



National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

NASSGAP Annual Conference

October 21-24, 2025

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON - ALEXANDRIA OLD TOWN



Welcome NASSGAP Members and Guests!



Welcome to the 2025 NASSGAP Conference in beautiful Alexandria, Virginia! It is a privilege to welcome you to this year's conference. In between learning from and sharing ideas with one another, I hope you will also find time to enjoy the charm and history surrounding us here in Old Town Alexandria.

Our stellar conference committee, led by Katie Stevens (SC), has worked tirelessly throughout the past year to design a program that is informative, timely, and engaging. If this is your first NASSGAP Conference, then you are in for a treat! I've found no other conference that compares to this group of dedicated state aid experts meeting together to share ideas and strategize how best to serve students across the nation in their pursuit of post-secondary education, while simultaneously supporting one another in the important work that we do. If you are a returning attendee, I expect that one of your favorite things about our time together will be the conversations and networking opportunities that happen best when we gather in person.

The past year has been one of extraordinary challenges and accomplishments for NASSGAP. We have navigated the ongoing impact of the "Better FAFSA" rollout, responded quickly to the acceleration of change at the federal level, and worked together to support students and families across the country. Our collective

advocacy has been strong and effective. From signing on to critical policy letters, engaging directly with FSA and members of Congress, and strengthening of our ongoing partnership with SHEEO, we've kept the needs of states and students front and center.

Your Executive Committee—a group of dedicated and talented volunteers—has worked diligently to advance NASSGAP's mission. Highlights of the year include frequent communication with FSA to ensure our members' questions and concerns are heard at the highest levels, continued excellence in Power Hour sessions on timely topics, and ongoing advocacy through letters, meetings, and coalition efforts to protect state grant programs, support student needs, and improve access to financial aid.

I want to thank each of you for supporting NASSGAP's work this year. Your participation in Power Hours, your engagement on the listserv, and your willingness to share expertise have strengthened this organization. It's been a privilege to lead such a passionate, collaborative, and knowledgeable community dedicated to advancing access and affordability in higher education.

As we begin this year's conference, I encourage you to learn, share, ask questions, and connect. Whether it's during a session, a hallway conversation, or our traditional State Roll Call, I hope you leave inspired and energized for the work ahead. Please join me in extending our deep appreciation to the 2025 Conference Committee for their extensive efforts developing this week's program. Thanks to your feedback over recent years, they've built an experience rich with learning, sharing, and connection.

Thank you, again, for being here. It has been an honor to serve as your President this year, and I look forward to connecting with each of you in the days ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth K. McCloud". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth McCloud
President, NASSGAP 2024–2025

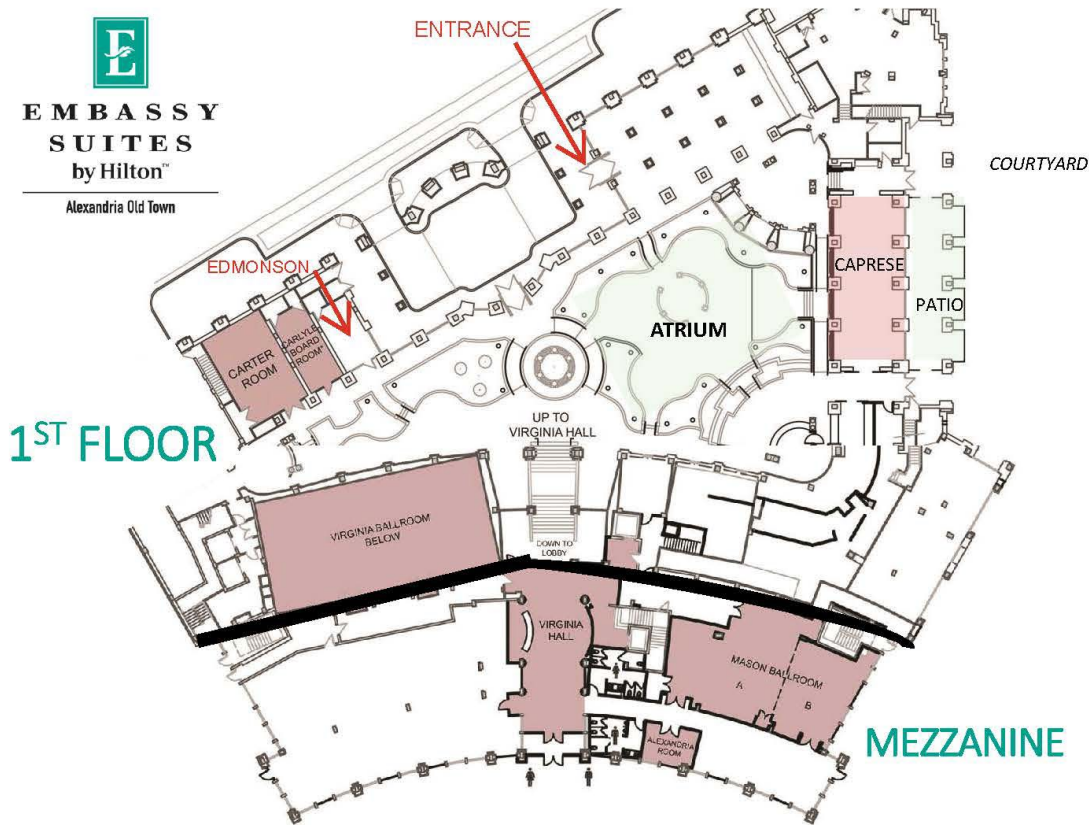


National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

EMBASSY SUITES FLOOR DIAGRAM



EMBASSY
SUITES
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Alexandria Old Town



