Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (Simplification and Higher Education Regulations)

A "Washington Update" from the federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (ACSFA).

Budget Woes

In a time of complex budget challenges – for us as financial aid professionals, our colleagues in other student service areas as well as academics and ultimately our students – how do we make due with what we have? Should it be business as usual or is now the time to become innovative and affect change in the way we serve students? We have assembled a panel of your peers to discuss what they are doing to maintain a high level of service with limited resources and a growing student base. Join us for an inspiring discussion in this difficult time.

Cal Grants

TBD

Case Managing Financial Aid: Are You Serious!?

Students can receive financial aid from a myriad of financial aid sources, such as Title IV, EOPS/CARE, CalWORKs, TRIO, and special grants. In this session, presenters will share how they work with the financial aid office to ensure that the funding their programs provide students augments financial aid packages while avoiding duplication of services and over awarding by using a case management approach.

Chancellor's Office

TBD

Counseling Students to Effectively Manage Finances

We've condensed information from a trusted financial counseling certification program to help you learn how to better counsel students about their personal finances – whether you have five minutes or an hour. Help students recognize how their values relate to their financial behaviors. Find out how fairy tales can enhance student and counselor interaction!

Customer Service – The Other Side of the Counter

As customer service professionals, we receive lots of training from other customer service professionals about how to work with students and best serve their needs. In this session, we get to hear from the students – what are their needs, what information is really helpful, what do we do well and what can we improve. Join a conversation with a panel of students who will give us a candid view of what everything looks like and sounds like from the other side of the counter.

Debit Card Options

A number of California Community Colleges are issuing financial aid to students using debit cards rather than checks. Hear from colleagues who have implemented the debit card solution and weigh the benefits of one system over another.

Ethics in Financial Aid

In the aftermath of the student loan scandals, what constitutes a "conflict of interest" for the financial aid professional? Does a move to Direct Lending mean that you no longer have to worry about professional ethics? What kind of decision would you make in an ethical dilemma? This session will review some of the recent issues and provide some case-study discussion.

FAFSA Changes for 2010-11

Ever catch yourself making assumptions about the FAFSA based on what you know about the 2009-10 version? With the large number of changes that will be taking effect for the 2010-11 year, you may not want to make that mistake. This session will not only cover all of the changes that have been made in both the paper and Web versions, but also all of the recent and future Web enhancements that will make things easier for your students and keep you from scratching your head.

FAM – Birds of a Feather

Round table discussion on the issues, concerns, hints and tricks Banner, PowerFAIDS, PeopleSoft and Datatel users have to share.

FFELP to Direct Loan Transition

A panel of colleagues who have transitioned to Direct Loans will facilitate the discussion of FFELP to Direct Loan transition. Schools will discuss their transition plan, organization changes, coordination and planning with IT, changes to publications and Web sites, and their overall communication plan to students and parents.

Identifying Fraud on Your Campus

Ever wonder if you have financial aid fraud happening on your campus that you are unaware of? What are some of the warning signs that would point to a potential problem related to financial aid fraud? In this session a panel of financial aid administrators will share their experiences dealing with financial aid fraud schemes as well as tips for identifying potential fraud schemes on your campus. You will also have an opportunity to discuss your concerns about fraud issues on your campus and learn from some financial aid administrators who have "been there, done that."

Identity Theft

This session will provide real-life cases on Identity Theft involving federal student aid. The ED Office of Inspector General will give an overview of current regulations and steps to avoid identity theft on your campus. Find out what you may not know about identity theft and how to become vigilant about protecting your students and yourself.

In-reach Strategies Panel

Now that many schools are filling up, classes are full, waiting lists are long and staffs are short, how do we best serve students? At a time when enrollments are up and recruitment is not as much of an issue, we now turn to the students who are here – ensuring that they have knowledge and access to all services that are available and that they qualify for. This session will explore some best-practices in reaching in to our students to be sure that they have access to the resources they need.

Integrating the Financial Aid Office with Other Departments

We have fewer staff, less funding and more students with greater needs. Are we really expected to do that much more with this much less? This session will take a look at how we can coordinate financial aid offices with other departments to serve more students with fewer resources. Since we serve many of the same students as several categorical programs (EOP&S, DSP/S, CalWORKs, etc.), we can examine how to combine forces and do more with less.

