



# GSL-Online

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The Official Newsletter of the  
Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program  
A Division of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

## June 2009 Edition

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## MASFAA Conference In Review

"Healthy Education Options for Aid Administrators - Taking Care of Ourselves While We Take Care of Others" was the theme for the 2009 Montana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (MASFAA) conference held April 15-17 at Helena's Park Plaza on the downtown walking mall.

Conference participants started off their day with a mini-health fair including: Chair massages, Health and wellness information, Chiropractic care, Aikido information, Blood pressure readings, and Yoga information.

It was a full agenda the first day:

- MGSLP updates on Federal regulations, products, scholarships & grants, and default prevention
- A student loan discussion with MGSLP & SAF
- Clock hour break out session with the Department of Education

The second day included:

- Full year Pell
- ACG/SMART
- Transitioning Native American Students through College
- GI Bill Update
- Best Practices of 2009-2010 FAFSA
- Federal Update by Deb Tarpley

While mostly business, there was enough time in the evening to unwind with colleagues at Gamepods, Helena's new age arcade. The Nintendo Wii ended up being the hit of the evening with participants getting physical with Bowling and Boxing, and rocking out with Guitar Hero and Rockband. Who knew all of these financial aid professionals had so many skills? The best part was the proceeds went towards student scholarships to purchase books.

The 2009 MASFAA keynote was given by Dr. Cheryl Cavalli, D.O. and was entitled Staying Positive in a Down Economy and Recognizing and Dealing with Depression. Dr. Nicholas Smith, D.C. followed with a new system of ergonomic and longevity principles that was both engaging and useful.

Corporate Support for the 2009 MASFAA Conference was provided by Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program, Student Assistance Foundation, U.S. Bank, Sallie Mae, and Wells Fargo.



## Director's Den

The student loan world remains unclear, although one thing is for certain: MGSLP and its lending partners (for

example MHESAC/SAF) are fully prepared and able to deliver all student loans in the upcoming academic year (09-10). Some 35 local lenders and several national lenders remain committed to providing students loans in Montana.

Speaking of commitments, MGSLP plans to disburse MGSLP Grants later this summer (probably in August). While we still don't know the exact amount, our goal is \$300,000, the same amount we delivered last year. It's difficult to predict the exact amount until our fiscal year ends June 30th. The biggest factor we must consider is put (sold) loans. When a loan is put to the US Department of Education, we lose the revenue associated with that loan - although we still have the expense associated with originating the loan. In the ever-changing world of student loans, predicting where we will land financially has become somewhat more challenging.

We in the student loan world are anxious for the summer to unfold. Between now and the end of the federal fiscal year (September 30th), both houses will work out details of a budget reconciliation. Those details will have a significant impact on FFELP in Montana.

## Partner News: The Montana College Access Network

The Montana College Access Network (MCAN) signed on with the U.S. Department of Education, to bring National Training for Counselors and Mentors (NT4CM) to Montana.

If you are not aware of or have not heard of MCAN, we are a coordinated network of individuals and entities that are committed to promoting access to educational opportunities after high school for Montana students. To learn more about MCAN, ask a question, or become a member visit us at [www.knowhow2gomontana.ning.com](http://www.knowhow2gomontana.ning.com).

We are excited to bring NT4CM to Montana. The training is geared toward those that work with, encourage, and give guidance & direction to high school students. The training is conducted by financial aid experts from around the state and covers topics such as:

- Basic foundational knowledge and concepts of financial aid
- Applying for financial aid using the FASFA and handling special circumstances
- Information about the Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG) and what counselors and mentors can do to increase the number of eligible students

- Tips on searching for scholarships
- Information on state aid, such as scholarships, grants, work, and loans

The first NT4CM training is set for Wednesday, September 16, in Helena. If you are a counselor, mentor, or care about the future of our youth, please save the date and plan to attend. More details will be posted to the MCAN website in the coming weeks along with future training dates. Hope to see you there.

## Spotlight on Financial Aid: Chief Dull Knife College



Michelle Three Fingers took over the reigns as the new Financial Aid Director of Chief Dull Knife College in August of 2008. When I asked Michelle, “How did you get into financial aid?” With a smile she responded, “Kind of got shoved into it.” Sounds familiar, huh? I can’t count how many times I’ve heard of folks falling into Financial Aid and never leaving.

This August, Michelle will have been employed with Chief Dull Knife for five years. Prior to getting “shoved” into financial aid she worked for four years in the bookstore. She holds an A.A.S. from CDKC in Business (option in Management) and a B.A.S. from Rocky Mountain College in Management.

When asked about her most recent accomplishments, she reflects on how she “took a big jump into utilizing my degrees”; also how much she has “learned about financial aid”; and finally the feeling of “swimming instead of sinking after almost a year in financial aid.”

Besides financial aid, Michelle enjoys family, friends, and music. She has two daughters of her own, ages 11 and 14, and multiple step-children.

Something no one would ever guess about Michelle is that she has an insane sense of humor. I imagine this is why she was not willing to tell the tale of how she inherited her nick name. Come to think of it, she wouldn’t even reveal her nick name . . . perhaps in time she will divulge it to us.

Running the financial aid office solo, it’s no wonder Michelle’s idea of a dream vacation is . . . “Anywhere I am by myself with nothing or no one to worry about”. I am sure that all your fellow Financial Aid Directors would agree with that!

### News Brief: Scholarship Update

#### Governor’s “Best and Brightest” Scholarship Program helping students succeed.

With 2.5 million dollars appropriated for the “Best and Brightest” Scholarship Program, 631 new scholarship awards went to Montana students attending Montana University System campuses, including seven tribal colleges and three community colleges.

Two hundred and sixteen meritorious students received a \$2,000 award renewable for up to three years after the initial award year, and 415 need-based students received a \$1,000 award renewable for up to one year after the initial award year. Along with new scholarship awards, the Governor’s “Best and Brightest” Scholarship Program also funded all previous renewable scholarship awards.

The Governor’s scholarship program includes three distinct scholarships. This year 167 Montana high schools had a qualifying student who received the “High School Merit” scholarship. The “Merit-at-Large” scholarship went to 49 high school, home school, non-traditional, or current college students based on an online application advertised through television, radio, and print announcements. “Need-Based” scholarships, chosen by individual campuses based on financial need, will help 415 students this coming academic year.

The Governor’s “Best and Brightest” Scholarship Program, also known as the Governor’s Postsecondary Scholarship Program, began in 2005 to help fund Montana students seeking a higher education here in Montana, based on merit and need, and to promote two year schools and programs.

The Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program (MGSLP) facilitates this scholarship program on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. If you have questions about this scholarship program please contact MGSLP Scholarship Unit at 1-800-537-7508, or E-mail [scholarships@mgslp.state.mt.us](mailto:scholarships@mgslp.state.mt.us).

### Events Calendar

The 2009 Five-State Bankers Convention  
Denver, CO  
June 28th-30th

NASFAA National Conference  
San Antonio, TX  
July 12th-15th

Salish Kootenai Conference  
Pablo, MT  
July 27th-31st

Would you like your event posted here? Submit your events to Andrea  
e-mail: [aopitz@mgslp.state.mt.us](mailto:aopitz@mgslp.state.mt.us)