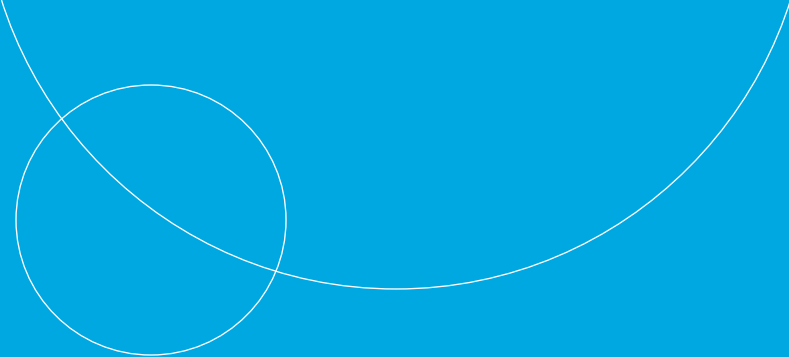




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**Let's get together, yeah, yeah, yeah.**



**How 'bout admissions and financial aid communications combine?**

Greer Davis – Associate Director, Strategic Communications, Admissions & Recruitment  
Karla Weber Wandel – Communications Manager, Student Financial Aid

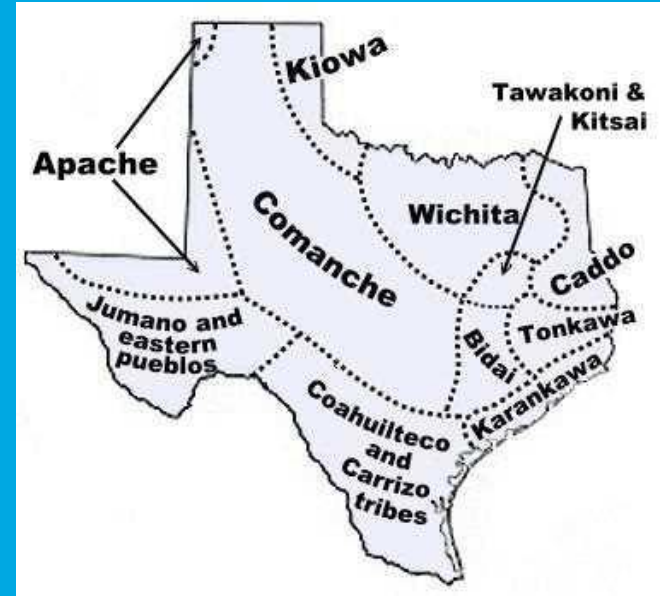
# Indigenous Land & Water Acknowledgement

[native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca)

The Caddo, Jumanos, Wichita, Kiikaapoi, and Tawakoni have called this region home for time immemorial, as well as others that roamed through like the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache. This land and the nearby waters nourish, heal, protect and embrace them, today and for many generations before, in a relationship of balance and harmony.

Although mostly visitors here, we could not gather for this event had it not been for state and federally sponsored settler colonialism that dispossessed and displaced American Indian nations and communities across Texas and the U.S.

With a spirit of humility and openness, take a moment to visit [Native-Land.ca](http://Native-Land.ca) to locate your own community and the Native Land your home or institution resides and to learn more about building relationships as a reflection of Indigenous rights and cultural equity.



# A Quick Public Service Announcement

We are fully and unwaveringly committed to this bit.



The title didn't make you sing?

Not a fan of The Parent Trap?



There may be references you find odd, that we'll lean far too deep into, and may go over your head.



We're making it fun for all of us.

But you can still learn from what we will share today!

# You'll learn...

1. Why you should listen to us.
2. A brilliant, beyond brilliant plan.
3. How to do the same.
4. The steps to make it happen.



**Why Listen to Us?**

# Greer Davis

## SME – All Things Admissions & Recruitment

- Twin
- Divorced parents
- Over a decade of directing admissions communications
- 15 years higher ed marketing
- 9 years directing undergraduate centralized CRM comms
- Segmentation and targeting marketing in a centralized model



# Karla Weber Wandel

## SME – All Things Financial Aid

- Cousin often confused as twin.
- Camp Webb, Wautoma, WI
  - Born into a Camp Director family, first two summers.
  - Attended a week each summer as a camper.
  - Had the LIT and Kitchen Staff experience as a teen.
- UW's Financial Aid since August 2007.