1ST FLOOR

VIRGINIA BALLROOM
CARTER ROOM
CARLYLE BOARD ROOM
ATRIUM
CAPRESE ROOM
PATIO
COURTYARD

MEZZANINE

VIRGINIA HALL
MASON BALLROOM
ALEXANDRIA ROOM

CONFERENCE EVENT	LOCATION
President's Welcome Reception	Caprese
Daily Embassy Suites Breakfast	Atrium
Conference Sessions	Mason
Lunches (Wednesday and Thursday)	Caprese
Embassy Suites Evening Manger's Reception	Atrium



CONFERENCE DETAILS AT A GLANCE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2025

10:00 AM – 5:00 PM | Executive Committee Meeting | Carter Room

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM | Registration | Hotel Lobby

6:00 PM – 9:00 PM | President's Welcome Reception | Caprese

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025

6:30 AM – 8:15 AM | Breakfast | Atrium

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM | Registration | Mason Pre-function Area

8:30 AM – 5:00 PM | Conference | Mason Room

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM | Lunch | Caprese

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM | Group Dinner | Blackwall Hitch/Alexandria Waterfront
Meet in the lobby at 6:00 PM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2025

6:30 AM – 8:15 AM | Breakfast | Atrium

8:30 AM – 5:15 PM | Conference | Mason Room

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM | Lunch | Caprese

5:30 PM | Dinner on your own

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025

6:30 AM – 8:15 AM | Breakfast | Atrium

8:30 AM – 12:15 PM | Conference | Mason Room

Thank you to our 2025 Conference Planning Committee

Title	Name
Conference Co-Chair	Katie Stevens (SC)
Conference Co-Chair	Alex Zucco (CA)
President	Elizabeth McCloud (PA)
Past President	Jennifer Lanphear (ME)
President-Elect	Renée Davis (NV)
Treasurer	Tamika Braswell (OH)
Member-at-Large	James Snider (TN)
Director of Federal Relations	Frank Ballmann (NASSGAP)
Chair, Web Committee	Jennifer Rogers (MS)
Volunteer	Lee Andes (VA)
Volunteer	Zachary Christian (SC)
Volunteer	Melissa Cruz (GA)
Volunteer	Cassidy Dragunat (UT)
Volunteer	Michelle Marlowe (WV)
Volunteer	Deborah Paul (LA)
Volunteer	Erin Rau (OR)

**Interested in getting more involved in NASSGAP?
Conference Committee is a great place to start!**

Contact Jennifer Lanphear (jlanphear@famemaine.com)
with questions or to volunteer for 2026.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2025

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM	NASSGAP Executive Committee Meeting – Carter Room
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Registration – Hotel Lobby Visit the registration table to check in and receive your welcome package.
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	President McCloud’s Welcome Reception – Caprese Restaurant and Patio Enjoy heavy hors d’oeuvres and open bar, hosted by Elizabeth McCloud, 2024-2025 NASSGAP President.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025

Mason Room

Daily Moderator: Tamika Braswell (Ohio)

Hot and cold beverage station available from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

6:30 AM - 8:15 AM	BREAKFAST – Atrium
8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Registration – in case you missed us on Tuesday – Mason Pre-function Area
8:30 AM - 8:45 AM	President’s Welcome and Housekeeping Elizabeth McCloud (PA), 2024-25 NASSGAP President
8:45 AM - 9:15 AM	Introductions and Recognition of First-Time Attendees Elizabeth McCloud (PA), 2024-25 NASSGAP President
9:30 AM - 10:15 AM	Host State Happenings Lee Andes – State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)

	<p>Join us as we spotlight Virginia, this year's conference host state, with insights from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. This session will weave together a brief look at the Commonwealth's rich history with a discussion of current higher education priorities, challenges, and current initiatives designed to expand opportunity and strengthen student success.</p>
10:15 AM - 11:15 AM	<p>State Roll Call</p> <p>Renée Davis (NV), President-Elect</p>
11:30 AM - 12:45 PM	<p>LUNCH – Caprese Restaurant and Patio</p>
1:00 PM - 1:40 PM	<p>State Roll Call (continued)</p> <p>Renée Davis (NV), President-Elect</p>
1:45 PM - 2:45 PM	<p>Financial Aid Options for Undocumented, DACA, and Mixed-Status Family Students</p> <p>Kyra Mathews (OR), Meghan Flores (MN), and Cassidy Dragunat (UT)</p> <p>In this session, an overview of the issues specific to college access and financial aid options for undocumented, DACA, and mixed status family students will be provided. Given federal guidance and individual state restrictions on funding options and college access for these populations, colleagues from Minnesota, Utah and Oregon will share how we assist undocumented, DACA, and mixed status family students in accessing financial aid, and what state financial aid programs are available to these various populations in their state. We will also discuss the challenges and lessons learned in serving this population over time and during FAFSA simplification.</p>
2:45 PM - 3:00 PM	<p>Break – Mason Prefunction Area</p>
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	<p>Higher Education and What Comes Next: Stories from Students with Disabilities</p> <p>Pamala Trivedi – Georgetown University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (GUCEDD)</p> <p>Hari Kannan – Graduate of the TerpsEXCEEDS Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program; University of Maryland, College Park</p> <p>For many students with disabilities, college is about more than academics – it is about belonging, building skills, and preparing for the future. In this session,</p>

