

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Spring: verb (used without object), sprang or, often sprung; sprung; spring-ing.

“ to come into being by growth, as from a seed or germ, bulb, [root](#), etc.; grow, as plants. “

During the month of March our hearts and minds begin to anticipate the arrival of the season so aptly named as it is associated with new growth, longer days, warmer temperatures and the feeling of well-being that comes with witnessing the renewal of nature that is all around us. Here at LOSFA we were graced with a sneak-preview of the spirit of spring in the midst of the chill of winter: College Goal Sunday.

Okay, in February we told you about the value of College Goal Sunday and the collaborative spirit which abounds during this event. What we couldn't tell you about in February was the phenomenal growth that sprang forth from last year's event to this one. It truly put our team in a 'spring-like-state-of-mind'.

College Goal Sunday truly came into being by growth this year. Every (and I literally mean EVERY) site that existed in both 2013 and 2014 experienced growth—in most cases that growth was huge. The overall attendance went from 360 students served to 862 students served. Keep in mind that this means there were more participants in attendance because we only count student registrations—so this number doesn't include parents.

The most remarkable thing about the event wasn't the numbers though. It was: The thirst for knowledge and the desire for assistance evident in the eyes of parents and students; The pride in the eyes of the Trailblazers as they assisted peers; The willingness of the Council of Student Body Presidents (COSBP) to provide staff to serve; The savvy thinking on the part of Financial Aid staff to accommodate crowds much larger than the year before; The satisfaction of partners like Jump\$tart who gave out every Financial Literacy Playbook they had, and The feeling of accomplishment shown in the faces of the LOSFA staff as they surveyed the audience. It may have been winter outside but it was spring inside the hearts of all of us who come to work each day to serve students and families.

So if the sneak-preview of spring came in February, what's left to do in March? That's easy: The FLY Tour AND the GEAR UP Explorers' Club Conference!! Our talented LOSFA team will be touring the state this month to showcase what we think will be the best FLY Tour production ever! Our GEAR UP Explorers' Clubs will be showcasing their accomplishments in New Orleans while brushing arms with College Admissions personnel and COSBP student leaders!! We are just getting warmed up ☺ I'll tell you all about it in April!

Best-
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Louisiana College Goal Sunday Assists 862 Students with FAFSA Completion

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) and the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) hosted Louisiana's seventh annual College Goal Sunday statewide event on February 16, 2014, at twelve locations around the state. It was Louisiana's most successful College Goal Sunday event to date.

A total of 862 students/families received free assistance from financial aid professionals in completing the primary student financial aid form, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

LASFAA representatives provided a general financial aid overview and a preview of the FAFSA content. LOSFA representatives explained the TOPS processing cycle and how Louisiana Connect, the state's online college access and career planning portal can be maximized to compare the costs, course offerings and amenities of schools students are interested in attending as well as prospective employment opportunities and salary expectations for fields they are considering as majors.

Funding for Louisiana College Goal Sunday was provided by the College Access Challenge Grant and a grant from USA Funds. Thanks to these funds, one student attendee from each of the 12 locations won a \$500 scholarship. LOSFA was also able to award a \$500 scholarship to one of the 34 Trailblazer volunteers who helped staff the event. Volunteers also included Professional School Counselors and members of the Council of Student Body Presidents (COSBP).

As a special College Goal Sunday value-added benefit at the Baton Rouge Community College site, representatives of the Louisiana Jump\$tart Coalition were in attendance and provided valuable information on financial and school resources and money management tips for parents and soon-to-be first time college students.

Below is a list of participating sites and the scholarship winner from each site:

- Baton Rouge Community College
Jashawna Hayes, Career Academy
- Bossier Parish Community College
Daniel Rovell, Captain Shreve High School
- Dillard University
Nigel Palmer, KIPP Renaissance High School
- Fletcher Technical Community College
Ashlie Redaway, Thibodaux High School
- Louisiana Delta Community College
Chelsey Goodwin, Rayville High School
- Louisiana State University – Alexandria
Morgan Lemoine, Marksville High School
- Southeastern Louisiana University
Lakeisha Nicholes, Amite High School
- Southern University Baton Rouge
Zechariah Cameron, Zachary High School
- Southern University Shreveport
Jayla Washington, Captain Shreve High School
- SOWELA Technical Community College
Kaysha Wright, Lagrange High School
- University of Louisiana Lafayette
Dylan Davis, Breaux Bridge High School
- Xavier University of Louisiana
Jeremy Allen, De La Salle High School
- Trailblazer Scholarship Winner
Ryan Harmon from Minden High School

Louisiana College Goal Sunday



Louisiana College Goal Sunday



LOSFA's "FLY TOUR 2014: College Quest" Hits the Road This Month

LOSFA's fourth annual FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Tour will reprise the winning format used in years past to entertain and educate students on financial responsibility as well as a variety of LOSFA-administered student financial assistance programs.

