



MASFAP Monitor

April 2024 Volume 2024, Issue 2

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Matthew's Message

Matthew Kearney, MASFAP President
Director Student Financial Services, Southeast Missouri State University



MASFAP Membership: Let's Score Big Together!

Dear MASFAP All-Stars,

As we dive into another month, I want to take a moment to applaud each and every one of you for the incredible resilience you've shown during these challenging times. Just like athletes facing tough opponents on the field, you, as financial aid professionals, have tackled the hurdles presented by FAFSA Simplification head-on, demonstrating unwavering dedication and adaptability in ensuring students receive the support they need.

It's like we're in the midst of an intense sports season, with every twist and turn of policy resembling a new play in the game. But guess what? We're not just surviving – we're thriving! Together, we're proving that no matter the challenge, we can overcome it with teamwork, determination, and a winning spirit.

Now, let's talk about some exciting plays coming up on our schedule. Our Freshman Fridays and drive-in day training sessions are the perfect opportunities to sharpen our skills and stay ahead of the game. These events are our

training camps, where we refine our strategies and techniques to better serve our students.

And mark your calendars, because we're gearing up for the highlight event of the season – our Fall 2024 conference at the Lodge of Four Seasons! Set to take place from November 4th to 6th, this conference promises to be nothing short of legendary. Picture it: a gathering of the finest minds in financial aid, coming together to exchange ideas, learn from one another, and celebrate our collective victories.

So, lace up your sneakers and get ready to hit the court because this season is ours for the taking! Together, as a team, we'll continue to show the world what it means to be MASFAP strong.

Let's go, MASFAP!

Warm regards,

Matthew Kearney

Empowering Change: A Recap of Our Hill Day Event



By Candice Shea, Assistant Director, Columbia College

In February, we had the incredible opportunity to participate in a Hill Day event at our State Capitol in Jefferson City, Missouri, and what an experience it was! MASFAP advocates from across our state gathered to raise our voices and advocate for higher education. The energy and passion were palpable as we navigated the halls of power, engaging with policymakers to bring attention to our organization and share our passion for helping students.

The Power of Advocacy: A Personal Reflection

Reflecting on the day's events, I am reminded of the immense power of advocacy. This was my first Hill Day event and I was nervous. This was out of my comfort zone—I'm not naturally outgoing, and I don't love politics or talking about it with strangers. I do enjoy reading Will's "In DC This Week" emails. I realized quickly Hill Day is not about politics, but about sharing our story as financial aid professionals. And that I can do with confidence!

As advocates, we can spark change, to amplify the voices of those who may otherwise go unheard. Our conversations with legislators were not just about policies and numbers; they were about real people, real students whose lives are directly impacted by the decisions made in these hallowed halls.



One particularly memorable moment was being introduced on the House floor (group photo included), the energy was exciting and empowering. While meeting with Senators and House Representatives, we shared personal stories and the work we do. We talked about the needed funding for our state programs and how it benefits students. We shared details of our work and provided a reminder that we are here. We hope our stories resonated deeply with our elected officials, humanizing the issues and highlighting the urgent need to support higher education initiatives.

The Benefits of Being an Advocate

Everyone can be an advocate, and I encourage everyone to join us for the next Hill Day. Being an advocate for college students is not just about fighting for change, it is also about empowerment. Here are just a few of the benefits of being an advocate:

Empowering Change: A Recap of Our Hill Day Event, *Continued*

- **Making a Difference:** Advocacy gives us the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of our peers. By speaking up and taking action, we can influence policies that shape the future of higher education.
- **Building Skills:** Engaging in advocacy hones valuable skills such as public speaking, networking, and strategic thinking. These skills are not only beneficial in the realm of advocacy but also in our future careers and personal lives.
- **Fostering Community:** Advocacy brings people together, creating a sense of community and solidarity among students who share common goals and values. By working together, we amplify our voices and increase our impact.
- **Personal Growth:** Advocacy pushes us out of our comfort zones and encourages personal growth. Whether it's speaking at a public forum or meeting with elected officials, each experience builds confidence and resilience.
- **Creating Lasting Change:** Perhaps most importantly, advocacy has the power to create lasting change. By advocating for policies that prioritize access, affordability, and equity in higher education, we can help build a brighter future for generations to come.

Moving Forward: Continuing the Conversation

Our Hill Day event may be over, but our work is far from finished. As advocates, it is our responsibility to continue the conversation, to keep pushing for progress, and to never lose sight of the transformative power of our voices.