you will hear about (and from) those who have taken different paths through higher education, including Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs and traditional university experiences. The student discussion will include why college was important to them, what supports made the experience meaningful, and how it has shaped what comes next. We will also think through how universities, state agencies, families, and potential employers can work together to make higher education a meaningful, accessible, and affordable experience for students with a wide range of support needs.

Participants will gain a deeper understanding of how campuses and agencies can reduce barriers, how families can be included as partners, and how employers can engage with graduates to create pathways into the workforce.

Six-Year Student Outcomes Among First-Time Recipients of the NYS Tuition Assistance Program

Bosede Cajuste and Marissa Bieber (NY)

The New York State (NYS) Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) has provided approximately \$30 billion in need-based aid to more than six million students since its inception in 1974. However, the impact of this program on improving college access, success, and equity has been unclear. As part of an initiative to shine light on TAP recipients, a series of reports have been released analyzing six-year student outcomes among first-time TAP recipients. Using a sample of 4,000 TAP and non-TAP recipients of similar socioeconomic status who started college in 2013 and 2014, we found that:

- TAP recipients were more likely to graduate; the six-year completion rate for TAP recipients was 60%, 34 percentage points higher than non-TAP students (26%).
- TAP recipients were found to be twice as likely to begin their college education at a four-year institution, and two times more likely to complete their education at a four-year institution.
- A greater percentage of TAP recipients chose to attend colleges in NY
- TAP advanced educational equity. TAP recipients saw reductions in the gap in six-year completion rates between disadvantaged and advantaged subgroups.

Additional analyses tracked three TAP cohorts: those who started college in 2015, in 2016, and in 2017; each cohort comprised of more than 55,000 students. Over 70% of the six-year funding directly supported students who graduated. On-time graduation rates among TAP recipients saw an improvement over the three years, with 52% of students at two- and four-year colleges graduating on time in 2017, compared to 49% in 2015 and 2016. Taken together, these reports reaffirm TAP's standing as one of the nation's most effective and impactful state financial aid programs.

4:15 PM - 5:15 PM

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM	NASSGAP Group Dinner (included in your conference fee) Blackwall Hitch, Alexandria Waterfront – 5 Cameron Street; Alexandria Meet in lobby at 6:00 PM
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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2025

Mason Room

Daily Moderator: Erin Rau (Oregon)

Hot and cold beverage station available from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

6:30 AM - 8:15 AM	BREAKFAST – Atrium
8:30 AM - 9:20 AM	State Roll Call (continued) Renée Davis (NV), President-Elect
9:30 AM -10:15 AM	Smart with My Money: A Statewide Approach to Financial Literacy in North Dakota Amanda Woidyla – Bank of North Dakota How can a state work across agencies, sectors, and communities to become the most financially literate in the nation? In this session, attendees will get an inside look at <i>Smart with My Money</i> , North Dakota’s innovative, multi-agency initiative aimed at improving financial literacy across the state. This presentation will explore the origins and goals of the initiative, the collaborative partnerships that are making it possible, and the strategies being used to reach North Dakotans of all ages. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how one state is building momentum through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to financial empowerment and education – and how similar models might be adapted elsewhere.

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM	<p>Redefining Affordability: Federal Shifts, State Strategies, and Student Realities</p> <p>Crystal Collins and Justin Draeger (Strada Education Foundation)</p> <p>What does “affordability” mean in today’s shifting landscape? This session will explore how federal changes, state policy responses, and student experiences are reshaping how we define, measure, and address affordability. Drawing on national research and state-level insights, the presenters will share emerging ideas, practical takeaways, and a look at what’s ahead for state affordability initiatives.</p>
11:30 AM - 12:45 PM	LUNCH – Caprese Restaurant and Patio
1:00 PM - 1:30 PM	<p>State Roll Call (continued)</p> <p>Renée Davis (NV), President-Elect</p>
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	<p>Optimize Your Outreach</p> <p>Kathy Hastings (NC) and Jason Seay (TN)</p> <p>Over 20 NASSGAP states shared insights into the structure and focus of their Outreach teams through a survey conducted of members in 2025. This session will share the findings of that survey that include how the teams measure their progress and impact, how the teams are funded, and some of the key initiatives that drive their work. North Carolina and Tennessee will bring examples of successful outreach efforts. Please bring your examples to share of initiatives that have worked in your state!</p>
2:30 PM - 2:45 PM	Break – Mason Pre-function Area
2:45 PM - 3:45 PM	<p>Advocacy by the Numbers: Turning Data into Student-Centered Action</p> <p>Zachary Christian (SC) and Madison Sheffield (CA)</p> <p>From one of the nation’s largest states to one of its smallest, California and South Carolina share a common goal: championing students through data-driven policy and systems change. This session explores how agencies of any size or political landscape can leverage student-level and district-level grant data to build powerful legislative relationships, meaningfully transform program administration, and advance policy changes.</p>

