



LOSFA LOOP

January 2010 Edition

Volume 3-1

From the Desk of the Executive Director

It's always exciting to usher in a new year and in this case, a new decade as well. It's seen by many as a new beginning and a time to make resolutions. The fact that most resolutions aren't kept isn't as important as the fact that resolutions come from reflection, a desire for improvement and the willingness to make whatever changes are deemed necessary in order to improve. Just like the fact that Louisiana has historically ranked in the bottom of several education-based categories is not as important as the fact that we as a state are constantly assessing the issues and are committed to improvement. That commitment made it possible to celebrate several gains in our education system in 2009.

A study by the U.S. Chambers of Commerce awarded Louisiana an "A" for use of technology in its schools. The report singles out creation of a state virtual school and computer-based assessment (Daily Advertiser, November 2009). The percentage of students earning Basic or above increased in 28 of 30 core subject assessments in grades 3-11 on iLEAP, LEAP and GEE tests. In 25 of 30 assessments the improvements exceeded the annual historic gains (Louisiana Department of Education, May 2009). Louisiana's efforts to align key components of college and career readiness are once again being recognized by a leading national education reform group. Achieve, a non-profit education organization based in Washington, D.C., released its fourth annual "Closing the Expectations Gap" report which shows that Louisiana is one of only 10 states meeting three or more critical benchmarks in successfully aligning education efforts with the expectations of colleges and employers (Closing the Expectations

Gap, February 2009). More encouraging news is the fact that, despite popular perception, our students who've benefitted from our education system meeting those critical benchmarks are remaining right here.

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report released last month, Louisiana college freshmen are among the most likely to stay at home. Some 84.9 percent of students from Louisiana enrolled in-state for their freshman years surpassed only by Utah, North Carolina and West Virginia. I would like to think that those students are staying in the state because of the TOPS scholarship and other state financial aid programs such as the Go Grant, but I'm sure that's just part of the equation. Perhaps our students and their parents are recognizing the benefits of staying in Louisiana due to strides made in education at the post secondary level in 2009. LSU's E.J. Ourso College of Business was ranked as one of the top 50 internationally known Business Schools. The school moved up a spot to Number 48 on Eduniversal's Palmes 2009 rankings of U.S. institutions (Eduniversal Palmes, November 2009). After two years of incremental growth, Louisiana Tech in Ruston was rated a Tier 3 institution, second only to LSU among the state's publicly supported colleges. Tech was also ranked among

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LOSFA Outreach

It's never too soon to plan for the future

LOSFA representatives Justin Marshall and Kendra Woods visited Angelina Bowlins' second grade class at Dufroc Elementary recently to discuss the children's college goals and give them information on the START Saving Program to take home to their parents.

To get them thinking about the future, each student decorated a pig centered around their future career. Woods and Marshall explained to the students why it is important to save money for college and stay in school.



January is National Mentoring Month

National Mentoring Month is the time each year when our nation spotlights the importance of mentors and the need for every child to have a caring adult in his or her life. When you serve as a mentor, you enrich your own life as much as you do the life of a child. In order to be a mentor or find a mentor in your local area go to <http://www.nationalmentoringmonth.org/>

February is Financial Aid Awareness Month

The purpose of Financial Aid Awareness Month is to let Louisiana high school seniors and their families know that a college education is not just a dream, but is attainable. There are numerous sources of financial aid available. February is the key time to begin the application process in order to be considered for all aid programs offered at state and federal levels.



A listing of LOSFA's scheduled events for February can be found on our Web site at <http://www.osfa.la.gov>. If you would like to schedule an event, please contact Michelle Darling at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 2027.

Don't Forget! Student Transcript System (STS) training is scheduled for January 5-8 at the Louisiana Technology Center in Baton Rouge. Training begins at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. every day except Friday. On Friday, there is no 1 p.m. session.

LOSFA Extends Hours for Special Financial Aid Call-In Night

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) will conduct its annual "Financial Aid Call-In Night" on Monday, Feb. 1, from 6-9 p.m.

During these special nighttime hours, callers may contact LOSFA with questions about the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), Louisiana-guaranteed federal student loans, other federal and state student aid programs, and the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) Saving Program -- Louisiana's 529 college savings plan.

LOSFA's customer service representatives will also provide on-the-spot advice and assistance for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid -- also known as the FAFSA -- which is the convenient single application for most state and federal aid programs.



Kendra Woods is just one of the many Public Information and Communications representatives who will be working the phones Feb. 1 to assist callers during LOSFA's Call-In Night.

Callers from outside the Baton Rouge area may use the toll-free number at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012. Callers from inside the Baton Rouge area may use the local number at 922-1012.

LOSFA's normal call-in hours for student financial aid information are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The annual "Financial Aid Call-In Night" is designed to assist callers who are unable to call during regular business hours.

The end of a productive partnership

The partnership between the Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) and LOSFA has come to an end, as the contract signed in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita expires.

Since April 2007, ECMC has managed payment for LOSFA's student loan default claims. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, LOSFA experienced a 166% increase in the number of claims and a 156% increase in the dollar amount of claims from October 1, 2006, to March 31, 2007, as compared to the same period during the previous year.

