

NYSFAAA Statement of Principles

Executive Summary/Background

The NYSFAAA community has always had pro-active leadership and as such, the association's president commissioned the *Professional Standards and Ethics Committee*. One of our charges was to refresh the association's statement of principles.

As students and their access to education have always been our top priority, the written history of our own governance, mission statement, constitution and earlier statement of principles still stand as our primary documents. Other than the recognition and support of new state and federal guidance, below is merely an updated re-statement of what we have been practicing for over thirty years.

This Statement of Ethics and Guiding Principles (The Statement) adopted by the NYSFAAA Executive Council expresses our mission and the standards, which pledge that our membership will conduct business in accordance with the highest professional and ethical standards and all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

This Statement reflects the guiding principles by which we operate our organization and conduct our daily business with our members, students, families, lending institutions, guaranty agencies, government authorities, and all other people and entities. These principles apply to all NYSFAAA officers and members. This statement also applies to all activities and special events, which NYSFAAA runs or participates in. Periodic review of our principles reinforces commitment to our values, and helps us focus on the ethical issues we face.

NYSFAAA Mission Statement Adopted February 5, 2007

"NYSFAAA is a charitable, volunteer association of financial aid professionals advocating for, and promoting equal access to post-secondary education for all students. NYSFAAA offers education, professional development, and networking opportunities for its members and for colleagues in related education, business, and governmental profession.

Understanding of Terms

Ethical Behavior

Acting in ways consistent with what society and individuals generally accepts as good values. Ethical behavior tends to be good for business and involves demonstrating respect for key moral principles that include honesty, fairness, equality, dignity, diversity and individual rights.

Professional Behavior

Courtesy and respect for others are fundamental elements of professional behavior. A professional strives to understand the differences among colleagues, provides fair constructive feedback when asked to evaluate others, contributes equitably in group work, and is punctual and avoids disrupting the work environment. Professionals respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy.

Honest Behavior

Honesty refers to a facet of moral character and connotes positive and virtuous attributes such as integrity, truthfulness, straightforwardness, including straightforwardness of conduct, along with the absence of lying, cheating, theft, etc. Honesty also involves being trustworthy, loyal, fair, and sincere.

Section I – Our Principles

The Executive Council has adopted the following statement of NYSFAAA's "Principles".

- 1 NYSFAAA is a charitable association of volunteers that operates and advocates for the long-term benefit of our members and by extension their constituents. Our success depends on earning the respect, trust and confidence of our members, educational institutions, government authorities and the public at large.
- 2 Our officers and members act honestly, professionally and ethically at all times.
- 3 The leaders of NYSFAAA set the tone and example for the membership. We commit to the highest level of integrity, and communicate its importance through example, discussion and training.
- 4 NYSFAAA is a self-supporting entity, declining all contributions from outside sources that would violate, State or Federal laws, jeopardize our tax-exempt status, or would lend itself to the appearance of impropriety
- 5 NYSFAAA does not concern itself with matters outside the scope of its mission and neither endorses or opposes any causes or politics.
- 6 NYSFAAA recognizes and supports the NASFAA Statement of Ethical Principles and the Code of Conduct for Institutional Financial Aid Professionals.
http://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/Statement_of_Ethical_Principles.pdf

- 7 We affirm our principles through our organization's Constitution and other applicable documents (reference it in an appendix for paper version or add link for web version).
- 8 We recognize our responsibility to comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations. We emphasize compliance as a fundamental responsibility of all our members. The Executive Council will establish an oversight committee, as needed, to respond to compliance issues, and respond to problems as they may occur.
- 9 Our guiding principles are not all inclusive, they cannot replace the common sense that each of us must use and apply with respect to ethical issues and handling them promptly. We will act in a manner that is honest and fair and reflects the spirit of our principles.

Section II – Our Goals

The activities toward achieving our goals and functions of NYSFAAA all share the underlying goal of assisting our members within the context of their regular occupational responsibilities to:

- Provide financial access to higher education opportunities to all the people of New York State and/or attending NYS institutions.
- Provide useful, accurate, and timely information to students and families and communities about financing higher education by offering technical assistance, financial counseling, and tailored customer service;
- Encourage early awareness of college aid programs, financing resources, saving opportunities and financial literacy.
- Administer programs and all other aspects of the profession with efficiency, accuracy, ethics, and professional behavior.

Section III – Our Activities toward Achieving our Goals

The goals above will be achieved through a variety of NYSFAAA activities including:

- Representing students and membership in national and statewide discussions that impact Financial Aid.
- Organizing, sponsoring, providing and participating in professional and program administration training and mentoring to our members, and to others.
- Organizing, sponsoring, providing and participating in informational and awareness activities targeted directly to students, prospective students, their families and to the Guidance Counselor communities throughout the state.
- Working actively with industry partners to promote adequate funding, administrative simplicity, equitable program rules, and systematic integrity.
- Providing direct NYSFAAA scholarships to students within New York State and working cooperatively with other scholarship providers and services.

Section IV – Enforcement of the Code

1. Responsibility

- a. NYSFAAA’s Executive Council is responsible for ensuring that our Statement of Ethics and Guiding Principles are enforced.
- b. The President, in consultation with Executive Council will determine if there is an alleged violation to the code (S1.2.). If so:
 - i. Per S1.8 Executive Council will establish an oversight committee to respond to compliance issues
 - ii. That committee will be the reinstated Ethics Committee chaired by the President-Elect or Past President

If the charged person is unable to chair the committee (due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances) then the sitting President will assign a chair subject to approval from Executive Council.
 - iii. The chair will select no less than 4 and no more than 6 current NYSFAAA members who have served at least 4 years on Executive Council

2. Who

- a. Only NYSFAAA members are subject to the Code
- b. A alleged violation is when a law, involving the management of Financial Aid has occurred,
 - i. NYSFAAA does not determine whether the law or regulations have been violated. Those decisions can only be made by the regulatory authorities or courts.
 - ii. Should there be a indictment the of a NYSFAAA member, as above, then the President and Executive Council would start action.

3. Process

- a. The Ethics Committee is created when the President and Executive Council becomes aware of an alleged violation
- b. The committee then monitors the outcome. Should the court determination occur after the 2 years of the President the new President will charge incoming President-Elect to continue as Chair with the authority to change committee members as desired.
 - i. If the regulatory authorities or courts find the member guilty, the committee will discuss and make a recommendation to the President and Council
- c. If the recommendation is to remove membership then the Council will discuss and vote on a motion to terminate membership.

- d. If termination is determined the President will send the member a letter
 - i. The letter will contain
 1. That membership has been terminated
 - a. Membership dues are not refundable
 2. The reason why
 3. That it is appealable
 - a. By writing to the Ethics Committee attention to the chair
 4. Appeals will be discussed the ethics committee
 - a. After discussion The committee will make a recommendation to Executive Council
 - b. After discussion Council will vote on a motion
 - c. The President will send the determination in a letter
 - i. If the decision is to uphold the determination, the person will be advised that their membership has been terminated without appeal. Further appeals will not be considered.
 5. Should the courts turn over the decision the sitting President, by his authority, may reinstate his/her person's membership upon written request.

Appendices:

NYSFAAA Constitution

NASFAA Statement of Ethical Principles and the Code of Conduct for Institutional Financial Aid Professionals