



# LOSFA LOOP

January 2011 Edition

Volume 4-1

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

Happy New Year! It seems like only yesterday that we were preparing for the arrival of the year 2000, which represented not only a new year, but a new decade and millennium as well. It was such a huge event as everyone scrambled to be "Y2K" ready. That's why it's hard to believe that not only is the first decade of the new millennium already over, but the first year of the 2nd decade just ended. When you reflect upon the first decade of this millennium, you almost have to concede that the most important event of that period in Louisiana was when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005. It's unfortunate when the most important event in our state during any specified time period is a tragedy, so I prefer to view the decade of 2000 to 2010 in a different light, as the first time in the history of Louisiana in which we had the TOPS scholarship and the START Saving Program for an entire decade. With that noted, it begs the question "How has this positively impacted our state?" According to a Southern Regional Education Board study, the ratio of Louisiana high school graduates who enrolled in college in 2000 was 59% and had increased to 70% by 2008. Enrolling in college is important, but not as important as actually completing college. According to data furnished by the Louisiana Board of Regents, the total number of students completing their programs at Louisiana public colleges during the 2000-2001 academic year was 25,500 and had increased to 29,062 during the 2009-2010 academic year. There are so many factors that play a pivotal role in the number of students who enroll in and complete post secondary education that it's difficult to ascertain the impact of TOPS and START on these statistics, but I don't think their impact can be dismissed either. I'm also confident that the increase in the number of college graduates contributed to the results of a recent survey. Employment services firm Manpower surveyed more than 18,000 employers in 100 metropolitan areas to find out who's hiring, who's firing and who plans to maintain their current staff

levels. The survey revealed that the metropolitan area with the most optimistic forecast of all for hiring this winter is Baton Rouge, LA. The improvement that we're experiencing has me eagerly anticipating where we'll be as a state at the end of this decade.

Speaking of improvement, we've conducted a Financial Aid Call-In Night in February for the past 9 years, but this year we're going to introduce a new component. For the first time ever, instead of calling, people will have the option of going to our facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA> and participating in a live chat for answers to their financial aid questions (pages 3 and 4). Another improvement that we're happy to report is the new START Saving Program investment options, complete with full details about each one (page 7).

It would be great if all our news were about improvements, but unfortunately that is not the case. Mid-year budget cuts and increased participation in the fall semester have limited the funds available for Early Start in the upcoming spring term. Despite this challenge, we've taken necessary steps to see to it that the students are not adversely affected (page 6). Of course these necessary adjustments for the benefit of the students wouldn't be possible without the Board of Regents and the cooperation of the schools. It's the dedication and hard work of all of our partners that allow us to effectively administer the programs which make us Louisiana's First Choice for College Access.

--Melanie

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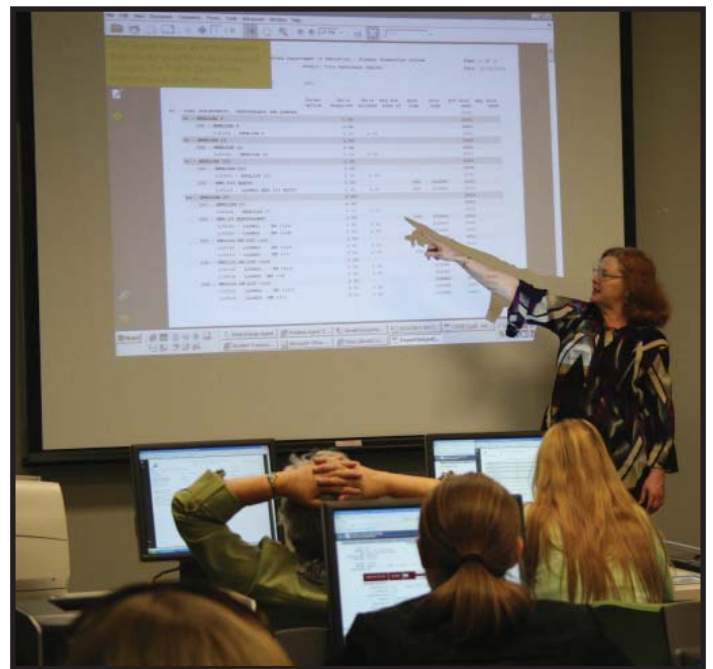
## LOSFA Outreach



LOSFA's Jerri Mack (left), Public Information and Communications Supervisor, attended the 2010 Professional School Counselors' Conference hosted by the Louisiana Department of Education in New Orleans on December 1 and 2, 2010. Over 600 counselors registered for this event, representing high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools throughout the state.

