Iowa Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

THE INFORMER

The Quarterly IASFAA Newsletter

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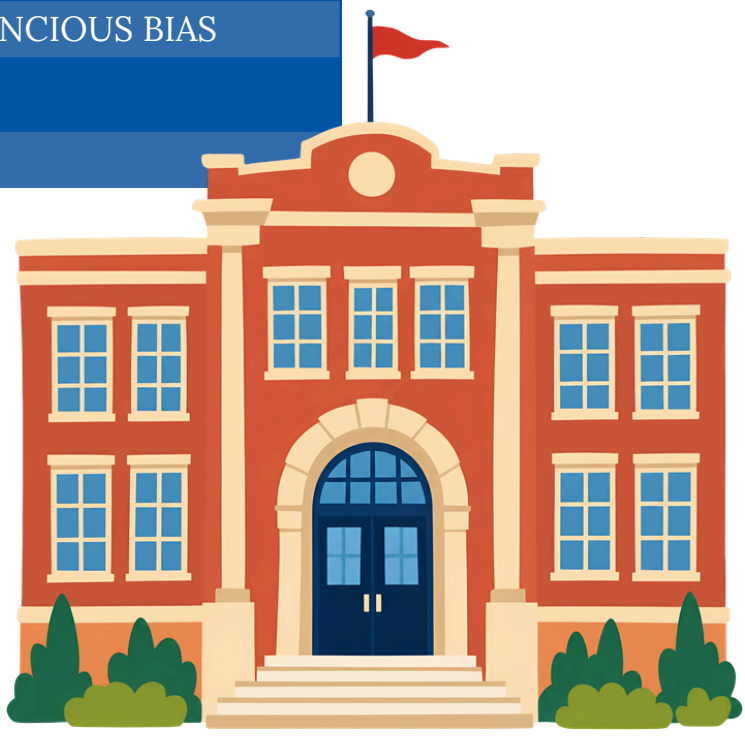
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Meet the Executive Council



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IASFAA Excec Council Retreat Sets the Stage for the Year Ahead

Submitted by Jess Graham, IASFAA President

IASFAA's 2026-27 Executive Council gathered July 20-21 for its annual retreat, bringing together officers, committee leaders, and board members to prepare for the year ahead.
The two-day retreat created space for both orientation and forward planning. Council members began by reviewing how IASFAA operates, including Executive Council roles and responsibilities, committee and officer duties, meeting expectations, association policies and bylaws, finances, and the annual meeting cycle.

For returning council members, the conversations offered an opportunity to revisit processes and identify areas where IASFAA can continue to strengthen its operations. For those newer to the Executive Council, the retreat provided important context for how their individual roles connect to the broader work of the association.

A significant portion of the retreat focused on IASFAA's future.

Council members reviewed the association's current strategic plan and began discussing development of the next plan, including how IASFAA can thoughtfully engage members in identifying future priorities. Leadership development was also part of the conversation, with discussion around continued leadership initiatives and opportunities to help members grow their skills and become more involved in the association.

Committee leaders also spent time looking ahead to the 2026-27 year. Discussions included communications and member outreach, professional development opportunities, awards and scholarships, conference planning, association technology, website improvements, and other operational needs.

The retreat concluded with a broader prioritization and action-planning conversation. Council members identified key initiatives, considered who should take ownership of the work, and began establishing next steps and timelines.



IASFAA Excec Council Retreat Sets the Stage for the Year Ahead

"One area I'm especially excited about is the work we're doing with our association technology. Becoming more self-reliant will create meaningful cost savings for IASFAA while giving us greater ownership of the tools that support our members. I'm also excited to see where professional development goes this year. We have an opportunity to be creative, listen closely to what our members want and need, and build programming specifically for them." ***President, Jess Graham***

Just as important as the work itself was the opportunity to spend time together as a leadership team. The retreat gave Executive Council members time to ask questions, exchange ideas, learn from one another, and build a shared understanding of where IASFAA is headed.
As the new association year begins, Executive Council members will continue turning those conversations into action while creating opportunities for the broader IASFAA membership to help shape the association's future.



"My hope is that every member can find something within IASFAA that is meaningful to them. There is a place here for the people who are deeply engaged in the latest issues and for those who lead more quietly. You do not have to be the person presenting at a conference or speaking up first to have a voice in this association. I want our members to feel heard, find opportunities that fit them, and know there is a place for them within IASFAA."
President, Jess Graham

There is plenty of work ahead, but the retreat provided a strong starting point for a year focused on connection, thoughtful planning, leadership development, and continued service to Iowa's financial aid community.

Bundle Coordinators: A Quick IASFAA Membership Check-In

IASFAA Bundle Coordinators, please take a few minutes to review your institution's membership information and help keep your staff connected.

- Pay your institutional membership dues if you haven't already.
- Add new staff members to your bundle.
- Remove staff members who have left your institution.
- Add retirement dates for retiring staff members.
- Encourage staff to complete or update their individual profiles.
- Encourage colleagues to volunteer with IASFAA. Sometimes a personal nudge from someone who has already been involved can make all the difference.

Keeping your bundle current helps IASFAA maintain accurate membership records, recognize career milestones, and connect members with opportunities to get involved.

Get the Most Out of Your IASFAA Membership

Your IASFAA membership is more than a name on a roster. Take a few minutes to make sure you are getting everything you can from it.

