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# LOSFA LOOP

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October 2011 Edition

Volume 4-10

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

As September, which was proclaimed as College Savings Month in Louisiana by Governor Jindal, comes to an end, it is appropriate that October is the month in which we celebrate World Teachers' Day. World Teachers' Day, held annually on October 5th since 1994 - when it was created by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - celebrates teachers worldwide. Its aim is to mobilize support for teachers and to ensure that the needs of future generations will continue to be met by teachers. As Louisiana's first choice for college access, LOSFA recognizes that while we provide access to college for Louisiana students, it is actually the dedicated teachers who prepare them to meet the academic challenges and rigors of post secondary education. We salute not only the teachers in Louisiana, but the nearly 30 million teachers and education workers worldwide.

In addition to the recognition of teachers, there are several other exciting and important events taking place this month. The TOPS award amounts for 2011-2012 are now finalized (Page 7), the LASFAA Fall Conference is taking place and after a tremendous amount of time and effort from our staff and numerous partners, the Louisiana Connect portal will be launched this month. Many of you provided us with information on scholarship searches, internship matches, financial literacy resources, enrichment opportunities, volunteer opportunities, remediation programs and countless other resources for Louisiana students. All of your input has been incorporated into this portal. It is our hope that when some of you have the opportunity to see a demonstration of the portal at one of the Professional School Counselor Workshops taking place this month (Page 4) and when some of you attend the training on the portal taking place on October 4th, you will feel that your time and effort was not in vain because we have succeeded in creating the best possible resource for Louisiana students and their parents. It's the collective effort of dedicated education professionals and a business community dedicated to cultivating and hiring "home-grown" talent that is going to make the Louisiana Connect portal the zenith of college access and career readiness services in Louisiana.

--Melanie

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## LOSFA Outreach



*LOSFA's Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, David Roberts, is pictured with Rachel Cruze Ramsey, daughter of financial expert Dave Ramsey, at the Louisiana Jumpstart Coalition's Education Summit. Roberts was on the planning committee for the conference, the FLY Team performed and LOSFA's Financial Literacy and Development department had a display table.*



*Britt Kelly, a member of LOSFA's FLY Team, plays the guitar as part of the FLY Team's dramatic presentation for the National College Access Network (NCAN) Conference in St. Louis.*



*Left, Lynda Whittington, LOSFA's Director of Loan Operations, presents during LOSFA's Strategic Planning, held September 22-23. The entire executive staff attended, along with some of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission members. Dr. Jim Purcell, Commissioner of Higher Education, spoke to the group which also included Board of Regents, Department of Education, and GEAR Up representatives. There was also a live demonstration of the new Louisiana Connect portal.*

## **WARNING: Outside Entities Now Claiming to Accept START Deposits**

If you've been scanning the Internet and have come across sites such as GiftofCollege.com, FreshmanFund.com or Gradsave.com, be warned -- the sites are not authorized to accept deposits for the START Saving Program.

Some of these sites claim to collect money from credit cards and deposit those funds into 529 plans for its members. One or more of the sites states that anyone can donate via the site, for a fee.

The College Savings Plans Network (CSPN), an affiliate of the National Association of State Treasurers, has sent a cease and desist letter to the GiftofCollege.com site asking it to stop accepting contributions on behalf of any 529 Plan account. CSPN is now considering whether to send such a letter to the FreshmanFund.com and Gradsave.com sites, and others like them, in the near future.

According to CSPN's letter to GiftofCollege, "To our knowledge, none of the 529 Plans listed on your Web site has authorized Gift of College, Inc., to accept contributions or solicit investments in 529 Plan products."

**GiftofCollege, FreshmanFund and Gradsave are not authorized to accept deposits for the START Saving Program. START does not guarantee that money charged to the account owner's credit cards by these sites will actually be deposited into START accounts.**

Further, LOSFA charges no fee to make deposits into a START Saving account. Deposits may be mailed directly to the program administrator at:

Louisiana START Saving Program  
P.O. Box 91271  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-9271

Deposits may also be made by electronic funds transfer from your personal savings or checking account or by employer deductions from your paycheck.

The START Saving Program advises current and prospective account owners to be wary of any charges related to deposits to START Saving Program accounts. Before you send money to one of these businesses, we urge you to contact the START Saving Program directly for your no fee deposit options.

Contact START Saving Program staff by phone at (800) 259-5626, ext. 1012, or by e-mail at [start@startsaving.la.gov](mailto:start@startsaving.la.gov).

