

2019 Year in Review: NASFAA's Policy, Grant, and Advocacy Efforts

By Hunter B. Martin

In 2019, NASFAA and its members across the country made great strides in influencing important policy decisions regarding college access, affordability, simplification, and transparency. NASFAA engaged in numerous advocacy, grant-funded, and public policy undertakings to support its mission of promoting programs that remove financial barriers and ensure student access to postsecondary education.

By the end of the year, NASFAA will have held five successful [Advocacy Pipeline](#) events on Capitol Hill this year with 17 members, including nine participants for the fourth annual "[G/P Hill Day](#)." NASFAA also launched a new series of [issue briefs](#) on timely federal student aid policy issues as lawmakers consider proposals to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA), and updated the annual [National Student Aid Profile](#), while NASFAA's Board of Directors updated NASFAA's [Code of Conduct](#) in November 2019.

Read on for a comprehensive list of other actions NASFAA and its members took in 2019.

Issue Briefs

[Issue Brief: Campus-Based Aid Allocation Formula](#)

Jan. 28, 2019 – Campus-based funds are allocated directly to participating institutions based on an institutional need formula; institutions then determine which of their students receive the funds as well as their award amounts.

[Issue Brief: Origination Fees](#)

May 8, 2019 – The HEA of 1965, as amended, specifies a loan origination fee of 1% for all Direct Subsidized Loans and Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and a fee of 4% for all Direct PLUS Loans for both parent borrowers & graduate/professional student borrowers.

[Issue Brief: The FAFSA Act](#)

May 15, 2019 – The bipartisan FAFSA Act would simplify the federal student aid application, verification, and loan repayment processes by allowing direct data sharing between the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Education.

Grant Initiatives

[Assisting Displaced Students Working Group \(2015–20\)](#)

Since April 2015, NASFAA has been working to provide assistance to students whose schools closed while they were enrolled or shortly after they withdrew. With the help of grant funding, a ticketing website, and a working group comprised of NASFAA member volunteers, NASFAA has been able to assist more than 6,000 students from more than 30 closed institutions across the country.

[The Higher Education Committee of 50 \(2017–19\)](#)

In late 2017, NASFAA was awarded a grant to convene a group of forward-thinking campus leaders tasked with developing policy solutions that will help surmount obstacles preventing students from enrolling in, paying for, and graduating from college through pre-identified policy areas related to access, affordability, accountability and transparency. In March 2019, the group released their [final report](#), which included 36 recommendations for higher education.

Exploring Ways to Make FAFSA More Efficient (2019-20)

NASFAA is further exploring ways to make the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the overall federal aid application process more efficient and streamlined for students and families. The 10 ideas, and their resulting paper, explored through this work will help address the main challenge in simplifying the application process: creating an application that simultaneously makes the process easier for applicants and accurately distinguishes those who are truly in need of Title IV aid from those who are not. These papers will cover a wide variety of topics and address all major FAFSA simplification proposals that have been recently introduced for consideration. Each paper will be written by an association, think tank, or scholar that is currently working in this space and each set of authors will be challenged to conduct new research and/or data collection or expand on a current body of work. The reports are expected to be released in June 2020.

National Analysis of Extending Title IV Aid to Short-Term Programs (2019-20)

In current law, Title IV student assistance is available only to students enrolled at institutions of higher education in programs of study of at least 600 hours over 15 weeks of instruction. However, many in-demand labor market skills that require some type of credential require less seat time than the minimum established by the Title IV eligibility rules, leaving students seeking those credentials to find alternatives to Title IV funding, potentially limiting access to such programs. Evaluating these policy proposals is difficult without more information about the current landscape of short-term programs. To explore the landscape of these programs NASFAA, Advance CTE, and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) are currently collaborating to produce a national analysis of short-term programs. The final report is expected to be released in June 2020.

Letters

[NASFAA Letter on Racial Disparities 2019](#)

February 15, 2019 – NASFAA submitted recommendations for how to improve the federal financial aid system for students of color in response to an inquiry from a group of democratic senators.

[NASFAA Submits Written Testimony to HELP Committee on FAFSA Simplification](#)

March 12, 2019 – NASFAA submitted the following written testimony for inclusion in the Simplifying the FAFSA and Reducing the Burden of Verification hearing, encouraging lawmakers to leverage technology to streamline and simplify the FAFSA.

[NASFAA Submits Written Testimony to House Education Committee on College Cost](#)

March 13, 2019 – NASFAA submitted the following written testimony for inclusion in the House Committee on Education and Labor's hearing on college cost, encouraging lawmakers to keep in mind the vital role of student aid.

[NASFAA FY 2020 Appropriations Request Letter](#)

March 22, 2019 – NASFAA sent a letter to the House and Senate appropriations committees urging them to reject cuts to federal aid programs included in President Donald Trump's fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget proposal and increase the federal investment in students.

[NASFAA Submits Letter of Support for Information Sharing Between DoD and ED](#)

May 13, 2019 – NASFAA submitted comments in support of the Department of Defense's proposed systems modifications.

[NASFAA Cancer Deferment Letter](#)

June 28, 2019 – NASFAA urged congressional leaders to ensure the new cancer treatment deferment benefit, included in the fiscal year 2019 spending package passed in September, is available for all federal student loan borrowers.

[Department of Education Publishes Draft Form for Reporting Foreign Gifts](#)

Aug. 1, 2019 – NASFAA wrote in a letter to the Department of Education expressing growing concern over the lack of clarity surrounding the foreign gift reporting requirements associated with Section 117 of the Higher Education Act.

[NASFAA Submits Letter on Public Service Loan Forgiveness Implementation Challenges](#)

Sept. 17, 2019 – NASFAA submitted comments to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Education and Labor on implementation challenges with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

[NASFAA Sends Letter to House Education Committee Ahead of College Affordability Act Markup](#)

Oct. 28, 2019 – In a letter to the House Committee on Education and Labor, NASFAA wrote that it supported certain provisions in the HEA reauthorization bill, the College Affordability Act, as well as outlined areas on concerns.

[NASFAA Joins Other Organizations in Criticizing ED's Foreign Gifts Reporting Guidance](#)

Nov. 5, 2019 – NASFAA, along with 29 other higher education organizations signed on to a letter offering comments about the Department of Education's proposed rules on foreign gift reporting requirements.

Comments

Last year NASFAA submitted comments on established regulations, policies, and processes concerning the topic of the 2020-21 FAFSA. Visit our [Department of Education Regulatory or Process Issues or Other Executive Branch Departments](#) page to see past comments and requests for action.

[NASFAA Submits Comments on Proposed Changes to 2019 Gainful Employment Disclosure Template](#)

Jan. 7, 2019 – NASFAA submitted comments in response to a Department of Education information collection request seeking feedback on proposed changes to the 2019 gainful employment disclosure template.

[NASFAA Submits Comments on Draft 2020-21 FAFSA](#)

June 3, 2019 – NASFAA proposed that an additional question be added to the FAFSA in order to

maintain eligibility for Simplified Needs Test (SNT) and automatic zero EFC for certain applicants who are affected by the 2018 tax form changes.

[NASFAA Submits Comments on Draft 20-21 FAFSA Round 2](#)

Aug. 2, 2019 – NASFAA submitted comments on the second draft of the 2020-21 FAFSA, and urged ED to make changes to the way questions 35 and 82 are posed, and suggested improvements to the question regarding untaxed income.

Publication Date: 12/9/2019