



LOSFA LOOP

June 2011 Edition

Volume 4-6

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Although hurricane season is upon us and the Mississippi River continues to threaten to flood certain areas of the state, I believe it is important to remember that there are good things happening in Louisiana. Last month, our FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Team had an opportunity to educate many of our colleagues throughout the country when it was able to take the FLY Tour to San Antonio, TX for an audience of representatives from approximately 40 states (Page 7) at the College Goal Sunday Best Practices Forum. The presentation was very well received to the point that college access professionals from as far away as Hawaii are requesting that the FLY Team come to their states.

Despite the enormous success of the FLY Tour and the national acclaim it has garnered for our state, I am even more excited about the impending Louisiana Connect Portal (Page 3). As Louisiana's First Choice for College Access, it's vital that we're instrumental in ensuring that our middle and high school students have access to the resources they need to facilitate their matriculation into and successful completion of college. Our objective is to connect students to remediation, enrichment, internships, volunteer opportunities and long-term career options within our state.

Last month, I extended congratulations to the high school graduating class of 2011. The graduation ceremony is called "commencement" because commencement means "beginning" -- hopefully the beginning of a successful college experience. Commencement also signals the beginning of summer; a break for students, counselors and teachers, but a very busy time for our colleagues in higher education as preparations are made to ensure students have the funds they need to pay for college. We are committed to getting you the information regarding funding levels as soon as it becomes available to us. We have successfully worked with the Board of Regents to determine the GO Grant award amounts for 2011: \$1,000, \$500, and \$250. It is our highest priority to get the correct TOPS award amounts out to the financial aid offices as quickly as we can get them from the proper authority. As you know, the amount TOPS pays an institution for a student's award is directly tied to the tuition charged, therefore we are closely monitoring the appropriations process for proposed tuition increases, as well as any action taken regarding tuition increases authorized under the GRAD Act last year. We expect the GRAD Act amounts to be authorized upon approval by the Board of Regents at their June meeting. We sincerely appreciate the patience you exhibit during this time. Next month we will detail any new changes based upon the information we receive.

--Melanie

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LOSFA Outreach Event Schedule

Monday, June 6

Louisiana Tech University – Ruston – 1-2:15pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Monday, June 20

McNeese State University – Lake Charles – 1pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Monday, June 27

McNeese State University – Lake Charles – 1pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Nicholls State University – Thibodaux – 1:30pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Sunday, July 10 - Tuesday, July 12

Northwestern State University Trailblazer Camp - Natchitoches

Sunday, July 17 - Tuesday, July 19

Nicholls State University Trailblazer Camp - Thibodaux

Monday, July 25

Louisiana Tech University – Ruston – 1-2:15pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Monday, August 1

Louisiana Tech University – Ruston – 1-2:15pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Nicholls State University – Thibodaux – 1:30pm – LA Gear Up Camp

Monday, August 15

FLY Team Performance – New Orleans – Delgado Community College, City Park Campus



John R. Justice Loan Repayment Program Deadline Reminder

The deadline for applying for the John R. Justice Loan Repayment Program is June 30th. The program provides qualified Louisiana public defenders and assistant district attorneys with assistance in paying back student loans. The State of Louisiana has capped annual awards for qualified prosecutors at \$5,000 and the annual awards for qualified public defenders at \$10,000. The aggregate amount for each individual public defender and prosecutor is not to exceed \$60,000 per recipient.

For complete information or to apply, go to <http://www.osfa.la.gov/jrjustice.htm> or call Linda Williams at (225) 219-7595 or email at lwilliams@osfa.la.gov.



Louisiana Connect Portal Contract Awarded

ConnectEDU, a national company with designed portals currently being used by over 2.5 million students in 2,500 high schools and 345 colleges, has been awarded a contract to provide the State of Louisiana with an interactive Web-based portal that includes college access and career readiness services to all Louisiana students.

