

OASFAA Summer Drive-In 2008

Presentation by Cindy Pollard on behalf of the OASFAA Mentoring Committee.

I'm pleased to join you today with an update on the status of the ongoing effort to develop a Mentoring Program for OASFAA's members.

Late last year, the Mentoring Committee conducted an online survey. The actual survey results will be posted online soon for those of you who would like to view the data. For now, I'll share some highlights with you:

- approx **20% of OASFAA's membership** (64 out of 320+) responded to the survey, which is considered a very good response rate.
- The two largest segments represented were community colleges (34%) and 4-year private colleges (30%).
- About half of the respondents were Financial Aid office staff or Counselors; 20% were FA Directors.
- Almost half (47%) of the respondents had 12 or more years of experience; the next largest group (24%) had between 4 and 7 years of experience. This may be an indication of the populations with the greatest interest in participating in a mentoring program, we'll see.

Here's where it gets more interesting:

- **92% said they believe it is OASFAA's role** to encourage mentoring relationships among its members.
- **87% said OASFAA should develop a formal mentoring program.**
- ...even though **72% had no prior experience** with mentoring at all. We've identified a need!
- 75% said their supervisor would support their involvement, fortunately.

Here's a sample of some of the comments respondents shared:

- This sounds like a fantastic opportunity for the OASFAA membership!
- OASFAA's prime directive for the organization years ago was that it was a training organization.
- I've seen several mentor programs when I've participated in various professional organizations. I don't find them to work nearly as well as people hope.
- Mentoring colleagues will be crucial as our profession gets more complicated and we lose good people to retirement and burnout. We need to encourage others to join our profession and STAY in the profession.
- Strongly support and will help in any way I can!

So what are we doing with this information?

Having confirmed that the membership strongly supports the concept, we began researching various options and existing programs. We also looked at why previous efforts didn't take root, and decided it's mostly because this is no easy task! There are challenges to overcome, such as

geographic distances, and the competing demands of busy financial aid offices, but the greatest challenge, as always, is time itself.

Fundamentally, mentoring is a long-term relationship. That doesn't mean that an individual mentor-protégé partnership must last a lifetime. It does mean that OASFAA's commitment to a mentoring program must outlast limited terms of service and the changes in leadership that are necessary to the vibrant health of our association. In short, any successful mentoring program must take a long-term view. It must be sustainable.

The Committee decided that launching this new endeavor – especially one designed to influence the personal and professional lives of OASFAA's members – will require expert guidance. While there are many talented individuals in our association, we recommended to the Executive Council that we turn to a mentoring professional with proven success establishing sustainable mentoring programs.

I'm very pleased to announce that, at the most recent Executive Council meeting, the board took the bold step of approving (in concept) contracting with a consultant to help guide us through the development and implementation of OASFAA's mentoring program.

As everyone here in this room knows all too well, we work in a field that demands much of us: our knowledge, our experience, our judgment, our creativity, our energy, and our individual and collective commitment to continued growth and lifelong learning. OASFAA already plays a key role in the training and development of its members and other partners in the financial aid process. We're now poised to expand this role significantly.

Watch for further information as our plans develop. In the meantime, please take every possible opportunity to ask your questions and share your suggestions with members of the Committee or your representative on the Executive Council. Please also let us know if you are willing to help us get this program off the ground.

We're looking for volunteers!

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