

NASFAA's "Off the Cuff" Podcast – Episode 300 Transcript

OTC Inside the Beltway: 300 Episodes Later

Justin Draeger:

Hey, everybody. Welcome to another edition "Off the Cuff." I'm Justin Draeger.

Karen McCarthy:

I'm Karen McCarthy from NASFAA's Policy team.

Allie Arcese:

And I'm Allie Arcese with our Communications team.

Justin Draeger:

Welcome, everybody, to our 300th episode of "Off the Cuff." Are we supposed to have a-

Allie Arcese:

We need that alarm sound that's like, "Brah, brah, brah, brah!"

Justin Draeger:

So we don't have any big fanfare for this one, but I do want to prep... I don't think we do. Do we, Allie?

Allie Arcese:

I don't think so.

Justin Draeger:

We brought you back. That's kind of vague.

Allie Arcese:

Whoa. Because people really care what I have to say.

Justin Draeger:

I care. And I think Karen cares.

Allie Arcese:

That's all that matters.

Justin Draeger:

Karen, you're not really-

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

You're not emoting.

Allie Arcese:

She's like, "Oh yeah. Definitely."

Justin Draeger:

You're not really emoting a lot of caring, but-

Karen McCarthy:

I was like, "Wait." I was looking over at the agenda. I was like, "What's that part?"

Justin Draeger:

Okay. But I do want to... We are coming up on my final episode and we do have some surprises in store for that one, and that'll be in two weeks.

Allie Arcese:

I'm excited for that.

Justin Draeger:

Me too. I'm excited as well. Karen?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. I'm excited.

Justin Draeger:

Are you going to emote anything for that one?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. No, I was, some of these things... I imagine, Justin, you'll probably be on some... You'll be a guest on some podcast somewhere else, but you just won't have this in your new role. Some of your NASFAA things that I think you really enjoy and see as fun, these are like you're kind of phasing out.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. I find that another podcast. They don't let me just talk as much as I want.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

I'm not the boss over there. I can't just talk endlessly.

Karen McCarthy:

They're like, here's your script, Justin.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. I hate those. I hate podcasts. Well, hate's too strong of a word. I don't like them as much.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah,

Justin Draeger:

Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

It doesn't feel natural.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. You know what? And I'm not a scripted type of person. I think that's the other thing. Did you guys do drama in high school or college?

Allie Arcese:

No.

Karen McCarthy:

I took a class, but I wouldn't say I did any drama.

Justin Draeger:

Oh, you took a drama class. That surprises me.

Karen McCarthy:

In college, I think we had some kind of fine arts requirement. It definitely,

Justin Draeger:

Karen I love that we've worked together so long and you still find ways to surprise me.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

So you took a drama class and how did it go? You got A's, I'm sure you got A's.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, but I was also definitely challenging in new ways for me,

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Karen McCarthy:

Would say. Yeah, because it was a lot of improv, thinking on your feet, kind of that kind of stuff.

Justin Draeger:

I don't feel like I would enjoy improv. Yeah. Well, were you both here for the-

Allie Arcese:

Yes.

Justin Draeger:

For the improv-

Allie Arcese:

That's exactly what I was thinking about.

Justin Draeger:

Retreat we did?

Allie Arcese:

I remember, I don't know how this,

Karen McCarthy:

That was definitely a stretch.

Allie Arcese:

I don't know how this came up, but right before that retreat, I was talking to Aaron,

Justin Draeger:

Who used to work here,

Allie Arcese:

Who used to work here, yeah. And it came up, we were talking about, I don't know, just uncomfortable middle school things. And I was like, oh yeah, I took an improv class in middle school with one of my friends and it was one of the worst things I've ever done in my life. I hated it. I was just embarrassed the whole time. And she was sitting there because she knew,

Justin Draeger:

I don't know how to tell you this.

Allie Arcese:

And then the next week was our all staff retreat and we go into this big room and they're like, surprise. It's group improv. And I was like, no. I looked over at Erin and she was just like, I'm sorry.

Justin Draeger:

Well, in fairness, it wasn't, well, I don't want to put words in your mouth. Was it terrible?

Allie Arcese:

I think I just blacked out.