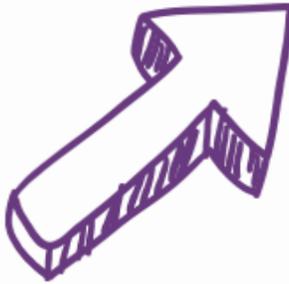
There is space for advocacy year-round, and I hope this shines a light on our work and that you volunteer for our Legislative Committee. Together, we can support a future where every student has the opportunity to thrive, where access to quality education is not a privilege but a fundamental right. Let's keep advocating, keep fighting, and keep striving for a better tomorrow.

Together
We Can!



HAPPENINGS

- **Holly Allen, Goldfarb School of Nursing:** In personal news, my husband and I are expecting baby #4 this Spring.
- Check out this NASFAA article about our **Amy Hager, Moberly Area Community College:**
https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/33142/MVP_Amy_Hager_FAAC
- **Alexandria Miller, Missouri Scholarship & Loan Foundation:** Pictured is my daughter and her high school dance team, they are the Division 5 Missouri State Champs. Congrats to the Fort Zumwalt West High School Dance Team!! (picture right)



RECENT CHANGES



- Heather Kleekamp is the Director of Financial Aid at State Technical College.
- Stacy Bogier is the Director of Financial Aid at East Central College.
- Alex Delonis is the Assistant Vice President for Student Financial Services at Saint Louis University

Conference Sneak Peek

Attention: We have some amazing and pertinent topics planned for the upcoming conference. Check out this list of conference topics, and plan now to be at our annual conference!

CONFERENCE INTEREST SESSION TOPICS:

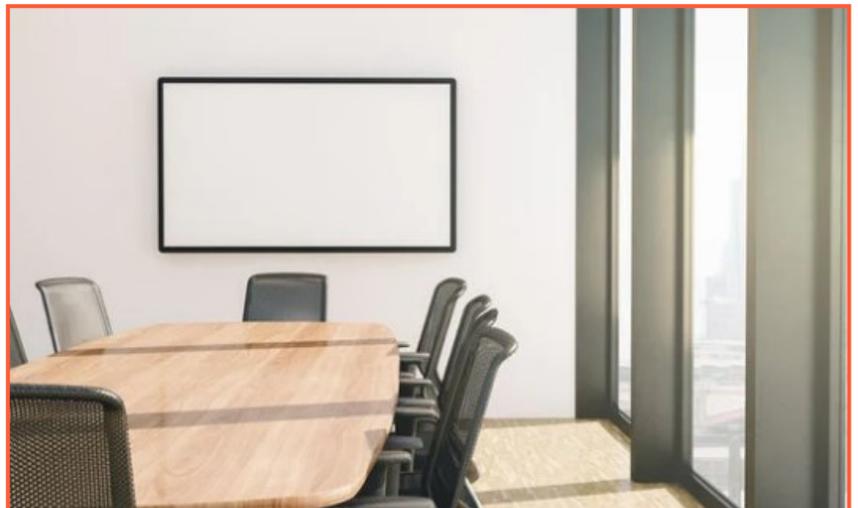
- Optimizing SAP Compliance and Appeal Process
- Other Financial Assistance (OFA) Processing
- Student/Family Perceptions of College
- FAMOUS
- Onboarding and teambuilding
- Financial Literacy
- VA
- Pell/Enrollment Intensity
- Maximize FWS
- Return to Repayment
- SAI Hand Calc
- SAI and PJ
- Gearing up for 25-26 FAFSA
- Best Practices for MSLF and other statewide programs
- FTI Data Sharing



FOR:
OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WHEN:
November 4-6, 2024

WHERE:
Lodge of the Four Seasons



A Moment of Mindfulness: Navigating Change With Balance



By Ethan Miller, Southeast Missouri State University and MASFAP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Co-Chair

Dear MASFAP,

As we navigate through the ever-evolving landscape of financial aid, characterized by constant changes in policies, regulations, and technology, it's essential to remember the importance of maintaining balance and taking moments for mindfulness. In the midst of these shifts, it's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of tasks and responsibilities, often forgetting to prioritize our own well-being.

In the fast-paced environment of financial aid administration, where every decision impacts the lives of students and their families, finding moments of mindfulness can be a challenge. However, it is precisely during times of change and uncertainty that practicing mindfulness becomes most valuable.