**NOTE:** LOSFA will begin accepting deposits via debit and credit cards before the end of the calendar year. When that happens, account owners will be notified by LOSFA.

# 2011 Professional School Counselor Workshops Scheduled

Attendees of this year's Professional School Counselor Workshops will get the first peek at LOSFA's new Louisiana Connect Portal. The Portal officially launches this month and students will get a glimpse of what they can expect in this year's edition of NEXT magazine. NEXT will feature an insert, seen below, as well as a feature story on LOSFA's Trailblazer Camp.

In addition to a live demonstration of the new portal, counselors can expect updates on all LOSFA administered programs including TOPS, the Louisiana Go Grant and the Early Start program along with announcement of dates for upcoming LOSFA events and outreach activities.

*Look for this insert in NEXT magazine!*

## Top Ten Reasons to ...Connect!

- 1 **Show Off.**  
*Build a profile to show off your skills and achievements*
- 2 **Stay Connected.**  
*Receive messages and alerts on your cell phone*
- 3 **Get in the Know.**  
*Find out about important college and career events*
- 4 **Get Smart.**  
*Earn how to successfully plan for college and a career*
- 5 **Find Your Best Fit for College & Career.**  
*Use interactive college and career search tools*
- 6 **Become Part of Louisiana's Only Purpose Network™**  
*You have a social network... Now it's time to build your Purpose Network. Connect with colleges and employers in LouisianaConnect!*
- 7 **Get Recruited by Louisiana Colleges.**  
*With your permission, colleges can reach out to you*
- 8 **Find Cash for College.**  
*Get matched to scholarships and grants*
- 9 **Find Jobs.**  
*Get matched to internship opportunities*
- 10 **Do It all In ONE place!**

