



"Tools for Success" webinars for Assets for Independence grantees:

IDAs for Education: Effective Strategies to Partner with Educational Institutions

Friday, October 19th, 2012
12:30 – 1:30 p.m. PST / 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. EST

Kate Griffin: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's webinar on IDAs for education and effective strategies to partner with educational institutions. We are going to give folks another minute to log on and then we will get started. Thank you for joining us, we are excited to have an interesting discussion on IDAs for education and have a conversation with two speakers situated at educational institutions providing IDAs. We are delighted to have all of you here with us today. This webinar is the latest in an ongoing series of Tools for Success webinars that are designed for AFI grantees and sub-grantees across the country. My name is Kate Griffin and I would like to welcome you to our conversation today.

Before we start today's presentation, I'd like to begin with a few housekeeping items. If you're having trouble dialing in you can listen through your computer using speakers or connecting a headset to your computer.

If you're having technical difficulties such as trouble connecting to the visual portion of the webinar or any other problems, send us an e-mail and we'll send you the PowerPoint file as an attachment so that you can follow along. The e-mail address is tmurphy@cfed.org.

Today's webinar is being recorded, so you will be able to review it on demand after the fact. You will receive a follow up email in a week or two with details on how to access the recording. We will also send a copy of the PowerPoint presentation that is being used today. So you'll have that in hand as well. Our call today will last for one hour.

We have a number of participants registered today, so your phone lines have been muted to ensure sound quality.

At any point during the webinar, if you have questions for our speakers, we encourage you to send questions at any time during this presentation by using the Questions box in your GoToWebinar Control Panel as you see on your screen. We will try to answer as many of your questions as we can during the course of the presentation.

We realize that some of you on this call may not be AFI grantees, so we want to provide you with information about the program. The Assets for Independence Program, or AFI for short, is the largest source of funding for IDA programs nationally.

To learn more about AFI, including how to apply, visit www.idaresources.org

There is also an upcoming orientation webinar that may be of interest to you:

The **Prospective Grantee Webinar: Developing Resources and Partners** will take place on Thursday, October 25th, 2:00 – 2:45 p.m. EDT and, again, you can register at www.idaresources.org.

With that I am going to introduce our speakers for today. We have Janet Riis, from Carroll College, which is a four year college in Montana. She is the head of financial aid there. Carroll College is partnering with Montana Credit Unions for Community Development (MCUCD) to offer educational IDAs. Elizabeth Perry joins us from Mount Hood Community College in Oregon where she is helping to run the IDA program there and she partners with Maggie Reilly at CASA of Oregon to run that program. Maggie is going to do some explaining of that program, as well, in her role as moderator. I'm Kate Griffin and I'm with the AFI Resource Center, a place you can turn to for training and other technical assistance needs for AFI grantees. Before I turn the mike over to Maggie Reilly, I'd like to take a minute here and learn a little bit more about who is on our webinar today. We have had quite a few people log on so we would like to learn who is represented in the group today. So if you could take a minute and indicate in the poll whether you're the staff of a college or university; from a foundation; if you're an IDA practitioner; or if you're from the government or a nonprofit. We would love to know who is on the call so we can tailor our conversation to the audience.

Great. Let's see what we have here. It looks like a great and interesting mix of people represented on the call today. Thank you all for letting us know who is here and what your interest is. I am going to turn it over to Maggie now and she is going to share with us the objectives of the session and get us started. Maggie?

Maggie Reilly: Thanks Kate and welcome everybody to today's webinar. As you can see on the screen, the objectives of the session are to focus on understandings from two different education institutions about how they've brought in individual development accounts and IDA programs into their schools and into the services they offer. Also, it looks like we have a lot of IDA practitioners and nonprofit leadership folks in the room, so an understanding of their insights into how best to partner with educational institutions will help. The perspectives of these two educational institutions will help us as IDA practitioners get a good grasp on finding the right point of entry and finding someone who can champion the program, from someone in financial aid to student services, to someone working with the book store or even the bursar's office. These two speakers will share their direct experiences and their insights and how they got IDAs started at their schools. We will also hear about

how they incorporated IDAs into their work and how they've made IDAs an option for students trying to access college or university or trying to persist and graduate from school.

