A round blue and white logo with palm trees and a beach

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2025 KASFAA Conference

April 2nd~4th, 2025

Manhattan, Kansas

“Island Getaway”

From the President

Welcome to the 2025 annual spring KASFAA Conference and welcome to Manhappiness or the Little Apple as we locals may call it! I am excited to host this year’s conference in my hometown. Vanessa Flipse and Cherish Calovich, conference co-chairs, along with the conference planning committee, have worked hard to create this year’s conference. Hopefully, you will find sessions and speakers that encourage, engage, and energize you.

I’d like to extend a warm welcome to our special guests and speakers. Tom Starr is our keynote speaker and will bring a message about perseverance and remembering your “why.” Karen McCarthy, NASFAA vice president, will join us virtually to provide important updates and help us get a pulse on the happenings in Washington, which is especially relevant as the financial aid world continues to experience significant change. Justin Chase Brown is the RMASFAA president and will share the work being done across the Rocky Mountain region. Justin will also be leading a session on Policy and Procedures you will want to check out! Becky McAllister is our visiting RMASFAA State Swap delegate and is the director of financial aid at Eastern Wyoming College. Michelle Arellano, director of student financial assistance at KBOR, will provide the state update and a session on the Kansas Promise Act.

As we reflect on what the past year and half has brought, it is marked by our collective resiliency and tenacity. We could not be on this side of the monumental changes that FAFSA Simplification brought if it was not for each other. Together we are stronger. I encourage you all to create new connections, strengthen existing connections, to find the tie that binds, to find that person you can call on when you have a question, because this is what makes KASFAA great. It is our people. It is the friendships created.

I leave you with that challenge. Build your connections as you visit with our associate members to learn about the services they provide, as you mingle with colleagues in sessions, and as you engage with others in the hallways. The benefits of those connections are waiting for you.

A person smiling at the camera

AI-generated content may be incorrect.If you have any questions while you’re at the conference, please seek out a conference planning committee member, a board member, or me! We would be happy to help you and would love to make a new connection!

Tanya McGee

KASFAA President, 2024-2025

KASFAA “Island Getaway” 2025

Welcome to the Spring Conference Program! You will need to print a copy to bring with you if you would like a hard copy while at the conference. The following are a few things we wanted to share with you.

* Presentation handouts are available on the Conference Site for you to download or print in advance of the Conference.
* Dress for the Conference is casual or business casual.
* The Conference headquarters is located behind registration. If you have an emergency, please report it to the Registration area, or the hotel front desk.
* Please wear your KASFAA name badge to all Conference sessions and functions. KASFAA reuses the badge holders/lanyards, so please return your name badge to the Registration area prior to leaving the Conference.
* Complimentary wi-fi will be available in the Conference area and hotel rooms. Passwords will be provided at Conference check-in.
* Please be respectful with electronic devices. Silence all electronic devices during sessions. Do not record any session without advance permission from the presenter(s).
* Breakfast will be provided on Thursday and Friday morning. Commuters will need to register for breakfast if they intend on joining.
* Session evaluations will be completed online. There will be an evaluation for each session, as well as the overall Conference.
* The Corporate Development Committee will be holding the annual fundraiser, with Summer Institute Scholarships as the beneficiary. Please consider donating a raffle item and/or purchasing raffle tickets to win the great items that are donated!
* Scavenger Hunt! We are having a fun scavenger hunt around the great city of Manhattan, your scavenger hunt guide is in your Welcome bag. All the items can be found within walking distance of the Hilton Garden Inn and there are no items past the 6th and Poyntz Avenue. Win a $100, $50 or $25 gift card! Also, everyone who completes the Scavenger Hunt receives a free wine or beer ticket for Thursday night’s cash bar!

A sincere thank you to all who helped make this Conference a success! The Conference Planning Committee hopes you enjoy yourself at the KASFAA Island Getaway!

Hotel Information

Hilton Garden Inn

410 S. 3rd Street

Manhattan, Kansas 66502

785-532-9116

Conference Registration – Conference Entry Hallway

Vendor Area-Preconvene Hallway

Large Group Sessions – Kaw Nation/Big Basin

Breakout Sessions – Konza Prairie A, Konza Prairie B, Konza Prairie C, McDowell, Tuttle, Alcove

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|  | **Conference Program At A Glance** |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Wednesday, April 2, 2025** | **Room** |
|  |  |  |
| **9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.** | **KASFAA Spring Board Meeting** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
| **9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.** | **Exhibitor Set Up** |  |
| **11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** | **Registration Open** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.** | **Conference Welcome/Keynote Speaker** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
|  | **Opening Skit** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
|  |  |  |
| **2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.** | **Breakout Session 1** |  |
|  | Guide for New FA Professionals (Crystal DeLong) | Tuttle |
|  | Managing Manual Processes in Today's Environment (Arnetta Brown) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | NASFAA U: COA Part 1 (registration required) (Darcy Johnson & Emily Keiter) | McDowell |
|  | Setting Sail: Mastering the Art of Manually Calculating the Student Aid Index (SAI) (Danielle Sullivan) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | Cybersecurity (Dr. Thomas Bunton ~ KSU) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.** | **Snack Break/Visit Exhibitors (Break Sponsored by Cedar Holdings)** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.** | **Breakout Session 2** |  |
|  | Kansas Promise Act ~ KBOR (Michele Arellano, Elaine Frisbie, Tammy Garth) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | Anchored: Finding Peace in Uncertain Times (Rebecca McAlister) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | NASFAA U: COA Part 2 (registration required) (Darcy Johnson & Emily Keiter) | McDowell |
|  | Current Trends in Collections with Agency Panel | Tuttle |
|  | When Your 'Business' Impacts Your 'Business' (Lou Murray) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **5:10 p.m. - 6:10 p.m.** | **Breakout Session 3 ~ Birds of a Feather** |  |
|  | Associate Members | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | Community Colleges and Technical Schools | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | Fiscal Officers | Konza-Prairie C |
|  | Public Schools | Tuttle |
|  | Private Schools | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **6:15 p.m.** | **Dinner on your own** |  |
|  | **Scavenger Hunt Begins** |  |
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|  | **Thursday, April 3, 2025** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **7:30 a.m. - 12:00 a.m.** | **Registration Open** |  |
| **7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.** | **Breakfast Buffet** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
| **7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.** | **Newcomer's Breakfast** | Prairie A |
| **8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.** | **General Session: NASFAA Update ~ Karen McCarthy (Virtual)** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
| **9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.** | **General Session: RMASFAA Update ~ Justin Chase Brown** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
|  |  |  |
| **10:30 a.m. - 10:50 a.m.** | **Snack Break/Visit Exhibitors (Sponsored by Earnest)** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **10:50 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.** | **Breakout Session 4** |  |
|  | Kansas Setoff Program (Jessica Pope) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | Reaching New Heights of Student Support in Financial Aid (Ginger McBride) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | OFA and Scholarships (Tanya McGee) | McDowell |
|  | Is the Customer Always Right? (Julie Finn) | Tuttle |
|  | Creating an Ecology of Validation for Students (Justin Chase Brown) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **11:50 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.** | **Sandwich Lunch Buffet and KASFAA Business Meeting** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.** | **Breakout Session 5** |  |
|  | Ask a Director (like ask a Fed) ~ Panel | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | How to Have Difficult Conversations (Janae Tunley & Angie Zeorlin) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | Gap Financing: Private vs. Plus Loans (Associate Panel) | McDowell |
|  | Verification (Mitzi Suhler) | Tuttle |
|  | Legal Updates & Compliance Insights (Chad Echols) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **2:40 p.m. - 3:40 p.m.** | **Breakout Session 6** |  |
|  | Working with Gen Z (Robb Cummings) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | Compassionate Compliance in SAP (Ginger McBride) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | Maximizing Your Personal Productivity (Justin Pfeifer) | McDowell |
|  | From Policy to Action: Empowering FA Professionals to Advocate for Students (Daisha Holmes) | Tuttle |
|  | Identifying & Supporting Delinquent Loan Borrowers (Chris Campbell) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **3:40 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.** | **Snack Break/Visit Vendors/Vendor Break-down after** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.** | **Breakout Session 7** |  |
|  | Ask an Auditor (Kientz & Penick) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | Thriving in Change (Crystal DeLong) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | R2T4 (Brenda Hicks & Laura Weiss Cook) | McDowell |
|  | Data-Driven Decision Making in FA Leveraging (Karen Goos-KSU) | Tuttle |
|  | Collaboration Between Financial Aid & Student Accounts (Panel) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **5:00 p.m.** | **Cash Bar Opens** |  |
| **5:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.** | **Dinner, Award Banquet and Ceremony** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
|  | **Community Pictures ~ Come meet, greet, and mingle with the groups** |  |
|  | **Board Members ~ Mentors/Mentees, New Members, Retirees** |  |
|  | **KASFAA Game Night (Board and Card Games)** |  |
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|  | **Friday, April 4, 2025** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.** | **Breakfast Buffet** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
|  |  |  |
| **8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.** | **Breakout Session 8** |  |
|  | Making Professional Judgement Calls (Panel) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | Finding Solid Ground: Navigating Gainful Employment (Panel) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | Student Account Data Analytics (Denise Varrientos) | McDowell |
|  | Compliance and VA SCO (Trish Runion) | Tuttle |
|  | Legislative 101 (Brenda Hicks) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **9:40 a.m. - 10:40 a.m.** | **Breakout Session 9** |  |
|  | Mentorship Program (Membership Committee) | Konza-Prairie A |
|  | What Does the Future Hold for KASFAA? (Roundtable/Forum) | Konza-Prairie B |
|  | D.O.E ~ Top 10 Compliance Findings (FSA Training) | McDowell |
|  | Strategies for Student Accounts Outside of Transcripts (Roundtable) | Tuttle |
|  | Department of VA Education Benefits-An Island Tour (Trish Runion) | Alcove |
|  |  |  |
| **10:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.** | **General Session: KBOR Update** | Kaw Nation/Big Basin |
|  | **Closing Skit (Tony, Dori, and Lou)** |  |
|  | **Prize Drawings and Conference Wrap Up** |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | Fiscal Officer Track |  |
|  | Neophyte Track |  |

