

President's Corner



Dear
Colleagues:

It's been a tumultuous year for higher education. COVID-19 changed every aspect of life as we knew it. Like everyone else, we were happy to turn the page on 2020 and to see signs of what was familiar before the pandemic.

As we turn the page to 2021, FAS is commemorating our 30th Anniversary in 2021. We will be recognizing this milestone all year long. Throughout the year, we will hear from longtime friends, colleagues, and clients who have been with us over the last three decades. Watch for these special tributes in future editions of FAS Compass and on our LinkedIn page.

It's always a pleasure welcoming new clients to the FAS family. We also appreciate hearing from clients who are pleased with our services. A recent Client Case History features Marymount University. FAS Consultant, Ron Elmore worked with Marymount for several months, serving in an interim director of financial aid capacity. Our staff interviewed Dr. William Bissett, Vice President of Enrollment Management, and we're grateful for his kind remarks about Ron and FAS. Read more about Ron's years of experience and impeccable financial aid career in our Consultant Spotlight.

In our Getting to Know You section, you'll hear from Student Business Services (SBS) Consultant, Kathy Jewett. Kathy joined SBS in 2019 and has served as Howard University's

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FAS Helps Marymount University's Financial Aid Office Keep Performance at a High Level

Challenge

Marymount is a comprehensive Catholic university that offers a wide array of undergraduate and graduate degrees through the Schools of Design, Arts, Humanities, Business and Technology, Sciences, Mathematics, Education, and the Malek School of Health Professions. With its Arlington, Va., location, students have a wide variety of internship opportunities in Washington, D.C., from Capitol Hill and the Smithsonian to the National Institute for Health and international corporations. When the school's financial aid director's position became available, Dr. William Bissett, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Affairs, reached out to FAS.



Solution

"I knew about FAS because I had a good experience working with them at another institution," said Dr. Bissett. "We had an inexperienced team at Marymount, and I knew they needed guidance while we searched for a new director." FAS Consultant Ron Elmore, who was familiar with Marymount's software system, stepped in for three months to direct and oversee day-to-day operations and mentor the staff. When a new financial aid director was hired, his engagement was extended so he could help with her orientation.

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Financial Aid Services
Atlanta, Georgia

President's Corner

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Interim Bursar for over a year. She will share a little about her extensive background as well as some perspectives on several challenges all business offices are facing today.

Executive Consultant, David Glezerman has written an Industry Insight paper that explores migrating to cashless cashiering. Check out this edition's article focusing on digital payments. This is quite timely and useful for institutions considering going cashless or who want to handle payments more efficiently.

Our Compliance Team is closely monitoring developments with the CARES Act, HEERF, and most recently, the American Rescue Plan Act. The latter provides \$40 billion in funding to higher education. Continue to visit our [COVID-19 Resource Page](#) for the latest updates.

Finally, we can't pass up the opportunity to announce the new consultants who have joined us in the past few months. We are excited about the experience they bring and look forward to the great work they will do for our clients.

If there are topics you would like covered in a future edition of FAS Compass or if we can assist your institution, please contact our Client Relations Team. Enjoy this edition of FAS Compass!

Sincerely,



David Gray
President

Handling Student Payments More Efficiently

by David Glezerman

David Glezerman has over 39 years of higher education experience, at executive and managerial levels, serving in student business service positions in the community college and four-year public institution setting. As an Executive Consultant with Student Business Services (SBS), he offers consulting services to bursar/student account offices to assess and enhance business processes, address compliance issues and enhance customer service.

Getting students to pay their tuition on time is challenging in normal times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, new barriers have arisen to receiving and processing these payments—and many other types of payments—quickly and efficiently. Despite efforts to work remotely to

avoid spread of the virus, business officer staff still must come to campus to process and deposit checks. This can be stressful for students who want to make sure their payments were received on time.

If your school uses a payment vendor or bank to receive and process its transactions, many students and families prefer to use traditional payment methods. It is important to promote the security and ease-of-use provided with online payments.

Changing the culture of institutional payers is complex and requires clear and concise communications with both internal and external

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FAS Helps Marymount University's Financial Aid Office (continued from page 1)

Results

"FAS has the reputation for hiring very experienced, competent financial aid professionals who deal with a variety of situations, size up the issues and make an immediate impact," said Dr. Bissett. He noted that Elmore's recommendations and support kept operations running smoothly and helped improve student satisfaction. "In Ron, we not only found a good financial aid professional, but also were fortunate enough to find a good person who mentored and trained our staff with empathy."

Industry Resources

Our 2021-2022 Verification Compliance Checklist is now available. Request your free copy today.

FA Consultant Profile - Ron Elmore

Ron Elmore has over 30 years of student financial aid experience in both four-year public and four-year private institutions. Ron came to FAS in 2020. He joined the consulting team after finishing his career at High Point University where he served as Director of Student Financial Planning. Ron is available to provide Interim Staffing, Consulting and Assessment services to improve business processes, strengthen compliance efforts and enhance student satisfaction.



Prior to his tenure at High Point University, Ron has also served as Director of Financial Aid at several other institutions throughout his career. These include Berry College, Greensboro College, and Birmingham-Southern College. Ron has a deep depth of knowledge in administering

all aspects of student financial aid. He has strong user experience with Ellucian's Colleague system. He has also worked in PowerFAIDS and Jenzabar environments and is familiar with the CARS system.

