



From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

"The measure of who we are is what we do with what we have."

Vince Lombardi

June brings us to the end of a journey and to the beginning of a quest. We started with a mission to take our message directly to students in as many ways as possible. We pooled our collective talents to match what we needed to do with the expertise we possessed. In doing so we found that we inspired students to do the same. As we look back at the school year in review to measure what we've accomplished, we realize that we have a lot of firsts to celebrate:

Summer Bridge Programs for rising juniors and seniors

College Kick-Off Days

Expansion from College Application Week to College Application month

Senior Game Plan Commitments

FAFSA Pin Assistance

FAFSA Completion Project District Partnerships

Expansion of College Goal Sunday from one day to multiple pre and post events

Text Messaging Initiative to high school seniors and college freshmen

Expansion of statewide school and community events to concentrated and intensive services

Introduction of Area Leadership Programs on university campuses

Expansion of FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Tours to university campuses with the addition of on-site admissions, recruitment, and admission status checks

SAR (Student Aid Report) assistance for parents and students

Expansion of TOPS Retention Seminars

Introduction of the GO Center concept in partnership with the East Baton Rouge Parish Library

College Acceptance Days

GEAR UP Youth Congress

Google Hangout Meetings with GEAR UP Statewide Officers

Planning Meetings with GEAR UP Statewide Officers and Legislative Delegation Members

ACT Boot Camps

Workshops on Avoiding Summer Melt

Trailblazer Leadership Training

Our first GEAR UP graduating class since the grant has been under the direction of LOSFA

We extend a heartfelt thank you to each of you for your cooperative spirit and your willingness to assist with paving the way for our students to succeed. The students we reached together inspire us to continue to do all that we can with what we are privileged to have.

continued on page 2

In this edition. . .

From the Executive Director's Desk
LA GEAR UP Day at Capitol
TOPS Processing Begins June 11

1 -2
2 -4
5-6

College Signing Day
LA GEAR UP Class of 2015
Spurlock to Participate in Leadership Academy

5,9
7-8
10

From the Desk of the Executive Director (continued)

May this parting advice serve as a pearl of wisdom for our students and an inspiration for those of us who serve:

"Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great

work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it."

Steve Jobs

Best,
S.

LA GEAR UP Day at the Capitol

Governor Jindal and the Louisiana House of Representatives declared May 11 as Louisiana Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (Louisiana GEAR UP) Day. In the Proclamation, Governor Jindal states, "Whereas Louisiana GEAR UP currently serves 3,000 high school seniors in 30 schools in 12 Louisiana Parishes; and Whereas the State of Louisiana is committed to providing a quality education for all students and helping them achieve their highest potential, I, Bobby Jindal, Governor

of the State of Louisiana, do hereby proclaim May 11, 2015, as Louisiana GEAR UP Day in the State of Louisiana." Representative Robert Johnson personally presented Dr. Tireka Cobb, assistant director of LA GEAR UP, with a resolution from the Louisiana House of Representatives. The resolution states, "Whereas, it is appropriate to recognize Monday, May 11, 2015, as Louisiana GEAR UP Day at the state capitol and to welcome the outstanding student leaders from Louisiana GEAR UP as they share how this exceptional program has impacted them and over twenty thousand low income students within the past twelve years."



Dr. Tireka Cobb (left), receives the House Resolution for LA GEAR UP at the Capitol from Representative Robert A. Johnson, District 28. (Above) Representative Stephen E. Pugh, District 73 talks to a group of LA GEAR UP students while they tour the Louisiana State Capitol.

continued on page 3

LA GEAR UP Day at the Capitol (continued)

Louisiana GEAR UP student leaders and state officers gathered in the State Capitol Rotunda from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. to celebrate Louisiana GEAR UP Day by sharing with legislators, their staffers, and the general public their schools' display boards describing the impact the program has made on them, their school, and community. Student leaders wore name badges that not only introduced who they were and what school they attended, but the badges also included the name of the postsecondary institution they would be attending during the summer or later in the fall of 2015.

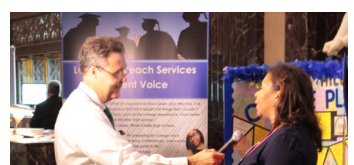
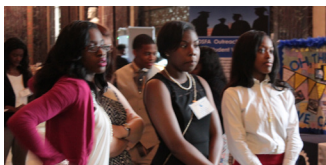
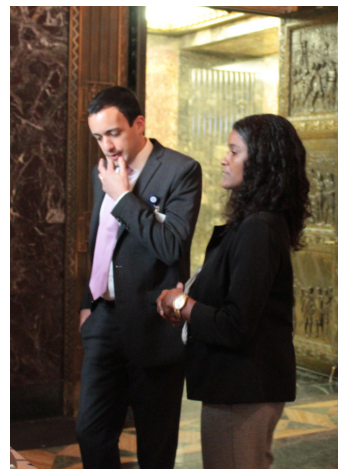
Avoyelles High, East Feliciana High, Rayville High, and Pleasant Hill High School had display boards featured in the Capitol Rotunda during the event. The display boards from these schools were selected at the 2015 Louisiana GEAR UP Explorers' Club Summit for outstanding display design, creativity, and content. These boards illustrated 2015 Louisiana GEAR UP supported activities, such as college campuses they visited/toured around the state during the academic year.

