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| Wednesday,  March 26th  9:00-5:00 CFAA Training at CCC-Kearney    1:00-5:00 PM – Board of Directors Meeting            Executive Room (2nd Floor)  6:00 PM - NeASFAA Board Dinner | | A black and white image of a carnival  Description automatically generated | |
| Thursday, March 27th | | | |
| 8:15-8:45 AM – First Time Attendee Gathering  Stateroom B | | | |
| 8:00-9:00 AM - Registration Open            Entrance into Conference Space from Holiday Inn | | | |
| 8:50-9:00 AM - Opening Remarks: Traci Boeve, NeASFAA President & Jordan Eisenmenger, PDRC Chair            DEF Ballroom | | | |
| 9:00-10:00 AM - General Session: Erin Garber-Pearson            DEF Ballroom | | | |
| 10:00-10:10 AM – Break | | | |
| 10:10-11:00 AM – The Legislative Process: Ritchie Morrow  DEF Ballroom | | | |
| 11:00-11:10 Break | | | |
| 11:10-12:00 Breakout Sessions | | | |
| **Stateroom C** | **Stateroom B** | | **Executive Room (2nd Floor)** |
| **Professional Development and Succession Planning**  Vanessa Martineau  Moderator: Ashley Morrow | **Excel Tips and Tricks**  Francesca Davis  Moderator: Courtney Luebben | | **Hey...Focus! Finding Professional and personal success through managing your 'squirrel moments'**  Lou Murray  Moderator: Ciel Senechal |  |  |
| 12:00-1:30 Lunch, RMASFAA Update, State Update  DEF Ballroom | | | |

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| 1:35-2:25 PM – Breakout Sessions | | | | |
| **Stateroom C** | | **Stateroom B** | | **Executive Room (2nd Floor)** |
| **The Price is Right! Helping Families Win the College Cost Game**  Susan Stephenson  Moderator: Holly Johnson | | **Private Loans Vs Parent Loans**  Carin Carstens & Mike Mutziger  Moderator: Ron Hancock | | **Next Steps with AI**  Dr. Amy Mancini  Moderator: Mark Krings |
| 2:30-3:05 PM – Exhibitor Popcorn            DEF Ballroom | | | | |
| 3:05-3:15 PM – Break | | | | |
| 3:15-4:05 PM – Breakout Sessions | | | | |
| **Difficult Conversations: Getting Comfortable with the Elephant in the Room**  Kelcie McBride & Margarita Gurrola  Moderator: Susan Stephenson | | **How to Recognize Student Loan Fraud**  Robb Cummings  Moderator: Sara Edwards | | **RMASFAA Strategic Planning Listening Session**  Moderator: Vanessa Martineau |
| 4:05-4:15 – Break | | | | |
| 4:15-5:05 – Breakout Sessions | | | | |
| **Two Year Public Sector**  Moderator: Shelby Hills | | **4 Year Public Sector**  Moderator: Britney Hart | | **4 Year Private Sector**  Moderator:  Janet Solberg |
| DEF Ballroom Associate Sector; Moderator: TBD | | | | |
| 5:30 Social hour and Cash Bar  6:30 Banquet, Award Presentations, Retiree Recognitions, Entertainment | | | | |
| Friday, March 28th | | | | |
| 8:45-10:00 Universal FAFSA and NeASFAA: Traci Boeve, Jodi Vanden Berge  DEF Ballroom | | | | |
| 10:00-10:30 AM – Checkout Break | | | | |
| 10:30-11:20 AM – Breakout Sessions | | | | |
| **Stateroom C** | **Stateroom B** | | **Executive Room (2nd Floor)** | |
| **Financial Aid Funhouse: Unpacking the Clown Car of Misunderstood Regs**  Becca Dobry & Susan Stephenson  Moderator: Bailey Jorgensen | **Juggling the Student Aid Index (SAI)**  Korri Risinger  Moderator: Robb Cummings | | **Battling Burnout**  Sara Edwards  Moderator: Carin Carstens | |
| 11:30- Philanthropy Presentation, Lunch, Business Meeting, Passing the Gavel, Closing Remarks | | | | |

**Thank you sponsors!**

**Meet our Keynote, Erin Garber-Pearson!**



Erin Garber-Pearson is a multimedia artist, circus performer, and play enthusiast who splits her time between Tucson, Arizona and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.  Erin strives to bring heightened moments of play into her art practice and life. Her studio practice is a mix of objects, embodied movement, and a lot of unusual equipment. She has shown her work in galleries throughout the country, and has been a guest speaker on the topic of artist ethics in entrepreneurship, and the importance of play in building resilience as an adult.   
  
