

**Name:** Jonathan Ibarra

**Title/Position:** Senior Assistant Director, Financial Aid Loans and Scholarships.

**Employer:** Appalachian State University

**State Association:** NCASFAA (The North Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators)

**Biographical Summary:**

Hi! My name is Jonathan Ibarra. I am the Senior Assistant Director, Financial Aid Loans and Scholarship (pretty big title don't you think!). I have been financial aid world since January 2017. I started off as a Work-Study Student during the second semester of my 1st year in college. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Exercise Science. I decided to stick around in Financial Aid when I graduated because I began to develop an interest in the Financial Aid world so why not? As a result, I applied and became the Financial Aid Loan and Scholarship Processing Specialist. In this role, I processed our Federal Direct Loans, Private Loans, and Outside Scholarships. I maintain this position from the end of December 2019 to July 2021. During that time, I pursued my Master's Degree in Higher Education in the Fall of 2020. At the end of my 1st year in graduate school, I applied and earned the Assistant Director, Financial Aid counselor. I stayed in that position for about a year. After completing my Master's Program in Higher Education at the end of June 2022, I was the interim for the Senior Assistant Director position for about 6 months before earning the permanent role. In my current role, I oversee our loans team, outside scholarship team, oversee our state aid and state scholarships. Since being in Financial Aid, I have successfully earned 7 NASFAA credentials. Other than that, I enjoy working out. I tried to do it at least 4-5 days a week. I absolutely love to cook! Spanish food is my main go-to. Soy Mexicano and whenever I go to Mexico, I try to learn new food as I go! That's pretty much about me!

**What gives you hope for advancements in Diversity, Equity, Justice, and/or Inclusion?**

I do have a strong hope for the advancements in Diversity, Equity, Justice, and Inclusion. I was a 1st generation college student. Since college, I have always felt a strong need for Diversity. I grew up in a small conservative town so coming to Appalachian State University was a big deal in my decision to come because of the importance of Diversity. I was fortunate to be surrounded by other students who come from similar backgrounds as myself and to this day, I serve as the Advisor for the Latin Hispanic Alliance on campus so it is such an amazing feeling to be connected with our students and be someone they can look up to for guidance and assistance. I am aware of the current events going on in this country so it's important to maintain a strong will to strive for the continuation of Diversity, Equity, Justice, and Inclusion. I personally will continue to make sure our students have a safe space, especially for those from different backgrounds. Also, be an advocate for our students, families, and within our community.

**What makes you smile?**

For me would be speaking my Spanish native language to our Spanish-speaking students and families. We all know the college process can be complicated to navigate especially if this is your 1st time in your family to go to college or if you come from a Spanish background. For me, it was challenging because I was unable to translate Admissions / Financial Aid related terminologies to my family so I had to figure things out. It is such an incredible feeling to be able to assist students and families in understanding and

learning about the financial aid process such as FAFSA, Financial Aid award packages, and exploring options to pay for college. When I am having this conversation with them, it's beautiful when I can see their eyes pop up in that they are able to understand and ask questions that most English-speaking students and families would ask. To me, that is what makes me smile.

**What is one personal goal you are comfortable sharing with us?**

One of my personal goals would be to explore ways to help support my community at the state level. This year as our Admission team is going through the traveling season, we are looking for ways to coordinate together in creating Diversity and Spanish-speaking events as an early outreach because we know the changes of 2024-2025 FAFSA will be here sooner than later so we want to be able give out the important information for potential students and families to understand what's coming especially those from Spanish-speaking backgrounds.