Advisor/Front Desk Supervisor > Communications Manager

- Research affiliate with the Center for Higher Education Linguistics and Translation (CHELT)



# Some Context.

## Organizational Structure and the like...

- Both Office of Admissions and Recruitment and Office of Student Financial Aid live in the Division of Enrollment Management along with the Registrar's Office – each office has their own comms person or team, all different structures
- Decentralized communications and marketing model for the university
- This work is not done by central marketing and communications – totally on us
- All prospective and admitted undergraduate communications are centralized through admissions and CRM
- Salesforce CRM (2018) and Eloqua Marketing Automation (2016)



# **A Brilliant, Beyond Brilliant Idea...**





**It's been a tough year...**

*I'm sorry, I can't handle this.*

**I Have a Brilliant Beyond Brilliant Idea**





**Let's Get Together...**

# Who Are We Talking To?

- Applicants
- Admits
- Parents/families/supporters of applicants and admits
- High school counselors
- Advisors at two-year colleges
- CBO Partners

# What We Did

- Segmented email communications
  - Taking the information from existing communications and rewriting them to work for each audience
  - Using available information to create communications for our audiences and vet those through OSFA to make sure content and details were correct and used acceptable language
- Social media
  - Targeting campaigns based on what students and families could and should be doing
  - Sharing across channels
- Deadline extensions
  - Detailed communications about the extensions to all audiences

# What Are We Talking About?

## Sept – Nov 2023

- FAFSA® will not be available October 1. Rather sometime in December.
- No December 1 Priority Deadline.
- Our Better FAFSA webpage.
- Emphasize FSA ID creation (new for those without SSN).

## December 2023

- More emphasis on FSA ID creation.
- FAFSA® will open by December 31, 2023.
- Soft launch with possible challenges.
- Ways to get FAFSA® Support
- Later financial aid offers.

# December/January- FAFSA is Coming!?

## December 19 – Counselors and Advisors

- "Rumor has it the FAFSA will open December 31"
- Communicate before the break
- Acknowledge the break and timing issues
- What to tell them to do
- What resources exist for them and for their students and families
- Expectation setting
- **Promise to keep informed**



**Rumor has it... FAFSA available by December 31st**

Hello Kara,

As you may have already heard, Federal Student Aid (FSA) recently updated their messaging to say the 2024–25 FAFSA® will open by December 31, 2023. While this does mean it could open to students and families any time between then and now, we think it's safe to assume it will open on the 31st.

We realize the timing for this isn't ideal, as you and your students will be on break and our office will be closed from December 22 through January 1. So we wanted to reach out ahead of time with information to prepare you, your students, and their families ahead of the winter break.

- Remind your students and their contributors that setting up their FSA ID is the best thing they can do to be ready to submit as soon as possible.
- Though the FAFSA® is releasing, FSA has cautioned us that it will be a soft launch and to expect possible maintenance pauses, waiting rooms, and other delays through January.
- Students and their families should not feel rushed to complete the FAFSA® immediately during the soft launch. FAFSAs will not be processed and sent to us until later in January, so there is ample time to complete it.
- But with that, please encourage them to work towards completing as soon as they can so they don't face any other delays with getting their financial aid offer.
- If a student isn't sure if they are eligible to submit a FAFSA®, you can refer them [here](#).

Additionally, here are a few ways you and your students and their families can get



# December/January - The FAFSA is LIVE!



## January 2 – Applicant and Prospective Applicant and P/F/S Emails

- It's available
- Soft launch – don't worry about issues
- What to do - submit ASAP
- Resources – we are here for you
- Expectation setting
- **Promise to keep informed**

**The new and improved 2024–25 FAFSA® is now available!**

You can now access and submit the 2024–25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®).

Although the FAFSA® is now available, we've been cautioned that it will be a soft launch and to expect possible maintenance pauses, waiting rooms, and other delays through January.

As a result, it's important that you and your family do not feel rushed to complete the FAFSA® immediately during the soft launch or worry if you have issues that delay your submission. FAFSAs will not be processed and sent to us until later in January, so there is plenty of time to complete it.

With that said, you should still work toward completing your FAFSA® as soon as you are able so you don't face any other delays with getting your financial aid offer for the 2024–25 school year.

### Ways to get help completing the FAFSA®:

- [College Goal Wisconsin](#) – A free statewide program, with both in person and virtual events.
- Check with your school's counseling office for any local FAFSA® events or support.
- Call 608-262-3060 or [email us](#) with specific questions or situations.

If your family has experienced significant changes in income or has expenses that are not reflected on your FAFSA®, [read more about how you can let us know!](#)

Due to the later FAFSA® release, we also expect that financial aid offers will go out later than usual. Please know that we're working as quickly as we can, and admitted students will get an email as soon as their financial aid offer is available. Make sure you have set up your wisc.edu email account and check it regularly — that's where our communications will be sent.

# December/January - The FAFSA is LIVE-flawed

## January 16 – Counselors and Advisors

- It's available...but
- Now open "24/7"
- Continued difficulties
- What [issues] our financial aid office is seeing
- How to get help and support
- **Promise to keep informed**

The 2024-25  
FAFSA is now...