Wednesday Keynote Speaker

**Meet Tom Starr, our KASFAA Conference 2025 Keynote Speaker!**

**“Guiding Principles for Success, Work-Life Balance and Inner Peace”**

This session will review the four guiding principles that have impacted both Tom’s personal and professional life. His adherence to those concepts throughout his career, in his family setting, and during time spent in the military were key elements in retaining balance, a calm demeanor, and even enjoyment, no matter the situation in which he found himself.

 Tom Starr served as executive director of four different college football post-season bowl games, the only individual to have ever done so. They were the Sun Bowl (El Paso, Texas); Armed Forces Bowl (Fort Worth, Texas); Freedom Bowl (Anaheim, California); and First Responder Bowl (Dallas, Texas). He was co-founder of the latter three. In addition, he also held the title of Sr. Associate Executive Director of the Independence Bowl (Shreveport, Louisiana).

He was twice named College Football Bowl Executive-of-the-Year and received the College Football Bowl Association Legacy Award in 2023. The Armed Forces Bowl Most Valuable Player Award (Starr MVP Trophy) is named in his honor. Prior to his entry into the college bowl business, Tom had a tenure as Service Bureau Director of the Big Eight (presently Big 12) Conference, and once occupied the position of Sports Information Director at Iowa State University.

Starr received a B.A. Degree in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Iowa, and completed his course work for a Master’s Degree in Public Relations at Iowa State University. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame of his prep alma mater, Newton, Iowa High School. Starr is also a graduate of the ESPN School of Business and the U.S. Army Adjutant General School.

An Army Veteran, Starr served a one-year tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam and was the recipient of a Bronze Star Medal, two Joint Service Commendation Medals (with Oak Leaf Cluster), the Republic of Vietnam Service Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (awarded by the South Vietnamese Government), among other honors.

He is the author of “They Never Heard the Final Shot” with a sub-title of “After 50 Years – The Truth About Vietnam,” which was released this past Veteran’s Day.

Tom is married to Cathy (Worsham) Starr, and they reside in Fort Worth, Texas. They have two children, Cherish Calovich and Carter Starr, and grandchildren Zack, Colton, and Mackenzie Calovich, and Lacey Starr.

Wednesday 2:45-3:45 Breakout Sessions

**Breakout Sessions #1**

**Guide for New Financial Aid Professionals** Room: Tuttle

*(Neophyte Track)*

*Presenter: Crystal DeLong, Citizens Bank*

*Moderator: N/A*

There is A LOT to learn as a financial aid administrator and with constantly changing rules and regulations, it’s important to know where to go for the latest information. There is an abundance of training materials and resources available to you and in this session, we will share a list of tools to help you succeed on the job.  You don’t have to HAVE all the answers, but you do need to know where to find them!

**Managing Manual Processes in Today’s Environment** Room: Konza-Prairie A

*(Fiscal Office)*

*Presenter: Arnetta Brown, Transact*

*Moderator: Dell Holden, Cedar Holdings*

Join us for an insightful discussion on the challenges facing bursar offices in today’s higher education landscape. With staffing shortages, increased workloads, and manual processes straining resources, institutions are searching for ways to improve efficiency. This session will explore key pain points in third-party sponsor payment processing and pre-collection activities, highlighting real-world inefficiencies and how automation can help. We’ll also discuss industry trends, vendor solutions, and implementation considerations. Engage with peers, share your experiences, and gain practical insights to streamline your back-office operations.

**NASFAA U: Cost of Attendance Part 1** (reg. required) Room: McDowell

*Trainers: Darcy Johnson & Emily Keiter, Washburn*

*Moderator: N/A*

In this course, you will learn the principles and purposes of the student budget construction process, gain an understanding of how to build student budgets (including sources for setting the value of cost components), learn about the various allowable budget components and restrictions for certain categories of students, and become familiar with budget recalculations and the impact of non-Title IV aid on the cost of attendance. You will receive access to the NASFAA self-study guide as well. You must pre-register and attend all sessions to qualify to take the corresponding NASFAA Professional Credential test.

A person wearing glasses and a necklace

AI-generated content may be incorrect.A person wearing glasses and a black shirt

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**Setting Sail: Mastering the Art of Manually Calculating the Student Aid Index (SAI)** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Presenter: Danielle Sullivan, Johnson County Community College*

*Moderator: Diana VanDyke, Butler Community College*

Embark on a financial aid voyage as we chart the course to mastering the Student Aid Index (SAI). In this hands-on session, you'll learn how to navigate the waters of income assessments, allowances, and tax tables to accurately calculate the SAI manually.

Key Takeaways:

· Breeze through a real-world scenario and map out the components of the SAI formula step by step.

· Understand which components on the FAFSA increase or decrease the SAI.

· Leave equipped to guide students toward their educational horizons with accuracy and expertise!

Join us on this tropical journey! Whether you're new to the process or seeking to refine your skills, this session will equip you with the tools to steer confidently through the financial aid seas.

**Cybersecurity**  Room: Alcove

*Presenter: Dr. Thomas Bunton ~ KSU*

*Moderator: Tanya McGee, KSU*

Kansas State University will share invaluable insights into effective incident response, communication strategies, and the importance of resilience in navigating the aftermath of a cyber-attack. This session will feature KSU's ongoing recovery efforts, highlighting the tangible steps to enhance cybersecurity and mitigate future risks. Learn how they continually engage and align with leadership on essential preparation strategies, and the skills gaps discovered during the recovery process. Join us as we explore KSU’s resilience and determination in the face of cyber adversity.

Wednesday 4:00-5:00 Breakout Sessions

**Breakout Sessions #2**

Kansas Promise Act ~ KBOR Room: Konza-Prairie A

*Presenters: Michele Arellano, Elaine Frisbie, Tammy Garth, KBOR*

*Moderator: Robb Cummings, Sallie Mae*

If your institution is a Promise Act Scholarship eligible institution, you are strongly encouraged to attend this session. KBOR will present an overview of the certification and payment process and provide new updates regarding Promise Act funding for the 2025-2026 Academic Year.

**Anchored: Finding Peace In Uncertain Times** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Neophyte Track*

*Presenter: Rebecca McAllister, State Swap Ambassador from Wyoming*

*Moderator: Cherish Calovich, Baker University*

 In a world filled with constant change and unpredictability, finding inner peace can often feel like an impossible task. Anchored: Finding Peace in Uncertain Times explores practical ways to stay grounded and centered amidst life’s challenges. This presentation offers insights into cultivating resilience, mindfulness, and emotional balance, helping individuals navigate turbulent times with clarity and calm. By learning to anchor ourselves in the present moment, we can maintain our peace despite external chaos, building strength and stability from within.