Mindfulness is not just about meditation or relaxation techniques; it's about being present in the moment, cultivating awareness, and finding a sense of balance amidst the chaos. Here are a few simple ways we can incorporate mindfulness into our daily routines:

- **Pause and Breathe:** In the thick of a hectic day, take a moment to pause, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. This simple act can help calm the mind and center your thoughts.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Take time to reflect on what you're grateful for, whether it's the opportunity to help students achieve their educational goals or the support of colleagues and mentors. Cultivating a sense of gratitude can shift your perspective and bring positivity into your day.
- **Set Boundaries:** As dedicated professionals, it's easy to blur the lines between work and personal life. Set boundaries by establishing designated times for work and self-care and honor those boundaries to prevent burnout.
- **Connect with Nature:** Spend time outdoors, whether it's taking a walk in the park during your lunch break or simply stepping outside to feel the sun on your face. Connecting with nature can provide a sense of grounding and rejuvenation.
- **Engage in Mindful Activities:** Find activities that bring you joy and peace, whether it's gardening, painting, or practicing yoga. Engaging in mindful activities can help you recharge and replenish your energy.

As we navigate through the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the realm of financial aid, let's remember to prioritize our own well-being. By incorporating moments of mindfulness into our daily lives, we can cultivate resilience, enhance our effectiveness as professionals, and ultimately better serve the students and families who rely on us.

In the words of Jon Kabat-Zinn, "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf." Let's embrace the waves of change with balance, presence, and a moment of mindfulness.

Wishing you all moments of peace and tranquility.

FAA Spotlight

Spotlight: Joyous Chambers



What's your title, and describe your role and responsibilities at your institution?

Title: Financial Aid Counselor

My role and responsibilities here at Lincoln University are:

- External scholarships
- Financial Aid Workshops
- Counseling and advising students and parents on the Financial Aid process.
- Helping students complete FAFSA.
- Determine eligibility of Federal Student Aid for individual programs and post awards to student's accounts.

How long have you worked at your institution?

I have been with Lincoln University for seven years and in the financial aid office for three years.

What has your career path been like?

I started with state after graduation and was there for about six years until I transitioned into higher education. I started in Residential Life as a room assignment coordinator after the covid outbreak I was placed in financial aid. From there it grew on me and my interest in the matter ran wild. Financial aid has been a very enjoyable journey thus far and I would love to end my career in this department 30 years from now.

Tell us about your financial aid team at your institution.

My financial aid team is wonderful!! There is a wealth of knowledge within our office. We have a team of nine in our office and four that deal solely with financial aid. Within our office we have a financial aid counselor with over 30 years of experience, our past financial aid Director with over 35 years of experience that works part time and our financial aid Director with 20 years of experience within this field.

Do you have any mentors in your professional life?

Yes. In this field I have been blessed to be mentored by our past Director Mr. Alfred Robinson and one of our counselors Mr. Jerry Westbrooks. Also, within the past two years under the MASFAP conference I had the wonderful opportunity to be matched with Keri Gilbert as a mentor and become apart the 2024 Leadership Development Program (LDP).

What have been your biggest accomplishments on your team?

Running the work study program and successfully managing the student workers and the budget correctly each year. Also, I feel my biggest accomplishment is when students and/or parents thank me for being very helpful in getting them through the financial aid process.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your family.

My name is Joyous Chambers I am originally from Los Angeles, California moved to Jefferson City to attend Lincoln University. I have since graduated from LU twice with a BS degree in CIS and with Master's in Higher Education. I have been married to my wonderful husband Gerald Chambers for

FAA Spotlight, Continued

four years and we have a beautiful and very energetic two-year-old daughter named Kori. Free time I don't know what that is anymore...LOL!!

What do you like to do in your free time?

In my free time I love to be outside making new memories with my family.

What is the last good movie or Netflix series you watched?

The last good movie I saw was Bob Marley: One Love

What kind of music do you listen to and what's the best concert you've been to?

I like to listen to all types of music from R&B, 90's Hip-Hop, Country and Gospel. But my favorite would have to be music from the 90's and 00's. The best concert that I have been to has to be The Queen B herself Beyonce however, I am super excited about my upcoming Usher concert in October.

Do you like traveling?

YES!!!! I am looking forward to my Alaska trip this September.

Tell us a fun fact or something few people know about you:

I love to line dance.



