

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Melanie Amrhein

Welcome Home, LA GEAR UP! As Louisiana's First Choice for College Access, we feel that the LA GEAR UP Program, whose mission is to increase the number of at risk students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education, is finally home now that they have joined the LOSFA staff. Transition is something that we've grown quite accustomed to, so after a short and smooth transition period, we look forward to a great year for our 10th and 11th grade student cohort.

One of the best programs we have for our LA GEAR UP students and any potential college student is the START Saving program, Louisiana's 529 college saving plan. I want to thank State Treasurer John Kennedy for collaborating with me on some television and print media interviews in an effort to increase awareness about START. I really liked something that he told several interviewers, to paraphrase, he advised that we have about 44,000 START accounts and we're going to continue "beating the drum" until we have 440,000 START accounts! START really is a program that every Louisiana parent, grandparent etc. should be participating in.

I realize that these are challenging economic times and I certainly don't want to appear insensitive to those who are struggling with the basic necessities, but if you

have any disposable income at all and you have a child, grandchild or a niece or nephew who has yet to reach college going age, I urge you to look into opening a START Saving account. You can save whatever is affordable and it doesn't have to be an exorbitant amount of money. When that child matriculates into postsecondary education, they will appreciate any amount that you were able to save. Whether you accumulate enough to finance their entire education including tuition, room and board and all of their qualified higher education expenses or if you can save just enough to pay for a few books, every little bit helps. Don't forget, we will help you by matching a percentage of your annual deposits every year!

Finally, as always, I look forward to seeing my LASFAA colleagues at the Fall Conference later on this month. I'll be presenting my state update on the last day of the conference. Now, I realize that the beautiful Horseshoe Casino has amenities and "distractions" that may seem more appealing than hearing me speak, but if this is any incentive, I'll be revealing the details of the revised Go Grant Program. The task force has worked diligently to maximize the effectiveness of this program for our students. I'm sure that you will be pleased with what we have come up with and I look forward to your feedback.

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College Savings Month Media Tour

The College Savings Plans Network was joined by more than 40 states in declaring September "College Savings Month".

During September, LOSFA and the Department of the Treasury embarked on a statewide media tour to raise awareness of the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) saving program, the state's 529 college saving program.

LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein along with Treasurer John Kennedy traveled to media outlets across the state to inform parents and guardians of Louisiana children about saving for college, how to funnel dollars that would otherwise have been paid in taxes toward their children's education, and how to earn a financial return on their investments despite the nation's unstable economy.

"Louisiana parents or guardians interested in sending their children to college should begin saving now, if only a few dollars a month," said Amrhein.

For more information on the START Saving Program, visit www.startsaving.la.gov or contact LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626 or via email at custserv@la.gov.



State Treasurer John Kennedy and LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein took part in a media tour to spread the word about financial aid programs offered to students and families in Louisiana.

USA Funds® takes over College Goal Sunday



When Louisiana first began participating in the College Goal Sunday initiative, a nationwide program that helps college-bound students and their families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the form necessary to qualify for many student aid programs to pay college expenses, the program was under the stewardship of NASFAA and later on was assumed by YMCA of the USA.

On August 28th the Lumina Foundation and USA Funds® announced that USA Funds has assumed ownership of and administrative responsibility for College Goal SundaySM. USA Funds will provide support to organizations that coordinate College Goal Sunday events nationwide. Last year 39 states and the District of Columbia conducted College Goal Sunday events, helping more than 39,000 students and parents complete and file the FAFSA.

Louisiana's College Goal Sunday event, typically conducted in February, brings together financial aid professionals and other volunteers who help students and parents complete the FAFSA. Despite significant improvements by the federal government in streamlining and simplifying the FAFSA, the form continues to pose a barrier to college access for some students, particularly those who are first in their families to attend college and those from economically disadvantaged households.

"As a nonprofit organization that works to promote preparation for, access to and success in higher education, and a longtime funder of College Goal Sunday, we look forward to the opportunity to help more families qualify for student aid for college," said Carl C. Dalstrom, USA Funds president and

CEO. "During our initial year as College Goal Sunday national administrator, we will work closely with our partners at Lumina Foundation and the YMCA of the USA to ensure a smooth transition of the program. In future years, we plan initiatives to reach even more families with FAFSA-filing assistance."