Mack conducted break-out sessions regarding the various presentations LOSFA offers to schools for parents and students. She showcased abbreviated versions of 6 presentations and focused on each presentation's target audience. This gave counselors a greater understanding of the many programs LOSFA administers and ways in which the agency is available to assist them.

LOSFA's Kate Herke (right) conducted the agency's annual Student Transcript System training workshops for non-public high school counselors and administrators during December of this year. LOSFA scheduled four separate sessions, so that as many people as possible could find a workable date. The sessions ran from 9:00am to 3:00pm, with a one-hour break for lunch, and were held at the computer lab at the Louisiana Technology Park complex in Baton Rouge. They covered all aspects of STS entry and inquiry, from beginner to advanced, with special attention to problems that various attendees had experienced. Seventy-seven counselors, administrators, and other school staff, from all over the state, attended.



Haley Plauche', LOSFA student worker, (left) assists Ed Blasi with his end-of-the-year START deposits during the last week of December. From December 28-30, LOSFA staff accepted well over \$2.5 million worth of START deposits. December 30, 2010 was the deadline for START deposits to be counted as part of the Louisiana state tax deduction for 2010.



## Live chat on Facebook for Call-In Night

Do you have questions for the LOSFA staff, but don't have time to call during regular work hours? Would you like to chat one-on-one with a LOSFA representative? You'll have the chance to do just that this February when LOSFA conducts a live chat with students and parents via its Facebook page as part of Call-In Night.

"Our Trailblazers have asserted repeatedly that Facebook is the most effective tool by which to communicate with students," David Roberts, Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, said. "We're excited to add this social media component to our annual Call-In Night and hope that a great number of students will log on to Facebook and chat with us on February 1st."

Participants can take part in the Facebook chat by going to LOSFA's Facebook page on Feb. 1, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., and clicking the "Join the Chat" icon. They will then be connected to a LOSFA staff member who will answer any questions they have about LOSFA programs.

The live chat is part of an ongoing online outreach effort by LOSFA. Those who have 'liked' LOSFA on Facebook can also look forward to:

**January 3rd – January 7th** – Reminders about Financial Aid Call-In Night and College Goal Sunday as well as information for seniors who haven't achieved the necessary ACT score to qualify for TOPS about the January 7th ACT registration deadline for the February 12, 2011 test.

**January 3rd -February 18th** – Daily countdown to College Goal Sunday. Periodically, there will be a different question posted such as "Have you registered to attend?" or "Do you know what you need to bring?" with links to different sections of the College Goal Sunday site to address those questions.

**February 20-27** - LOSFA participates in America Saves Week.

**February 21st – February 25th** – Once College Goal Sunday is over, high school seniors and college students will receive information regarding the benefits of creating an account on the Louisiana Award System.

**February 28th -March 4th** - Reminder about the March 4th ACT registration deadline for the April 9, 2011 exam to seniors who haven't yet achieved the necessary ACT score to qualify for TOPS.

**May 2nd – May 6th** - Reminder about the May 6th ACT registration deadline for the June 11, 2011 exam to seniors who haven't yet achieved the necessary ACT score to qualify for TOPS.



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



**United Way**

## United Way Total

Despite a late start to this year's campaign due to the relocation, LOSFA collected \$8,456.08 for the United Way, surpassing the agency goal of \$8,000.00.

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



# A Special Financial Aid Call-In Night

Tuesday, February 1, 2011  
6-9 p.m.

For one night only, we will extend our financial aid hotline hours as a convenience to students and their parents.

Dial **800-259-5626, Ext. 1012** (toll free)  
or **219-1012** (Baton Rouge local)

or **Chat Live on Facebook** ([www.facebook.com/LOSFA](http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA))  
to obtain the answers to your questions relating to all forms of financial aid for higher education.

