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OASFAA NEWSLETTER

A publication of the Oregon Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Dear OASFAA Members & Friends,

Ten years ago, I joined the Oregon financial aid community and got my first taste of involvement with OASFAA. To say this organization has played a role in my personal and professional life would be a massive understatement; through OASFAA I have honed my skills as a financial aid administrator, grown professionally, and found lasting friendships and trusted mentors. Our community's commitment to helping students achieve their higher education goals, and supporting those folks who are doing the work, is a lifeline for many across the state.



The last five years have brought numerous challenges to our communities; from a global pandemic to a divisive and contentious political landscape across our nation, it has taken a toll on folks in our profession. We have seen colleagues make the decision to leave financial aid, whether in retirement or to shift to a different field altogether, and have felt the overwhelming increase in administrative burden being placed upon our offices, often with little additional resources to accomplish. Through it all, I hope your OASFAA connections have helped you find solace in the chaos, humor in the dark places, and the strength to press on in this important work.

It is such an honor to represent OASFAA and to build upon the 57-year legacy that precedes my time as president. I hope that, together, we continue to expand our community and the support we all need to remain steadfast in our work. Together we are stronger than ever, and our collective resilience will bring us through this season of challenge.

Debbie O'Dea, 2025-2026 OASFAA President

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2025 Annual OASFAA Conference

OASFAA's 57th Annual Conference was held at the beautiful Salishan Coastal Lodge with beautiful weather until our departure on the final day.

We had 111 colleagues join us, and our keynote speaker, Danielle Mancuso, kicked off the event with an energetic session on "glowing through change" and challenge us to build connections, take care of ourselves, and stay rooted in personal and institutional values.





We had a wide range of topics, from Advocacy with WASFAA President John Bender to Ali Schneider's session on Immigration Information, as well as excellent sessions on Resources for Foster Youth, Neurodiversity, and Operational Calendars, and the NASFAA credential on Satisfactory Academic Progress. Thank you to all our presenters, near and far! Your time and energy for this event is so valuable to our state's development in the field.

On Wednesday night, we checked out the local restaurants then gathered in the Sunset Suite for the President's Party. Thursday night, attendees got their "glow on" for dinner and awards, then made their way to friendship bracelets, coloring books, and the karaoke party! Don't let us forget to mention that there was bacon!

This year's community partner was The Shadow Project, a nonprofit with a mission of making school more accessible and engaging for K-8 students

with learning challenges, such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and trauma. With their direct connection to education for the neuro-divergent community and their active promotion and practice of the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, OASFAA chose The Shadow Project to help



students achieve their full

potential. Thank you for your generous support for our charity partner, OASFAA community!

We hope you found this year's conference to be as successful and meaningful to your work as a financial aid professional as we did. The 2026 Annual Conference is already in the works, and we're hoping you'll join us back at Salishan next February! If you are interested in being a part of next year's committee, we encourage you to indicate your interest through the <u>Volunteer Preferences form</u> as soon as possible, or by contacting OASFAA's volunteer coordinator, <u>Ingrid</u> <u>Baker</u>, as the 2026 committee will be formed soon!



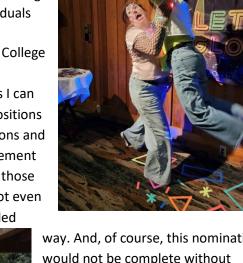
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Annual OASFAA Awards

There are so many great things about being involved with OASFAA. At the top of the list has to be the networking opportunities to get to know one another across our shared profession and to forge personal connections with some truly amazing people. At the 2025 Annual Conference, we recognized the following individuals for their work and service in the financial aid industry:

• Lifetime Membership Recipients: Ryan West, Chemeketa Community College (nominated by Breana Sylwester)

Ryan has been one of the backbone members of OASFAA for as long as I can remember. Over the years, Ryan has served in a variety of roles and positions with OASFAA, never shying away from the tough jobs. He has led sessions and workshops covering everything from basic financial aid to cash management and Title IV return calculations. He has also stepped up as a mentor to those starting out in financial aid and for new financial aid directors, often not even realizing he was serving our financial aid community in this much needed





way. And, of course, this nomination would not be complete without mentioning his sense of humor. Ryan has a way of making you laugh about the things you really want to cry about. I have many great memories with Ryan but I think my favorite memories are just the one-on-one conversations we have had over the years. I always come away a little happier and always a little smarter. While has moved on to other higher ed responsibilities, Ryan has left a

memorable mark on OASFAA. It has been an honor working with Ryan over the years and he truly deserves to be a Lifetime Member of OASFAA.

