



# LOSFA LOOP

August 2015

Volume 8-8

## From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

“Always seek out the seed of triumph in every adversity.”

*Og Mandino*

Mandino’s words are the creed demonstrated by the 130 college bound students who participated in the White House 2015 Beating the Odds Summit. We are proud to proclaim that Mr. Darius Spurlock, Mr. Oscar McClain and Ms. Timenee Thomas represented LOSFA in The House!!

As part of her Reach Higher initiative, First Lady Michelle Obama welcomed more than 130 college-bound students from across the country to participate in the 2015 Beating the Odds Summit. These students were sponsored by 70 non-profit organizations, representing a mix of urban, rural, foster, homeless, special needs, and under-represented youth who have overcome substantial obstacles to persist through high school and make it to college. The event focused on sharing tools and strategies to successfully transition to college and the resources needed to persist and complete the next level of education.

The day-long event included a panel moderated by E! News host Terrence Jenkins, which featured First Lady Michelle Obama, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, musical artist Wale, and Manuel Contreras, a rising senior at Brown University and co-founder of 1vyG. Additionally, students participated in workshops

and panels led by the U.S. Department of Education, Google’s Jaime Casap, and other leaders in K-12 and post-secondary education.

The students were treated to a concert by Wale AND a surprise appearance by President Barack Obama!! Here’s what our crew had to say about the experience:

“The Beating the Odds Summit gave me an immeasurable amount of determination to achieve my goals and to reach higher for success. During the Summit I was fortunate to meet the First Lady and President of the United States which was a once in a lifetime opportunity. First Lady Michelle Obama was encouraging saying, “If you want to make the most of your potential, then summer can’t just be a vacation. It’s really a time to try to get ahead.” I plan to take her advice and start getting involved in activities that will help promote me in my future endeavors. Summers for the next four years will not just be for vacation, but a time for getting ahead through summer courses, volunteer work or internships.”

– Darius D. Spurlock

“The Beating the Odds Summit was a once in a lifetime opportunity. For me, it meant greatness and pride because my accomplishments were the main factors for me having this wonderful opportunity. It showed me how all of my hard work paid off. On this trip, I learned that I should reach higher towards a post-secondary education because it determines my

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## From the Desk of the Executive Director *(continued)*

future. I also learned that if an African American born in Hawaii by the name of Barack Obama can become president, then there is no telling what I can and can't do. President Obama said so himself. Based on what I learned, I plan on encouraging students coming behind me to strive for a post-secondary education because they are the futures of the world."

– Oscar L. McClain

"I believe the children are our future; teach them well, and let them lead the way."...and I'm sure you know the rest. Words written by Michael Masser and Linda Creed, made popular by George Benson and the late, great Whitney Houston, are still so relevant. That notion was clearly evident through the convening of over 130 college-bound high school graduates from across the country! As with most of my experiences with students, from serving as a summer camp counselor with Louisiana GEAR UP to teaching students about the world of sports, physical activity, and health to forming students to be leaders in their own light, the pleasure in the work comes from watching them grow to be successful, whether it's learning to dribble with their non-dominant hand or reciting a speech in front of a group of their peers. Although the experience was once in a lifetime, (I mean who else gets to see the President and First Lady at the same place in the

same day?!) it meant more to be able to be there with two of Louisiana's most deserving students. I met a young lady who asked me what advice I would give to students like her, first-generation and overcoming obstacles; I told her one of my favorite phrases... "You all have unfinished business; this is only the beginning. There are other students out there, whether peers, near-peers, or younger, who are depending on you to be successful. And you have to be there to pull them up as well." I've found that there is no clear wrong way to go about reaching a student, besides telling them they can't or not helping at all. We have to reach for them where they are to give them the necessary tools for success. The work we do here at LOSFA and all of college access solidified the purpose of this Summit. It was more than just meeting some of the most powerful and influential people in the world; it was developing and building support from those same people who shared similar experiences, and encouraged students to strive for excellence."

– Timenee Thomas

We couldn't be more proud! Keep reading because we've got pictures!!

Best-  
S.