The services that will be incorporated into the soon to be launched Web site include, but will not be limited to:

- ▶ Creation and tracking of a 5-year plan (Individual Graduation Plan) beginning in the 8th grade as required by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE);
- ▶ Curriculum tracking (Core 4/Regents/Career/Taylor Opportunity Program for Students/others as defined by students and/or required by law);
- ▶ Scholarship searches;
- ▶ Internship matches;
- ▶ College application;
- ▶ Financial aid resources;
- ▶ Financial literacy resources;
- ▶ Student loan resources and tracking; and
- ▶ Job market trends (national and state).

Funding for the new contract is derived from a federal grant, The College Access Challenge Grant, which is administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) as designated by Governor Bobby Jindal.

The contract was awarded to ConnectEDU through a competitive process as the result of a nationwide Request for Proposals issued by the Louisiana Office of State Purchasing on behalf of LOSFA.

ConnectEDU is a national leader in delivering college and career planning portals that serve the needs of K-12 students, postsecondary students, non-traditional students, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions and state agency partners in an easy-to-understand format. The objective of the portal is to provide a tool that will enable students and counselors to successfully manage their education and to launch their careers with a personalized tool that leverages the wisdom and support of the adults who also play key roles in each student's success.

LOSFA is a state agency and the administrative arm of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission and the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority. Among the programs administered by LOSFA are Louisiana's premier merit-based scholarship program, the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS); the TOPS Tech scholarship program; the state's 529 college savings plan, the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) Saving program; the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship program; the Early Start and TOPS Tech Early Start dual enrollment programs; the Louisiana Go Grant need based aid program; the Chafee Educational Training Voucher (ETV) program; and the John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment program. LOSFA's mission is to promote and provide college access and to remain Louisiana's first choice for college access information and assistance. LOSFA is also extremely active in the dissemination of college access and financial literacy information within the state with a concentration on assisting students from low income families and first

continued from Page 3

generation college attendees in locating and obtaining the resources necessary to pursue and complete a postsecondary education. To these ends, LOSFA regularly partners with other entities such as the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Louisiana Department of Education, the Gear Up and Trio programs and the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

START gets an assist from Grapevine Communications

In February 2011, Grapevine Communications, a public relations firm made up of LSU marketing students offered the services of eight (8) public relations consultants to research, strategize, write and design materials and plan events pertaining to the START Saving Program.

“In addition to wanting to provide practical marketing experience to a group of motivated college students,” David Roberts, LOSFA's Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, said, “I was also interested in their perspective. We’re always open to new and innovative ideas regarding how we can make more Louisiana citizens aware of the great benefits that the START Saving Program has to offer. This group exceeded my expectations.”

Over the past three months, Grapevine Communications achieved the following for the START Saving Program:

- ▶ Made arrangements for David Roberts to appear on Louisiana Public Radio on the Jim Engster show.
- ▶ Attended and displayed information at the Parents Magazine Camp Expo. They solicited companies for prizes to give away at the booth.
- ▶ Arranged for David Roberts to be on Baton Rouge Channel 2's Morning Show.
- ▶ Conducted a Jingle Contest.
- ▶ Created two (2) START Coloring Sheets with START information for parents on the back.
- ▶ Created Kindergarten Graduation Folders with START information.
- ▶ Produced and distributed a press release for the Jump\$tart Poster Contest.
- ▶ Submitted and had printed a ‘Letter to the Editor’ (The Advocate).
- ▶ Developed a social media account.
- ▶ Contacted businesses in Baton Rouge to donate to future contests. Funds would be used to open START accounts for contest winners.
- ▶ Attended the LOSFA FLY Tour at McKinley Magnet High School in Baton Rouge and helped distribute materials.

Roberts said the partnership worked out so well, there are plans to continue the project next year.



TOPS eligibility determination for 2011 graduates

TOPS initial eligibility for the 2011 graduates for academic year 2011-2012 will begin Thursday, June 2, 2011. This will be the first complete academic year for processing graduates and TOPS continuing students on LOSFA's new Louisiana Award System (LAS). The system provides students access to their individual data, while schools have access to the data for their student population.

