

Regional Scholarship Providers Network (RSPN)
Meeting Minutes
July 25, 2023 | 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
SCF Lakewood Ranch

1. Meeting Attendees – There were 29 attendees at the July meeting.

1. Henry (Hank)	Battie	A. Jean Battie Scholarship Fund
2. Susie	Bowie	William G. and Marie Selby Foundation
3. Kay	Carrington	Community Foundation Sarasota County
4. Harriet	Cowan	ASALH
5. Deborah	Chapman	Consultant
6. Matthew	Chernesky	United Way Suncoast
7. Alex	DeMartino	UnidosNow
8. Lynette	Edwards	Delta Sigma Theta
9. Tonya	Eubanks	Arts Advocates
10. Heather	Ferrigno	Education Foundation of Sarasota County
11. Nikki	Francisco	State College of Florida Foundation
12. Lori	Gentile	Women's Resource Center
13. Ben	Jewell-Plocher	Embracing our Differences
14. Caitlin	Joyner	Rotary Futures
15. Ron	Kline	ASALH
16. Andrea	LaChapelle	State College of Florida, Financial Aid
17. Carlos	Moreira	University of South Florida
18. Simone	Peterson	Manatee Community Foundation
19. Theresa	Quinn	Take Stock in Children Manatee
20. Gayle	Ross	Charlotte Community Foundation
21. Dan	Sidler	CareerEdge
22. Brandy	Spencer	USF- Tampa
23. Kathryn	Swisher	USF- Tampa
24. Lori	Tomlinson	State College of Florida Foundation
25. Daniel	Washington	Charlotte Education Foundation
26. Caroline	Wertz	Scheidel Foundation
27. Taylor	Wey	University of South Florida
28. Kiarra	Womack	William G. and Marie Selby Foundation
29. Earl	Young	Take Stock in Children Sarasota

2. Welcome – Susie welcomed the group and thanked SCF, also noting the multi-county representation at the meeting. She reviewed the reasons for the creation of the RSPN emphasizing that the goal is really about building community. The group objectives include *strengthen relationships, improve communications, increase collaboration, share information, and learn and develop together.*

3. **Intro** - Kiarra reviewed the agenda and asked attendees to introduce themselves along with providing a word that describes how they feel about RSPN. Below is a word cloud of the responses.



4. **Scheidel Foundation Guest**- Caroline Wertz, Sr. Director of the Scheidel Foundation, explained that the family foundation focuses on college success for underrepresented populations. They primarily provide grant funding opportunities in Washington DC, Sarasota, and Jacksonville, and support some scholars directly through scholarships at SCF. Funded scholars don't always graduate, so they realized that there are systemic barriers, as well as home and personal issues, that need to be addressed. Caroline's goal is to talk with other scholarship providers to learn more about what others are doing in the space. For example, Jacksonville's state college has 30 to 50 Scheidel scholars with a dedicated education coordinator assisting them on their college journey.
5. **FAFSA Changes:** Andrea LaChapelle, Director of Financial Aid at SCF, provided an overview of the changes coming to the FAFSA. This simplification is the first change since 1965 and was passed with the COVID legislation. The new application will have fewer questions (36 versus 108) and no longer will there be an estimated family contribution (EFC) - now there will be a Student Aid Index (SAI). Pell awards will be driven by the SAI. Most information will be auto populated, pulled from the IRS and other sources. If the student does not have an FSA ID, they cannot submit an electronic application. The SAI will begin at a -1500 as the lowest rating. There will be 4 Pell status levels: maximum, non-max (or middle), minimum, or no Pell. Students and parents must create an FSA ID and they must have an email address. Challenges include that students must create this FSA ID in advance (the ID will clear in 24 to 48 hours); the delay in the release of the new form (which is now anticipated to be December 31) will cause issues for both college admissions and scholarship providers; families with multiple students in college will no longer increase aid (which may be an opportunity for scholarship providers to fill the gap); and the new process penalizes part-time students (such as parents) given award amount significantly decreases for part-time enrollment. However, using 2021/22 data input into the new metrics shows that more people in total will be Pell eligible. Andrea recommends that high schools begin a fall engagement process to help families create FSA IDs, learn about scholarship options, and complete the Florida financial aid and Bright Futures applications. Then they can follow up in January with the FAFSA workshops once the new form is released. Andrea also shared that the actual FAFSA completion rate in Florida is only 17%, which is 48th in the United States, given so many people start the application but do not fully complete it. The new process also requires colleges to put professional judgment at the forefront and take into consideration any changes, such as income and benefit drops for veterans leaving the service. Financial aid officers are empowered to adjust awards based on current status, and no college can have a policy that it won't reevaluate a student's status. Also, Social Security numbers are no longer a block to applying and certain asylum-seekers, such as those from the Ukraine, are eligible but must apply for permanent residency.

