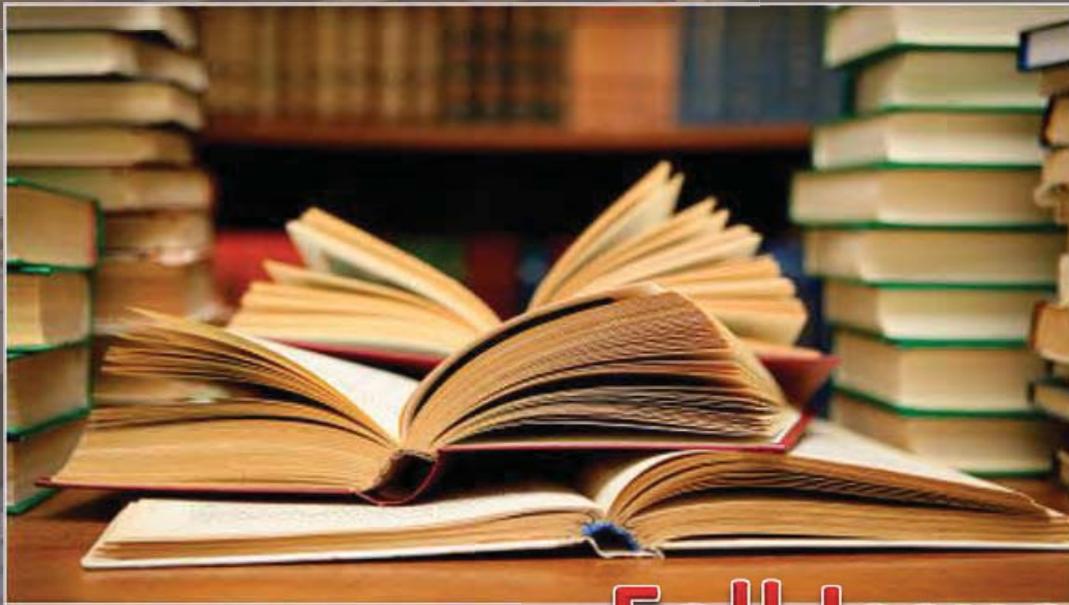


VASFAA VOICE



Fall Issue

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vasfaa

Virginia Association of Student
Financial Aid Administrators

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President's Message

Melissa J. Barnes, VASFAA President



MAGNIFYING THE POWER OF VASFAA 2011-12

Greetings VASFAA Members!

I trust that each of you have had a productive fall registration and are looking forward to aid disbursement, FISAP and SCHEV reporting! And someone once said "...and the beat goes on!"

I am delighted to serve as your 2011-12 VASFAA President and proudly bring you greetings on behalf of the Board, the Committee Chairs, and of the volunteers that will service during this year. The VASFAA Board and

Committee Chairs had a very productive transitional board meeting in Norfolk, Virginia at the Norfolk Sheraton Hotel (the site of the 2012 Annual VASFAA Spring Conference). It is my hope as your President to "Magnify the Power of VASFAA" through leadership, developing, training and volunteer services.

In addition, thank you for affording me with the opportunity to attend the NASFAA Conference in Boston, Massachusetts and the SASFAA Transitional and Board Meeting during the summer months. It seems that the minds of our colleagues continues to focus on the changes in regulations that governs us...glad that the year-round Pell, ACG, and SMART are all a thing of the past! Nowadays it seems like we are more focused on gainful employment, new S.A.P. standards, and verification changes for 2012-13!! Because of the vast changes, both the Conference (Kerrie Roth, Chair) and Non-conference (Biz Daniels, Chair) Committees will be working diligently to provide training opportunities for you. Look for more forthcoming details.

VASFAA is a volunteer professional organization; and I am honored to be a part of an organization that promotes volunteer services. I appeal to you, my colleagues, to reach out and become a member of a committee of your choice. I am grateful for those that have already volunteered and look forward to others that choose to join our team.