## LOUISIANA CONNECT



Coming Soon

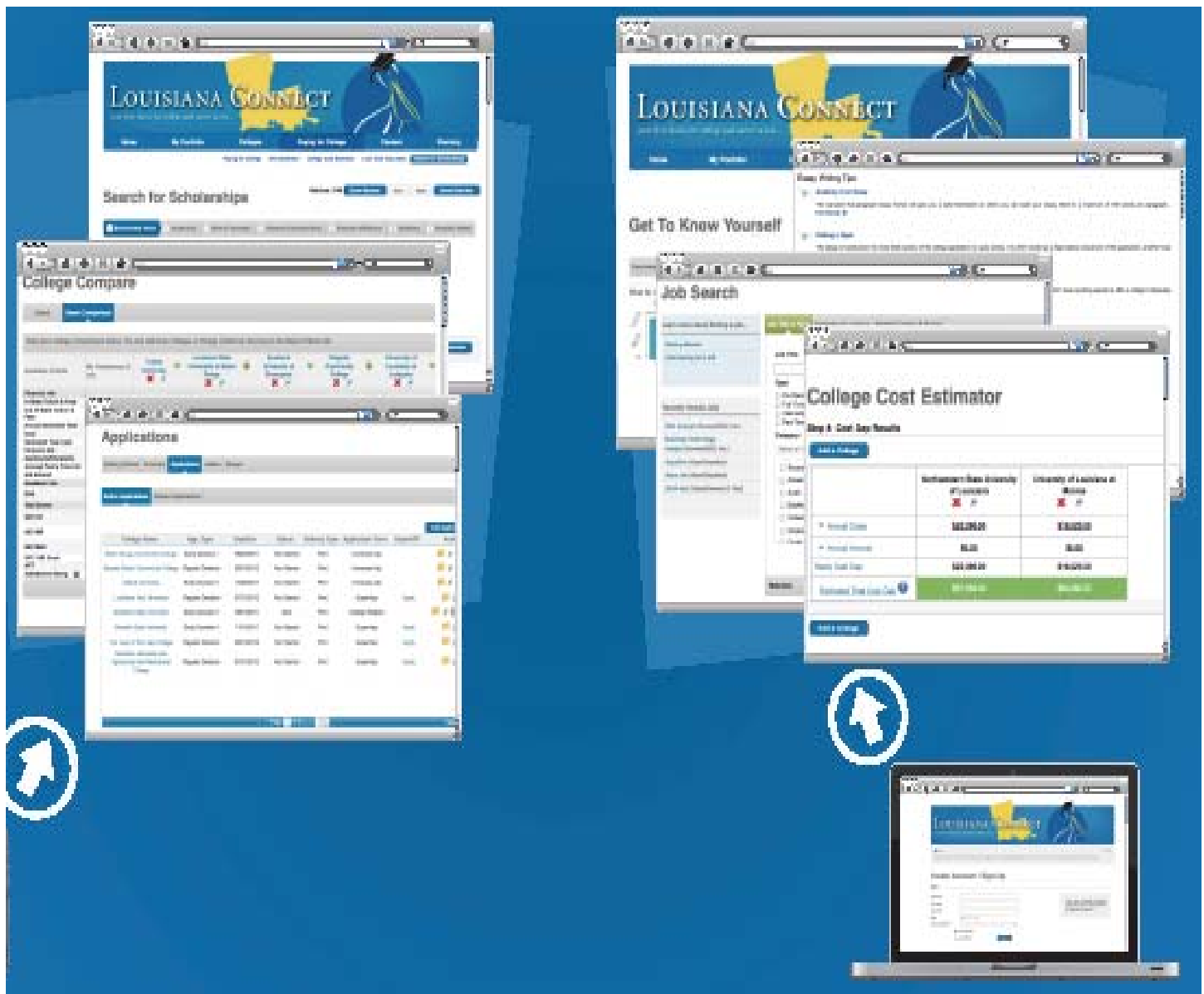
Activate Your Account This October

Opportunity

...it's just a click away

Powered by:





**Professional School Counselor Workshop dates: Be the first to see the new portal**

**October 3, 2011**

Mandeville  
Dave Treen Instructional Technology Center

**October 4, 2011\***

Baton Rouge  
Southern University  
Smith Brown Memorial Ballroom

**October 5, 2011**

New Orleans  
Delgado Community College  
LAC Pontchartrain Meeting Room  
2nd floor, Student Life Center

**October 17, 2011**

Lake Charles  
McNeese State University  
Para Ballroom

**October 18, 2011**

Natchitoches  
Northwestern State University  
Student Union Ballroom

**October 19, 2011**

Monroe  
University of Louisiana Monroe  
ULM Conference Center

**October 20, 2011**

Alexandria  
LSU-Alexandria  
Caffey Annex

\*Additional hands-on training for the Louisiana Connect Portal will take place at an afternoon session, beginning at 1 p.m.



## START Media Tour a success

LOSFA's 2011 START Media Tour recently came to a close, successfully reaching Louisiana residents across the state with its message of saving for higher education.

"It was great to have the opportunity to discuss the START Saving program in most of the major media markets in Louisiana. Hopefully, this tour served to increase awareness about START. It is absolutely the best way to save for college in Louisiana," David Roberts, Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, said.

As part of the promotion of Louisiana College Savings Month, Roberts spoke to television, newspaper and radio outlets in Lafayette, Alexandria, Shreveport, Monroe, Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

Louisiana's START Saving program is an innovative college savings plan designed to help families contend with the growing costs of educating their children after high school. START offers many benefits including:

- ▶ Earnings Enhancements: the state actually matches a percentage of dollars saved, based on adjusted gross income
- ▶ Tax Advantages: earnings grow tax deferred and, when used to pay qualified higher education expenses, are not taxed by the state or federal government
- ▶ Up to \$2,400 in deposits per account per year can be deducted from taxable income reported to the state (\$4,800 if the account owner is married and files a joint return). Account owners who deposit less than the maximum deductible amount in any one year may carry over the unused portion of the exemption to future years
- ▶ A variety of investment options are available from very conservative to very aggressive

For more information on the LOSFA START Saving Program, visit [www.startsaving.la.gov](http://www.startsaving.la.gov) or contact LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626 x1012 or via email at [custserv@osfa.la.gov](mailto:custserv@osfa.la.gov)



## Rivet retires after 19 years

After 19 years with LOSFA, Nell Rivet is retiring.

She's finishing up her stay in Loan Administration, but Rivet has worked in several LOSFA departments including Preclaims, Collections, Scholarship and Grants and the Mail Room.

"I would like to thank my fellow employees for some wonderful years," she said. "A job of helping schools and students has always given me a great feeling. I wish all the best to everyone at LOSFA and those who have gone before me in retirement."

As for what she'll be doing once she's gone? She has some plans.

"The first Monday after October 28, I plan to set my alarm for 7 a.m. so that I can semi-wake up and decide if I would like to get out of bed or not and revel in the fact that I do not have to get up at 5 a.m."

She also plans to build up an exercise routine and do some decluttering. Maybe she'll volunteer, she said, or work as a part-time greeter at Wal-Mart "so I can get a discount and keep my hand in the game."

