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# College Goal Sunday Helps Families Across Indiana!

The one and only College Goal Sunday for the 2023 – 2024 academic year took place February 25th at 40 sites across Indiana. Not surprisingly, in a year where the form launch was delayed 3 months, and website glitches have been occurring, interest by families for this longtime ISFAA event was high.

Over 500 FAFSA's were filed at College Goal Sunday sites this year with families grateful for the expert assistance in a very interesting year for the form. While the filed forms total is big news, some other event details may be an even bigger story.

98% of survey respondents on the 25th said they found the event helpful, which is almost identical the responses last academic year. Another item of note is that over 740 students attended College Goal Sunday.

The percentage of attendees that are 21st Century Scholars was 30%, which is also almost identical to last academic year.

The only way College Goal Sunday is possible is because of the amazing volunteers. 326 volunteers staffed the 40 sites using their expertise to get the FAFSA filed for attendees. As always, the leadership team is extremely grateful to all who gave up some of their Sunday to make Indiana's largest FAFSA filing event happen.

The final data point of note is the percentage of first-generation students at College Goal Sunday. 50% of the event attendees are first generation students, which is an increase of about 7% from last year.

A big thank you to every volunteer, to counselors throughout Indiana who posted promotional materials, and others who got the word out about College Goal Sunday in so many ways. Hopefully there will not be a delayed FAFSA in the fall, but either way we know College Goal Sunday is up to the challenge!







### President's Perspective

I can't believe my year is wrapping up. It's gone by so quickly, but looking back we've gotten so much accomplished. I am so grateful to have had this experience and been able to serve with a board full of wonderful friends and financial aid colleagues. This year has been a year where we've examined different ways to support our membership, strengthen our association, and advocate for our students. Just like the FAFSA, not everything has been smooth sailing or worked out as we had hoped, but we have embraced the challenges and moved the needle forward.

Over the last couple of years, the board has been exploring the possibility of moving towards an institutional membership model. The hope is that by opening up membership to everyone within an institution we could provide access to important professional resources and development opportunities to those who may not have otherwise been able to become members. At our business meeting during the conference. I am excited to share with you the proposal that has come from the years of research and lessons learned from our colleagues across our region and at the NASFAA level. The board has been exploring changes to our by-laws, as we look at moving towards institutional membership and creating an official Policy & Procedure manual for ISFAA. These crucial elements will be shared comprehensively during

the conference, underscoring our commitment to transparent governance and effective organizational structure.

Recently our Nominations, Elections, and Awards committee sent out a vote for our special election to vote an incoming President-Elect. This special election was to fill the vacancy that is being left from Alex DeLonis's departure from Indiana. While Alex is leaving the great state of Indiana after being involved in ISFAA for many years, we wish him and his family all of the best as they move to St. Louis. Alex contributed to ISFAA in many ways and served on our board in various positions. His leadership, collaboration, dedication, and friendship is something I am very grateful for (in addition to his contagious laugh)! While the shoes may be big, we must still fill them, which is why I want to remind everyone to vote! As mentioned before we will have several items that we will need to vote on after the conference and will likely be holding another special election to fill a vacancy in the treasurer position once our president-elect candidate has been chosen. As members, voting is an instrumental part of having a voice in the governance and future of our organization and I hope that you will cast your vote when the time comes!

Looking ahead to the next couple of weeks I am blown away by the record number of conference registrations we have. Moving the



Megan Watson

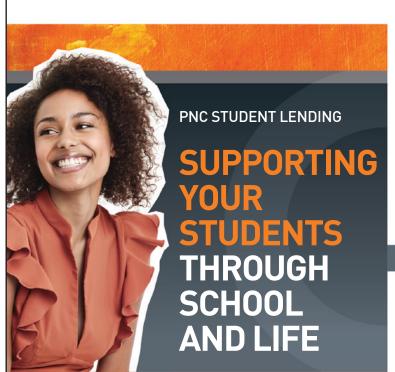
l am so grateful to have had this experience and been able to serve with a board full of wonderful friends and financial aid colleagues.

conference to a new location and the news of not being able to receive ISIR's until mid-March made me nervous. However, I am hopeful that the agenda planned will provide members with timely updates and allow opportunities to network with our sponsors, who will surely have lots of support and resources to share with us. Our NASFAA colleagues will be in attendance and sharing all the information they have.

