



ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

# AASFAA Newsletter

[www.aasfaaonline.org](http://www.aasfaaonline.org)

Fall 2003 Edition, September 29, 2003

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Deborah Byrd

Summer has come to a close and we are approaching one of my favorite seasons, fall. I think of cool nights, beautiful fall leaves and setting out bulbs for my spring garden. As you all know the tax package failed and times are going to be difficult in the coming months for all of us due to budget cuts. I encourage you all to get involved because it will make a difference.

"The Future is Now" is the theme for the Fall Conference scheduled October 15-17, 2003 at the Auburn University Conference Center, Auburn, AL. The Program Committee chaired by Dr. Chip Quisenberry and Andy Weaver, the Local Arrangements Committee chaired by Dan Miller and the Vendor/Sponsor chaired by Melinda Calhoun have planned an unforgettable Fall Conference. The program will consist of sessions that will be beneficial to all of us now and in the future. The Local Arrangements committee has made sure that our stay will be comfortable and the activities will be entertaining. Check out the tentative agenda for information on the exciting planned programs.

By now you should have received an email from me about the Humanitarian Project that we are embarking on at the conference for Children's Harbor, a not-for-profit organization that works with Children's Hospital of Birmingham. Let's make this project a success.

I would like to thank each of you for having the confidence in me to serve as your 2003-04 President. I am looking forward to the new and exciting challenges that are presented to me as President of AASFAA. I look forward to working with everyone, and let me know if there are any issues or concerns that you would like for me or the board to address.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Cindy Massey

The New Aid Officer's Workshop for the Fall Conference in Auburn, AL will cover three informative topics, Cost of Attendance, Professional Judgment and Institution Application and Re-certification for Participation in Title IV Programs.

We encourage all "new" Financial Aid Administrators and staff to attend. Remember to indicate on the *Conference Registration Form* that you plan to attend the New Aid Officer's Workshop so that we can plan for each participant to have the handouts and lunch. The Workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15 from 9:00 a.m. until Noon with lunch immediately following.

Look forward to seeing everyone in Auburn!

## ACHE LIASION REPORT

by Cheryl Newton

After the September 9<sup>th</sup> Tax Referendum was voted down by the vast majority of the citizens of the state, Gov. Riley immediately proceeded to his "Plan B" on budget cuts for the 2003-04 fiscal year. His recommendations were zero funding for the following programs:

- Alabama Student Assistance Program
- Alabama Student Grant Program
- Alabama National Guard Educational Assistance Program
- Chiropractic
- TSPAT

Unless the legislature proposes changes of restoring funding (full or partial) on these programs, no payments for the award year 2003-04 can be processed. I will keep everyone updated as to how these programs proceed through this special session.

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## LONG RANGE PLANNING REPORT

by Dee Talley

The AASFAA Long Range Planning Committee has been charged with the task of developing a five year plan for the association. Since AASFAA has no current long range planning document, this committee will be working hard to develop such a document. The committee will be developing goals and objectives for the association that will ensure its continued viability and effectiveness. The committee will be engaging in the following activities during the 2003-2004 year:

- Developing a strategic plan for the association's leadership and fiscal integrity
- Access current committees to determine their effectiveness in their goals and objectives. Also, the committee will determine if any committees need to be added or deleted from the organizational structure
- Make recommendations for changing or expanding services, activities and roles of the association
- Review and assess the association's mission statement for any needed changes.
- Assess association's bylaws and polices and procedures to ensure they are meeting the needs of the association.
- Review the terms and composition of office of elected officers.
- Assess the composition of the association's membership.

These are just a few of the many areas the committee will be reviewing this year. To be successful at this important endeavor, the committee will need to seek input from the members of AASFAA. Please provide the committee with any suggestions or concerns you may have about the future of AASFAA. This is your Association and as such should meet any needs that you may have. Please let the committee know what you think is working and what is think needs to be changed or improved upon. Your input is very valuable to the committee and they will welcome all comments and suggestions. Please e-mail any comments or suggestions you may have to the chair of the Long Range Planning Committee, Dee Talley, at [dgtalley@sass.uab.edu](mailto:dgtalley@sass.uab.edu).

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

## LEGISLATIVE LIASION REPORT

by Dot Wilkinson

AASFAA members are very fortunate to have Clark Aldridge serving as legislative liaison for SASFAA. He will keep all the states in SASFAA informed about important

issues in Washington and my job is to make sure those messages are relayed to the AASFAA membership. As we prepare for reauthorization, please stay informed about issues of importance to you and your institution and the students you serve. Both the house and senate will be working on issues that will affect reauthorization.

There may be tremendous cutbacks in funding in many areas of state government, including schools, due to the fact that Amendment One did not pass. Several people may lose their jobs, including teachers and support staff.

Dr. Bill Wall, from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, has reported that Governor Riley's budget proposal recommends zero funding for five of the six student assistance programs administered by ACHE. There will be no funding for 2003-04, unless the legislature intervenes.

The President's of the two-year college system met on September 16 for a very short meeting and left to meet with the legislators. I am sure that other segments of education are also meeting with their legislators to see what the outcome will be for funding for the current year as well as years to come.

