



Louisiana Office of
Student Financial Assistance

LOSFA LOOP

January 2014 Edition

Volume 7-1

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Happy New Year!! Here's hoping your holiday was filled with family, friends and happy times-all the ingredients needed to make memories! Speaking of memories-Here's a look back at the LOSFA year in review.

In 2013 our LOSFA family said good-bye to Melanie Amrhein who led LOSFA through good times and not so good times with a calm and steady hand. We also said good-bye to Victoria Baxter, Shannon Domingue, Sally Donlon, Kelly George, Justin Marshall, Fred Reed, Mathilde Rivera and Ryan Shaw. Each of these individuals left a lasting footprint on our agency and we are grateful for the initiatives they accomplished and the many fond memories they left with us.

We said hello to Logan Beaulieu, Tireka Cobb, Shanna Estay, Andrew Granger, Charlie Lewis, Nyetta Meaux, Kyleigh Quiroga, Mia Scott, Alexis Starr and Kendra Williams. We look forward to the talents these new members bring to LOSFA as they take their respective 'seats on the bus'. We are already seeing great things from each of them.

We experienced phenomenal growth in Louisiana Connect. We launched public pages to provide additional information on college access to all potential students and their families. We launched a mobile app designed by our Trailblazers to put college access information literally in the hands of our students. In addition we just unveiled a college cost calculation tool

to assist families with estimating the amount of federal aid they may receive and the cost to attend the college of their choice.

We celebrated the 20th Anniversary of our Trailblazers Program. The Trailblazers continue to be our ears and voice on their respective campuses throughout the academic year. The nature of Trailblazers has changed dramatically over those 20 years. The 3-day curriculum now includes many more hands-on activities like interactive learning sessions in computer labs and student-created video projects. We are extremely proud of the evolution of the Trailblazer program from its humble beginning twenty years ago.

We took steps to resolve recurring confusion over fee bills and the TOPS Award Amounts. Our Legal team worked diligently to gain input from LOSFA staff and stakeholders resulting in a new base line for the TOPS award amount and guidelines to simplify fee bills to ensure that the amount of tuition charged at each institution equals the TOPS award amount at that school. Kudos to the schools for their hard work and a sigh of relief for parents, students and our Public Information Division; because less confusion is a plus for us all.

We've covered a lot of ground in 2013 and we are up for the opportunities and the challenges that 2014 is sure to present!

Best-
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Go Grant Billing Update

All Fall Go Grant billing deadlines have passed and the Fall Go Grant billing process is complete. No additional Fall billings will be accepted without approval from the Board of Regents.

As of mid-December, Go Grant payments total \$12,101,393 leaving a Go Grant program balance of \$14,019,146 for Winter and Spring awards.

Schools may begin billing for Winter/Spring 2014 after the conclusion of the 14th class day at semester schools (10th class day at term schools).

Winter/Spring billing deadlines:

Winter

January 17- Billing Deadline
February 1 –Billing Correction Deadline

Spring

March 24 – Billing Deadline
April 11 – Billing Correction Deadline

As always, if a billing deadline falls on a weekend (or holiday), the deadline is the next business day. For 2014, the Winter correction billing deadline will be Monday, February 3.

After the conclusion of the spring billing deadline, unused funds will be reallocated. Reallocations will be made to institutions to award eligible students that were enrolled for Fall 2013 with continuous enrollment into Spring 2014 but did not receive a Go Grant because of an allocation shortfall or enrolled for Spring 2014, but due to shortfalls did not receive a Go Grant Award. Should you have questions or need assistance with Go Grant, contact Erica Hughes at 225-219-7707 or Erica.Hughes@la.gov.

Louisiana GEAR Up Announces New Staff Member

Charlie Lewis joined the LA GEAR UP team in December 2013 as the Evaluation Coordinator/Program Analyst. Prior to LA GEAR UP, she worked for over six years at Louisiana State University (LSU) as an Undergraduate Coordinator. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology from Southern University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix, Baton Rouge Campus. From LSU, she has 24+ graduate hours in areas such as statistics, research methods and program evaluation. Her specific research interests include: student advocacy, leadership, and accountability. She hopes to draw on the student-services experience that she gained while working at LSU to assist the current team of LA GEAR UP professionals to promote awareness and provide readiness to the LA GEAR UP juniors and seniors as they enter the college matriculation process.