The program is a dynamic theatrical presentation that uses poetry, music and drama to communicate the importance of students being financially literate and fiscally responsible as they prepare to embark upon their post-secondary education.

The theme of the 2014 FLY Tour is "College Quest." The program will address topics ranging from credit and money management to financial aid for college. The intent is to make high school students aware of how financial aid decisions made early in their lives can have a lasting impact on their futures. The production will also present information about support services available to students on college campuses and pre-college tasks that must be completed prior to the student's first day of classes.

Returning cast members from LOSFA's Public Information and Communications Division include Ebony Holmes, Britt Kelly and Kendra Woods. Joining the cast this year (and directing the 2014 show) is LOSFA's College Access Challenge Grant director, Nyetta Meaux.

Britt Kelly acts out a Math scene from the FLY Tour 2013.



Tour dates, times and locations are listed below:

Friday, March 21st

Noon – Crowne Plaza (Kenner)
LA Gear Up Leadership Summit

Monday, March 24th

9:30am – Union HS (Farmerville)

Tuesday, March 25th

10:45am – Marksville HS (Marksville)
2:30pm – East Feliciana HS (Jackson)

Wednesday, March 26th

8:15am – Westgate HS (New Iberia)
1:30pm – Jeanerette HS (Jeanerette)

Thursday, March 27th

9:25am – Northside HS (Lafayette)
1:00pm – Kaplan HS (Kaplan)

Friday, March 28th

9:00am – Abbeville HS (Abbeville)
1:00pm – Scotlandville HS (Baton Rouge)



Kendra Woods and Ebony Holmes play a bank customer and a bank officer in the Bank Scene from FLY Tour 2013.

LOSFA Conducts Annual Call-In Night and Facebook Chat

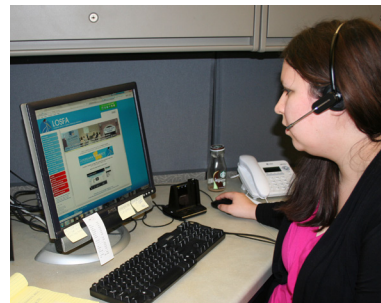
The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) conducted its thirteenth annual “Financial Aid Call-In Night” on Monday, February 10, from 6-9 p.m.

During these special nighttime hours, callers were able to contact LOSFA with questions about all forms of state and federal student financial assistance, including the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), need based grants, student loans, and the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) program – Louisiana’s 529 college saving plan. LOSFA’s public information representatives also provided 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 student aid programs.

LOSFA also simultaneously conducted its fourth annual online Facebook chat during the same hours (6-9 p.m, Monday, February 10). More than 700 persons

followed the discussion as questions were submitted and answered via the LOSFA Facebook page. If you would like to follow LOSFA’s Facebook posts, simply log on to Facebook and “like” LOSFA.

LOSFA’s normal call-in hours for student financial assistance information are 8 a.m. until 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 event is always held during the month of February -- which is National Financial Aid Awareness Month.



Kyleigh Quiroga assists a caller during Call-In night.

Trailing Timenee Thomas

Timenee Thomas was first featured in the July 2013 LOSFA LOOP as the Louisiana GEAR UP representative attending the GEAR UP Leadership Alumni Academy (GUALA) in Washington, D.C. that June. Lately, Timenee has been on the legislative trail meeting with Senator David Vitter and Representative Bill Cassidy as part of her GUALA commitment to connect with members of Congress.

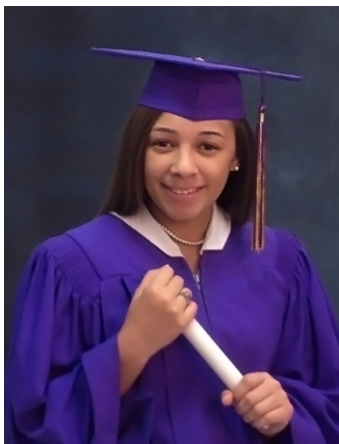
In these meetings, Ms. Thomas promotes GEAR UP and shares her personal college access story, which begins as a GEAR UP student in Bunkie, Louisiana and includes GEAR UP summer camps, Rewards For Success (RFS) scholarship, working as a GEAR UP camp counselor, and, eventually—but not finally—successfully navigating her way through Louisiana Tech University and into a teaching career. We don’t say “finally” because Timenee’s story is far from over, and LA GEAR UP is proud to have played and continue to play a role in her success.