At CASA of Oregon, we are the administrator of the Matched College Savings Program. It started as the Matched Education Savings Account College Initiative in 2007 and it is an example of how a nonprofit organization, an IDA provider, can partner with education institutions and offer IDAs directly to students. CASA of Oregon started this initiative in 2007, so we've been working for about 5 years directly with GEAR UP high schools and that is the Gaining Early Awareness And Readiness for Undergraduate Programs in high schools and it is a federal program. We also partner with community colleges such as Mount Hood and then colleges and universities in Oregon and Washington. We started by identifying programs with these educational institutions and really got an understanding for where IDAs could compliment and enhance their existing programs. We also looked for existing asset building infrastructure and, by that, I mean perhaps already satisfying financial education components that are currently incorporated into existing curriculums as an example. Programs focused on college access or attainment and then the career path and working with financial aid has also been a key part to the success of our partnerships and it is great that we have Janet on the call to explore that conversation more. We also learned that we needed support from different levels within each educational institution, including at the presidents' or principals' level depending on the type of institution, and again, with financial aid and of course the departments that provide support to students in pursuing higher education. At the current time, we have close to 20 educational institutions that partner with us through the Matched College Savings Program.

In partnering with educational institutions, we have focused our pitch and why they should partner with us in terms of these three key areas you see on the slide. One is the ability to leverage financial resources. So this means, for example, the ability to leverage these financial resources through the Assets for Independence program, through other federal resources and state resources, if they are available. We are fortunate enough in Oregon to have the 75% tax credit for the Oregon IDA initiative. And then foundation resources have also had wide appeal to our partners. One of the first partners was the Oregon Alliance for Independent Colleges and Universities which saw the opportunity to raise funds on behalf of member colleges and, instead of just dispersing straight out scholarships, saw value in a savings scholarship much like why IDAs are popular across the political aisle; they saw value in both the savings and match component and then being able to leverage those resource with ours in support of their institutional goals. This fall, we launched a partnership with the Independent Colleges of Washington member colleges. The alliance and ICW are our partners, not only in fundraising, but also in financial education, outreach and providing support to both of our missions. By partnering with Mount Hood Community Colleges' transition, transiciones and TRIO programs and also with GEAR UP high schools in Oregon, we're building on the next one which is the existing infrastructure and then also leveraging institutional capacity and commitment. These schools have a really strong focus on educational attainment and support and later you'll hear from Elizabeth Perry of Mount Hood Community College who will speak more to the infrastructure of existing programs that have made this partnership successful. Within these partnerships we are also able to

create champions at the student-faculty administrative leadership levels by identifying at each level why IDAs make a difference. This can be from reducing student debt to leveraging funds to the beauty of a public-private partnership if that's something that's important to the president of institutions or foundations or maybe businesses that you're working with in achieving different diversity goals. So really understanding why the college that you want to work with would be interested and what we do with them that's very similar and where we overlap. As you know, IDAs can help colleges and universities, not only help their students but help the institutions themselves by reaching their goals of serving more moderate to low income students, creating a more diverse student body or preparing a more workforce ready graduating class. So really being able to identify what those goals are and where there is overlap has really been very successful for us and so now we will be hearing from Carroll College's Janet Riis. Janet?

