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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

December 2010 Edition

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FSA Conference In Review

The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Conference was held December 1-4 in Orlando Florida at Walt Disney World's Swan and Dolphin with over 6,500 people in attendance.

General sessions included a welcome by FSA's Chief Operating Officer, William J. Taggart; Application Processing System Update, Federal Update, and the always enjoyable Town Hall Meeting.

This year's conference focused on the significant changes that have impacted the Title IV Programs over the past year including: the transition to the Direct Loan Program, FAFSA Simplification, and Year Round Pell. A primary objective of this year's conference was to ensure all schools are comfortable participating in the Direct Loan Program.

2010 FSA Conference Presentations Handouts can be found [here](#).

Delinquent Borrower Reports

Between PUT loans and the conversion to Direct Loans, delinquent borrower reports and the systems used to request them are in different locations. To help simplify the process and clear up any confusion MGSPLP is creating a short training program. The training will explain the different types of reports, where to request them, and where to send the reports after they are received. We will be contacting you to set up an appointment for the training. See you soon!

NASFAA Highlights the Expectations the Department of Education has for Schools in the Article Found [here](#).



Director's Den

2010 was a challenging year for MGSPLP and

the student loan industry. The move to Direct Lending dominated much of the year and, no doubt, required much of your time and attention. Even during a challenging year, there were many positives and highlights. MGSPLP celebrated the lowest cohort default rate in the country at just 1.8%. 2010 also saw the Governor's Best and Brightest scholarship surpass \$8 million in total aid to Montana students. Additionally, MGSPLP financial literacy staff visited more than 10,000 Montana students and helped them prepare for college. We also signed numerous memorandums of understanding with schools across Montana and pledged to help you with default prevention. MGSPLP is pleased to provide these default prevention services and we look forward to sharing our expertise with you.

These successes are just a few examples of how MGSPLP weathered 2010. No one knows exactly what the future holds, but one thing is certain: MGSPLP is here to help you and your students and we will do everything within our power to make 2011 another successful year!

Events Calendar

College Goal Montana
February 9 & 13, 2010

MASFAA Annual Conference
Apr 10- Apr 14, 2010

Missoula, MT

Summer Institute
June 5-10, 2010

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



Scholarship Update

Registration is open!

Students can now register online for these scholarships to be awarded in 2011; Montana University System Honor Scholarship, the Governor's Best and Brightest Merit Scholarship, and the Governor's Best and Brightest Merit-at-Large Scholarship.

- 2011 High School graduates may apply for all three scholarships.
- Students already attending college, non-traditional and home-schooled students may apply for the Merit-at-Large Scholarship.
- Application packets are due by March 15th 2011.

Visit www.scholarship.mt.gov or call 1-800-537-7508 for more details.



Sandy & Sheila

RMASFAA Conference In Review

RMASFAA 2010 Grand Forks, ND



The 2010 Conference Committee ensured a galactic experience in line with this year's RMASFAA Conference theme, A Financial Aid Odyssey. The conference was held in Grand Forks, ND at the Alerua Center. This year's philanthropy project benefited the St. Vincent de Paul Summer Lunch Program for youth. Attendees played Cosmic Bingo, took their space picture in the photo booth and won door prizes, all for a good cause!

Jeff Baker, Director of the Policy Liaison and Implementation Staff for Federal Student Aid with the Department of Education was a guest speaker. He advised FSA professionals on all statutory, regulatory, and policy matters that relate to the Title IV Federal student aid programs.

Justin Draeger, President of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), introduced himself to The RMASFAA organization and provided a NASFAA Update & Listening Session.

Financial Aid administrators have witnessed a whirlwind of federal financial aid legislation. Sessions to help successfully navigate the transition to direct lending included: The Hitchhiker's Guide to Direct Loan Processing; Year Round Pell; Simplifying the Financial Aid Application Process; Implementing New Legislation; Satisfactory Academic Progress/Return to Title IV Funds; Direct Lending Reconciliation; Professional Judgments; and Disclosure Responsibilities of Institutions.

Evening entertainment included an out-of-this-world experience.... a tour of UND Aerospace and ND Space Grant Consortium facilities. The tour included the high altitude chamber, flight and air traffic control simulators, Planetary Space Suit Design Lab and Spacecraft Simulator Facility.