Eventually, it's going to be all about the grandchildren, she's sure. "I plan to steal their children," she said. "That could be a full-time job."



## Adjusted TOPS Tuition Amounts

Beginning with the spring semester, quarter or term of the 2010-2011 award year, the TOPS Award amount will be the amount as currently set by the Commission or the institution's published tuition fee amount only, whichever is greater.

As outlined in Communication 11-131, dated July 11, 2011, the previous award amounts were considered conditional until such time that the institutional tuition amounts were reported officially to the Board of Regents this September. Accordingly, in the case of 7 institutions the actual tuition reported to the Board of Regents was higher than the TOPS Award distributed resulting in an adjusted TOPS Award amount. Institutions affected are highlighted in red on the charts on the following pages.

The adjusted TOPS Award Amounts are effective immediately. If the award amount at your institution is affected and you have already billed, you are to submit a supplemental billing (or invoice) for the fall semester difference.

If you need additional information, please contact Dr. John Bell at [jbelle@osfa.la.gov](mailto:jbelle@osfa.la.gov).

**TOPS AWARD AMOUNTS FOR 2011-2012 AWARD YEAR**  
**For Opportunity, Performance and Honors Award Levels As of September 27, 2011**

Institutions	Semester/Quarter Amount <sup>(5)</sup>	Annual Award Amount <sup>(5)</sup>
<b>Technical</b>		
Louisiana Technical College Campuses (All Programs) <sup>(1)</sup>	\$492.00	\$984.00
<b>Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools (Terms)<sup>(1)</sup></b>	\$317.00	\$951.00
<b>2 Year Institutions<sup>(2)</sup></b>		
Baton Rouge Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Bossier Parish Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Delgado Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
L. E. Fletcher Technical Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Louisiana Delta Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Louisiana State University at Eunice	<b>\$1,009.00</b>	<b>\$2,018.00</b>
Northshore Technical Community College	\$711.00	\$1,422.00
Nunez Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
River Parishes Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
South Louisiana Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
SOWELA Technical Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Southern University at Shreveport	<b>\$1,012.00</b>	<b>\$2,024.00</b>
<b>4 Year Institutions</b>		
Grambling State University	\$1,755.00	\$3,510.00
Nicholls State University	<b>\$1,725.00</b>	<b>\$3,450.00</b>
<b>LAICU Institutions<sup>(3)</sup></b>	\$1,621.00	\$3,242.00
Louisiana State University at Alexandria	<b>\$1,734.00</b>	<b>\$3,468.00</b>
Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge	<b>\$2,276.00</b>	<b>\$4,552.00</b>
Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at New Orleans	\$2,351.00	\$4,702.00
Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport	\$2,423.00	\$4,846.00
Louisiana State University at Shreveport	\$1,751.00	\$3,502.00
Louisiana Tech University (Quarters)	\$1,295.00	\$3,885.00
McNeese State University	\$1,696.00	\$3,392.00
Northwestern State University	\$1,738.00/\$1,708.00	\$3,446.00
Southeastern Louisiana University	\$1,732.00	\$3,464.00
Southern University at Baton Rouge	\$1,755.00	\$3,510.00
Southern University at New Orleans	\$1,472.00	\$2,944.00
University of Louisiana at Lafayette	<b>\$1,720.00</b>	<b>\$3,440.00</b>
University of Louisiana at Monroe	<b>\$1,739.00</b>	<b>\$3,478.00</b>
University of New Orleans	\$2,051.00	\$4,102.00
<b>Out-of-State Institutions<sup>(4)</sup></b>		
Gallaudet University	\$1,621.00	\$3,242.00
Rochester Institute of Technology (Terms)	\$1,081.00/\$1,081.00/\$1,080.00	\$3,242.00

(1) Also the amount for summer semesters and terms for students in technical programs.

(2) Also the Award Amount for Technical Programs at BPCC, BRCC, Delgado CC, LA Delta CC, L.E. Fletcher Tech CC, LSU-E, Nunez CC, RPCC, SLCC, SOWELA Tech CC and SU-S.

(3) Centenary, Dillard, Holy Cross College, Louisiana College, Loyola, NO Baptist Seminary, OLOL, St. Joseph's, Tulane, Xavier, (Tech Program. OLOL only)

(4) Schools that are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Includes both Academic and Technical Programs.

(5) Red highlighted amounts have changed since the initial 2011-12 TOPS award amount notification.



