

INFORMATION
February 20, 2026

HIGHER EDUCATIONAL AIDS BOARD

BOARD REPORT #26-13

WASFAA concerns regarding the financial management of HEAB programs



Tammie DeVooght-Blaney
Executive Secretary of Higher Education Aids Board
Robert Bode
Chair of Higher Education Aids Board
Post Office Box 7885
Madison, WI 53707-7885

November 21, 2025

Dear Secretary DeVooght-Blaney and Chair Person Bode,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (WASFAA), we write to further our partnership with Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB) and our shared mission of helping Wisconsin students access and complete a high-quality education. Our members work closely with HEAB every day to administer critical state-funded financial aid programs, and we desire a continued collaboration.

WASFAA is a nonprofit professional association comprised of more than 300 financial aid and student service professionals at 85 public and private colleges and universities across Wisconsin, collectively serving 451,991 students. As front-line administrators of federal, state, and institutional aid programs, our members work closely with Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) and share a deep commitment to supporting equitable access to higher education for Wisconsin students. According to the February 28, 2025 HEAB Board Report #25-14, \$199,636,703 in Wisconsin Grant funds alone were committed to students across all four sectors in Wisconsin: the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Technical College System, private non-profit institutions, and tribal colleges, underscoring the scale and impact of our shared work.

We value this partnership and the hard work of HEAB's dedicated staff. However, with rapid changes to regulations and the implementation of a new system, we are concerned about the operational challenges affecting the timely and accurate delivery of state aid to students. Limited resources, system delays, and inconsistent guidance have created significant challenges for both institutions and the students we jointly serve.

Most importantly, and of great concern to our members, these issues have led to financial uncertainty for students who rely on state aid to cover tuition, housing, books, and basic needs. When funding is waitlisted, delayed, or unclear, students encounter avoidable barriers to enrollment, persistence, and degree completion. Recognizing that timely and transparent information is essential, the U.S. Department of Education revised its processing system - shifting the tax year used and adjusting the application release date - to ensure students could understand their financial aid earlier. In the same way, it is imperative that our state aid board take comparable action to provide students with early, reliable information about their awards, so they can plan responsibly and pursue their education without unnecessary obstacles.

Recognizing that HEAB's staff are managing considerable responsibilities under resource constraints, WASFAA believes there is great opportunity for us to work together proactively

toward solutions that improve the efficiency and student impact of state aid programs. To that end, we respectfully recommend that HEAB:

- **Develop sector-specific best practices for fund management**, including the implementation of an individual aggregated cap on student awards.
- **Engage the HEAB Executive Board** to provide recommendations for improved business practices.
- **Develop a strategic improvement plan** that outlines clear priorities, milestones, and regular progress updates shared transparently with institutions.
- **Provide regular, coordinated updates and written guidance** shared consistently with all institutions.
- **Offer continued opportunities for stakeholder involvement** through listening sessions or focus groups.
- **Prioritize joint advocacy for increased state investment in HEAB's capacity**, ensuring the agency is fully equipped to administer aid efficiently and equitably.

By working together, we can reduce barriers for students, improve confidence in state systems, and ensure our shared mission is fulfilled. WASFAA is committed to partnering with HEAB to support this important work and stands ready to engage in solution-focused dialogue.

Thank you for your continued leadership and partnership on behalf of Wisconsin students. We welcome an opportunity to meet within the coming weeks to discuss shared goals and next steps. Please reach out to Triena Bodart to schedule a time to discuss our next steps.

Sincerely,

WASFAA Executive Board:

Triena Bodart, President

Katy Weisenburger, Past-President

Ben Wilkes, President-Elect

Wendy Leach, Treasurer

Terry Klein, Past-Treasurer

Carole Ann Johnson, Treasurer-Elect

Casey Lehmann, Secretary

Elizabeth Bloedow, Member at Large

Heidi Schissler, Member at Large

Joe Kauffman, Member at Large

Stephanie Ryan, Member at Large

Matt Lehmann, Associate Member Representative



State of Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board

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Tammie DeVooght Blaney
Executive Secretary

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January 9, 2026

Dear President Bodart,

Thank you for sharing your letter and for outlining the perspectives and experiences of WASFAA's membership. I appreciate the commitment your association brings to supporting students across the state and the recognition of the collaborative efforts involved in administering financial aid programs. The points you've raised reflect important considerations, and I value the spirit of partnership conveyed and remain committed to working together to ensure financial aid professionals have the tools and support needed to succeed.

I'd like to highlight the efforts our team has made over the past 12 months to ensure a smooth transition for all financial aid offices while using the new GLASS (Grants, Loans and Scholarship System) System. Previously, HEAB had solicited a group of financial aid officers to work in a test group while the GLASS system was being designed for our state. This fall, the GLASS system went live. Since then, several activities have taken place including:

- Monthly training events offered to all Wisconsin Financial Aid Officers (FAQs)
- One-on-one training sessions have been offered to all colleges.
- Updates shared about the GLASS system at sector group meetings, including UW System and the Wisconsin Technical College System by myself and my team whenever invited.
- Grant specialists respond daily to emails and calls from schools to assist with issues that arise.
- A brainstorming group was created in July 2025 with representatives from all sectors to meet with HEAB at least quarterly for information sharing and problem solving.
- In-house staff debriefs after all group training and evaluation of feedback from FAQs.

