

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Melanie Amrhein

I originally planned on beginning this message by welcoming everybody to College Savings Month, but in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Isaac, that seems somewhat anti-climactic. I'm glad that our state survived the storm with minimal injury and property damage. Since our office and some colleges were closed for a few days, possibly affecting the 9th and 14th class days and TOPS billing, our Scholarship and Grant Division staff will work diligently with all affected schools to ensure accurate and efficient payment of TOPS bills. With that being stated, now I want to welcome everybody to College Savings Month.

As members of the College Savings Plans Network, we've been joined by more than 40 other states in declaring September as "College Savings Month". Across the nation, many activities are held during September to recognize the importance of saving for college. In Louisiana, we've collaborated with the Department of Revenue and the State Treasurer for a media tour which will take place this month.

I will be making many of the media appearances myself along with Treasurer Kennedy and I look forward to visiting different cities to espouse the tax benefits of the START Saving Program. According to the Louisiana Department of Revenue's 2011 Tax Exemption Budget document, for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011, Louisiana families reduced their income tax liability by more than \$1.5 million through deductions for START accounts. If we can keep educating people about the benefits of the START Saving Program then perhaps we can change it from being one of the best kept secrets in Louisiana to being as synonymous with college access in Louisiana as the TOPS scholarship.

Finally, I look forward to seeing many of you at the Fall LASFAA Conference next month. I always enjoy providing you with the state update and there will be much to talk about. I'll see you then.

Melanie

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September is College Savings Month

According to the Louisiana Department of Revenue's 2011 Tax Exemption Budget document, "For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011, Louisiana families reduced their income tax liability by more than \$1.5 million through deductions for START accounts."

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

Section 529 plans make it easy and affordable for the average family to plan ahead for the cost of college attendance and are available in 49 states and the District of Columbia. Across the nation, many activities are held during September to recognize the importance of saving for college.

To raise awareness of the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) saving program, the state's Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sanctioned 529 college saving program, a statewide media tour is being organized by the program's administering agency, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), the Louisiana Department of the Treasury, and the Louisiana Department of Revenue.

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 beneficiary 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 also available from very conservative to very aggressive.

"The purpose of our media tour is to impress upon parents the immediate need to begin saving for their children's college education," said LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein.

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

"That figure represents a significant personal investment by Louisiana families in the future education of their children," said Louisiana Treasurer John Kennedy. "This exemplifies exactly what the START program was designed to accomplish," he added. "If not for the START program, those dollars would have been paid in taxes without a guaranteed direct benefit to the families making the payments."

Amrhein, along with Department of Revenue representatives and Treasurer Kennedy (or other Treasury officials) will travel to media outlets across the state during the month of September in an outreach effort on behalf of the START Saving Program. During the tour, the panel will 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.

"Many parents don't realize it, but if they start saving for college early enough, setting aside \$25 each month can completely cover the cost of an education at a public, four year university in Louisiana," Kennedy added.

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.





Louisiana Connect Video Training

Video conferences will be conducted by members of the ConnectEDU team at various locations throughout the state on September 13 and 14. The purpose of these training sessions is to give Professional School Counselors an in-depth, hands-on look at the Louisiana Connect Portal. The content is based on issues identified by a focus group of Professional School Counselors convened by the Louisiana Department of Education over the summer.

"We are very excited about the Louisiana Connect Compressed Video Training," said PIC supervisor Jerri Mack. "This video-conference training was designed to be very 'hands-on' for Professional School Counselors throughout the state regarding the Louisiana Connect portal."

"The goal of these workshops is to provide the Professional School Counselors with a deeper understanding of the features and benefits of the Louisiana Connect portal."

Dates & Locations:

Thursday, September 13 & Friday, September 14
9 a.m. & 1 p.m.

Alexandria – LSU-A Learning Center

Baton Rouge – Baton Rouge Community College

Lafayette – South LA Community College

Natchitoches – Northwestern State University

New Orleans – Delgado Community College (Charity School of Nursing)

West Monroe – Louisiana Delta Community College

Thursday, September 13

9 a.m. & 1 p.m.

Lake Charles – DeQuincy High School

Registration is available on LOSFA's Web site at www.osfa.la.gov/training.

2012 LOSFA Professional School Counselor Workshops

The Public Information and Communications staff is gearing up for LOSFA's annual Professional School Counselor Workshops. Beginning this month, members of the LOSFA staff will be traveling around the state to bring program updates and information to middle and high school counselors.

"As always, we are looking forward to our annual Professional School Counselor Workshop tour around the state," said LOSFA's director of Public Information and Communications, Gus Wales. "Once again, we will be sharing legislative and program updates with the counselors as well as seeking input and feedback from them."

"Updates will include TOPS, Technical Education Opportunities, the Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning Portal and a number of other topics of interest to the counselors and their students."