**NASFAA U: Cost of Attendance Part 2** (reg. required) Room: McDowell

*Trainers: Darcy Johnson & Emily Keiter, Washburn*

*Moderator: N/A*

In this course, you will learn the principles and purposes of the student budget construction process, gain an understanding of how to build student budgets (including sources for setting the value of cost components), learn about the various allowable budget components and restrictions for certain categories of students, and become familiar with budget recalculations and the impact of non-Title IV aid on the cost of attendance. You will receive access to the NASFAA self-study guide as well. You must pre-register and attend all sessions to qualify to take the corresponding NASFAA Professional Credential test.

**Current Trends in Collections with Agency Panel** Room: Konza-Prairie A

*(Fiscal Track)*

*Panel Session*

*Moderator: Connie Robinson, RMS*

Join fellow Fiscal Officers to talk about all the current trends in collections. Collaborate with colleagues on the specifics of collections and what the future holds in terms of collections.

**When Your “Business’ Impacts Your ‘Business”** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Lou Murray, Earnest*

*Moderator: N/A*

A mental health awareness discussion, as we look into how stress, personal and professional issues, depression, anxiety and perspectives within us impact others, our productivity, and our drive. We will review data regarding these issues at the workplace, how the topic impacts campuses and the country financially, ponder correlations happening at home, hear testimony regarding one's battle with depression and offer suggestions on how to relight our spark and passions that make us successful.

**Birds of a Feather Breakout Sessions**

Get together with colleagues from institutions and organizations similar to yours to talk about successes, challenges, concerns, and opportunities.

* Associate Members – Konza-Prairie A
* Community Colleges and Technical Schools – Konza-Prairie B
* Fiscal Officers – Konza-Prairie C
* Public Schools – Tuttle
* Private Schools – Alcove

Wednesday Evening

Dinner on your Own





Thursday 7:30-8:30

Breakfast Buffet Kaw Nation/Big Basin

Newcomer’s Breakfast Konza-Prairie C

Thursday 8:30-9:30

Kaw Nation/Big Basin

NASFAA Update: Karen McCarthy (Virtual)

# *ViA person wearing a pink sweater and a pearl necklace AI-generated content may be incorrect.ce President of Public Policy and Federal Relations, NASFAA*

Karen McCarthy serves as vice president of public policy and federal relations at the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), where she leads the association’s federal advocacy strategy and public policy initiatives. As NASFAA’s chief lobbyist and primary liaison to Congress and the U.S. Department of Education, Karen plays a central role in shaping national financial aid policy and legislative efforts.

Karen has held multiple leadership roles within NASFAA, where she has overseen public policy development, regulatory analysis, research initiatives, and stakeholder engagement. Her work has been instrumental in advancing federal student aid policy, simplifying the FAFSA process, and ensuring effective communication between policymakers and practitioners.

Her background also includes direct institutional experience in financial aid administration at Boston University and Miami University of Ohio. With a strong foundation in student advising, regulatory compliance, and technical training, Karen brings a comprehensive understanding of both policy and practice to her work.

A native of Massachusetts, she holds a master’s degree from The Ohio State University and a bachelor’s degree from Cornell University.

Thursday 9:30-10:30

Kaw Nation/Big Basin

RMASFAA Update Justin Chase Brown

*A person in a suit and tie

AI-generated content may be incorrect.RMASFAA President*

Justin serves as the Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid and Interim Director of Husker Hub at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is a first-generation college graduate of Texas A&M University and earned his Master of Science in Education from the University of Kansas and PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Justin has been recognized as a NASFAA Gold Star winner for innovation and regularly participates in state, regional, and national financial aid activities, presentations, and publications on student financial aid policy and advocacy. He is proudly serving as the President for RMASFAA.

Thursday 10:50–11:50 Breakout Sessions

**Breakout Session #4**

**Kansas Setoff Program** Room: Konza-Prairie A

*(Fiscal Officer Track)*

*Presenter: Jessica Pope*

*Moderator: Sarah Toennis, Ellucian*

Join your fellow Fiscal Officer colleagues for a discussion on the Kansas Setoff Program. Stay up-to-date on new legislature and discuss the future of the program.

**Reaching New Heights of Student Support in FA** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Presenter: Ginger McBride, Washburn University*

*Moderator: Jana Parks, Baker University*

The film adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Broadway musical, *In the Heights* (2021) is a vibrant celebration of Washington Heights and those who live there. The characters Nina Rosario and Sonny are each confronted by social and financial barriers to pursuing higher education. Financial aid administrators can gain invaluable insights from these fictional characters' experiences to increase support for real life current and prospective students facing similar challenges. As a result of participating in this session, attendees will gain a greater awareness of the barriers students like Nina and Sonny face and ways that financial aid administrators can support the success of all students.

  Participants are encouraged to watch *In the Heights*prior to the conference if possible. However, watching it is not a requirement to benefit from this session as a discussion guide/reference materials will be provided. Those interested in watching it may be able to for free through a local library or at no additional cost as part of a current subscription (or free trial!) to HBO Max, Hulu Premium, YouTube Primetime, or YouTube TV Premium. It is also currently available to rent for approximately $4 through Apple TV, Google Play Movie, Fandango at Home.

**Other Financial Aid and Scholarships**  Room: McDowell

*(Neophyte Track)*

*Presenter: Tanya McGee, Kansas State University*

*Moderator: Carin Carstens, Scholarnet*

Come learn about the treatment of Other Financial Assistance (OFA) and the impact it can have on the rest of the financial aid awards. We will take some time to explore the changes made by the FAFSA Simplification Act, which removes emergency financial aid for unexpected expenses within a student’s COA and removes foster care payments from OFA. Join us poolside as we dive into this topic together!

**Is the Customer Always Right?** Room: Tuttle

*Presenter: Julie Finn, College Ave*

*Moderator: Chris Campbell, Inceptia*

Customer service is the act of providing support to both prospective and existing customers that helps them have an easy and enjoyable experience. Customer satisfaction and maintaining good customer relations is very important in higher education. We often use the phrase “the customer is always right,” even when customer demands and opinions may be unreasonable.

In this session we will discuss the different types of customers, why a customer may not always be right, handling customer conflicts, your tone of communication, and why good customer service is crucial to your institution. Come prepared to learn and share your experiences.

**Creating an Ecology of Validation for Students** Room: Alcove

*Presenter: Justin Chase Brown, University of Nebraska*

*Moderator: Dori Roth, Hesston College*

Students thrive when they feel heard, valued, and supported. This session will explore the concept of an *ecology of validation*—a framework that fosters student success by creating environments where students' experiences, identities, and challenges are acknowledged and affirmed. We will discuss strategies for building validation into financial aid and student services to enhance engagement and persistence. Additionally, we will highlight how the University of Nebraska–Lincoln implements this approach through Husker Hub, an integrated one-stop student support model. Learn how communication, holistic advising, and student-centered policies create a culture of validation that empowers students to navigate financial aid, registration, and academic success with confidence.

Thursday 11:50-1:15

Kaw Nation/Big Basin

**Lunch – 11:50-1:15 Sandwich Buffet**

|  |
| --- |
| ~ Classic build-your own sandwich, Southwest Wrap, or Garden Salad |
| ~ Chips |
| ~ Pasta Salad |
| ~ Cookie Dessert |
| ~ Includes Water and Iced Tea |

**KASFAA Business Meeting – 11:50-1:15**

The Business meeting will take place during lunch. Reports from officers and committee chairs, as well as the financial standing of KASFAA will be discussed. The meeting will be adjourned until Thursday evening for the swearing in of officers.

Thursday 1:30–2:30 Breakout Sessions

**Breakout Sessions #5**

**Ask a Director** Room: Konza-Prairie A

*(Neophyte Track)*

*Panel: Robin Adamson (Coffeyville), Nathan Buche (Hutch), Tony Tanking (Benedictine), Jana Parks (Baker)*

*Moderator: N/A*

So you want to be a Director? Join this awesome panel of top Directors in our field to get a firsthand look at what being a director is all about! Even if your desire is not to be a director, join us for what is sure to be an entertaining conversation about the Financial Aid profession.

**How to Have Difficult Conversations** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Presenters: Ja’Nae Tunley & Angela Zeorlin, Wichita State*

*Moderator: Holly Johnson, Monogram*

Navigating difficult conversations with students is an essential skill for any Financial Aid Administrator, whether you're addressing scholarship requirements, financial difficulties, or sensitive personal matters. In this session, you'll learn strategies for approaching and managing tough discussions with empathy and confidence. We'll explore techniques for active listening, maintaining composure, and fostering a respectful and supportive dialogue. This session will equip you with the tools to handle difficult conversations gracefully, helping you build stronger relationships with students and support their success both academically and personally.