Distinguished Service Award: Frankie Everett, Rogue Community College (nominated by Debbie O'Dea & Carlos Villarroel)

It is my pleasure to nominate Frankie Everett for the Distinguished Service Award on recognition of her quiet and consistent contributions to OASFAA. As the Technology Chair, Frankie is responsible for making sure the information on the OASFAA website is accurate and current. She ensures that the website is operating and addresses any hiccups or issues that might arise with the server. Frankie also monitors outgoing communication and ensures the ballot is accurate and functional for each cycle. In addition to her role as Technology Chair, until recently she was also the Communications Chair and got the OASFAA newsletter out to the membership every quarter. Frankie is always swift to respond when something needs to be addressed, and willing to intervene when MemberClicks and I are not getting along. As an all-volunteer organization it would be easy for some of these tasks to take a backseat, but Frankie always makes sure that OASFAA is dialed in and good to go! (...Awards, continued on page 4...)





(...Awards, continued from page 3...)

• Unsung Hero Award: Bobbi Jo Williams, Oregon State University (nominated by Brian Hultgren)

It is an enormous privilege to nominate Bobbi Jo Williams for the Unsung Hero Award. While many OASFAA members may not be as familiar with her work, those of us who have had the honor of working with her at Oregon State University can wholeheartedly attest to why she truly deserves this recognition.

Bobbi Jo holds the position of Office Manager for the Financial Aid office at OSU, but her role extends far beyond what the title might suggest. As the heartbeat of our office's customer service operations, Bobbi Jo manages a team of 12-15 student workers, all while overseeing the various platforms through which OSU students interact with the Financial Aid office — whether virtually, in-person, via email, phone, or appointments. She is the constant presence ensuring that students' needs are met promptly, that every request is

heard, and that no detail goes unnoticed. Her level of commitment and attention to detail is

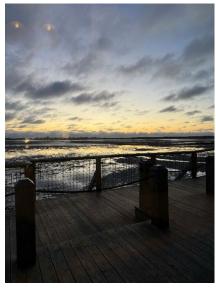
Her level of commitment and attention to detail is unmatched. She works tirelessly behind the scenes to coordinate all aspects of office operations, but what truly sets Bobbi Jo apart is her unwavering passion for OSU and for helping students. She approaches every task, no matter how big or small, with the utmost dedication, never seeking recognition or reward. Her

focus is always on what benefits the students and enhances their experience at OSU. I've had the privilege of working alongside Bobbi Jo and often serve as her backup, giving me a firsthand look at the depth of her work ethic. She is the embodiment of quiet strength, consistently going above and beyond the expectations of her position. Bobbi Jo is not only dedicated to the students but is also deeply committed to supporting her colleagues, stepping in whenever needed, and doing so with grace and professionalism. Through her mentorship of student workers, our office has



created a pipeline for providing career opportunities within the Financial Aid office. Here is a quote from Ezequiel Ayala Reyes, a recent graduate and our newest Financial Aid Advisor: "Bobbi Jo has been so helpful since the first day I started working here 6 years ago. She is very approachable. She has given me all her support throughout the years, and I'm so grateful to have worked with her directly."

Her connection to OSU runs deep. Growing up watching both her parents dedicate 30+ years of service to the university and its students, Bobbi Jo with 28 years, has clearly inherited that same passion and commitment. Just like her parents, Bobbi Jo is a cornerstone of our community, working tirelessly and with great humility to ensure that students have the



resources and support they need to succeed.