LOSFA staff will be manning the phones to help you with such varied topics as:

- \*Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)
- \*Other Scholarships and Grants
- \*Student Loans
- \*START Saving Program
- \*Assistance in Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

**We Hope To Hear From You!**  
**(800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012 or (225) 219-1012**



College  
Goal  
Sunday

MMM...  
A Money  
Sundae?

Louisiana College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> 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 Web site.  
[www.osfa.la.gov/CollegeGoal Sunday.shtml](http://www.osfa.la.gov/CollegeGoal%20Sunday.shtml)

Louisiana College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> Locations 2011  
February 20th, 2011 2 - 4 P.M.

**Alexandria**  
Louisiana State University - Alexandria

**Baton Rouge**  
Baton Rouge Community College  
Southern University - Baton Rouge

**Bossier City**  
Bossier Parish Community College

**Grambling**  
Grambling State University

**Hammond**  
Southeastern Louisiana University

**Houma**  
Fletcher Technical Community College

**Lafayette**  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

**Lake Charles**  
SOWELA Technical Community College

**Lutcher**  
Lutcher High School

**Monroe**  
Louisiana Delta Community College

**New Orleans**  
Delgado Community College - West Bank Camp  
Dillard University

**Ruston**  
Louisiana Technical College

Check our Web site 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 Sunday<sup>SM</sup> 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.

## Changes to the Early Start Program

Mid-year budget cuts have reduced the 2010-11 Early Start (ES) budget from \$5.5 million to \$4,959,650. As LOSFA completes processing for the Fall semester/term, the agency projects it will have approximately \$1.8 million to disburse for the 2011 Spring semester/term payment requests.

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) and the Board of Regents (BOR) have approved reducing payments for any Early Start course taken at a Louisiana Technical College (LTC) to \$50 per credit hour, up to \$150 per course, to cover the costs of a student's enrollment. This will be effective Spring 2011.

Despite this cost saving measure, LOSFA anticipates that the remaining budget will not be sufficient to cover all anticipated Spring billings. Therefore, Early Start payments for Spring semester/term 2011 will be on a pro-rata basis. Immediately following the April 1, 2011 billing deadline, LOSFA will determine the total billed. The total funds available will be divided by the total billed and the result will be the pro-rata amount. For example, it is projected that billing for the spring will be \$2,605,017. The amount of funds available is projected to be \$1,627,650. If these figures hold true, then the pro-rata amount will be 62.5% of the billed amount.

Institutions are expected to absorb the difference between the pro-rata payment and full payment, and under no circumstances shall the difference be passed on to the student. That amount will not be determined until the final billing is received.

It is imperative that institutions adhere to the billing and corrections deadlines since:

- ▶ Only payment requests received by the April 1st deadline will be processed
- ▶ Schools will have from April 2-April 30 to submit corrections: This only applies to bills received by April 1st
- ▶ All payment amounts will be finalized and processed after May 1st
- ▶ Requests for late billings/corrections **will not be approved**

The Board of Regents and LOSFA will review the framework/budget for 2011-12 in the near future. Both agencies will work with institutions to continue to support and grow a strong dual enrollment program.

*Keep up with changes on LOSFA's Social Media sites!*



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



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



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

# New START Saving Investment Funds

As of January 1, 2011, START Saving account owners have additional investment fund choices. Owners may now choose one or more of 10 funds, which include three age-based tracks and seven other funds, giving them more freedom to craft an investment plan best suited to their individual needs.

A description of the all investment options follows. For more information, please review the START Disclosure Booklet: [http://www.startsaving.la.gov/savings/pdf/START\\_Disclosure\\_Booklet\\_2011.pdf](http://www.startsaving.la.gov/savings/pdf/START_Disclosure_Booklet_2011.pdf).

## Louisiana Principal Protection Fund (Fixed Earnings)

This option is the most conservative START Saving Program investment plan and is managed by the Louisiana State Treasurer. This option invests 100% of deposits and interest earned thereon in fixed earnings investments such as government and corporate bonds, notes, and certificates of deposit. The state guarantees the return of your principal so you cannot lose money, but does not guarantee any particular investment return. Every other option involves some risk of loss of principal.

