



FSA *Now*

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

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Management Council Retreat

FSA's Management Council attended a two-day retreat in Lansdowne, Virginia on April 2-3. The meeting offered managers an opportunity to become better acquainted and to review the upcoming FSA leadership-excellence training program.

The retreat began with introductions and a welcome from FSA COO Terri Shaw. With the help of facilitators from the Public Strategies group, the Management Council shared experiences and engaged in exercises to identify individual strengths and build team chemistry.

On day two of the retreat, managers reviewed the new leadership-excellence training program. The goal of the program is to define FSA leader-

ship excellence and its importance in helping the organization reach its performance goals and objectives. The key theme of the training is collaboration to achieve results. The Management Council, "acting collaboratively," worked on several pending issues. FSA University plans to roll out the same leadership training program to all FSA managers beginning in May and continuing through June.

When asked to describe their experience with one word, participants said the retreat was "worthwhile," "helpful," "hopeful," and "successful." Terri Shaw commented that she found the retreat to be a critical, forward-moving exercise for her team.



The Management Council: **Back Row** (l-r): Calvin Thomas, Tom Pestka, Jennifer Douglas, Victoria Bateman, Terri Shaw, John Fare, Deborah Price. **Middle Row** (l-r): Kay Jacks, Marianna O'Brien, Jerry Schubert, Kristie Hansen. **Front Row**: Debra Wiley, Jeff Baker.

FSA Business Integration Group

The Business Integration Group (BIG) is an organization-wide forum that facilitates communication between business and systems initiatives to ensure appropriate dependencies and sequencing for our modernization efforts. Recently formalized by the management council, BIG assures that independent projects develop in accord with one another through consultation and collaboration.

In July 2002, Kay Jacks established BIG. The group was formed to address FSA's strategic plan for modernization and systems integration efforts. Before, no forum existed to discuss the integration of initiatives. However, now they are considered on a cross-functional level. With the advent of BIG, staff members from all different areas within FSA are represented at the table to assure consensus in the development process.

As the organization became more established, the role of the group expanded. Jeanne Saunders now heads the newly formalized group, meeting twice a week to discuss a variety of organizational business and systems development projects. Group members include program owners, operators, managers, project leaders, executives and technical support.



BIG's success stems from its ability to facilitate communication across functional areas within the FSA business structure. Ultimately, the group aims to further the integration of FSA operations and continue the enterprise-wide modernization process.

The group meets every Tuesday afternoon and Thursday morning. For more information, contact Jeanne Saunders.

Spotlight On....

David Bartnicki



The South Carolina Association of School Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) awarded to FSA employee, **David Bartnicki**, the 2003 **Distinguished Service Award** in recognition of significant contributions to higher education and student financial assistance programs. David joins an elite group of past recipients that include Richard W. Riley, former Secretary, U.S. Department of Education and Dallas Martin, Executive Director, NASFAA. The award was presented to David last week at the SCASFAA Spring Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC. David is the Institutional Improvement Specialist with the Atlanta Case Management Team.



David receives his award at the SCASFAA spring conference. Pictured with David are Keith Reeves, SCASFAA president-elect, and Elizabeth Milam-Lomas, SCASFAA Secretary.

FSA Now

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FSA Now is a monthly newsletter for FSA staff available on FSA.net. To share feedback or contribute ideas, e-mail FSA Communications.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Proposed Reorganization Update

The process to approve FSA's proposed re-organization is entering the final stages. FSA submitted the proposed re-organization plan to the Office of Management for evaluation. From there, it was submitted to the clearance offices for review and comment. FSA HR is now working to address any concerns raised by the clearance offices and anticipates completing this phase of the process by the end of next week. OM must then approve the re-organization before it is forwarded to the union for review.

ED Singers Wanted

Last fall, a group of talented ED employees in Washington, DC, created the U.S. Department of Education Singers. The group performed at the holiday receptions in December, at the All Staff Meeting in January and has plans to perform at upcoming ED events. Additionally, the group rehearses twice a month with selected fifth and sixth graders at Walker Jones Elementary School. The ED Singers are currently seeking additional members. Contact Dawn Hein for more information.

FSA for Counselors Web Site

On March 14, Student Aid Awareness, in partnership with the Schools Channel, launched a new Web site for middle school, sec-

ondary school and TRIO counselors. Formally called FSA for Counselors, the site provides information on student aid and features FSA publications and scripts for financial aid presentations. To view the Web site, go to <http://fsa4schools.ed.gov/counselors>.