Since 2002 USA Funds has provided grants totaling nearly \$2.9 million to support College Goal Sunday programs in 13 states. USA Funds' support helped establish College Goal Sunday in several states, including Arizona, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi and Wyoming.

"Lumina Foundation has been pleased to be the primary sponsor of College Goal Sunday for many years, helping thousands of students and families achieve their college dreams in most states in the nation," said Jamie Merisotis, Lumina Foundation president and CEO. "We believe that the transfer of ownership and administrative responsibilities to USA Funds will help expand College Goal Sunday's capacities, thereby offering FAFSA-filing assistance to many more college-bound students. We also thank the YMCA of the USA, which has managed the program during the past three years, for its careful stewardship and its work to expand the reach of College Goal Sunday to under-served populations."

"I am excited about the next evolution of College Goal Sunday," said Neil Nicoll, president and CEO of YMCA of the USA. "USA Funds has been a long-term partner of the Y and College Goal Sunday. With its history and deep experience in college access services, USA Funds is well suited to improve and grow the program."

College Goal Sunday began in Indiana in 1989 as a joint project of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association and the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

2012 LOSFA Professional School Counselor Workshops

The Public Information and Communications staff began LOSFA's annual Professional School Counselor workshops in September. Members of the LOSFA staff traveled to Alexandria, Monroe, Bossier City and Lake Charles to bring program updates and information to middle and high school counselors.

The workshops will continue in October with the following dates and locations:

Monday, October 1

Baton Rouge, Southern University - Smith Brown Memorial Union Ballroom

Wednesday, October 3

Mandeville - Dave Treen Instructional Technology Center

Thursday, October 4

Lafayette - Chenier Auditorium

Tuesday, October 9

New Orleans - Delgado Community College, LAC Pontchartrain Meeting Room

Check-in begins at 8 a.m. The workshops will begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at noon. Registration is available on LOSFA's Web site at www.osfa.la.gov/workshops.



Left: LOSFA Public Information and Communications Supervisor Jerri Mack and Britt Kelly help Professional School Counselors sign in during last week's workshops.



Above: Deborah Paul, Director of LOSFA's Scholarship/Grant Division, addresses Professional School Counselors in attendance at a workshop.



Left: Professional School Counselors listen to a presentation by LOSFA Public Information and Communications Director, Gus Wales.



Louisiana Connect Video Training

On September 13 and 14 members of ConnectEDU conducted training sessions for Professional School Counselors at various locations around the state via compressed video transmission. These sessions gave counselors an in-depth, hands-on look at the Louisiana Connect Portal.

If you were unable to attend, you can view one of the sessions at <https://connectedu.webex.com/connectedu/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP=TC&rID=61928072&act=pb&rKey=61d36be9fd15cfc6>.



Adanna Ukah of ConnectEDU looks on as Brusly High School senior and 2012 LOSFA Trailblazer Trent Davis discusses how he has used Louisiana Connect to help him make decisions for his college career.



A group of Professional School Counselors gathered at Baton Rouge Community College to learn more about the Louisiana Connect portal from the ConnectEDU team.



ConnectEDU's Dante Leone leads a group of Professional School Counselors through a demonstration of the capabilities of the Louisiana Connect portal.



Martha Moore, an Education Program Consultant with the Louisiana Department of Education, discusses how Louisiana Connect addresses Individual Graduation Plans.

LA GEAR UP staff joins LOSFA

As of Monday, September 17, LOSFA grew by seven staff persons as LA GEAR UP—Louisiana Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs—transitioned leadership from the Louisiana Board of Regents to LOSFA, a long-standing and significant LA GEAR UP partner.

LOSFA welcomes assistant director Sally Donlon, along with Delreese Hector-Smith, Renee Carter-Harris, Dianna Frank, Denise Jacobs, Savitri Scott and Neal Boyd. LA GEAR UP falls under Assistant Director of College Access and Outreach David Roberts.