Justin Draeger:

So you don't have any recollections.

Karen McCarthy:

I don't think it was terrible. It was definitely uncomfortable. But in that personal growth kind of way,

Justin Draeger:

It was uncomfortable.

Karen McCarthy:

Well,

Justin Draeger:

As I recall, it was mostly, it was just games. I don't think it wasn't, remember this show with Drew Carey when they were on TV?

Allie Arcese:

Oh, whose line is it anyway.

Justin Draeger:

Okay, thank you. It wasn't that. It wasn't like you literally had to act out scenes in front of your,

Allie Arcese:

Yes, it was. No, it was.

Justin Draeger:

No, it wasn't. What? I don't remember this at all. I thought it was games. We were in the middle and you had to pass a ball to somebody else,

Allie Arcese:

There was that, but we also did some acting out scenes. I think there was one in particular that I do remember.

Justin Draeger:

Remind me because I have no, maybe I blacked out.

Allie Arcese:

Some of us were lined up in chairs and we had to take turns. There were four or five of us who went and sat in the chairs and everyone else was like,

Justin Draeger:

Did you go up?

Allie Arcese:

I did. I remember I was there, Steven was there and they gave us, I don't know, personalities or something that we had to act out. You're an angry sandwich shop owner.

Karen McCarthy:

I remember building a story you had to add on. Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

I was just like, okay, I'm going to be Larry the sandwich shop owner.

Justin Draeger:

Wait, why do you have to have a, did they say from New York?

Allie Arcese:

It was just like, see, this is why I hate improv. Just like everything I think of is stupid.

Justin Draeger:

I love it. I'm so glad we did this. Oh, how wonderful that this-

Allie Arcese:

Yeah, a memory you'll never clearly forget.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, I didn't remember it at all, but I'm glad it was an imprint for you. This was a memory marker or something you'll never forget.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

Imprint, scar.

Karen McCarthy:

It does.

Justin Draeger:
You're welcome.

Karen McCarthy:
When we have these staff retreats and we're planning these activities, I have heard you Justin say, well, no matter what we do, some people are going to hate it. It's really hard.

Allie Arcese:
Collective trauma.

Justin Draeger:
Collective trauma. FAFSA, FAFSA rollout of 2024, the improv retreat of 2018 or whenever that was. It's all a blur.

Allie Arcese:
I mean, it's better than having to read an entire book and then be quizzed on it in real time.

Justin Draeger:
Geez. How many, can we just cover the retreats you actually liked? How about that? Those sound like far fewer. What about this last retreat? We didn't do anything did we?

Allie Arcese:
I thought we did.

Justin Draeger:
We did have improv. You had to go off for 15 minutes and come back and give a departmental update. And how was that?

Allie Arcese:
I wish I had more time. I wish I had known what we were going to do ahead of time because-

Justin Draeger:
I know.

Allie Arcese:
That part of it was like,

Justin Draeger:
But see, then everybody complains that you have homework like you just did so you can't win.

Allie Arcese:
But see, no, because afterwards I went home and the song 'I'm just Ken' popped into my head and then I had this brilliant idea where we could have done our calm team update. We're just calm.

Justin Draeger:

That would've been a lot

Allie Arcese:

And it was a missed opportunity if I had known ahead of time. You know,

Justin Draeger:

You know what, we have an all staff meeting in two weeks. What I want you to do is you're going to get a redo and bring it back with all staff meeting. All right. Can you do that? Just you if you want, you can bring in Hugh.

Karen McCarthy:

I really like the scavenger hunt in the museum.

Justin Draeger:

Oh, in the museum?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah. That was two years ago.

Justin Draeger:

Here's what I love about those. For whatever the couple hours we do that I don't have to be quote in quote in charge.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

No, that one was fun.

Justin Draeger:

And then I can just screw around and derail everything. I'm a normal staff person and yeah, I wasn't in either of your groups I don't think was I?

Allie Arcese:

No.

Karen McCarthy:

No. I was in the winning group. Winning group.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Well, that's because I wasn't in your group because I was like, I'm just going to be this guy over here and we're just going to play around and I'm not here to win or anything. I just don't have to be in charge for a day. And it was a lot of fun.