Lastly, I want to highlight all of the wonderful people that have volunteered this year. Without our volunteers our association would not be as strong as it is. I am excited to hand the gavel off to Ron at the conference and welcome his incoming board members. In order for our association to remain strong in the coming years we must continue to

invest in our new professionals and ourselves. I encourage anyone who is new to our profession to get involved, meet others, and join our welcoming ISFAA community. The volunteer form is on our website and our committee chairs are eager to connect with anyone who would like to join in on the fun. I think we all deserve a little fun as we navigate this unprecedented time in financial aid.

Thank you ISFAA for trusting me as your leader. It's been a year of challenges, growth, and excitement and I am humbled to be able to serve alongside so many dedicated financial aid professionals across the state. I am looking forward to connecting with everyone at the conference.



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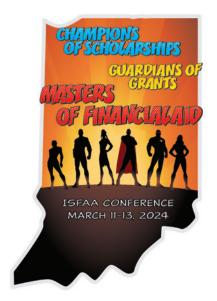
### ISFAA Conference Preview

#### **Greetings ISFAA Heroes!**

The program committee has worked hard to create a heroic conference for you. The annual ISFAA conference is just a few weeks away, from Monday, March 11th - Wednesday, March 13th. The conference theme is "Financial Aid Superheroes: Champions of Scholarships, Guardians of Grants, and Masters of Financial Aid".

On Monday, March 11th, the day will start at 9 am with the optional pre-conference trainings presented by the ISFAA training committee. If you feel like you could improve your superpowers, take your pick of Verification, SAP, or Safe Zone Training courses. Completing one of these trainings can earn you a NASFAA credential. Starting at 10:00 a.m., the site committee will open the registration table. You can check in at noon to visit the vendor booths and talk with colleagues. As always, be prepared for the opportunity to bid on the various Pat Wilson Scholarship silent auction items!

The conference will officially begin at 1:00 p.m. with ISFAA's president, Megan Watson, lifting off the conference. We then will learn about Keeping the Flame Burning: Addressing Wellness and Self-care with James Richter, Director of Clinical Services at Sandra Eskenzai Mental Health Center, followed by



multiple breakout sessions for you to choose from. The day will end with the ISFAA President's Reception. You'll want to stick around for heavy hors d'oeuvres, cold drinks, good conversation, and Musical Bingo!

Tuesday starts our ISFAA Superhero Day (wear your favorite ISFAA or Superhero Swag) with our keynote speaker, Catherine Matthews, from Indiana University, who will help you focus on your superpowers so you can combat your supervillains! Don't have any ISFAA Swag? Order yours today through the ISFAA Shop located on the website. We will offer several quality breakout sessions, from fraud in higher education to FAFSA Simplification and even questions about federal program reviews, to name a few.

On Wednesday, our School Spirit Day will start with a general session on Staying in Love with Financial Aid by Helen Faith, NASFAA National Chair. After the general session, there will be a heroic variety of additional breakout sessions throughout the morning. Finally, we will hear from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and receive closing remarks from the ISFAA President and President-elect. This is a brief, super-speed overview of the conference agenda and only a few of the great sessions and presenters we have arranged for you all.

So please join us for the state's largest gathering of financial aid superheroes at the Renaissance Hotel in Carmel, IN, on March 11-13, 2024! Additional details, including registration info, agenda, and full program, can be found on the conference website, www.isfaa.org/conference.

We look forward to seeing all of you heroes there!

2024 ISFAA Program Committee **Brandon Kuntz** Deb Gossman Holli Hunter Karen Louis



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### President Elect's Perspective

So, does anyone have anything interesting to share about financial aid, it's been fairly quiet, hasn't it? We as financial aid administrators just continue to prove how resilient we are. The last few years between COVID shutdowns, HEERF awarding and reporting, now the elusive 2024-25 ISIRs, we prove we can handle hard things and just keep being there to serve our students.

As I wrap up my long tenure as President-Elect (I think it will be two months as of the ISFAA conference) I know I have a real challenge ahead of me to continue the astounding work done by the current President, Executive Board, Committee Chairs and Committees. We will work to continue to strengthen the association, and that cannot be done without our volunteers!

It wasn't until I left Indiana and the association for a few years in 2020 and 2021 that I realized how much I would miss my involvement with ISFAA. The dedication of all the volunteers. is simply amazing! I believe it was two days after I started my position at Purdue Fort Wayne in November of 2021 that I found an email in my inbox from Kelly McGuire inviting me to return to the Pat Wilson Scholarship Committee.