Updates from MDHEWD

Submitted by: Paula Clay, MDHEWD

Access Missouri Deadlines

The Department has extended the final Access Missouri Deadline for the 2024-2025 academic year to June 1, 2024. Eligible students who completed a FAFSA by the April 1 priority deadline will be guaranteed to receive the Access Missouri grant, though the final award amount will not be determined until later this year. Eligible students who complete the FAFSA after the priority deadline but before the June 1 final deadline may receive an Access Missouri award, subject to available funding and based on the FAFSA completion date. Students who file by the final deadlines will have until July 31 to make any needed FAFSA correction.

State Student Financial Aid Committee (SSFAC)

Additionally, MDHEWD plans on reconvening the State Student Financial Aid Committee (SSFAC) during the summer of 2024, which will be comprised of representatives from each of Missouri's postsecondary sectors. Since its inception in 2004 (as the State Aid Program Improvement Team), the SSFAC has participated in FAMOUS redesigns, administrative rule creation, a comprehensive review of state aid programs, and numerous other issues affecting state aid. The Department hopes that the SSFAC will serve as a forum to discuss institutional concerns and trends regarding state aid, assess changing needs of students to ensure effective aid programs, improve administrative efficiency, and strengthen partnerships with participating institutions, community partners, and legislators.

FY 2025 Budget Bill

At this time, the current FY 2025 budget bill maintains current funding levels for most of the state financial aid programs. The one exception is the Wartime Veterans Survivor's Grant, which has a proposed increase of \$170,000.

Journey to College Day

Time to [register](#) for Journey to College Day July 23, 2024.

FAFSA Help

Students can make an [appointment](#) for FAFSA help with our Outreach Coordinators through the Summer.

Adult Learning Strategic Framework:

Please take the time to read our Adult Learner Strategic plan: <https://dhewd.mo.gov/initiatives/documents/adult-learner-strategic-plan.pdf>.



Best Advice for Those New to Financial Aid?

Read! Read everything and ask questions of those who have been in financial aid longer than you have.

Marla Fernandez, Truman State University

Be flexible and be curious! You're never done learning in financial aid, as we've all seen this year. Stay updated on changing policies and don't be afraid to ask questions!

Ethan Miller, Southeast Missouri State University

When things get tough, and you feel bogged down by regulations and requirements, don't forget how important this work is—how impactful you are to a student and their life trajectory. Keep at it!

Keri Gilbert, Stephens College

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Find your BrainTrust circle to help you through the rough times. Be involved in MASFAP!! And remember that what we do is so important, but remind yourself it is not life and death.

Janice Barnes, SLU

I have several go-to phrases that my staff have really grabbed onto over the years as Kimisms 😊

'Everything is fixable. Doesn't mean it is not painful to get through, but it is fixable. Mistakes happen and we learn from them.'

I heard this from my brother once and it stuck with me. Not sure who the original quote came from. 'Comfort Zones are Expandable!' Branch out and learn about R2T4 even if you hear it is awful 😊! Continue to expand your FA knowledge outside of the area you are responsible for. You never know when your team might need help in that area.

And give yourself a break! Financial Aid is hard and not intuitive. It takes a good year to feel and learn all the seasons of FA.

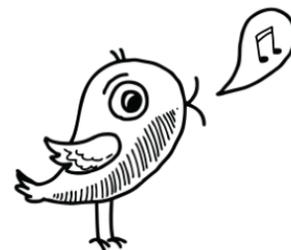
Kim Cary, OTC

What helps me is to bookmark all my resources that I use on the web and always ask questions if unsure. The FSA training site is also a great resource to use.

Jeana Sanders, Three Rivers College

The cliché answer is get involved, it's the easiest way to turn this into a career and find your people who can help you along the way. But another recommendation is to remember why we do this... even in the hard times; remember that the work you do is helping individuals achieve a dream that they maybe didn't think was possible. We are creating generational change through the work we do and that should always be something you are proud of!

Matthew Kearney, Southeast Missouri State University



Runnnnn!! Just joking. This field sometimes can feel like we are on an emotional rollercoaster. However, I have found there are way more goods than bads. And we should all remember, we are truly making a difference as we are helping so many students achieve their dreams.

Alexandria Miller, Missouri Scholarship & Loan Foundation

FAA Spotlight



Spotlight: Alex Delonis

What's your title, and describe your role and responsibilities at your institution?