Karen McCarthy:

But then I mean that was totally up my alley. I like the competitive games, but there are definitely.

Allie Arcese:

Oh, me too.

Karen McCarthy:

Some people on staff are less competitive.

Allie Arcese:

And some people don't follow the rules, which pisses me off.

Justin Draeger:

That's why this year we handed out bananas to everybody because we were like, we can't make this competitive in any way because half our staff will eat each other alive. I've seen our staff devolve into monsters over the most innocuous stupid games. So that's why I was like, this year

Allie Arcese:

It's me.

Justin Draeger:

Buy bananas and just tell everybody up front. Everybody gets a banana and I don't want any winners, everybody-

Allie Arcese:

Are you a winner? Are you a loser?

Justin Draeger:

Everybody's a loser.

Allie Arcese:

It's all the same. Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Well this is great.

Allie Arcese:

This type of content is how we got to 300 episodes.

Justin Draeger:

Send your complaints directly to Allie. This is how we get the complaints. We do have some, I feel like things are improving, frustrations are still high. The consequences are still high with the FAFSA. I don't want to downplay that, but we are seeing eight offers going out. People are still, we do have some populations that are still being left out, but things are happening. Karen, why don't you catch us up on the latest and greatest from the Department of Education since the last podcast? Where are we?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, since the last podcast, so we had the EA, excuse me, on May 17th. That was a little bit of an update on where Ed was with reprocessing, the big batches of reprocessing, for the FPS issues, kind of the ED specific issues, and then the FTI issues, the IRS-related issues. So those were the big, big groups, millions of records that needed to be reprocessed. And they mostly gave that update because while they had announced their plan sent out lists of who could potentially be reprocessed to institutions, there weren't specific dates tied to that. And not everything, the reprocessing didn't happen all at the same time. So the schools are continuing to get reprocessed ICERs and they were wondering, how do we know when you're done? Are you done yet or are they still going to come? How long are they going to come?

Justin Draeger:

Yep.

Karen McCarthy:

So the update that they put out basically said, you kind of had to read a little bit between the lines, but they're done with that big reprocessing. And so what they said is that the list that they had released earlier that schools were relying on, these are the people who you could potentially receive reprocessed ICERs for should no longer be used. And there were some people on those lists that schools said they were kind of holding back from packaging because they appeared on the list. So they thought they were going to get a reprocessed ICER. And so in this announcement, Ed was basically saying, "We're done, don't use that list. So if you're holding on to anyone, you should move them through packaging. We over-identified the potential reprocessing here". What the EA did not say, and Ed will not say, is that they are 100% done with reprocessing because that's never the case that they would say that in any year. They always find smaller batches of errors,

Justin Draeger:

Right? That's business as usual.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. So I think some people were looking for that in the EA, but that was not there. What they said is that they're primarily done with those big big groups and then it identified a few issues that they've identified are issues and that they're still working through. And the two, and they were very clear in the EA, they affect less than one half of 1% of the 10 million FAFSAs at the time. But we had been hearing from the community, so we did know that they seem to be real issues. One is that schools were receiving ICERs that didn't have SAIs on them, blank SAI,

Justin Draeger:

Yep.

Karen McCarthy:

But didn't have a reject code. So normally if you don't get an SAI, you have a code that tells you what the problem is and they didn't have that. So they had no idea what the problem was if there was a problem. And then the others were students that were selected for verification, but they didn't have a verification tracking group assigned to them. So schools are wondering, okay, I have to verify, what am I verifying? I don't have that. I need that code.

And in that announcement from the 17th, ED said that they had identified the issue they were working to resolve and the resolution would likely start in the upcoming week. And we've continued to hear, I hear mostly about the blank SAIs and that schools are still seeing those. I'm not sure if they are still seeing new records come in with blank SAIs or if they are wondering what about these old ones that I'm hanging onto, will they get resolved soon? I checked in with FSA this morning and they said they're putting in a fix this upcoming weekend, but they will likely this week post another EA with a generic reprocessing update and where things stand. So I don't have any more details on that, but we should hopefully soon get an update from them on reprocessing in general and those kind of unresolved issues they're working through.

