

An Update on NASSGAP Activities as of 12/05/2006
Sent to membership via email

Membership Directory

If you haven't already received one, you will be receiving a hard copy of the 2006-07 NASSGAP Membership Directory. Marilyn Cargill (VT) and Theresa Antworth (FL) worked hard in obtaining updated information for the directory and Theresa and her staff did an outstanding job in compiling, printing, and distributing it. The directory is an invaluable tool for contact of not only our state agency members, but our associate and cooperating members as well.

ED Technical Forms Committee

After many years of serving as co-chairs of the Ed Technical Forms Committee, Mary Beth Kelly (PA) and Sherri Fox (NJ) have indicated that time constraints imposed by their jobs will no longer allow them to devote the time necessary to chair the committee. They have graciously agreed to remain on the committee to help our new chairperson, Maureen Laffey (DE). Thank you Maureen for chairing this most-important committee, and thank you Mary Beth and Sherry for taking the helm for so many years.

It's Survey Time!

The 37th Annual NASSGAP Survey instrument is available online at <http://www.nassgap.org/survey>. The survey is the premier document of NASSGAP that is used by states, researchers, and various organizations to assess states' efforts to help students attend college. It's important that every state complete the survey on time. Mike Solomon (IL) sent an email to all members on October 27, 2006 about accessing the survey. As Mike indicates in his email, it should be completed by Groundhog Day, February 2, 2007. (No you will not get six more weeks to complete the survey if the groundhog sees his shadow). If you need help in accessing the survey, contact Mike.

Spring Conference

Our Spring 2007 Conference will be held May 27 – 30, 2007 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington DC. This year the spring conference falls on the Memorial Day weekend. What better way to celebrate than in our nation's capital!

The Program Chair is Stephanie Butler (AK) and the Site Chair is Christine Zuzack (PA). Judy Knapp (NH) and Julie Leeper (IA) have already volunteered to help with the program. If you would like to help out on either the program or site committee, contact Stephanie or Christine.

Examining LEAP

In the summer of 2006, Chas Treadwell (NY) and Cheryl Maplethorpe (MN) were instrumental in developing and putting out a Request for Research Services that invited researchers to examine the LEAP program and to react to the USDE's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) analysis that rated LEAP as "Not Performing" and "Results Not Demonstrated". Jamie Dushin, Budget Analyst for the Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program was awarded the research grant and, in October 2006, produced a report entitled "Examining LEAP". The report highlights, among other things, the fact that states go above and beyond the matching requirements of LEAP and that the majority of LEAP funds go to the very needy. The report has been shared with Kristin Conklin of the USDE and we are currently working on a press release to release the report to the public.

Simplification Ad Hoc Committee

In response to a request from the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (ACSFA) to share our thoughts with them on the issue of simplification, NASSGAP formed an ad hoc committee to focus on this issue and to develop responses not only for ACSFA but for any other organization seeking our opinion and data. This new committee is chaired by Melanie Amrhein (LA) and includes representation from the Executive, Ed Technical Forms, Federal Relations, and Policy and Research committees.

In developing a NASSGAP position on simplification or any other issue, it may be necessary for committees such as the ad hoc committee to survey the membership for data or opinions. It can't be stressed enough how important it is to respond to the surveys. We have been lobbying for many years to be a partner in the federal financial aid policy and procedure arena. Our voice is being heard more and more as various organizations seek our opinions and access our survey data. Let's keep up the good work of gathering data from all states so that we accurately convey our opinions and needs.

Web Enhancements

The Executive Committee has recently given the go-ahead to Gold Bridge Partners, Inc. to enhance NASSGAP's website by improving the polling function. Specifically, the enhancements will allow users to create polls with multiple questions, to select multiple answers when voting, and to have the ability to have write-in responses for more than one answer. The polling function is one of the more frequently used functions of our web and these enhancements should give a broader range of options to our members when developing polls.

Members are encouraged to use NASSGAP's website. Much time and effort, especially on the part of Dennis Obergfell (IN), Web Committee Chair, and Mike Solomon (IL), have been put into the development and maintenance of the site (not to mention monetary resources). If you haven't gone to the site recently, go to www.nassgap.org. Take a look around. You'll be amazed at all the information stored on the site – conference info and presentations, a calendar of events, minutes, correspondence, the Washington Update,

polling results, the membership directory. You name it – it's there. If you have any questions about the content or navigating the site, contact either Dennis or Mike.

Negotiated Rulemaking

NASSGAP nominated President Mary Ann Welch (RI) to participate in the USDE's negotiated rulemaking, which is scheduled for December through February. The secondary nominee for back-up is Lee Andes (VA), and Chas Treadwell (NY) was nominated as a representative if we are able to secure a seat on two committees. As of now, a committee has been established to address Title IV loan issues (on which we were not chosen to participate). Another committee will be formed to address the Academic Competitiveness Grant and SMART Grant. Additional committees may be established as needed.

Conferencing with the USDE

Due to the work of Bart Astor, our DC Director and Chas Treadwell (NY), Federal Relations Chair, NASSGAP recently has had the very welcomed opportunity to participate in two conference calls with Kristin Conklin, an assistant to the US Secretary of Education. Kristin is very interested in working with NASSGAP to develop proposals to strengthen LEAP/SLEAP. She is also interested in our opinions on simplification, a unit record system, and early awareness initiatives. The newly formed ad hoc committee on simplification has been participating in the conference calls along with some Executive Committee members. It is very encouraging that the USDE is seeking our opinion. The full membership will be involved in reviewing and commenting on any position NASSGAP takes in responding to the USDE on any issue.