The Birmingham News reports that if the governor's budget is approved, Alabama will join Wyoming and South Dakota as the only states that provide no state financial aid programs for college students.

Stay tuned.

## LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS REPORT

by Dan Miller

The Fall Conference Local Arrangements Committee has met several times and we've sent many emails and plans are "almost" complete for the Fall Conference at the Auburn Hotel and Conference Center. Even though the Hotel is undergoing some major renovations, our conference will not be adversely affected. With a little shifting and some "temporary facilities" outside, the Hotel will be ready to serve us and meet our needs. The Program Committee has arranged a great program with sessions of interest to all and we will make all the necessary arrangements to make this a memorable conference.

Our committee consists of Charles Markle who will assist in set up of registration and packet processing, Ellen Canada who will assist with A/V needs and menu selections and seating arrangements, and Melody Caldwell who will handle decorations and signs. These are their primary duties but they have all stepped in and taken on other responsibilities to assure that your conference experience will be positive and pleasant. They of course can accept volunteers—so, if you are willing to help, contact them to see how you can.

AASFAA has adopted a "humanitarian project" to gather donations of books, toys and games for the

Children's Harbor program to assist children at Children's Hospital in Birmingham who have long term serious illnesses. We will have large containers available for you to deposit your donations. (If you forget to bring something, checks will be acceptable too!) We hope that you will be enthusiastic in your giving. A presentation of these gifts will be made at the opening session.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference. Make your "arrangements" to be there!!

## AASFAA NEWS

by Tommy Dismukes and Deborah Byrd

### Congratulations

Jeff Golden, former Director of Financial Aid at Troy State University and an employee of the Alabama Student Loan Program/KHEAA for the past 7 years, will retire on September 30, 2003. However, don't be too upset, Jeff plans to return to work with the Alabama Student Loan Programs/KHEAA on a part-time basis where he will assist the Marketing team on some schools visits, conferences, and will also be responsible for some Outreach activities in the southern part of the state. We wish Jeff the best in his semi-retirement!

### Fall Conference Humanitarian Project

AASFAA's heart is big and strong and our desire to provide assistance to those in need is the hallmark of our very existence. As we come together at our Fall Conference to renew our relationships with each other and to renew our skills to be better at our jobs, I thought about providing an opportunity to assist a group in need of assistance whose hearts are not big and strong and who need hope and encouragement.

I have learned of the work of Children's Harbor, a not-for-profit organization that works with Children's Hospital of Birmingham. With a location that adjoins the hospital, Children's Harbor provides family counseling and support services for critically ill children and their parents. A second location at Lake Martin serves as a family retreat and adventure center for these children and their families.

I ask each of you to join me in an effort to provide needed books, toys, and games for the children served by Children's Harbor. With state budget cutbacks that will affect the Children's Hospital, support for those agencies that provide supplemental support services for these children is very important. Our timing could not be better.

In speaking with Children's Harbor's Executive Director, I have learned that the hospital has some stringent "screening standards" for donated toys, books etc. It would be better to provide a monetary donation—a check or a gift card from Wal-Mart, Circuit City or Best Buy. They can purchase from suppliers who meet the hospital's standards plus they have a tax-exempt status

and can avoid paying the 10% sales tax—so your donation goes further. Bring your donations to the conference on Wednesday October 16. A representative of Children's Harbor will be attending our conference to accept them. You might want to go to their website to see what they do and who they serve. See for yourself --- [www.childrensharbor.com](http://www.childrensharbor.com).

## LENDING MATTERS

by Timothy Ballard and David Long

### Alabama Student Loan Program Update

Alabama Student Loan Program's 2003-2004 publications have new looks and up-to-date info for students on finding, getting into, and paying for the college of their choice. There is no charge for the books or brochures.

*GETTING IN*, now in its seventh edition, is full of color, pictures and valuable information for anyone getting ready to go to college. Both the information and the way it's presented are updated, relevant and user-friendly. Copies of *Getting In* have been sent to all Alabama high schools. The 150-page book answers most questions college-bound seniors have, with information about topics from careers to financial aid to programs offered by Alabama colleges, trade schools and universities.

*AFFORDING HIGHER EDUCATION* is new to Alabama this year. This book lists some 4,000 financial aid sources available to Alabama residents and students. *Affording Higher Education* will be available later this fall.

*PLANNING YOUR FUTURE* brochures provide college-planning and financial aid information for high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors. The redesigned versions of *Planning Your Future* are at the printer and will be available soon.

### USA Funds Update

USA Funds® offers the higher-education community a new resource to bolster student retention. "Solving the Retention Puzzle," a new feature on the USA Funds Web site — [www.usafunds.org](http://www.usafunds.org) — provides guidance to postsecondary institutions about enhancing persistence and graduation rates, thereby contributing to lower student-loan default rates.

Developed in cooperation with Noel-Levitz, the nation's leading consultant to higher education on student retention, "Solving the Retention Puzzle" supplies higher-education administrators with advice about assembling the following four critical components of successful student-retention programs. The Web feature includes the following segments:

- Institutional assessment, which helps the campus define itself based on qualitative and quantitative measures.

