

## FSA Training Conference

### Speaker Bio

Session(s): BO23. Cybersecurity - The Challenges Facing FAAs

## Daniel Commons

*Federal Student Aid Chief Information Security Officer & Director,  
Enterprise Cybersecurity Group*

Dan Commons is the U.S. Department of Education (Department) office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) and director of Enterprise Cybersecurity Group. FSA administers the federal student financial aid programs, which each year provides more than \$120 billion in federal grants, loans, and work-study funds to approximately 10 million students at nearly 6,000 participating schools. In total, FSA manages a federal student loan portfolio valued at \$1.5 trillion representing more than 43 million customers.



Under Mr. Commons' leadership, staff implements the FSA portions of the Department's Federal Information Security Management Act and cybersecurity requirements. Such requirements include developing and maintaining specific information security and privacy services to assure the availability and confidentiality of the FSA portfolio, which contains personally identifiable information. As the FSA CISO, Mr. Commons is responsible for 73 percent of the Department's High Value Assets hosted in multiple FSA-managed data centers, third-party facilities, and Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program cloud facilities. Mr. Commons has initiated a tiger team to review, rewrite, or eliminate 150 process documents and guides that were out of date, redundant, or not required, while fostering a customer-focused, risk-based organization. The tiger team effort reduced the authority to operate processing time from nine months to 52 calendar days.

Mr. Commons has served in a number of leadership roles at FSA, including as the acting director for information assurance services, as well as the chief for cybersecurity operations. Prior to that, he served in senior positions at the Defense Information Systems Agency, ARTEL, and as an active duty member of the U.S. Air Force.

With more than 37 years of federal service and 22 years of information assurance experience, Mr. Commons is recognized as a cybersecurity expert providing a broad-based set of skills encompassing the full spectrum of financial, acquisition, program management, and cybersecurity

technical skills. He was recognized as a 2018 Cybersecurity Leader of the Year by FedScoop and the 2019 Pinnacle Award winner for Cybersecurity Government Executive of the Year. He has received major military awards, such as the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medal, and the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal.

Mr. Commons earned a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University and a master's degree from Northern Montana University.