	Learn how SC encourages thank-you letters from students and how both states use impact data to tell compelling stories—proving that effective advocacy isn’t about scale, it’s about strategy. Additionally, hear from our colleagues at CSAC on how they will be using their data in new and exciting ways.
4:00 PM - 5:15 PM	NASSGAP Business Meeting
5:30 PM - until	Dinner and evening with new and old NASSGAP friends or on your own

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025

Mason Room

Daily Moderator: Renée Davis (Nevada)

Hot and cold beverage station available from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

6:30 AM - 8:15 AM	BREAKFAST – Atrium
8:30 AM - 9:20 AM	State Roll Call (continued) Renée Davis (NV), President-Elect
9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Evolving Policy Landscape for College Access and Student Financial Aid Moderator – Frank Ballmann (NASSGAP) Panelists – Jill Desjean (NASFAA), Catherine Brown (NCAN), Tom Harnisch (SHEEO), and Aaron Lemon-Strauss (US Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Office) As the higher education policy landscape continues to shift, so too do the opportunities and challenges for students striving to access and complete college. Join a dynamic roundtable of leaders from national organizations committed to college affordability and student success as they unpack emerging trends, explore potential policy changes, and examine what’s at stake for the higher education community. This session will provide insight into the forces shaping the future and will invite candid dialogue about how we, as state aid administrators, can carefully and impactfully navigate policy changes while continuing to support students. Come ready to listen, learn, and lend your voice to the conversation.

11:15 AM - 12:00 PM	<p>Closing Conversations: Open Forum and Collaborative Solutions</p> <p>Moderator – Renée Davis (NV; NASSGAP President-Elect)</p> <p>As we wrap up this year’s NASSGAP conference, join us for an open discussion where your voice takes center stage. This moderated session invites you to raise outstanding questions, dive deeper into the topics that sparked your interest, and discuss challenges that didn’t make it onto the agenda. Whether it’s a burning question, an agency challenge, or just what keeps you up at night, this is the space to be heard, connect, and leave energized. Don’t miss this final opportunity to collaborate with peers, share insights, and brainstorm solutions in a relaxed, supportive environment.</p>
12:00 PM	<p>Conference Closing, Followed by Incoming Executive Committee Meeting</p>

Special Thanks to NASSGAP’s 2024-2025 Executive Committee & Committee Chairs

President

Elizabeth McCloud
Pennsylvania
elizabeth.mccloud@pheaa.org

President-Elect

Renée Davis
Nevada
rdavis@nshe.nevada.edu

Past President

Jennifer Lanphear
Maine
jlanphear@famemaine.com

Secretary

Kristina Fripps
Maryland
kristina.fripps@maryland.gov

Treasurer

Tamika Braswell
Ohio
tbraswell@highered.ohio.gov

Member-at-Large

James Snider
Tennessee
james.snider@tn.gov

Conference Co-Chair

Katie Stevens
South Carolina
katie@sctuitiongrants.org

Conference Co-Chair

Alex Zucco
California

Web Committee Chair

Jennifer Rogers
Mississippi
jrogers@mississippi.edu

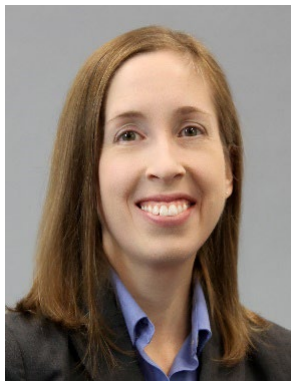
Federal Relations Committee Chair

Ritchie Morrow
Nebraska
ritchie.morrow@nebraska.gov

Director of Federal Relations

Frank Ballmann
NASSGAP
frank@nassgap.org

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Elizabeth McCloud, NASSGAP President **Vice President of State Grant and Special Programs** **Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)**

Elizabeth McCloud is Vice President of State Grant and Special Programs for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) and has been with the agency since 2015, providing policy guidance and operational support. PHEAA's State Grant and Special Programs department administers and disburses over 20 postsecondary aid programs for the students and institutions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As Vice President, Elizabeth provides leadership, strategic planning, management, and administration of policies that govern or impact the State Grant and Special Programs area, with an emphasis on the policy impact for students and postsecondary institutions.

Prior to joining PHEAA in 2015, Elizabeth served as the Director of Financial Aid at Elizabethtown College, where she spent 20 years assisting students and families in the pursuit of postsecondary education after having initially been introduced to financial aid as a student worker at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Elizabeth has been an active member of the Pennsylvania Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators since 1995 and is committed to the support of student access to postsecondary education.

*Sessions: NASSGAP Welcome and Introductions
Wednesday, October 22 – 8:30 am
NASSGAP Business Meeting
Thursday, October 23 – 4:00 pm*



Lee Andes **Director of Finance Policy and Innovation** **State Council of Higher Education for Virginia**

Mr. Lee Andes has served at the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) for over 28 years and has worked in higher education for over 35 years. Mr. Andes' primary responsibility as Associate Director for Financial Aid was oversight of the state's financial aid programs. Lee is a founding member and initial President of the Virginia College Access Network (VirginiaCAN), has served as President of the National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs (NASSGAP), and is currently a member of the College Board's Southern Regional Council. In February 2025, Mr. Andes was named Director of Finance Policy & Innovation at SCHEV.

