



NEWSLETTER

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Achieve a Higher Standard... with HEAG!

Message from Milton

Happy Spring from all of us at HEAG. In addition to the warmer weather, however, processing financial aid applications heats up as well. Here at HEAG we have an excellent team of financial aid professionals available to assist you with your backlog of pending files. Let us help you to reduce your stress.

~ Milton Kerstein, President

HEAG LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

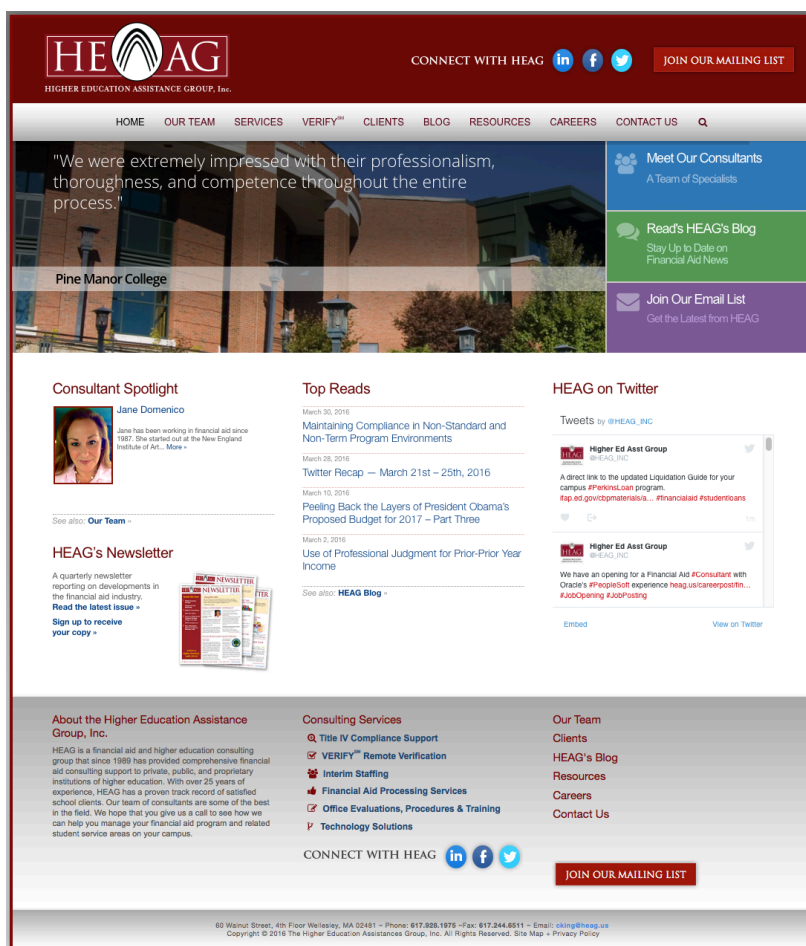
We are very excited to officially announce the launch of our newly designed website located at our same address, www.heag.us.

The new website is full of helpful resources along with links to quickly contact us located at the top of each page. Want to schedule a VERIFYSM Demo? Simply click the link located on each page and we will follow up as soon as possible. Additionally, our blog and live social media posts are clearly visible on the homepage,

providing you with the latest financial aid industry news. Be sure to check back often and SUBSCRIBE so you never miss a post!

Are you interested in consulting with HEAG? Then, continue to check the HEAG Careers page where you can now apply online for positions posted.

Please stop on by our page and take a look!



REDUCE TIME STUDENTS WAIT IN LINE

Picture this. It's right before the first week of fall classes and you have prepped staff as much as possible for the incoming deluge of students to the campus. During their visit, they will be doing everything from registering for classes, moving into dorms and, of course, finalizing their financial aid documentation. In the Financial Aid Office, you expect the usual lines out the door, possible hour plus wait times for students to be serviced and some of them visibly upset with the antiquated process.



Shorter Lines; Happier Students; Less Stress for Financial Aid Staff

But this year is different. In your department, lines are much shorter than they were last year. You look around and students are actually smiling instead of scowling because of the anticipated wait. Your staff is also much more jovial and seems to be less stressed out. What has changed? VERIFYSM, The Higher Education Assistance Group's online portal system for submitting required verification documents, was put into use at the start of the academic year.

Instant Gratification with Online Verification

In a nutshell, HEAG caters to the school's needs and removes the obligatory middleman in the verification process. Millennial students, who are used to instant gratification via systems they can access 24/7, are now able to log into their smartphones, take a picture of a required document, upload it to the portal and receive emails quickly indicating if anything is still missing. There was never a visit to campus or a wasted stamp to place these vital documents in the mail. The needs of your study body are changing the way operations have been conducted on college campuses for decades and will continue to shift in ways that are not yet even dreamed up. We are here and ready to assist you with this technological migration.

If you would like to envision your office future in the same matter, contact us for a demonstration of how the VERIFY platform can work for you. See the [File Review and Verification](#) section of HEAG's blog for more tips on increasing student satisfaction.