As I rolled out my goals and objectives during the 2011 Annual VASFAA Spring Conference and at the Transitional Board Meeting, I focused on providing leadership, development, training, and volunteer services. I made the commitment to strengthen our development partners by looking at other entities that offer services to higher education institutions. We are off to a great start! Under the leadership of Michael Poma, Development Partners Chair, 58 emails have been sent to our constituents.

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Under the leadership of Linda Woodley, Awareness Chair, VASFAA has completed the application for the College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACGP). It is the Committee's desire to continue VASFAA's tradition of promoting Super Saturday throughout the Commonwealth. The Board approved to host Super Saturday on the following dates in 2012: January 28th, February 4th, and February 11th.

Dr. Pamela Rambo has agreed to Chair Secondary School Relations and has been working diligently to offer workshops for High School Guidance Counselors during October and November 2011. More information will be forthcoming! If you are interested in hosting a High School Guidance Counselors Workshop, please contact Dr. Rambo at pamela.rambo@cox.net. I am sure that she will welcome your invitation!

The VASFAA website has transitioned from ATAC to Wild Apricot and many thanks goes to Jane Moore, Electronic Services Chair, for making the transition happen!!! Because the website is new, the Board voted to require all members to complete your "Membership Application". In addition, we have added an "Announcement" feature to the website designed specifically for posting news between editions of the "Voice". If you have any questions or problems, please contact Jane at jmoore7@gmu.edu.

Speaking of news, Kylie Kennedy, Newsletter Chair, has taking on the awesome task of producing 4 quarterly newsletters this year. Please contact Kylie at ktodak@liberty.edu for deadline dates and more information pertaining submission of news articles.

Now, it is my privilege to provide you with the team of members that will be serving on the VASFAA Board for the 2011-12 year:

2011-12 VASFAA Executive Board Members

President	Melissa Barnes	Norfolk State University
President-Elect	Margaret Murphy	Emory & Henry College
Past-President	Heather Hollandsworth	Ferrum College
Secretary	Ashley Reich	Liberty University
Treasurer	John Brandt	Southern Virginia University
Treasurer-Elect	Lisa Tumer	James Madison University
Rep-At-Large/Development	Vera Riddick	Old Dominion University
Rep-At-Large/Outreach Services	Stephanie Clements	Virginia Tech
Rep-At-Large/Information Systems	Tarik Boyd	ECPI
Rep-At-Large/Organizational Services	Paul Farrar	Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
Special Appointee (non-voting)	Jeanne Holmes	SunTrust Bank

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2011-12 VASFAA Committee Chairs

Archives	Holly Rison	Randolph-Macon College
Awareness	Linda Woodley	SCHEV
Budget & Finance	Bobby Clemmer	Blue Ridge Community College
Conference	Kerrie Roth	Old Dominion University
Development Partners	Michael Poma	SunTrust
Electronic Services	Jane Moore	George Mason University
FOCUS	Mike O'Grady	Financial Aid Services
Government Relations	Donna Taylor	Virginia Tech
Membership	Carla Dailey	Old Dominion University
Newsletter	Kylie Kennedy	Liberty University
New Century/President Council	Brenda Burke	VCU
Non-Conference Training	Biz Daniels	Great Lakes Educational Loans Services, Inc.
Public Relations	Anita Aymer	Wytheville Community College
SCHEV Liaison	Lee Andes	SCHEV
Secondary School Relations	Pamela Rambo	Rambo Research
Strategic Planning	Randy Craig	Chase

I am extremely excited about the strides that have been taken thus far to “magnify the power of VASFAA”; and I am confident that there are more exciting things to come. I look forward to working with and hearing from each of you.

In closing, thank you for your vote of confidence by electing me as your VASFAA President and for your part in “magnifying the power”!

Sincerely,

Melissa J. Barnes
VASFAA President

VASF^{AA} VOICE

Letter from the Editor

Hello and welcome to the 2011-2012 VASF^{AA} Voice! Our mission for this year's newsletter is to "Magnify the Power of VASF^{AA}" by keeping our members informed and updated on events and happenings within, as well as, outside of VASF^{AA}. We want to be able to provide a resource for schools and a closer network of financial aid offices in hopes of bettering our financial aid services to our students.