*Session: Host State Happenings
Wednesday, October 22 – 9:30 am*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Cassidy Dragunat Assistant Commissioner for Financial Aid Utah System of Higher Education

Cassidy Dragunat serves as the Assistant Commissioner for Financial Aid in the Office of the Commissioner at the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE). In this role, she oversees the administration of state financial aid programs and leads statewide efforts to increase FAFSA completion, aiming to expand college access and affordability for Utah students. Cassidy also supports student success initiatives focused on basic needs and mental health. She earned her bachelor's degree from DePauw University and her master's degree from the University of Utah. Outside of work, Cassidy enjoys hiking, reading, traveling, and spending time with her beloved dog, Rudy.

*Session: Financial Aid Options for Undocumented, DACA, and Mixed-Status Family Students
Wednesday, October 22 – 1:45 pm*



Meghan Flores Manager, State Financial Aid Programs Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Meghan Flores serves as the Director of State Financial Aid Programs for Minnesota and joined the Office of Higher Education in September 2016. Meghan began working in financial aid as a student worker after attempting to negotiate her aid offer and has almost 30 years of experience administering federal, state, and institutional aid programs.

Meghan currently oversees the financial aid programs, staff, budget and MNAid technology for Minnesota. Meghan also serves as the State liaison between Minnesota and Federal Student Aid, as well as representing the state and her agency on several national organizations.

*Session: Financial Aid Options for Undocumented, DACA, and Mixed-Status Family Students
Wednesday, October 22 – 1:45 pm*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Kyra Mathews

**Scholarships and Grants Program Manager
Office of Student Access and Completion,
Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission**

Kyra Mathews works with the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) as the Scholarships and Grants Program Manager. She manages the scholarships and boutique grant programs and staff, administers the Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance program, and is policy lead on financial aid topics. Her prior role was the Oregon Opportunity Grant administrator, the state's largest need-based grant program (and she was even a recipient of this grant while in college).

Kyra studied Sociology and Computer Information Technology at the University of Oregon. Starting with the agency as a work-study student in 2012, Kyra has worked in many different departments of the HECC agency, from ASPIRE as the Development Specialist to the Executive Office as Ben Cannon's assistant and HECC Commission Administrator. She lives in Woodburn, spending free time reading books, playing video games, or chasing after her toddler.

*Session: Financial Aid Options for Undocumented, DACA, and Mixed-Status Family Students
Wednesday, October 22 – 1:45 pm*



Hari Kannan

Graduate of the TerpsEXCEEDS Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program; University of Maryland, College Park, and Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Fellow; Georgetown University

Hari Kannan recently graduated from the TerpsEXCEEDS Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) program at the University of Maryland, College Park. He lives with his family in Maryland and is interested in pursuing a career as a fitness trainer.

Hari is currently a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Fellow at Georgetown University, where he contributes his lived experience as part of an interdisciplinary training program that prepares future leaders to improve comprehensive supports for people with disabilities and their families across the lifespan.

*Session: Higher Education and What Comes Next: Stories from Students with Disabilities
Wednesday, October 22 – 3:00 pm*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Pamala Trivedi
Research Associate Professor
Georgetown University

Pamala is a Research Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Georgetown University and the Associate Director of the Georgetown University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (GUCEDD). She is a school psychologist who provides clinical support to educators and staff in public and public charter schools in Washington, DC, and she leads training and academic programs at Georgetown focused on inclusion and disabilities. Pamala is passionate about embedding social-emotional supports in inclusive school and community settings and is also the parent of a school age student with developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health support needs.

*Session: Higher Education and What Comes Next: Stories from Students with Disabilities
Wednesday, October 22 – 3:00 pm*



Marissa Bieber
Data Analyst, Program Evaluation and
Reporting Division
New York State Higher Education Services Corporation

Marissa Bieber is a Data Analyst for New York State Higher Education Services Corporation in the Program Evaluation and Reporting Division. She received her BS in Business Administration from the University at Albany and her MBA from St. Bonaventure University.

With over ten years of research practice in the private and public sectors, including the Siena College Research Institution and the New York State Department of Education, Marissa's current tasks include measuring the impact New York State student financial aid programs have on recipient completion rates, collaborating across several units to analyze current data needs, and creating visual and measurable representations of financial aid data.

Outside of program evaluation, Marissa enjoys traveling, camping, taking in a Broadway show, and leading her daughter's Girl Scout troop.

*Session: Six-Year Student Outcomes Among First-Time Recipients of the NYS Tuition Assistance Program
Wednesday, October 22 – 4:15 pm*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Bosede Cajuste

**Program Evaluation and Reporting Director
New York State Higher Education Services Corporation**

Leave it to Bosede Cajuste to get to the bottom of things! Trained as a scientific researcher specializing in cancer, Bosede traded in her pipettes for coding, interviewing, conducting statistical analysis, producing data visualizations, writing and just about anything related to evaluating programs. When Bosede earned her MSPH from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, she didn't know she'd also fall in love—with program evaluation!