U.S. Department of Education Launches Federal Financial Aid Toolkit/Website

The U.S. Department of Education has launched an online “one-stop shop” aimed at professional school counselors and other advisers, such as staff or volunteers at community-based organizations, who assist students through the process of selecting and financing their higher education. The Financial Aid Toolkit, available at FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov, consolidates federal financial aid resources and content into a searchable online database, making it easy for individuals to quickly access the information they need to support their students.

This adds another resource to the growing number of online financial aid information and access tools that also includes the LOSFA website (www.osfa.la.gov) and the Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning portal (www.louisianaconnect.org).

“By equipping counselors and mentors with financial aid information, we can help to ensure current and potential students are getting the (federal) assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of planning and paying for a postsecondary education,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

The searchable online database provides access to resources covering the entire federal financial aid lifecycle from applying for financial aid to repaying student loans.

Key features of the site include an enhanced search function that enables stakeholders to search to find and sort resources by audience, topic, time of year

for best use, and type of resource. Examples of the types of items accessible on the site include: outreach resources such as financial-aid-night materials, fact sheets, videos, infographics, and PowerPoint presentations; suggested messages for social media in the form of tweets, Facebook posts, and blog posts; and sample articles for organization newsletters and sample e-mails.

Additional features provide tips and resources to help counselors, college access professionals, and other mentors obtain a basic understanding of financial aid and the federal aid application process and information about loan repayment.

The toolkit also offers professional development information such as training opportunities and resources for self-instruction.

February 16 is College Goal Sunday in Louisiana

Louisiana's seventh annual College Goal Sunday will be held on February 16, 2014, from 2-4 p.m. at twelve 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 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.

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.

The program begins promptly at 2:00 p.m. and will conclude by 4:00 p.m. (this is not a "drop in" event). As an added bonus for participants, a drawing will be held at each location for a \$500.00 scholarship. The scholarship drawing will be held shortly after the program begins at 2:00 p.m. from among those present.

Anyone, from a soon-to-be high school graduate to a returning adult student, who is planning to attend any postsecondary institution that participates in the Federal Title IV Aid programs during the 2014-2015 academic year can benefit from attendance. This includes public, private, technical, community, proprietary and career colleges.



Pre-registration for the event is strongly encouraged to ensure that each site has the resources needed to assist all participants. To do so, log on to www.osfa.la.gov/CollegeGoalSunday.shtml and click on "Register". The site also provides detailed information including a listing of specific tax and income records and documentation that participants will need to bring to the event.

College Goal Sunday Louisiana is sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), and the Council of Student Body Presidents (COSBP) with assistance from the Louisiana Gear-Up program with funding from USA Funds and the College Access Challenge Grant.

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.us.

2014 Louisiana College Goal Sunday site locations:

[Alexandria](#)

[Louisiana State University-Alexandria](#)

Brumfield Caffey Ballroom

First Floor Student Center

Alexandria, LA 71302

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February 16 is College Goal Sunday in Louisiana *continued*

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge Community College
Location TBD

Southern University
Location TBD

Bossier City/Shreveport

Bossier Parish Community College
Building D, Room 215
Bossier City, LA 71111

Southern University at Shreveport
Jesse Stone Lecture Hall

Hammond

Southeastern Louisiana University
Fayard Hall - Main Lobby
Hammond, LA 70402

Houma

Fletcher Technical Community College
Main Campus (1407 Hwy. 311)
Room 104
Schriever, LA 70395

**T r a i l b l a z e r
V o l u n t e e r s
h e l p o u t w i t h
r e g i s t r a t i o n
a t
C o l l e g e
G o a l
S u n d a y 2 0 1 3 .**



Lafayette

University of Louisiana Lafayette
Location TBD

Lake Charles

SOWELA Technical Community College
Arts and Humanities Bldg.
First Floor Multi-Purpose Room

Monroe

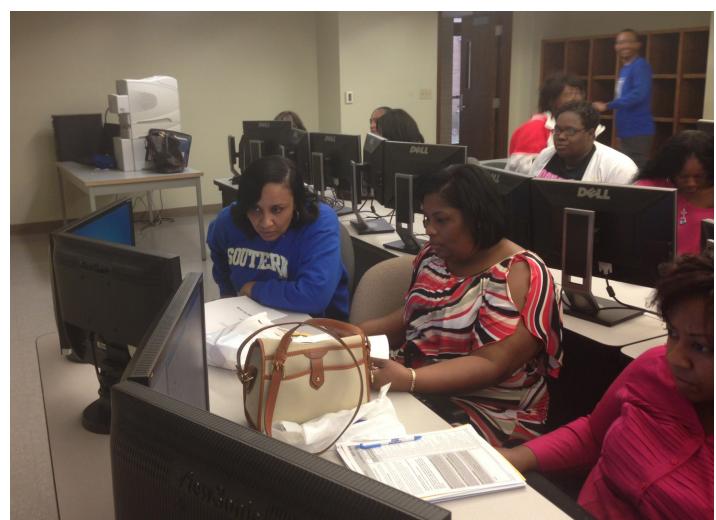
Louisiana Delta Community College
Monroe Campus – 7500 Millhaven Road
Louisiana Purchase Building, Third floor Room 310
Monroe, LA 71201