As I come to the beginning of my term as President, I want to first thank Megan for her leadership this past year! Megan has strived to help every committee! Also, she tried to ensure committee volunteers understood their volunteerism and time was appreciated,

and that these commitments were meant to be a one-year commitment.

This year, with all the craziness in this ever-evolving world of financial aid, I would like focus on reminding ourselves why we do what we do. Whether that means working in financial aid, serving on an ISFAA committee, board etc. First and foremost, we are in this industry to serve our students. As we already know this is going to be and has been a challenging year for our offices, but take a moment to step into the shoes of our students. These are students just finishing up their senior year of high school in many cases. They are excited about high school careers, and have been accepted to a college or university, but they are still questioning how they will pay for it. Just as our offices, these students and families are in limbo; not knowing how or even if they can afford the institution where they were accepted. When families do finally get the answers they need, their timeline to shift to an alternate school choice will be cut short. With all of this uncertainty students will need to lean on us, and will depend on us to be at our best. While being strong for our students we also cannot forget we will need each other in this industry as well. We are an amazingly strong group of individuals and offices, but we are stronger together!

I look forward to what this year will bring, and I look forward to working with great people focused on students and strengthening our association and industry!



Ron Herrell

We will work to continue to strengthen the association, and that cannot be done without our volunteers!

### Executive Committee Member Focus

### Robert Sommers



**Robert Sommers** 

## 1. Please tell Bits and Bytes about your current position Taylor University

I'm the Executive Director of Financial Aid at Taylor taking the reigns of a wonderful team from my predecessor, Tim Nace, who retired after over 30 years of service to the institution.

### 2. How did get your start in Financial Aid?

I started in the admissions office at IWU after college and after a short stint out of higher education with a technology firm, I was approached by my previous VP about applying for the Director of Financial Aid position at IWU. The position was intriguing, and I enjoyed my previous time in higher education, so I applied. Fortunately, they had hired an experienced financial aid administrator, Lois Kelly, as an Asst. VP, so taking on a novice in the position wasn't as big of a risk. She was an excellent mentor and I'm forever grateful for the opportunity to join this wonderful profession.

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

I'm currently the Public Relations Commissioner, so I have the opportunity to work with great chairs and co-chairs of committees like Website, College Goal Sunday, Make It Real, Newsletter and Counselor Workshops. These committees coordinate a lot of the outreach activities of our association to Indiana families and our high school partners.

# 4. You have been involved with financial aid for 24 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?

Over my long time in this industry, it is easy to remember the student that missed a deadline and lost over \$11,000 in grant

money or the recreation management major that was taking on over \$70,000 in student loan debt. However, I mostly remember the joy of simply helping a student or family with questions about how they are going to pay for education and then walking them through the process. What we do in our profession isn't rocket science, but it is scary, challenging, and confusing to many families. Dealing with finances often shines a light on previously made decisions, whether good or bad, but also provides a wonderful opportunity to support and even change a student's trajectory in life. Many times, we are the unsung heroes removing barriers from the student's path toward completing their degree. A rewarding and satisfying profession for sure.

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

I've had the privilege serving in various capacities as part of ISFAA including chairing the conference site, conference program, sponsorship, membership, and leadership symposium committees but also serving on many other committees to support our students and association. Serving on the executive committee as internal operations commissioner and delegate-at-large in addition to my current commissioner role has afforded me the opportunity to interact with so many of my great colleagues and ISFAA members. We have a wonderful group of financial aid administrators in our association doing awesome work in our profession.

### 6. You joined ISFAA in 2001. Please share your thoughts about the organization after 23 years as a member...

When I think of ISFAA, I think of the members. So many people have impacted my life during my time as an ISFAA member. We're the oldest financial aid association and while we've acted like it at times, we've also adapted and been active in advocating for our students and members. Members have worked diligently to partner with our state commission colleagues to be good stewards of state funds and provide opportunities for students to complete their degree. We're strategically planning for the future while remembering where we've come from and why we do what

we do. Providing opportunities for members to grow in the profession through training and mentorship will be critical to our continued success.

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

The ever-changing environment and the flexibility we have to help students attain their educational goals. Financial aid can be very complex yet also so simple. We have regulations but application varies based on interpretation and a student's situation. We touch so many other areas of the campus and without us, most colleges wouldn't be in business. We can go to work every day and experience something different and impact lives. A great and rewarding profession we work in for sure.