Justin Draeger:

So we're definitely in cleanup mode. And like I said at the outset, reprocessing is largely done. There will always be a little bit of groups, but largely in cleanup mode. And then as I also said at the outset, Karen, there are still a few students that are in a bit of a quandary here. Right. So we're talking about some populations that can't still fully use some of the benefits of the new FAFSA. And those students who originally completed a paper FAFSA, they're still a little bit in a bit of a jam, right?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, because they did that earlier announcement. Ed said that they will start to process the paper FAFSAs they have in their possession by the end of June.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah.

Karen McCarthy:

They said the numbers are low in terms of the paper FAFSAs they have. They suspect that many, although this is really just speculation on their part, many of those people may have since filed an online FAFSA. So their online FAFSA has been moving along. But yeah, if somebody only filed a paper FAFSA, those still have not yet been processed.

Justin Draeger:

All right, Karen, what else we want to talk about here? Anything more?

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, I think this is kind of unofficial conversations that we've had with FSA in that they've been getting lots of questions about conflicting information, which conflicting information is not new. We've always

had it. Schools know they need to resolve conflicting information, but with the new FAFSA there are new opportunities for conflicting information. So they've gotten a lot of questions about, is this conflicting information? Is this not? Particularly with regards to you have some information on a FAFSA that perhaps conflicts with what comes over from the IRS.

And in some cases it's not a conflict. It could just be that the IRS information is as we know it's prior year info and it may conflict with what the student is currently reporting and we go with what they're currently reporting. Or it may be something like the applicant says they are a non-filer, did not file taxes, and it pings against the IRS and pulls in tax return information. So that is more of a clear-cut conflict that would need to be resolved. But there's kind of lots of different scenarios. Is it a conflict, A? And B, how do I resolve it if it is one? And FSA told us that they're working on some guidance generally about conflicting information. No ETA on when that will come out. Although they were pretty clear on the example of somebody who says they're a non-filer and tax return information comes in that is conflicting information that the school would need to resolve. But it's unclear exactly how that would get resolved. So we're kind of hoping that they will provide some clarity in all of these scenarios in this guidance that they're working on.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. And the department is aware that this is an acute need from schools.

Karen McCarthy:

They are, yes. Similar to the data sharing guidance, which I guess I can, when I think acute need, data sharing guidance kind of goes off in my head that is also still pending.

Justin Draeger:

That's right. And we checked in with the department this week on the data sharing guidance. They understand it's an acute need. We keep hearing it's about a week out, but then a week goes by and we don't have it.

Karen McCarthy:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

So we don't have an update on timing other than it's about a week out. So we'll keep pressing on the department for the data sharing guidance. All right, thanks very much Karen. Appreciate it. Let's move on. We have a letter that we worked on with our other colleagues in the higher education space. This was spearheaded by the American Council on Education signed on by several higher education associations including NASFAA, the presidential associations and several other groups. We'll have a link to this in our show notes. This was also covered in NASFA's Today's News. Let me cover some of the highlights on this and then I want to bring you into this conversation as well, Karen, because I know you and your team worked with ACE and the other hired associations who signed on.

Three things in this letter right out of the gate that it asked for. And this was sent to the four corners, which would be the Democrats and the Republicans in charge of the House and Senate education committees. So sent to Congress but really directed at issues surrounding the FAFSA. Right out of the gate, urging Congress to address "Problems created by the delays from the FAFSA and to guard against similar problems in the future". So first they asked, or we in the higher education community asked for

schools to continue to have the ability to transfer a hundred percent of their unexpended federal work [inaudible 00:17:51] dollars to the FCOG grant program. And I think that's all under the heading of too much going on this year. We don't have time to fiddle around with programs the same. We need flexibility. So flexibility is needed.

Number two in assessment, a long-term assessment of how FAFSA delays have impacted low income students and other students and institutions. And I think this is particularly needed because right now we're seeing just on a weekly basis, institutions who are announcing either closures or mergers. Something that I think folks were calling were sort of predicting during the pandemic, maybe forestalled because of aid packages that were passed by Congress to prop up institutions that is not on the horizon right now. And we are seeing schools who are facing some serious fiscal pressures that are exacerbated by the fact that we have enrollment pressures created by these FAFSA delays.