**Darius Spurlock, Timenee Thomas and Oscar McClain attend the Beating The Odds Summit in Washington D.C.**



**More than 130 college bound students attended the summit. The students have overcome substantial obstacles to persist through high school and make it to college.**

# Beating The Odds Summit



## Louisiana Students Attend First Lady's 'Beating the Odds' Summit at the White House

Darius Spurlock and Oscar McClain, both 2015 graduates of Scotlandville Magnet High School, were among the 130 college-bound students from across the nation who were welcomed by First Lady Michelle Obama to participate in the 2015 'Beating the Odds' Summit, as part of her Reach Higher Initiative. Spurlock and McClain both also served as 2014-15 State Officers in the LA GEAR UP program administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA). The students were accompanied to an evening networking reception on July 22 and to the White House Summit on July 23 by LOSFA/LA GEAR UP Program Coordinator Timenee Thomas.

The invitation to the event was secured and accepted through LOSFA's membership with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Students were to be class of 2015 high school graduates with plans of continuing on to post-secondary education who have closely worked with LOSFA. Their educational information and a paragraph describing how they "beat the odds" to realize the success they have achieved were required to supplement the submission for White House approval.

Spurlock submitted the following paragraph: "I have beaten the odds in my life by surpassing norms such as being undereducated and lack of discipline, norms that society has placed on black males specifically. Before I realized my true potential, I made average grades and was not the most disciplined student. My only goal then was to finish high school without any plans for the future. However, through certain teachers taking the time to encourage me and motivation from my family, I found my true potential and realized that I could go further in life with higher education. Because of the time invested in me, I now know that I have the ability to be successful beyond high school. In college, I plan to get involved in various organizations and activities on campus and to shadow a successful individual in my career field of interest. Through this, I can flourish

in higher education by being involved and preparing for my career. There is so much I would like to do with my degree, but the main thing is to give back. I want to play a vital role in helping the youth find their true potential just as I have. Beating the odds is not easy! It takes determination and perseverance from everyone."

McClain submitted the following paragraph: "Throughout my high school years, I have excelled at an innumerable amount of things because I overcame a huge obstacle. During my freshman year, my grandfather passed, and we were very close. He always encouraged me to do great in school because he wanted me to be successful in life. We would always have one-on-one conversations about life in general. More importantly, he would always tell me to stay out of trouble and to surround myself around people that have good leadership potential. It's true. Thinking of him after his death motivated me to become a better person because I knew what he expected of me. Before he died, I was making all A's and B's. After he died, I made straight A's for two consecutive years. I never made a B again until the end of my first semester of my senior year. Using my grandfather's death as motivation resulted in me becoming the Salutatorian of my class, maintaining a 4.47 grade point average. When I go to college, I plan to major in chemical engineering and get involved in many activities to assist me with my studies. My goal is to make all A's throughout college. Once I get my degree, I plan to work at Exxon Mobil to learn how things are polluting the earth and attempt to discover ways to reduce the problem."

The 130 students who attended the Summit were asked to submit a question for a response from the First Lady. Both Spurlock and McClain had their questions selected, but time restraints resulted in only McClain's question being posed to Mrs. Obama.

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## Louisiana Students Attend First Lady's 'Beating the Odds' Summit at the White House *(continued)*

McClain's question was: "What obstacles did you have to overcome in order for you to pursue your education and your career in the law field?"

The First Lady responded, "The first [obstacle] was the people who doubted me. I decided to apply on my own; counselors would tell me, 'You may be reaching too high.'" The First Lady then recalled that upon stepping onto Princeton's campus she was met with comments from people who said that she didn't belong there, that she was an 'affirmative action student'. She went on to say, "I started to realize, 'I can do this'! I'm smart, I can outwork anyone', I had to stop listening to the doubters. You have to start listening to the voice within you."

Among the highlights of the Summit was a surprise appearance by President Obama who told the attendees, "America succeeds only when every young person in America is able to dream big and has the tools to chase their dreams." He went on to say that the intent of the 'Beating the Odds' Summit was to remind students that they can succeed despite the barriers and real issues they are faced with because this is a land of opportunity.

Spurlock plans to attend Louisiana State University this fall while McClain plans to attend Southern University and A&M College. Both plan to major in Chemical Engineering.

## October is Louisiana College Application Month!



ALL Louisiana High Schools can participate this year!

