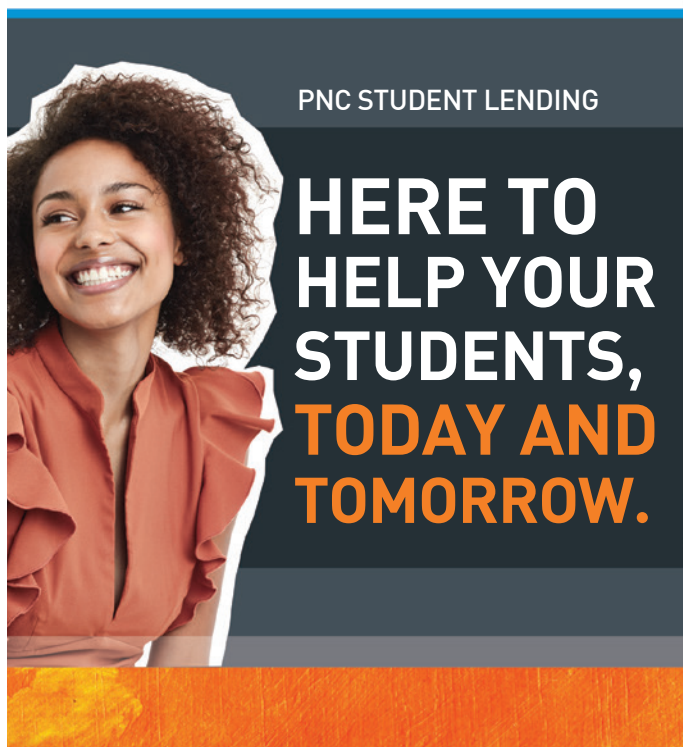
I've definitely been one to say "no" a lot and defer signing up for all the extra things we get asked to do. But I would say if you're thinking about getting involved, come on in- the door is wide open!



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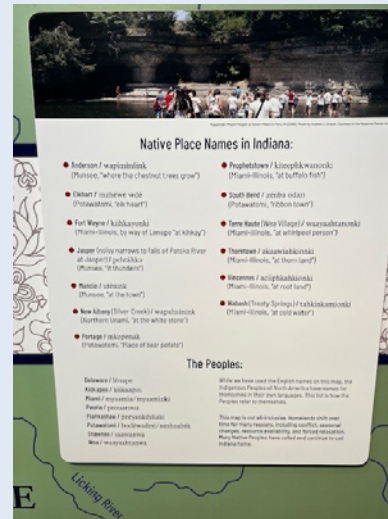
Access, Equity, and Diversity

Indigenous People's Day Celebration

by Amanda Fishman

As member of the Access, Equity, and Diversity committee, I get the opportunity to research, learn, and share information and items that appear on the monthly action newsletter. This past October, I packed up my spouse, and my two very squirmy children and traveled to downtown Indianapolis. There, nestled next to the canal, we visited the [Eiteljorg Museum](#) to participate in their Indigenous People's Day Celebration.

We began the day listening to Storyteller [Perry Ground](#) perform two stories for us. He was magnificent at detailing how the earth was created, which turned out to be a massive part of his own tribe's culture, and how a very sneaky coyote, stole the stars in the sky. From there we spent an hour wandering and exploring the museum itself. The boys enjoyed many of the tactile, visual, and audio hands-on learning opportunities in each of the exhibits, spending the most time at the beading table. If beading or pattern making is not your thing, my personal favorite was the audio experiences. Throughout the museum, there are recordings of native speakers telling their family's story or reading curated lines of text in their native language. We ended our visit by watching traditional native dances performed



by different tribe members. These dances were beautiful expressions of the dancer's tribe's history and culture and if you have not had a chance to see it in person, I would highly recommend it.

While Indigenous People's Day was

a fun for all, rest assured that you have not missed out. You can visit the Eiteljorg, the Indiana State Museum, or other historical indigenous sites around our state (Angel Mounds, Prophetstown State Park, Mounds State Park, etc.) to learn more about this vibrant culture. Even better-Check out the Access Equity and Diversity's Committee's Monthly Action Newsletter for other opportunities to challenge your norm and learn more about the uniqueness that makes our lives and communities so great.

Exploring the topic of Representation with Brandi Miller...

by Monique Ware



Brandi Miller

After the Access, Equity, and Diversity Committee read the article "Representation Matters" in the MASFAA July newsletter, they decided to invite the author, Brandi Miller from Drake University, to talk to the ISFAA community. The virtual

presentation on November 8 was hosted in the effort to help bring awareness of what representation in the workforce can do and how to encourage and support diversity within the workplace.