FSA Collections/IRS Partnership

The IRS, in preparation for outsourcing the collection of \$200 billion in federal tax debt, has asked FSA Collections to attend a Private Collection Agency "Pre-Bid" Conference. The conference is planned in preparation for future solicitation to initiate third-party collection efforts on outstanding IRS debts. FSA Collections has had several meetings with IRS officials during the past 12 months, and the IRS is using FSA's collection process as their model. Coincidentally, FSA and the IRS are also collaborating to verify FAFSA data from information provided on personal income tax returns.

New Internal Relations Manager

Chris Greene joined FSA Communications on March 17, as the new internal relations manager. Chris comes to FSA from Optimum Public Relations of Falls Church, VA.

Did You Know?

ED will match up to four hours of leave per pay period for employees to volunteer in schools, adult education or youth activities. Employees can volunteer in any type of school or preschool (public, private, faith-based, etc.) or any education or youth-related non-profit or community organization. Approved activities include tutoring, counseling, computer instruction, delivering lectures and vocational training. For more information on the Education Volunteers Initiative, visit <http://connected.ed.gov/invoke.cfm?oid=31ADD9CB-2D27-4F5E-AA2881C6C4206A91&method=displayFull&navID=5F4A71AA-F0E0-488C-BFBDE4D6C952C839>.



My FSA

FSA Now talked to Deborah Price about her new job as chief of staff.

Q: When did you begin working at FSA?

A: I began last month, March 26th.

Q: What have you learned so far?

A: FSA has lots of acronyms. So learning the vocabulary is high on my agenda. Also it really seems there is an element of teamwork here. Each individual sees her or himself as a part of the whole and the sense of transition right now makes everyone want to work to be a part of the team.

Q: Do you have any personal goals you wish to accomplish as chief of staff?

A: My short term goals include getting a grip on understanding how FSA operates and finding out who is responsible for which tasks. This is important because I want to have a positive impact as chief of staff and to do that I must understand the responsibilities of the staff.

Q: Why is this opportunity so important to you?

A: I have been involved in policy issues for the past 18 years. In this position I am dealing with the practical implications of those policy issues. This position provides me with the opportunity to put into place my policy experience from a new perspective. Here, I have the opportunity to see the results of policy and lawmaking.

Q: What does *We Help Put America Through School* mean to you?

A: For those who need financial assistance to reach their dreams of a college education FSA allows them to do so. Students should be encouraged to pursue their dreams, and the lack of finances should never be the stumbling block. This motto shows that FSA is dedicated to helping students reach their dreams. FSA is a great office, and I feel privileged to be here.

Q: Tell us about your immediate family.

A: Lucy, who is part West Highland Terrier and part another cute Terrier, is my baby girl and my best little friend. I got her from a rescue league about five years ago. She is a great companion. My "two legged" family includes my parents who are retired and live in St. Louis, Missouri. They are avid photographers and love to travel and

come to visit often. I also have one brother, Larry, who was a teacher for 27 years. He is also retired, but he missed teaching so much he went back to teaching once the new school year started. While my immediate family is small, my extended family is massive, so I have the best of both worlds.

Q: If you could describe yourself in three words to the FSA staff what words would you choose? Why?

A: Optimistic: I look for the positive in things and believe that the best that can happen is always an option. Committed: When I believe in something, I am dedicated to it. I am dedicated to not giving up on my beliefs. Enjoy life: I enjoy my job and the work I do and I make time to have fun with friends and relax with Lucy. I feel blessed because God has given me a great life.

Q: Tell us about your previous professional experience. How will those experiences assist you in performing your duties at FSA?

A: I began at the Department of Education in June of 2001 and was the Senior Advisor to Deputy Secretary Bill Hansen. In that role I also served as the Executive Director of the Secretary's Commission on Opportunity in Athletics, which looked into Title IX issues as they pertain to athletics. Before coming to the Department of Education, I worked in the United States Senate for just over 16 years. The last 11 years I worked with Sen. Nickles, the Assistant Majority Leader, in his Leadership Office where, among other things, I worked on education issues. Before that, I worked with Sen. Armstrong for six years. Working on the Hill I learned that titles do not matter because we are all staff and we are here to do the very best job for our constituents. I graduated from the University of Missouri with a degree in interior design. Although there is a leap from interior design to education and policy, I believe it grounded me in some essential tools that hold true in any job. Interior design teaches you to be very specific and organized while at the same time being creative. I feel that organizational skills, attention to detail, and performing the very best I can are tools that will assist me in carrying out my duties as chief of staff.