



LOSFA LOOP

April 2012 Edition

Volume 5-4

From the Desk of the Executive Director

This time every year I usually begin this address by stating how much of a pleasure it was to interact with and address my financial aid colleagues at the Spring LASFAA Conference. The interaction was pleasurable, but the presentation I had to make was not, due to the fact that I had to announce LOSFA's impending layoffs. By now many of you have already heard the news that our agency will be laying off a number of employees effective June 30th. In addition to losing the employees in our loan operations division we're also losing several employees in support areas including the entire Financial Literacy and Development Section formerly known as School and Lender Services. At a time like this, when you're losing approximately one third of your LOSFA family, obviously your first concern is for the well-being of those employees, but secondly you're concerned about making a smooth transition regarding the services that we provide to colleges such as financial literacy and TOPS Retention workshops. We're in the process of reviewing several options for continuing those services. Regardless of how we choose to proceed, we will involve the Advisory Committee and strive to make the transition as seamless as possible. While we will miss our affected employees, we know that their strengths will carry them far in new careers and opportunities and know that you join me in wishing them the best!

April is National Financial Literacy Month, as well as National Poetry Month. It may seem out of place for a financial aid/college access agency to even mention National Poetry Month, but actually it's very appropriate because of our 2nd Annual FLY Tour. Last year we created a traveling stage show that combined poetry, drama and music to teach financial literacy to a high school audience. Last year's show was so well-received that it was presented as the finale for the 2011 National College Access Network (NCAN) Conference in St. Louis, MO. The 2012 FLY Tour will culminate early this month and the video of the show will soon be available for viewing on our Youtube page (<http://www.youtube.com/LOSFA1000>). We feel that the 2012 show is actually superior to last year's show because we placed more of an emphasis on financial literacy as a component of college access. It also deals directly with the student loan crisis and counters those voices who're currently questioning whether or not higher education is still a sound investment. We still believe that it is and will continue to be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access.

--Melanie

In this edition. . .

<i>Changes to TOPS and Go Grant</i>	2
<i>Legislation Update</i>	3
<i>Louisiana Connect Update</i>	4
<i>FLY Tour Returns</i>	6
<i>START Return Rates</i>	7
<i>LASFAA Spring Conference</i>	11

LOSFA Outreach



Britt Kelly, LOSFA Public Information and Communications Representative, spoke to a group of approximately 60 home study students and parents at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette last month.

He talked to the attendees about qualifying for TOPS as a homeschool student, as well as general financial aid.

Important Rule Changes Affecting TOPS and GO Grant

On March 19, 2012, the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission amended Sections 301 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to change the definition of academic year (college) to include summer sessions. Beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year and thereafter, for purposes of fulfilling the 24 hour requirement, the academic year begins with the fall term of the award year and concludes immediately before the next fall term commences. ***All intersessions and summer sessions are included.***

This change applies only to TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Award recipients.

Reminder: The TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards will not pay for college summer school except when:

- ▶ the summer session is required in your degree program for graduation and you enrolled for at least the minimum number of hours required for the degree program, or
- ▶ you can complete your program's graduation requirements in the summer session, or
- ▶ the course(s) taken during the summer session is required for graduation in the program in which you are enrolled and is only offered during the summer session, or
- ▶ the summer session is conducted for a nonacademic program in which you are enrolled, or
- ▶ you have earned at least 60 hours of college credit.

Students who do not meet the above criteria may always attend a summer session at their own expense.

At the same meeting, the Commission approved an administrative rule change regarding the Go Grant eligibility requirement for students 25 years old or older. This rule change deletes the requirement that a student 25 years old or older must have a break in enrollment of at least two semesters to be eligible to receive a Go Grant and has an immediate effective date.

NOTE: An award made for summer school expends one semester or term of TOPS eligibility.