Janet Riis: As Kate mentioned, Carroll College is a small, private Catholic college in Helena, Montana and we have an average enrollment of about 1,500 traditional students. The Montana Matched Educational Savings Account, or MESA, program started at Carroll in 2010 as a pilot with the assistance of the Montana Credit Unions for Community Development, or MCUCD, and the Student Assistance Foundation, or SAF. We were first approached by Karen Smith at MCUCD to be one of the two pilot schools in the state for the MESA program through the AFI grant. With our current grant, we are able to serve an average of 7 students a year at an 8 to 1 match which equals \$4,000 per student. Since we are a private undergraduate institution, our tuition is higher, so the \$4,000 definitely makes a difference for students. Students save \$500 and are rewarded with an additional \$4,000. The roles and the champions of the program; when we were first approached by MCUCD, we set up a meeting with our financial aid staff, our development director and our VP of finance. We received enthusiastic buy in from everybody immediately. They loved the idea of this program. The VP of finance agreed to fund the \$10,000 per year investment in institutional funds for the 3 year commitment. Our development director indicated that they could easily find a donor for the remaining years once they had data to show the success of the program. The financial aid office was brought in because students learn valuable financial literacy, they learn to save and the earn dollars for tuition which in turn creates responsible loan borrowers and graduates.

The only extra time commitment by the school is communicating and marketing the program once a quarter via e-mail and flyers and distributing the applications through the office. The staff actually appreciates having the extra financial aid tool available for students who are having difficulty paying the bills. Most of the applicants we've seen begin the program because they had actual one-on-one conversations with our counselors and are made aware of the program because they are having financial difficulty at that time. The business office is also where the program is advertised so they will send students our way if they have someone in need of funding. We have the applications posted on our website and they're also available in the office of financial aid. MCUCD, our partner and main administrator, manages and coordinates and develops the program. They process all of the applications, they communicate the next steps to students and they coordinate the disbursements between the students, the credit union and the school. MCUCD also fields

any technical questions the students have on the qualifications for the program. So, for the technical information, we send that on to MCUCD rather than attempting to answer some of those. Our credit union partners work with the students to ensure savings deposits are made and once the requirements are complete, they work with the student to ensure the appropriate amount is disbursed to pay their bill.

Our second partner, Student Assistance Foundation or SAF, has experience in providing our Montana students with some knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their post-secondary education through student access grants, campus outreach and community outreach and resource allocations. They've been a strong advocate for a Montana student saves project, as well, and have worked closely with the credit union that works in Montana to assist students with saving, budgeting and college preparation. SAF contributes a portion of the match to the two pilot schools. SAF also provides all of the financial literacy counseling which is required by the AFI grant. SAF uses a product that's called Grad Ready which is a modular learning system. The SAF representative assigned to Carroll College works with our students directly, scheduling the counseling sessions and planning. SAF then notifies MCUCD when the requirements by the students are complete.

On to our impact on our students; the impact is evident in their ability to remain enrolled, finish the degree and graduate with a lower loan debt than other students. The MESA program is impacting our first generation students, traditional and non-traditional students. Due to the economic crisis, we were also noticing more students who were experiencing financial difficulties. So this program was a great vehicle to offer to them. While the program is not an immediate funding solution when they are in our offices, they must save \$25 a month for at least 6 months before they can request the disbursements, the students do realize the benefits of the program over a period of time. As they learn to save on a monthly basis they also learn they will be able to budget for the upcoming semester due to their commitment to the program. As many of them discuss their immediate hardships with our financial aid staff, we can generally assist them for a semester while they work at helping themselves prepare for the future semesters through using the MESA program. We've also started communicating the program availability to our GEAR UP high schools in Montana. We send e-mails to the GEAR UP high school counselors and to the students who are prospects of Carroll that are attending those GEAR UP high schools. Paying for private education generally takes multiple avenues to fund. The MESA program is another avenue which can help narrow that gap in funding for our low income students. And with federal budgets being cut for aid and state aid being extremely minimal in Montana, MESA just provides another avenue which is a benefit for our students in Montana.

