

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

“Something cannot emerge from nothing.” Frank Herbert

This quote says it all as we band together to advise families on the steps they need to take to maximize grant and gift aid and minimize loan debt.

February is **Financial Aid Awareness Month**. However, for most of us in the college access field, even though we may host additional events during this time, **every** month is actually financial aid awareness month. As most of you are well aware of there is one important form that unlocks many sources of financial aid for students: the FAFSA.

We encourage parents and students to equate Tax Season with FAFSA season. So our team rolled up their sleeves and put together a slate of events designed to remove the barriers and dread from the FAFSA completion process so that the FUNDS can begin.

- **Free Income Tax Assistance**-We’ve partnered with the JumpStart coalition to identify almost 200 sites for limited to moderate income families to receive income tax assistance. This assistance is provided through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. While we know that a FAFSA may be filed before income taxes are complete, we believe it is advisable not only to complete them but also to ensure that data is imported from the IRS into the FAFSA FORM. As those of us in the college

access field know, importing the data reduces the chance for error as well as being selected for verification, which can slow down the aid award process. Go to www.osfa.la.gov and click on College Goal Sunday to find sites near you.

- **Facebook Chat**-Our staff is staying late to chat with students/families about financial aid and college access questions on **February 10th** from **6-8 p.m.** Last year our social media chats eclipsed our call-in night so this year we went all in to connect with students where they hang out most.
- **Financial Aid and College Access Night**- We’ve partnered with the East Baton Rouge Parish Library to host a Financial Aid Information Night at the Main Library on **February 23rd** from **7:00-9:00 p.m.** Not only is the facility fabulous but even more outstanding is the opportunity to engage with students and families to answer questions about financial aid and provide expert assistance.
- **Phone/Email and Text Support**-For students/families that need to know how to interpret their Student Aid Report (SAR) once they’ve filed the FAFSA or the latest about how to transition from the FAFSA PIN to the FAFSA ID we offer the following: Email us at custserv@la.gov ; sign up to receive or respond to one of our texts anytime, or call us at 225-219-1012 from 8:00-4:30 p.m.

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From the Desk of the Executive Director *continued*

- During the month of February as well as any other month of the year: We are here to help. There's no need to let questions or anxiety get in the way of access to the maximum amount of grant/gift aid students qualify for. Remember the first letter of FAFSA stands for FREE! So we encourage students/families to save their hard earned money for other college expenses and contact or come see us so they DON'T LEAVE MONEY ON THE TABLE!

Best-
s.

March 1 is College Goal Sunday in Louisiana

Louisiana's eighth annual College Goal Sunday will be held on March 1, 2015, from 1:30-4:00 p.m. at fifteen locations around the state. The purpose of College Goal Sunday is to provide students and their families with free professional assistance in completing the primary student financial aid form, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Completing the FAFSA is the first step to take in order to receive most forms of federal student aid including Pell grants, low-interest federal student loans and to participate in the federal Work Study program. **In addition, several state student financial aid programs, including the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) scholarship program and the Louisiana Go Grant need-based aid program, require completion of the FAFSA in order to qualify and access funds.** Many campus-based institutional scholarships also require completion of the FAFSA.

College Goal Sunday is a national program designed to help students navigate the paperwork barriers that stand between them and the money they need to attend college. Completing the form correctly with detailed income, tax and other information can be a difficult task. On College Goal Sunday, financial aid professionals from Louisiana colleges and universities will be on hand to provide free line-by-line assistance.

Anyone, from a soon-to-be high school graduate to a returning adult student, who is planning to attend any post secondary institution that participates in the Federal Title IV Aid programs during the 2015-2016 aca-

ademic year can benefit from attendance. This includes public, private, technical, community, proprietary and career colleges.

Pre-registration for the event is encouraged to ensure that each site has the resources needed to assist all participants. To do so, log on to <http://www.osfa.la.gov>. The website will also provide detailed information including specific records and documentation that participants will need to bring to the event. The website also lists over 190 Internal Revenue Service VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) sites statewide where low to moderated income families may receive free tax preparation assistance prior to College Goal Sunday.

Doors will open at each site at 1:30 p.m. and the program will begin promptly at 2:00 p.m. Attendees are advised to arrive in time to sign in and be seated prior to 2:00 p.m.

College Goal Sunday Louisiana is sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) with assistance from the Louisiana GEAR-UP program. Funding for College Goal Sunday is provided by a grant from USA Funds.