As the Program Evaluation and Reporting Director at the NYS Higher Education Services Corporation, Bosede brings over ten years of experience conducting evaluations for non-profits and state agencies. She's calm under pressure and a creative at heart. Little known fact is Bosede spent many years moonlighting as a freelance writer and copyeditor; and if she had free time, she would publish a book of poems.

*Session: Six-Year Student Outcomes Among First-Time Recipients of the NYS Tuition Assistance Program
Wednesday, October 22 – 4:15 pm*



Amanda Woidyla

**Student Development Coordinator
Bank of North Dakota, Education Outreach and Financial Literacy Team**

Amanda Woidyla is the University and Student Development Coordinator on Bank of North Dakota's Education Outreach and Financial Literacy team. In this role, she coordinates College Application Month, leads FAFSA completion events across the state, and develops curriculum, workshops, and presentations on financial literacy topics for audiences of all ages. She also serves on the North Dakota Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Executive Committee as Associate Member at Large. Amanda has been with BND for nine years, bringing a passion for helping students navigate their educational and financial journeys.

Outside of work, Amanda enjoys practicing yoga and exploring the outdoors with her German Shepherd, Ruby, and Belgian Malinois, Elektra.

*Session: Smart with My Money: A Statewide Approach to Financial Literacy in North Dakota
Thursday, October 23 – 9:30 am*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Crystal Collins

**Vice President for State Affordability Initiatives
Strada Education Foundation**

Crystal Collins currently serves as Strada's Vice President for State Affordability Initiatives, supporting investment in state initiatives that ensure the cost of education is not an insurmountable obstacle for learners and their families. Before joining Strada, she served as a state fiscal policy leader in both Colorado and Tennessee, specializing in performance funding models and financial aid programs. Crystal is a two-time Vanderbilt University graduate.

*Session: Redefining Affordability: Federal Shifts, State Strategies, and Student Realities
Thursday, October 23 – 10:30 am*



Justin Draeger

**Senior Vice President of Affordability
Strada Education Foundation**

Justin Draeger, Strada's Senior Vice President of Affordability, leads efforts to reduce postsecondary education costs and improve financial aid access. With over 20 years in the field, he previously served as President and CEO of NASFAA, advocating for student financial aid.

He is a recognized expert, frequent media source, and holds degrees from Brigham Young University and Baker College.

*Session: Redefining Affordability: Federal Shifts, State Strategies, and Student Realities
Thursday, October 23 – 10:30 am*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Kathy Hastings

**Director of Outreach and Communications
North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority**

Kathy Hastings is the Director for Outreach and Communications with the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, the agency that administers state scholarships for students to attend college in NC. In this role she helps mobilize partners around college access and FAFSA completion and leads an outreach team that provides training and technical assistance to education stakeholders who are supporting the work. Prior to this role, Kathy led college access and FAFSA completion efforts with the Florida College Access Network. There, she

was instrumental in the growth of 17 local cross-sector coalitions that supported 82% of the state's population in advancing postsecondary access and completion for under-supported students.

Kathy earned an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and a BS in Marketing from Southern Illinois University.

*Session: Optimize Your Outreach
Thursday, October 23 – 1:30 pm*



Jason Seay

**Senior Director of Outreach
Tennessee Higher Education Commission**

Jason Seay is the Senior Director of Outreach for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). A native Kentuckian, Jason joined the agency in 2006 as the Outreach Specialist for Middle Tennessee where he was responsible for conducting financial aid workshops in a 34-county region. In 2007, he was promoted to his current position where he has overseen an expansion in the number of Outreach Specialists assisting students and parents with the college financial aid process. Jason earned his bachelor's degree and a master's degree in public administration from Western Kentucky University where he met his wife, Pamela.

*Session: Optimize Your Outreach
Thursday, October 23 – 1:30 pm*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Madison Sheffield

**Assistant Deputy Director of Policy and
Public Affairs
California Student Aid Commission**

Madison Sheffield is the Assistant Deputy Director of Policy and Public Affairs at the California Student Aid Commission and has been with the Commission since 2023. Madison brings a public health lens to her work, and as a result has served Californians in numerous capacities in her career, from health insurance mandates and behavioral health to community college and financial aid. She has also led several state agencies in developing equity action plans and led the development of a statewide toolkit for incorporating equity into all state budget and policy decisions. Madison is also a new mom to a one-year-old, a delight that brings new inspiration to her everyday work.

*Session: Advocacy by the Numbers: Turning Data into Student-Centered Action
Thursday, October 23 – 2:45 pm*



Zachary Christian

**Deputy Director
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants
Commission**

Zachary Christian is the Deputy Director for the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission and has been with the Commission since November 2016. Prior to his time with the Commission, Zachary served as a Financial Aid Counselor at his Alma Mater, Winthrop University. In addition to involvement with NASSGAP, Zachary is an active member of SCASFAA and SASFAA, having held multiple leadership roles on both Executive Boards - including serving as SCASFAA President in 2023-24. He is also active in NASFAA and serves on the State Advocacy Network. Outside of his work with the Commission, he is an adjunct instructor at Midlands Technical College, teaching database and computer courses.