REGULAR SESSION 2012
Legislation That Could Possibly Affect LOSFA
As of March 23, 2012

HOUSE BILLS					
	No.	Author	Subject And Summary	Fiscal Note	Status
1.	HB 275	Schroder	STUDENT/TUITION: Authorizes the public postsecondary education management boards to increase tuition and mandatory fee amounts up to SREB averages in accordance with the Board of Regents Tuition and Financial Aid Policy, subject to legislative approval of such policy, and authorizes uniform imposition of tuition and mandatory fee amounts on a per-credit-hour basis.		Assigned to House Education
2.	HB 294	Harrison	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Establishes a maximum dollar amount of \$1,600 per semester for a TOPS award for the 2013-2014 award year through the 2017-2018 award years.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
3.	HB 299	Harrison	STUDENT/TUITION: (Constitutional Amendment) Provides that the requirement that the imposition of a new fee or increase in an existing fee requires the enactment of a law by a 2/3 vote by the legislature shall not apply to new tuition amounts or mandatory fees or increases of such by a public postsecondary education management board.		Assigned to House & Governmental Affairs
4.	HB 348	Greene	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Provides relative to Taylor Opportunity Program for students awards when insufficient money to fund all eligible students is appropriated. Removes income from the cut criteria and leaves only ACT/SAT scores as the criteria to use to eliminate students because of a funding shortfall.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
5.	HB 435	Lorusso	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Provides scholarship opportunities to certain military veterans. Veterans would be classified residents for tuition purposes if they served on active duty for two years, was honorably discharged and is currently serving in the reserves.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
6.	HB 740	Lebas	STUDENTS: Provides for participation in a dual enrollment program at postsecondary education institutions by certain high school students enrolled in BESE-approved programs. The legislation changes the participation restriction from enrollment in a public high school to enrollment in an educational program approved by BESE and adds a Louisiana residency requirement.		Assigned to House Education
7.	HB 785	Hunter	CURRICULA: Authorizes a high school student to change his program of study and the type of diploma he is pursuing prior to the beginning of the second semester of his senior year under certain circumstances.		Assigned to House Education
8.	HB 841	P. Smith	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Relative to Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, provides for award dollar amounts. The Board of Regents will annually set the TOPS Payment Amount.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
9.	HB 848	Hunter	HIGHER EDUCATION: Authorizes postsecondary education management boards to grant resident status for tuition purposes for distance learning and out-of-state commuters		Assigned to House Education

HOUSE BILLS					
	No.	Author	Subject And Summary	Fiscal Note	Status
10.	HB 926	Simon	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Relative to TOPS, specifies circumstances under which an award applicant's ACT/SAT test score can be submitted to and considered by the program's administering agency after statutorily established submission deadlines.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
11.	HB 945	H Burns	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Extends TOPS eligibility for certain students who reenlist in the U.S. Armed Forces and maintain continuous active duty.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
12.	HB 946	Greene	STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Extends TOPS eligibility for certain students who reenlist in the U.S. Armed Forces and maintain continuous active duty.		Assigned to House Education Scheduled to be Heard 3/28/12
13.	HB 964	Fannin	COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES: Provides for the merger of Louisiana Tech and LSU-Shreveport		Assigned to House Education

SENATE BILLS					
	NO.	AUTHOR	SUBJECT AND SUMMARY	Recommended Position	Status
1.	SB 62	Appel	EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: Re-creates the Department of Education.		Assigned to Senate Education
2.	SB 103	Nevers	POSTSECONDARY ED: Limits the number of hours required to earn a baccalaureate degree.		Assigned to Senate Education Reported favorably 3/21/12
3.	SB 247	Long	POSTSECONDARY ED: Creates the Central La. Technical Community College. The Central Louisiana Technical Community College includes the following LTC campuses: Alexandria, Avoyelles, Huey P. Long, Lamar Salter, Oakdale and Shelby M. Jackson.		Assigned to Senate Education
4.	SB 284	Cortez	COMMUNITY TECH SYSTEM: Merges certain La. Technical College campuses with South Louisiana Community College. Effective July 1, 2012, the Acadian, Charles B. Coreil, Evangeline, Gulf Area, Lafayette, T. H. Harris, and Teche Area campuses of the Louisiana Technical College are merged with South Louisiana Community College.		Assigned to Senate Education
5.	SB 301	Lafleur	POSTSECONDARY ED: Allows postsecondary institutions to carry forward certain funds at the end of a fiscal year under certain conditions.		Assigned to Senate Education
6.	SB 418	Appel	POSTSECONDARY ED: Provides relative to the regional distribution of public postsecondary educational institutions. The Board of Regents would consider whether the merger of two or more existing postsecondary institutions within a region would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of public postsecondary educational services and programs within the region.		Assigned to Senate Education