As records for the 2011 high school graduates are processed, those who are determined eligible will appear on the Academic Year (AY) 2012 Master Roster as New Eligible. When postsecondary schools submit end of term grades, TOPS continuing student eligibility processes and the updated student status is also reflected on the TOPS Master Roster. The initial TOPS AY2012 TOPS Master Roster became available to the schools on May 27, 2011.

Initial eligibility determinations for TOPS applicants begin when LOSFA receives the following: final grades and graduation certification from the high schools through the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), Student Transcript System (STS); either a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or TOPS online application; and scores from ACT and/or SAT. Parish school boards and non-public high schools have until June 15, 2011 to submit transcript data for the 2011 high school graduates to the LDOE.

Special populations, such as home study, out-of-state, out-of-country, military, non-graduate, and returning student applicants also process weekly. Because these students process with alternate eligibility requirements, the student is responsible for ensuring that certain required documents, such as ACT and/or SAT scores, out-of-state and out-of-country final transcripts with graduation date and completed TOPS Affidavit of Residency, are received timely by LOSFA. The TOPS Initial Eligibility requirements for special populations, along with the other initial and continuing eligibility requirements can be found on our Web site, www.osfa.la.gov.

TOPS weekly processing runs each Thursday night, and the updated Master Roster is available to the schools on the LAS at www.osfa.la.gov each Friday morning. Students also have access to their personal updated TOPS status, and are encouraged to create an account and monitor that status via the LAS at www.osfa.la.gov. TOPS award notification letters are mailed each week to newly eligible, reinstated, and ineligible students after the Thursday processing.

Students who have questions concerning their TOPS eligibility can check their initial and continuing status via the LAS at www.osfa.la.gov, or can contact a Public Information and Communication Representative at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012 or 225-219-1012 or via email at custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Jerri Mack graduation speaker for Louisiana New School Academy in Baton Rouge



Jerri Mack, LOSFA's Public Information and Communications Supervisor, served as the commencement speaker for the Louisiana New School Academy in Baton Rouge on May 27th.

The school was celebrating its 15th year and had 15 graduates. In addition to graduation, the event served as a promotion ceremony. Students going into the next grade were also honored.



"I was very honored when Mrs. Thompson asked me to speak at Louisiana New School Academy's graduation. They are a great group of students ready to begin the next chapter of their lives. I was so happy to be a part of their special day," Mack said.

At top left, Jerri Mack speaks at the Louisiana New School Academy's graduation ceremony. Below, she stands with school principal Valeria Thompson.

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>



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA

Draft Cohort Default Rates for FY 2009 Released

While the national cohort default rate is expected to increase again for the second year in a row, LOSFA's draft cohort default rate continued to decrease.

Last month, the Department of Education (DOE) announced that the national draft 2-year cohort default rate for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009 was calculated at 8.9%. This represents a 27% increase from the 7.1% rate reported for Federal Fiscal Year 2008.

LOSFA's draft cohort default rate for FFY 2009 was 7.6 %, a 13.6% decrease from the FFY 2008 rate of 8.8%, which itself was a 12% drop from the previous year.

In February of each year, DOE issues the draft rates for each institution, so schools will have the opportunity to review their draft rates and challenge the calculations reported. The individual draft rates are not made public until all challenges are completed and the official rate is published in September.

The cohort default rate for FFY 2009 represents the percentage of borrowers who entered repayment between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009, who then defaulted prior to October 1, 2010.

FLY Tour goes National!

LOSFA's FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Team made its first stop outside of Louisiana on May 17th in San Antonio, Texas, at the College Goal Sunday Best Practices Forum. In May of every year, representatives from approximately 40 states convene for the College Goal Sunday Best Practices Forum. It's an opportunity for states that conduct College Goal Sunday to share best practices, learn from one another and improve their programs. During this year's forum, the FLY Team was the featured presentation. This was an opportunity to show representatives from other states what Louisiana has to offer. The completion of the show was greeted with a standing ovation. The FLY Tour makes a stop in St. Louis, MO, at the NCAN (National College Access Network) Conference in September.



For more information, contact the
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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.