Often called a “Renaissance Woman,” Erin is also a welder, tightwire walker, radical feminist, and lifelong student of mother earth. Her work has been featured at the Toledo Museum of Art, Woodwalk Gallery in Wisconsin, Bowling Green State University's Wolfe Center for the Arts, the Sculpture X Social Practice Conference in Toledo, OH, and in the Women CineMakers Biennial Magazine based in Berlin. She also embraces nontraditional art spaces that don't fit neatly on her CV.  
  
Erin has spent her career teaching college art in 3 universities, and students of all ages at Bird's Eye View Circus, a circus school she founded in 2012. She ran the school for 10 years until 4 of her employees bought her out. Currently she is pursuing her second Master’s degree in Expressive Arts and Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Adler Graduate School in the Twin Cities area. She is delighted to be here in Kearney to discuss the importance of developing and nurturing play in our work and life.

A person holding a cat

AI-generated content may be incorrect.**Meet our RMASFAA**

**President-Elect,**

**Vanessa Martineau!**

Vanessa Martineau is the Director of Financial Aid at Western Governors University (WGU), operating out of Salt Lake City, Utah. She has over 11 years of financial aid and higher education experience and earned her bachelor’s degree in political science and gender studies from the University of Utah as well as her master’s degree in management and leadership from Western Governors University. Vanessa has served her state and regional associations (UASFAA and RMASFAA) as a presenter, instructor, committee member/chair, and elected officer – most recently stepping into the RMASFAA President-Elect role for 24-25. She has had the honor of serving at the national level as well, most recently on NASFAA’s Advancing the Profession Task Force and 2024 Conference Planning Task Force. Vanessa is passionate about facilitating effective and compassionate leadership, a culture of responsible borrowing, and student-centric decision-making. She is an advocate for continual learning, professional development, and change management with a fondness for documentation. When she’s not working, Vanessa enjoys fostering cats and kittens, supporting local art, and playing D&D.

**Meet our RMASFAA State Swap,**

**Danielle Sullivan!**

Danielle Sullivan grew up in Abilene, Kansas. She attended the University of Kansas and received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Sociology, German, and Crime & Delinquency. To save the KU Financial Aid Office from having to review her Satisfactory Academic Progress appeal for time-frame issues, she decided not to pursue a fourth undergraduate degree. She began her financial aid career with Default Resolution Group helping Department of Education borrowers resolve their defaulted student loans. In 2008 she moved to the school side at the University of Kansas overseeing Satisfactory Academic Progress for nearly 11 years. In 2019 she moved to the community college side and oversees the Financial Aid Advising team at Johnson County Community College—phone calls, walk-ins, emails, and appointments – oh my! To keep things fun and interesting, Danielle has been involved in KASFAA, serving on a committee each year including serving as Welcome Committee Chair, Outreach Training Chair, and Secretary. Danielle has been a faculty member for RMASFAA Summer Institute for four years and serves on the RMASFAA Training committee. In 2024, she received RMASFAA’s Ron Smout award for teaching and mentoring. She recently got her Master’s degree from the University of Kansas in Organizational Communication – a lifelong achievement finally made a reality. Danielle spends her free time traveling whenever possible, seeking out weird and offbeat roadside attractions.

**Session Descriptions**

**Professional Development and Succession Planning**

Financial Aid is a profession that demands continual learning and growth. No matter what point you're at in your career, professional development plays a critical role in helping you to advance and effectively serve students. Succession planning ensures that when it’s time to take the next step you’ve already set up your successor for success. This session will teach participants how to create a Professional Development Plan (PDP), explore opportunities available to Financial Aid Administrators, and provide guidance for getting started with succession planning. Participants should walk away with motivation, tools, and ideas to fuel their career growth and development!

**Excel Tips and Tricks**

**Hey...Focus! Finding Professional and personal success through managing your 'squirrel moments'**

Individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) face unique challenges that can impact their productivity and overall well-being. Managing these conditions at the workplace requires a comprehensive understanding of their characteristics and the implementation of appropriate strategies. In this presentation, we will explore practical approaches that can help all individuals who simply lack focus. All can thrive in the workplace, enhancing their professional potential while maintaining personal wellness. Together, employers and employees can cultivate an inclusive work environment that will benefit both individuals and the organization.