Number three, a comprehensive assessment of the changes to the need analysis formula. We always have modeling and we saw some of that modeling done by the Urban Institute and some other research organizations and by Congress itself before the FAFSA Simplification Act was passed. But this letter's asking for now that it has passed, let's take a look at some of the data sets in these out years to see how students and schools are being impacted, particularly in light of some of these FAFSA delays. So, those are the three things out of the gate. And then there are several headings that I want to highlight because some of these would get at technical amendments that, Karen you and I have talked about that NASFAA would sign on to and will sign on to in the future.

One. A hold harmless protection for institutions of higher education that processed original ICERS. And this goes back to sub regulatory guidance that the Department of Education issued in the last several months as we were dealing with ICERS that came out and then needed to be reprocessed. That contained inaccurate data and then schools may have processed financial aid offers based off of those original ICERS. And so in the letter it's asking for clear language be placed in statute that institutions are allowed to package and will not be subject to punitive measures at some future point well into the future as a result of following the Department of Education.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, Justin on that one, we've had a few questions on that because, you mentioned the sub-regulatory guidance that Ed had, because they did in one of their announcements say that a school could have made an award on an original ICER if the student aid index was lower on the original ICER. Meaning it's to the benefit of the student and they would not use the fact that you did that as a flag, in terms of their reviews and any of that moving forward.

And in particular, I think some of the college presidents, we mentioned this was a community letter, reached out to their organizations and they felt that that language that ED used was not strong enough in their sub-regulatory guidance. So they were really hoping for more stronger language to be put in the statute itself by Congress that would protect institutions. So this isn't, some people have said, don't we already have that? Didn't ED say we could do that and nothing bad would happen? And Ed did address it in their EA, but there was some concern out there that Ed's language wasn't quite as strong as it could have been in terms of offering those protections.

Justin Draeger:

So it's not like schools aren't protected, it's just that we're asking for something actually in statute which would be stronger.

Karen McCarthy:

Yes.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. Also, in the letter is asking Congress to officially move the FAFSA deadline from January one to October one, which we've covered extensively in this podcast and in articles. Number three heading here is require a comprehensive assessment of the family farm and small business exclusion. We've talked a lot about family farms and what we're asking for is what's the impact? Let's actually take a look at the numbers and see if we need to make some adjustments in the statute and federal methodology.

Karen McCarthy:

And that one, oh, can I jump in on the family farm one? I feel like that one is particularly important to ask for the assessment because we are now getting information on the FAFSA that we didn't have before because it wasn't being reported. So it's more challenging to model this in the absence of real data than say getting rid of number in college because you knew how many families reported more than one in college on a FAFSA before. So you could model who would be impacted and all of that. But with the family farm, we were going in the opposite direction. We didn't have info and now we have new info. So it's hard to model that until we actually get into a real life cycle and see what the actual impact is.

Justin Draeger:

And to be clear, we don't actually, the department could release these assessments without legislation.

Karen McCarthy:

Oh sure.

Justin Draeger:

So this is asking for legislation, but the department could do these assessments without it as well. So there's nothing prohibiting us from asking the department, Hey, could you just do these assessments?

Karen McCarthy:

Right. But we were in this letter, we did the original, the draft said that we wanted Congress to require the Department of Ed to do this analysis and one of our suggestions was can we ask them to be required to make it publicly available? We don't want Ed doing it and then just sending it to Congress. We all want to be able to see that information.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, we'd like to do it without foiling it and ripping it out of-

Karen McCarthy:

But yes, I mean Ed could just do it and make it publicly available on their own if they wanted.

Justin Draeger:

Let's all see it. Sunshine works both ways.

Karen McCarthy:

Yep.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. Number four, allow for SAI prorations. So I think enough said we all get why that's important for particularly summer terms. Five, add the housing question back onto the FAFSA form. So enough said, I think we all understand why we want that. Six, allow for married students who are separated to be considered independent. I think this really gets at trying to restore something before where under this, here's a specific scenario. If you're 23 years old and you're separated, you would be considered dependent as it stands today. Whereas before, if you were 23 years old, you had been married and you were separated, you would've been considered independent, without any sort of intervention or PJ or anything like that.