Registration is available on LOSFA's Web site at www.osfa.la.gov/workshops.

Dates and Locations:

Monday, September 24

Alexandria, Louisiana State University at Alexandria - Brumfield Caffey Annex Building

Tuesday, September 25

Monroe, University of Louisiana at Monroe - Student Union Ballroom

Wednesday, September 26

Bossier City, Bossier Parish Community College - Room F203

Thursday, September 27

Lake Charles, McNeese State University - Student Union Para Ballroom

Monday, October 1

Baton Rouge, Southern University - Smith Brown Memorial Union Ballroom

Tuesday, October 2

Metairie - Iglesia de Dios Getsemani (formerly Celebration Church) 2701 Transcontinental Dr.

Wednesday, October 3

Mandeville - Dave Treen Instructional Technology Center

Thursday, October 4

Lafayette - Chenier Auditorium

Check-in begins at 8 a.m. The workshops will begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at noon.

2012-2013 Chafee Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program and Chafee Program Automation

The Chafee Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program payment request process has been automated. Beginning with the Fall 2012 semester/quarter, payment requests for eligible students will be submitted online via the Louisiana Award System.

This is another example of LOSFA's continuing efforts to improve access to our programs in order to better serve both students and schools.

Louisiana Award System College Administrators will have access to the Chafee ETV Program. College Administrators will also have the capability to add the Chafee ETV role, create user accounts and issue passwords for other school personnel. If you are currently responsible for administration of the Chafee ETV Program and do not have a Louisiana Award System logon, contact your institution's College Administrator to request the Chafee ETV logon. Contact LOSFA if your school does not have a Louisiana Award System College Administrator.

Student eligibility edits have been incorporated into the automated payment request process (e.g., FAFSA verification, age limitations, etc.). Also included are measures to prevent common billing errors (e.g., omission of required data, billing amount that exceeds available funds, etc.).

SUBMISSION OF A PAYMENT REQUEST BY THE SCHOOL CERTIFIES THAT THE STUDENT IS ENROLLED AT THE INSTITUTION AND HAS MAINTAINED SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS.

PAYMENT REQUESTS SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED UNTIL THE STUDENT ACTUALLY BEGINS ATTENDING CLASSES.

THE \$5,000 ANNUAL CHAFEE AWARD SHOULD BE DIVIDED BY THE NUMBER OF SEMESTERS/QUARTERS IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR.

Note: If the school determines that an eligible student will be aging out of the program or

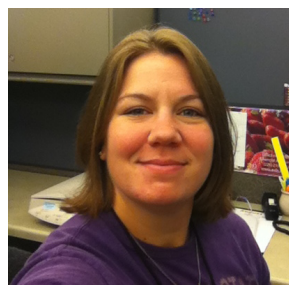
graduating at the end of the fall semester/term, the full \$5,000 award may be requested if the student's budget will allow a payment in that amount.

PRIORITY FOR SPRING PAYMENT WILL BE GIVEN TO FALL SEMESTER CHAFEE RECIPIENTS. Until January 31, ONLY payment requests for renewal awards (Fall recipients) will be processed. Payment requests for new awardees for the Spring semester will be processed beginning February 1st.

The Department of Children & Family Services will continue to verify that the student is part of the Foster Care System and issue final approval on payment requests. Following approval, LOSFA will request funds and forward them to the institution on behalf of the recipient.

Questions regarding the Chafee ETV Program should be directed to Bonnie Lavergne, 225-219-7714, Bonnie.Lavergne@la.gov or Caleshia Clark, 225-219-7708, Caleshia.Clark@la.gov.

New Hire



Ryan Shaw joins the LOSFA Public Information and Communications division in the Publications section.

The Baton Rouge native is "excited for the new challenge" and is "looking forward to helping young people in Louisiana pursue higher education."

Shaw has previous experience with the state, having served as a Public Information Officer for the Louisiana State Museum system in New Orleans and a student intern with the Office of State Parks.

She holds a degree in Mass Communication from Louisiana State University as well as a masters in Sports Management from Southern Illinois University.

She says she is happy to be at LOSFA and finds the staff to be "very friendly and welcoming."

Important TOPS Updates

New rule helps bolster summer and intersession enrollment

Students are taking advantage of a new rule that allows them to use credits earned in intersessions and summer classes to meet requirements necessary to retain their TOPS award.

Students can use classes taken during intersession and summer terms to meet the TOPS requirement of 24 hours per academic year. Students who have already earned their required 24 hours by the end of the Spring semester/quarters can use these terms to improve their GPA to maintain their TOPS award.

Schools from across the state reported increases in the number of students attending courses during these terms following the rule change, which was adopted by LASFAC in March.

Note: Because of school closings due to Tropical Storm Isaac, the date to update "pending" records to "canceled failure to earn 24 or more hours" has been moved back to September 6th.