**The Price is Right! Helping Families Win the College Cost Game**

As rising college costs and questions about the value of higher education continue to command headlines, spark policy debates, and dominate dinner table discussions, the importance of providing and communicating accurate Cost of Attendance (COA) estimates is more critical than ever. For students, understanding college costs is a key factor in making informed decisions about educational opportunities, financial planning, and long-term goals. How institutions of higher education calculate and disseminate accurate cost estimates plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of college affordability and access.

Identifying the true cost of attending college is one of the most important decisions prospective students and their families will make. This session examines how schools can build more precise and comprehensive COAs by exploring strategies and requirements for each cost component. It will also highlight the critical role of clear, transparent messaging in fostering student trust, influencing enrollment decisions, maintaining institutional credibility, and ensuring compliance. Attendees will gain insights into how accurate COAs impact financial aid packaging, scholarship allocation, and enrollment strategies. By creating effective cost communication strategies, institutions can empower families in their college decision-making process while strengthening their own credibility and success.

**Private Loans v. Parent Loans**

Navigating the world of student loans can be overwhelming, but understanding the difference between Federal PLUS loans and private loans is essential when planning for college. In this session, we will break down the key features of each loan type, interest rates, repayment options, and potential benefits. This session will provide valuable insights into making the best choice for your financial future.

**Next Steps with AI**

Take the next step by using AI assistants to help you transcribe meeting notes, create action lists, improve presentations, and analyze data. We will explore built-in Office 365 features and online apps.

**Difficult Conversations: Getting Comfortable with the Elephant in the Room**

Difficult conversations can be…difficult. Some conversations can be uncomfortable, embarrassing, stressful, or even scary. This presentation will provide tips from some great resources and our own experiences to help you feel more comfortable addressing the “elephant in the room.” Trigger Warning: This session will provide summaries of conversations that touch on some tough topics, which include drugs, child neglect, infertility, sexual assault, suicidal ideation, fraud/identity theft, undocumented status, and more. We will do our best to keep things lighthearted when appropriate; however, we also want to provide examples of how these tips can help you feel prepared for high and low-stake situations.

**How to Recognize Student Loan Fraud**

Join us for an insightful session where we will share tips to help protect your institution from deceptive practices in the student loan process. This presentation will explore the evolving tactics used by fraudsters to exploit the student loan system and the risks they pose for institutions and lenders alike. This session will highlight strategies for fraud prevention and steps to take if you suspect fraud.

**RMASFAA Strategic Planning Listening Session**

Join us for a discussion session for the future planning of RMASFAA. With a new Strategic Long-Range Plan on the horizon, we want to work with you to develop that plan. Come with your insights on what you like about RMASFAA and ideas on what could be improved or innovations you would like to see. What would you like RMASFAA to focus on in the next few years? We want to hear from you.

**Financial Aid Funhouse: Unpacking the Clown Car of Misunderstood Regs**

Step right up to Greatest Regulatory Show on Earth, where the financial aid compliance landscape can sometimes feel like a trapeze act without a net or an overstuffed clown car—just when you think you’ve got it figured out, another unexpected requirement pops out! Federal aid is a complex circus of ever-changing and often misinterpreted rules, leading to compliance risks and operational inefficiencies.

This session will guide attendees through some of the most common TIV misconceptions, misapplied rules, and confusing regs, from R2T4 calculations and cost of attendance components to conflicting information and professional judgment. We’ll navigate the tightrope of compliance and help you avoid a Ferris wheel of findings.

Whether you're a financial aid ringmaster or just starting out with the Title IV juggling act, you’ll leave our session with more confidence in your ability to pull a rabbit out of a hat and maintain compliance in your office.

**Juggling the Student Aid Index (SAI)**

Understanding the Student Aid Index (SAI) can feel like navigating a three-ring circus, but with the right guidance, you’ll be juggling the essentials with ease. In this session, we’ll break down the different SAI formulas to determine which applies in various situations, follow the SAI flowchart to identify the correct path for students, and pull back the curtain on how the SAI is calculated. Whether you’re new to the financial aid arena or a seasoned performer, this session will provide the tools you need to juggle the SAI without dropping the ball.

**Battling Burnout**

Have you ever explored the science of stress and burnout? This presentation provides practical strategies to manage and mitigate stress by completing the stress cycle, addressing societal pressures, and promoting emotional well-being. With actionable advice and relatable anecdotes, it empowers you to break free from the cycle of exhaustion and lead more balanced, fulfilling lives.