SENATE BILLS					
	NO.	AUTHOR	SUBJECT AND SUMMARY	Recommended Position	Status
7.	SB 458	Lafleur	TUITION: Provides relative to START education savings accounts and for definitions with respect thereto. Removes the requirement that a postsecondary institution be accredited by the regional accrediting association.		Assigned to Senate Education Reported favorably 3/21/12
8.	SB 527	Walsworth	POSTSECONDARY ED: Provides for the merger of Louisiana Tech and Louisiana State University at Shreveport.		Assigned to Senate Education
9.	SB 579	Adley	TOPS: Extends TOPS eligibility for certain students who reenlist in the United States Armed Forces and maintain continuous active duty.		Assigned to Senate Education



Update

March has been an exciting month for Louisiana Connect. The Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) launched on March 8th, 2012. Now housed in the portal, the IGP allows students and counselors the opportunity to better coordinate success planning! We will keep everyone updated as new features go live in the portal!

Some key facts for Louisiana Connect:

- ▷ Number of student records loaded: 225,000+
- ▷ Nearly 11,000 students have created profiles in the system this year
- ▷ Over 800 counselors have accounts in Louisiana Connect

LOSFA Launches Second Annual “FLY” Tour

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is set to launch its second annual “Financial Literacy for You (FLY) Tour”. The live performance will be presented at select high schools throughout the state over the next two weeks.

“The FLY Tour program is a dynamic theatrical presentation that uses poetry, music and drama to communicate the importance of being financially literate and fiscally responsible,” said LOSFA Assistant Executive Director for College Access and Outreach David Roberts.

The program will deal with everything from credit and money management to financial aid for college and will attempt to impress upon high school students the impact that a variety of financial decisions made early in their lives can have on their long term futures. The production will also highlight a number of the college access, scholarship, and grant programs administered by LOSFA.

“This is a completely new production but follows a very successful format that was introduced last year,” said LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein. “Presenting financial literacy and college access information within a theatrical format resonated well with high school students and teachers last year,” she added, “and we feel confident that we will receive similar responses this year.”

Spring 2012 FLY Tour Schedule

Monday, March 26

9am - Northside High School in Lafayette

1pm - Sam Houston High School in Lake Charles

Tuesday, March 27

9am - Grace King High School in Metairie

1pm - Thibodaux High School

Friday, March 30

9am – Port Allen High School

1pm – East Ascension High School in Gonzales

Saturday, March 31

9am – Southeastern Louisiana University Upward Bound Program in Hammond

Monday, April 2

9am – CE Byrd High School in Shreveport

1pm - Bossier High School

Tuesday, April 3

9am – Carroll High School in Monroe

START SAVING PROGRAM

Funds Managed by The Vanguard Group
Average Annual Returns, Updated Quarterly - As of December 31, 2011

Fund	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	Since Inception	Annual Total Return 2011
Vanguard LifeStrategy Income Portfolio (VASIX) Inception: 09-30-1994	3.77%	8.30%	3.93%	4.74%	6.88%	3.77%
Vanguard LifeStrategy Conservative Growth Portfolio (VSCGX) Inception: 09-30-1994	1.76%	9.80%	2.65%	4.61%	7.06%	1.76%
Vanguard LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Portfolio (VSMGX) Inception: 09-30-1994	0.26%	10.98%	1.53%	4.60%	7.34%	0.26%
Vanguard LifeStrategy Growth Fund (VAGX) Inception: 09-30-1994	-2.28%	12.01%	-0.19%	4.12%	7.26%	-2.28%
Vanguard Total World Stock Index Fund (VTWSX) Inception: 06-26-2008	-7.88%	11.49%	N/A	N/A	-2.09%	-7.88%
Vanguard Total International Stock Index Fund (VTSNX) Inception: 11-29-2010	-14.51%	N/A	N/A	N/A	-7.78%	-14.51%
Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Institutional Shares (VITNX) Inception: 08-31-2001	1.09%	15.17%	0.35%	3.93%	4.03%	1.09%
Vanguard Small-Cap Index Fund Investor Shares (VSIIX) Inception: 12-15-2006	-2.68%	19.26%	1.91%	N/A	1.73%	-2.68%
Vanguard Mid-Cap Index Fund Investor Shares (VMISX) Inception: 03-30-2007	-1.99%	20.02%	N/A	N/A	0.45%	-1.99%
Vanguard Large-Cap Index Fund Investor Shares (VLCGX) Inception: 08-30-2007	1.58%	14.57%	N/A	N/A	-0.83%	1.58%