The goals of Louisiana College Application Month are: To ensure that every graduating senior at participating high schools submits at least one admissions application; To promote a college-going culture in schools; To encourage best match and fit for each student.

If your high school would like to participate, please e-mail [ebony.holmes@la.gov](mailto:ebony.holmes@la.gov) for a LCAM Registration form. Forms are due by September 4<sup>th</sup>. Participating schools will be sent Site Coordinator and Volunteer Training manuals that include step-by-step planning timelines for implementing Louisiana College Application Month at your school in October.

**Students complete applications during Louisiana College Application Month in October 2014.**



## Legislature Makes Changes to TOPS Tech Award

The TOPS Tech Award was created with the sole intention of promoting a skilled workforce in Louisiana. Currently, the TOPS Tech Award is offered to qualified high school graduates and provides up to two years of skill or occupational training to be pursued at an accredited Louisiana postsecondary institution that offers a vocational or technical education certificate/diploma.

Students graduating through the 2015-2016 academic year (high school), who are awarded TOPS-Tech may enroll in a Louisiana public community or technical college that offers a Vocational or Technical Education Certificate or Diploma Program or a non-academic undergraduate degree to pursue a skill, occupational training, or technical training (including approved cosmetology and proprietary schools) subsequent to high school graduation.

Due to changes made during the recent legislative session, beginning with students graduating in the 2016-17 academic year, TOPS Tech awards may be used only for certain degrees/certifications and programs that are aligned with the state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.

### For Students Graduating High School in the 2015-2016 Academic Year

The TOPS Tech Award may be used for up to two years of skill or occupational training at any campus of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, accredited two-or-four-year public colleges or universities, or private colleges or universities (members of the Louisiana Association of Independent

Colleges and Universities, LAICU) to pursue a vocational or technical education certificate, diploma or non-academic degree program. Students who are eligible for the TOPS Tech Award may also use their awards at any school with a valid and current certificate of registration issued by the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology and that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United

States Department of Education, and at any proprietary school with a valid and current license issued by the Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education. 2016 High School graduates MAY NOT use the TOPS Tech award at any institution to pursue an academic program or degree.



### For Students Graduating High School in the 2016-2017 Academic Year and Thereafter

Beginning with students graduating from high school in the 2016-17 academic year, the TOPS Tech Award is a workforce scholarship program for Louisiana residents who enroll in an eligible college or university on a full-time basis in an associate's degree or other shorter-term training and education program that is aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.

If the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Commission determine that a program is no longer aligned with those priorities, an otherwise eligible student who had previously received an award and enrolled in that program may continue to use the award.

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## Legislature Makes Changes to TOPS Tech Award

### TOPS TECH CORE CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING IN THE 2015-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR

#### UNITS COURSE

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 | English I, II and III  |
| 1 | English IV, or substitute 1 unit of Business English   |
| 1 | Algebra I, or both Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2 (two units); or both Applied Mathematics I and II (two units)  |
| 2 | Geometry, Applied Mathematics III, Algebra II, Math Essentials, Financial Mathematics, Advanced Math – Pre-Calculus, Advanced Math – Functions and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, or Probability and Statistics (2 units). Integrated Mathematics I, II and III may be substituted for Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, and shall be considered the equivalent of the 3 required math units. |
| 1 | Biology  |
| 2 | Chemistry or Applied Chemistry, Earth Science, Environmental Science, Physical Science, Integrated Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II or Physics for Technology, or Agriscience I and Agriscience II (both for one unit)   |
| 1 | American History   |
| 1 | Civics and Free Enterprise ( <i>one unit combined</i> ) or Civics ( <i>1 unit, non-public</i> )  |
| 1 | World History, Western Civilization, or World Geography  |

**Remaining courses must be selected from one of the two following options:**

#### Option I

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Fine Arts Survey or drafting (one unit) or substitute 2 units of performance courses in music, dance or theatre; or substitute 2 units |
|---|--|

of visual art courses; or substitute 2 units of studio art courses; or a course from the Career and Technical of studies that is approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) (must be listed under the Vocational Education Course Offerings in Bulletin 741 or the updates to Bulletin 741); or substitute 1 unit as an elective from among the other subjects listed in this core curriculum)