Effectively communicating changes, updates and happenings in the world of financial aid, the VASF^{AA} Voice will work to bringing relevant pieces to the newsletter. The VASF^{AA} Voice is designed to be informative, thought provoking, as well as, a source of encouragement to you and your financial aid offices. I would like to invite all VASF^{AA} members to use their writing skills to participate in the VASF^{AA} Voice by submitting articles and updates from the respective committees that they may be involved in.

Through submitting articles, the newsletter can touch on various topics that are relevant to all, or most, of higher education, possibly bringing resolution and ideas to many obstacles facing our institutions. I encourage members to get involved in not only the newsletter, but in the many VASF^{AA} committees and event opportunities available. Keeping you connected to present hot topics and events, the VASF^{AA} Voice hopes to serve the members of VASF^{AA} well.

The Newsletter Committee welcomes new ideas and topics to make the Voice more relevant to its members and their institutions. Here's to the kickoff of the 2011-2012 VASF^{AA} Voice and magnifying the power of VASF^{AA}!

Sincerely,

Kylie Kennedy
VASF^{AA} Voice Editor

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Committee Updates

Awareness Committee

VASFAA's Awareness Committee is busy preparing for Super Saturday 2012. As VASFAA plans its 10th annual event, this year the committee is planning to host Super Saturday on THREE different Saturdays. The schedule is as follows:

January 28th @ 4-year colleges & universities
February 4th @ community & technical colleges
February 11th @ high schools & community centers

The additional dates will provide parents and students with more opportunities and choices to obtain the assistance needed to accurately complete the FAFSA.

As of August 22, 2011, 29 sites have been secured for Super Saturday 2012, but we are shooting for at least 40. The Awareness Committee has several ideas for promoting Super Saturday in mind, including mailing postcard magnets to Virginian families and placing an ad about Super Saturday in the annual College & School Guide published by Media General. The committee is also planning to distribute pre-loaded USB drives to high school seniors that will include information on college admissions, financial literacy, financial aid filing deadlines, Virginia cost of attendance information as well as the dates and locations of Super Saturday.

The Awareness Committee members include Ashley Ann Reich, Liberty University; Tierney McAuley, SCHEV; Malik Gladden, Norfolk State University; Margaret Murphy, Emory & Henry College; William Scharrer, Project Discovery; Marlene Cicchetto, Bon Secours Memorial College of Nursing; Crystal Filer-Ogden, Bon Secours Memorial College of Nursing; and Linda Woodley, SCHEV.

If and when you get a call or e-mail from a member of the Awareness Committee, we hope you will agree to host or to volunteer at one of the sites. As our 10th annual Super Saturday event, we want this one to be special. For more information, please contact Linda Woodley at (804)371-2938 or via e-mail at lindawoodley@schev.edu.

Thank you,

VASFAA's Awareness Committee

Conference Committee

The Conference Committee is in the early stages of conference planning and needs your help! If you are interested in serving on the Conference Committee, please contact Kerrie Roth at kr Roth@odu.edu. Most committee work can be completed via phone or e-mail contact. Also, if you won't be attending the conference there are many tasks that must be completed ahead of the conference, so feel free to sign up now and be a part of the VASFAA 2012 Conference Committee!

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The Unconventional Student: Communicating Strategies with Online Adult Learners

By Rachel Myers and Ashley Ann Reich

Taken from NASFAA's Transcript Magazine Vol. 22 No. 2



A TIME magazine article, "Holy Enrollers: Why Boomers are Going to Divinity School" (Feb. 6, 2011) describes a movement of adult learners pursuing career dreams that they have had since they were children. One student featured in the article sold many personal possessions and used the money to enroll in divinity school at age 64. The article describes how Baby Boomers are embarking on a second or third career by answering to a "higher calling," and statistics have shown a 20 percent growth overall for students who are over age 50 and above.