The lessons learned from Carroll with the program; I mentioned we are a pilot institution so we learned some things going through the initial process and initially we hosted an informational seminar on campus to get the word out but it wasn't well attended even though we sent personal invitations to only those we thought might qualify, so like our Pell grant eligible students or current students. The program really does need to be encouraged by the counselors. The students need to feel that it is worth their time and energy and, while we look at it as a great opportunity, the students need to be counseled to understand the full

benefit of the program. We have one page applications sometimes for scholarships and because they are only 4 or maybe 5 hundred dollars, students won't take the time to complete the application but when you say that the MESA program awards up to \$4,500 that definitely does get their attention, so we have chosen to do the 8 to 1 match with our higher tuition at Carroll. As I stated before, most of the applicants will actually come from one-on-one communications with our counselors. We've noticed that very little is accomplished by email or snail mail but the word is getting out so we hope to see more students take advantage of the program this year. We just pushed out our communication to the current students and GEAR UP students so hopefully they will be able to be in the program long enough to be ready for next fall. Overall the program is a win-win for our students and for Carroll. It was not a difficult decision for us to become a participant and we hope to continue it in the future as well.

Maggie: Thanks Janet. I was actually hoping you could follow up a little bit more on your experience with the financial aid officers and with the financial aid component and help us, as practitioners, understand a little bit more about maybe some key communication points that we should know about or understand about financial aid and communicating about IDAs with financial aid officers. Would you be able to comment on that?

Janet: As far as the account, the asset, it is not included on the federal FASFA forms, which is the application for federal student aid. The IDA is a protected asset so the amount is not reported when they complete their application for federal student aid. It is counted as a resource so when they take a disbursement, they withdraw some of the MESA funds and it becomes a disbursement to their student account. We do count that as a resource of financial aid for that academic year. For most students, it does not impact them, it just goes on top of their normal package for their original financial aid award offer and what many students are able to do is reduce the loan that was originally offered so it does not harm them in any way as far as less gift aid, less work study, less loans unless they want to reduce their loans. This is what it is like in most cases at Carroll. Is that what you were thinking?

Maggie: Yes thank you for clarifying and now we will hear from Elizabeth Perry at Mount Hood Community College.

Elizabeth Perry: Hello, everybody. I am really excited to take part in today's webinar. Mount Hood Community College has been working collaboratively with CASA of Oregon since 2007. Well, the conversations began in 2007 and we actually started working and establishing accounts in 2008. The original motivation for our program to partner with CASA of Oregon to provide IDAs really was very simple. We work with, typically, low income students who are first generation, many of whom are learning English as they come into college. Transition programs were targeted by CASA of Oregon because of support services provided by our programs to our students and the ways those wrap around support systems and curriculum within transition programs could help students to finish school. The program was established and in the first year, I believe, we had approximately 30 students who we recruited and, similar to the experience at Carroll College, for some students it was a matter of hearing about the program and thinking that maybe it sounded too good to be true. What

is really important to keep in mind is the relationships that existed for the transition and transiciones students. Let me explain those two programs because they are programs that work with first generation students. These programs are working with students who are coming from immigrant backgrounds, many of whom have two or three languages in their household and who haven't experienced an education in the United States previously. It works to help students understand the higher education system and helps to provide curriculum and resources within a classroom setting so that students do career exploration and at the end of the six months that they participate in the program they are coming out with an educational plan and career goals having been pretty firmly established.

That program has had some very good results prior to the partnership with CASA. With that partnership, our retention rates have dramatically increased because of the added financial assistance provided through our partnerships and the matched college savings program. We had an 85% retention rate for students who, as I mentioned, are very low income and facing multiple barriers as they come to college. Currently, we are serving 245 students between transitions, transiciones and TRIO programs and the two TRIO programs that are involved in matched college savings programs work, also, collaboratively with transitions so we are essentially providing a network of services to students and matched college savings program was the absolute enhancement that we needed to make sure that students had a financial safety net. In most cases, with the students that I work with, are students who have great motivation to stay in school and they have that hard work ethic to be here but really lack the financial resources so when they are introduced to the program, often they just are amazed that this is available to them and they enthusiastically sign up for it. Here at the college, our students' savings are matched at a 5 to 1 rate by CASA of Oregon and that means that annually students are typically saving \$528 and then they are matched by CASA of Oregon at the rate of 5 to 1 for \$2,640. Over the course of the 3 years, that means that students see that their savings are significant and they are able to save \$9,500 approximately. That means, for some of our students, they have been able to finance most of their education with the matched savings program. Students are also encouraged to apply for scholarships and find other financial resources on campus so that dollar amount is stretched and that results in a great transfer rate for our students.