New Orleans

Dillard University
DUICEF HALL, Room 106
New Orleans, LA 70122

Xavier University

University Center
McCaffrey Ballroom on Drexel Dr.
New Orleans, LA 70125



F i n a n c i a l A i d P r o f e s s i o n a l s h e l p C o l l e g e G o a l S u n d a y 2 0 1 3 a t t e n d e e s f i l l o u t t h e F A F S A o n l i n e a t S o u t h e r n U n i v e r s i t y i n B a t o n R o u g e .

2013-2014 TOPS Tech Early START Billing Update

Since the elimination of funding for the Louisiana Early Start Program, TOPS Tech Early Start has continued to increase in enrollment each year. TOPS Tech Early Start payments for Academic year 2011-2012 totaled \$86,300. For Academic year 2012-2013 payments totaling \$862,500 was made to 29 schools on behalf of 3,974 students. During Fall 2013 alone, payments totaling \$714,700 have been made to 30 schools on behalf of 4,035 students.

TOPS Tech Early Start provides up to \$600 per academic year for eligible 11th or 12th grade public high school students to concurrently enroll for up to six credit hours per semester at a Public college in a vocational course of study leading to an industry-based certification in a Top Demand Occupation.

A recent review of the TOPS Tech Early Start Qualifying Top Demand Occupations revealed that the use of the 4-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code is more relevant for TOPS Tech Early Start purposes. Schools may enroll qualified students in any course taught by their school that is listed under the approved 4-digit CIP code. (A complete list of programs under each CIP can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/default.aspx?y=55>).

Should you have questions or need assistance with TOPS Tech Early Start, contact Caleshia Clark at 225-219-7708 or Caleshia.Clark@la.gov.

Louisiana Connect Update

Last month two important cost calculators were added to the public pages section of the Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning Portal: an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Calculator and a College Cost Estimator.

These tools are provided to help users understand the actual price of college and how families can afford it.

Users should begin by completing the EFC Calculator to get a sense of their federal student aid eligibility. By simply plugging in the EFC result into the College Cost Estimator user can determine how much additional money will still be needed to meet the costs associated with attending the Louisiana 2 or 4-year college specified. Users can also enter funding sources to address the gap including anticipated grants, scholarships, 529 savings and loans to estimate the net cost.

Also last month, ConnectEDU (CDU) conducted a one-hour online training session for non-public school counselors. The training included a review of past difficulties and pitfalls encountered with data loading; formatting and importing data; the importance of the demographic file; finding data in Louisiana Connect; navigating to manage student data (Community Administrators only); and manually editing data once imported.

The training was recorded and is now in the Louisiana Connect Support Portal. Users can access it by using this link: <https://support.connectedu.net/Louisiana/training-center.html>. It may also be accessed by going to the Support Portal Training Center tab. It is under the Counselors and Administrators tab as “Data Import for Non-Public Schools Training”.

Kennedy Touts “Explosive Growth” of START Saving Program

Speaking last month at a joint meeting between the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, State Treasurer John N. Kennedy highlights “explosive growth” in the state’s 529 college savings program. The fund has grown from about \$2 million in 1999 to around \$460 million today.

The Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust program, or START, is a state-sponsored trust fund operated by LOSFA that allows parents to put money away with the benefit of having the state match those dollars.

A report from Legislative Auditor Daryl Purpera’s Office shows that the program, administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), is in good financial health.

The state matches between 2 percent and 14 percent of all deposits based on the adjusted gross income of the account owner. Account owners can choose the level of risk for the funds they invest, ranging from a secure

interest rate to stock market funds. All investments are managed by the state treasurer and administered by LOSFA. Additionally up to \$2,400.00 in deposits (\$4,800.00 for married couples filing jointly) can be deducted from taxable income reported to the state. Account owners who deposit less than the maximum per account in any one (1) year may carry over the unused portion of the exemption to future years.

