



LOSFA LOOP

September 2010 Edition

Volume 3-9

From the Desk of the Executive Director

September is always an exciting month, probably due to the fact that it's a month defined by transition. We transition from the summer into the fall, the school year is so new that it's still in transition, cooler temperatures are on the horizon and football season begins. Since January, most Louisianans have been basking in the afterglow of the Saints first super bowl victory after 43 years in existence. The fact that those 43 years included going more than a decade before managing a .500 season, two decades before having a winning season and three decades before mustering a playoff win made the Saints victory in Super bowl XLIV that much more satisfying. It's no wonder that we were so moved by the victory and now wondering if the Saints can achieve a repeat. Some feel that they can, while others feel that they may have become too complacent. Saints quarterback Drew Brees even referred to the complacency that one feels after a Super Bowl victory as a "disease".

I can't say for sure whether or not the Saints will win another championship, but I do agree with Drew Brees regarding complacency. No matter how good you are, if you become too complacent, everybody else catches up to you and eventually surpasses you. Despite working hard to claim the title of "Louisiana's First Choice for College Access", LOSFA is constantly looking at ways to improve the manner in which we administer our programs and serve the public.

This is why in every recent issue of the LOSFA LOOP we've been advising you of something new that we're doing to expand and improve our efforts such as administering the Chafee ETV Grant, venturing into social media, changing the name of our School and Lender Services (SLS) Section to Financial Literacy and Development and expanding its role and making

changes to the START Saving Program in order to benefit account owners. This issue is no exception. In addition to moving to an entirely new location (Page 2), we're unveiling a new Awards System (Page 3) that will replace the current TOPS Portal and provide additional benefits to students, colleges, as well as our very own LOSFA staff. We also provide you with an update on the new simplified FAFSA (Page 5) that should have a tremendous impact on the 2011 College Goal Sunday event. While focusing on so many new services, we would be remiss if we didn't provide an update on some of our established services such as the Professional School Counselor Workshops (Page 4).

On the 5 year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, we remember and salute our colleagues who suffered personal property destruction, relocation and disruption, but still persevered, rebuilt and kept the mission of college access alive for all those affected. The storm of 2005 taught us all that we work best when we work together and like the Saints, have winning seasons to come.

--Melanie

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LOSFA Outreach

We're having a contest!

LOSFA is looking for your help in doling out bragging rights to a select group of this year's Trailblazers.



At this year's Trailblazer Camps, groups of students created multiple videos promoting LOSFA and its services and we're having a contest to pick a winner.

The eight videos -- four from each camp -- can be found on LOSFA's Youtube page, www.youtube.com/LOSFA1000. The video that receives the most views will be crowned champion.



We're Moving!

LOSFA is relocating from its current location on Wooddale Boulevard to the Galvez Building on Fifth and Main Streets.

The agency is scheduled to be in the new building by the first of November.

LOSFA is working hard to make certain the transition is a smooth one, with minimal down time.

Further information and updates on the impending move can be found in future LOSFA LOOPS.



Galvez Building

LOSFA unveils new Award System

LOSFA has migrated to a Web-based application system that will serve users of all LOSFA administered scholarships and grants programs, including TOPS, Go Grant, Early Start, TOPS Tech Early Start, Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship and Chafee Educational Training Voucher. Students and schools logging into their accounts via the Awards System now have access to a plethora of new information.

The Award System has a “new look and feel,” Alice T. Brown, LOSFA IT Director, said. The move to the new system was spurred by a desire for “an easier way to support more scholarship and grant programs,” she said.

LOSFA is rolling out the new system in three stages. By the end of September, the entire system will be in place. The new system will provide multiple benefits to students, schools, organizations and LOSFA personnel. Those benefits include:

Students:

- ▶ Earlier access to the Web site – instead of being created with the FAFSA, logon ability created with first ACT record
- ▶ Home page information includes all eligible scholarships/grants
- ▶ Ability to electronically create an Exception Request (will still have to mail in supporting documentation) and review its status and associated comments. Additional information provided to assist students with filing the correct paperwork with the Exception Request
- ▶ Notifications – with PDF document that duplicates the letter sent via mail
- ▶ Ability to view approved payments to schools
- ▶ Access to Loan information via Meteor
- ▶ Real-time access to data and the ability to update mailing address and email address

Colleges:

- ▶ Ability to post broadcast messages
- ▶ Individual logon ids and passwords with group account management at the colleges
- ▶ Additional rosters (e.g., Grade error report)
- ▶ Access to student profiles including eligible awards and notifications
- ▶ Access to enter and view data for LEAP/SLEAP, Chafee and Rockefeller
- ▶ Access to Loan information via Meteor
- ▶ Real-time access to data

Board of Regents:

- ▶ Access to HCELP information

Internal LOSFA User Groups:

- ▶ Improved system navigation
- ▶ Ability to track all name changes for a student
- ▶ Ability to view the application like the colleges or students
- ▶ Improved system reporting
- ▶ Improved processing of ROOS applications – no longer waiting week to week for processing updates
- ▶ Improved processing of Grade records – no longer waiting week to week for processing updates
- ▶ Provision of scholarship/grant student information across various programs with the ability to incorporate later Start and Loan data
- ▶ Integrated Exception processing with approval automatically creating Academic Information (e.g., Grade) to be used in renewal processing
- ▶ Easier process to create refunds

2010 LOSFA Professional School Counselor Workshops

LOSFA is hosting its annual Professional School Counselor Workshops this month, bringing updates and information to school counselors from across the state.