So what has really been important in this relationship, and I can't stress it enough, is the collaborative nature of the relationship that we enjoy with CASA of Oregon. We've evolved that relationship over the years. It was always a positive relationship, but just like any good relationship, we have had to give and take at different moments and that means that when processes change with CASA of Oregon we have ongoing communications and a relationship that is both trusting. Through research that I did about these kinds of IDAs, I found that one of the key ingredients is having staff both on the higher education side and on the nonprofit side. CASA of Oregon is really being bi-cultural and that means understanding how the systems on either side work. I've been very fortunate in working with Maggie over the years to have a person who really understands and appreciates the opportunities and challenges of working with higher education systems. My background is in nonprofits, that's what I came to understand what they mean by bi-cultural staff on both

sides and that really gives us flexibility and the knowledge base that it takes to be able to maneuver through challenging systems.

In the case of the IDAs here on campus, CASA of Oregon processes our applications but we work collaboratively so often times we have a session where we are basically seeing many students at the same time and the staff is all working together to process applications and CASA determines their eligibility. After that process, then they also do a lot of communication and coordination with us to make sure that those disbursements are getting back to the college. We have, here at the college, been able to recruit students directly from our programs so our students, in order to qualify for a matched college savings program account, have to have been either a graduate of transition, transiciones or one of the TRIO programs on campus. TRIO are federal programs funded by the federal government to help first generation low income students or students who have faced barriers to higher education. Between those programs, those are the students that make up the students of the matched college savings program. We distribute applications to students, we communicate the requirements which are, in our case, requiring students to participate here on campus for the 12 hours of financial literacy training. We provide that financial literacy here on campus. We also do a lot of the coordination internally.

We were able, from the very start, to have meetings that were positive between the business office and financial aid and one of the biggest champions on campus is our financial aid director. She has been incredibly helpful in making sure this program is successful from the financial aid side, making it understandable to all of us in terms of how it can interact successfully with matched college savings program and, as I mentioned before, we also have developed the financial literacy curriculum here on campus and have delivered it in many different formats. That's one of the places I had the greatest learning curve in terms of what the best way is to deliver the curriculum. Students report back what a life changing lesson they learned. It doesn't just change their academic life, it has had a life changing impact on them and as was mentioned before, that debt reduction is a significant benefit of the program here on our campus.

I want to just say that from the students I worked with prior to enrollment, the biggest challenge and the place where I was frustrated often is that students couldn't attend college because of not having the financial resources, so this has been the most positive collaborative relationship in terms of not just the students feeling successful but also our staff feeling like we have a tool. As professional dedicated to student success, it's great to have a tool to offer students where they make a commitment to change their financial future and we have just seen amazing rates of retention, college graduation rates and transfer rates have gone up significantly at our college. I can't stress it enough. As we go on, you'll see a quote from one of the students about what's it has meant for her and her life. The satisfaction of knowing that you have some power over your financial future is also a benefit that I didn't fully understand as much. Recently I've seen students come back and report that financial knowledge is one of the amazing benefits that students continue to stress to me. They come back and tell me about graduating and that they've not only changed their academic life but their family's life. It is amazing, an incredible gift.

This is a student, Margarita, who shared with us what was really a typical story but it was compelling and I felt it was great. She sent us her thoughts about matched college savings so I wanted to share it with the audience. This student had been very hardworking, I met her years ago and when the matched savings college program was available to her she said it was the best thing that has ever happened to her and she is grateful and that's a true message for me is that the work that we do here at the college on behalf of our students is a worthwhile endeavor. The challenges that are encountered are very worth the opportunities that it affords to students. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Maggie: I have a quick follow up question. Liz, you mentioned this idea of give and take and being bi-cultural from a standpoint of understanding the college or university but then from your side understanding the nonprofit and how those function and the importance of that in establishing the relationship. Would you be able to speak to any key areas you think would be important for a nonprofit interested in working with a college to know?