**OPEN**

Supporting  
Future Badgers

**The 2024-25 FAFSA® is here and *mostly* working**

Hello Greer,

Although its availability was rocky this past week, Federal Student Aid (FSA) has confirmed that the 2024-25 FAFSA® is now available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

However, that doesn't mean the soft launch is over, or that some students aren't still having difficulties.

Additionally, we still haven't gotten a definitive date as to when schools will begin receiving students' FAFSA® data, so we're still unable to estimate when financial aid offers will begin going out.

Here are just a few things our team has noted:

- Overall, more students than not have been able to complete their 2024-25 FAFSA®. This is reassuring, so continue to encourage your students to at least try.
- Students and contributors cannot yet make corrections. We're told access to make corrections will be available after the soft launch, so likely later this month or early in February. In some cases, if the FAFSA® hasn't been processed, it may be easier to delete it and start over than wait for corrections to be available.
- Although parents without a social security number can now create their FSA ID, a known issue is stopping them from contributing to the FAFSA® itself. There is currently no work around, and we're waiting for further guidance from FSA.
- Many have expressed concerns about the estimated Student Aid Index (SAI)

# What Are We Talking About?

## January 2024

- FAFSA® is available but expect delays and issues.
- No corrections.
- New issues for those without SSNs
- Concerns with SAI accuracy.
- Get FAFSA® Support

## February 2024

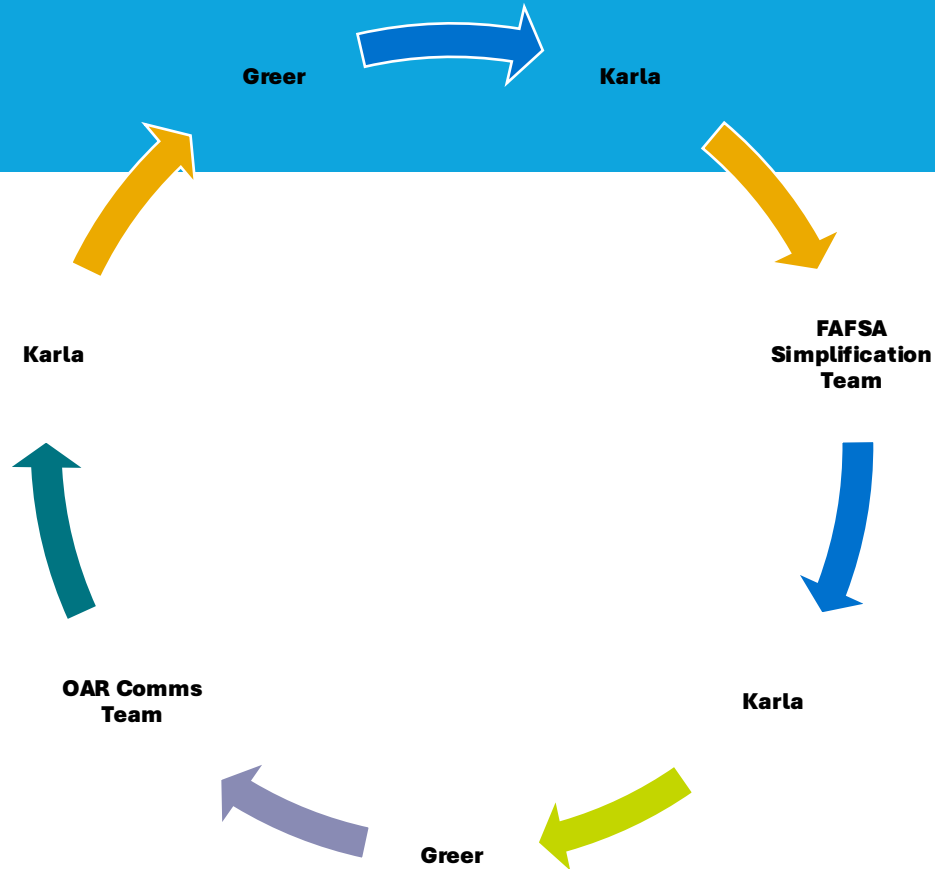
- FAFSA® data will not be received until mid- to late-March.
- No timeline estimate for aid offers.
- Extended enrollment and housing despot deadline to May 15.
- Emphasize FAFSA® completion now that most technical kinks worked out.

## April - May 2024

- Getting FAFSAs®, but major data issues.
- Timeline estimates for financial aid offers to begin sending.
- Continued data issues and challenges for those without SSN, new correction issues.
- Low FAFSA #s. Need FAFSA by July for August disbursement!