## Age-Based Moderate Track Fund (Variable Earnings and Fixed Earnings)

The Moderate Track represents the least aggressive track of the three Age-Based Investment Tracks and may be appropriate for account owners who are comfortable sacrificing the potential for greater returns in exchange for the potential for less risk. This track initially invests in the Vanguard LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Fund (VSMGX), which seeks to provide capital appreciation and a low to moderate level of current income. The LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 60% of the Fund's assets to common stocks and 40% to bonds. When the beneficiary reaches six (6) years of age, the Moderate Track transitions to the Vanguard LifeStrategy Conservative Growth Fund (VSCGX), which invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula. Over time, this should reflect an allocation of approximately 40% of the Fund's assets to bonds, 20% to short-term fixed income investments, and 40% to common stocks. When the beneficiary reaches eleven (11) years of age, the Moderate Track transitions to the Vanguard LifeStrategy Income Fund (VASIX). Investment is made in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 60% of the Fund's assets to bonds, 20% to short-term fixed income investments, and 20% to common stocks. When the beneficiary reaches sixteen (16) years of age, all monies invested in the Moderate Track move to the Louisiana Principal Protection Fund. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***



## Age-Based Growth Track Fund (Variable Earnings and Fixed Earnings)

Somewhat more aggressive than the Moderate Track, the Growth Track initially invests in the Vanguard LifeStrategy Growth Fund (VASGX), which seeks to provide capital appreciation and some current income. The LifeStrategy Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 80% of the Fund's assets to common stocks and 20% to bonds. When the beneficiary reaches six (6) years of age, the Growth Track transitions to the Vanguard LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Fund (VSMGX), which seeks to provide capital appreciation and a low to moderate level of current income. The LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 60% of the Fund's assets to common stocks and 40% to bonds. When the beneficiary reaches eleven (11) years of age, the Growth Track transitions to the Vanguard LifeStrategy Conservative Growth Fund (VSCGX), which seeks to provide current income and low to moderate capital appreciation. The LifeStrategy Conservative Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 40% of the Fund's assets to bonds, 20% to short-term fixed income investments, and 40% to common stocks. When the beneficiary reaches sixteen (16) years of age, all monies invested in the Growth Track move to the Louisiana Principal Protection Fund. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***

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### **Age-Based Aggressive Track Fund (Variable Earnings and Fixed Earnings)**

The Aggressive Track, the most aggressive of the three Age-Based Investment Tracks, is designed for account owners who are willing to accept greater risk in exchange for the possibility of a higher rate of return. The Aggressive Track Fund uses the same funds used by the Growth Track Fund, but allows the principal to remain in the riskier funds longer. The Aggressive Track initially invests in the Vanguard LifeStrategy Growth Fund (VASGX), which seeks to provide capital appreciation and some current income. The LifeStrategy Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 80% of the Fund's assets to common stocks and 20% to bonds. When the beneficiary reaches nine (9) years of age, the Aggressive Track transitions to the Vanguard LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Fund (VSMGX), which seeks to provide capital appreciation and a low to moderate level of current income. The LifeStrategy Moderate Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 60% of the Fund's assets to common stocks and 40% to bonds. When the beneficiary reaches thirteen (13) years of age, the Aggressive Track transitions to the Vanguard LifeStrategy Conservative Growth Fund (VSCGX), which seeks to provide current income and low to moderate capital appreciation. The LifeStrategy Conservative Growth Fund invests in other Vanguard mutual funds according to a fixed formula that over time should reflect an allocation of approximately 40% of the Fund's assets to bonds, 20% to short-term fixed income investments, and 40% to common stocks. When the beneficiary reaches sixteen (16) years of age, all monies invested in the Aggressive Track move to the Louisiana Principal Protection Fund. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***