These trends mean that students from the Baby Boom (born mid-1940s to early 1960s), Generation X (mid 1960s to early 1980s), and Generation Y (mid-1980s to early 2000s) are all enrolled in the same college. At Liberty University, for example, 58 percent of enrolled students are considered either Generation X or Baby Boomers.

The population of adult learners is split almost in half, with undergraduate students making up 51.5 percent and professional students making up 48.5 percent. Communicating with such a wide variety of age groups takes some creative thinking and exploration of available tools.

Compounding this issue is the growing number of online learners. Adult students in particular often do not have the time or the ready access to college that would allow them to take classes on campus. Instead, they opt for online programs that allow them flexibility to pursue a degree while working, raising a family, and managing a household. With online learners comes the special communications challenge of reaching students who may never actually set foot in the student aid office. A number of outreach options are available, but none is a panacea – the best choice will depend on the preferences and needs of each student population.

Social Media

Higher education institutions have begun using social media as an alternative way to reach students and a means to enhance the collegial student experience for online learners. Twitter and Facebook have significant advantages for admissions, although financial aid offices typically choose to err on the side of caution due to privacy concerns, opting for one-way communications where only the host can post comments and make announcements. It is a delicate balance that schools must maintain to not sacrifice for the sake of reaching students at their preferred level of communication.

It is still important to consider your audience before spending the time and money to invest in a current trend. According to a 2010 Pew Research Center study, 50 percent of Generation X and 58 percent of Baby Boomers read a daily newspaper, as opposed to 43 percent of Generation Y. Additionally, 19 percent of Generation X state they "never" trust social networking sites. This illustrates that while social media may be an excellent way to create a classroom forum setting for some, it is not a universal effective.

Pick Up the Phone

Call campaigns are another means often used to reach online populations. While many schools will use blasts of pre-recorded messages, some have found that the one-on-one communication directly with the student is more effective than an

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Chat

Liberty University's online advising and admissions departments began using a chat feature more than a year ago with very positive results. The financial aid office implemented a chat feature at the beginning of January 2011 and has not only seen high usage, it has also seen a marked reduction in the call volume for simple questions. While some adult learners may not be completely open to online communication services, we have found that the majority of our student chat communication comes from that population.

With faster and broader communication comes the need to be extra vigilant about abiding by FERPA, Gramm Leach Bliley Act, the FACT Act, and other requirements to protect the privacy of our students. At Liberty, to ensure we are maintaining compliance, we have implemented identity verification steps. In addition, our in-house Program Integrity Analyst uses chat transcripts to track alleged fraud account communications.

Web-based Forms

The ability to submit forms via the Internet has improved efficiency and timely processing across the board at Liberty. In the department, we have created an online verification worksheet for students applying for specific institutional discounts to fill out and sign electronically. This eliminates the need to fax, scan, or physically mail the document. The movement towards paperless processing in almost every area of the university has posed some technical and security concerns with the adult learning population who, while comfortable with online education, are not as eager to utilize an online system to submit private information.

Some of that discomfort is fading, however, as the U.S. Department of Education continues to encourage online student aid application processing. Recently, the Department implemented the IRS Data Retrieval process, which allows students and parents who have filed a tax return to transfer their IRS data direction to the FAFSA for the year in which they are applying. This process will reduce user keying errors and allow for faster turnaround times. As the Department continues to push the envelope, adult learners are beginning to adapt to paperless communication.

Learning New Tricks?

The adult learning population – particularly online learners – are often poised between unfamiliarity with and distrust of online processes, and the need to engage online as part of their web-based program. Exploring a variety of approaches to reach as students on as many levels as possible will help them to transition into the paperless processing environment of the future without missing out on the critical current information they need to stay informed.

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Key Questions for Assessing Your School's Default Aversion Program

Tamy Garofano, TG Regional Account Executive

Financial aid professionals are passionate about their work because they believe in helping students gain access to a brighter future through higher education. They also know a higher education costs money, and most students would have no chance at getting it without financial support.