HEAB will continue to offer monthly training opportunities throughout the remainder of the 2025-2026 academic year.

Finally, amid the on-going information sharing we have provided Goldbridge, our private contractor who built the system, they suggested a few meetings over the next few months that would be open to a group of FAOs representing all sectors and their team. They would like to offer the FAOs an opportunity to engage with them and address any lingering concerns or suggestions regarding the GLASS system implementation. I would like to invite you to assist us with the invite list for those conversations and welcome your participation also. I will follow up with you regarding this request in a separate communication.

Thank you again for reaching out and for your ongoing dedication to Wisconsin students. I look forward to continuing the conversation and exploring how we might work together to support students and institutions alike.

Tammie DeVooght Blaney
HEAB Executive Secretary

Robert Bode
HEAB Board Chair

Robert Bode
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(612) 501-3189

February 12, 2026

Executive Secretary Tammie DeVooght Blaney
Higher Educational Aids Board
P.O. Box 7885
Madison, WI 53707-7885

Delivered via email

Dear Secretary DeVooght Blaney:

I am following up on our discussion of November 25, 2025. During that telephone call you requested that I obtain more information about the concerns referred to in the letter dated November 21, 2025 which we received from the president of the Wisconsin Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Triena Bodart. Attached as an addendum to this letter is a summary of the concerns expressed to me regarding your agency's management of the financial aid programs which it oversees.

Several financial aid administrators shared concerns regarding the financial management of programs for which your agency is responsible. These financial aid administrators questioned HEAB's ability to accurately forecast grant expenditures before and during the academic year. Inaccurate projections have resulted in delayed awards for eligible students. Furthermore, private non-profit institutions experienced a significant shortfall in expected grant funding during 2024-25, which required private funding to make up the deficit.

Concerns about HEAB's ability to manage program funds continue into this current academic year. On January 30, 2026, HEAB "released" 2,878 students from the Wisconsin Grant waitlist for the Technical Colleges. This is in addition to the 1,767 students "released" in the two weeks prior. It therefore appears that, due to a predicted overcommitment of Wisconsin Grant funds which did not materialize, HEAB withheld Fall semester grants to as many as 4,645 eligible students, which is nearly 25% of the total number of Wisconsin Grant recipients at the Technical College system in 2024-25.

The full Board should be informed of concerns regarding HEAB's financial management of financial aid programs and the efforts of HEAB staff to address these issues. Therefore, for the February 20th, 2026 Board meeting please:

WASFAA concerns regarding HEAB program management, p. 2

1. Add to the agenda under New Business: "WASFAA concerns regarding the financial management of HEAB programs."
2. Include in the meeting materials:
 - a. WASFAA president Bodart's letter of November 21, 2025.
 - b. Your response dated January 9, 2026
 - c. This letter from me dated February 12, 2026, along with the enclosed Addendum.
3. Please prepare to discuss these concerns about the Agency's ability to accurately forecast funding needs and make timely awards to students.

For the February meeting of the Board, I have asked WASFAA President Bodart address the Board on behalf of WASFAA. Board members Sheridan and Lowry will also present their sector's perspective on the WASFAA concerns. Others may share their views as time allows.

As always, I appreciate your willingness to collaborate on solutions for overcoming barriers Wisconsin students face in pursuing their education goals.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Bode". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Bode
2025-26 Chair
Higher Educational Aids Board

I submit this letter in my capacity as member of the Higher Educational Aids Board, appointed by the Governor of Wisconsin. The statements herein do not reflect and do not represent the opinions of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, the UW System or the UW Board of Regents.

Addendum

List of major concerns of WASFAA members regarding HEAB management by category:

Financial Management

- Significant errors in forecasting grant fund expenditures
- Student awards duplicated for attendance at multiple institutions
- System depends on institutions to cancel awards for non-enrollment
- Early waitlisting of students/late release of students from waitlist (delayed awards)
- Confusing institutional grant budget/allocation process
- Some institutions fully funded while others experienced substantial deficits
- Lack of adequate controls places institutions at financial risk
- Refund process is antiquated, restricting institutional ability to reissue funds

Communication

- Staff are slow to respond to urgent inquiries
- Once provided, guidance is inconsistent
- System issues are not shared proactively, only when a question is asked directly
- Error lists to be resolved by institutions contain duplicate entries
- Answers to frequently asked questions are not easily obtainable
- Outdated email lists result in missed communications
- Regulations linked to the website appear to be several years' out of date

Processing

- Requiring paper checks for institutional refunds delays reissuing funds to other eligible students
- Refunds must be received and processed by staff before funds may be reissued to an eligible student on the waitlist
- Subsequent FAFSA corrections may result in awarded student being reset to ineligible/waitlist status