Brandi brought a fresh and relevant perspective to the financial aid lens through her 22 years of dedication within the financial aid field. Her overall positive energy, along with her narrative and understanding of navigating the financial aid world when she often was the only voice or one of a small group of diverse voices helped convey the need that there is within the financial aid space.

Are you a part of the MASFAA Listserv? Keep up to date on events like this from the Access, Equity, and Diversity Committee as well as other ISFAA Happening. Visit [ISFAA.org](#) and update your profile to say "Yes" to receiving ISFAA Listserv messages.

2023 MASFAA Annual Conference in Indianapolis!



OCTOBER 22-25 INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA



Committee Spotlight: Leadership Symposium and Mentoring

The Leadership Symposium Committee and the New Professional & Mentoring Committee are working together to create a unique opportunity to help our members learn to be the great leaders they are meant to be.

Every other year, the Leadership Symposium Committee gathers future leaders for an all-day workshop. This year, our president charged us with making more of an impact in leadership development. With that charge, the committee agreed to a series of relevant topics, sent out applications, and we are halfway through!

We planned to cover a wide range of topics over the span of a few months. So far we've discussed mentoring and networking, we've heard from Justin Draeger and Rachel Rotunda about the importance of involvement and networking, and recently we took the Clifton Strengths finder test and discussed with a specialists on how to best use our strengths.

Coming up for the group, we will hear about Imposter Syndrome and round out the series with a discussion on

how to lead others, even if you are not the leader just yet.

This year the Mentoring Committee has been working to create a program for new professionals to partner-up with another professional that has been in the profession for a few years, and are willing to share their expertise. We saw an opportunity to collaborate between committees and offer a mentoring component to the leadership series. Although it was not mandatory for the participants to have a mentor, we now have a sizeable group that have been matched and are beginning their meetings with their mentors.

We all understand the importance of training and development, especially now with all the changes in our field. This is a great opportunity for members to learn leadership skills necessary to thrive in our financial aid office.

If you are interested in joining the mentoring program, please watch the ISFAA Listserv for details on how to join the next group or email President@isfaa.org.

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Volunteer Today! - College Goal Sunday: February 25th, 2024

Now in its' 35th year, College Goal Sunday is looking for volunteers to help at events across the state on **February 25th, 2024**. Volunteer Registration is now open and we are looking forward to having you join us to once again give free FAFSA filing help to students and families between 2pm and 4pm (Local Time).

[Click here to Volunteer!](#)

Please volunteer at a College Goal Sunday site near you from about 1pm to 5pm local time. You can volunteer to fill a number of positions that include: FAFSA Expert, General Financial Aid Expert, Setup and Cleanup Crew, and Registration Table Volunteer.

Note: To be guaranteed a College Goal Sunday t-shirt you must complete the volunteer registration form by **January 22nd, 2024**. This year's shirts are available in short or long-sleeve options.



Support ISFAA and Buy a Shirt!

Thank you for being a member of ISFAA. We are so excited to share the news that we've recently partnered with spreadshop to bring ISFAA products into the world. From t-shirts to polos, bags and stickers, you now can order a product with our logo on it and support ISFAA in a whole new way.

Spreadshop is a web-based shop that allows organizations to sell products with our logo on it without having to buy in bulk. You can order a shirt or any product in any style and color they have, and they will add the ISFAA logo. Spreadshop will create the product and ship it directly to you. In turn, our organization makes a small profit on anything we sell.

Please visit our shop today to check it out! isfaa.myspreadshop.com

New



✓ ● ● ● ● +
ISFAA - Men's T-Shirt

New



● ● ● ● ● +
ISFAA - Contrast Coffee Mug

New



✓ ● ● ● ● +
ISFAA - Unisex Crewneck Sweatshirt

Money Smart Tips

by Nina Loesch



Hope this finds you having a great month so far! 'Tis the season where we are thinking about gifts for family and friends, or you could be someone that has all your shopping done. Our minds are racing as we have our checklist and want it all crossed off before December 25th. This is a friendly reminder to “slow” down in December and take time to watch some great Christmas movie classics and know that you will get done all that you need to get done before December 25th and all will be ok!

MONEY TIP:

Keep in mind that the holidays can be more peaceful if you do not try to stay caught up with what you need to buy more of but instead think of what you can do more of (volunteering your time or donating items to local charities in your community). Keep up with the spirit of the holiday season without over-spending!