### **Vanguard Total World Stock Index Fund, Investor Shares (VTWSX) (Variable Earnings)**

The Fund seeks to track the performance of a benchmark index that measures the investment return of stocks of companies located in developed and emerging markets around the world. The Fund employs a "passive management" —or indexing—investment approach designed to track the performance of the FTSE® All-World Index, a free-float-adjusted, market-capitalization-weighted index designed to measure the market performance of large- and mid-capitalization stocks of companies located around the world. The Index includes approximately 2,800 stocks of companies located in 47 countries, including both developed and emerging markets. As of October 31, 2009, the largest markets covered in the Index were the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, and Australia (which made up approximately 40%, 9%, 8%, 5%, and 4%, respectively, of the Index's market capitalization). The Fund typically holds approximately 2,000 stocks in its target Index (covering nearly 99% of the Index's total market capitalization) and a representative sample of the remaining stocks. The Fund holds a broadly diversified collection of securities that, in the aggregate, approximates the full Index in terms of key characteristics. These key characteristics include industry weightings, country weightings, and market capitalization, as well as certain financial measures, such as price/earnings ratio and dividend yield. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***

### **Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Fund, Institutional Shares (VITSX) (Variable Earnings)**

The Fund seeks to track the performance of a benchmark index that measures the investment return of the overall stock market. The Fund employs a "passive management"—or indexing—investment approach designed to track the performance of the MSCI® US Broad Market Index, which represents 99.5% or more of the total market capitalization of all the U.S. common stocks regularly traded on the New York Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ over-the-counter market. The Fund typically holds 1,200–1,300 of the stocks in its target index (covering nearly 95% of the Index's total market capitalization) and a representative sample of the remaining stocks. The Fund holds a broadly diversified collection of securities that, in the aggregate, approximates the full Index in terms of key characteristics. These key characteristics include industry weightings and market capitalization, as well as certain financial measures, such as price/earnings ratio and dividend yield. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***

### **Vanguard Total International Stock Index Fund, Investor Shares (VGTSX) (Variable Earnings)**

The Fund seeks to track the performance of a benchmark index that measures the investment return of stocks issued by companies located in Europe, the Pacific region, and emerging markets countries. The Fund em-

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employs a “passive management”—or indexing— investment approach designed to track the performance of the MSCI® EAFE® + Emerging Markets Index, an index designed to measure the performance of stocks of companies located in Europe, the Pacific region, and emerging markets countries. The Index includes approximately 1,700 stocks of companies located in 43 countries. As of October 31, 2009, the largest markets covered in the Index were the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Australia, Germany, and Switzerland (which made up approximately 16%, 16%, 8%, 6%, 6%, and 6% respectively, of the Index’s market capitalization). The Fund invests all, or substantially all, of its assets in the common stocks included in its target index. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***



#### **Vanguard Small-Cap Index Fund, Investor Shares (NAESX) (Variable Earnings)**

The Fund seeks to track the performance of a benchmark index that measures the investment return of small-capitalization stocks. The Fund employs a “passive management”—or indexing— investment approach designed to track the performance of the MSCI® US Small Cap 1750 Index, a broadly diversified index of stocks of smaller U.S. companies. The Fund attempts to replicate the target index by investing all, or substantially all, of its assets in the stocks that make up the Index, holding each stock in approximately the same proportion as its weighting in the Index. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***



#### **Vanguard Mid-Cap Index Fund, Investor Shares (VIMSX) (Variable Earnings)**

The Fund seeks to track the performance of a benchmark index that measures the investment return of mid-capitalization stocks. The Fund employs a “passive management”—or indexing— investment approach designed to track the performance of the MSCI® US Mid Cap 450 Index, a broadly diversified index of stocks of medium-size U.S. companies. The Fund attempts to replicate the target index by investing all, or substantially all, of its assets in the stocks that make up the Index, holding each stock in approximately the same proportion as its weighting in the Index. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***



#### **Vanguard Large-Cap Index Fund, Investor Shares (VLACX) (Variable Earnings)**

The Fund seeks to track the performance of a benchmark index that measures the investment return of large-capitalization stocks. The Fund employs a “passive management”—or indexing— investment approach designed to track the performance of the MSCI® US Prime Market 750 Index, a broadly diversified index predominantly made up of stocks of large U.S. companies. The Fund attempts to replicate the target index by investing all, or substantially all, of its assets in the stocks that make up the Index, holding each stock in approximately the same proportion as its weighting in the Index. ***It is possible that monies invested in this fund will lose value.***



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