Schedule Your VERIFYSM Demo Today.

Call 617.928.1975 or Click to request a demo.

CONSULTANT SPOTLIGHT

Name: **Lisa Reichstein**

Current Position: **Financial Aid Consultant**



Tell us a little about yourself. I have been in financial aid for 29 years, starting as a temporary file clerk and working my way up to the Financial Aid Director at a community college located in North Carolina. I have been married for 31 years and have two sons, ages 25 and 28.

What do you enjoy most about your current position at HEAG? The thing I love the best is helping someone at a school find an easier way to run a process for their office and streamline their practices.

What makes HEAG unique or special compared to your work experiences elsewhere? Everyone that works at HEAG comes from different types of colleges and have a wealth of information and knowledge. I love having the opportunity to travel to other schools and being able to meet a lot of new people.

Before working for HEAG, what was the most unusual or interesting job you've ever had? While in college I worked at Krispy Kreme near the campus of East Carolina University on weekends. I served coffee and donuts. My future husband was a police officer who came in to get coffee and I met him there.

When you're not consulting, what kind of other hobbies/interests do you have? I enjoy doing renovations in our home and when not doing that I sew and spend time at our camper at the beach.

What is something few people know about you? That I sewed my own wedding dress and veil.

Lisa will be representing HEAG at this year's NCASF AA Conference in April. If you see her, make sure to say hello!

APRIL IS FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

HEAG will be sharing financial literacy resources and news all month. Follow us on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook for information you can share with your students. #financialliteracy

Does your college have a Financial Literacy website? Here are a few examples:

Boston College

http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/financial/financial_literacy/succstart.html

Creighton College

<https://www.creighton.edu/financialaid/financialaidinfo/financialliteracy/>

Georgia State University

<http://sfs.gsu.edu/the-financial-aid-process/financial-resources/financial-literacy/>

Gettysburg College

https://www.gettysburg.edu/scholarships_aid/financial-literacy.dot

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

<https://www.wpi.edu/offices/fa/financial-literacy.html>

COMMUNITY COLLEGE WATCH

Hot Topic – BA Degrees at Community Colleges

From California to Florida, there are now more opportunities to earn bachelor degrees at community colleges. If your community college is thinking about adding bachelor degree programs, financial aid offices should consider:

- Appropriately adding the degree to your Program Participation Agreement (PPA) to receive Title IV, HEA program funding
- Accreditation and state approval issues
- Potential consortium and contractual agreements
- Creating Policies & Procedures surrounding the newly approved programs
- Training vital staff on changes within your financial aid management system as it relates to new program processing
- Ensuring financial aid has communicated with all other involved departments regarding items such as a revised SAP policy, Cost of Attendance, etc.
- Any potential disclosure updates that need to be made such as changes to Consumer Information

Here are some recent news stories on the growing trend; and please give HEAG's compliance experts a call if you have any questions about adding bachelor degree programs.

[BA degrees in growing demand at community colleges](#)

[Colleges Lock Horns Over Nursing Programs](#)

Free Community College Initiatives Update

[See our January 11, 2016 Community College Watch for a more comprehensive list of cities and states with free community college initiatives](#)

[Detroit makes community colleges free](#)

[Kentucky house approves free community college](#)

[Mass. Dept of Ed chief announces plan for low cost BA degrees](#)

In the News

[A new potential credentialing model for community colleges](#)

Resources

[Community College “challenge” website with statistics on enrollments and graduation rates](#)

[Expectations meet reality: The underprepared student and community colleges 2016 Report](#)



BATTLE WAGES ON OVER HIGHER EDUCATION

On March 23rd, 2016, the House Budget Committee (HBC) released more detail surrounding spending cuts on some key higher education programs. There remains a dichotomy between the Republican controlled Congress and the Democratic White House as they both attempt to advance their respective spending initiatives. While there are ideas for a wide variety of non-defense discretionary programs cuts from Paul Ryan's budget plan, we want to hone in on what may be impacting your financial aid department.

Some of the most glaring budget proposals occur within the Pell grant program. Those include no increases to the maximum Pell award amount over a ten year period which currently stands at \$5815 per student, per year. Another would be to fully eliminate Pell assistance to students enrolled at a less-than-half-time status, usually five credits or less. On February 9th, President Obama unveiled in his spending package that Pell grant increases be permanently tied to inflation and made no mention of eliminating the grant for students taking only one course. In fact, in the President's FY17 budget, he has asked for an increase in Pell money for students taking at least 15 credits in a semester which would be a change to the way the current program pays out Pell funds to “full time” students by the current definition, as those taking 12 credits or more. The HBC would also look to eliminate the decade old needs analysis provisions which include increases to the “automatic zero” Expected Family Contribution and the income protection allowance calculations.