Timenee Thomas, far right, with Chaka Fattah, the original sponsor of GEAR UP legislation and the U.S. representative for Pennsylvania's 2nd congressional district. With Timenee are LA GEAR UP students. From the left: Emily Ryan, Jameshaulyn Fernandez, Ja'Marcus Goudeau, and Khalil Roy.

Summer Love

When Jacqueline Olivier, Westgate High School senior, was in the 7th grade, she spent a week on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) at her first LA GEAR UP residential summer camp. In this science-themed experience, campers analyzed owl pellets to find out what was on the owl's dinner plate the night before. Mice, of course! Jackie then worked with camp counselors and university professors to reconstruct the remains of a mouse skeleton, which she brought home in a Ziploc bag as a souvenir, and thus began Jackie's interest in a medical career.



It was also the beginning of Jackie's love affair with ULM. Upon return from camp, Jackie announced to her grandmother, Charlotte Olivier, that ULM was the college for her. Ms. Olivier thought the decision premature and every summer afterward insisted that Jackie

experience a GEAR UP camp on a different college campus. Through the years, however, Jackie's interest in ULM remained firm. In October 2013, Jackie applied to ULM and received provisional acceptance pending completion of her senior Core Curriculum courses.

Jackie is one of those students who has availed herself of every possible GEAR UP opportunity, including writing contests, scholarships, tutoring, campus field trips, Explorers' Clubs, and, of course, summer camps. In her ULM application letter, Jackie even recycled the college application essay she wrote for the GEAR UP Fall 2013 Essay Contest! Not only that, Jackie has raised her ACT score four points since the first time she took it and is currently awaiting her latest scores. Jackie attributes her improved ACT scores and success in math to LA GEAR UP-funded after school tutoring and a terrific tutor, Ms. Katie Villarroel.

Congratulations to Jackie and all the other college-bound seniors who first fell in love with a university campus via a LA GEAR UP residential summer camp!

LA GEAR UP student Jackie Olivier, Westgate HS Senior, graduates in May 2014.

My College Access Story: What I Know Now That I Didn't Know Then

By Denise Jacobs

Research indicates that almost all middle school students say they intend to go to college. I don't remember anyone ever asking me.

Of the 18 seniors in my rural northern Michigan town, two attended college right out of high school: the minister's son and his girlfriend. I, on the other hand, got married following graduation and took two community college courses before ending my college career for almost 20 years.

As I have learned while working as a GEAR UP college-access professional, income is often the highest indicator of college enrollment. As it turns out, when limited income middle school students become seniors, sadly, only 30% of limited income seniors apply to college.

Get this: Oftentimes, limited income students do not even give themselves an opportunity to determine whether college within their financial means. Some

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My College Access Story *continued*

research indicates that as many as 50 percent of highly-qualified limited income students fail to apply to college.

I have to wonder what made my two classmates different. What I suspect is that the minister's son was on the healthy side of the income divide in our small community. Equally important, perhaps, is that, as a college graduate, father could help son with the process.

The other student, the valedictorian, let's call her Mary, would have fit well within the GEAR UP high-need demographic. If 50 percent of highly-qualified limited income students do not even apply to college, what set Mary apart? I think it had to be the minister and his son. You see, it isn't just a lack of knowledge about the application- and financial-aid process that hinders limited income students; it's the lack of sources. Limited income students often don't know who to ask for help because they are surrounded by friends and family who don't have the answers, either. But, Mary was different; she knew people who knew the ropes.

My mother was a homemaker, and my father was a tool and die maker. College was not even on the periphery of our conversation. Our K-12 rural school was not steeped in a college-going culture. Newly-minted high school graduates tended to work at the local copper tubing plant, drive trucks, take low-level jobs in the oil field, wait tables, or take jobs at the mega grocery store in the nearest large town.

Still, there was a moment when an upperclassman already at college persuaded me to apply. I remember filling out the application. If an application fee was required, I would have written a check from my own account. Since I had waited tables throughout high school, my checking account was flush. I remember having \$500.00 in the bank when I graduated from high school; this was no small amount in 1970, but it wouldn't have come close to paying for four years of college.