I am the Assistant Vice President for Student Financial Services at Saint Louis University. I oversee both the financial aid and student accounts teams. I'm responsible for ensuring the efficient delivery of financial services to our students while upholding federal, state, and institutional policies and standards.

How long have you worked at your institution?

I have worked for SLU for just about 2 months. Let's just say I still use my GPS to get to and from work. Before joining SLU, I served as the Associate Dean for Enrollment Management & Director of Financial Aid at Wabash College for the last 5 years.

What has your career path been like?

I started my career in financial aid as a student employee. I thought I wanted to go into law enforcement, but I had so much fun doing verification that I figured I should make a career out of it. I started my first full-time job in financial aid before I finished my undergraduate degree at the age of 21. It has been a magical journey since then!

Tell us about your financial aid team at your institution.

Our Student Financial Services team at SLU is exceptional. They're hardworking, innovative, and dedicated to supporting our students. When I first joined SLU, the team went above and beyond to help me settle in, organizing various activities to help me get acquainted with both the team and the city. Their support during my transition was invaluable. I'm looking forward to all the great things we will accomplish together.

Do you have any mentors in your professional life?

I have had some of the best mentors during my career. This includes, but not limited to: Heidi Carl (Purdue University), Craig Slaughter (Kenyon College), Chip Timmons (Wabash College), Chad Olson (Iowa State), Helen Faith (Wisconsin-Madison), Angela Karlin (Kansas University), and Marvin Smith (UCLA). These folks and more have helped guide me through association leadership, job changes, and have ultimately helped me grow personally and professionally.

What have been your biggest accomplishments on your team?

Surviving the challenges of FAFSA Simplification has been a major focus since I arrived at SLU. Despite the complexities, our team remains dedicated to supporting student success while managing the myriad responsibilities that come our way. And just supporting each other through all the change that has happened over the last few years.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your family.

I have a wonderfully supportive wife and a 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son. Every day is an adventure. Since moving to St. Louis, we have already visited numerous parks, the zoo, The Magic House, the Butterfly House, and



FAA Spotlight, Continued

Ollies Outlet store. For some reason my family really enjoys that store.

What do you like to do in your free time?

When I'm not unpacking or entertaining my children, I enjoy playing disc golf and video games with friends. But mostly I enjoy spending time with the people I care about.

What is the last good movie or Netflix series you watched?

I have been a lifelong Grey's Anatomy fan. At this point I just have to know how it ends. The newest show I've picked up on Netflix has been Suits. I just have a couple seasons left. Makes me feel like I would have been a great lawyer had R2T4's not stolen my heart.

What kind of music do you listen to and what's the best concert you've been to?

I listen to a little bit of everything. I'm a documented Swifty. The best concert I've attended had to be sitting in the front row to see Darius Rucker. I'm also glued to the ongoing rap soap opera beef between Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, and Drake.

Do you like traveling?

I enjoy traveling, but traveling with young children is tough! We haven't done too much over the last few years but hope to pick things back up once my son becomes a civilized human being.

Tell us a fun fact or something few people know about you:

This is a tough question! I wrestled in college but avoided getting cauliflower ear. I have never had a cavity despite having a below average dental hygiene routine. And I can't eat any white condiments...that includes mayo, miracle whip, sour cream, cream cheese, horseradish, tartar sauce, or anything else that might be disguised as mayonnaise.



Next MASFAP Newsletter Mid-July



The Missouri Association of Student Financial Aid Personnel (MASFAP) is a dynamic association dedicated to serving and advocating for practitioners, users and providers of student financial aid programs.

Monitor Submission Policy

Articles may be submitted by any person, company or organization for consideration by the MASFAP Monitor staff and are subject to approval prior to publishing in the newsletter. In general, submissions are made by members of the organization. The author's name should be included in the submission. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit the content of any article or information submitted.

Articles will be edited for accuracy, quality and appropriate length. Submissions may be limited to one article per Monitor, per person, company, or organization, depending on space.

Articles are intended to be informational and for the benefit of MASFAP members, not for company promotion or advertising.

If the author is unavailable or a resolution can't be reached, the editor will refer it to the committee chairperson and President for a decision about publication.

The MASFAP Monitor is brought to you by the Communications Committee.