Explorers' Club state officers Oscar McClain, Governor from Scotlandville High, Ariel Battley, Lieutenant Governor from Glen Oaks High, and Darius Spurlock, Attorney General from Scotlandville High also attended the event.

Explorers' Clubs are student-run organizations that provide peer leadership opportunities as a component of the LA GEAR UP program. Explorers' Club members are charged with making wise academic and behavioral decisions leading them to success in postsecondary education. They are also tasked with helping other students at their school make wise decisions as well.

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a federal college access initiative providing students and families the support and resources they need for college success. While at the Capitol, LA GEAR UP staff discussed with visitors and legislators what services are offered to high school seniors in the program.





LOSFA Plans to Begin TOPS Processing for 2015 High School Graduates on June 11

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) plans to begin TOPS initial eligibility processing for 2015 high school graduates on June 11, 2015.

TOPS evaluation and eligibility determination can only be made for those students whose parents granted consent for LOSFA to receive their academic data. Parents who initially denied such consent, or failed to turn in their consent forms last fall and now wish to grant consent should:

- go to www.osfa.la.gov
- click the red "Forms" button on the menu on the left side of the homepage
- click "Scholarships/Grants (TOPS) Forms"
- download and print the "Consent Form"
- sign and return the form to the student's high school

If consent was initially denied and the student is now over 18, the student may download the "18-Year-Old

Consent Form", sign and return it to their high school. If consent was already given by a parent, the student does not need to submit another form after turning 18.

Students with an active "Louisiana Award System" account on the LOSFA Website will be notified of their TOPS eligibility or ineligibility by Email upon determination of their status. To register and create an account on the "Louisiana Award System":

- Go to www.osfa.la.gov
- Click on the blue "Louisiana Award System" button on the menu on the left side of the homepage
- Click "Register" and follow the instructions.

Once signed into the Louisiana Award System, the student should immediately enter, or update, their contact information as all future updates to their award status will be sent to the Email address provided. **LOSFA will no longer notify TOPS applicants of their eligibility status by mail.**

College Signing Day

Zachary High School held a College Signing Day on May 1 for their seniors. Seniors were asked to wear college shirts of schools where they were accepted or would be attending on National Decision/Signing Day. 200 students and staff participated in the event.

Here's what students said about the event:

"College signing day was an enjoyable experience because high school students were able to showcase their accomplishments of being accepted into various colleges. It was great to see so many students seeking a secondary education to better their futures."

-Quinton Townsel, attending Louisiana Tech University Honors College

"College signing day was an exciting experience for me personally because I was happy to see how many of Zachary High School students were continuing on with their education. Seeing all of my classmates in shirts that represented the colleges they have been accepted to made our future endeavors become real."

-Bailey Valentine, attending University of Louisiana at Lafayette

"I was so excited that the school planned College Signing Day, especially for those of us who aren't athletes. It was nice to be recognized for something as life-

continued on page 9



LOSFA Plans to Begin TOPS Processing for 2015 High School Graduates on June 11

TOPS evaluation and eligibility determination can only be made for those students whose parents granted consent for LOSFA to receive their academic data.

Parents who initially denied such consent, or failed to turn in their consent forms and now wish to grant consent should:

LOSFA Consent Form:

Go to www.osfa.la.gov

Click the red “Forms” button on the menu to the left side of the homepage

Click
“Scholarships/Grants (TOPS) Forms”

Download and print
the “Consent Form”

Sign and return the form to the
student’s high school

If consent was initially denied and the student is now over 18, the student may download the “18-Year-Old Consent Form”, sign and return it to their high school.

Students with an active “Louisiana Award System” account on the LOSFA Website will be notified of their TOPS eligibility or ineligibility by Email upon determination of their status. To register and create an account on the “Louisiana Award System”:

LOSFA Award System:

Go to www.osfa.la.gov

Click on the blue “Louisiana Award System” button on the menu to the left side of the homepage

Click “Register” and
follow the instructions.

Once signed into the Louisiana Award System, the student should immediately enter, or update, their contact information as all future updates to their award status will be sent to the Email address provided. **LOSFA will no longer notify TOPS applicants of their eligibility status by mail.**

LA GEAR UP Class of 2015

Louisiana GEAR UP is proud to present the Class of 2015!