At the same time, financial aid professionals are acutely aware of the consequences when student loan borrowers fail to meet their repayment obligations after they leave school. Unfortunately, today's circumstances have intensified this issue. A strained economy and diminished job prospects for students have led to increased cohort default rates (CDRs) across the nation. The transition to a 3-year calculation will cause rates to spike even further, with tough penalties for schools with high CDRs.

In light of today's economic and student aid realities, having an effective default aversion program has never been more important. Other than through CDRs, however, how can schools assess their default aversion activities? The questions below represent a good start. Use this quick check to help you determine your program's strengths and weaknesses — and where to focus improvement efforts in the future.

Does your school have an interdepartmental default aversion committee charged with reviewing and revising your school's default aversion plan?

Since student loan default and high CDRs affect the entire school, not just the financial aid office, it's important to involve the entire school in the solution. Doing so not only gains buy-in for your school's default management efforts from areas essential to their success, but also gathers a wider range of ideas and strategies than relying on just one office would produce.

If your school lacks a default aversion committee with representation from across your campus, work to create one by reaching out to as many student-affecting areas as possible — including the registrar's office, bursar's office, admissions office, enrollment management office, career placement office, and faculty members.

Once your team is formed, make explicit the ramifications of default and build consensus on an approach to helping borrowers succeed in repayment. From this consensus, your team can oversee the creation or enhancement of a concerted default aversion plan. Finally, ensure the plan's relevance and effectiveness by instituting a regular review and revision period, preferably every one to two years.

Does your school have an interdepartmental enrollment management committee that addresses the effects of financial literacy, debt management, and student retention on default rates?

As we all know, degree completion has a significant impact on a student's likelihood to repay student loans successfully. For this reason, a school's enrollment management plan — and especially the component of that plan focused on student retention — plays a major part in the school's default aversion strategy.

Just as with default aversion, student retention is a campus-wide responsibility. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the institution to focus on satisfactory academic progress and timely degree completion while equipping students with the skills to manage the financial obligations they incur during and after school. Doing so will increase their chances of leaving school with a degree in hand and avoid defaulting on their loans.

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Has your school established achievable short-term and challenging long-term goals to lower your school's CDR?

The CDR is an indicator, an easily understood measure signifying how well your students are handling repayment. By lowering it, you will help more students repay their loans successfully, thus avoiding the unpleasant consequences of default.

Defining precise goals for lowering your CDR will help motivate your school to decisive action to meet those goals, as well as help you measure just how effective your program is. To accomplish this, be sure to set goals that meet the S.M.A.R.T. criteria: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

To help accomplish these goals, consider assigning at least one person to focus primarily on your school's default aversion efforts, and training that individual in the details of CDRs, financial aid, and the consequences of default.

Does your school have personnel dedicated to contacting at-risk borrowers about their student loans during their grace period as well as borrowers who are delinquent on their student loans?

No matter how much effort you put into educating your borrowers while still in school, some will not manage to begin repaying their loans on time. For many of these borrowers, communication with the school may be enough to nudge them into a regular repayment pattern, whether because they don't fully understand their financial obligation, don't know how to start making payments or where they should go, or just haven't thought about it yet.

For this reason, having staff members assigned to contacting borrowers is a must for any school that wants to manage its default rate effectively.

Remember, however, that loan servicers and guarantors are required to communicate with borrowers as part of their due diligence activities. These communications by letter, email, and phone come at key times during delinquency and serve to underscore a borrower's repayment obligations. Be aware of these time frames and actions so that you can stagger, and echo, the message of repayment at other times. Finally, it's a good idea, when you contact students, to avoid any tone of a collection agency.

Self-awareness is always the first step to improvement. By asking yourself these strategic questions, you will take strides to improve your school's default management efforts.

Online financial literacy training that works: Making lessons stick

Tamy Garofano, TG Regional Account Executive

Online financial literacy training is an efficient and helpful way to teach important concepts if — and this is a big “if” — the lessons actually stick with the students. What strategies can boost the “stickiness factor” in online financial literacy training?