Number seven, allow for the increased usage of FAFSA data. This one I'll just flag is this sort of, is preempting a little bit, we don't have the guidance from the department on data sharing. But it's re-emphasizing the need that within the institution a lot of things will be dependent on them being able to share the fact that there are low-income students, and sharing that cross campus so that they can provide support services to those students.

And then number eight, the last one in this letter really gets it reduced income verification now that we have IRS transfers of data. Which the department committed to temporarily this year, but really it's sort of getting a commitment on an ongoing basis that verification really should be quite low going forward, given that we're basically using IRS data nowadays.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. And most of the verification process as our community thinks of it, is not in the higher education act in terms of selection rate, what you're verifying the documents and all of that. So I think part of it is to get Congress to put something in the statute itself. That would be more directive to the department about the need for lower, I mean the department does understand the community's wishes, but really right now the ball's completely in the Department of Ed's court with the way that things are set up. So this would kind of get things codified into the statute.

Justin Draeger:

And not at the sacrifice of program integrity. We want the right people to get the right amount of money, but just recognizing we also don't need to overburden students in schools with verification that ultimately doesn't result in any change. Something that was happening even before we had direct IRS uploads into the-

Karen McCarthy:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

All right, our final thing this week we are closing in on our annual meeting, our NASFAA national conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I'm becoming increasingly excited about this conference. We're going to have a lot of exciting stuff planned Allie. When was the last time you were at our, you weren't at last?

Allie Arcese:

No, the last conference I was at was 2019 in Orlando.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, so it's been a few years.

Karen McCarthy:

Really?

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, I know you weren't with us last year, which was in San Diego.

Allie Arcese:

Yes.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, your home county and you're coming with us to Milwaukee. This is going to be a good, and we have good numbers. Our numbers are,

Allie Arcese:

High.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. People were predicting like, oh, Milwaukee, you might not pull. Our numbers are solid.

Allie Arcese:

Hey, you know what, Milwaukee seems pretty cool. I'm excited to visit. We watch Top Chef in our family. Actually the first year we did this during Covid when there were no sports,

Justin Draeger:

Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

Everything got canceled. We did a Top Chef fantasy league with my brother-in-law and sister-in-law because they had an all-star season. So we all drafted chefs and made this, so we keep doing that. And anyway, this season they're in Milwaukee actually, so they're highlighting all these cool restaurants and food things about Milwaukee and Wisconsin in general. Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, so one of the things that,

Allie Arcese:

Try to check that out.

Justin Draeger:

If you haven't been to a NASFA conference in a while, little while. One of the things we do now is we are going to cities where people can get out into the community, and we make sure there's enough time so that folks can go to these businesses and patronize them and make sure that they are going to a Top Chef restaurant if they want to. We also highlight minority owned and women owned businesses so that they can go out and support people in the local community, among a lot of other things. So why don't you catch us up Allie? What are some of the most exciting things that people should be looking for?

Allie Arcese:

Oh gosh. Well, one thing I know that will be really interesting, we're doing a reception at the Harley Davidson Museum. I think that will be really cool for everyone, especially you Justin.

Justin Draeger:

I do ride,

Allie Arcese:

You have that interest in motorcycles.

Justin Draeger:

I do ride a Harley Davidson and have for many, many years.

Allie Arcese:

Is it a Harley?

Justin Draeger:

It is.

Allie Arcese:

No it's not?

Justin Draeger:

Yes, it is. Yeah. How dare you. Yeah, it is. Actually,

Allie Arcese:

I've never seen it.

Justin Draeger:

I rode it in. I rode it into the office today actually. So, yeah.

Allie Arcese:

Oh, good for you. When I was going through the, I go through before we publish everything on the website and copy, edit all the session descriptions. So I've read all of them. I think there's a lot of interesting ones this year, like on the intersection of wellbeing and financial aid and how it relates to financial aid practitioners in their offices as well as their students. There's some sessions on women in financial aid and advancing women in the profession.

Obviously there's a lot of sessions on rehashing this year's FAFSA rollout and lessons learned and things like that. There's a little bit of something for everyone. I think there's some topics we haven't seen before. There's going to be some on diversity, equity and inclusion and undocumented students and Native American and tribal institutions. So just a huge, huge variety. The schedule and all the session descriptions are up online.