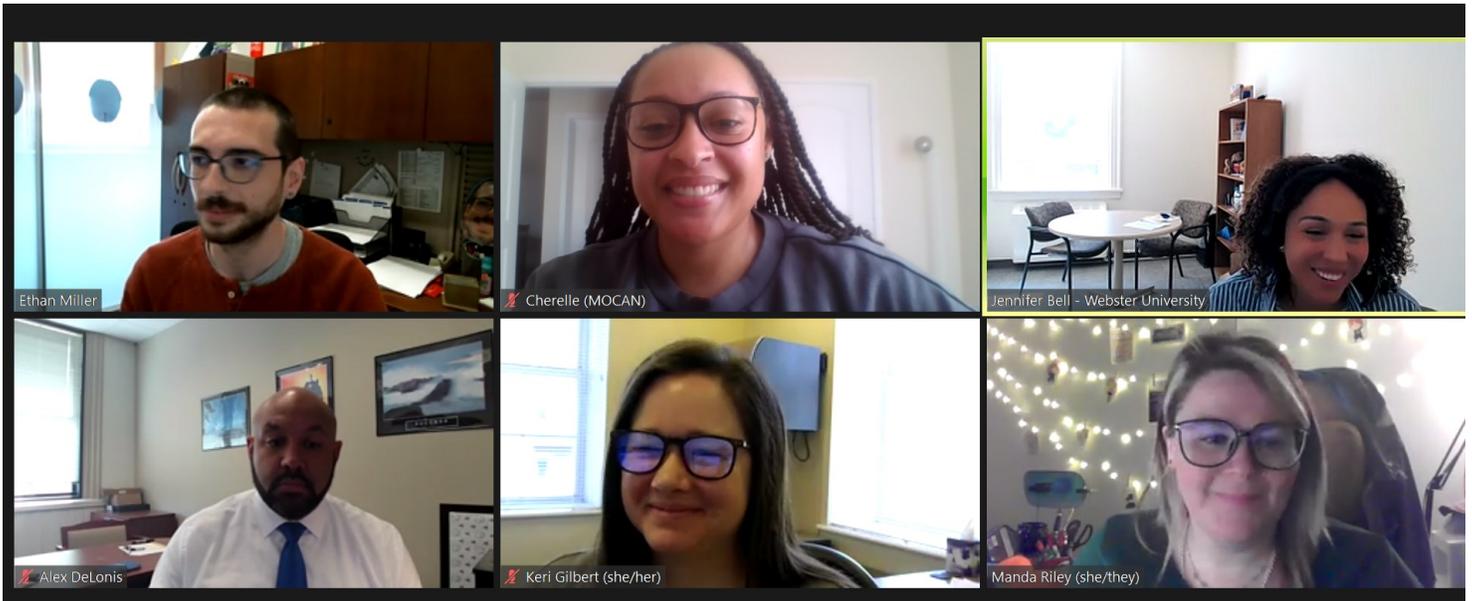
Submissions for the next MASFAP Monitor are due July 10, 2024.

SUBMIT



Your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Co-Chairs Jennifer Bell and Ethan Miller — Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee held its first meeting in April, marking a pivotal moment in MASFAP’s commitment to fostering a more inclusive environment. In our first meeting, passionate members gathered to initiate vital discussions and lay the groundwork for transformative projects.

The meeting was abuzz with energy and enthusiasm as committee members delved into a plethora of ideas aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within our community. Among the key topics of discussion were innovative projects slated to shape our journey towards a more equitable future.

One standout initiative on the agenda is the creation of a member pulse survey, designed to gauge the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion within MASFAP. By soliciting feedback directly from our community, we aim to identify areas of improvement and tailor our efforts to address specific needs.

Furthermore, the committee outlined plans to provide professional development opportunities focused on diversity and inclusion. These initiatives will empower members with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster a more inclusive culture, both within our organization and beyond.

In addition to these projects, the committee is also spearheading the development of a MASFAP diversity statement—a powerful declaration of MASFAP’s commitment to championing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all facets of our work.

As we embark on this journey, we invite all members to join us in our efforts to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. Together, we can effect meaningful change and cultivate a community where every voice is valued and heard.

Stay tuned for updates on our progress and upcoming initiatives as we work together to build a brighter, more inclusive future for all!

2024 Executive Board / Committee Chairs



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Disclaimer:

MASFAP, the Executive Board and Executive Committee are not responsible for the accuracy of any information contained in this newsletter as an authority, but rather its use as a guide. Further, the opinions expressed by the contributors are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official opinion of MASFAP, the Executive Board or the Committees.

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