Louisiana Principal Protection Fund & Earnings Enhancement Fund
Average Annual Returns, Updated Annually - As of December 31, 2011

	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	Since Inception	Annual Total Return 2011
Louisiana Principal Protection Fund Inception: 1997	2.53%	2.81%	3.67%	4.30%	4.93%	2.53%
Earnings Enhancement Fund Inception: 1997	2.47%	2.70%	3.55%	4.35%	4.99%	2.47%



PARENTS – Get involved in your child’s college and career planning!

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is pleased to announce the launch of **Louisiana Connect**, a comprehensive, college & career planning web portal available to all 8th - 12th grade students in the State of Louisiana. As a parent you can create an account to help your student through the process. You will also have access to Louisiana Connect’s full range of college & career exploration tools.

Counselors will be instructing students to activate their accounts in Louisiana Connect, so please encourage your child to get going right away!

Create Your Account Today:

1. Go to <https://louisianaconnect.org/>
2. On the right hand side of the page you will see an area to “Create An Account”
3. Enter the following information:

Student ID (School ID number)

Student’s (your child) First Name

Student’s (your child) Last Name

High School

4. Select “I’m a Parent”

5. Click

Register

6. Complete the profile, Username and Password.

Your Username must be your email address

With Louisiana Connect You Can:

- Track student progress against important college and career planning activities
- Search for colleges, compare costs and make recommendations to students
- Search for scholarships and make recommendations to students
- View your child’s Individual Graduation Plan (IGP)
- View your child’s career plan and explore occupation profiles
- Learn about college costs, need-based aid and other financial options
- Access your personal Communication Center where you can communicate with your child and receive important messages, alerts and event invitations



STUDENTS – Opportunity is Just a Click Away!

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is pleased to announce the launch of **Louisiana Connect**, a comprehensive, college & career planning resource just for you!

Create Your Louisiana Connect Account Today:

1. Go to <https://louisianaconnect.org/>
2. On the right hand side of the page you will see an area to "Create An Account"
3. Enter the following information:

Student ID (School ID number)

Student's First Name

Student's Last Name

High School

4. Select "I'm a Student"

5. Click 

6. Complete the profile information and create a Username and Password.

Your Username must be your email address

With Louisiana Connect You Can:

- Connect with colleges and universities that are a match for you
- Learn about careers and connect with employers
- Find scholarships and other programs designed to help you succeed
- Stay Connected with Your Communication Center
- Access Your Exclusive News Feed and Event Planner
- Build Your Profile. Show Off Your Skills and Achievements
- You Can Afford a College Education...Learn How

Opportunity is Just a Click Away...

Taking the ACT & Applying for TOPS?

Read carefully *before*
completing your
ACT Registration
form!

- TOPS processing cannot begin until LOSFA can match FAFSA data, high school academic data, and ACT score.
- This data is matched by **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER**.
- IF YOU DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER** ON YOUR ACT REGISTRATION, YOUR TOPS PROCESSING **WILL BE DELAYED**.



For more information, contact LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626, Ext. 1012 or custserv@osfa.la.gov.



Amrhein addresses LASFAA Conference

Melanie Amrhein, LOSFA's Executive Director, delivered an update on the state of the agency at the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) Spring Conference on March 8th.

Among the topics covered were the Louisiana Connect Portal progress, the changes to proposed state funding for agency programs, including the elimination of funding for Early Start and the State Matching Funds Grant, and anticipated shortfalls in TOPS.

She also discussed the effects of federal legislation on LOSFA, including the proposed elimination of approximately 60 positions and outsourcing of loan operation functions as of July 1, 2012.

Find us online:



<http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.twitter.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.youtube.com/LOSFA1000>



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA



For more information, contact the
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance:

By Phone: 800-259-5626, Ext. 1012

By E-mail: custserv@osfa.la.gov

By Mail: P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202

Web Address: www.osfa.la.gov

For submissions, opinions or comments for LOSFA LOOP, please
contact David Roberts at droberts@osfa.la.gov.