

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Justin Draeger
Vice President of Development
(202) 785-6960
DraegerJ@NASFAA.org

News from NASFAA

Build Your Own Financial Aid System!

Washington, D.C. (November 2008) – No, this isn't an advertisement you've seen on late night television. This is exactly what NASFAA is trying to accomplish over the next few years through the National Conversation Initiative (NCI). It's a daunting task to be sure, but it's not impossible. In less than five months NASFAA plans to send the new Administration comprehensive steps to overhaul and drastically improve the financial aid system.

Much of the legwork is going on now and we need your help. Here are three ways you can get involved.

1. Spend Time Evaluating

Nobody understands the financial barriers that prevent students from going to or completing their postsecondary educations better than financial aid administrators. When a flick of the pen in the state capital limits state higher education spending or when budgets passed in Washington fail to fully fund successful programs, financial aid administrators are left holding the bag for fledgling students.

Put our current financial aid system out of your mind for a moment. Instead, think about how you could best meet the financial needs of your students if you could design a new financial aid system from the ground up.

The following questions may help you get started.

- Should financial aid be used as a tool to level the playing field for economically disadvantaged, underserved, and underrepresented students?
- What are the most successful conduits for channeling these student groups into a postsecondary institution?

More

NASFAA has compiled nearly 30 questions under eight broad topics to help you get started. These questions, along with [more information on the National Conversation Initiative \(NCI\)](#), can be found on the NASFAA Web site.

2. Attend an NCI Listening Session

NASFAA needs your help in articulating where the current financial aid system is failing students. We're listening! NASFAA has held seven crowded town hall meetings around the country at national, regional, and state financial aid meetings. Many more are scheduled to follow.

NCI listening sessions are brimming with ideas about what works and what doesn't work. Here's a small sample of what aid administrators are saying:

"This country is not serious about providing access. We talk a good game, but we don't back it up."

"The federal programs should be simplified into one grant, one loan, and one job to remove most of the complexity in understanding, awarding and administering programs and enable better counseling and better debt management."

"My hope is that we can get back to financial assistance programs that help needy students. Students should not be saddled with unaffordable debt or confused by complicated applications and eligibility criteria... these programs should be entitlements so students won't worry that Pell Grants and Stafford Loans may disappear. Students should be able to focus on their education, not worry about being able to afford their education."

Listening sessions are scheduled at the following events. If there's even a chance you can make one of these listening sessions, please make every effort to do so.

- MASFAA, Hyannis, MA, Fri., Nov 22, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Dept. of Education FSA Conference, Las Vegas, NV, Dec. 2 to 5 (exact date and time TBD)
- CCCSFAA, Anaheim, CA, Sat., Dec. 6, 3:15 pm
- CASFAA, Anaheim, CA, Sun., Dec, 7, 3:30 pm
- CASFAA, Anaheim, CA, Mon., Dec, 8, 10:15 am
- SWASFAA, Little Rock, AR, Thurs., Dec. 11, 3:30 pm
- MSFAA, Dearborn, MI, 2009, date and time TBD
- SASFAA, Myrtle Beach, SC 2009, date and time TBD

More

If you are unable to attend a listening session or if the speaking lines were too long for you to have your chance to speak, you may also [submit your comments online](#).

3. Participate in NASFAA’s Online Forum

In early November, NASFAA President & CEO Dr. Phil Day launched an online forum at <http://www.nasfaapresident.org> where aid administrators can post comments and interact with other aid administrators on higher education funding. This online forum is designed to encourage and facilitate discussions of federal student aid issues as they relate to NCI.

All comments are welcome! You may comment on any topic in the forum as often as you wish. Comments submitted by individuals with *myNASFAA* accounts (using your work email address to post) will be considered as NASFAA develops its NCI recommendations. Both members and non-members can have *myNASFAA* accounts, so if you don’t have your account yet, please [create an account](#) now.

Rest assured that email addresses will not be displayed publicly on the blog. This blog is meant to facilitate discussion. It is understood that comments posted to this blog represent the opinions of the participants, not the organizations or institutions with which they are associated.

Grassroots Effort

NCI could not happen without the help of active financial aid administrators working in the field. This effort is vitally important for the millions of current and future low-income and historically underrepresented students who are often left behind. Now is NASFAA’s time to help move the country toward a recommitment to higher education access and success.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) is a nonprofit membership organization that represents more than 14,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities, and career schools across the country. Each year, financial aid professionals help more than 16 million students receive funding for postsecondary education. Based in Washington, D.C., NASFAA is the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators. In addition to its member Web site at www.NASFAA.org, the Association offers a Web site with financial aid information for parents and students at www.StudentAid.org.

[Editor: A photograph of the author is available for download at www.NASFAA.org/Subhomes/MediaCenter/JustinDraegerPhotoMediaCenter.jpg.]