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LOSFA LOOP

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A Message From the Executive Director



Melanie Amrhein

Welcome to the Dog Days of summer! August just seems to get hotter and hotter and busier and busier! With the successful completion in July of Trailblazers 2012, we are focused on the beginning of a new academic year. Our Trailblazer camps are always exciting because they present another opportunity to train more than 150 students on financial aid with the understanding that they will pass on what they've learned to their peers. Our recent camps were especially important because we surveyed the Trailblazers to find out which features of the Louisiana Connect portal they would want to be able to access in a Louisiana Connect mobile telephone

application. In our continuous effort to maximize the effectiveness of the Louisiana Connect portal we've researched other state portals and learned that a mobile telephone application is an effective way to ensure that students continue to access the portal. So we're in the process of investigating a mobile application that every Louisiana 8th through 12th grade student with a smart phone can use to actively access the portal to facilitate their college access and career aspirations at any time and wherever they are. We'll keep you posted.

August is a critical time for our colleagues in the campus financial aid offices as you work on those last minute financial aid packages, complete loan processing, fee payment and registration. It's also crunch time at LOSFA as we continue to run TOPS eligibility and renewals. To date, over 19,000 new TOPS awards for 2012 graduates have been processed, as well as almost 29,000 renewals. I would also like to remind schools to send summer grade reports as soon as possible as renewal eligibility for students may now depend on hours completed over this term/semester to complete their 24 hour requirement. Don't forget the 2012-13 TOPS Tuition Amounts are posted on our Web site at http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/TOPS_Tuition_Amounts.pdf. Finally, despite changes in our staff which includes the loss of our Financial Literacy and Development Section, we will still be able to provide TOPS Retention seminars for your students. Just contact our Public Information and Communications Division via email at custserv@osfa.la.gov or via telephone at 1-800-259-5626.

Good luck as you begin another new academic year!

Melanie

Trailblazer Camp 2012

Another year of Trailblazer Camps has passed, with more than 150 students from across Louisiana gathering at Northwestern State University and at Nicholls State University to learn about college access, and financial assistance. Two of those campers walked away with \$1,000 scholarships provided by our friends at LELA (Louisiana Education Loan Authority) and all walked away with a deeper knowledge of what it takes to pay for higher education.

The main focus of this year's camps was giving the Trailblazers an opportunity to activate their accounts in the Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning portal and get some hands on experience in using the portal. They were first provided with an overview of the portal's many features by Adanna Ukah from ConnectEdu in Boston. Ms. Ukah then assisted the campers in groups of twenty or less in fully exploring the portal in computer labs.

Campers were also treated to a live performance of our 2012 FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Tour which was extremely well received.

On the final night, each of the eight Trailblazer squads created videos to highlight the benefits of Louisiana Connect account activation. The videos will be available on LOSFA's YouTube page by early September, and

photographs from the camps will be posted on LOSFA's Flickr page with the next two weeks.

The following pages feature photographs of this year's campers.

In their own words, Trailblazers tell what they learned at camp:

"These past few days have been awesome! I wish they would have lasted longer...but now that I know more about TOPS and Louisiana Connect and much more, I can go home and help my fellow classmates throughout their senior year. Thanks for a great Trailblazer Camp experience!"

-Katelyn Thille, Ville Platte High School

"This was an awesome experience! Glad I could spend this time with some awesome people and learn some awesome information!"

-Santannah Gabby Aaron, Bolton High School

"I will remember these two days for my whole life. I had so much fun and learned a lot.... I think I can take the right track for my college now."

-Juan (Lalo) Rubio, Rapides High School

\$1,000.00 LELA Scholarship Winners:

Northwestern:

Luke Williamson, Archbishop Shaw High School

Nicholls:

Katlyn Methvien, Holden High School



Trailblazer Camp 2012 - Northwestern State University



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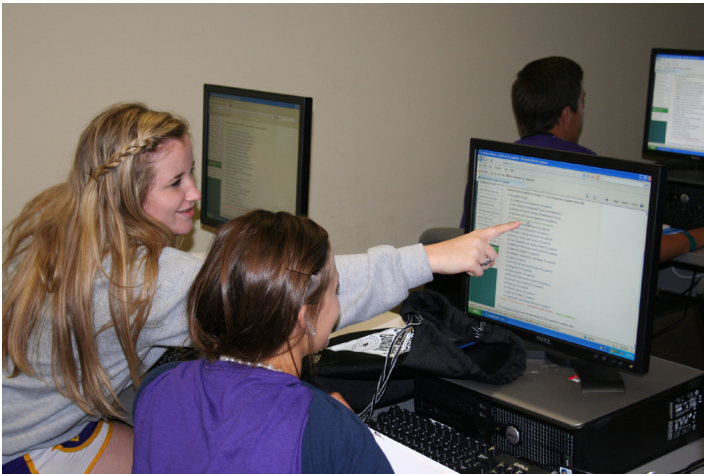
Trailblazer Camp 2012 - Nicholls State University



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Legislative Acts from the 2012 General Session

The Louisiana Legislature passed two TOPS related bills during the 2012 General Session that were signed by the governor. The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) adopted emergency rules regarding these acts at its July meeting.

Act 108 – TOPS: ACT or SAT qualifying score

Effective date: 2011 graduates and beyond

This act allows students to request and receive an exception to the ACT/SAT deadline to earn a qualifying score. Act 108 authorizes LASFAC to accept a first time qualifying score on the ACT/SAT earned no later than September 30 immediately following high school graduation if the Commission grants an exception to the July 1 deadline because it determines that the applicant was prevented from taking the test prior to July 1 of the year of graduation due to circumstances beyond the immediate control of the student AND attributable to the administration of the test. Illnesses, lack of trans-

portation, death in the family, and similar circumstances are not attributable to the administration of the test and will not support an exception. A student's TOPS eligibility is reduced by one semester if his/her first qualifying score on the ACT/SAT is earned after the April national ACT test date.

Act 215 – TOPS: Military Extension

Effective date: From the Beginning of the Program

This act extends the deadline for first-time, full-time enrollment and for earning the minimum cumulative grade point average after TOPS award suspension for certain students who join the United States Armed Forces. Act 215 extends the deadline for enrolling as a first-time, full-time student for students who reenlist during their first enlistment and during any subsequent enlistments to the semester or quarter immediately following the one year anniversary of separation from active duty.



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

By Phone: 800-259-5626

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.