

2026 VASFAA Conference Agenda

Wednesday, June 17, 2026
Saint Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont

Time		Session	Session Description	Presenter
8:00 - 9:00	Registration			
9:00 - 9:15	Opening/Welcome	President's Welcome		Matt Desorgher, VASFAA President
9:15 - 10:15	General Session 1	Student Aid Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act: Key Changes and Impacts	The One Big Beautiful Bill Act introduces sweeping changes to federal student aid programs, impacting everything from Pell Grants and student loans to institutional accountability measures. In this webinar, NASFAA policy experts will break down the bill's key student aid provisions, explain what they mean for institutions and students, and highlight areas requiring further guidance from the Department of Education. The session will also cover any updates to the negotiated rulemaking process concerning the OB3 provisions. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of the legislative changes and anticipated timelines for implementation.	Jill Desjean, NASFAA Director of Policy Analysis
10:15 - 10:30	Break			
10:30 - 11:30	Break out Session 1	Pell Freeze Dates	This session explores Pell Freeze Dates, including why they matter, how they affect student eligibility, how modules impact freeze dates, and what financial aid professionals need to know to support accurate Pell Grant processing.	Joann Larson, VTU
	Break out Session 2	Comparing Financial Aid Awards: Cost Transparency	Families are often presented with financial aid offers that look very different from one institution to another—making true cost comparisons challenging. This session will explore strategies for helping families interpret and compare financial aid awards, understand the true cost of attendance, and make informed enrollment decisions. Participants will also discuss best practices for customer service to clarify the decision-making process.	Matt Desorgher, UVM
11:30 - 12:30	Lunch			
12:30 - 1:00	VASFAA Business Meeting	VASFAA Business Meeting		Matt Desorgher, VASFAA President
1:00 - 1:45	General Session 2	State/Federal Update	This longstanding, cornerstone session at VASFAA conferences provides a timely overview of key developments shaping Vermont's higher education landscape alongside the latest federal higher education legislative activity. The update highlights policy shifts, funding trends, and emerging issues impacting institutions and students. Attendees value this recurring session for its practical insights and reliable perspective on what's ahead at both the state and federal levels.	Scott Giles, VSAC
1:45 - 2:45	Breakout Session 3	So you want to be a Director?	Curious about exploring a director-level role? Join the VASFAA Engagement Committee for a candid panel discussion with experienced directors who will share their career journeys, lessons learned, and practical advice. This session offers insights into leadership readiness, key competencies, and what to expect when moving into a director role. Perfect for those exploring what's next in their professional path!	Presented by VASFAA engagement committee featuring: Marie Johnson (Executive Director, UVM), Tanner Matchus (Associate Director, CCV), and Jeani Stella-Devani (Associate Director, Vermont Law and Graduate School)
	Breakout Session 4	From PLUS to PRIVATE: Navigating Loan Qualifications and Credit	The One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3) is reshaping how students and families pay for college — and for many, it means increased reliance on private education loans. As federal options shift, credit readiness is becoming a critical part of financial aid advising, not an afterthought. In this session, we'll break down how OB3 elevates the importance of credit and why more students will encounter credit-based borrowing earlier and more often. Financial aid administrators will learn how to explain credit reports and scores in plain language, set realistic expectations around eligibility, and — most importantly — give students actionable steps they can take now to improve their credit before applying. Attendees will leave with a clear, repeatable framework they can confidently share with students and families, including simple timelines, real-world examples, and protective strategies like credit freezes. The goal is not just understanding credit, but empowering students to actively improve it in a post-OB3 borrowing landscape.	Jennifer Sommerman, CollegeAve
2:45 - 3:15	Break	Networking Bingo Break	<i>Give your brain a break from the content-heavy sessions with a sweet treat! Join our networking break to connect with business partners and enjoy a fun game of bingo designed to spark conversation and fresh connections.</i>	
3:15 - 4:15	General Session 3	The Green Mountain Gameshow!	Grab your buzzers and get ready to play! Wrap up the conference with a high-energy, interactive gameshow featuring highlights and takeaways from sessions across the day. Join your VASFAA community for friendly competition, shared laughs, and a little learning as we celebrate all we've learned together. This fun, lighthearted finale is the perfect way to cap off the end of our annual get together!	Your Host: Matthew Couture, VTU
4:15 - 4:30	Closing			