In every way, Bobbi Jo Williams exemplifies the qualities of an Unsung Hero. She is a quiet force at Oregon State University, whose dedication to both the financial aid community and to the students she serves is profound and worthy of recognition. I can think of no one more deserving of this honor.

• **Rookie of the Year: Jenny Ruelas**, Mt. Hood Community College (*nominated by Jenn Satalino*)

Jenny is a bilingual Financial Aid Advisor for Financial Literacy and Outreach, and has immediately jumped in to work with OASFAA's Community Partner Training Committee. Jenny has reviewed slides for OASFAA's high school "Financial Aid Night" deck in both English and Spanish. Most recently, Jenny jumped at the chance to volunteer for OASFAA's annual Paying for College webinar, which reaches students statewide. Jenny was part of the crack Q & A team who fielded questions on October 23rd. We look forward to Jenny's long career in financial aid!

Annual Conference Scholarship Recipient

Ivy Snyder, Financial Aid Advisor, Oregon State University

I was so thrilled to get the scholarship to attend the 2025 OASFAA conference! It was my first time at a state-level conference, and it meant a lot. As financial aid folks, we're always working hard to help students, jumping through training hoops and keeping up with all the new rules. This conference was like a big hug during a tough time, and it was amazing to feel connected to everyone in the financial aid community across the state. Honestly, the whole conference was great! It was awesome to see everyone learning and sharing their experiences. I especially loved getting to chat with people while volunteering. The sessions were super interesting, with the keynote presentation,



"Immigration Information & Updates," and "A Journey of Understanding & Support" ones really sticking with me. The keynote speaker's message reminded us we can all glow inside and make a difference to our students. "A Journey of Understanding & Support," told from a personal point of view, really opened my eyes to how we can better help students with ADHD and autism and what resources we can use to better advise them. "Immigration Information & Updates" gave me a much clearer picture of what's happening with immigration and how we can navigate under this political climate.

I'm just so grateful for everything I learned and everyone I met at the conference. The MC made it feel like a big welcome, and the charity program was a really nice touch. This whole experience has really pumped me up to help students even more, and I feel like I've got some great new tools and ideas to do just that.

Maureen Morgan, Financial Aid Coordinator, Portland Community College

Over the last couple of years, the weight of working in higher education and specifically in financial aid has been pushing the boundary of just too much. But after a few days with colleagues from across the state at the OASFAA Annual Conference, I'm feeling rejuvenated, inspired, and ready to get back to work.

Alternate lyrics to Tom Petty's Free Fallin':

Free Money

She's a good girl, filed her fafsa Loves Pell Grant, and her scholarship, too And I'm a bad boy, cuz I asked for her taxes I'm a bad boy, for fixin' her file

Cuz she wants free, free money Yeah we all want free, free money

He's a good boy, did entrance counseling Accepted the terms, and his MPN, too. And I'm a bad boy, cuz nobody told him That student loans, are loans and not grants

Cuz he wants free, free money Yeah we all want free, free money As I approached my 17th year in financial aid, I was honored to be selected as an OASFAA scholarship recipient to attend my first ever OASFAA conference. For years, I've heard about how beautiful Salishan is, the legendary karaoke party, and how many friendships sparked on those grounds. All the stories are true.

But it's not all about Jello shots and margaritas. There were a few sessions and highlights that were particularly moving and practical.

- Danielle Mancuso's keynote session about identifying our core values and discussing how those values not only motivate our actions but define and ground us.
- Rachael Smith and Tina Dorrell shared their personal journeys living as neurodivergent individuals and offered some practical suggestions to be better colleagues and partners. (...Scholarships, continued on page 6...)

(...Scholarships, continued from page 5...)

 Lifetime achievement recognition for my colleague Brenda Thomas. She's done this work for 40 years, never expecting a thing in return, and it was so special to see her receive recognition for her commitment to supporting students.

While there were many great sessions over those days, these really focused on Purpose and People. They allowed me to be reminded of what drives me and how all these small actions are actually big actions with big impact.