**Presenter Bios**

**Traci Boeve** is the Director of Financial Aid at Hastings College. She’s been at HC since 1994 with various roles in the Admissions Office, and in 2016 transitioned into the financial aid profession. She is currently serving as NeASFAA’s President. Hastings College has been a big part of her professional life, but also personal as well. She is a graduate of Hastings College with a double major in Math and Economics. Her husband has also worked at Hastings College for over 30 years and is the current Registrar. They have two grown children-Jennifer is in her second year as a graduate assistant for the Softball Program at Northwestern College in Orange City, IA and enrolled in a MS program in Mathematics at Indiana State University and Mike plays baseball and is in the minor leagues for the Milwaukee Brewers.

**J. Ritchie Morrow** is the Financial Aid Officer with Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. He coordinates all state financial aid programs, including the Nebraska Opportunity Grant, the Community College GAP Program, the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship, the Excellence in Teaching Loan Forgiveness program, the Door to College Scholarship, and the Nebraska Career Scholarships for private and community college students. Additionally, he updates the FAFSA Completion website, works on numerous reports published by the Commission, and helps to develop policy recommendations presented to the Nebraska Legislature and Governor. He has worked at the Commission since 2003. Previously, he was employed in the financial aid offices at Indiana University – Bloomington, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Wayne State College, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

He is a member of the Nebraska Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs where he has served on numerous committees and office positions, included a stint as president of NASSGAP.

Ritchie is a life-long Nebraskan, originally from Kearney. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Education from UNK with the idea of teaching business to high school students. Instead, he enrolled in the Higher Education Administration program at IU where he graduated with a Master of Science in Education.

He and his wife of 29 years, Amber, have a son, James, who graduated from UNO with a bachelor’s and master’s degree in Political Science with concentrations, respectively, in Foreign and National Security Affairs and International Relations, and an adopted daughter, Jooee, that lives in China with her husband and three kids.

**Francisca Davis**

**Lou Murray** is a 29-year veteran in higher education and the regional lead for Earnest, where he provides financial aid solutions to colleges across the Southern, Southwest, and Rocky Mountain states.

As a first-generation graduate of the University of Houston, former pastor, and leader in various school associations, Lou is dedicated to public speaking, motivating others, and challenging the stigmas surrounding mental illness. A committed mental health advocate, Lou has presented to numerous associations, universities, local businesses, and podcasts, raising awareness and fostering open dialogue on mental wellness. Lou initiated the creation of Earnest’s employee ERG group, WellnEST, which exists to foster a supportive environment where mental health is prioritized, stigma is shattered, and every individual feels valued and supported.

In addition to his presentations, Lou created *The Music Experience*, which he offers to corporations, schools, local businesses, and private events. This initiative led to the formation of Mission Upbeat LLC, Lou's personal venture aimed at promoting positivity through motivational speaking, mental health advocacy, and his unique music-driven experiences.

When not visiting schools, providing presentations, or mixing music as a DJ, Lou enjoys “geeking out” with his three children—Alessandra, Aliana, and Ian—watching sports with his wife, Nidia, or playing catch with his dogs, Acee and Stevie. Lou resides in Pearland, Texas.

**Susan Stephenson** has more than twenty years of experience in higher education – as a Financial Aid Director, Admissions Director, and Enrollment Management Executive Director overseeing multiple student services areas.  She is a respected leader in state, regional, and national financial aid and admissions associations, including serving on boards as President, Treasurer, and Secretary; chairing many association committees, such as Training, Conference, Conference Program, Membership, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging; serving as a mentor in RMASFAA’s Leadership Pipeline; and as faculty for many years at RMASFAA’s Summer Institute. She is a Certified Financial Aid Administrator, R2T4 Specialist, and has earned 15 NASFAA credentials.

Outside of work, Susan enjoys attending theatre performances—especially musicals—visiting art museums, traveling, gardening, reading, and spending time with friends, family, and her eight (yes, eight!) chonky blanket walruses (also known as cats…).

**Carin Carstens** has more than 25 years of experience in the Financial Aid Industry. She is a market relationship manager at ScholarNet where she helps schools automate and simplify their private loan process. Carin is the current RMASFAA Associate Member delegate. She lives in Sioux Falls, SD with her husband Jeff and daughter Cambrie. She enjoys spending as much time as possible with her immediate and extended family.