Elizabeth: I noticed in the instapoll the make-up of the audience and I think that's why I decided it was important to highlight that. I came from working for a nonprofit and when I first got into the work that I love here, working with students, I was amazed at how long things take in higher education and for all the people in higher education in the audience, probably people are chuckling. For me, knowing that things are much more fluid in the nonprofit world that when I was being asked for something from CASA of Oregon, I understood that this was the nature of change and that it was much faster than the world I have here. So to be the bridge between those two worlds is really important. Maggie, your understanding of higher education was really helpful and you understood that when things took a while here it was because of the way institutions function. I really credit that understanding in developing our collaborative relationship that has become so positive. That's was an interesting insight that I knew anecdotally. But it was also reflected in the USC research, that functioning relationships are a key ingredient.

Maggie: That was helpful, thanks.

Kate: Great, so we have lots of questions pouring in here so we are excited we have some time to get into it. Let's get at some of the mechanics of how these IDAs work. So Maggie, you have the most breadth of experience, can you grab these ones quick? Number one, do students have to deposit earned income? If so, do you require students to have jobs when they enter the program or do you help them find employment? Second, what happens if a student misses a deposit and, third, can intermittent withdrawals be made to pay tuition bills? So just a couple questions on mechanics.

Maggie: To the earned income question, if you are working with a program under AFI, you do have to have all deposits come from earned income. However, you can enroll people who are eligible for TANF or who receive TANF, as an example, and then help them find a job and have those deposits come from that earned income. With the economy, that might put someone's timeline a little off but most first students have either work study or some kind of

part time job or are working in the informal economy doing lawn mowing, babysitting, what have you, that we can still document through an employer. You do have to have earned income depending on the funding source. In the case of AFI, the deposits do need to come from earned income.

If someone misses a deposit, we send them, and most AFI grantees function the same way, we notify them they've missed a deposit. We send a letter and then track that and work with them to get back on track. In a lot of cases, somebody might have just forgot and then it's an opportunity for us to then set up direct deposit instead. That certainly facilitates the process so they don't forget again. If they do miss more deposits, we allow them to miss three in 6 months. So you have to bat .500 to stay in the IDA program with us. After that, you would be eligible for an early access meaning you may lose your spot in the program if you can't make consecutive deposits moving forward.

The question about intermittent withdrawals is really important. We have an option called "save and spend" and basically it's just that. You save for at least 6 months at enrollment but then you are able to access and set mini goals and access whatever savings and match you've accrued based on that savings. We allow this for every academic term because different programs want to have different availabilities for funds depending on the types of schools we work with. Most of your schools are on quarters or semesters and from the administrative standpoint, it's not that difficult. It makes a lot more sense to have intermittent withdrawals because most students have ongoing financial needs during every academic term instead of just one go all at once, so it does help them budget better and fit as better with their financial aid package.

Kate: Thanks, one last question in that vein. Do students need a social security number?

Maggie: Students need a social security number or an individual tax identification number to open a savings account. So if they don't have a social they can get an individual tax ID number, and you can use it to file taxes and open a bank account.

Kate: Thanks. Janet, we had a couple questions come in about your program. How are you monitoring student outcomes? What's the framework under which Carroll College and the credit union share data and information? And then, while you're talking about your relationship with the credit union, it would be interesting to understand how you identified the credit union or how that match between Carroll College and the credit union was made and what criteria you used to choose the financial institution you wanted to work with.

