

MAR 2023

CAFAA NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Colorado Association of
Financial Aid Administrators

Meet Ariel Mendez - President Elect

LINDSEY CAMPBELL, CAFAA PRESIDENT

CAFAA is proud to announce that Ariel Mendez, Director of Financial Aid at Arapahoe Community College will be the 2023-2024 CAFAA President. She has been in financial aid for 13 years, and couldn't be more fit for the job. I had the pleasure of sitting down and asking her a few questions about her and her career. Read on to get to know your incoming 2023-2024 CAFAA President.



Ariel Mendez

How did you find financial aid as a career choice?

"Like almost everyone, it was an entire accident. My entire life had been building up to me going to law school. When I graduated from undergrad and was no longer on that path, I was a bit... lost? While preparing for the LSATs I landed a job as an Admin I in financial aid at CCA. It was an immediate fit for my black-and-white, rules-following personality yet had enough nuance that kept my very active brain constantly busy, that I abandoned all thoughts of law school almost instantly. In 7 or 8 months I became an advisor and then slowly kept growing my career from there. Once I realized how much the work not only fulfilled my intellectual growth needs but also my drive toward social justice, it became the place that I knew I would stay for a long time. I even got my master's degree in public policy because it was the most natural fit with the type of work that really fed my soul as a director; being able to create a social justice framework to the policies we form around the state and federal regulations which we have to abide is everything I could want from my work."

What made you say "YES" to being the next CAFAA President?

"I'm going to be honest, here. Peer pressure?... I'm kidding....Mostly. Eileen Griego won't read this (thank goodness!), but her peer pressure skills are no joke. So are Karla Nash's.

I actually decided to say yes because CAFAA has been something that has had a profound impact on me during the Colorado portion of my career. It is the reason I have built a ton of connections across the state that I can tap into and

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MEET ARIEL MENDEZ

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collaborate with. I've built lifelong relationships with many of the people I've met through CAFAA with people who support me personally and professionally. When I was asked to act as interim director at ACC, it was my CAFAA relationships that encouraged me, gave me tips, and taught me things I needed to know. Those same people encouraged me to apply for the permanent role and have kept me going through difficult times. The biggest reason I said yes is I want to keep providing that opportunity and place for current and future financial aid career-seeking folks."

What's your number-one goal for your year as CAFAA President?

"Reinvigorating those really amazing elements of CAFAA. Things like PDT opportunities and training outside of the annual conference. I'm planning to work on boosting robust committee engagement. One of the things that is unique about our industry is that we are often the only people who know this massive amount of information that people all over the country need access to. My goal is to boost CAFAA's ability to disseminate the myriad of information far and wide and continue to help those in our industry make meaningful connections while they do it."

What advice would you give to someone just starting out in Financial Aid?

"Only buy expensive alcohol. None of the cheap stuff. You'll savor it more. I'm joking... My main advice is to really understand why you're doing this work and remind yourself often. Working in financial aid is an exercise in patience, adapting to change quickly (and constantly), stress management, and asking questions constantly. There are many ways that the work can get overwhelming and feel like it's just too much. Keeping the purpose behind your work is what will always bring you back to some sort of baseline when you've answered your 65th email that day about refunds. Also, take care of yourselves. It's no easy thing doing this work and most college and university administrators are entirely unaware of the burden on financial aid offices. Find your people, build and maintain those relationships deliberately. If this work is important to you and you want to keep going, you have to make sure that you are taking care of yourself, finding joy and peace in your life."

What is the last thing you did that was really fun?

"I adore taking solo trips to the many far-flung places my friends live. Last year I took a trip to New York by way of Boston and spent a few days wandering Boston alone. I went on a whale watching tour (it was frigid, and I highly recommend doing it in the summer if you can but entirely worth it) and just beat around the city for a couple of days alone and I absolutely adored it. Definitely 12/10!"

CAFAA is excited to continue building our momentum with Ariel at the helm. If you are interested in joining Ariel's team, reach out to her directly – volunteer positions are open now. Email Ariel.Mendez@arapahoe.edu

A Wise Person Once Said

IF YOUR ACTIONS INSPIRE OTHERS TO DREAM MORE, LEARN MORE, DO MORE AND BECOME MORE ... YOU ARE A LEADER.

-JOHN QUINCY ADAMS





Nomination Deadline Extended

ONLINE NOMINATIONS DUE
MARCH 24, 2023

[SUBMIT NOMINATIONS HERE](#)

CAFAA Wants You!

HOLLY DAUGHERTY, COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

As our President Elect, Ariel Mendez said "It is time to gather our leadership team for the 2023-2024 year with CAFAA." There are various volunteer positions open on the CAFAA Board. These positions range from voting Executive Committee Members and Sector Reps, to non-voting committee chairs and co-chairs positions, and general volunteer committee members.

The nomination deadline has been extended to March 24, 2023. We are still in need of a nomination for Secretary and our Four-Year Public Sector Rep. You can learn more about these and all of our positions by visiting the [CAFAA Website](#).