**Gap Financing: Private vs. Plus**  Room: McDowell

*Associate Member Panel*

*Moderator: Crystal DeLong, Citizens*

Join our Associate Members as the answer questions about the differences between Private and Plus loans and the importance of providing the best option for student’s families.

**Verification**  Room: Tuttle

*Presenter: Mitzi Suhler, Sterling College*

*Moderator: Kelli Lowe, Credit World Services*

This session will aid financial aid professionals in understanding the regulations surrounding the verification process along with providing guidance on how to communicate with students and families as to why this process is necessary. Join us for an engaging and interactive discussion on how to better support our students through the verification process.

**Legal Updates and Compliance Insights** Room: Alcove

*(Fiscal Track)*

*Presenter: Chad Echols*

*Moderator: JR Berninzoni, Williams & Fudge*

Keep up with the collection and legal updates that have occurred and stay in-the-know of upcoming legislature and updates affecting business offices and financial aid offices.

Thursday 2:40-3:40 Breakout Sessions

**Breakout Sessions #6**

**Working with Gen Z** Room: Konza-Prairie A

*(Neophyte Track)*

*Presenter: Robb Cummings, Sallie Mae*

*Moderator: N/A*

Gen Z: It’s a VIBE - How we connect with a new generation of students  
Delivering a positive student experience relies on understanding their service expectations. his session will focus on distancing yourself from previously held expectations and exercising empathy in your student services role. We will also discuss strategies for increasing the engagement with the students you serve.

**Compassionate Compliance in SAP** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Presenter: Ginger McBride, Washburn University*

*Moderator: Monica Young, WSU Tech*

This presentation explores the intersection of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policies/procedures and student support through the lens of compassionate compliance. As a result of attending this session, participants will become (re)acquainted with the concept of compassionate compliance, challenges students face navigating the SAP appeal process, and recommendations to incorporate empathy and understanding into SAP policies/procedures while maintaining regulatory responsibilities.

**Maximizing your Personal Productivity** Room: McDowell

*(Fiscal Officer Track)*

*Presenter: Justin Pfeifer, WSU Tech*

*Moderator: Jeff Daniels, PNC*

This session will cover topics to reduce chaos and stress in your daily life. The session will provide strategies to plan your day and week, manage projects more effectively, reduce time spinning your wheels, increase productivity without increasing your work hours, and help you make progress on the things that matter in your work and life.

**From Policy to Action**  Room: Tuttle

*“Empowering Financial Aid Professionals to Advocate for Students”*

*Presenter: Daisha Holmes, Johnson County Community College*

*Moderator: Michelle Arellano, KBOR*

Financial aid professionals play a crucial role in ensuring students have access to higher education—but the fight for student aid doesn’t stop at awarding funds. With shifting federal policies and legislative challenges, advocacy is more important than ever. This session will equip you with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to become an effective advocate for student aid. Learn about the latest developments in federal and state financial aid programs, the power of storytelling in advocacy, and practical strategies for engaging with legislators. Whether you're new to advocacy or looking to strengthen your impact, discover how small actions can lead to big policy changes—and how you can be a voice for the students who need it most.

**Identifying & Supporting Delinquent Loan Borrowers** Room: Alcove

*Strategies for Effective Intervention*

*Presenter: Chris Campbell, Inceptia*

*Moderator: Ashley Morrow, KHEAA*

In this session, we will take a look at the current state of repayment, average delinquency rates and challenges that are facing borrowers and institutions. We will take a look at ways to effectively assist your delinquent borrowers, options to avoid default and ways to protect your institution from sanctions for a high CDR.

Thursday 4:00-5:00 Breakout Sessions

**Breakout Sessions #7**

**Ask An Auditor** Room: Konza-Prairie A

*Presenters: Eric Kientz & Taylor Penick, CPAs*

*Kientz & Penick, CPAs, LLC*

*Moderator: Cherish Calovich, Baker University*

This session will focus on what auditors are looking for in the upcoming audit season following the 2024-25 FAFSA rollout and answer questions your organization may have about the issues Financial Aid departments faced during the last year.

**Thriving in Change** Room: Konza-Prairie B

*Presenter: Crystal DeLong*

*Moderator: N/A*

No matter how long you have been in Financial Aid or Higher Education, you likely already know (or have heard) that change is constant and just the norm. Regulations change, students change, technology changes, our work environment changes, our leadership changes, along with many other examples.  This session shares how to thrive, by learning to reframe our work, redefining ourselves, accepting our new reality, and capitalizing on new opportunities that change brings.

**R2T4**  Room: McDowell

*Brenda Hicks, Southwestern College & Laura Weiss-Cook, Manhattan Tech*

*Moderator: Diana VanDyke, Butler Community College*

Back by popular demand – a reprise of the session from the 2023 NASFAA conference of mind bending R2T4 scenarios. This session will focus on R2T4 for modules and discuss those crazy, complicated situations we encounter when calculating R2T4. The session will also briefly discuss the new regulations posted on January 3, 2025 and in effect July 1, 2026.

**Data-Driven Decision Making in Financial Aid Leveraging**  Room: Tuttle

*Presenter: Dr. Karen Goos ~ Kansas State University*

*Moderator: Tanya McGee, Kansas State University*

This session explores how data analytics can inform strategic financial aid decisions to optimize enrollment and maximize institutional resources. Learn how to leverage data for predictive modeling, award optimization and targeted recruitment strategies.

**Collaboration Between Financial Aid & Student Accounts** Room: Alcove

*(Fiscal Officer Track)*

*Panel Discussion*

*Moderator: Deborah Rollf, University of Kansas*

Join colleagues in discussing the importance of communication and the relationship between Business and Financial Aid offices. One cannot exist without the other!