Janet: The credit union, Montana Credit Unions for Community Development, we have partnered with on presentations and other things in the past so we had a bit of a relationship working with financial literacy with them in the past and they've been to our state conference. So that's where that originated. They also work very closely with the Student Assistance Foundation who partners with the student saves projects and the financial literacy they manage. That's how we became involved with them. There was a credit union that offered to participate in the pilot and that was Rocky Mountain Credit Union in Helena

so there is one working with Carroll College and I'm not positive which credit union it is in Missoula working with the other pilot school. As far as the outcomes and monitoring, the Montana Credit Unions for Community Development are tracking all of that data. We also talk with the students when they complete the program and do more of an informal one-on-one conversation with them to see how they did in the program, what they gained from it, the benefits and what they think would be good to communicate to future students. It is a pilot, we are trying to figure out how we should process everything and market and communicate it in the future. That helps on the school level, monitor that and then the actual outcomes, the data, is processed with the credit unions.

Kate: Thank you. Someone here has commented on two related issues. One is that, the matched rates that we are talking about, 8 to 1 and 5 to 1, are rather generous and so the question arises, is how important do we think that match rate is to recruiting and enrollment and the success of these programs. So Liz and Janet do you want to tackle that?

Elizabeth: Actually, that was a conversation Maggie and I shared when we were first establishing the program because we were looking at how we help students to the ultimate goal of finishing their educational goal and it was a conversation about; do we establish a match of a higher rate in order for us to keep it more feasible for students to go to school? We actually calculated, based on the current tuition, and based on fees and all the educational expenses associated with students that a 5 to 1 match would make it a do-able option for students who were really struggling. That's how we came upon that and I do feel it is an important consideration as you go forward that, particularly if you are trying to lessen the gap and make it possible for students who are struggling that that rate is an important consideration and I would argue that that's about where we've landed based on the reality of it being reasonable for students.

Maggie: The other piece to add to that, that Liz and I talked about, is that if a student is going to school full time and has a work study position at minimum wage up to 10 bucks an hour-ish, what is the cost of attendance? What's the gap in financing? And then, based on those earnings, we get closer to closing that gap. So it really did come down to, at what rate of return do we need to show based on not working full-time and working only partial hours, going to school full time and being able to close that financial gap?

Janet: At Carroll, again, we are a private institution so our tuition is just over \$26,000 so for us the ratio was a discussion piece for sure. It did need to be larger. The University of Montana in Missoula is the other pilot program and their match is lower than ours but they are a public institution so lower tuition, smaller gap. The tuition amount and the gap definitely was the main factor in that. For current students, it may be a little different for our incoming students. Our thought process was that incoming freshmen come in, they can spread that over the four years, about \$1,000 a year or so. Current students, we have junior and seniors running into financial difficulties and just too many loans so this is really helping them. They'll either have \$4,500 for a year or they can divide it, if they are a junior, in their last two years so they can graduate and be able to pay for the last year or two.

Kate: We have a couple of questions that touch on the role of parents or families of these students. Do either of the colleges, do you either engage parents or families in some way shape or form and do you ever have parents that want to participate and, if so, what are the eligibility requirements for those parents?

Elizabeth: I didn't mention this in the original presentation, one thing that is important about the programs we run is that the age range of students I work with is anywhere from 18 to 62, so quite a great age range. Within that, and we've worked with the younger students, we definitely make it a priority specifically because of the cultural component within our program to reach out to the parents to help the parents understand the program and often times, if the students themselves haven't communicated that, I will get a phone call from a parent. We do have session that is a general information session and parents are invited to be a part of that and ask questions. I would say having worked in the Latino community all my life, one of the things I am always mindful about is that you have to educate and go over documents with students to help them understand and in the cases with the parents, help them understand step by step the application process. It is really important to include the parents in these discussions for younger students.

Janet: At Carroll, we haven't had a parent participate on behalf of the student. It has been the students who are the actual participants. We do communicate to families so parents and the students. We e-mail the GEAR UP high school students as they are seniors and are looking at coming to Carroll. We directly communicate to the students but then also, in all of our information programs, when we go out on the road with our admissions group, in our presentations, we go over the MESA program so the families are there for those information nights and then it is also on our new student financial aid page so parents are looking at those scholarship pages as well.

Kate: Thanks. Going back to the match rate question, Maggie, maybe you can fill us in here. Who actually determines the match rate?