**TOPS TECH AWARD AMOUNTS FOR 2011-2012 AWARD YEAR**  
**AS OF September 27, 2011**  
**For Technical Programs only. (Confirm with institution that Program is Technical.)**

Institution	Semester Award Amount <sup>(2)</sup>	Annual Award Amount <sup>(1) (2)</sup>
Baton Rouge Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Bossier Parish Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Delgado Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
L. E. Fletcher Technical Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Louisiana Delta Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Louisiana State University at Eunice	<b>\$1,009.00</b>	<b>\$2,018.00</b>
Louisiana Technical College Campuses (All Programs)	\$492.00	\$984.00
Northshore Technical Community College	\$711.00	\$1,422.00
Nunez Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Our Lady of the Lake College	\$423.00	\$846.00
Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools	\$317.00	\$951.00
River Parishes Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
South Louisiana Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
SOWELA Tech. Community College	\$1,056.00	\$2,112.00
Southern University at Shreveport	<b>\$1,012.00</b>	<b>\$2,024.00</b>

1. Full-time enrollment for summer sessions in technical programs will be paid at the semester award amount or the actual tuition rate plus registration fees, whichever is less.
2. Red highlighted amounts have changed since the initial 2011-12 TOPS award amount notification.

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



[www.Flickr.com/LOSFA](http://www.Flickr.com/LOSFA)

## LOSFA Lowers Student Loan Cohort Default Rate Again

LOSFA's Cohort Default Rate Has Now Dropped Below the National Average

According to figures recently released by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has reduced its cohort default rate by 1.2 percent for a second year and is now below the national average. For the 2009 cohort year, the default rate on student loans guaranteed by LOSFA fell to 7.6 percent, from the previous year's 8.8 percent. This is the second year in a row LOSFA's rate has decreased while the national cohort default rate increased to 8.8 percent (up from 7.0 percent the previous year) for the same period.

Cohort default rates are calculated annually and are based on the percentage of students who enter repayment and default on their student loans within the first 24 months. The calculation includes students who began repayment on or after Oct. 1, 2008, through Sept. 30, 2009, and defaulted before Sept. 30, 2010.

LOSFA's Default Prevention Section has been a key contributor to this effort, through various default prevention activities. As soon as a lender notifies LOSFA of a delinquency, the first delinquency letter is mailed to the borrower, advising of the options available to resolve the delinquency. At least one attempt to contact the borrower by telephone and one letter is generated every 30 days until the account is either resolved or defaulted.

Numerous additional efforts are performed in an attempt to make contact with the borrower to advise of the delinquency and to explain the best options available for resolution. During the most recent state fiscal year, these efforts resulted in the prevention of over \$609 million in potential defaults.

Borrower awareness is the key to keeping defaults down. LOSFA's Financial Literacy and Development (FLD) section and Public Information and Communications (PIC) division have also played a strong role in helping to lower the cohort default rate.

The LOSFA FLD section provides outreach, training and professional development programs and materials to students, parents, educators and the general public. One of those programs is called Financial Literacy for You (FLY) and consists of presentations on credit, banking, money management, credit cards, identity theft, budgeting, debt management, and student loan repayment requirements. Age appropriate FLY presentations are available for college, high school and middle school students as well as educators and the general public.

The LOSFA PIC division also works diligently to ensure borrower and potential borrower awareness through public information events and activities including financial aid presentations at high schools and middle schools, and Parent Night Seminars at various locations across the state. In addition, the PIC division conducts annual Guidance Counselor Workshops, where high school guidance counselors are trained in all aspects of financial aid.

For more information, contact LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626, Ext. 1012, or visit us online at [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov).



*LOSFA's Deputy Executive Director Sujuan Boutte (right) and Denise Spellman, Associate Financial Aid Director, University of New Orleans (left) attend LOSFA's Advisory Committee's September meeting. The committee received updates on GO Grant, Early Start, TOPS and the Louisiana Connect Portal. Attendees were also briefed on LOSFA's participation in Voluntary Flexible Agreements with United States Department of Education.*



*Congratulations to the Nicholls Krewe of Vulcan! Their YouTube video had the most views (173) of the eight 2011 Trailblazer videos over the past month. As the winning krewe, their group photo will be posted on the LOSFA Web site for the remainder of the year.*

For more information, contact the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance:

By Phone: 800-259-5626, Ext. 1012

By E-mail: [custserv@osfa.la.gov](mailto:custserv@osfa.la.gov)

By Mail: P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202

Web Address: [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

For submissions, opinions or comments for LOSFA LOOP, please contact David Roberts at [droberts@osfa.la.gov](mailto:droberts@osfa.la.gov).