Managing Cohort Default Rates

This session will highlight default prevention initiatives to assist schools in managing their cohort default rate (CDR) and offer insights about the benefits for schools with low default rates and the consequences of higher default rates. Attendees will learn how a school's CDR is calculated and how the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) has impacted CDRs, including how the shift from a 2-year to a 3-year calculation has influenced CDRs.

Office Efficiencies – Facilitated Best Practices Session

Share tips for creative, innovative or just plain common-sense efficiencies that people have implemented to deal with increased student applications and effects of the current budget situation in financial aid offices on your campus. Sometimes hard times make for great opportunities for needed changes! Join us to share and hear specific challenges faced, what has been or could be done to offset them, or concerns you'd like to throw out to the crowd.

Professional Judgment: the Ups and Downs of EFCs and Loan Award Amounts

The application of professional judgment (PJ) is one in which we, as aid professionals, have some latitude in applying regulations to benefit students who have unusual circumstances or who have dire needs. PJ can only be applied in specific areas, though. Have you embraced the concept of PJ in your work and in your office? Come to this session to find out what you can do, share what you already do, and see if you learn something new!

R2T4 Best Practices

Hear and discuss ways to handle R2T4 in your office. Items discussed will be: we know why but when do we do it, problems, hints, software used, and audience concerns.

Rejection, Verification, and Frustration!
How the Aid Application Process Keeps Students

Approximately 100,000 eligible students in the California Community Colleges apply for aid but do not receive it. Now more than ever, we need to do all we can to ensure that available financial aid reaches the students who need it most. Last year, we introduced our research on the FAFSA application process, with the goal of learning where and why students fall through the cracks. Having now analyzed data from 13 California Community Colleges, we will be previewing our findings at the CCCSFAAA conference. Come find out what we discovered and what the implications are for policy and practice.

Responding to Conflicts: Strategies for Dealing with People on the Edge

This session will help financial aid office staff learn communication and stress management tips for identifying and dealing effectively with staff, students and parents during these tough economic times.

The Changing Landscape of Financial Literacy Programs for College Students

Developing a financial literacy program is on the top of many financial aid administrator's agenda for 2009-10. Why? Perhaps, it is the unprecedented level of interest from students. Or maybe it is the significant investment in literacy programs envisioned by proposed legislation. Tim Ranzetta of Student Lending Analytics will share survey data to describe the current state of financial literacy programs, identify key elements of successful programs and highlight resources available to assist students in making better economic decisions.

Verification

At least 30% of your financial aid applicants must complete the verification process to receive federal financial aid. Verification policies are not all created equal. Financial aid directors have options. This session will teach you some of those options and talk about completion of verification. On the other hand, all of your financial aid files must be free of conflicting data. What's the difference? At the end of this session, you will know the answer.

Veterans: Changes and Outreach

Not only do we have an increasing number of veterans on our campuses, we can expect more to come as the war in Iraq winds down. This session on veterans will cover three main issues: GI Bill certification, veterans' transitional issues, and a discussion as to what our campuses can do to help veterans readjust to campus life.

What is Direct Lending?

This overview is intended to provide introductory-level information to staff new to the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program as well as for those who may be interested in learning more about the program. Topics covered: the roles of each participant in the Direct Loan program—schools, students and FSA; the basic steps involved in the Direct Lending process—loan origination, master promissory note processing, funding and disbursement, monthly reconciliation, year-end closeout, and the various options available to schools in each step of the process. Borrower benefits and the resources and support available to both schools and students are also discussed.

Year-Round Pell Grant

This session will cover recent budget and policy issues affecting the Federal Pell Grant Program. The session will highlight issues related to the payment of "two Pell grants in an award year," duration of student eligibility, and ineligibility due to civil commitment. It will also include discussions regarding students whose parents have died in Iraq and Afghanistan and these students' eligibility for Federal Pell Grants and for other programs, including the new Afghanistan and Iraq Service Grants.