6. **Group FAFSA Discussion** - Simone Peterson then facilitated a group discussion about the opportunities these FAFSA changes present. Below is a summary of participant responses.

What are aspirations for students?

- Complete the FAFSA
- Close the gap in post-secondary funding
- Help students/parents understand the changes that are coming in FAFSA
- Help students understand how to complete the form themselves going forward
- Make the new process easy
- Increase parent education
- Help students understand how awards are evaluated
- Relieve student stress
- Help families navigate if more than one student is in college
- Share the student aid reports with the scholarship providers
- Use a more inclusive process

What are you nervous about?

- Competing against other institutions for enrollment given the timing delay.
- Reaching nontraditional students.
- Parents are used to the old FAFSA, so they'll be nervous and anxious about the new one.
- 17% FAFSA completion rate is daunting
- Making sure students feel empowered to complete the FAFSA
- Helping students understand the new language, definitions, and how to communicate this.
- Needing an FSA ID - may result in a lot of paper applications.
- Changing language and aligning scholarships with the new FAFSA.
- Not being able to upload tax information and if the auto populate process produces errors.
- Maintaining a flexible mindset as scholarship providers.
- The impact on part-time students, especially parents.
- Possible technical difficulties, systemwide.
- People being afraid of government intrusion.
- Renewable scholarships and how to get students to complete under this new system.

What are opportunities?

- A collective marketing strategy to encourage FAFSA completion and to show the steps.
- Higher education readiness given there will be more opportunities for touch points.
- The opportunity to talk about Florida financial aid separate from FAFSA.
- Partner with FCAN or a state rep for accurate FAFSA completion rates and advocacy.
- Adapt and make the process more equitable at the scholarship provider level.
- Agree to work together as scholarship providers in communicating opportunities.
- Push out scholarship deadlines.
- Information dissemination to other scholarship staff.
- FAFSA info sharing during college tours in the fall.
- Partner with LCAN volunteers for FAFSA and other financial aid events.
- Evaluate our own practices and consider what 'equitable' looks like.
- Great opportunity to change scholarships not just for one year but to make permanent changes.

60-90 Day success we can achieve together

- Choosing a common deadline for Spring 2024 scholarship applications, later than the traditional dates we have used in past years.
- Distribute information about FAFSA changes and the opportunities to other scholarship administrators in our area.
- Increase our own training and education around FAFSA and its changes before the time arrives to work with students and families.
- Support Local College Access Networks in their post-secondary nights by volunteering.

7. **Results 1st** - Susie closed the meeting by sharing that the Selby Foundation will be introducing Robyn Faucy of Results 1st to lead us through a process that helps individual participants and the group as a whole identify targets, milestones and gains we hope to make as a result of our time in RSPN.

Results 1st will begin with a digital survey and including in-person working sessions with the group. There will be a raffle entry for a special gift card for those who complete the survey.

8. **Closing** – Kiarra thanked everyone for attending and encouraged them to reach out to her directly to offer input on how to make the Network as impactful as possible. The next quarterly meeting will be at the **end of October (24th, 25th or 26th)** and will be scheduled via a Doodle Poll. All are invited!