



**Thomas Vo**  
**Director Financial Aid**  
**State College of Florida**  
**Manatee-Sarasota**  
**Candidate for FASFAA President-Elect**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to run for Florida Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (FASFAA) President-Elect. It truly is an honor to give back to an organization that provides support to our industry, our students, our institutions and our careers within the State of Florida.

My career in Financial Aid spans over 20 years. It began in 1996 in the state of Pennsylvania, working in the Loan Origination Department for Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency/AES where I held several positions during my 7 years of employment.

Wanting to broaden my experience in all aspects of financial aid, I was hired as Campus Manager of Financial Aid for Harrisburg Area Community College, Gettysburg. During my years in financial aid in Pennsylvania, I played an active role volunteering for Pennsylvania Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (PASFAA).

Not one to shy away from challenging opportunities and increased responsibilities, I became Manager Student Accounts for The Scholar Ship, an international start up study abroad program sponsored by University of California- Berkeley and Royal Caribbean International Cruises. My responsibilities included building the students accounts and financial aid department from scratch which required creating policies and procedures for both offices while implementing the ERP system.

Wanting to advance my career further, I served as Vice President Client Services for ProEducation Solutions (Sarasota-based Financial Aid consulting firm) where I managed their communications division. I also provided interim staffing throughout the country in such roles as Chief Compliance Officer for Houston Community College and Financial Aid Director for the following institutions: University of District of Columbia (UDC), South Texas College of Law in Houston, Texas, Palm Beach State College, and State College of Florida Manatee-Sarasota.

I have extensive experience within the Florida College system. As Vice President with ProEducation Solutions, I worked closely with several Florida client schools. Among them are

St. Petersburg College, Broward College, and Florida State College at Jacksonville. Most recently, I have served as Director Financial Aid for Palm Beach State College from 2012 through 2015. In November, 2015, I was honored to accept the position of Director Financial Aid for State College of Florida Manatee-Sarasota where I held the duties on an interim basis in 2010.

I have been very active with FASFAA and currently serve on the Executive Board in the role as 2015 Annual Conference Co-Chair. I have served as presenter and moderator at last year's FASFAA Conference, hosted and assisted College Goal Sunday at various sites throughout Florida and have presented at the FASFAA Region IV workshop. I was a financial aid mentor in the inaugural FASFAA Leadership program started last year by Past President Stephanie Lawrence.

I am passionate about our industry and am equally passionate about volunteerism. I consider myself to be high energy and have much gratitude to our Executive Board members for allowing me many opportunities to volunteer for service and leadership with FASFAA. I admit, while volunteering and giving much to our organization, I received much more in return through learning, leadership, friendship and a continued passion for what we do. It is this passion and gratitude that has led me to seek the position of President-Elect.

I consider myself a "collaborative leader." I believe in order for organizations to succeed, it must foster an environment that allows input from all individuals. A leader must ensure that member concerns are not only welcomed but solicited in order to make key decisions. We are a strong organization, in fact "over 700 STRONG" represented by various sectors of the financial aid community, including postsecondary institutions in Florida, lending institutions, state governmental agencies, loan servicing agencies, and other organizations that support financial aid administration. The different experience and perspective that our members possess should be leveraged and embraced to provide support to our institutions and ensure the future success of our organization. Throughout my career in Financial Aid, I've met many professionals in our field and had rewarding conversations with them. The common theme I take from these conversations is that "We all stumble into the field, it was never planned." "We are passionate about Financial Aid!" "We are concerned about the ever changing regulations putting greater responsibility, greater workload, greater stress and above all else greater liability on us."

We are not without challenges – challenges that if elected President, I will embrace and seek to change into opportunities. Passion for the profession is waning, seasoned staff is retiring, and we need to energize the desire to serve in our Association. I firmly believe in our mentorship program. I am deeply concerned about the current landscape of our industry. I've witnessed failed searches for executive level positions due to limited qualified applicant pool. I've witnessed Directors fail in positions because they lack the knowledge or skills to succeed or are not given the necessary support. New leaders must be mentored and developed because our future success depends on it.

I am pained when I see schools assessed liability due to compliance issues. I believe as we continue to deal with the ever changing landscape, we must support one another and leverage our knowledge and expertise through various media. I will work with my full energy and devotion to create such opportunities for our members to communicate and support one another to overcome these challenges. Together we are "700+ Strong with 1 Unified Voice."

In my personal time I am pursuing a MBA International Business at Florida Atlantic University. I reside in Bradenton, Florida and enjoy running half marathons, kayaking, and spoiling my 3 adorable nieces Alyssa 12, twins Madison 9 and McKenna 9.