

VASFAA of Olde

The Virginia Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (VASFAA) has a history that spans nearly 40 years. It all began in April 1968 when Tom Langston of Lynchburg College sent out a questionnaire soliciting the viewpoint of the financial aid community regarding the need for an association. The first VASFAA meeting was held the following month in Charlottesville, Virginia.

It did not take long for the Association to begin to grow. The implementation of a Board of Directors and the publication of a newsletter and membership directory were some of the first steps the organization took in the early 1970s. Workshops were developed in response to the growing need for additional training. A conference for aid administrators was established, and regional financial aid workshops were created for high school guidance counselors. But all that did little to quell the concerns relating to state legislation. The Board of Directors and membership wanted to focus more on advocating state legislation to fund programs supporting higher education.

Communication between the state higher education community and VASFAA was at a high in the mid-1970s. In May 1976, Barry Dorsey of the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) convened the first organizational meeting of the Council's Financial Advisory Committee. Through joint efforts of SCHEV and VASFAA in April 1977, federal funds were secured to begin developing in-service training programs for the financial aid community.

The 1980s found VASFAA focused on financial aid awareness. In January 1981, Governor John Dalton signed a Certificate of Recognition establishing Virginia Student Financial Aid Awareness Week. As awareness grew, so did the VASFAA membership. It flourished from 55 members in April 1971 to 180 just ten years later. The emphasis on financial aid awareness also led to the development of the *VASFAA Journal*, containing articles about the direction of state financial aid programs, salaries of financial aid professionals, and job location and development programs. The first issue was distributed to the membership in the spring of 1983.

As a result of tremendous growth in membership and for the protection of the executive board, VASFAA incorporated on July 20, 1984. And in January of 1988, Financial Aid Awareness Week was extended to a month-long endeavor. In the spring of 1989, the lending community established the Sue Deaton Ross Endowment Fund. This fund, named for a former VASFAA president and student aid advocate, was created to provide scholarships to deserving Virginia residents attending Virginia schools.

In the 1990s, the organization began to look toward the future of student financial aid, leading to a position paper entitled "A Strategic View of Students at Risk in Virginia," which addressed the Commonwealth's role in encouraging the participation of economically disadvantaged students in higher education.

As VASFAA embarks on a new century and a new millennium, it will continue to search for ways to promote its mission. Now over 400 strong, the VASFAA membership seeks professional growth and collaboration of its members to ethically, competently and adequately serve the needs of students, families and institutions in matters related to financial and informational resources. Yet even as we embrace change, the central focus of VASFAA will not change: it has always been and will continue to be to support students' postsecondary education goals.