"ECMC made it possible for LOSFA to continue and improve its service and duty to customers and other constituencies. We will be forever grateful for their intervention," LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein said.



Left, Director of LOSFA's Loan Operations Division Lynda Whittington and Executive Director Melanie Amrhein prepare to cut a cake celebrating the partnership between LOSFA and ECMC. Right, Bobbie Sweeney, ECMC Chief Business Operations Officer, receives a gift from Amrhein.



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



A Special Financial Aid Call-In Night

Monday, February 1, 2010
6-9 p.m.

For one night only...

LOSFA staff will be available to answer all of your student financial aid questions



LOSFA
Louisiana Office of
Student Financial Assistance

800-259-5626, Ext. 1012 (toll free)
922-1012 (Baton Rouge local)

Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
Go Grant
START Saving Program
Federal Student Aid
Student Loans

We Hope To Hear From You!

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY IS FEBRUARY 21ST!**



**College
Goal
Sunday**

**MMM...
A Money
Sundae?**

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM is an event that will help you melt away the tedious process of filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to obtain financial aid. Free on-site assistance from area college financial aid professionals will be provided.

For more information, including what you need to bring, visit us at our website.

www.osfa.la.gov and click on College Goal Sunday

**Louisiana College Goal SundaySM Locations 2010
February 21st, 2010 2 - 4 P.M.**

- Alexandria**
Louisiana State University - Alexandria
- Baton Rouge**
Baton Rouge Community College
Southern University
- Bossier City**
Bossier Parish Community College
- Grambling**
Grambling State University
- Hammond**
Southeastern Louisiana University

- Houma**
Fletcher Community and Technical College
- Lafayette**
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- Lake Charles**
SOWELA Community and Technical College
- Monroe**
Louisiana Delta Community College
- Natchitoches**
Northwestern State University

- New Orleans**
Delgado Community College - West Bank Campus
Dillard University
Southern University - New Orleans
- Ruston**
Louisiana Technical College
- Sorrento**
River Parishes Community College
- St. James**
St. James High School

Check our website for additional site locations and specific room locations at each site.

The College Goal Sunday program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc, and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM is sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) with funding from a Lumina Foundation for Education grant.

MILESTONES



Administrative Services' Sharie Robinson graduated from Southern University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management in December.

She decided to complete her degree for her daughter, she said.

"I promised myself that once my daughter was old enough to understand what college is, I would go back to school and earn a college degree," Robinson said. "At the age of 7, my daughter asked me if I graduated from college. I enrolled at Baton Rouge Community College the next week for the spring semester of 2004 and earned an Associates of Applied Science in Business Technologies in 2006."

She then went on to enroll in Southern in the fall of 2006. She intends to use her knowledge to advance with the State.

After nearly 30 years with the agency, Lenora Young is retiring.

Young began working for LOSFA in the Accounting section. She has since weathered many administrations and at least four building relocations. She ends her career in LOSFA's Loan Division.

Her retirement plans include traveling and spending more time with her grandchildren, before eventually setting her sights on volunteering.





Happy Holidays

LOSFA employees enjoyed an agency-wide holiday party and gift exchange, complete with three tables of homemade goodies. Executive Director Melanie Amrhein passed out Santa beads to all who attended and no one left hungry.



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America's top 10 for graduating students with the least amount of debt (U.S. News and World Report, September 2009). LSU and Tulane University are among the 118 schools to receive the 2008 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. The Carnegie Classification has been used for more than three decades to describe institutional diversity in higher education (The Advocate, January 2009).

Perhaps a greater percentage of those students who are staying in the state to pursue post secondary education would remain in the state upon graduation if they knew that a study of economic performance across the United States rates Louisiana second best when it comes to weathering the recession. The analysis examined six areas, including employment rates, wage growth and job growth, and created an index based on scores in each category (Portfolio.com, November 2009). In addition Lafayette ranks second and Baton Rouge ninth on a new list of the best mid-size cities in which to launch a business. The report said both cities' small business growth rate from 2004-2007 was 9.3%, compared to the Top 20 average of 5.9%. The list, put together by the Kauffman Foundation and Fortune Small Business magazine, ranks the Top 20 large, mid-size and small cities in the U.S. (The Advocate, October 2009). Finally, Louisiana's economic outlook ranks 18th out of 50 states, according to a study released by the American Legislative Exchange Council. That ranking is up from 21st in the same study's prior year assessment (American Legislative Exchange Council, August 2009). If the vast amount of progress made in education and in the economy in our state in 2009 isn't enough to keep our

best and brightest here then perhaps they would be happy to know that Louisiana has been designated as the happiest state in the entire country (Science Journal, December 2009).

It makes me happy to report the strides that our state has made in 2009 in these critical areas. 2010 is certain to bring us challenges, but also opportunities. I know that this community will rise to the challenges and seize the opportunities as we always have. It is also our commitment that LOSFA will continue to be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access. Happy New Year!

--Melanie



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.