# How We Did It

- Checked our pride at the door
- Go back and forth and back and forth to get it right
- Involve others when needed, but avoid "camels"
- Focused on serving our audiences - above all
  - Make it make sense for them – clear, easy
  - Anticipate concerns and questions
  - Don't leave them hanging
  - Be a resource regardless...





*Happily ever after.*

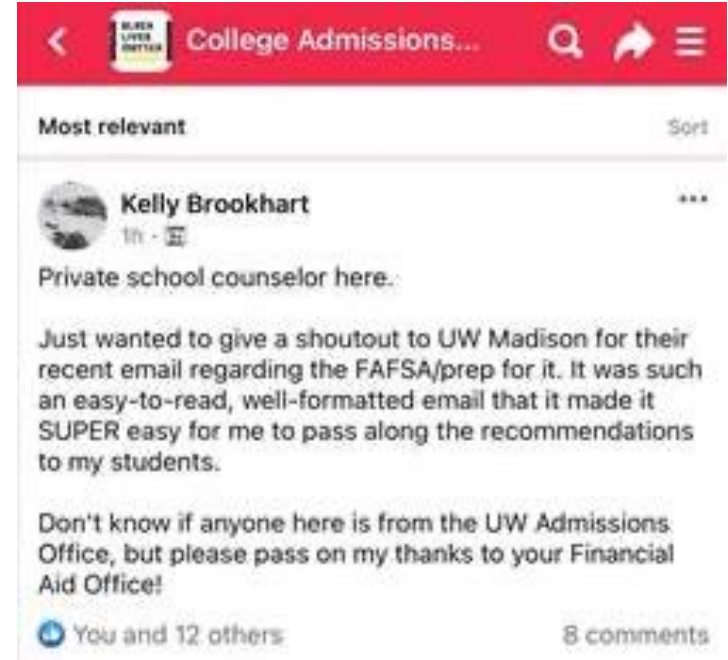


**We Nailed it.**

# We Nailed It

## Our Audiences Really Like What We Did... (We got mom and dad back together)

- Our Stakeholders were informed
- They felt kept in the loop and appreciated the constant updates
- Appreciate the approach – we made sure it was as easy to read and understand as possible and noted what it meant for them either as the student, the parent/family/supporter, and as a counselor/advisor
- People wanted to copy us...



### Bravo, UW–Madison for letting go of their December 1 Priority FAFSA filing date!

5 [User] wrote on 09-28 03:22 PM ET

While other colleges may have done this or thought about, UW-Madison is the first college to email me and make the announcement that they are not going to stick to their typical FAFSA filing date. What a relief for families, and what a help to counselors! I hope that other colleges will follow... [more](#)

**Now It's Your Turn!**





**Know Your Goal**



**Fixing? Improving? Both?**





# **Know Your Strengths & Weaknesses**

# Based on Your Goal: What do you Bring? What Do you Lack?

## Greer

- Know the audience and their needs and concerns
- Access to the audiences and ability to reach them
- Expertise in messaging to each group
- Familiarity – but just enough to be dangerous

**I needed Karla's expertise and up-to date knowledge of all things FAFSA**

## Karla

- Financial Aid and FAFSA expertise.
- Have the plan/accessible language knowledge to answer questions and communicate specifically about financial aid and its processes, clearly and simply.
- Access and connection to "real-time" information as it becomes available.

**I needed Greer's access to and knowledge about prospective students and their supports, from families to high school counselors and other college access folks.**



**Know Your People**

## Find Your Allies





**Identify Barriers**

# How To Find Your People (as a Communicator)

- Understand what is important to your audience
- Learn you can be well informed and still not know everything
- Take part in communities of practice and committees
- Start with the comms people and ask them make introductions
- Scratch (their back) first

# How To Find Your People (as a SME)

- Take a critical eye to your subject
  - Who would be interested in it
  - What about it would be interesting to certain audiences
- Be open to talking about things in a different way – expertise and accessibility shouldn't mutually exclusive
- Take part in communities of practice and committees
- Start with your peers and other SMEs and ask them make introductions to their communication people/ask them how they get their message out
- Ask for help and put yourself out there
- Be willing to try something outside of your comfort zone





**Know Your Audience**

# **Menti.com**

# **Code**



**Know Your Stuff**

# **Menti.com**

# **Code**



**Now...make it happen...**

## Create a Plan





**Keep Communications  
Open and Honest**

**Find Efficiencies**

**DID YOU KNOW THE CONCORDE GETS  
YOU THERE IN HALF THE TIME?**





**Own What You Don't Know**

**Don't Be a Meredith...**





**Greer Davis**

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Communications  
Office of Admissions & Recruitment  
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# Questions?



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