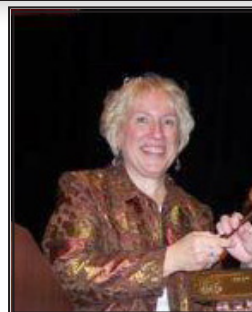
***To see all RMASFAA Conference pictures click [here](#).

RMASFAA AWARDS



*Ron Smout Award for
Teaching and Mentoring*

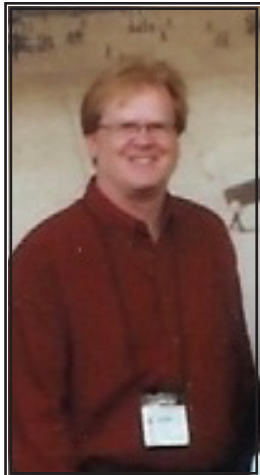
---Sue Weinreiss



Hall of Fame

---Terri Gruba

Montana Welcomes U.M.'s New Financial Aid Director... Kent McGowan



Kent came to the University of Montana at the start of fall 2010 semester as a seasoned veteran with almost twenty years of experience under his belt. When asked how he first got into financial aid, Kent responded, "As an Admissions Counselor for my alma mater I was required to contact prospective students and discuss their aid packages over the phone. Doing well with that and being intrigued with the aid process in general, I left admissions with the intent of finding employment in financial aid." His favorite part of being in financial aid is "it never gets boring and our work makes a difference in peoples' lives."

Kent graduated from Mead High School in Spokane, WA. He was a Math Ed major at Eastern Washington University before transferring to George Fox College where he earned his BA in Religion. He then went on to receive his Ed M in College Counseling and Student Personnel Work from the University at Buffalo.

When not working, Kent enjoys spending time with his: wife, Marla Jo; kids Mariah, 16 and Francisco, 14; dogs, Lucy and Cinnamon; and cats, Kirby and Sampson. Mariah and Francisco are quite the hockey players. Mariah had two goals and three assists while Francisco had four goals and one assist and led his team in penalty minutes in last weekend's hockey games. Dad Kent is extremely proud of his kids.

Kent picked a great state to live since some of his favorite activities include being in the outdoors. He likes to spend time hiking and swimming; he loves the Missoula North Valley view from his back porch as well as the Mount Lolo view from the front porch; his idea of a dream vacation would involve a lake with swimming, jet skiing and water skiing. It sounds like Montana is the place for Kent!

A few of Kent's favorite things include science fiction books; action and adventure movies; television shows such as: "Lie to Me", "Bones", "NCIS"; sports teams-"Go Seahawks! Go Bills! Go Sabres!"; ice cream, pizza, and lasagna.

Some of Kent's favorite quotes include: "I'm not drinking that Kool-Aid" Computer consultant; "People will forget what you do, but they will not forget how you make them feel." Speaker at recent RMASFAA conference; "No matter where you go, there you are." from The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension.

Here's something that you might not be able to guess about Kent - he loves singing and has been involved in choirs and quartets, typically singing 1st tenor, since the fourth grade. Except "No solos, please", he says.

Janet Riis is Honored to Serve as RMASFAA President



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

We come from the eight states of Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. Our backgrounds are as varied as the landscape of our region. We represent institutions of all sizes and types - from small proprietary schools to large land-grant universities. Our members include financial aid administrators at schools as well as representatives of the associate sector including lenders, software providers, servicing agencies, and others who provide support to our students and schools.

RMASFAA prides itself in providing quality training and professional development to our membership. Members are able to receive the latest updates and changes to federal programs, regulations, and policies. Our annual fall conference provides top-notch speakers from our profession, quality content, in addition to professional networking opportunities. The region is also known for its high quality Summer Institute training which takes place over a week in June.

Volunteers are the life blood of RMASFAA. We have committees that provide training, mentor new leaders, support the professional community, focus on multicultural diversity activities, or provide the voice to our association through public relations. These are just a few of our committees and I would like to encourage you to take a look and see how you may help.

We encourage you to visit our website often. Here we will continue to keep you current on all Association activities, training opportunities and schedule, committee reports, as well as many other features. This is the central place to keep us connected - to each other and to our industry.

I am honored to serve as the President of RMASFAA this year and welcome your thoughts and suggestions. We rely on each other's expertise, knowledge, and friendship. We share ideas, processes, and shoulders to lean on. We come together as a group always working toward one common goal - to help meet the needs of our students.

Best wishes for a productive and successful year. I look forward to having you participate in our regional activities throughout the year.

Janet Riis
RMASFAA President 2010-2011