Upcoming Events

Mon Jan 22, 2024

[ISFAA Leadership Symposium Series](#)

Category: ISFAA Events

Fri Jan 26, 2024

[ISFAA Executive Board Meeting](#)

Category: Executive Board Meeting

Thu Feb 15, 2024

[Working with Autistic Colleagues, What You Need to Know about Neurodiversity and the Workplace" presented by Cecilia Pohs Buckley](#)

Category: ISFAA Events

Mon Feb 26, 2024

[ISFAA Leadership Symposium Series](#)

Category: ISFAA Events

[View Full Calendar](#)

ISFAA.org Website Tip

The [ISFAA.org](https://isfaa.org) website can be used as a resource to find various ISFAA related events and happenings. If you're looking for a specific event or conference, login to [ISFAA.org](https://isfaa.org) and take a look at the “Upcoming Events” tab on the right side.

Looking for additional events? Click “View Full Calendar” and search by date or event type. If you notice something is missing, please reach out to the website committee at website@isfaa.org

Comings and Goings

...and other tidbits of association news

Sue Allmon

Comings

Abby Tremain will start as the Director of Financial Aid for Ivy Tech's Hamilton County campus on December 4th.

Wendell Brown will start as Director of Financial Aid for Ivy Tech's Marion campus on November 27th.

Jordan Niemeier will start as a Veteran and Military Benefits Processor in the Ivy Tech's System Office on November 27th.

Bennet Gallivan started as a Financial Aid Advisor for Ivy Tech's Valparaiso campus on November 20th.

Autumn Fudge started as a Financial Aid Advisor for Ivy Tech's Richmond campus on October 16th.

Elisa Pride started as a Financial Aid Advisor for Ivy Tech's Indianapolis campus on October 8th.

Mike Hamm started as Assistant Director of Financial Aid for Ivy Tech's Kokomo campus on October 9th.

Brenda Marion started as Associate Director of Financial Aid for Ivy Tech's Indianapolis campus on September 18th.

Ashley Sharma was welcomed to the IUPUI staff on November 1st.

Michael Finnell joined the IUPUI Office of Student Financial Services on November 27th and is the Assistant Director for the Law School.

Promotions

Michele Maskell has been promoted to serve as the Financial Aid Systems Architect in Ivy Tech's Systems Office – congrats Michele!!

Laura Vegas and **Sarah Owen** were promoted to serve as Senior Financial Aid Systems Business Analysts in the Ivy Tech's Systems Office. Congrats to both Laura and Sarah!!

Goings

Kristina Delbridge left IUPUI on November 30th to begin her new position at the University of South Florida.

Good News Announcements



Virginia (Ginny) Washington has been with IUPUI for 45 years!! Say what – she must have been 2 when she started working! Congratulations Ginny on this milestone and from all of us you have mentored over the years a heartfelt thank you for your wisdom and kind words.

When asked what is your most powerful positive memory from your time working at IUPUI, Ginny's response was:

My most power memories have been with students, staff and faculty! They have played so many roles in my time here at IUPUI, from heartwarming events, offering smiles at just the right time, and at time being as close as family. I am grateful for all the many connections, celebrations we have shared throughout many professional development events, campus events and community outreach. This is why it is such a meaningful time for me to celebrate 45 years, with my colleagues and friends, but also to say how much you all mean to me. I truly love being a part of the campus staff and all that is "IUPUI"!! As well the many colleagues and friends who I have worked with through ISFAA, MASFAA & NASFAA.

Congratulations Ginny on this milestone and from all of us you have mentored over the years a heartfelt thank you for your wisdom and kind words.

Good News Announcements continued...

Ivy Tech Community College has been hard at work providing learning opportunities for their financial aid staff! They are proud to announce the following persons have earned their FAAC designation:

Kristen Kampfe – 7/27/22

Marty Mehringer – 1/12/23

Kathleen Ramsey – 4/20/23

Casey Trela – 10/12/23

Kelly Lally – 11/2/23

Julie Wonderlin – 11/9/23

Paul Friebus – 11/10/23

Nicole Trice – 11/16/23

Congratulations to one and all! Well-deserved honor!!

Patt McCafferty celebrated her 20th anniversary at Ivy Tech Community College on December 1. She writes, *“Hat tip to Sue Allmon who hired me for the financial aid position in 2003!”*

2024-2025 FAFSA Coming Soon...

**Bits and Bytes**

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