- Student assessment, which helps campus administrators identify students likely to succeed and those likely to withdraw prior to graduation.
- Institutional interventions, which helps postsecondary institutions develop an infrastructure to promote student success.
- Student interventions, which offers case studies of successful retention practices.

The Web feature provides the following additional resources:

- An assessment tool that helps postsecondary institutions audit the current state of their student-retention efforts.
- A step-by-step process for retention planning.
- A list of other student-retention resources on the Web.
- Links to a database of award-winning student-retention practices.

“Solving the Retention Puzzle” is part of a comprehensive USA Funds initiative designed to help postsecondary institutions boost persistence and graduation rates and prevent loan defaults. The Web feature is located in the “Financial Aid Professionals” section of the USA Funds Web site, [www.usafunds.org](http://www.usafunds.org), under “Debt-Management Information.” To learn more about USA Funds’ debt-management efforts, contact your debt-management consultant, Shannon Otis, toll-free at (866) 497-8723, Ext. 7880, or by e-mail to [sotis@usafunds.org](mailto:sotis@usafunds.org).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by Dan Brent

### Don’t Not Turn Left!

Financial Aid Office people get annoyed that students don’t read the directions. It’s a legitimate complaint. You regularly have to resist the temptation to say, “If you can’t read, how did you get into this place?” But sometimes we have a hand in creating this problem. We write material that’s perfectly clear to us, but not necessarily, it turns out, to the reader.

I write these articles for newsletters. I’ve learned to sleep on them and reread them the next day. It’s astonishing how something can be perfectly clear on Tuesday and be quite ambiguous by Wednesday! Language ambiguities create lots of our humor. “You’ve got your shoes on the wrong feet,” a mother tells her two year old. “No,” he answers, “Those are my feet!” Or this from the blond jokes: Two blondes are on opposite sides of a river. “How do I get to the other side of the river?” the one asks. The other looks upstream and downstream and then answers, “You’re already on the other side!”

Outside of work, I’ve developed a habit of looking for ambiguities and contradictions in street signs. I think it started a half century ago when Bob and Ray, a comedy team of that era, did a skit on the topic of

ambiguous street signs as part of a Broadway show. One of the signs they brought had the directions I’ve used for the title of this article: Don’t Not Turn Left. “You can be sure,” they explained, “that you’ll get a ticket going by that sign no matter what you do.”

Several years ago in a high school photography class, one of my daughters got an assignment to “Capture your life philosophy in a photo.” She got an “A” for her picture taken at a shopping mall near our home. It was simply two street signs juxtaposed within a few feet of each other and facing in the same direction. One said “Enter”; the other said “Do Not Enter”. Apparently her teacher thought that was a good summary of the situation being faced by a typical high school junior.

Here are some other signs with which I’ve crossed paths. For a while at a construction site near our house the right lane was marked “Right Lane Must Turn Right” but the right turn was completely blocked by a chain-link fence topped with razor wire. Good luck. A sign on the road outside our building says “End of Speed Zone” and thirty yards past that is a stop sign. Apparently you can go as fast as you want for the hundred feet between the two signs. Here is another favorite of mine. In the 95-degree summer weather, the drive on Interstate 90 in western Pennsylvania near Erie is humored by the road signs that regularly warn “Bridge May Be Icy”.

I recently made a presentation in Dubuque. A block down from the hotel was a metered parking area with a sign that said “City of Dubuque: Public Parking Only”. Without success I wondered what might constitute private parking there. To make it funnier, a line across the bottom of the sign warned, “Violators Will Be Prosecuted”. Imagine the court scene. Judge: “What’s the charge?” Prosecutor: “He parked in a public lot, Your Honor!”

One of the workshops I present from time to time for Financial Aid offices is entitled, “Helping Students Help Themselves”. Among the ideas I suggest to participants is double-checking what we write for intelligibility. It’s the Tuesday-Wednesday thing. Of course it made perfect sense to us on Tuesday. But it’s worth rereading on Wednesday – or, better yet, it’s a good idea to ask someone else to read it for clarity.

The government provides us with the “*Federal Stafford Loan Plain Language Disclosure*”. You’re familiar with it. It’s more than 2000 words presented on one page in about 5-point type. Financial Aid office people tell me that virtually every college student in the country gets a copy, but they doubt that a single college student in America has ever read it. Not surprising.

So the challenge for Financial Aid offices is to communicate in a way that’s not only accurate but intelligible as well! Albert Joseph was a recognized expert in use of the English language. He used to argue, “It’s not that people don’t understand the words. It’s just that if you make people use 60% of their energy figuring out what you’re saying, they will have only 40% of their potential left to grasp and use your information.”

*Dan Brent is a Professional Development Officer with Citibank. He regularly presents seminars for Financial Aid Office people.*

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

AASFAA Fall Conference ----- Oct. 15-17  
Auburn, AL

SASFAA Conference ----- Feb. 15-18  
Birmingham, AL

AASFAA Spring Conference ----- April 13-16  
Orange Beach, AL

NASFAA Conference ----- July 18-21  
Minneapolis, MN