Thursday 5:00-9:30

Kaw Nation/Big Basin

**Cash Bar – Opens @ 5:00**

**Award Banquet – 5:00-9:30**

**Taste of Italy Buffet**

|  |
| --- |
| ~ Caesar Salad |
| ~ Fettuccini & Penne Pasta |
| ~ Alfredo & Marinara Sauces |
| ~ Sliced Grilled Chicken/Traditional Meatballs |
| ~ Seasonal Vegetables/Garlic Bread |
| ~ Cannoli Dessert |
| ~ Includes Water and Iced Tea  **Awards Presented**  Years of Service  Hall of Fame  Deborah Byers Outstanding Service Award  Bruce Lopez Meritorious Achievement Award  KASFAA Rising Star Award  **Community Pictures ~ Board Members, Mentors/Mentees, New Members and Retirees**  **Swearing in of 2025-26 Officers**  **KASFAA Game Night (Board and Card Games)**  Friday 7:30-8:30  Breakfast Buffet Kaw Nation/Big Basin  Friday 8:30-9:30 Breakout Sessions  **Breakout Sessions #8**  **Making Professional Judgment Calls** Room: Konza-Prairie A  *Panel ~ Mitzi Suhler (Sterling), Tony Tanking (Benedictine), Dylan Babcock (KSU), Jana Parks (Baker)*  *Moderator: N/A*  Making Professional Judgment Calls with the Simplified FAFSA can be challenging. Join this seasoned panel of guests to discuss under what circumstances professional judgment calls should be made and the best way to ensure you are keeping with your policies and procedures.  **Finding Solid Ground** Room: Konza-Prairie B  *Navigating Gainful Employment with Strategy, Resilience & Perspective (Panel)*  *Presenters: Danielle Sullivan (JCCC), Darcy Johnson (Washburn), Thad Davidson (Washburn), Dori Roth (Hesston), Bruce DeClue (Pratt CC)*  *Moderator: Robb Cummings, Sallie Mae*  Set anchor in a supportive and engaging session designed to empower aid administrators to chart their course through the challenging waters of Gainful Employment (GE). This session offers a safe harbor to share strategies, experiences, and lessons learned while managing the complexities of GE compliance.  Come listen to our panel guests as they provide insights into how they weathered the storm of Gainful Employment. Panel guests will share their personal journeys—how they managed stress, preserved their mental health, and discovered new perspectives during this demanding process.  **Key Takeaways:**   * Gain new perspectives on professional growth and lessons learned through the GE experience. * Learn practical strategies for managing and simplifying the GE process. * Discover techniques for preserving mental health and resilience during high-pressure time amidst regulatory waves. * Engage in a safe and open space to share frustrations and reflections with peers. * Leave equipped with practical advice for tackling GE, reflections on what you might do differently, and a sense of closure as you prepare to move forward.   You’re not on an island alone! This session will be your compass. Join us to find clarity, connection, and confidence as we set our sights on a brighter compliance horizon together!  **Student Account Data Analytics** Room: McDowell  *(Fiscal Officer Track)*  *Presenter: Denise Varrientos, WSU Tech*  *Moderator: Donnie Mercer, Butler Community College*  Student Account Data Analytics will be an interactive discussion regarding how colleges analyze their accounts receivable data and present this information to their leadership. Come with your own experience to share with the group and leave with new ideas on how to research and present.  **Compliance and VA SCO** Room: Tuttle  *Presenter: Trish Runion, Kansas State University*  *Moderator: Kristina Blanck, Manhattan Christian College*  Join us as we take time for the VA School Certifying Officials to hang together as we discuss the waves we are seeing in the processing of VA education benefits. All are welcome who may have questions as the tide of these benefits lap at the shores of all aspects of financial aid.  **Legislative 101** Room: Alcove  *(Neophyte Track)*  *Presenter: Brenda Hicks, Southwestern College*  *Moderator: Crystal DeLong, Citizens*  “Never ask how the sausage is made” is sometimes used as a general rule for life. In financial aid, knowing how the sausage is made can save you a lot of time and trouble as well as position you as a trusted and rational partner on your campus. How well are you versed in the basics of civics? This Legislative Process 101 session will take you back to middle school social studies to discuss the branches of government, their powers, the way they are intended to balance one another and how laws are made and implemented. The session will be interactive and fun using today’s plentiful issues as examples. When rumor and speculation become rampant – even by trusted media sources – knowing the basics can help you respond appropriately to what you are hearing in local, state, and national media outlets.  Friday 9:40-10:40 Breakout Sessions |
| **Breakout Sessions #9**  **Mentorship Program** Room: Konza-Prairie A  *(Neophyte Track)*  *Membership Committee*  *Moderator: N/A* |
| New to Financial Aid or just want to have a mentor in the field to bounce ideas off of? Join our Mentorship Program session! We will explain how we match Mentors with Mentees depending on what type of school they are at and what kind of system they use. It is a great way to network and stay connected to the best in the business!  **What Does the Future Hold for KASFAA?** Room: Konza-Prairie B  ***Opportunity In Chaos***  *Roundtable/Forum*  In light of recent developments in Washington DC and the Department of Education – what implications does this have for the financial aid profession on a state level. This session will update you on the latest news. Stay and participate in a facilitated round table discussion of the future of the profession and how KASFAA can help.  **D.O.E. ~ Top 10 Compliance Findings** Room: McDowell  *FSA Training Webinar*  This session is a webinar on the Department of Education’s Top Compliance Findings when they conduct a program review.  **Strategies for Student Accounts Outside of Transcripts** Room: Tuttle  (*Fiscal Officer Track)*  *Roundtable Discussion*  This session is a roundtable with fellow Fiscal Officers regarding the different strategies for student accounts outside of transcripts.  **Department of VA Education Benefits-An Island Tour** Room: Alcove  *Presenter: Trish Runion, Kansas State University*  *Moderator: Kristina Blanck, Manhattan Christian College*  Join us as we go on a sightseeing tour of the different chapters of Veteran Affairs Education Benefits. As we take a seagull’s view of this landscape, expect to learn the different benefits and who is eligible to use them.  Friday 10:40-12:30  Kaw Nation/Big Basin  **10:40-11:40 ~ Kansas Board of Regents Update**  A person wearing glasses and a black jacket  AI-generated content may be incorrect.Michele has been in the field of Higher Education Administration and, more specifically, Financial Aid and Scholarships for over 25 years. She has been the Director of Student Financial Services at the Kansas Board of Regents since September 2023. As a non-traditional undergraduate student, Michele started her Financial Aid Administration journey as a work-study financial aid advisor and verification specialist in the Financial Aid office at the University of Kansas. Michele holds an MSEd in Higher Education Administration and a BGS in Sociology from the University of Kansas. She lives in Lawrence with her husband, teenage son, and 3 dogs. She enjoys traveling to the northeast coast to visit her oldest son and spending time outdoors.  **Conference Wrap Up and Prize Drawings**  Closing out the Conference with announcements, acknowledgements and drawing of the names for the different prizes to be raffled off. The Scavenger Hunt winner will also be announced. Must be present to win the grand prize drawing.  Presenter Biographies  **Robin Adamson, Director of Financial Aid**  **Coffeyville Community College**  I am Robin Adamson, I have proudly served as the Director of Financial Aid at Coffeyville Community College for the past 6 years, but I have been in financial aid for 20 years. My passion for helping students has afforded me a challenging but rewarding career. I am married and share my home with our wonderful son, Raphael, and our three dogs, Winnie, Dottie, and Lou. In my free time, I enjoy exploring the outdoors, traveling, and watching my son play various sports.  **Michele Arellano, Director of Student Financial Services**  **Kansas Board of Regents**  Michele has been in the field of Higher Education Administration and, more specifically, Financial Aid and Scholarships for over 25 years. She has been the Director of Student Financial Services at the Kansas Board of Regents since September 2023. As a non-traditional undergraduate student, Michele started her Financial Aid Administration journey as a work-study financial aid advisor and verification specialist in the Financial Aid office at the University of Kansas. Michele holds an MSEd in Higher Education Administration and a BGS in Sociology from the University of Kansas. She lives in Lawrence with her husband, teenage son, and 3 dogs. She enjoys traveling to the northeast coast to visit her oldest son and spending time outdoors.    **Arnetta Brown, Account Manager**  **Transact**  Arnetta Brown is an Account Manager at Transact, leveraging over 20+ years of specialized experience in higher education.  Drawing from her knowledge of payment solutions, Arnetta excels in fostering strong relationships with clients and delivering tailored solutions to meet their specific needs.  Her unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction and her relentless pursuit of excellence have consistently positioned her as a trusted advisor within the industry.  Armed with a master’s in business administration from Tarleton State University, Arnetta’s dedication, coupled with her exceptional communication skills and strategic mindset, positions her as an invaluable asset to both her clients and her team at Transact.    **Dylan Babcock, Financial Aid Advisor**  **Kansas State University**  Dylan is a Financial Aid Advisor at Kansas State University, where he started his career in financial aid in May of 2022. He grew up in Lincoln, KS and is a graduate of Washburn University. Dylan enjoys working with students and families to guide them through the financial aid process and help them find ways to make their college education more affordable. His interest in working in higher education sparked from his involvement in student government throughout his time at Washburn.  In his free time, Dylan likes to cook, spend time with family and friends, and travel. He has visited 5 different countries and now 29 of the 50 states after his trip to New England this last fall. Dylan is an avid K-State and Kansas City Chiefs fan and can often be found watching their sporting events.  **Nathan Buche, Director of Financial Aid**  **Hutchinson Community College**  Nathan Buche is currently the Director of Financial Aid at Hutchinson Community College and is a Certified Financial Aid Administrator through NASFAA. He has been in his position at Hutchinson for 12 years and in Financial Aid for 14 years. Nathan also oversees the institutional scholarship program and all Veterans administration for the college. He graduated from Friends University in Wichita, KS with a Bachelor of Arts in Publications and has a Masters of Education in Sports Administration from Wichita State University also located in Wichita, KS. Prior to being Director at Hutchinson Community College he worked as an Admission Representative, Financial Aid Clerk and Assistant Director of Career Services at other institutions.  Nathan is currently the Treasurer for KASFAA. He is a Past President of KASFAA and is also a past NASFAA FAAC Commissioner serving a 2-year term representing the RMASFAA Region. He has served as co-chair of the conference planning committee and the chair of the archive committees in KASFAA. He has also been a presenter of topics in KASFAA. In RMASFAA he has been the state delegate for Kansas to the board and served as a mentor in the leadership pipeline.  **Dr. Thomas Bunton, Associate Vice President, and Chief Information Officer**  **Kansas State University**  Dr. Thomas Bunton is the Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Kansas State University. In this role, he provides information technology leadership throughout the university, including teaching, learning, research, and administrative environments.    Before this role, Bunton was the Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer at New Mexico State University and the Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He also held various leadership roles at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and Purdue University, where he led large-scale technological and organizational transformations that included implementing centers of excellence, drafting and executing IT strategic plans, and rationalizing and integrating complex IT portfolios.    Bunton is passionate about higher education and its role in society, particularly social mobility. He spearheads efforts and outreach to increase affordability, access, and student success. His outreach efforts include mentoring high school students interested in information technology careers and being a regular lecturer to incoming first-generation students. He’s strongly committed to illuminating and providing frictionless educational pathways for students who may otherwise lack experience navigating the sometimes confusing and unfamiliar environments associated with higher education.  **Chris Campbell, Assistant Vice President, Business Development**  **Inceptia**  Chris has been working in higher education for over 16 years. His work in higher education started on campus supporting students in processing military education benefits and his roles expanded to successfully create military scholarship and support programs at various universities. Chris has spent the past 7 years working with colleges and universities on issues like student loan support, verification, and other services. Supporting students has always been a passion for Chris and his role with Inceptia leverages his experience to focus on positive student outcomes. He resides in AZ with his wife, 3 kids and dog Chewbacca.  **Robb Cummings, Director of Relationship Management**  **Sallie Mae**  Robb Cummings, Director of Relationship Management for Sallie Mae, has worked in the student financial aid industry for the past twenty-nine years. He has been active on both the state and regional level. He has served RMASFAA as the Chair for the Rocky Mountain Summer Institute, Associate Member Delegate, Corporate Development Chair, Electronic Initiatives Chair, and on various other committees. Robb has also served in multiple state financial aid associations. A graduate of Washburn University with a BBA degree in marketing and management, Robb resides in Topeka, KS  **Thad Davidson, Application Analyst for Financial Aid**  **Washburn University**  Thad Davidson is the Application Analyst for Financial Aid at Washburn University, where he works behind the scenes to support the financial aid staff and streamline their processes. With a passion for efficiency and problem-solving, he continuously seeks ways to enhance workflows and improve the team's experience. Thad has been involved in the financial aid profession for 20 years, contributing in various capacities. He has also been involved with KASFAA, primarily serving in roles related to Electronic Resources.  **Bruce DeClue, Financial Aid Director**  **Pratt Community College**  I started at Pratt Community College two years ago in the Cashier position of the Business Office. Shortly after, I moved to Student Accounts Coordinator before finally landing in the Financial Aid office at the Director level. I love playing music, buying books, telling myself I’ll read them someday, and staying at home.    **Crystal DeLong, Vice President, National Sales Manager of Education Finance**  **Citizens**  Crystal DeLong is Vice President, National Sales Manager of Education Finance at Citizens. She began her career in financial aid at Fort Hays State University in KS as a work study student back in 2001! After 18 years in aid offices in KS and MO she jumped to the “other side” to continue serving her passion in Higher Ed. Crystal has served in a variety of roles in both state and regional financial aid associations during her 24 years in the industry, and loves all of the friendships that have been built over the years because of volunteering in these great organizations!    Crystal and her husband Jim spend their free time chasing their 5-year-old son Tate around. His nickname is “Tate the Tornado” as his main goal in life is to destroy things! Her 18-year-old stepdaughter is a Freshman at the University of Arkansas and thriving as she learns the ropes of college and adult life. This also means Crystal went through the FAFSA process as a parent for the first time in 2024. What a year to start!  ***Chad Echols – Partner at Frost Echols, LLC.***  ***(Sponsored by Williams & Fudge)***  *A Rock Hill native, Chad graduated in 1998 from Clemson University. He received his law degree in 2002 from the University of South Carolina School of Law, where he was a member of the South Carolina Environmental Law Journal. Following law school, Chad was a law clerk for the Honorable John C. Hayes III in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit of South Carolina.*  *Before forming Frost Echols, LLC with Mike Frost, Chad owned and ran The Echols Firm, LLC for over 10 years. Chad began his work in the credit and collection industry serving as Vice President and General Counsel for Williams & Fudge, Inc., a national student loan collection agency located in Rock Hill, SC. He continues to serve as outside general counsel to Williams & Fudge, Inc.*  *Chad’s practice focuses on the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, compliance for collection agencies and debt purchasers, business law, litigation, and commercial collections. Chad is a member of the South Carolina Bar Association. He also serves as a member of the Fee Dispute Resolution Board of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit for the South Carolina Bar.*  Chad serves on the Board of Governors for the Come-See-Me Festival, the Board of YMCA Camp Cherokee, the Board of Managers for the Anne Spring Close Greenway, and the Board of Trustees for Clinton College. In addition to Chad’s civic activities, he enjoys time with his family, fly fishing, and pulling for the Clemson Tigers.  **Julie Finn, Head of Campus Development Southwest**  **College Ave**  Julie Finn is the Head of Campus Development Southwest for College Ave. She started her career in higher education on the school side, working in both Admissions and Financial Aid offices, before moving to the education lending side, where she has spent the last 20 years. Julie is an active member of KASFAA, RMASFAA and NASFAA, as well as several other state associations. She loves working with FAOs to help bring knowledge and resources to their offices so they can share with their students and families, often presenting financial literacy information and the basics of student loans. Julie has a passion for connecting with individuals from all over in order to work toward the common goal of helping students gain access to college.  **Elaine Frisbie, Vice President for Finance and Administration**  **Kansas Board of Regents**    Prior to joining the Kansas Board of Regents in 2014, Elaine served five governors in the Kansas Division of the Budget where she was responsible for coordinating the state’s budget, as well as managing the state’s cash flow and municipal bond market disclosures. As Vice President for Finance and Administration with the Board of Regents, she oversees the finance, information technology, state university facilities, student financial aid programs, and the data and planning functions in service to the state’s public postsecondary education system. A two-time graduate of the University of Kansas, she has a Master of Public Administration degree with a focus on public finance.    **Tammy Garth, Scholarship Administrator**  **Kansas Board of Regents**  Tammy has been with the Kansas Board of Regents financial aid since November 2022 and administers the Promise, Hero's, and Computer Science Educator scholarships. Previously, she worked in Financial aid at Seward County Community College. She is a mother of 2 boys. Her oldest son is in the US Air Force, and her youngest son is a Senior in College. Tammy lives in Liberal and enjoys golfing, playing pool, traveling, and crafting.  **Karen Goos, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management**  **Kansas State University**  Karen Goos is the vice provost for enrollment management at Kansas State University.  She provides strategic leadership and vision to all aspects of enrollment management at K-State, including domestic, international, and graduate student recruitment, financial aid, registration and transfer enrollment.  Prior to joining K-State, she served as the University of Central Missouri’s (UCM) vice provost for enrollment management. She earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary and middle school education from Doane College; a master’s in exercise science-athletic administration from UCM; and a doctorate in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri.  **Brenda Hicks, Director of Financial Aid**  **Southwestern College**  Brenda Hicks, FAAC®, has served Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas, in both admissions and financial aid since 1991 and is currently the Associate Vice President of Student Financial Planning and Director of Financial Aid. She is the 2021 recipient of the NASFAA Allan Purdy Distinguished Service award and is in the KASFAA and RMASFAA Hall of Fame. She served as NASFAA National Chair in 2020-2021. She remains active in state, regional, and national professional associations and just joined Blue Icon as a consultant. When not working she is ‘Mom’ to two beautiful boys. She and her husband of 32 years live in Winfield, KS with their dog Toby.  **Daisha Holmes, Specialized Grant Programs Manager**  **Johnson County Community College**  Daisha Holmes is a Specialized Grant Programs Manager at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas. In her role, she oversees the Kansas Promise Scholarship, state aid, and other local grant opportunities. She also provides guidance to students on their educational journey. Daisha completed her Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management from the University of Missouri – St. Louis in 2020 and most recently obtained her Master of Arts in Organizational Communications from the University of Kansas in May 2024. Through her four years of experience as a financial aid professional, coupled with her education at the University of Kansas, Daisha has developed a deep appreciation for the various aspects of her profession. She has a strong passion for service and thrives on tackling new challenges to address the needs of others.  **Emily Keiter, Financial Aid Advisor**  **Washburn University**  Emily Keiter is a Financial Aid Advisor at Washburn University. While her primary focus is assisting students and families through the financial aid process, she also processes Academic Engagement and assists with running the Federal Work Study program aka her favorite part of financial aid. She is unapologetically a Swiftie but loves many genres of music and usually has at least one song running through her head at all times. She also enjoys painting and going on long drives and walks when it’s nice outside.  **Kientz & Penick, CPAs, LLC**  **Eric Kientz, Partner**  Eric has over 15 years of accounting experience, with 11 of those years in public accounting.  He is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Management Accountant, Chartered Global Management Accountant, and Certified Nonprofit Accounting Professional. He earned his Bachelor’s in Business Administration from Kansas State University and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the Kansas Society of Certified Public Accountants (KSCPA), and Institute of Management Accountants (IMA). Eric serves as a member of the Finance and Investments Committee for the Kansas Association of Community Foundations. He specializes in working with non-profit and local government organizations on audit, tax return, compliance and consulting services.  Niche areas of practice are community foundations, local school districts, and organizations that provide service to persons with developmental disabilities.    In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his wife, April, and their children (McCabe, Kacen, Harper, and Cambrey). Eric’s hobbies include grilling and home improvement projects.  **Taylor Penick, Partner**  Taylor has been providing exceptional auditing and accounting services to his clients for over 10 years.  He earned his Bachelor’s in Business Administration with emphasis in Accounting from Kansas State University. He is a Certified Public Accountant as well as a Certified Nonprofit Accounting Professional and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Kansas Society of Certified Public Accountants (KSCPA).  Taylor specializes in working with non-profit and local government organizations on audit, compliance and consulting services. He has worked with clients from an array of industries including rural water districts, community foundations and agricultural associations.  Taylor spends much of his spare time traveling with his wife & kids and attending sporting events. He also enjoys cooking,  outdoor activities such as  golf and hunting, and coaching his son's baseball team.  **Becky McAllister, Director of Financial Aid, State Swap Ambassador**  **Eastern Wyoming College**  With 14 years of experience in higher education, Becky currently serves as the Director of Financial Aid at Eastern Wyoming College (EWC), a small community college in Wyoming. Throughout their career, Becky has been passionate about helping students achieve their educational and career goals by providing them with the necessary resources to navigate the financial aid process. Becky is dedicated to ensuring compliance in the Financial Aid area, with a strong focus on adhering to federal, state, and institutional regulations while providing exceptional service and maintaining transparency in the financial aid process.  In 2011, Becky served as the President of the Wyoming Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (WYASFAA) and attended the NASFAA Leadership Conference, which enhanced their leadership skills and commitment to advancing the financial aid profession. This was very helpful as Wyoming hosted the annual RMASFAA Conference event during this time. Becky is the current Secretary for WYASFAA, serving this position for the last year.  Becky is deeply committed to staying involved in the financial aid community, sharing knowledge, and advocating for students to ensure they have the support they need to succeed in their academic pursuits.  **Ginger McBride, Financial Aid Advisor**  **Washburn University**  Ginger McBride (Ginger/Ginger’s) is currently a financial aid advisor working directly with students and their families/support networks at Washburn University – Go Bods! This is Ginger’s 3rd KASFAA conference, but 1st year presenting. Prior to working in financial aid, Ginger answered 2am phone calls, mediated roommate conflicts, and supervised RAs as a residential life/student housing professional, which continues to shape Ginger’s commitment to holistic student support…and pizza. Off-campus, Ginger enjoys keeping up with friends and family whether they are near or far, board games, tv/movies, and good books.  **Tanya McGee, Associate Director of Student Financial Assistance**  **Kansas State University**  Tanya McGee is the associate director of student financial assistance at Kansas State University. Like many, she began her career in higher education as a work-study student employee in the financial aid office. Fast forward 28 years later and she’s still enjoying helping students and families make it through the complexities of financial aid – even now that it’s simplified! 😉  Tanya has been active in KASFAA serving on multiple committees over the years and as Vice President twice (2004-2005, 2017-2018). She is currently serving as the President of KASFAA. Tanya and her husband, Dan, have 3 daughters with only 1 still in high school. The empty nest and a new phase of parenting is almost upon us!  **Lou Murray, Regional Lead**  **Earnest**  Lou Murray is a 29-year veteran in higher education and is the regional lead for Earnest, where he provides financial aid solutions to colleges across the Southwest, and Rocky Mountain states. As a committed mental health advocate, Lou has presented to numerous associations, universities, local businesses, and podcasts, raising awareness and fostering open dialogue on mental wellness. In addition to his presentations, Lou created The Music Experience, which he offers to corporations, schools, local businesses, and private events. This initiative led to the formation of Mission Upbeat LLC, Lou's personal venture aimed at promoting positivity through motivational speaking, mental health advocacy, and his unique music-driven experiences.  Lou initiated the creation of Earnest’s employee ERG group, WellnEST, which exists to foster a supportive environment within the company where mental health is prioritized, stigma is shattered, and every individual feels valued and supported.   When not visiting schools, providing presentations, or mixing music as a DJ, Lou enjoys “geeking out” with his three children—Alessandra, Aliana, and Ian—watching sports with his wife, Nidia, or playing catch with his dogs, Acee and Stevie. Lou resides in Pearland, Texas.  **Jana Parks, Director of Financial Aid**  **Baker University**  Jana Parks is the Financial Aid Director at Baker University. She has worked in the Financial Aid Office in varying roles over the last 22 years. She enjoys the opportunity to help students reach their dreams of furthering their education.  Outside of work she is a mom to 3 children, a 22-year-old daughter who will graduate in May from Baker University, a 17-year-old son who will graduate high school in May, and a 12-year-old daughter in middle school. She is also a wife to a teacher and coach at Shawnee Mission North High School. In her spare time, she helps lead the women’s ministry group at her church.  **Dr. Justin Pfeifer, Vice President, Student Success**  **WSU Tech**    Justin Pfeifer has been at WSU Tech (formerly WATC) since 2012, serving in the Vice President role since 2014. In this role, Pfeifer provides leadership to the functions of Enrollment Management, High School Partnerships, Academic Advising, Success Coaching, Financial Aid, Business Office, Student Engagement, Counseling, TRIO, Community Navigators, Transfer Services, Disability Services, and the Future Maker learning lab. Prior to WSU Tech, Justin served in several roles at Manhattan Area Technical College, including Director of Admissions and Vice President of Student Services  **Dori Roth, Director of Financial Aid**  **Hesston College**  Dori Roth is the Director of Financial Aid at Hesston College. Hesston is located in Hesston, KS which is about 30 miles north of Wichita. She has worked in financial aid for seven years. Dori has volunteered on various committees in KASFAA and been a mentor in both RMASFAA and KASFAA. Dori has attended Summer Institute and has been a faculty member and Chair of SI. Before starting her career in financial aid, she was a High School Business teacher for 24 years. Dori is a native  of Nebraska, so she loves Nebraska Football, enjoys shopping, traveling, and golfing in her spare time. Dori’s part-time job is as a barista at The Lincoln Perk in Hesston.  **Trish Runion, VA School Certifying Official**  **Kansas State University**  My name is Trish Runion, and I am a VA School Certifying Official at Kansas State University. I am very proud to be a wife to my husband Rick for 37 years and a mom to my twin sons for 30 years.  I am very grateful to have been working in financial aid for the past 10 years and have been a KASFAA member almost from my first day.  During my career I have worked at both private and public institutions. I received my NASFAA FACC certification in July 2020. I truly love helping students and thoroughly enjoy my job.    **Mitzi Suhler, Vice President for Enrollment Services**  **Sterling College**  Mitzi Suhler is the VP for Enrollment Services at Sterling College and has been employed at Sterling for 17 years. The Enrollment Services Office works with students through the Admissions and Financial Aid processes. Mitzi has spent most of her 17 years working with students through the financial aid process. If you asked Mitzi what her favorite thing is about financial aid, she would tell you she loves it when things balance…the first time! Reconciliation isn’t just a process for Mitzi; it is like a Sudoku puzzle. You have to have all the right numbers in all the right spots to get the right answer! And then you have to take a minute and bask in the glory of knowing… you did it!  Mitzi and her husband, Dennis, have lived in Lyons, KS for over 42 years. They have three grown children who are married and have given them seven wonderful grandchildren, all under the age of six. Mitzi says they don’t need to pay good money to go to the circus anymore; they have one in their house all the time when the grandkids come over…but she loves it!  Mitzi likes to craft, read, color with her grandkids, and teach Bible Class. She takes her crafts on the road a few times a year and enjoys sharing her creations at local craft shows.  **Danielle Sullivan, Financial Aid Advising**  **Johnson County Community College**  Danielle Sullivan grew up in Abilene, Kansas. She attended the University of Kansas and received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Sociology, German, and Crime & Delinquency. To save the KU Financial Aid Office from having to review her Satisfactory Academic Progress appeal for time-frame issues, she decided not to pursue a fourth undergraduate degree. She began her financial aid career with Default Resolution Group helping Department of Education borrowers resolve their defaulted student loans. In 2008 she moved to the school side at the University of Kansas overseeing Satisfactory Academic Progress for nearly 11 years.  In 2019 she moved to the community college side and oversees the Financial Aid Advising team at Johnson County Community College—phone calls, walk-ins, emails, and appointments – oh my! To keep things fun and interesting, Danielle has been involved in KASFAA, serving on a committee each year including serving as  Welcome Committee Chair, Outreach Training Chair, and Secretary. Danielle has been a faculty member for RMASFAA Summer Institute for four years and serves on  the RMASFAA Training committee. In 2024, she received RMASFAA’s Ron Smout award for teaching and mentoring. She recently got her Master’s degree from the University of Kansas in Organizational Communication – a lifelong achievement finally made a reality. Danielle spends her free time traveling whenever possible, seeking out weird and offbeat roadside attractions.  **Tony Tanking, Director of Financial Aid**  **Benedictine College**  Tony began working as Director of Financial Aid at his alma mater, Benedictine College in 2008. He graduated in 1988 with a B.A. in Accounting and also received his EMBA from Benedictine in 2004. Prior to entering the wonderful world of financial aid, Tony spent 20 years in the agricultural business world, focused on the energy industry. His experiences during that time included accounting, marketing, department management, retail management and customer service to name a few. Little did he realize that the experiences he gained in this world would be valuable tools pertaining to the everyday happenings of the financial aid world.  Tony has been actively involved in both state and regional associations over the past 9+ years, serving on various committees. Tony has been involved in many aspects of KASFAA over the past 18 years, including serving as KASFAA President in 2019-20. He has also been involved with RMASFAA, most notably being involved with Summer Institute and Leadership Pipeline as a mentor.  Tony’s “off-time” (if there is such a thing) is spent being involved with his family, his wife Karen of 37 years and his 7 grandchildren.  **Ja’Nae Tunley, Financial Aid Retention Specialist**  **Wichita State University**  A dedicated graduate of Wichita State University, Ja'Nae began her career in the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships at Wichita State in 2023. Currently serving as a Financial Aid Retention Specialist, Ja'Nae is dedicated to supporting scholarship students in maintaining their awards. She takes pride in providing guidance and resources to help students thrive academically. Beyond her professional role, Ja'Nae enjoys connecting with students through programming events hosted by the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships, creating a welcoming and engaging environment for all. Her commitment to student success and her genuine care for their well-being make her an invaluable asset to the WSU community.  **Denise Varrientos, Business Office Senior Director**  **WSU Tech**  Denise Varrientos is the Senior Director of the Business Office at WSU Tech. She has been involved with accounts receivable for 25 years, working in the medical industry prior to student accounts. Denise started at WSU Tech when SB155 was first introduced for Kansas High School Students, so she spent her first few months in higher education not only learning the ins and outs of higher ed and a new software system but also setting Banner up to charge correctly. From that point  Denise has also assisted with eBill set up as well as the student side of a completely new chart of accounts created by the finance department. Recently, Denise oversaw a new 12-month tuition tier model that required a complete overhaul of charges and system set up.  Denise was the KASFAA Fiscal Officer Chair for 9 years and was the President of the WSU Tech Employee Activities Committee for 8 years, organizing monthly events for the employees and planning the annual picnic as well as the Children’s Holiday Party with Santa.  An award-winning landscape photographer, Denise is a past Senior Board Member of Professional Photographers of Kansas. You will almost always find her with a camera in her bag. One of her favorite things to photograph is the Keeper of the Plains in Wichita. On weekends, you may find Denise and her husband, Joe, running after their 5 grandchildren, or treasure hunting to keep the three booths they have at Paramount Marketplace in Wichita stocked with vintage merchandise.  **Laura Weiss Cook, Financia Aid Director**  **Manhattan Area Technical College**  Laura is the Director of Financial Aid and a VA School Certifying Official at Manhattan Area Technical College.  She has been working in the Financial Aid sector since 2012, holding several roles win the Kansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (KASFAA), including President-elect (2021-2022), President (22-23), Past-President (23-24), and Finance Committee Chair (24-25).  Laura and her husband, Kevin, also own a fair trade boutique in Manhattan that promotes ethical and sustainable products. When Laura is not busy at work, with KASFAA, or doing administrative work for her store, she enjoys attending concerts and the theatre with Kevin and their daughter, Audrey, who is an engineering student at Kansas State University.  **Angela Zeorlin, Associate Director of Scholarships**  **Wichita State University**  I began my Financial Aid career in 2002 with Wichita State University after coming from a corporate background. After attending my first state conference in 2007, I was hooked. I truly enjoy the camaraderie and wealth of knowledge available to me and want to play an integral role in bringing those opportunities to others. Over the past 20+ years, I have served on multiple KASFAA Committees and the Board of Directors. I have also been involved with the RMASFAA Training and Membership Committees as well as Summer Institute both on the Board and as Faculty. I believe an organization is only as strong as those who choose to serve it, and I am proud to serve at both the State & Regional level.  KASFAA Board of Directors  **2024-25**  Tanya McGee, President  Vanessa Flipse, President Elect  Jana Parks, Past President  Cherish Calovich, Vice President  Daisha Holmes, Secretary  Nathan Buche, Treasurer  Robin Adamson, Treasurer Elect  Crystal DeLong, Associate Member Rep  **2025-26**  Vanessa Flipse, President  Trish Runion, President Elect  Tanya McGee, Past President  Danielle Sullivan, Vice President  Kristina Blanck, Secretary  Robin Adamson, Treasurer  Lacey Ledwich, Treasurer Elect  Crystal DeLong, Associate Member Rep  2024-25 KASFAA Committees   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Archive**  Kristina Blanck, Chair  Alicia Guzman, Co-Chair  Tanya McGee  **Association Governance**  Jana Parks, Chair  Tanya McGee, Co-Chair  Vanessa Flipse  Laura Weiss-Cook  Diana VanDyke  **Association News & Publicity**  Vanessa Rodriguez, Chair  Nichole Carver, Co-Chair  Amanda Duffy  Tanya McGee  Diana VanDyke | **Conference Planning**  Vanessa Flipse, Chair  Cherish Calovich, Co-Chair  Tanya McGee  Micah Kough  Madison Henderson  Donnie Mercer  Denise Varrientos  Carol Taul  Lou Murray  Randi Whalen  Ashley Morrow  Savannah Williams  **Corporate Support**  Ashley Morrow, Chair  Lou Murray, Co-Chair  Chris Campbell  Robb Cummings  Crystal DeLong  Tanya McGee |   2024-25 KASFAA Committees   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Electronic Resources**  Micah Kough, Chair  Tony Tanking, Co-Chair  Tanya McGee  **Finance**  Laura Weiss-Cook, Chair  Nathan Buche, Co-Chair  Robin Adamson  Crystal DeLong  Tanya McGee  **Fiscal Officers**  Denise Varrientos, Chair  Donnie Mercer, Co-Chair  Tanya McGee  **Membership**  Carol Taul, Chair  Linda Oldham Burns, Co-Chair  Cherish Calovich  Jill Lucas  Rachel Touchatt | **Outreach Training**  Leah Nicholson, Chair  Ginger McBride, Co-Chair  Michele Arellano  Kevin Foster  Diego Guerrero  Tanya McGee  Kimberly Morgan  Sicilee Shannon  Mitzi Suhler  Danielle Sullivan  Alex Zarchan  Angela Zeorlin  **Professional Development**  Sarah Wellman, Chair  Emily Keiter, Co-Chair  Crystal DeLong  Julie Finn  Tanya McGee  Trish Runion  Julie Scott |   Upcoming Training Opportunities  A yellow and black logo  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  A white and blue text with a qr code  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  Upcoming Training Opportunities  **RMASFAA Conference 2025**  **October 05-08, 2025**  **Wichita, KS**    Conference Sponsors  *A logo with blue stripes  AI-generated content may be incorrect.*    A green letter on a white background  AI-generated content may be incorrect.      *A black and white logo  AI-generated content may be incorrect.*  *A black and white logo  AI-generated content may be incorrect.*  A blue and green logo  AI-generated content may be incorrect.*A close up of a logo  AI-generated content may be incorrect.*A close-up of a logo  AI-generated content may be incorrect.    A blue logo with white text  AI-generated content may be incorrect.  A black background with blue letters  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |
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