Background

Malcolm Gladwell coined the term “stickiness” in his now-classic book *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell, writing about educational television shows like *Sesame Street* and *Blue’s Clues*, was referring to the qualities that make messages better understood and remembered. Chip and Dan Heath, two brothers who are both experts on communication, took the term as inspiration for their 2007 book *Made to Stick*. Whether it’s political communication, classroom teaching, or urban legends, the Heath brothers argued, there are common elements to messages that catch on.

Of course the best teachers, through years of trial and error, and through the immediate feedback of being in the same room as their students, know when to shift strategies to enhance the lesson’s stickiness factor. One concern that skeptics have expressed about online learning is that it lacks that feedback loop, as well as the expert teacher’s understanding of students.

Skepticism aside, online learning isn’t going away anytime soon. For any number of reasons — budget, scalability, desire to engage technologically-inclined 21st-century learners — online learning continues to grow in popularity. A September 2010 study by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) — *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies* — found that online learning is one of the fastest growing trends in education. Not only that, the review reports that online learning was slightly more effective than face-to-face learning under some circumstances, and that a blended approach (online and face-to-face learning) was more effective still.

Given the potential suggested by those findings, it’s worth asking: what are ways that online learning can be most effective? If we’re going down this road — *since* we’re going down this road — how can we get the best results? How can we best apply what we know about making messages stick, as well as research into educational best practices, to online learning? Here are some tips to make online lessons stick.

1. Keep it active

ED’s review found that when learners are prompted to take control of their interactions with media, there is an increase in reflection and achievement. These moments of learner activity or learner reflection are especially effective at boosting understanding when students are pursuing online learning individually. That makes intuitive sense if we speculate that active engagement disrupts the tendency to skim along the surface of the material. At the same time, it’s worth noting that online learning — particularly with interactivity — is highly conducive to expanding learning time. When the student can keep at the activity as long as attention lasts, better learning outcomes can be expected.

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How might this apply to online financial literacy training?

For online financial literacy training, it might be a good idea to break content into short chunks, with frequent opportunities for assessment, and some student control of navigational paths. When students are regularly coming to natural stops, answering questions, and clicking on meaningful navigation choices to determine what comes next, better outcomes are likely. When game-like activities with fun interfaces are part of the training, brain switches are more likely to be in the “on” position.

2. Ask thought-provoking questions

A recent study by **Dr. Sylvie Kerger** from the University of Luxembourg shows that girls are more interested in learning science lessons when the scientific concepts are presented in terms the students might think of as more feminine than typical boy-oriented science instruction. For example, “How can we make the colors in tie-dye shirts look brighter?” might frame the lesson in a more girl-friendly way than “Today we’re going to learn about pH and water solubility.” The effect isn’t specific to online learning, nor is the gender issue the salient point for our specific purposes. The point is that material that is dry and difficult in the abstract can be made interesting when presented in concrete, student-adapted terms. Online learning, like face-to-face learning, must prepare the way by provoking thought and curiosity on the topics at hand.

How might this apply to online financial literacy training?

It’s easy to see how relevant financial literacy content could be made concrete for students. For example, getting students to understand the differences between a defined benefit retirement plan and a defined contribution retirement plan may seem daunting at first. Not only is the material inherently unflashy, retirement is far from the thoughts of most college students. However, job offers are *very* much on students’ minds, so framing that information in terms of choosing the best job offer creates pedagogical leverage in gaining and holding student attention.

3. Appeal to the eye

Dr. John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*, writes that it’s obvious that vision is our dominant sense, but what’s surprising is how far the other sense lag behind. For example, on *hearing* a piece of information, a typical human being will remember only about 10% of it three days later. What’s the effect of adding a strong visual component? Retention moves quickly northward, with most people remembering 65% or so of the message! Good visual design, including animation, charts, motion graphics, and appealing colors and fonts, can go a long way toward helping the brain learn and retain concepts.

How might this apply to online financial literacy training?

An under-designed, text-heavy lesson isn’t going to carry the day. Conversely, it’s just as true that an overly busy design will be distracting, confusing, and cluttered. The recipe for likely success is consistent use of appealing fonts, clear page design, and engaging visuals that carry through different course elements. This component of effective online learning is why many subject matter experts can’t just put their ideas online and effectively attract students. The way things look isn’t just ornamental. It’s an important pedagogical factor to which good attention should be paid.