When the University of Marquette accepted my application, I had no idea who to ask for help except for my parents. My 1970 high school graduation predated the Pell Grant by two years, and without a counselor at the school, we would not have known about any existing resources. In our family, sending a girl to college just wasn't in the cards. Instead, my parents encouraged me to get married.

I know now that I might have received federal aid had my parents known they could submit a Parents' Confidential Statement, a precursor to the FAFSA. Also, as my father died the following year, 1971, I would have been eligible for significant assistance. One of the great family ironies is that, as survivors, my younger sisters and brother were able to attend college on my father's Social Security benefits, a benefit Congress eliminated in 1981.

The first year I was married, I took two writing courses at the closest community college, over an hour away. As it turns out, my community college experience followed a national pattern. According to CollegeBoard, half of all college students attend community colleges because they are affordable, close to home, do not require an extensive application process, and can serve as a transition step to a bachelor's degree. However, only one in ten community college students actually transfers to a university and completes a bachelor's degree. I represent the one in ten. It just took me 28 years.

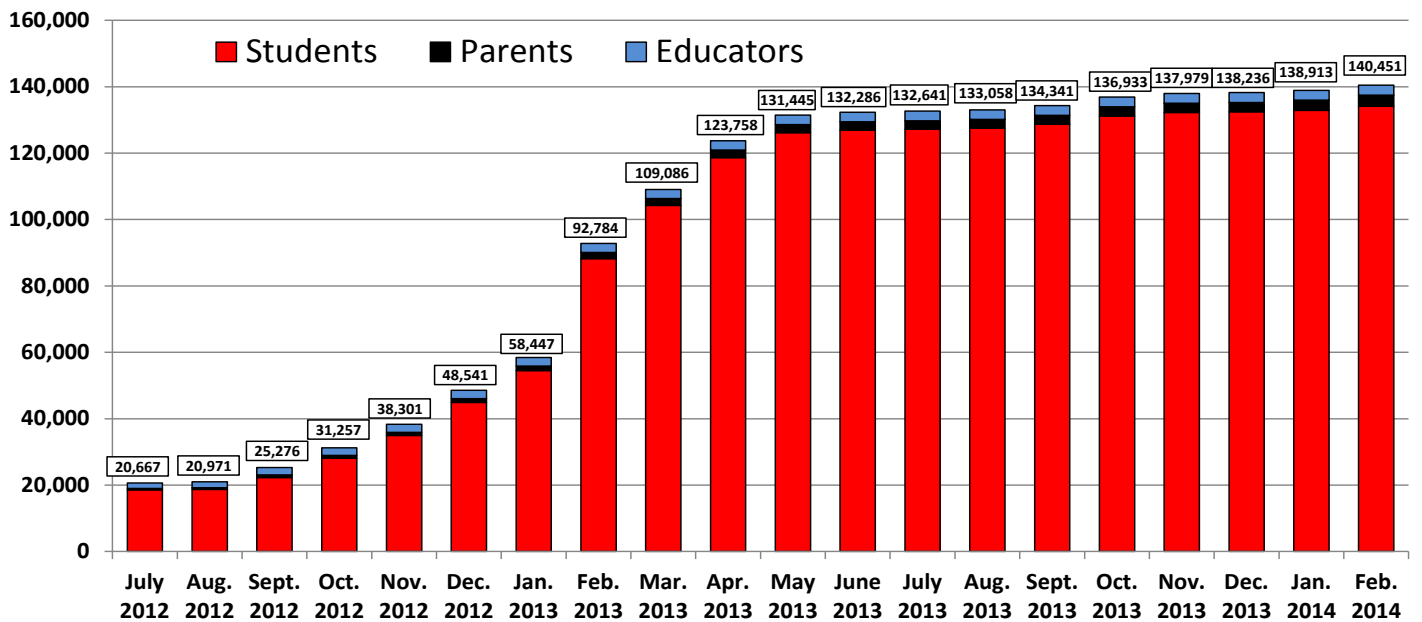
Denise has worked for LA GEAR UP since 2006, and she appreciates the opportunity to provide others with the type of information she could have used herself.



Denise Jacobs, at right, receives her Master's in English Language and Literature in August 2001 along with her sister, Kelly Jacobs, who received a Master's in Special Education that May but waited to "walk" with her sister.



Active Users



The February 2014 data is as of 2/27/2014.

The current total of 140,451 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 134,089 Students, 3,387 Parents, 1,559 Community Administrators, 528 Professional School Counselors, 880 Teachers, and eight 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



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.