There's also some special events taking place for first time attendees. So the first timers will have their own dedicated Slack community in our Slack community. And you can also sign up for a mentor if you're a first time conference attendee. And that deadline is this week, tomorrow, Friday. And then the first timers will also have a kickoff networking event on Sunday evening the first night that we're there.

Justin Draeger:

Great.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah, so lots to look forward to.

Justin Draeger:

Let's make sure here we put a link to how people can sign up for a mentor if they're a first timer. I think one out of three or maybe-

Allie Arcese:

There are a lot. Yeah, there are a lot of first timers.

Justin Draeger:

One out of three people will be first timers at this year's conference, which is great. It's great to see so many first timers there and the Department of Education will be there. So folks will be able to interact with the Department of Education colleagues. They'll be doing a couple sessions. I think they'll have 'Ask a Fed' set up in the Exhibit hall so they can go in and have some one-on-one dialogue with their federal colleagues.

We have some great, as Allie mentioned, I think there's a 5K run walk. We're going to have some students come in and be doing some performances for us. We have the DJ for the Milwaukee Bucks who will be doing pre shows before every general session, so you'll want to make sure you're there on time. And we even have at the last session, we have a giveaway for three free registrations for next year's conference. So you must be present to win. So if stick around, there'll also be a random giveaway for three free registrations for next year's. Where is next year's conference?

Allie Arcese:

Anaheim.

Justin Draeger:

Oh, thank you.

Allie Arcese:

AKA Disneyland.

Justin Draeger:

Are you going to go to next year's?

Allie Arcese:

Are you going to come?

Justin Draeger:

Well, I won't be working here, but,

Allie Arcese:

Well, I know that's why I was asking, are you going to attend?

Justin Draeger:

I hope so. I hope it's in the budget. Obviously I am not the biggest Disney fan, but I'm not a Disney hater either. This is Disneyland or Disney World.

Allie Arcese:

Disneyland. Whoa, what?

Justin Draeger:

I'm sorry I don't,

Karen McCarthy:

I get them confused too. Justin.

Justin Draeger:

Thank you. Karen. Sorry, Allie. I feel like I just assaulted you in some way. Anaheim is not next to the water either. Is it, in California?

Allie Arcese:

No, I mean it's not like you can walk to the beach,

Justin Draeger:

But you could smell it. It's California still though. I mean, it's got to be,

Allie Arcese:

You can smell a lot of things in Anaheim, I'm sure.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. I feel like we might need to work on our marketing a little bit for Anaheim. Let's focus,

Allie Arcese:

Come smell us in Anaheim.

Justin Draeger:

Let's focus on Milwaukee, which is right on the water actually. People may not realize it's gorgeous.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. I feel like I should know this, but this came up, I was somewhere away from my phone. I was like, what is the water in Milwaukee? And I asked the people who are with me, and nobody seemed to know what the water was. What is the water?

Justin Draeger:

Milwaukee is right on Lake Michigan, so I don't know though if-

Allie Arcese:

Which is water.

Justin Draeger:

It is water and it's fresh water, but I don't know if on a clear day you can see across Lake Michigan to actually see Michigan. And then Milwaukee also has the Milwaukee River going through it. And on one of those nights we're actually doing-

Karen McCarthy:

Multiple bodies of water.

Justin Draeger:

We're doing boat tours, so you can get on a boat from one of the receptions and actually I think it might be the Harley Davidson night tour.

Allie Arcese:

That's pretty sweet.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. And you can just get on one of the boats and do a quick tour and it'll take you up and down the river and come back. And at the Harley Davidson night, if you do the Harley Davidson thing, you also have a Harley Davidson experience where you can get on a bike and it's like an experience where they have fans and it turns on and you feel what it feels like to have a,

Allie Arcese:

I think that's the closest I'll ever get to riding a motorcycle.

Justin Draeger:

Is that your way of asking me to give you a ride on the Harley Davidson?

Allie Arcese:

No, I'm saying I don't want to.

Justin Draeger:

Well, you live right around the corner. Allie. Do you want me to stop over and pick you up?

