



WASFAA Highlights is a monthly electronic news update provided by the WASFAA President for the benefit of the WASFAA membership. The electronic publication will contain informational items pertaining to WASFAA activities and newsworthy items of interest to the WASFAA community. Past issues are archived on the WASFAA website at <http://www.wasfaa.org>. Additional information regarding any given issue may be obtained by emailing the current WASFAA President, Tami Sato, at tsato@scco.edu.

WASFAA Highlights for the Month of September, 2006 - (Vol. 2, No. 6)

- Fall Conference time is here and many WASFAA states have been busy with preparations for their big event. I just returned from the ALASFAA Conference with an agenda with a definite feline theme. They had sessions called "How to Herd Cats" (VA/FA Update) and "High Cost of Kitty Litter" (Cash Management). An impressive session brought the financial aid administrators attending the conference together for round table discussions with students and their parents from a nearby high school. Janet Dodson, NASFAA Chair gave the keynote address and provided facts on higher education and our entering freshman class. Most of these students were born in 1984 and in their world view a Southerner has always been U.S. President, they grew up in minivans and Hip-Hop and rap have always been a popular musical forms. See the whole Class of 2006 Mindset List at http://www.beloit.edu/~pubaff/releases/mindset_2006.html
- How did you provide Constitution Day on your campus? At my college we provided each student with a pocket booklet of the Constitution, held a trivia contest with awards that included a quilt made by our Student Affairs Vice-President and passes to the nearby Nixon Library. Let me know how your campus fulfilled this requirement and we can share ideas in a newsletter article.
- Talk about requirements, did you know that we are required to make an effort to distribute voter registration forms to each student for general and special elections for federal office, including the election for governor, or other chief executive within a state? You can provide the actual voter registration materials or information on online sites. Check out a new site at www.declareyourself.org that can assist students. There is only a short time left to register for the November elections.
- What's new at WASFAA? Well we have a new brochure that can be used to let others know what WASFAA is all about: our mission, core values, membership benefits, beginnings and training activities. Photos of some WASFAA members were taken by Peter Miller. I will be distributing brochures as I visit the state conferences but if you would like to receive one either electronically or in paper, let me or Membership Chair, Wendy Olson know. Kudos to Wendy for taking the lead on this project.
- The WASFAA/NASFAA Fall Training workshops will be held from late October to December. The broad topic is verification and will cover issues relating to the EFC formula & HERA changes, conflicting information, resolution of findings and a policies and procedures template demonstration. On top of that there will be time set for an ACG and National SMART grant discussion. You can get more detailed information on the content and materials you will receive at <http://www.nasfaa.org/AnnualPubs/FT06/index.html>. Look for an announcement soon with details on dates and locations.
- Some of the WASFAA/NASFAA Fall Training sites will be coordinated with the "Having Fun with Personal Taxes" workshops sponsored by Nelnet. Jim Briggs will share his expertise on tax returns as it relates to the student aid application process. Hope you will have the opportunity to attend both training events.

- A new report calls for new partnerships to end financial barriers to college. The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance gives six broad policy initiatives in its report, "Mortgaging Our Future: How Financial Barriers to College Undercut America's Global Competitiveness". One policy would reduce the financial barriers to transfer from two-year to four-year colleges and another would restrain increases in the price of college and offsetting the increases with need-based aid. The report argues that fiscal barriers will prevent between 1.4 million and 2.4 million college-qualified students from earning bachelor's degrees during the current decade. The complete report is at www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/mof.pdf
- Ending multiple years of a decreasing cohort default rates, the federal guaranteed student loan program rate increased to 5.1% for FY 2004. This is a bit higher than the all-time low of 4.5% in FY 2003. You should have received your notice electronically this month. There are 26 million borrowers with \$391 billion in outstanding FFEL and DSL loans.
- Well the big new this month seemed to be the speech by U.S. secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. She laid out an action plan for higher education that will call for the creation of a controversial database to track students' academic progress, simplify the FAFSA, increase spending on need-based student aid, and more accountability for colleges, particularly on rising costs. This was in response to recommendations in the report from the Commission on the Future of Higher Education which called for restructuring "the entire student financial aid system." Ms. Spellings said that she looked forward to teaming up with Congress again to improve the financial aid process. NASFAA has responded that they believe the current Title IV student aid programs are effective, but lack sufficient federal investment.
- Ms. Spellings has already taken some steps to put the recommendations from the commission's report into effect. She announced that the series of regional public hearings will include discussions on how these recommendations can be adopted administratively. Following these hearings, the department will begin using the negotiated rule-making process to carry out the commission's recommendations, as well as changes contained in HERA, a deficit-reduction bill that passed in February. In negotiated rule-making, federal agencies work with affected parties as rules are drafted. Patricia Hurley will be a part of the team representing our school view.