The number of accounts increased from just over 32,000 five years ago to 45,182 active accounts today, including 3,272 new accounts opened between 2011 and 2012, the report said.

Gov. Bobby Jindal’s financial disclosure reports show the governor is an active participant in the program, routinely contributing money to accounts opened on behalf of his three children, Selia, Shaan and Slade.

Visit <http://www.startsaving.la.gov> for more information about the START program.

Louisiana GEAR UP Conducts College Application Week

During the week of November 11 - 15, 2013, the Louisiana GEAR UP program conducted its College Application Week pilot program.

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC) is a national American Council on Education (ACE) initiative whose goal is to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply for college. Its first initiative to make this vision a reality was starting College Application Week. College Application Week actually began as “College Appreciation Day” through GEAR UP North Carolina in 2005. Currently, the ACAC takes place in 24 states and the District of Columbia.

The program was launched in 12 Louisiana parishes at 18 different high schools. These schools were Florien, Farmerville, Bastrop, Mangham, Rayville, Avoyelles, Bunkie, Broadmoor, Glen Oaks, Scotlandville, Renew City Park, Renew West Bank, East St. John, West St. John, Plaquemine, White Castle, Jeanerette and Westgate high schools. Louisiana GEAR UP partnered with Lafayette GEAR UP, who oversees the same program at seven of its own schools, including Acadiana, Comeaux, Carenco, Lafayette, Early College, Northside and David Thibodaux Stem Magnet Academy.

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College Application Week *continued*

Emphasis was placed on students who would be the first in their families to attend college, low-income students or students who wouldn't otherwise have considered applying to college for various reasons.

Applying to college can be a daunting and overwhelming task for many high school students. There's a plethora of information available, but students don't know what's pertinent for them. Programs like College Application Week help high school seniors navigate the complex college admissions process. Students are encouraged to apply for college and are provided assistance from enthusiastic representatives who want to see them succeed. In 2013, a total of 1,049 students from the two participating Louisiana GEAR UP programs completed at least one application for college admission.

Participants in Louisiana College Application Week were asked to rank the top challenges they felt they would face if they wanted to attend college. Participants were concerned with getting accepted into their college(s) of choice, which included having the necessary ACT/SAT score and GPA/high school grades set by the colleges. Students were also concerned about how they were going to pay for college and about finding out what kind of financial aid would be available to them if they were to enroll.

According to the 2013 Louisiana College Application Week Student Survey, 87 percent of students who participated in LA GEAR UP's College Application Week chose to apply to in-state colleges while 13 percent chose to apply to out-of-state schools.

Approximately 38 percent of participants applied to 4-year public institutions while 32 percent applied

to 2-year public institutions. Another 22 percent of participants applied to private institutions, and 8 percent applied to technical institutions.

Approximately 64 percent of students hadn't applied to any colleges or universities prior to Louisiana College Application Week. When researching prospective colleges and universities approximately two thirds of the participants utilized the Louisiana Connect Portal. The Louisiana Connect Portal provides students with information about different colleges including statistics, costs, available scholarships and other financial aid options.

At the end of Louisiana College Application Week students were encouraged to provide feedback about their experiences. Participants enjoyed learning about college in general and having the opportunity to speak to different college representatives. Students also liked having help with the application process and having time to complete their college applications during school hours. Students were also happy to receive scholarship and financial aid information.

The Louisiana GEAR UP College Application Week would not have been possible without assistance from the following organizations: Career Compass, ConnectEDU, Council of Enrollment Management Offices, Louisiana Board of Regents, Louisiana Department of Education, Louisiana Education Loan Authority, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, Louisiana School Counselors Association, statewide and partnership GEAR UP programs, TRIO/Education Talent Search Programs in Louisiana and Louisiana Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.



GEAR UP 2013 Contest Winners

In the fall 2013 Essay Contest, GEAR UP students were offered five college application essay prompts courtesy of the Common Application. The writing prompts, from learning from failure to the transition to adulthood, were designed to elicit the level of writing expected of rising first-year college students. Eleventh and twelfth-grade students at every GEAR UP school were given the opportunity to win a first, second, or third-place cash award. Student responses were frequently poignant and surprising in their range of experience.