4. Make connections with internal summaries

In 2003, scholar Robert Marzano published a paper analyzing 395 experimental studies and looking for classroom practices that research could confirm led to a boost in achievement. Some were among education's all-time greatest hits. Not many readers will be surprised that the following all boosted achievement:

applying compare and contrast as a thinking tool,
getting positive reinforcement from teachers,
practicing new skills to attain mastery, and
having a teacher who made the learning objectives very clear.

Perhaps less predictably, teachers who regularly use internal summaries get better results. One reason is that summaries orient the students, helping them map new information onto what they already know. Another is that this practice models that particular thinking skill for students, getting them in the habit of synthesizing information (one of the higher order thinking skills in Bloom's Taxonomy).

It's all about helping the students add the new knowledge to their cognitive maps. Internal summaries secure the learning that has just happened, and prepare the way for the learning to come. In *Made to Stick*, the Heath brothers talk about how high-concept movie descriptions ("*Aliens* is basically *Jaws* in outer space.") use what's already known to make new information more accessible and memorable.

How might this apply to online financial literacy training?

Online learning offers many opportunities to use internal summary to model that thinking skill for students. With financial literacy lessons, for example, transitioning from credit reports to credit scores offers the opportunity for this internal summary by analogy: a credit report is like a teacher conference, getting into the details of your credit history, whereas a credit score is like a grade, distilling those details into one number.

All these strategies (and this just scratches the surface) help to make solid online learning courses effective. With this kind of approach, the advantages of online learning are available in conjunction with best educational practices to help make financial literacy lessons that stick.

Avoiding Student Debt

By Kylie Kennedy

A financial aid office's end goal and mission is to finance their student's educational goals. Financing school, as we know can be costly. And, a student's financial aid package is made up of different sources of funds, from loans to grants to scholarships. Our big question is what is the best solution for our students to finance their education? This is a question that cannot be answered with a vague solution or quick reference as to how certain types of aid fit into a student's budget.

Financial Aid Has Options?

As financial aid administrators, we should be looking at each student's file to find their "personal" best solution for financing their education. Financial aid offices come in all sizes and we serve both small and large student bodies. So, how does such an ambitious goal get accomplished? Certainly we cannot host one on one sessions with every student in all circumstances. This would be both timely and somewhat ineffective. What we can do is give every resource possible to our students. Keeping our students informed of their options will encourage better solutions to financing their college education.

Informing students of their options can be tricky, and possibly come across as overwhelming. It is also necessary, so that we create informed borrowers and hopefully limit the total amount of funds borrowed by increasing the chances for grants and scholarships. We have all heard of those grants for the left handed, red headed students, but what are the truly viable options for the typical student? In a conversation with a co-worker, this topic came up and we were dumbfounded by the lack of motivation our students have when searching and applying for scholarship. My co-worker asked this question, "What job pays \$1,000 an hour?"; her point being if it takes a student an hour to find a scholarship and apply, wouldn't it be worth their time for a couple hundred dollars? Yet, we see very few students that seek out aid alternatives to loans.

Scholarship Fairs

There are a few practical ways that can be implemented at institutions in order to encourage students to seek better forms of financial aid. Many can already be found in practice at financial aid offices around the country. One of these solutions is hosting annual or bi-annual scholarship fairs. Notify your students in advance and encourage them to come out through e-mail reminders about times and locations. You can also have financial aid staff trainings on popular scholarships programs. The more resources your staff have, the more likely this information will be relayed to your student body.

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Avoiding Student Debt continued...

E-mail blasts

Recently, Liberty University began sending e-mail blasts notifying students of potential scholarship and grant opportunities. Informing our students of the upcoming deadlines brought a number of applications flooding into the office for review. E-mail blasts to potentially eligible students can be a convenient way to get information out to your students without wasting too much time.