**Mike Mutziger** brings over 20 years of extensive experience in the financial aid industry, offering a wealth of knowledge to his team. He is the Director at ScholarNet, where is leads and oversees his team with expertise and dedication. Mike lives in Sioux Falls, SD. In his free time, he enjoys hunting, cheering on any MN sports team and traveling with his beautiful wife, Brenda.

**Dr. Amy Mancini** is a higher education leader with extensive experience in K-12 administration and curriculum development. Currently serving as the Dean of Arts, Sciences, and Business at Central Community College, Dr. Mancini is passionate about transforming educational systems through equity initiatives and empowering educators to create collaborative environments. In addition to her doctorate in Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she has earned certifications in Artificial Intelligence for Business Strategy from MIT Sloan School of Management and Generative AI for Educators from Google.

**Kelcie McBride** is the Financial Aid Director at Western Nebraska Community College. While she has prior experience in Financial Aid, she began her current role in July 2023 – right before setup for FAFSA Simplification began (yes, she accepted the job knowing that)! Kelcie has experience in several roles in higher education including serving as a College Advisor through a grant-based position, Residential Life, Institutional Research, and her favorite, Financial Aid. She also has experience in the nonprofit sector. She and her husband, Jordan, have two little boys who are adorable, incredibly ornery, and the light of their lives!

**Margarita Gurrola** first started employment with WNCC in 2007 as a Technician, then later as an Associate/Specialist II. But way before that, WNCC paved her educational goals. She completed her Associates of Applied Science in Secretarial and hit the ground running in the workforce while raising a family. Soon, her calling was to serve her community and help people, so she returned to WNCC to complete her AA degree. Initial goal was to pursue a bachelor’s degree in human services but later pursued an all-inclusive Human Performance and Systems Management bachelor’s degree with Peru State College.

Education has always been a passion for Margarita as she was the only one of 10 siblings to obtain a bachelor’s degree.

In her free time she enjoys traveling and spending time with her loved ones.  She’s a proud mother of 4 sons, 1 daughter, 3 daughter in laws, 1 son in law, 9 grandsons and 2 granddaughters.

**Robb Cummings**, Director of Relationship Management for Sallie Mae, has worked in the student financial aid industry for the past twenty-nine years. He has been active on both the state and regional level. He has served RMASFAA as the Chair for the Rocky Mountain Summer Institute, Associate Member Delegate, Corporate Development Chair, Electronic Initiatives Chair, and on various other committees. Robb has also served in multiple state financial aid associations. A graduate of Washburn University with a BBA degree in marketing and management, Robb resides in Topeka, KS

**Jodi Vanden Berge** is the Director of College Planning and Outreach Services for EducationQuest Foundation in Kearney, Nebraska, where she has been a team member since October of 1987. In her current role, Jodi provides college access services to students and parents through in office or virtual appointments, at high schools and agency locations. Jodi has been very active on many committees within our industry including, NeASFAA, NACRAO and RMASFAA. Jodi earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from University of NE at Kearney and a Master’s in Management from Bellevue University.

**Becca Dobry** began her career in financial aid in 2007 and has since become a dedicated professional in the field. She has served on various committees at her institutions, as well as at the state and regional levels of financial aid associations. Throughout her career, Becca has been recognized with multiple state and regional awards for her contributions to the field.

A native of Nebraska, Becca holds a Bachelor’s degree from Chadron State College and a Master’s degree from the University of Nebraska – Kearney. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys spending time with her two dogs, reading, and traveling.

**Korri Risinger** is the Associate Director of Financial Aid at Wayne State College, where she has worked in financial aid since 2021. She is on this year’s Professional Development and Recognition Committee for NeASFAA and will be returning to RMASFAA Summer Institute as faculty this year after having attended as a student in 2022 and faculty in 2023.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband, two children, and dog. She loves reading—especially thrillers or anything that makes her cry—going on walks, camping, playing board games, and diving into true crime podcasts and documentaries.

**Sara Edwards** is Vice President, Relationship manager with Citizens. She has extensive experience in Higher Education, with 30+ years in Student Lending, Financial Literacy and Default Prevention. Sara has served in a variety of roles in both state and regional financial aid associations in MASFAA and RMASFAA. She covers the Midwest States and lives in MO with her husband and two boys....which are her dogs, Buster and BoBo and LOVES spending time with their granddaughter, Elle who is 3 years old and the light of their lives!