Virginia State Report

August 4, 2006

The VASFAA Transitional Board Retreat took place from May 22-24th at the Airfield Conference Center in Wakefield and we have had a successful launch to our bold trek for 2006-2007. We also managed to leave the retreat with a balanced budget for the upcoming year.

The theme for 2006-07 is to “Trek Boldly Into New Frontiers” which will be accomplished by launching five special “ships”. These ships are: MemberSHIP, PartnerSHIP, LeaderSHIP, ScholarSHIP, and FellowSHIP. Each of these ships will have specific mission objectives to help ensure the success of our VASFAA trek. The mission objectives are:

MemberSHIP: (1) Increase overall membership in the association by encouraging those that used to be members, and are no longer active, to become active once again and by reaching out to those institutions that are eligible to have members in the association but for whatever reason have chosen not to be active; (2) Ensure broad sector representation in association membership by reaching out equally to all sectors.  
  
PartnerSHIP: (1) Increase volunteerism and involvement in the association by providing opportunities for new members and those not previously involved to step forward and get actively involved in committee work; (2) Enhance the relationships VASFAA has with external partners and entities like SCHEV, the newly formed Commonwealth College Access Network, SASFAA, NASFAA, and state and federal legislators; (3) Reach out to legislators at the state and federal level to provide information about VASFAA and advocacy on financial aid and college access issues.

LeaderSHIP: (1) Provide development opportunities for new leaders within the association using mechanisms such as the Leadership Symposium, committee chair opportunities, etc; (2) Encourage membership to work with Past President and Nominations and Elections committee to have, at a minimum, two highly qualified candidates for each position on next year's slate of candidates.  
  
ScholarSHIP: (1) Provide high-quality training to the membership at the annual conference in 2007; (2) Provide additional high-quality training opportunities for our members beyond the annual conference to include a series of fall training events targeted at all levels of training needs.  
  
FellowSHIP: (1) Provide additional opportunities to foster networking and sharing of ideas within VASFAA and between VASFAA and external groups such as SASFAA, NASFAA, and other state associations; (2) Provide increased opportunities for members to provide feedback and input to the association utilizing a series of "away missions" during which the President and other members of the board will go to various parts of the state and see feedback through several hosted roundtable discussions.

We have committee chairs and co-chairs for all of the VASFAA committees we will have in 2006-07, and most of these chairs were able to attend the retreat. There are also several people in committee chair positions who have not previously served in VASFAA leadership positions. This is a great way to get the missions of LeaderSHIP and PartnerSHIP started.

VASFAA had great representation at the SASFAA New Aid Officer’s Workshop with 26 attendees, 1 instructor and 1 lender rep.

The VASFAA board liaison to the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) working with the VASFAA State Relations Committee Co-Chair were able to arrange for a special training session on ACG and SMART grants, conducted by Kay Jacks from the Department of Education, which was held at Central Piedmont Community College. 70 people, including Registrars and Admissions representatives, were able to attend. The attendees represented 30 different institutions and the training event was deemed a great success.

VASFAA’s Training Committee, Support Staff Training Committee, and Experienced Aid Officer’s Training Committee are hard at work planning a multi-faceted training event for the Fall. This event, while not a formal conference, will provide a variety of training opportunities covering a diverse range of training needs.

The 2006-2007 VASFAA Executive Board will hold its first official board meeting on August 16th. In keeping with the theme of exploring new frontiers, this first board meeting will be held completely in an electronic format. Hopefully this format will meet the goals of a typical board meeting while saving the association expenses associated with an in-person board meeting and will relieve the board members from some time out of the office.

On August 10th, the VASFAA President, President-Elect, Past-President, and State Relations Committee Chair will be meeting with the Virginia Secretary of Education. This meeting, set up by the VASFAA State Relations Committee, is part of VASFAA’s continuing outreach to legislators and external partners and will provide an opportunity to present VASFAA as a resource on matters related to financial aid and college access.

We have already begun the steps to prepare an annual conference in May 2007 that will rival all before it. All the VASFAA committees involved in putting together the annual conference have already set sail on the ScholarSHIP and have begun the hard work involved in carrying out this most important mission.

We are extremely excited about the upcoming year and look forward to the journey we will experience together as we “Trek Boldly Into New Frontiers.” This trek would not be possible without the efforts and commitment of all those that graciously volunteer their time and resources for VASFAA. The list of crew members continues to grow and we are sincerely indebted to all those that have stepped forward already and those that will still step forward as we begin the new VASFAA year.

Sincerely,

Erik Melis

VASFAA President 06-07