Allie Arcese:

Yeah. Sure.

Justin Draeger:

All right.

Allie Arcese:

Probably not the best thing to do when I'm like six months pregnant.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah, maybe not now.

Justin Draeger:

All right, well we'll wait until after this [inaudible 00:33:50] is born and then we'll do it. All right.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah. Okay.

Justin Draeger:

Sounds good.

Karen McCarthy:

Justin, you know how you have said several times, I'm always learning something new about you today,

Justin Draeger:

Yeah.

Karen McCarthy:

When you first said that you were driving a motorcycle, I was like, interesting, because you don't strike me as the motorcycle type.

Justin Draeger:

You didn't know.

Allie Arcese:

Did you not know he had a motorcycle?

Karen McCarthy:

I mean, this was a long time ago. How long have you had a license? I think this was,

Justin Draeger:

I've had my motorcycle license for at least, I don't know, 12 years.

Karen McCarthy:

Oh, I don't know. Well, maybe it was when I learned,

Allie Arcese:

But you didn't buy one until,

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, I didn't buy one until they installed the 66 tolls.

Karen McCarthy:

Well see that's where I'm going with it.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, it was totally out of practicality because they installed those damn toll roads.

Karen McCarthy:

I was like, really? You don't really strike me as the Harley type because I'm thinking of people out riding on a Blue Ridge parkway. I see beautiful weather and look at the foliage in the fall.

Justin Draeger:

No.

Karen McCarthy:

Yeah. And you said, oh, no, no, no, that's not me. He said, do you know how much faster I can get to the office?

Justin Draeger:

Right. First I bought a small Honda so I could take the toll roads for free, and then it was presented to me to buy a 2002 Harley-Davidson, 2003 Harley-Davidson Fat Boy. And I was like, well, that's a lot bigger and louder, so I'll take that. Sure.

Allie Arcese:

Sold.

Justin Draeger:

Sold, right? Yeah.

Karen McCarthy:

It's like, oh, so it's about your commute, there's the Justin I know. Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

So now it fits. The pieces are fitting together. Yeah. All right. Let's talk about the virtual conference.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah, so two weeks after the in-person conference, we've also got the virtual conference, which is a great opportunity. I mean, we started doing this during the pandemic when we had to cancel our annual conference and just kind of learned it was a good added opportunity for people who can't make it to the in-person conference or maybe don't have the budget to send multiple people. So for an institutional registration like flat rate, you can sign up as many people in your office,

Justin Draeger:

All new content.

Allie Arcese:

All new content. We're not repeating anything.

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Allie Arcese:

We've got a great keynote speaker, Alicia de Lorenzo, who's going to talk about, her session sounds interesting. How to sort of flip burnout on its head and not focus on the negative, but turn it into something that you can kind of channel in a positive way. I mean, personally, I'm interested to hear about that because that doesn't make sense to me.

Justin Draeger:

Are you okay, Allie, are you okay? Let me ask you this final minute. Are you doing all right?

Allie Arcese:

You know the friends, "I'm fine". No, I just think it sounds like an interesting topic. Then we've also got the need analysis credential training, which if you say you have four staff members who do the credential training, and then you're eligible to take the test for the credential at no extra cost. That makes up the cost of your registration and more just by participating in that credential training. We've also got a good general session on FAFSA simplification and how under-resourced schools weathered the storm. And then personal plug, I'll be doing a session with some reporters for a round table. We're going to have three or four higher Ed reporters talk about their experience, how they've seen things change, and specifically what it was like reporting on higher Ed and particularly financial aid in such a chaotic year. So looking forward to that one.

Justin Draeger:

It's going to be a great conference and your session looks to be stellar Allie, so people should definitely check this out. Thanks for plugging all that. Thank you everybody for listening for 300 episodes, or less if you just are joining us.

Allie Arcese:

Let us know if you need therapy.

Justin Draeger:

And we look forward to many, many more. And tune in the next two weeks. My final episode is in two weeks from now, right into our annual meeting. And hope everybody had a great weekend. We'll talk to you all again very soon. Remember to leave us a comment, remember to subscribe and tell a friend, and we'll talk to you again next week. Thanks.