Consider this compelling introduction by Florien High School's Cheyenne Herrington:

Have you ever experienced a point in your life when it seemed like everything had gotten easy? I know it sounds too good to be true, but trust me, it happens. I was living the life of a normal kid who played normal sports and lived at home with my normal family. Everything was supposedly going just as it should. It wasn't until later that I realized my life was meant for more than just going through the motions . . .

And this insightful reflection and historical reference by Mikailah Smith, a Red River High School student:

Early on in life, I learned that nothing is ever "given" to you in the real world. This not only informed me about the reality of adulthood,

but it motivated me to work hard for the things that I wanted. It also revealed to me the big responsibilities that are in the world today. The quote, "There is no substitute for hard work," by Thomas A. Edison, really points out how there's nothing better to give than hard work . . .

How about this heart-warmer by Amanda Smith, Broadmoor High School, whose baseball injury required surgery and physical therapy:

My brace came in a few days later, and I was able to begin running. I was back on the road to playing again. I was working with a physical trainer that pushed me to my limits. One of the biggest things that I gained from him was the feeling of love when helping people. That's when I made the decision to make the best of my experience and become an athletic trainer. I want to help people in a way that will change their outlook on their athletics . . .

Don't they all just make you want you to turn the page and keep reading? Our special thanks to the volunteer judges at the 29 GEAR UP schools across the state for doing just that. Without the support of the teachers who administer and judge the essays, the contest would not be possible.



From College Fairs to College Applications

Deciding what to do after high school might be a daunting task for some, but for Natasha Smith, a Red River senior, the decision is simple. "My plan is to attend Nicholls State and study nursing," she says.

Natasha was one of over 320 students browsing Red River's October 30, 2013 College/Career Fair, one of many LACRAO events hosted in GEAR UP schools. More than 20 representatives from public and private universities, the Armed Forces, and LOSFA provided postsecondary education information at this annual event.

With his do-or-die attitude, John Kyle Wren, Red River guidance counselor and LA GEAR UP On-Site School Coordinator, emphasized the importance of helping students prepare now for life after high school—especially if they want to attend college. Wren showed obvious pride in Natasha and other Explorers' Club members who hosted the event by greeting participants, lending a helping hand, and taking photographs.

At Red River High School, everyone gets in on the act, including the teachers who decorated their classroom doors in anticipation of Louisiana College Access Week (LCAW), which followed on the heels of the college fair.



In anticipation of LCAW, Red River teachers decorated their classroom doors to reflect the colleges they attended.



Natasha Smith, Nicholls-bound high school senior



LOSFA would like to wish you a Happy New Year! We look forward to working with you in 2014!

LOOK! Look for more information in our February LOSFA Loop for our annual Call-in Night!

November Election of Explorers' Club State Officers



Congratulations to the following LA GEAR UP students for winning the GEAR UP Explorers' Club State Officer Competition:

- Shania Dauterive, Westgate High
- Darian Johnson, Bastrop High
- Brandon Jones, Scotlandville Magnet High
- Darius Spurlock, Scotlandville Magnet High
- D'Anna Williams, IMSA West

Students assumed state leadership roles when they gathered for a strategic planning session in Baton Rouge on November 23, 2013.

The officer team will assume additional responsibilities and time commitments outside of local club functions as they work toward fulfilling the goals of the peer leadership academic-year club to promote a college-going culture.

Each member of the officer team has college aspirations. Darian has applied to both the University of Louisiana at Monroe and Southern University, and Shania is waiting to hear from Northwestern State University and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

As part of the statewide competition, students submitted personal essays. The excerpts below provide a glimpse into how these new state officers will meet their leadership responsibilities:



Shania Dauterive: I have grown to love and appreciate the lessons that the club has taught me through GEAR UP. One of the most important lessons is that it is important to plan for your future by exceeding your education further than high school.



Darian Johnson: My perspective for the [leadership] team is order and structure . . . I want the team to have fun but at the same time I want it to be structured.



Brandon Jones: As a young male I can help motivate and inspire other males about the importance of a college education to have a better future.