Thank you to the scholarship committee for selecting me as a recipient this year. It was incredible to connect faces with emails I've been working with for years. Watch out, those LinkedIn invites are coming and hopefully I'll see you all back at Salishan next year.



If it's happening in OASFAA, it's happening at... The Watercooler

Anna Hitchcock, formerly the Associate Director of Financial Aid, was promoted to Executive Director of Financial Aid at Reed College Antonio Castellanos joins Portland Community College as a Bilingual Financial Aid Advisor Carrie Sandberg, formerly the Financial Aid Office Coordinator, has taken on the role of Financial Aid Director at Clackamas Community College Kelli Albert and Cailin Mondo are the newest Financial Aid Advisors at Rogue Community College Maureen Morgan is the newest Financial Aid Coordinator joining Portland Community College, formerly from Portland State University Sandy Sundstrom retired as Director of Financial Aid at Reed College Terrie Sanne retired as Financial Aid Director at Clackamas Community College

If you or someone you know has received a promotion, taken a new job, or experienced a significant life event, email: <u>feverett@roguecc.edu</u>

OASFAA represented at NASFAA Legislative & Leadership Conference, Visits with Senator Staffers



Debbie O'Dea (OASFAA President), Frankie Everett (OASFAA President-Elect, and Ryan West (OASFAA Lifetime Member) attended the NASFAA Legislative and Leadership Conference and Expo in Washington D.C. in February. This was a wonderful opportunity to gain perspective and insight into leadership and management for the OASFAA membership, grow professionally, expand their network, and hone their leadership skills.

While it was a full schedule of sessions, the attendees had some downtime to explore Washington D.C., spend time with colleagues and friends across the country, and discuss current issues facing their campus and their state.

On the last day, attendees also had the opportunity to meet with senators and representatives. It was a bustling day at the capitol, with several confirmation hearings, but O'Dea, Everett, and West were able to meet with staffers for Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley. During this time, they discussed several key issues affecting Oregon financial aid, including expansion of Pell grant funding, commitment to campus-based funding (e.g. SEOG, FWS), eliminating Direct Loan origination fees, and the administrative burdens of Gainful Employment & Financial Value Transparency (GE/FVT) reporting.

A few days later, the U.S. Department of Education announced that the deadline to evaluate completer lists had been extended to September 30, 2025.

Federal Judge Orders Trump Administration to Temporarily Reinstate Fired

Federal Workers Article obtained from <u>NASFAA</u>

A coalition of 20 Democratic state attorneys general <u>filed</u> <u>a lawsuit</u> on Thursday against the Department of Education (ED) and President Donald Trump, seeking to block the administration's latest plan to lay off nearly half of ED's workforce. And late on Thursday night, a federal judge ruled in favor of the 20 states, ordering the Trump administration to reinstate thousands of fired probationary federal workers – including those at ED.

On Tuesday, Education Secretary Linda

McMahon announced that the department plans to



implement a reduction in force (RIF) to lay off nearly 50% of its staff across all divisions in part of an effort to improve efficiency and accountability. ED has not confirmed specifics on which employees were laid off, but there has <u>been some</u> <u>information</u> shared online giving a rough outline of which offices were hit the hardest – which includes Federal Student Aid (FSA). While laid-off staffers are still technically employed until March 21, they've had limited access to their email, phones and computers since the notice was released.

The 20 states in the lawsuit, which was filed in Massachusetts, alleged that the layoffs are illegal and the Trump administration does not have the power to dismantle any agency or override the agency's statutory requirements. Ultimately, the states are seeking a court order to block the Trump administration from gutting ED's workforce.

Specifically, the states pointed to a Supreme Court decision, Myers v. United States in 1926, that ruled Congress has the power to establish and determine the functions of administrative agencies.

The coalition of states also alleged that by following through on these layoffs, ED will be unable to perform its duties mandated by statute, including administering postsecondary education programs like the federal Pell Grant program.