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

Easy answer here - politics. The industry has become so over-regulated and impacted by political agendas that our elected officials and appointed leaders have lost touch with the reality of how to truly help families fund their education wisely and with less debt. We know because we

deal with it every day. FAFSA "Simplification" and financial "transparency" are two blatant examples of this loss of reality. In theory these terms are great but the application of them isn't producing the appropriate outcomes. Most in our profession want to help families understand their obligations and outcomes, simplify the process, and provide access while breaking down barriers, however regulations written from political agendas not practical application are tying our hands and limiting our ability to truly help.

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

I know this is the same message others have said but get involved. Participating in the upcoming conference and getting to know other members helps to begin building your network. It takes time and effort, but you'll find this membership is made up of great people. ISFAA needs active members that want to learn about who we are and where we've come from as an association, while stepping up through volunteering for committees and preparing for a leadership roles. You are what makes ISFAA who we are and who we're going to be.

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### Accessing FAFSA Data in ScholarTrack



The 2024-2025 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has been open for about two months, and many Hoosier students and their parents have already filed. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education (Commission) has heard from high school administrators and counselors around the state who are eager to see which of their students have completed the FAFSA.

However, 2024-2025 FAFSA data for current high school seniors is not yet available. Federal Student Aid (FSA) announced that the Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) needed to populate the FAFSA student data will not be available until mid-March.

#### What can you do until ISIRs become available?

 Check to see if your school has a signed data share agreement on file with the Commission by logging in to ScholarTrack and locating the "Excel Senior FAFSA Completion Report." If you do not see the "Excel Senior FAFSA Completion Report" in ScholarTrack, contact schools@che.in.gov to get a data share agreement signed for your school.

- · Look for the status of "Wrong Year Filed" after running the "Excel Senior FAFSA Completion Report" for the 2024 cohort. Students with a "Wrong Year Filed" status filed the 2023-2024 FAFSA when they need to file the 2024-2025 FAFSA. You can reach out to those students to remind them to file the correct year.
- Work with your Outreach Coordinator to update cohorts for students graduating early so that you will be able to track their FAFSA filing status and FAFSA completion data for your school will be accurate.

Once the Commission receives ISIRS and can start populating FAFSA student data, the Commission will send out an update via email and CounselorTalk. Emails from the Commission's K-12 team and the ScholarTrack system come from a @che.in.gov domain. Additional reminder emails come from @subscriptions.in.gov.

Please encourage your school to safelist these email domains so you and your students can receive important information about filing the FAFSA and requirements for 21st Century Scholars. If you haven't already, please subscribe to the Commission's email listserv.

Additionally, the Commission will update its <u>FAFSA</u> Completion Dashboard once ISIRs are received. This can be expected around mid-to-late March.



### 2024 NASFAA Conference

Thousands of student aid professionals from across the nation attend the NASFAA national conference each year to teach, learn, network, and share best practices.

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Brian McDonie

Thank you to our February 2024 College Goal Sunday Volunteers! We hope to see you again at our next event!







**Brittney Chesher** Brooke Kile Bryana Slisher Caleb Fendrich Calvin Hopple Candice Sutliff Caribia Coleman Carly Cox Carol Almas Carolyn Weaver Carrie Jackson Cathy Dedmon Chanda Rodski Charlene Shivers Charles Cameron **Charlette Sauders** Charmaine O'Quinn Chelsea Moorer Chelsi Stallings Chris Fresch Christa Clark Christopher Enstrom **Christy Tollett** Cindi Sabo-Jones Claire Nagel Claudia Herbst Claudia Saenz Claudia Valladolid Clay Adams Colby Shank Cordell Chenault Cory Like Cory Martens Courtney Althoff Courtney Knauff Cyndi Lang Cynthia Griggs Cynthia Murphy Daana Young

Danielle Runda

Danielle Taylor Danielle Zink Danny Enciso Dara Bishop **Darnell Ross** Datreena Anthony David Reseigh **Deb Watkins** Debbie Harding **Deborah Woods** Deloris Rochester Denise Ndukwu **Dennis Tedrow** Derry Ebert Desmond Delgado Dianna Case Diava Carter Donette Cassman **Donna Bevington** Donna Ring **Donny Mimms** Dr. Dorothy Frink Dr. Verleaish Jones Drhea **Dusty Burwell** Ed Ertel Elaine C Yednak Elaine Parrish Elani Temple Elisa Pride Elizabeth Moffett **Emily Hutsell Emily Tingle Emily Tomak Emily Tran** Erin Addington Esthela O'Neill Ezalea Allen Gabrielle Madison **Garnet Tipton** 











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Zachery Berrier

### Money Smart Tips

by Nina Loesch, Ivy Tech Community College - Columbus

Are you ready for spring and having a new money mindset? Remember that money mindset takes time to change.