TOPS Opportunity Award qualifying ACT remains 20

The minimum ACT score necessary to qualify for the TOPS Opportunity Award remains at 20 for 2012/2013 high school graduates.

The 2011/2012 ACT state average composite score was 20.3.

2012-2013 TOPS amount announced for LAICU schools

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) adopted the average award amount for TOPS recipients who attend Proprietary and Cosmetology (P&C) schools or non-academic programs at institutions which are part of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU) at its August 16 meeting.

The TOPS award for students attending P&C schools and non-academic programs at LAICU institutions in 2012-2013 will be \$1,520 for the academic year.

TOPS grade point average for 2013-2014 based on 19 units

At its August 16 meeting, the Executive Committee of the LASFAC approved a rule change affecting how the TOPS core high school GPA is calculated.

Beginning with high school students graduating in the 2013-2014 school year, the TOPS GPA will be calculated based on the 19 units that will comprise the TOPS core curriculum beginning with that academic year.

More information on TOPS core curriculum requirements can be found on [LOSFA's Web site](http://www.losfa.la.gov).



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 LOSFA LOOP, please
contact David Roberts at David.Roberts2@la.gov.

MAXIMUM TOPS AWARD AMOUNTS FOR 2012-13 For All Award Levels

Institutions	Semester/Quarter Amount	TOPS Annual Award Amount ⁽³⁾
Technical		
Capital Area Technical College ⁽¹⁾	\$710.50	\$1,421
Northwest Louisiana Technical College ⁽¹⁾	\$710.50	\$1,421
Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools	\$380.00	\$1,520
South Central Louisiana Technical College ⁽¹⁾	\$710.50	\$1,421
2 Year		
Baton Rouge Community College	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
Bossier Parish Community College	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
Central Louisiana Technical Community Col. ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
Delgado Community College ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
L. E. Fletcher Technical Com. Col.	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
Louisiana Delta Community College ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
LSU – Eunice	\$1,009.00	\$2,018
Northshore Technical Community College ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
Nunez Community College	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
River Parishes Community College ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
South Louisiana Community College ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
SOWELA Technical Com. College ⁽¹⁾	\$1,185.50	\$2,371
SU-Shreveport ⁽¹⁾	\$1,162.00	\$2,324
4 Year		
Grambling State University	\$1,966.00	\$3,932
Nicholls State University	\$1,962.00	\$3,924
LSU – Alexandria	\$1,869.00	\$3,738
LSU – BR	\$2,592.00 Fall/\$2,591.00 Spring	\$5,183
LSU HSC – NO	\$2,586.00	\$5,172
LSU HSC – Shreveport	\$2,665.50	\$5,331
LSU – Shreveport	\$1,941.00	\$3,882
Louisiana Tech University (Quarters)	\$1,437.00	\$4,311
McNeese State University	\$1,873.50	\$3,747
Northwestern State University	\$1,969.00	\$3,938
Southeastern La University	\$1,926.50	\$3,853
SU-Baton Rouge	\$1,978.00	\$3,956
SU-New Orleans	\$1,619.00	\$3,238
UL – Lafayette	\$1,963.00	\$3,926
UL – Monroe	\$1,994.00	\$3,988
University of New Orleans	\$2,256.00	\$4,512
Out-of-State Institutions for Hearing Impaired Students ⁽²⁾		
Gallaudet University	\$1,818.00	\$3,636
Rochester Institute of Tech. (Quarters)	\$1,212.00	\$3,636
LAICU Institutions: Centenary, Dillard, Holy Cross College, Louisiana College, Loyola, NO Baptist Seminary, OLOL, St. Joseph's, Tulane, Xavier (Tech Program, OLOL only)		
All Schools (Academic Program)	\$1,818.00	\$3,636
OLOL (Tech Program)	\$760.00	\$1,520
TOPS Eligible Students in a Graduate Program		
All Graduate Programs ⁽⁴⁾	\$2,592.00 Fall/\$2,591.00 Spring	\$5,183

Notes: (1) Includes all campuses within the designated colleges.

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

(3) The total amount does not include summer payments allowed for students enrolled full time in technical programs or students in an academic program that elect to have their award paid for a qualified summer session. The amount of the award may not exceed the tuition amount charged to the student for summer attendance.

(4) The TOPS Award Payment for TOPS eligible students enrolled in a graduate/professional program is limited to the full tuition charged by a school for enrollment in the respective graduate program or the maximum TOPS Award amount listed here, whichever is less.

Revised 8/20/12



2011 Trailblazers set to start college

The students who attended LOSFA's 2011 Trailblazer camp have graduated high school and are headed to college. We are very proud of all of them. The map below shows where some of these students will be earning their degrees.

Good luck, Trailblazers!