"The dismantling of the Department will result in higher costs to attend institutions of higher education," the lawsuit reads. "Not only will federal funding for Pell grants, work study programs and subsidized loans be at risk, but so too will the Department's administration of those programs, without which they cannot operate even if they were fully funded. Without these federal programs supporting students of higher education, the cost of pursuing higher education will increase and fewer students will have the opportunity to attend college."

On Thursday night, a federal judge <u>issued a temporary restraining order</u> against the Trump administration's layoffs as part of this lawsuit. U.S. District Judge James Bredar ordered that the thousands of federal probationary workers fired by

ED CONTACT INFORMATION

With the recent reduction in force at the Seattle San Francisco School Participation Division office, E-App inquiries and other institutional questions should be directed to: <u>CaseTeams@ed.gov</u> and cc Chief of Staff <u>Rachel.Oglesby@ed.gov</u>. the Trump administration be temporarily reinstated – which includes probationary workers from ED and other federal agencies.

In his ruling, Bredar wrote that the Trump administration used boilerplate termination notices for thousands of probationary workers, citing their "performance" as inadequate. However, these workers never received either a formal or informal notice from their supervisor that their performance was inadequate. (...ED Layoffs, continued on page 8...) (...ED Layoffs, continued from page 7...) Bredar wrote in his decision that "the law is clear" – when dismissing an employee due to unsatisfactory performance, the employer must "honestly" be dissatisfied with the employee's performance.

"Further underscoring the Court's conclusion that these terminations were not based upon qualification or performance is that many notices to employees did not even cursorily identify any issues with the individual's performance, but rather explained that their terminations were in the public interest or due to the priorities of the current administration, or else provided no reason at all," Bredar wrote.

According to the Washington Post, 63 of the employees fired by ED were probationary.

Furthermore, Bredar wrote that when the administration conducted its RIF, it gave no advance notice to states that would be impacted. Without advance notice to these states of the administration's layoffs, the states were harmed since they did not have the opportunity to plan, organize, and reprogram necessary resources for suddenly unemployed workers.

"Lacking the notice to which they were entitled, the States weren't ready for the impact of so many unemployed people," Bredar wrote. "They are still scrambling to catch up. They remain impaired in their capacities to meet their legal obligations to their citizens."

<u>Earlier in the afternoon on Thursday</u>, another federal judge, U.S. District Judge William Alsup, ordered the Trump administration to rehire thousands of fired probationary employees. However, his order did not include ED as one of the affected agencies.

In Tuesday's layoff announcement, ED said it would continue to deliver on "all statutory programs that fall under the agency's purview," which includes Pell Grants, student loans, and more. However, NASFAA Interim President & CEO Beth Maglione noted that decimating entire teams within the department could lead to unintended but dire consequences.

"Claiming that eliminating half the Department won't affect its services — without any clear plan to redistribute the workload — is, at best, naive and, at worst, deliberately misleading," Maglione <u>said in a statement</u>. "It also raises serious concerns about how billions of dollars in federal student aid will continue to be disbursed to students without interruption."

Stay tuned to *Today's News* for more coverage of this developing story.





A Note From Your IDEA Advocate

While we are certainly accustomed to fluctuations in the industry, it certainly feels like the various changes are coming far more quickly and are less predictable as of late. I am trying to keep a pulse on things and plan to use this section of this newsletter to provide updates in the coming months. If there are any issues in particular you would like me to address or investigate, please feel free to reach out to me directly. For folks wanting to do more to keep up to date on these topics themselves, I highly recommend the Chronicle of Higher Education's <u>DEI Tracker</u> - they are keeping a running webpage of anti-DEI bills and legislation related to higher education.

For now, I wanted to provide some clarity on ED removing options from the demographics question on gender on the FAFSA. I had initially selected "prefer not to answer" but went in after the question was changed to make a correction and test if I would have to select "male" or "female". While I was asked to look at that question, I was able to skip past it without selecting an answer and my correction was successfully processed with no response to the question. Hopefully, this can be some helpful information for those of you with students concerned about the change.