2	Foreign Language, Technical Writing, Speech I or Speech II
1	One unit from the secondary computer education program of studies approved by BESE

#### **17 Total Core Curriculum Units**

#### Option II

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | In a career major comprised of a sequence of related specialty courses. In order for a student to use this option, the courses for the career major must be approved by BESE. For a complete list of majors and courses, please go to: <a href="http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/coursechoice/2013-2014-career-and-technical-education-area-of-concentration-guide.pdf?sfvrsn=2">http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/coursechoice/2013-2014-career-and-technical-education-area-of-concentration-guide.pdf?sfvrsn=2</a> |
| 1 | In related or technical fields. A related course includes any course which is listed under the student's major. A technical course is one that is listed in the approved career option plan for the high school at which the course is taken.  |
| 1 | Basic computer course  |

#### **19 Total Core Curriculum Units**

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## Legislature Makes Changes to TOPS Tech Award

**TOPS TECH CORE CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING IN THE 2015-2016 ACADEMIC YEAR AND THEREAFTER**

UNITS   COURSE

- 1     English I
- 1     English II
- 2     English III, English IV, AP or IB English courses, Business English, Technical Writing, or comparable Louisiana Technical College courses offered by Jump Start regional teams as approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- 1     Algebra I; or both Algebra I, Part 1 and Algebra I, Part 2; or an applied or hybrid algebra course
- 3     Geometry, Algebra II, Math Essentials, Financial Literacy, Business Math, Algebra III, Advanced Math -Functions and Statistics, Advanced Math - Pre-Calculus, Pre-calculus, or comparable Louisiana Technical College courses offered by Jump Start regional teams as approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III may be substituted for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, and shall equal three mathematics credits
- 1     Biology

- 1     Chemistry I, Earth Science, Environmental Science, Agriscience I and Agriscience II (both for one unit), Physical Science, or AP or IB science courses
- 1     U.S. History, AP U.S. History, or IB U.S. History
- 1     Civics, Government, AP U.S. Government and Politics: Comparative, or AP U.S. Government and Politics: United States
- 9     In Jump Start course sequences, workplace experiences, and credentials. A student shall complete a regionally designed series of Career and Technical Education Jump Start coursework and workplace-based learning experiences leading to a statewide or regional Jump Start credential. This shall include courses and workplace experiences specific to the credential, courses related to foundational career skills requirements in Jump Start, and other courses, including career electives, that the Jump Start regional team determines are appropriate for the career major.

Students may also qualify for a TOPS Tech Award by completing the high school course work constituting the TOPS core curriculum for the Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards.

### Coming Soon Unlock My Future.org



A New LOSFA College Access Match and Fit Tool!



## Trailblazers Elect Officers, Learn About TOPS and Begin Working on Senior Game Plans and College Kickoff Events

The second round of 2015-16 Trailblazer Leadership Trainings were held on July 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> at Northwestern State University and Southern University A&M College in Baton Rouge respectively.

Trailblazers in the North and South elected three yearly officers each. Those officers are:

Governor – Christian Olivier, Highland Baptist Christian School

Lt. Governor – Azariya McClendon, Ringgold High School

Secretary of State – Elizabeth Guinn, Cedar Creek School

Attorney General – Brianna Dunn, East Feliciana High School

Senate President – Amber Peltier, H. L. Bourgeois High School

Speaker of the House – Brittney Dunn, Pineville High School

During the first round of Trailblazer trainings earlier this summer, each group created a Trailblazer motto. The two mottos were combined and the final result is: “Trust and support as leaders through camaraderie, respect and dedication to provide college access and financial aid information.”

At the July meetings, students were introduced to the major LOSFA activities that will be coming up during the academic year including how to create a College Kickoff event at their school, how to present the Senior Game Plan to their peers, and how their school can participate in College Application Month in October. The highlight of the afternoon session was a comprehensive TOPS seminar for the students and their parents.



## LOSFA's Social Media Sites



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



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



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



<http://instagram.com/LOSFA001>



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

By Phone: 800-259-5626

By E-mail: [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov)

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

Web Address: [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

For submissions, opinions, or comments for the LOSFA LOOP,  
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