Gus Wales, LOSFA's Public Information and Communications Director, said plans call for updating counselors about recent program updates and legislative changes.

Registration is now open on the LOSFA Web site. Middle School Counselors may register at:
<http://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/SpecialProjects.nsf/Main-GCWMS?OpenFrameset>

High School Counselors may register at:
<http://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/SpecialProjects.nsf/Main-GCW?OpenFrameset>

Check-in begins at 8 a.m., with the workshop beginning at 8:30 a.m. All workshops conclude at noon.

Dates and Locations:

Thursday, September 23

Mandeville, Castine Center at Pelican Park

Monday, September 27

Lafayette, Chenier Center Auditorium

Tuesday, September 28

Alexandria, Louisiana State University - Alexandria, Barbara Brumfield Caffey Annex

Wednesday, September 29

Monroe, University of Louisiana at Monroe, Alumni Center

Thursday, September 30

Bossier City, Bossier Parish Community College, F203

Friday, October 1

Lake Charles, McNeese State University, Burton Conference Center

Tuesday, October 5

Baton Rouge, Southern University, Student Union Ballroom

Friday, October 8

Delgado Community College. LAC Pontchartrain Room, on the 2nd floor of the Student Life Center

Thursday, October 14

Nicholls State University, Student Union Plantation Suite

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- ▶ Ability to group organizations (e.g., high schools, colleges)
- ▶ Clear processing history – use of an audit log

Simplified FAFSA

The federal government is planning additional changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2011-2012 academic year to make it even easier for students and parents to apply for financial aid.

The proposed changes include application status, PIN status, access to the previous year's information, information on who has updated the application and a Data Release Number for third parties.

Beginning January 30, 2011, the IRS Data Retrieval Tool will be available for Tax Year 2010. It will only be available to those who have completed a tax form. The parent's PIN will be used to link to the parent's IRS information. If income data is transferred from the IRS and the student is selected for verification, the verification will not include income information.

Beginning with the 2011-2012 Application, IRS Data Retrieval will be available for corrections as well as initial FAFSA submissions. Additionally, the IRS Data Retrieval Tool will be available in Spanish.

New Supervisor in Public Information and Communications

Jerri Mack has been promoted to the position of Supervisor in the Public Information and Communications department. She has been a LOSFA employee for 10.5 years.

"I am very excited about this new opportunity," she said. "I look forward to working with the schools and scheduling presentations."

Mack added that she will continue to travel, when requested by schools, and will attend other LOSFA events such as the upcoming Professional School Counselors Workshops and Trailblazers.

To schedule a presentation for your school, business or organization, contact Jerri Mack at 800-259-5626, Ext. 1012.



Welcome to LOSFA

Seen a few new faces around and wondered who they were? Wonder no more! LOSFA's two newest employees are happy to meet you.



Britt Kelly
Public Information and Communications

"The atmosphere is so unlike anywhere else I've worked. There's a real sense of community that makes a newcomer like myself feel welcome.

I'll admit I was a bit overwhelmed by the volume of information I was showered with upon my arrival, but I am learning daily and getting better and better at doing my job, thanks to the patience of everyone at PIC."

Prior to coming to LOSFA, Britt worked at the Dept. of Education for 2.5 years and with the Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism for 2.5 years. He believes "helping young men and women further their education is a noble goal."

Bonnie Ghassemi
Human Resources



"I've worked for the state for 14.5 years with the Department of Social Services, which is now known as the Department of Child and Family Services. I had heard through the years that LOSFA was a good agency to work for and now I know for myself that it's true. Everyone I've met since I've started has been so nice and welcoming. I'm looking forward to our move downtown because we'll all be on one floor and I'll get to meet everyone that way."

PIC representative recording first album

If you're flipping through cds in your favorite music store and happen upon one by LOSFA's Kendra Woods one day, don't be surprised.

Woods, a Public Information and Communications representative, is working on her first album. It's something she's wanted to do since she was a little girl, she said.

"I started singing in elementary school," she said. "I was in different plays and things. In 8th grade, I was elected Secretary after I sang my campaign speech."

She started writing song lyrics while in high school and recently recorded her first song.

The song can be found on Reverbnation at <http://www.reverbnation.com/KendraRaychelle>.

Woods says she is busy writing new songs and is working on a collaboration with an artist from Atlanta.

"Music has always been an inspiration to me, a way to express myself," she said. Her musical influences include singers Monica and Yolanda Adams.

While it's just a hobby at the moment, she hopes for it to one day become more. She even auditioned for American Idol a few years ago.

"I've always wanted a career out of it," she said.

Her goal is to complete her album. At the moment, she's networking via social media, hoping to make the right contacts.

"I'm working on putting enough together to create the album," she said. "If that's where it stops, I'll be happy. "

Whether she makes it as an artist herself, Woods intends to keep working as a songwriter.





LOSFA's Social Media



<http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.twitter.com/LOSFA>



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



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA



<http://www.louisianatopsprogram.com/>

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

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.