Students from LA GEAR UP schools around the state graduated during the month of May. There were over 2,900 graduates, many of whom received various public and private scholarships, including the LA GEAR UP Rewards for Success Scholarship totaling over \$23 million dollars. LA GEAR UP student leaders and officers received numerous honors at the various ceremonies, such as valedictorian, salutatorian, magna cum laude, summa cum laude and the principal's award. Many are expected to be TOPS recipients.

As a program whose mission is to provide the tools necessary for underrepresented students to become aware of and succeed in postsecondary education, LA GEAR UP staff would like to thank LOSFA, our administering agency, the Board of Regents, the Louisiana Department of Education, postsecondary, and other public and private partners for helping us serve these students, who are our future. Most importantly, LA GEAR UP would like to thank the Class of 2015 for being the best part of what we do!



LA GEAR UP Class of 2015 (continued)



College Signing Day (continued)

changing as college. I am very grateful to Zachary High and all its staff for an amazing 4 years of my life, and I hope I make them proud with my future accomplishments."

-Terri Honore, attending University of Louisiana at Monroe

"On college signing day it felt good to broadcast my future college ULL around school. I was able to be comfortable with my choice and know that I am prepared to take the next step in my life. College signing day is important because it allowed me to see the different universities my peers would be attending and opened me up to different type of schools."

- Endonezia Spears, attending University of Louisiana at Lafayette

"Wearing my shirt on college signing day brought a new wave of excitement for me, with the realization of college being so close! Also, seeing my classmates representing their colleges was exciting, because we've come so far together and now it is time for a new chapter. As I wore my LSU shirt, I felt so much pride to show all the underclassman what hard work can achieve



through high school."

-Gracen McDonald, attending Louisiana State University

"Wearing my ULM shirt on college signing day was eye opening. I got the chance to see where everyone was going, but I noticed that not many people were going to ULM. College signing day made me realize how different things will be by the Fall."

-Karlee Tate, attending University of Louisiana at Monroe

"I truly enjoyed college signing day because I was introduced to many different colleges that my classmates were attending. We got to show our school spirit for our future schools. This made me feel confident about taking the next

step in my life to further my education."

-Kendall Stewart, attending University of Louisiana at Lafayette

"The signing day was a great experience for everyone. It allowed all the seniors to take pride in their college decisions and their achievements while showing class spirit for a final time."

-Eddie Veal, attending Louisiana State University

Spurlock to Participate in GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy

Spurlock is one of 29 selected from a nationwide pool of applicants



Local resident, Darius D. Spurlock, has been chosen for the highly competitive GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy (GUALA), Class of 2016. The GUALA program identifies students with exceptional leadership potential and provides additional training and

tools to help them more effectively engage their peers, schools, and community in creating a college-going culture.

GEAR UP, or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is a federally funded college readiness and success program that provides services to approximately 551,000 students in low-income schools across 43 states and 1 territory. This region is served by Louisiana GEAR UP, which is based within the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), and currently serves over 3,000 students in 30 schools and 12 parishes across the state.

In order to better support the GEAR UP mission nationwide, the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) created the GUALA program, with the support of the Kresge Foundation. GUALA works to advance college and career readiness in communities by providing 12 months of training for Alumni Leaders on topics related to peer-to-peer outreach and mentoring, social media engagement, public speaking, and education policy.

Spurlock will participate in the year-long GUALA training program in order to better serve his GEAR UP community. As part of the program, Spurlock will

travel to Washington, DC for a week-long intensive leadership training, where he will interact with national policymakers and leaders.

“Mr. Spurlock’s countless contributions to the community make him a great fit for this position,” said LA GEAR UP Assistant Director, Dr. Tireka Cobb. “He is an advocate for higher education, and he promotes postsecondary education not only to his peers but to everyone he meets,” she continued.

Darius is an active member of the True Vine Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, LA where he has been involved in numerous church-related activities throughout the community. His most recent honor, the prestigious Scotlandville Magnet High School Principal’s Award, was presented to him for his dedication to excellence and peer leadership.

“While his accomplishments are many, Darius is most proud of being selected to share his GEAR UP story with over 2,000 GEAR UP directors, coordinators, and students at the 2014 National GEAR UP Conference held last summer in Washington, DC,” Cobb added.

“Darius Deonbre Spurlock embodies what Louisiana GEAR UP is all about and he is committed to helping the program achieve continued success in the future,” Cobb concluded.

For more information about Louisiana GEAR UP, please contact Dr. Tireka Cobb at LOSFA at 225-219-0920. To learn more about GUALA, please contact Alex Chough at NCCEP at 202-530-1135 or www.edpartnerships.org.

About Louisiana GEAR UP

In partnership with 12 Louisiana parishes, LA GEAR UP aims to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. Please visit our website at www.lagearup.com.

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.