Zachary earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music and History from Winthrop University in 2014, a Database Analyst Certificate from Midlands Technical College in 2017, and achieved the FAAC® designation through NASFAA's Certified Financial Aid Administrator® Program in 2024. On the lighter side, Zachary keeps a personal "dad-a-base" of favorite dad jokes... and is always willing to query it 😊

*Session: Advocacy by the Numbers: Turning Data into Student-Centered Action
Thursday, October 23 – 2:45 pm*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Frank Ballmann

**Director of Federal Relations
National Association of State Student Grant and
Aid Programs (NASSGAP)**

Frank has represented NASSGAP in Washington since 2010. He has over four decades of experience in education finance and student financial aid programs, not counting completing the FAFSA and receiving grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study to attend college. Representing NASSGAP, he was actively involved in multiple bipartisan legislative accomplishments, including the Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act, restoration of Year-Round Pell funding, finding a permanent “pay for” for the FUTURE Act, the FAFSA Simplification Act, and multiple COVID relief initiatives.

Prior to NASSGAP, he worked for a variety of organizations ranging from startup companies to major financial institutions. He has provided education finance, college savings, and financial aid program advisory services to a wide range of organizations, including state and nonprofit agencies in Alaska, California, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia, as well as the U.S. Department of Education. Frank holds a bachelor’s degree in accounting and political science from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and has earned his CPA certificate.

*Session: Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Evolving Policy Landscape for College Access and Student Financial Aid
Friday, October 24 – 9:30 am*



Catherine Brown

**Senior Director, Policy and Advocacy
National College Attainment Network (NCAN)**

As NCAN’s Senior Director, Policy and Advocacy, Catherine Brown oversees the creation and execution of NCAN’s nonpartisan policy agenda, priorities, and research at the federal and state levels. Brown most recently served as Senior Director at The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS), helping to advance affordability, equity, and college completion. Her work focused on increasing college persistence and completion, and she launched a new project to improve college affordability in Michigan.

Prior to joining TICAS, Brown served as the Vice President of Education Policy at the Center for American Progress and Vice President for Policy at Teach for America. Earlier in her career, Brown was a senior education policy adviser for the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, domestic policy adviser for presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, and legislative assistant to then-Senator Clinton. Brown received a bachelor’s degree from Smith College and a master’s in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She lives in Washington, DC, with her husband, two sons, and exuberant dog, Jenny.

*Session: Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Evolving Policy Landscape for College Access and Student Financial Aid
Friday, October 24 – 9:30 am*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Jill Desjean

**Director of Policy Analysis
National Association of Student Financial Aid
Administrators (NASFAA)**

Jill Desjean is the Director of Policy Analysis at the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. In her role, Jill manages the policy analysis team, interprets federal student aid legislation and regulations for NASFAA's members, works with NASFAA's members to develop policy recommendations, and provides feedback to policymakers on legislative and regulatory proposals.

Prior to joining NASFAA, Jill enjoyed a 20-year career in financial aid administration, having held roles in the financial aid offices at Tufts University School of Medicine, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Brandeis University, and the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts, as well as The New School in New York City. She earned her bachelor's degree from the College of the Holy Cross. Jill joined NASFAA in 2016 and is based in the Washington, DC area.

*Session: Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Evolving Policy Landscape for College Access and Student Financial Aid
Friday, October 24 – 9:30 am*



Dr. Tom Harnish

**Vice President for Government Relations Finance
State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)**

Tom Harnisch joined SHEEO in 2020 as Vice President for Government Relations. He leads the planning, implementation, and coordination of SHEEO's portfolio of federal relations, policy, communication, and advocacy work. He monitors new and potential federal action that have relevance to our membership. He is responsible for bringing these issues to the attention of SHEEO staff and SHEEO's membership and for articulating their potential impact on our members and the institutions and students they serve.

Prior to joining SHEEO, Dr. Harnisch worked in a series of roles at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) since 2007, including as Director of State Relations and Policy Analysis. His roles included policy research, analysis, and communication to the AASCU membership and other external stakeholder groups. He helped craft the AASCU Public Policy Agenda and planned the Higher Education Government Relations Conference. His research interests and commentary on higher education finance, access, affordability, and other topics have been cited in over 300 articles, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Politico*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Georgetown University and The George Washington University. Dr. Harnisch earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a master's from the University of Minnesota, and a doctorate from The George Washington University.

*Session: Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Evolving Policy Landscape for College Access and Student Financial Aid
Friday, October 24 – 9:30 am*

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Aaron Lemon-Strauss **Executive Director of the FAFSA Program** **US Department of Education, Federal Student Aid**

Aaron Lemon-Strauss is the Executive Director of the FAFSA Program at Federal Student Aid. This new role brings together responsibility for all aspects of the FAFSA program to support stronger outcomes for students, counselors, financial aid administrators, and all other stakeholders who rely on the FAFSA.

Aaron has spent 20 years in digital product development in education, including leadership across the non-profit, for-profit, and now public sectors. He most recently served as Chief Product Officer for Stride, having previously been Vice President for College Access Products at College Board.