Ron has always been actively involved in the financial aid profession. He

was elected and served as both President and Vice President of the Alabama Association of Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA). Ron is a highly sought-after trainer and presenter. He has been an instructor for the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' (SASFSA) New Aid Officer Workshop. Ron has made countless presentations at state and regional financial aid conferences over the years.

Ron received his Bachelor of Science in Psychology from North Texas State University and his Master of Education in Counseling from University of Alabama-Birmingham.

Handling Student Payments More Efficiently

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customers. How an institution describes options and communicates its preferences and expectations will set the tone for success or failure.

Maintaining quality customer service and enhancing cash flow is crucial to educational institutions, particularly during troubled times. Colleges and universities should be looking at existing processes to identify opportunities for improvements and efficiencies. To help your institution find solutions to enhance customer service, streamline cumbersome processes, and improve cash flow, please see our recent industry paper on Cashiering: *Migrating from Cash and Checks to Digital Payments.* (<https://files.constantcontact.com/ee3e81f3101/acc692eb-6e8b-4318-a6d5-d73f8e590777.pdf>)

Want to improve your digital payment adoption rate? Consider these steps:

- Examine current payment patterns to find opportunities
- Investigate business relationships with banks and payment vendors and if there are best practice solutions that your institution is not utilizing
- Review your customer communications to assure that messaging is clear, concise, and accurate

Compliance Corner

ED issues clarification and a change in position on charging lost revenue costs to HEERF grants.

The 2021-2022 Federal Pell Grant Payment and Disbursement Schedules are available.

A new Senate Bill calls for two simple student loan repayment plans: one standard, one income-driven.

Continue to check out our COVID-19 Resource Page for the latest updates.

FAS Compass

April 2021

Getting to Know You: A Q&A with Kathy Jewett



FAS: You've worked at several institutions over the past 25+ years. Have you always worked in higher education?

KJ: I started my career in banking and then I went back to graduate school to get a Master's in Education. I wanted to be a teacher. When I couldn't find a job in teaching, I ended up taking a job as the Manager of Student Loans at Boston College. I have been working in Higher Education ever since. I've worked in private and public institutions both large and small.

FAS: How has the industry changed since you started as Bursar and in recent years?

KJ: The sharp rise in education costs and the use of technology have been significant changes. When I started in this industry, students had to come to the office to be helped, bills were mailed and stuffed by hand. Students had to come in to pick up refund checks. Now I'm in front of a computer the entire day. I spend most of my time trying to improve the technology that runs the business. Due to the significant cost of an education, student debt and the amounts they are borrowing has become a serious issue. This wasn't the case when I started. Schools are now more mindful of their price tag and their ability to attract students.

This means billing and collecting money in the Bursar's Office is much more complicated.

FAS: You've seen, and been through, a lot in this industry. Is there a "hot button" issue right now? If so, what is it and how might an institution tackle it?

KJ: Customer service is always a 'hot button' issue but especially in a pandemic. The key to good customer service is a well-trained staff. It is also having well organized processes and excellent communication tools. The goal is for the students to have all the information they need readily available. If students have questions, the responses to them need to be clear, concise, and timely. Sending students from one office to another and back again is not good customer service. To avoid this, try to establish contacts in other offices where you can get answers for the student.

FAS: In your mind, what is key to a thriving relationship between Student Accounts and Financial Aid?

KJ: Without a good relationship with the Financial Aid Director, it is impossible to be a good Bursar. There must be transparent communication between the two offices and trust from day one. This is true for the two leaders as well as the staff in these offices. It's important to work together and not against each other. The messaging from each office must be coordinated and the calendar agreed upon. Also, cross training is very helpful. When the areas understand one another's basic functions, it builds trusts and fosters collaboration.

FAS: At several institutions, you helped evaluate/compare ERPs and were involved with implementations. What advice do you have for administrators who feel their ERP is underutilized?

KJ: It is very common for administrators to blame everything on the ERP they have. I don't think I've ever worked at a school where this was not true. Start with being open minded and willing to change processes utilizing the system that you have. It may be underutilized because it was configured to do things the way they have always been done or because no one has taken the time to learn what it actually can do. Take every opportunity to be more innovative in your processes and use the system you have as it was designed to be used. Chances are what you have may not be the newest and greatest but usually it works better than the staff claims it does.

FAS: We're seeing institutions tap professionals from outside higher education for Bursar and other leadership roles in business offices. What advice, or words of wisdom, would you give a mid-to-late career professional, who is entering this profession?

KJ: If you believe in young people and the importance of a good education, higher education is the profession to be in. The role of the Bursar's Office is to bill and collect money successfully. To be effective, you must be able to communicate with students who probably communicate differently from you. Also, parents may not understand all the rules and regulations. Be patient, deliberate and organized. Establish good relationships on campus including the support and confidence of upper management. It's a great environment to work in and it is so rewarding when you help the students figure out how to pay their bills. When just one student thanks you—it's all worth it!

FAS *Compass*

April 2021

Welcome New Clients

Our entire staff looks forward to working with them and being part of their successes.



Carolina College of Health Sciences



Eastern Connecticut State University



Gwynedd Mercy University



Kellogg Community College



Kettering University



Mount Wachusett Community College



Saint Michael's College



St. Lawrence University



University of California San Diego



Vance-Granville Community College



Western Michigan University

Welcome New Consultants

We are proud to welcome the newest additions to our Financial Aid Consulting Team.

Financial Aid Consultants

Maureen Anderson
Michael Bartini
Tarik Boyd

Student Business Services (SBS) Consultants

John Moetz
Cathy Poiesz