On the student loan side, congressional leaders are looking to eliminate the Direct Subsidized Loan program completely, stating “there is no evidence that in-school interest subsidies are critical to individual matriculation.” There was no mention of eliminating student loan subsidies under Obama's budget plan. Finally, the committee recommended phasing out TEACH Grants, citing a Government Accountability Office report that highlighted the lack of performance metrics and the frequency of grant-to-loan conversions.

The resolution passed the House Budget Committee on March 16th, but its path to passing the full House of Representatives is unclear. The House is out of session until April 12, so there is uncertainty surrounding whether or not the resolution may continue following the Easter break. Members of the House Freedom Caucus stated they would oppose the spending plan because it adheres to an agreement reached last fall between Congressional leaders and President Obama that includes modest increases in federal spending. If the Freedom Caucus stays united, Republican leadership will likely not have enough votes to pass the budget.

Sources:

https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/8035/Cost-Savings_in_House_Budget_Plan_Come_at_a_Price

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/us/politics/ryans-budget-proposal-runs-into-opposition-from-some-hard-line-republicans.html?_r=0

EARLY FAFSA GUIDANCE – BE PREPARED

On September 14, 2015, President Obama announced major changes impacting the FAFSA process for award year 2017-2018. These changes include early filing access (from January 2017 to October 2016) and the use of prior prior year data (use of 2015 income information instead of 2016). In an effort to prepare financial aid administrators, the Office of Federal Student Aid has begun issuing what they anticipate will be a number of Electronic Announcements as the Early FAFSA initiative is developed and implemented. Additionally, FSA has also created an informational page on www.ifap.ed.gov dedicated to Early FAFSA. This page will house all training, webinars, Electronic Announcements, Dear Colleague Letters and Federal Registers as they become available. These resources will certainly prove to be a valuable tool when preparing your institution for Early FAFSA.

- Early FAFSA Electronic Announcement #4 – Determining FAFSA Prior-Prior Items
- Early FAFSA Electronic Announcement #3 - Availability of the 2017-2018 Early FAFSA Information Page on the Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) website
- Early FAFSA Electronic Announcement #2 - Preparing for 2017-2018 Early FAFSA and Prior-Prior Year
- GEN-16-03 - Use of Professional Judgment When Prior-Prior Year Income is Used to Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Early FAFSA Electronic Announcement #1 - President's Announcement of FAFSA Filing Changes

North Carolina Association of
Student Financial Aid Administrators



HEAG TO ATTEND THE 2016 NCASFAA CONFERENCE

“Serving with Purpose for 50 Years!”

April 10 – 13, 2016 | Wrightsville Beach, NC

HEAG will be attending this year's upcoming [NCASFAA Annual Conference](#). HEAG Consultant, Lisa Reichstein, will be there to attend sessions, as well as, discuss HEAG's vast service offerings. If you'll be attending the conference, make sure to find Lisa and say hello!

About The Higher Education Assistance Group

The Higher Education Assistance Group, Inc. is a comprehensive higher education consulting and financial aid consulting group located in Wellesley, Massachusetts. In operation since 1989 initially as a financial aid consulting firm, we have since grown and expanded to represent all areas of student services management. We continue to advance and evolve to meet the needs of our school clients. The Group provides exceptional administrative and professional management services to all student service fields, including Admissions, Financial Aid, Continuing Education, Bursar and Registrar offices at two and four year institutions, both public and proprietary. The Group's highly qualified team of consultants has spent decades in the field providing administrators with the tools, knowledge and support necessary to complete institutional objectives. We pride ourselves on assisting post secondary institutions to meet challenges such as program regulatory compliance, organizational structure, staffing needs, and technological support.

Telephone: 617-928-1975 Web site: www.HEAG.us Email: Info@HEAG.us

KEEPING FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS “IN THE KNOW”

TRUE or FALSE. Your school offers programs that include self-paced or independent study courses that overlap terms.

TRUE or FALSE. Your school has programs that measure progress in clock-hours.

TRUE or FALSE. Your school has programs that have courses that overlap terms.

TRUE or FALSE. Your school has programs with terms that don't meet the federal definition of semester, trimester, or quarter terms.

If you answered TRUE to *any* one of the statements above, then you are by definition offering non-term and/or non-standard term programs.

The main demographic enrolling in non-standard terms are students over the age of 25, which the National Center for Education Statistics expects to increase by 20% between 2012-2023. 29% of all college enrollees are considered “traditional” students, attending four-year programs right after high school. That means, the remaining 70% are “non-traditional” students seeking out non-standard programs that can work around their busy schedules. These programs are becoming more popular, but are also the most complex for schools to implement and maintain given the high risk for noncompliance.

HEAG has some of the industry's leading experts regarding non-term & non-standard term programs involving initial setup, program roll-out and continued support once they begin. HEAG can assist with institutional considerations that need to occur in order to maintain compliance. These considerations include Student Information System requirements, financial aid staff knowledge, policy changes, academic and faculty engagement and attendance taking.

For more information on maintaining compliance in a non-term and non-standard term environment, please visit our recent blog post: [Maintaining Compliance in Non-Standard and Non-Term Program Environments](#).