In addition to FAFSA completion assistance and information on federal and state aid programs, College Goal Sunday attendees will have the opportunity to learn about several related topics:

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March 1 is College Goal Sunday in Louisiana



• Louisiana business and industry representatives will attend several locations to inform attendees about the flood of skilled jobs coming to Louisiana in the near future to describe the kinds of postsecondary degrees, certificates and/or certifications that will be required to access those job opportunities.

- LOSFA staff will be in attendance at all sites to explain the TOPS processing cycle and to answer any questions relating to state aid programs
- Members of the Louisiana Council of Student Body Presidents (COSPB) (The organization for postsecondary Student Government Association members) will be in attendance at a number of sites to provide information about college life in general, adjusting from high school to college, and other helpful social and study tips.
- The Louisiana Jump\$tart Coalition will have representatives present at the Baton Rouge Community College, Southern University Baton Rouge, University of Louisiana Lafayette, and Southeastern Louisiana University College Goal Sunday sites to provide financial literacy information to attendees.

The fifteen 2015 Louisiana College Goal Sunday site locations in Louisiana are:

Alexandria

Central Louisiana Technical Community College
Louisiana State University-Alexandria

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge Community College
Southern University

Bossier City

Bossier Parish Community College

Hammond

Southeastern Louisiana University

Lafayette

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Lake Charles

SOWELA Technical Community College

Monroe

Louisiana Delta Community College

New Orleans Area

Delgado Community College – West Bank Campus
Dillard University
Southern University (SUNO)
Xavier University

Shreveport

Southern University Shreveport

Schriever

Fletcher Technical Community College

For more information, visit www.osfa.la.gov or contact the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance at (225) 219-1012 or (800) 259-5626, or by Email at custserv@la.gov.

LOSFA's FLY Tour 2015

UNIVERSITY SCHEDULE

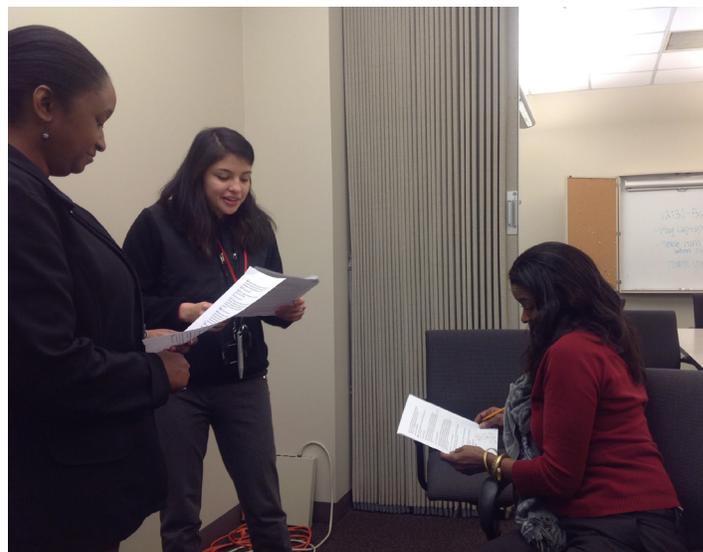
Grambling State University	March 17
Northwestern State University	March 18
Dillard University	March 23
Southeastern Louisiana State University	March 24
Southern University Baton Rouge:	March 25
SOWELA	TBD

To reserve a seat for your high-school seniors at a university near you, please call (225) 219-1012 or 1-800-259-5626.

LOSFA's fifth annual FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Tour will reprise the winning format used in years past to entertain and educate students on financial responsibility and a variety of LOSFA-administered student financial assistance programs. However, instead of traveling to schools as in years past, FLY Tours will be held in collaboration with universities across the state.

FLY is a dynamic theatrical presentation that uses poetry, music and drama to communicate the importance of financial literacy and fiscal responsibility. The 2015 FLY Tour will address topics ranging from financial aid for college to money management. The intent is to make high school students aware of how financial aid decisions made early in their lives can have a lasting impact on their futures. The production will also present information about support services available to students on college campuses and pre-college tasks that must be completed prior to the student's first day of classes.

Ebony Holmes is a returning cast member from LOSFA's Public Information and Communications Division. She is joined by GEAR UP staff: Timenee Thomas (director) Khristopher Hobbs, Sabrina Johnson, Charlie Lewis, Izzy Reyes, and Kendra Williams (stagehand).