Maggie: Technically, the grantee would determine the match rate. Our other IDA program we offer has a 3 to 1 match rate. In designing this new program, we got together with folks like Liz and folks at high schools and colleges we work with to try to understand the gap in funding and then based on a work study, students income what would be a reasonable amount less other expenses she/he would have to contribute. It was a collaborative decision but one that ultimately would be the grantee's decision. Of course, depending on the grant, you can go up to an 8 to 1 match with AFI but, I believe, and you probably would know the figure, I think 2 to 1 match is the sweet spot in terms of having success. People don't save more past that so it was less about incentivizing for people to save and rather for people to close the financial gap.

Kate: Great, thanks. Going back to some of the mechanics. Do any of you have an academic requirement for the program such as a minimum GPA? Or that they must maintain? And, then, when it goes to uses of the funds, can they be used for things like books and laptops

and if so, what documentation is required to make that withdrawal. Liz, could you tackle that first.

Elizabeth: We do not have a certain GPA in order to enter or stay in the program. But one of the important aspects of the program is that we maintain close relationships with our students. As I mentioned, in addition to the matched college savings program, we are encouraging students to apply to scholarships and those have minimum GPAs so it is something we keep an eye on but it is not something that would exit a person from the program. Then, in terms of the expenses, any disbursement of funds from our matched college savings program have to be made to an educational institution for the purposes of the stated academic goal. We require students to be trained on how that disbursement happens. That's one aspect for the educational side, probably if there was one thing I didn't anticipate is what we had to do in terms of gearing up for the infrastructure that would accompany the program. It was really significant for us to take this program as the opportunity for students but on the staffing side that's the place where we have had to grow in creative ways. Our staff hasn't significantly increased but we've had to be creative in how we do all the training, the disbursements and everything related to students. We actually collect students' receipts when they bring back their receipts for the purchase of text books or laptops and there has to be documentation that goes to us. There are several steps involved and, on the student side of it, that means students have to be better at saving receipts and being thoughtful about planning their educational needs. Once they've planned their educational needs and have the timing down, they also have to be thoughtful about bringing the receipts back to the college because everything gets saved in a file that also gets scanned and sent to CASA of Oregon. So there are quite a few steps that have to take place and the student is responsible for producing receipts so that their disbursement went for the educational purpose that was intended.

Kate: Thanks. And do either of you advertise this program to high school students?

Janet: Sure, we advertise it to high school students through our GEAR UP high schools in the state of Montana, to the GEAR UP counselors at the high schools and directly to our Carroll College prospects who are seniors in those high schools. We also have it on our new student financial aid page which is where all of our new freshman prospects go to determine available scholarships.

Elizabeth: One of the key programs that works with matched college savings program is TRIO College First, which is one of the federally funded TRIO programs and I believe throughout the country it might be known as TRIO talent search. That program is housed at local middle schools and high schools with the goal of helping students who are first generation low income to become the first in the family to go to college. We advertise that at local high schools and that the matched savings program is available to them. We are making a direct appeal to the students to learn more about the program and the benefits but also making sure the parents also understand what is being communicated to their child. That is something we actively do with the work we do with TRIO College First on high school campuses.

Kate: Maggie, I know you partner with a lot of different types of educational institutions. Can trade schools accept IDA funds or, in other words, what other types of educational institutions can use IDA funds?

Maggie: Trade schools and vocational school are great partners especially if they have a strong workforce development component. Again, if you're an AFI grantee, they need to be accredited by the US Department of Education. The US Department of Education has a very useful search mechanism on their website where you can look up the institution, which includes vocational and technical schools, to ensure their accreditation.

Kate: I want to say a great big thank you to Maggie, Liz and Janet for joining us today. You can see their contact info on the screen now. If you have questions for them, you can contact them directly. For general questions on AFI, please visit the AFI Resource Center at www.idaresources.org. Before we close out today, and I hope you can all go out to a lovely fall afternoon, we do want to ask you to respond to the evaluation question to let us know how we did and how we can strengthen future webinars. Thanks again everyone for your participation today.