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## Editor's Column

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## Editor's Column

In late July, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators wrapped up its National Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference program included the types of sessions you would expect for higher education professionals working in an environment where technology and policies are fast changing, with topics ranging from federal guidance on providing consumer information to privacy and data protection. A clear technocratic undercurrent ran through this year's conference. Yet, interest sessions and hallway discussions also touched on topics such as promoting financial literacy, student advising, student retention, communicating with students, and leadership, to name a few. The event reminded me of the very fundamental role that financial aid administrators play as educators and advocates.

The coming year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of two important moments for financial aid and higher education generally: the enactment of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and—not coincidentally—the founding of NASFAA less than a year later in 1966. Following the growth in federal student aid ushered in by the HEA, NASFAA was born from the need for financial aid professionals to speak with a single voice on Capitol Hill when advocating for the best interests of their students and institutions. For a half century, NASFAA's primary goal has been eliminating financial barriers to higher education and “opening doors of educational opportunity.” With the upcoming reauthorization of the HEA and college affordability increasingly in question for our nation's lowest income students, this advocacy is perhaps more important now than ever.

In this context, the *Journal of Student Financial Aid* will devote its next issue (Volume 45, No. 3) to reflection, examination, and discussion of the upcoming HEA reauthorization and what it means for students and financial aid administration. Guest edited by Dr. Laura Perna, the issue will feature work by a combination of researchers, policy experts, and practitioners, providing diverse perspectives on issues that have been of fundamental concern to NASFAA and financial aid practitioners for decades.

In the current issue (Volume 45, No. 2), our authors likewise provide research to help illuminate complex and fundamental issues in student aid. Their studies tackle ongoing questions about the effectiveness of merit aid in modifying student behavior, non-borrower perceptions of student loans, and so-called crises in higher education.

Jacob Gross  
Editor