Session: Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Evolving Policy Landscape for College Access and Student Financial Aid
Friday, October 24 – 9:30 am



Renée Davis **Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and** **Student Affairs** **Nevada System of Higher Education**

Renée Davis is Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs at the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). Amongst her various responsibilities at NSHE is oversight of Nevada's statewide financial aid programs. She has been a NASSGAP member since 2011 and previously served on the Executive Committee as a Member at Large (Conference Co-Chair), leading facilitation of the 2020 and 2021 annual conferences. Renée considers her volunteer experience with NASSGAP as the most enjoyable and rewarding of her career and is honored to have been elected as the 2025-26 president of

this important organization. In her spare time, Renée loves taking road trips with her husband, hiking in the Sierra Nevada, cycling indoors and outdoors, rowing, machine embroidery and quilting, reading, and cuddling with her cats.

Session: Closing Conversations: Open Forum and Collaborative Solutions
Friday, October 24 – 11:15 am
State Roll Call – All sessions



National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

Organization Name	NASSGAP Member	Website
Alabama Commission on Higher Education	Yes	ache.edu
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education	Yes	acpe.alaska.gov
Arizona Board of Regents	Yes	azregents.edu
Arkansas Department of Higher Education	Yes	adhe.edu
California Student Aid Commission	Yes	csac.ca.gov
Colorado Department of Higher Education	Yes	cdhe.colorado.gov
Connecticut Office of Higher Education	Yes	portal.ct.gov/ohe
Delaware Department of Education Office of Higher Education	No	delaware.gov/guides/higher-education
District of Columbia – Office of the State Superintendent of Education	Yes	osse.dc.gov
Florida Department of Education	No	fldoe.org/finance/financial-aid-scholarships
Georgia Student Finance Commission	Yes	gsfc.georgia.gov
Hawaii – University System of Hawaii	No	hawaii.edu
Idaho State Board of Education	Yes	boardofed.idaho.gov
Illinois Student Assistance Commission	Yes	isac.org
Indiana Commission for Higher Education	Yes	in.gov/che
Iowa College Student Aid Commission	Yes	educate.iowa.gov/higher-ed/financial-aid
Kansas Board of Regents	Yes	kansasregents.gov
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority	Yes	kheaa.com
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid Assistance	Yes	mylosfa.la.gov



National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

Organization Name	NASSGAP Member	Website
Finance Authority of Maine	Yes	famemaine.com
Maryland Higher Education Commission	Yes	mhec.maryland.gov
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education	Yes	mass.edu
Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)	Yes	michigan.gov/mileap
Minnesota Office of Higher Education	Yes	ohe.mn.gov
Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid	Yes	msfinancialaid.org
Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development	Yes	dhewd.mo.gov
Montana University System	Yes	mus.edu
Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education	Yes	ccpe.nebraska.gov
Nevada System of Higher Education	Yes	nshe.nevada.edu
New Hampshire State Treasury	No	nh.gov/treasury/scholarship-program/index.htm
New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority	Yes	hesaa.org
New Mexico Higher Education Department	Yes	hed.nm.gov
New York Higher Education Services Corporation	Yes	hesc.ny.gov
North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority	Yes	ncseaa.edu
North Dakota University System	Yes	ndus.edu
Ohio Department of Higher Education	Yes	highered.ohio.gov
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education	Yes	okhighered.org



National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

Organization Name	NASSGAP Member	Website
Oregon Office of Student Access and Completion	Yes	oregonstudentaid.gov
Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency	Yes	pheaa.org
Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner	No	riopc.edu
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission	Yes	sctuitiongrants.org
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education	Yes	che.sc.gov
South Dakota Board of Regents	No	sdbor.edu
Tennessee Higher Education Commission	Yes	tn.gov/thec.html
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board	Yes	highered.texas.gov
Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority	Yes	ushe.edu
Vermont Student Assistance Corporation	Yes	vsac.org
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia	Yes	schev.edu
Washington Student Achievement Council	Yes	wsac.wa.gov
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission	Yes	wvhepc.edu
Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board	Yes	heab.state.wi.us
Wyoming Department of Education	No	edu.wyoming.gov

Associate Members and Partners	Website
Education Loan Finance (ELFI)	elfi.com
Gold Bridge Partners, Inc.	gbpi.net
Nelnet Diversified Solutions	nelnetinc.com/nelnet-diversified-services
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)	nchems.org
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)	sheeo.org

**Want to get to know NASSGAP better?
Spend some time exploring NASSGAP.org!**

PUBLIC WEBSITE FEATURES

NASSGAP Annual Survey Results and Research Tool – Find answers to your data-related questions
 NASSGAP Mission, Purpose, and Bylaws – Learn all about NASSGAP
 Lists of Elected Officers and Committee Chairs – Get to know the current and past leadership teams
 Letters and Position Papers Signed – What policies and positions does NASSGAP support?
 Annual Conference Information – When and where will we meet again?
 NASSGAP Merchandise Shop – Represent NASSGAP wherever you are!

MEMBERS-ONLY PORTAL FEATURES

Access requires account login, but any employee in your organization can create a free account

Membership Directory – Meet your fellow members from across the country
 Meeting Minutes – Learn what your leadership team and committees are working on every month
 Conference Presentations and Power Hours – Repository for past presentations and Power Hour recordings in case you were unable to join us



National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs

Join us for our 60th Annual Conference!

Save the Date - NASSGAP 2026 Conference

October 20-23, 2026

*Breathtaking views
and meaningful
conversations with
colleagues from across
the nation... what more
could you ask for?
Hope to see you there!*



Caesars Republic Lake Tahoe Hotel - Stateline, Nevada