Try to think of a trip you would like to take or something you have been wanting for your home. You are in control of your money so you can plan to make things happen. Just takes patience and perseverance.

#### **Money Tips:**

Below are ideas on ways to save:

- 1) Order groceries ahead so you do not sway from your list and only get what you truly need.
- 2) Save coins in a jar, and put some in each day and when you have a lot, take the jar to the bank and you can put the money in savings.
- 3) If you enjoy eating out, try to order appetizers or split an entrée with your dining companion.
- 4) Anytime you have a \$5 bill, put it in a piggy bank and put it away and out of sight. Just keep adding to this and you will be able to save towards a goal that you have. (Idea taken from SoFi Learn)



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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.

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### ISFAA.org Website Tip

Searching for something on <a href="ISFAA.org">ISFAA.org</a>? Have you checked out the "Member Services" tab? This tab shares links to things like the Directory Search, Admin Services (reimbursement forms), access to minutes from the most recent ISFAA meetings, and resources from the Access, Equity, and Diversity committee. Take a minute to click around the Member Services tab and explore.

### Comings and Goings

### ...and other tidbits of association news .....

#### Sue Allmon

#### Comings

Katie Galloway has joined the financial aid office of IU Fort Wayne as the new Financial Services Representative.

Ivy Tech Lake County welcomed Brandy Bynum, a new Financial Aid Advisor on December 4, 2023. Brandy comes to Ivy Tech with over 10 years of customer service experience.

A Wendell Brown III is now the Financial Aid Director at Ivy Tech - Marion campus.

Abby Tremain is now the Financial Aid Director at Ivy Tech - Hamilton County campus.

Elisa Pride joined the Ivy Tech – Indianapolis campus as a Financial Aid Advisor.

Autumn Fudge is the new Financial Aid Advisor at Ivy Tech - Richmond campus.

Bonnie Neuhouser joined lvy Tech - Wayne/Warsaw on October 23, 2023, as a Financial Aid Advisor.

Rachel Mitchell became the new Assistant Director of Financial Aid for the Ivy Tech Wayne/Warsaw campus on February 12, 2024.

#### **Transitions**

But wait - Stan Werne, recently retired from Vincennes University will now be working part-time as a financial aid counselor working out of the VU Jasper campus. I knew he couldn't quit us cold turkey!

Jordan Niemeier changed roles from a Financial Aid Advisor at Ivy Tech – Evansville to a Veteran and Military Benefits Processor.

Matt Nettleton, formerly the assistant vice president at Inceptia has become the Director of Financial Aid for Grace College and Seminary.

Nathan Lohr is transitioning north, leaving University of Indianapolis to become the Director of Financial Aid at Wabash College.

Kevin Marier is rejoining Ivy Tech as a Financial Aid Business Analyst. He formerly worked with Ivy Tech as a Community Outreach Coordinator. Kevin has also served as a high school teacher and at Marian University as a financial aid assistant director.

Derek Welp is joining Ivy Tech team as a Financial Aid Systems Quality Assurance Analyst. Derek is coming to Ivy Tech from the University of Southern Indiana where he served as a financial aid counselor.

#### **Promotions**

Brandon Kuntz has been promoted to the Assistant Director of Financial for IU Fort Wayne.

**Tene Jones** has been promoted to Associate Director of Financial Aid for the Ivy Tech-Indianapolis campus.

#### Goings

Kristina Delbridge left IU Fort Wayne for the sunshine and warmth of Tampa. Florida where she is the Assistant Director of Financial Aid for Athletics and Compliance at the University of South Florida.

Alex DeLonis has left the building! Alex is moving westward to become the Assistant Vice President Student Financial Services for Saint Lous University.

#### Retirements

Stan Werne, Director of Financial Aid for Vincennes University is retiring from the director's position on March 18, 2024. He says this has nothing to do with 2024-2025 FAFSA complications. He states "I've been saying for several years now that I might retire soon. Well, I'm taking the leap."

#### **Good News Announcements**

Ivy Tech Community College celebrated Financial Aid Day in October with lunches and other events across the Ivy Tech campuses. Here are a couple of pictures from the Financial Aid Day celebrations.



Lake County campus



South Bend campus

#### **Deaths**

It is with a heavy heart that we announce that **Tammy Robbins** Director of Financial Aid, Ivy Tech Anderson campus passed away on February 18, 2024.



Bits and Bytes

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