Financial Aid Will Be Out-of-Office Today

A more unconventional way of getting your students' attention about the importance of scholarships and grants is seeking them outside of the office. Take the time to visit class rooms targeting specific majors to inform them on grants they might be eligible for. Offer your assistance outside of the office during admissions or visitor events, giving potential students a jumpstart on their scholarship search.

It's Not Too Late

On a smaller note, our students need to be reminded that it is not too late to search for alternatives to loans. Despite previous loans that have been taken out, students still have opportunities available for future terms. Even though deadlines for a current term may be past, searching for scholarships available for later semesters is never futile if it could reduce the amount of borrowed funds.

Overall, providing resources and encouragement can be our solution to reducing the student debt load, which is so prevalent right now. The various methods for informing our students of financial aid options will look different for every financial aid office. The important factor is that we are imparting our financial aid knowledge to our students. The logic "what they don't know won't hurt them" couldn't be more false in the realm of financial aid. Inform, motivate, and inspire students to reconsider their best option for financing their dream.

NASFAA Update

The NASFAA National Conference was held just two months ago in Boston, Massachusetts and discussions are still going. Among the many sessions that were available to financial aid administrators was the hot topic of the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act received a recent spike in publicity as congress and the Obama administration have worked to refine this new act that is hoped to be signed into law in the near future. There has been much debate over whether this act would be a detriment, or positive, to our present education system. This act would provide a way for undocumented students to obtain their citizenship under specific qualifications and reach their “dreams” both educationally and otherwise. Further updates on this will be released as they come.

Among other NASFAA news has been the discussion over the new requirement asking all schools wishing to keep Title IV eligibility to create Constitution Day programs in effort to provide their students with resources pertaining to the constitution. This new requirement sparked a patriotic side to our institutions as they have worked to maintain this requirement.

One of NASFAA’s recent featured topics was the net price calculator. This new regulation’s deadline will come shortly. All institutions hosting Title IV programs will need to have their Net Price Calculator available on their website for students starting October 29, 2011. Schools have been working hard to comply with this measure, procuring the right products and data to make sure their calculators are up to par. The main motivation behind this regulation has been to keep our students informed of their costs and create a mindset of transparency with our respective student bodies.

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Calendar Snapshot

September 25th - 28th

Council for Opportunity in Ed Conference (TRIO)

The 30th annual Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) conference will be held September 25th through the 28th in Washington, DC. This year's theme is "America's Future: The Role of Education in Our National Security". Hot topics such as "The Authority and Limits of Institutional Discretion in Spending Federal Money", "Show Me the Money! Getting the Scholarship Edge", and "Understanding and Supporting 21st Century Student Needs" will be among the many sessions

October 16th - 19th

NASSGAP Conference (State Scholarship & Grant)

The National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs (NASSGAP) is hosting their annual fall conference in Washington, DC over the dates of October 16th through the 19th. Sessions include "The Washington Update", "FOTW Interface with State Grant Applications", and the current dilemma of "Declining State Funds for Higher Education".

October 17th - 20th

Student Employment Association Conference

The National Student Employment Association will be hosted in Seattle, Washington this fall. Dates of the conference are October 17th through the 20th. This conference is geared towards dealing with the intricacies of student employment including legal issues, regulations for the federal work-study program and more.

November 29th - December 2nd **FSA Fall Conference**

The FSA Fall Conference is fast approaching. This year's conference will be held at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Registration is currently open. For attendees, available sessions include Direct Loan Reconciliation, the NSLDS update, Customized Verification – 2013-14 and beyond, Five Steps to Effective Cohort Default Rates Management, and more!

VASFAA VOICE

Thanks to our contributors !

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Article Guidelines

The editorial staff will review all articles submitted for publication. All articles should be of professional interest to the association and should not include marketing and/or advertising of products, services, websites, or personnel.

Picture Guidelines

Pictures should be submitted in .jpeg, .jpg, or .gif format.



To give away money is an easy matter... and in any man's power. But to decide to whom to give it, and how large and when, for what purpose and how, is neither in every man's power nor an easy matter. Hence it is that such excellence is rare, praiseworthy and noble.

Aristotle