I'm also keeping up with the February 14th <u>Dear Colleague Letter</u> and the new <u>FAQ</u> released this past Friday. Question 6 of the FAQ does address financial aid specifically indicating that schools cannot use race as a determining factor in awarding aid. I will try and provide a more informed update on this in our next newsletter.

-Emory

From the IDEA Board

Hello OASFAA Colleagues! Your IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access) Advisory Board wishes you a happy Women's History Month! We wanted to highlight a few ways that you can celebrate Women's History Month and some of the many other significant holidays this month.

Women's History Month celebrates the achievements and contributions of women to our society. The <u>National Women's</u>



<u>History Museum</u> has a plethora of information, resources, and events to help you learn more about the work women have done throughout history. Take some time this month to learn more about women like <u>Ida B Wells</u>, <u>Amanda</u> <u>Blackhorse</u>, <u>Sally Ride</u>, <u>Marsha P. Johnson</u> and more. And don't forget the women in your life! Your colleagues, friends, and family are all worth celebrating! <u>International Women's Day</u> is Saturday, March 8th and the theme this year is Accelerate Action. Accelerate Action encourages folks to reflect on what strategies have worked well to promote gender equity and to take action in continuing those strategies.

March is also <u>Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month</u>. President Reagan signed the holiday into effect in 1987 and we celebrate the month educating ourselves, advocating for those with developmental disabilities, and helping make things more accessible for everyone.

March 25th is the <u>International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery & the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade</u>. The day is a dedication for all of us to remember and acknowledge the horrors that were inflicted and take action to repair some of the harm caused and prevent it from happening again.

March 31st is <u>César Chávez</u> Day. Celebrated on his birthday, we learn from his legacy and continue his work. Chávez was one of the most influential labor advocates and leaders of the 20th century and helped guarantee rights for U.S. citizens through his work.

We also celebrate <u>International Transgender Day of Visibility</u> on March 31st. We celebrate the joy of transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals each year to honor their lives and counter transphobia. Thank you for taking the time to read this message from your IDEA Advisory Board! We appreciate your work every day striving to support students with access to education and other opportunities. Please reach out to Emory at <u>emory.spence@oregonstate.edu</u> if you have any concerns, anything you would like us to review, or if you are interested in joining the advisory board!

In community, Your OASFAA IDEA Advisory Board





"If the only way I'm paying for college is through Oregon Promise and paying out of pocket, do I have to use the Direct Loan Subsidized and the Federal Direct Unsub Loan? I just don't want to be paying the school money for something I don't want to be paying after I graduate. And if so, is there a way to decline this offer?" (email sent with this photo)

"Adult emailing culture is overthinking how polite you sound and forgetting to send the attachments."

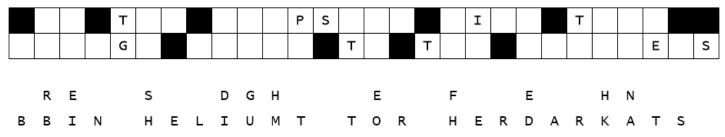
Got one to share? Send it to <u>oneile@linnbenton.edu</u>. All submissions will be published anonymously.

Are you hiring?

Post your vacancy at <u>www.oasfaaonline.org</u>.

Spring Fallen Word Puzzle

Directions: The letters from each cell are below the puzzle. Try to rebuild the original message by choosing the letters for each cell.





Available on Amazon

Interested in volunteering for OASFAA? Contact a committee chair below... 2025 Committee Chairs

Annual Conference Shauna Wing **Funds Development** Suzie Petersen Victoria Mavricakis IDEA **Emory Spence** Greg Kerr Legislative **Griffin Shaulis** Archives Shauna Stevens Membership Karen Fobert Kyra King Layla Solar Communications **Community Partnership** Jenn Satalino OSAC Liaison Erin Rau **Breana Sylwester** Site Selection **Carlos Villarroel Corporate Liaison** Holly Johnson Frankie Everett Technology FA 101/201 Volunteer Coordinator Kathy Campbell **Ingrid Baker** Kyna Burgett



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