SDASFAA October 2026 NEWSLETTER

Describe Your Perfect Fall Day IN 3 WORDS



Sweaters, leaves, chai

Becca Norris
South Dakota State University



Bright, cool, peaceful

Jen Bleyenberg
University of Sioux Falls



Football, hiking, cozy

Sharon Martin
Western Dakota Technical College



Trails, Hoodies, Football

Val Solano
South Daktoa School of Mines and Technology

SDASFAA Members Earn the NASFAA FAAC® Designation

NASFAA offers a Certified Financial Aid Administrator® program that allows financial aid administrators to earn the FAAC®designation. We'd like to take a moment to acknowledge our SDASFAA members who hold this credential that recognizes the knowledge and expertise necessary to uphold the integrity of the student aid programs. Our most recent members to earn this title are Tirzah Knight (BHSU) and Becky Pribyl (NSU). Other SDASFAA members to earn this designation are: Mary Alexander (ScholarNet), Sydney Chapman (SDSU), Stephanie Frank (SDSU), Carissa Koerner (USF), Erin Richards (SDMT), Stephanie Jones (NAU) and Beth Vollan (SDSU).

Once this credential has been earned, the FAAC®designation must be renewed every three years. This allows for continual training and learning (that's an everyday occurrence in financial aid anyway, right?!). You can learn more about this program at https://www.nasfaa.org/certification.

Kudos to our SDASFAA members who have obtained this distinction!

2027 SDASFAA Elections

Are you looking for a way to become more involved in SDASFAA? We have several open positions for our next election!

- ✓President Elect
- ✓Associate Member at Large
- ✓Member at Large (2 positions)

President Elect has the Opportunity to go to Washinton DC to attend NASFAA's Leadership Conference!

If you are interested in these positions, please reach out to Tracey Buisker at Tracey.Buisker@sdstate.edu.

Thank you for considering service to our association!



The Case of Student Success

SOLVED IN DEADWOOD!

The clues were plentiful, the suspects suspicious, and the investigators determined. This spring, SDASFAA members gathered at The Lodge at Deadwood for our conference, "Clue: The Case of Student Success."

Highlights included an interactive Clue-style game featuring a cast of memorable characters including Dr. FAFSA, Professor Pell, and Miss Subsidized to name a few. Attendees enjoyed sessions on AI in the Workplace, Holistic Wellbeing, Cash Management, Volunteerism, a NASFAA Credential on R2T4 and a virtual presentation from NASFAA on the One Big Beautiful Bill act.

Our State Swap Representative was Ginger McBride from Kansas and she provided a presentation on "Finding the Fun in Financial Aid." Shawna Otte came from Wyoming, representing RMASFAA, and provided both a RMASFAA update and an engaging presentation on Generation Z in the workplace



Our banquet included recognition of members whose dedication has strengthened our association over the years. Service awards were presented to Greg Binstock and Jill Elder (10 years); Mary Alexander, Kristy Ehlebracht, and Karrie Morgan (15 years); Emily Studenski and Lynette Robson (25 years); and Cheryl Bullinger (40 years).

The Douglas Steckler Professional Development Award was presented to Tirzah Knight, and the Outstanding Service Award was presented to Sydney Chapman.



We want to extend a HUGE thank you to the SDASFAA Spring Conference committee, all our amazing presenters and our wonderful sponsors! The event was a huge success because of you!



Save the Date for the 2027 SDASFAA Spring Conference April 27th-29th at The Clubhouse in Sioux Falls.



Did you know?

Custer State Park's annual Buffalo Roundup gathers approximately 1,300 bison, making it one of the largest publically owned bison herds in the world



Fall Bucket List

- [x] Be Awesome
- [ ] Take a Scenic Drive
- [ ] Attend a Football Game
- [ ] Visit a Pumpkin Patch
- [ ] Have a Bonfire
- [ ] Drink a Fall Beverage
- [ ] Paint a Pumpkin
- [ ] Bake a Fall Treat

Connection Corner

Try this low-pressure connection activity with your team!

Have your group collectively count to 20 with no prior planning but only one person can speak at a time. If two or more people say the next number at the same time, you start back at zero!

Complete as quickly as you can!

Board Member SPOTLIGHT

Treasurer



Shyan Smith
Treasurer
South Dakota State University

SDASFAA will be seeking a new treasurer to start in 2029! Please consider volunteering in this important and exciting role!

How long have you been in Financial Aid?
I have been in financial aid for almost eight years!

What inspired you to serve as the Treasurer?
I wanted to become more involved with SDASFAA, so serving on the board felt like a great way to give back. And apparently, I don't mind working with spreadsheets and numbers.

What is your favorite thing about serving as the treasurer so far?
I'm still fairly new to the role, but I've really enjoyed learning more about everything that happens behind the scenes to help make SDASFAA successful and the trip to Washington DC was an amazing opportunity!

What advice would you give someone considering a board position?
Go for it! It can feel a little intimidating at first, but everyone is incredibly welcoming. It's a great opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills, and become more connected with our financial aid community.

What is your favorite thing about fall?
My favorite thing about fall is the cooler weather, changing leaves, sweatshirts, and football season for the Jackrabbits and Chiefs!

What is a fun fact other members may not know about you?
I'm a Texas native, a proud boy mom, and a firm believer that anything under 60 degrees is cold.

Treasurer Duties

- Oversee association finances and financial records
- Prepare board, annual meeting, and audit reports
- Manage membership dues and applications
- Complete required nonprofit compliance filings
- Attend the NASFAA Leadership Conference (Optional but encouraged!)

Then and Now

AS A VETERAN MEMBER OF THE PROFESSION, WHAT ABOUT FINANCIAL AID HAS CHANGED THE MOST SINCE YOU STARTED?



Becky Pribyl
DIRECTOR
Northern State University
28 Years in Financial Aid

"I feel like the biggest change has been the speed of change. In the olden days, federal changes were generally implemented with the next financial aid year, done all at once with the new FAFSA. You could see what was coming, attend training, make plans, and implement. These days, changes are coming at us like water from a firehose. Recent examples include launching real-time identity fraud detection mid-year and implementing SOR revisions long before we had real guidance. Put on your scuba gear, people – epic splash zone!"

Did you know?

The average pumpkin contains about 500 seeds.