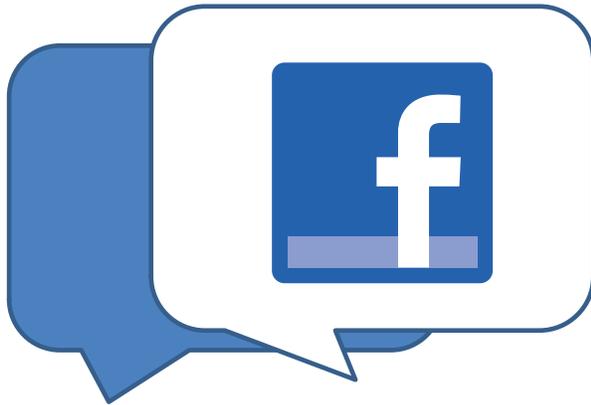


Sabrina Johnson, Izzy Reyes and Charlie Lewis rehearse a skit during a recent FLY Tour practice session.



financial literacy for you

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) Presents:



Financial Aid and College Access Facebook Chat Night

**Tuesday, February 10, 2015
6 – 8 p.m.**

Please join the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance for our fifth annual Financial Aid and College Access Facebook Chat Night.

From 6:00 until 8:00 p.m. on February 10, 2015, LOSFA representatives will be on hand to answer your questions about:

FAFSA

College Goal Sunday

TOPS

START 529 College Saving Plan

Student Financial Assistance

College Access



To participate, simply “like” LOSFA on Facebook. Then, post your questions on the LOSFA Facebook page and a LOSFA representative will reply. Or, comment on and discuss previous posts and responses.

We look forward to chatting with you!

Jacobs Appointed as Liaison for Virtual Learning Community



You posted a message on the NCAN Advisors team dashboard

The attached article explains the background of the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) in Louisiana. What I find so interesting is Patrick Taylor's initial vision, which was not just to send students to "LSU or Southern," but to help them fulfill their dreams. In Taylor's words, TOPS would send students to "truck driving school if they want to drive a truck" and "court reporting school if they want to become a court reporter." "Match & Fit" is the current lingo of college-access programs, but Mr. Taylor had a jump on us back in 1998 when the program began!



File: We cannot afford to diminish what TOPS does for Louisiana.pdf

Cheer 1 1 day ago



You Paris, The thing I love about TOPS is that it's a mini-college access program in itself. To qualify for TOPS opportunity, performance, and honors awards, students need to focus on ACT, an acceptable GPA in the Louisiana Core Curriculum, and FAFSA completion. If students can manage this, they are developing the SEL and academic skills that will lead to post-secondary success. My personal mission as a college access professional and educator is to help low-income students raise their eligibility. I'm also a big fan of the TOPS Tech award, which requires a 17 ACT score and can lead to some marketable and high-paying jobs.

Cheer 1 1 day ago

The National College Access Network (NCAN) has approved a mini-grant of \$1500 to LOSFA to appoint a Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Liaison for the NCAN Advisor VLC for the period of Jan. 2, 2015 through Dec. 31, 2015. This appointment increases LOSFA's visibility within NCAN. Denise Jacobs, LA GEAR UP program coordinator, has filled that position. The post at left references an article by John Kennedy, Louisiana State treasure, as published in *The Advisor* (Jan. 24, 2015).

As the VLC liaison, Jacobs will post relevant information and resources or pose questions to engage the NCAN learning community a minimum of once per week. In addition, the VLC liaison is expected to follow up on all comments, questions, and concerns related to her weekly postings and participate in a maximum of four planning calls per year with NCAN staff.

Recent online discussions have revolved around match and fit, the TOPS program, and the cost of college—always relevant topics of conversation at LOSFA.

LOSFA to Conduct Financial Aid and College Access Open House at East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library

LOSFA will conduct a Financial Aid and College Access Open House at the East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library on Monday, February 23, from 7:00 until 9:00 p.m. as part of our Financial Aid Awareness Month activities.

Individual tables will be set up to distribute information and answer questions about the TOPS scholarship program; the START 529 College Saving program; the FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid); College Goal Sunday; and How to Choose the Right College for Future Success. LOSFA representatives will be available for one-on-one consultations.

- Those who wish to open a START saving program account will be able to do so at the event with the assistance of a LOSFA representative.

- Those wishing to attend a College Goal Sunday FAFSA completion event will be able to register with the assistance of a LOSFA representative.
- Parents of graduating seniors will be able to gain an understanding of the TOPS processing cycle.
- Parents of underclass students will be able to verify that their child is on the correct path and taking the required courses for TOPS.
- Parents and students will also have the opportunity to learn from LOSFA and Louisiana GEAR UP representatives the best means of choosing the postsecondary school that will provide the greatest opportunity to successfully attain their individual career goals.

The event is free and open to the public. The East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library is located at 7711 Goodwood Blvd. in Baton Rouge.

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

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

Web Address: www.osfa.la.gov

For submissions, opinions, or comments for the LOSFA LOOP,
please contact Gus Wales at Gus.Wales@la.gov.