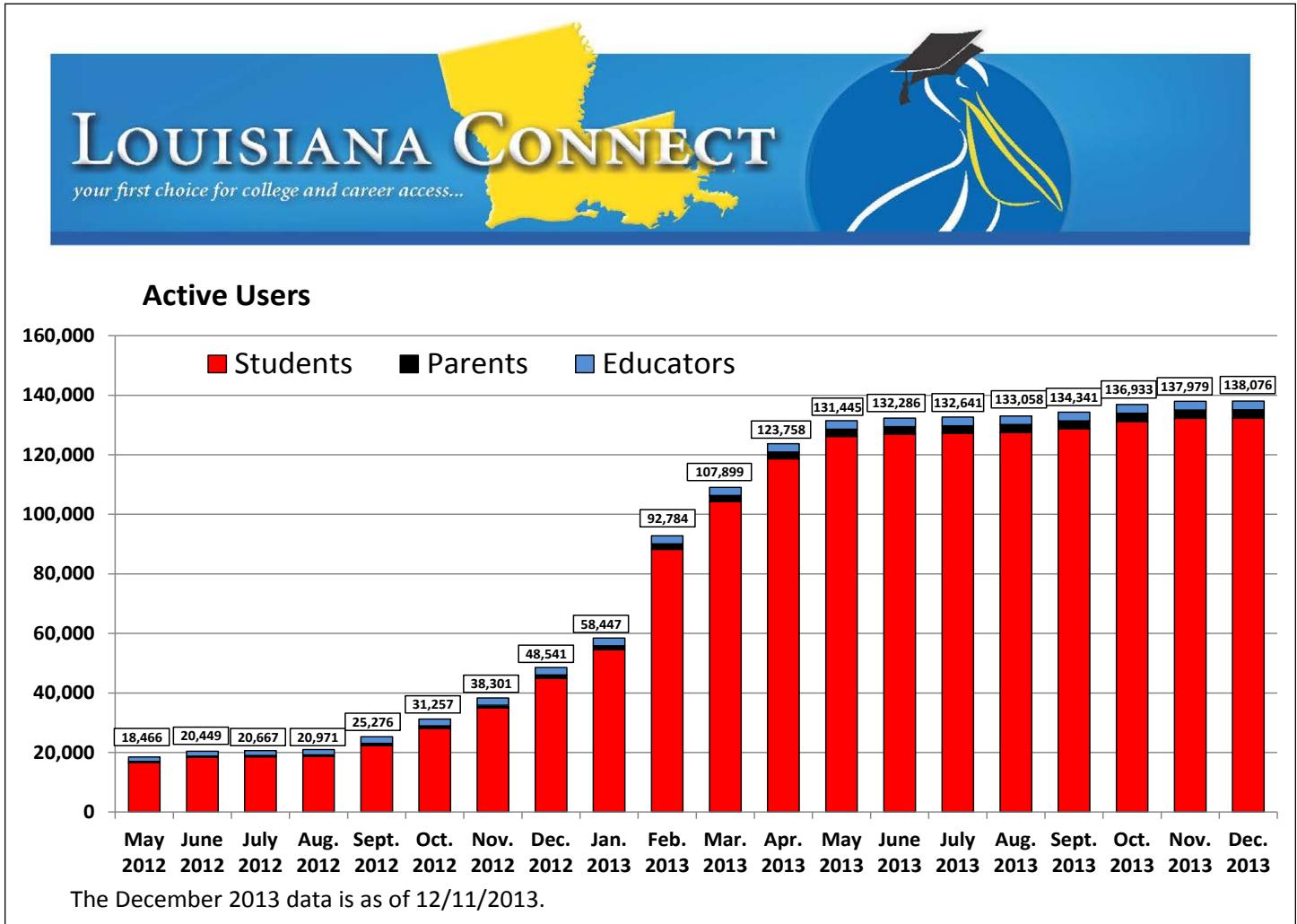
Darius Spurlock: My interests are music, art, and volunteering, all of which I participate in on a regular basis. I have very good leadership skills and care for others; many people say I have the big brother syndrome.

D'Anna Williams: I am open-minded, hardworking, passionate about what I do, dependable, friendly, and willing to do whatever it takes. Every summer I have dedicated a week to being a camp counselor at an overnight camp.



State officers are working under the direction of Timenee Thomas, a former GEAR UP student and graduate of Louisiana Tech University, to organize the 2014 LA GEAR UP Explorers' Club State Conference and Leadership Summit, which will be held in the spring of 2014.

The Conference is an annual event in which students highlight the projects their clubs have engaged in throughout the school year. The 2012-13 academic-year Conference was held in March 2013 at the Baton Rouge Marriott with over 180 10th and 11th graders in attendance.



The current total of 138,076 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 132,301 Students, 2,822 Parents, 1,546 Community Administrators, 521 Professional School Counselors, 877 Teachers, and nine Scholarship Managers.

LOSFA's Social Media Sites



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



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



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



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA



Louisiana Office of
Student Financial Assistance

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.