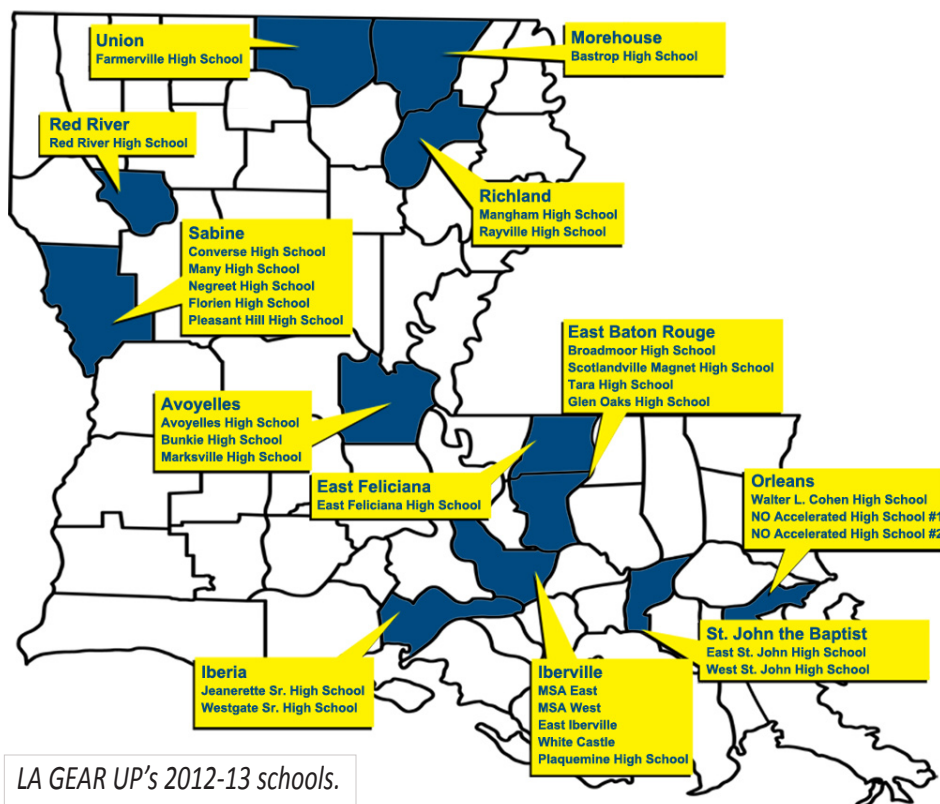
LA GEAR UP is a federally funded national initiative supported by the U.S. Department of Education, which gives grants to states or institutions of higher learning to create partnerships with low income middle or high schools.

To fulfill its mission to increase the number of at risk students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education, LA GEAR UP collaborates with school districts, colleges and universities, and partner organizations to implement broad initiatives tailored to school reform priorities.



LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein (left) and LA GEAR UP Assistant Director Sally Donlon (right) recognize Karen Harris (center) as LA GEAR UP's Parent Leader of the Year.

In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education awarded Louisiana a six-year, \$12.5 million GEAR UP grant, which became a seven-year, \$15 million award. In 2008, LA GEAR UP began a second six-year grant, this time for \$18 million, with a cohort of 6th and 7th grade students. That student cohort of nearly 8,000 is currently in the 10th and 11th grades in 30 schools and 12 Louisiana parishes, from New Orleans to Union.



LOSFA at the 2012 LA GEAR UP Conference



LOSFA Public Information and Communications Supervisor Jerri Mack (right) looks on as White Castle High senior Meaghan Overstreet (center) and Iberville Math, Science and Arts High senior Jayden Redditt (left) explain how they have used the Louisiana Connect portal to plan for college. Both Overstreet and Redditt first learned about the portal at LOSFA's Trailblazers Camp.



Marie DeMego from ConnectEDU walks GEAR UP Conference attendees through a demonstration of the Louisiana Connect portal. Gus Wales, LOSFA Public Information and Communications Director (seated) moderated the Louisiana Connect panel discussion.



LOSFA's Executive Director Melanie Amrhein spoke to GEAR UP Conference attendees.



(Left to Right) Ebony Holmes, Justin Marshall, Britt Kelly and Kendra Woods of LOSFA's Public Information and Communications Division treated the GEAR UP Conference attendees to a performance from the Financial Literacy for You (FLY) Tour.

Photos courtesy of Neal Boyd



LOSFA's Social Media



<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

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