Serving on the Board is a great opportunity for people from all experience levels in their career to lead in work that directly impacts our unique industry. It is also a great way to bring together perspectives from all over the state. The time commitment for board members will vary by position. All Board Members are asked to attend 4 virtual meetings over the course of their year of service. They must also attend an in-person transition meeting during the annual spring conference. Depending on the position within The Board there may be additional commitments such as meeting with CDHE or developing content for our monthly newsletter.

To submit your name or nominate someone else all you have to do is submit the [Volunteer/Nomination for 2023-2024 CAFAA Board Positions form!](#)

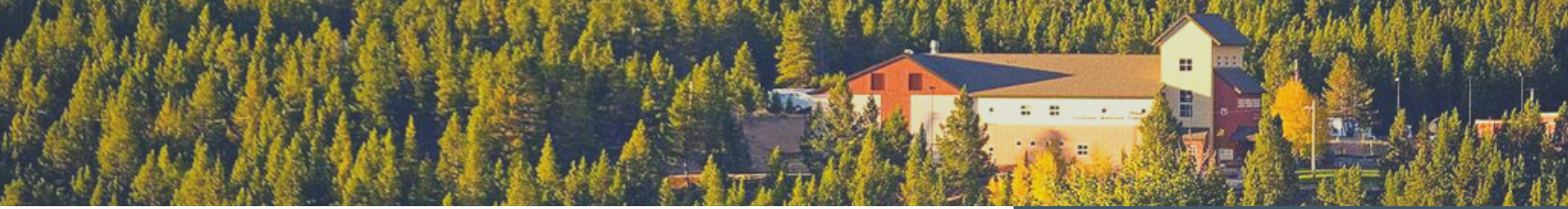
General Volunteer Opportunities

If serving as a Board Member is not an option for you, but you still want to be more involved there are various committees that any member can volunteer to serve on. These committees are a great way to get introduced to working with CAFAA and connecting with The Board but in a less formal capacity.

- Conference Committee
- Professional Development Committee
- Communications Committee
- Financial Awareness Committee

The Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs will be hosting a session at the conference to talk with anyone who is interested in or learning more about these volunteer opportunities.

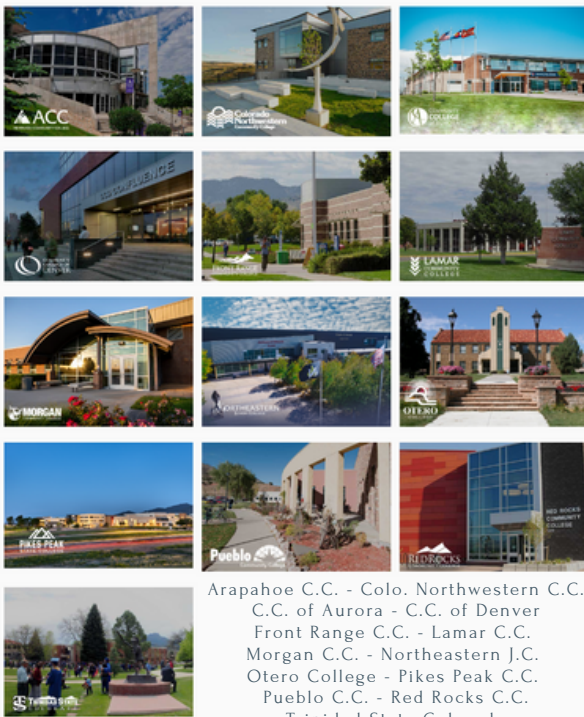
If you have questions or would like more information please contact Ariel Mendez, CAFAA President Elect ariel.mendez@arapahoe.edu.



Institution Spotlight

COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

The Colorado Community College System is the largest higher education and workforce training provider in the State, with 13 colleges and 35 locations - serving 114,000+ students annually. Working in Financial Aid within CCCS is great. There are so many different programs and types of aid across the system. It requires a good understanding of the wide breadth of federal and state aid that is used to serve our students. We also have a community of colleagues that we can easily reach out to and get help with system questions or assisting students transferring between CCCS schools.



Arapahoe C.C. - Colo. Northwestern C.C.
C.C. of Aurora - C.C. of Denver
Front Range C.C. - Lamar C.C.
Morgan C.C. - Northeastern J.C.
Otero College - Pikes Peak C.C.
Pueblo C.C. - Red Rocks C.C.
Trinidad State Colorado

Membership & Conference Update

HOLLY DAUGHERTY, COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your membership and/or registered to attend the annual CAFAA conference. We are trending back to "pre-pandemic" numbers for conference registrations and just shy of our regular membership base!

There is still time to renew your institution's membership and register for the conference. So don't delay renew and register today!

If you need help or have questions about the renewal process please contact Tracy Craven- tcraven@rmcad.edu.

Want to be included in our Institution Spotlight?

EMAIL HOLLY DAUGHERTY

HDAUGHERTY@COLORADOMESA.EDU

CAFAA COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR & HISTORIAN





FAFSA Simplification Webinar Recap

HOLLY DAUGHERTY, COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Thank you to all of you who attended our webinar on March 7th. We appreciate all of you who took time out of your day to attend. It was great to see so many institutions represented and to hear the various questions and concerns that you shared.