Update Your Member Profile
When was the last time you looked at your IASFAA profile? If it has been a while, chances are you have added a few new skills, responsibilities, or areas of expertise since you first filled it out.

Sign in to your IASFAA account, select **Member Home**, then **My Profile** to review and update your information.

Raise Your Hand to Volunteer

Did you see our recent call for volunteers? Here is your reminder to take the next step!

IASFAA committees are a great way to meet colleagues, build new skills, contribute to the association, and get more involved in the work happening across our state. You do not need years of IASFAA experience to participate.

Complete the IASFAA Volunteer Form

Help Shape Future Professional Development

What do you want to learn about? When is the best time for you to participate in an online event?

IASFAA's Professional Development Committee wants your input as it plans future learning opportunities. Take a few minutes to share the topics, timing, and formats that would be most useful to you.

Complete the Professional Development Survey

Connect with us!

Please send content suggestions or member updates to tatiana-ochoa@uiowa.edu

Like the IASFAA page on Facebook and follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn!

Unconcious Bias

Submitted by Josh Rinderknech, Wellbeing & Connection Chair

We have been taught to treat others how we would want to be treated, make sure that we treat students and fellow staff fairly and with respect. Our minds know that we shouldn't treat anyone differently based on gender, race, religious beliefs and so on. Unfortunately, we live in a world where we have to keep those thoughts in mind daily. We can react to people without even realizing it. Those actions are called unconscious bias.

What is unconscious bias? Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, is when someone acts based on assumptions, prior experiences, or ingrained thought patterns. Unconscious bias influences how we see and interact with different social groups. The biases can be negative or positive. One can subconsciously treat one group extra kindly without realizing other groups don't receive the same treatment. Unconscious bias happens to everyone, which is why it is important to acknowledge the biases and open the discussion for improvement.

How do we know when we are demonstrating bias? Self-reflection is a great starting place. Therapist.com recommends that we "spend time honestly reflecting on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in different situations. Consider whether you have made assumptions or judgments about others based on stereotypes or limited information." Harvard University also offers tests that can help reveal hidden biases to race, gender, age and other factors. This can be an opportunity to have a discussion with your peers about things they may have noticed.

Changing bias isn't a quick fix. It takes effort and some difficult discussions to correct. Hold yourself and others accountable. Seek perspectives from others with diverse backgrounds. In some cases, an individual can even seek therapy to slow down and identify feelings and actions.

It can be difficult admitting to having biases and to viewing or acting differently towards individuals who are different from ourselves in many ways. The most important thing to do is be receptive to uncomfortable realizations.

Last Call: Make MASFAA 2026 Part of Your Fall Plans

Submitted by Vanessa Wiest, MASFAA Program Chair + IASFAA Treasurer

There is still time to join us for MASFAA 2026, but the clock is officially ticking. **Registration closes October 14.**

This year's conference offers plenty of reasons to make the trip. Start with expanded preconference opportunities designed to create space for deeper conversation, connection, and professional growth. Throughout the conference, attendees will also have valuable access to NASFAA leadership and Federal Student Aid staff, bringing national and federal perspectives directly into the regional conversation.

And once the conference gets underway, the schedule is packed. Attendees can expect a robust mix of general sessions, interest sessions, networking, and timely discussions built around the issues financial aid professionals are navigating right now.

We are also ending the conference with opportunities to move from conversation to application.

Three Capstone Learning Labs will give attendees dedicated time to dig deeper into:

- Loan Proration, Schedule of Reductions, and Time to Credential
- Customer Service and Communication
- Data Insights

Then, we will bring everyone back together for a closing conversation on OB3 implementation in practice. Leaders representing different institution types and perspectives will share what they have learned since implementation began, what has changed, what remains challenging, and what their institutions are doing now.

If MASFAA 2026 has been sitting in your "maybe" column, this is the time to make the call. Not a MASFAA member? **Select "Full Conference (IASFAA Member)" ticket type and use code: MASFAA<3IASFAA**

Registration closes October 14. We hope to see you in Cedar Rapids!



NASFAA Training Opportunity for New Financial Aid Professionals

IASFAA Members,
Are you a newer financial aid professional looking to build your knowledge and expand your skill set? Or, if you lead a financial aid office or team, is there someone on your staff who could benefit from additional foundational training?

NASFAA's 2026-27 New Aid Officer Training Webinar Series is a great professional development opportunity for financial aid professionals with less than two years of experience.

The series runs September 22 through October 2 and includes 10 live sessions covering foundational topics such as:

- Verification
- Need analysis
- Student eligibility
- Other essential financial aid concepts and processes

The training is free for NASFAA members. All sessions will also be recorded and available on demand through August 30, 2027, giving participants flexibility to revisit the material throughout the year.

Learn more and register for the New Aid Officer Training Webinar Series

For financial aid leaders, we encourage you to consider who within your office may benefit from this opportunity. Investing in newer professionals strengthens individual skills, builds confidence, and helps develop the next generation of financial aid professionals.

NASFAA has also recently redesigned its Events Calendar, making it easier to find upcoming training, professional development, credential opportunities, and programs that may qualify for FAAC® recertification points.

We hope you'll take advantage of these resources and share them with colleagues who may benefit.