

NASFAA Members Participate in Advocacy Pipeline Following Passage of FUTURE Act

By [Hunter B. Martin, NASFAA Staff Reporter](#)



Last month, two NASFAA members traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of NASFAA's ongoing Advocacy Pipeline. While on Capitol Hill, Allene Curto, associate director of financial aid services at Springfield College, and Jacquelyn Cottom, assistant director of financial aid and compliance at Northern Virginia Community College, met with staffers from the offices of five different lawmakers representing Virginia and Massachusetts.

One of the main discussion points of the advocacy pipeline was the passage of the [Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education \(FUTURE\) Act](#). The bill provides mandatory, annual funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and allows the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to share taxpayer data directly with the Department of Education (ED) to simplify the financial aid application, verification, and student loan repayment processes for millions of students.

We asked the advocacy pipeline participants to share their thoughts and takeaways. Read on to learn about their experiences.

Allene Curto, associate director of financial aid services, Springfield College

What a wonderful opportunity it was to participate in the Advocacy Pipeline in December! We met with congressional staff, had the opportunity to thank them for the successful passage of the FUTURE Act, and had informative and productive conversations on some of the challenges that aid offices encounter while attempting to best serve our students. We discussed the challenges presented by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, loan proration, and other compliance hurdles.

We were able to emphasize NASFAA's ability to connect with members to provide needed data and impacts on students and families that our elected representatives can use to better inform their actions and support good legislation. Whether part of the Advocacy Pipeline or the Leadership & Legislative Conference & Expo, I encourage anyone who can to participate in the Hill visits. You will have a chance to inform staff while learning and connecting with other NASFAA members.



Jacquelyn Cottom, assistant director of financial aid and compliance, Northern Virginia Community College

When I was first contacted by NASFAA to participate in the Advocacy Pipeline I first thought, "How did they know I was interested in advocacy?" I go to work every day to support our students, and the opportunity to communicate and share with individuals who help shape laws that affect our students and profession genuinely excites me. Over the many years in this profession, that excitement is still there and the realization of how important and valuable those efforts are have grown.

Within the week of our visit, the Senate voted to pass an amended version of the FUTURE Act. We were scheduled to meet with members of the House Ways and Means Committee to discuss IRS data sharing, so the timing seemed perfect. Then, the day before our visit, the House voted on the bill and it passed. It was one of those, "What just happened?!?!" moments.

During the Advocacy Pipeline, we visited five different offices, thanked them for passing the FUTURE Act, and spoke on other issues affecting our students. Some individuals had more knowledge of financial aid programs; for others it was a learning experience. It was interesting to me because each office we visited took away a different nugget that we shared. Overall, it was a wonderful reminder of why I do what I do every day. I would not be working in my office if it

were not for the students I serve, and it is our responsibility to share with our elected officials how they can better support our students and the financial aid community (their constituents!).

NASFAA does a terrific job in advocating for us and it was encouraging to know that we belong to a professional association that is working hard for our efforts. I encourage my colleagues to get involved in the Advocacy Pipeline because your presence matters. I would tell anyone who participates that things can change in what feels like an instant. We have more than enough issues to share so come prepared because you never know what you may have the opportunity to discuss.

For more pictures from the event, check out NASFAA's Advocacy Pipeline [Facebook album](#). If you're interested in volunteering to be a part of NASFAA's Advocacy Pipeline, fill out an interest [form here](#).

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