During the webinar Lindsey Campbell, Director of Financial Aid at CMU and CAFAA President and Barb Marshall, at CU recapped the information shared during the NASFAA Leadership & Legislative Conference regarding FAFSA Simplification and how best for institutions to prepare.

Unfortunately there are still many aspects to the FAFSA Simplification process that are unknown, such as the release date for the 24-25 FAFSA, how exactly we need to communicate with students and their families about these changes, and the affects that these changes will ultimately have on the release of CASFA.

Due to the many concerns that are shared within Financial Aid Offices nationwide. This month NASFAA reported that along with seven other higher ed. organizations they has submitted a letter urging Federal Student Aid (FSA) to consider six recommendations should the Department of Education (ED) launch the FAFSA later than October 1. These recommendations include:

1. Commit to a specific FAFSA release date by May 1, 2023
2. Release a Pell lookup table by May 1, 2023
3. Send the technical specifications to state agencies, vendors involved in coding state, college, and university systems, and Financial Aid Management Systems (FAMS) vendors at least 8 months in advance of the FAFSA release
4. Launch a communications plan about the FAFSA delay with messages for students, parents, counselors, institutions, states and other stakeholders by July 1, 2023
5. Produce training materials, including screen shots and details on the parent wizard, by July 1, 2023
6. Implement the new process for obtaining an FSA ID by July 1, 2023

On the flip side, for all the unknowns there is one thing that we do know... None of us our alone in this process.

It was apparent during our webinar's open question and answer session that the majority of you are interested in staying connected regarding this topic. CAFAA is committed to continuing to help facilitate these conversations and will host additional sessions for our members to share knowledge, processes, ideas, and successes with one another. So be sure to stay tuned for more to come.

**Full Steam Ahead...
Registration Open**

[REGISTER ONLINE](#) FOR THE ANNUAL CAFAA CONFERENCE

ANNUAL CAFAA CONFERENCE
MAY 3-5, 2023
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, CO



EVENTS, UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

To have your event or announcement included please email hdaugherty@coloradomesa.edu

Silent Auction Items Needed

The Conference Committee is in the process of gathering donations for our annual philanthropic silent auction. If you have items to donate or would like to help in requesting donations, please contact Mike Pearce - michael.pearce@cccs.edu or Karen Tran - karen.tran@rrcc.edu.

RMAFSA Summer Institute

RMAFSA 2023 Summer Institute Registration is open! Early-bird registration will end May 5th. Join us June 4- 8, Wichita State University Wichita, KS.

[Click Here to Register!](#)



RMAFSA Conference is Coming to Colorado

Colorado needs your presence at the 2023 RMAFSA conference, and we hope to see many of you later this year. If you are interested in helping coordinate this conference, please reach out to:

- Jill Robertson: jrobert@mines.edu
- Joe Donlay: joe.donlay@colostate.edu

Upcoming Events:

23-24 CAFAA Board Nominations Closes
MARCH 24

Quarterly CAFAA Board Meeting
APRIL 7

CAFAA Spring Conference Steamboat Springs, CO
MAY 3-5

RMAFSA 2023 Summer Institute Wichita, KS
JUN 4-8

RMAFSA 2023 Conference Ft. Collins, CO
OCT

Members

ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY - AIMS COMMUNITY COLLEGE - ARAPAHOE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - BEL-RAE INSTITUTE OF ANIMAL TECHNOLOGY - CAMPUSLOGIC - CITIZENS ONE STUDENT LOANS - CO DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION - COLLEGE AVE. STUDENT LOANS - COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY - COLORADO COLLEGE - COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEMS - CDHE - COLORADO GEARUP - COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY - COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE - COLORADO NORTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE - COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES - COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, FORT COLLINS - COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF AURORA - COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER - CREDIBLE - DENVER SEMINARY - DISCOVER STUDENT LOANS - EARNEST - ELM RESOURCES - FORT LEWIS COLLEGE - FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNDING U - IRON BRIDGE RESOURCES - LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION - METRO STATE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER - MPOWER FINANCING - NELNET - NORTHEASTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE - PAUL MITCHELL THE SCHOOL DENVER - PIKES PEAK COMMUNITY COLLEGE - PLATT COLLEGE - PUEBLO COMMUNITY COLLEGE - RED ROCKS COMMUNITY COLLEGE - REGIS UNIVERSITY - ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN - SALLIE MAE - SCHOLARNET - SOFI - TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES - TRINIDAD STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, COLORADO SPRINGS - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, DENVER - UNIVERSITY OF DENVER - UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO - WESTERN COLORADO UNIVERSITY

Be sure to update your institution/organization's roster to include all active members.

We Want to Hear From You

Our Communications Committee is working hard on getting you up to date information. We will be updating our social media channels, website and blogs in the near future. If you have an idea for content we would love to hear from you:

- Holly Daugherty, Chair: hdaugherty@coloradomesa.edu
- Veronica Valles, Chair: vvalles@regis.edu

Newsletter updates, including spotlight sections and upcoming events, must be submitted no later than the 15th of each month to be included in the following monthly newsletter