

From the Desk of the Interim Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Ahhh, September! It's that time of year again. It's the time when we look back and realize that summer breezed by in a blur. It's also a time when those of us in the south anticipate with a great deal of hopefulness the long Labor Day Weekend WITHOUT a hurricane in the Gulf as the unexpected house guest.

For the students we serve it's a time of anticipation, excitement and trepidation as they ponder the school year ahead and the futures for which they are preparing. The challenges students face today in navigating towards the future are far greater than any one of our agencies can tackle alone. When we view the world through the eyes and experiences of the students we serve, the feedback they provide makes it easy to see the critical nature of the work we all do and the urgency of the need to do that work together.

I'm proud to say that we are doing just that. As I write members of our Public Information and Communications and College Access Divisions are on the road collaborating with Counselors, Registrars and Admissions Officers at the LACRAO (Louisiana Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers) workshops. Our team is gathering feedback regarding access efforts that are going great and ideas for areas where we can improve. As we gather feedback from you, we share it with our partners in education, workforce development and members of our team in other divisions.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, our GEAR UP and Legal teams are busy finalizing contracts with districts to provide additional college access services and support to

schools with high percentages of first-generation, limited income students. They've taken the lessons we learned from teachers, Explorer's Club Sponsors, On-site school coordinators and the students themselves to align the areas eligible for funding with the needs of the schools and the philosophy of Louisiana Believes.

Our remaining divisions, SG, IT, START and Fiscal are busy making sure that processes are in place for getting funds to schools and information to students and parents to facilitate a smooth financial transition into this academic year. As recently as yesterday, a request we received regarding START resulted in a revised and streamlined process. In a similar vein we received a request from a school that, by the school's own admission, was in an impossible situation. While this may be true in many cases, in this instance our SG Director took ownership, made phone calls, made more phone calls and identified a solution. How many students did it help: ONE. What was the value of the time for that ONE student: PRICELESS☺

Admittedly, the work we do in the field of college access is challenging at best. The fun never stops and just when you think you've read it all, someone comes up with a problem so complex it affirms that truth is indeed stranger than fiction. That's when we reach for the most important feedback of all: the words of the students we serve. They give us strength, hope and encouragement to keep pulling together, working hard to clear the way for a brighter future for those we serve. See for yourself on page [6](#).

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2013 Professional School Counselor Workshops

LOSFA's Public Information and Communications staff is gearing up for our annual Professional School Counselor Workshops. Beginning later 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 (including a look at the new TOPS Core Curriculum requirements for graduates of 2018 and thereafter), Technical Education Opportunities, student benefits of 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:

Tuesday, September 24

Alexandria, LSU-A Brumfield Caffey Annex

Wednesday, September 25

Monroe, ULM Alumni Center

Thursday, September 26

Bossier Parish, Bossier Parish Community College Room F203

Friday, September 27

Lake Charles, SOWELA, Arts and Humanities Bldg. Room 113

Monday, October 7

Mandeville, Treen Technology Center Auditorium

Tuesday, October 8

Baton Rouge, Southern University Smith Brown Memorial Union Ballroom

Friday, October 11 – Lafayette, Chenier Auditorium

Monday, October 14

New Orleans, University of New Orleans, University Center Grand Ballroom (2nd floor)

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

LOSFA Launches Louisiana Connect Public Landing Pages

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) today announced the launch of the new public landing pages for the Louisiana Connect college access and career planning Web portal.

Although students in grades 8-12 and their parents are encouraged to create accounts and log in to the portal at all times, those without log-in access may now use the redesigned, newly-launched Louisiana Connect public pages to view a comprehensive collection of information needed for college and career planning.

These public pages are separated into three distinct pathways to help users of all ages find the information they need to pursue a college education or career. The three pathways, Plan to Geaux, Pay to Geaux, and Geaux to Work, are further divided by target audiences, including middle school students, high school students, middle school parents and mentors, high school parents and mentors, and adult learners.

Each pathway offers the target audiences important information about different aspects of college and career access.

Plan to Geaux

This section of the public pages is designed to help students and those invested in their success to identify career interests and the specific type of education and training they will need to succeed.



LOSFA Launches Louisiana Connect Public Landing Pages (continued)



Pay to Geaux

Paying for an undergraduate degree, a graduate program or a technical certificate can be stressful. This section of the public pages offers information about college costs, financial aid, scholarships and more.

Geaux to Work

Career planning is important at all stages of life. This section of the public pages provides information and resources needed to build your path and see your career dream become a reality. Integration with the Louisiana Workforce Commission and its Star Jobs database provides easy access to career information.



Also available on the public pages is an “additional information” area, which offers more information about the Louisiana Connect portal to potential users as well as links to additional college and career access resources available throughout Louisiana.

The public pages can be accessed at www.louisianaconnect.org.

Federal Student Aid Update

The Impact of Sequestration on Federal Student Aid Programs

On August 2, 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act of 2011, which put into place automatic federal budget cuts, known as a “sequester,” to take effect if Congress failed to enact legislation to reduce the federal deficit by March 1, 2013. Because Congress did not act, these budget cuts are now in effect and they have had an impact on certain federal student aid programs.

Pell Grant Program

- The law specifically exempts the Pell Grant Program from the effects of the sequester.
- Therefore, the maximum Pell Grant award for the 2013–14 award year remains at \$5,645.

Direct Loan Program

- While this law does not otherwise change the amount or terms or conditions of Direct Loans, it does raise the loan fee paid by borrowers for Direct Loans disbursed after March 1, 2013.
- For a Direct Subsidized or Direct Unsubsidized Loan, the loan fee will increase from 1.0 percent of the principal amount of a loan to 1.051 percent. For example, the fee on a loan for \$5,500 will be increased by \$2.80 from \$55.00 to \$57.80.
- For Direct PLUS Loans for both parent and graduate student borrowers, the loan fee will increase from 4.0 percent to 4.204 percent. For example, the fee on a \$10,000 Direct PLUS Loan will be increased by \$20.40 from \$400.00 to \$420.40.
- The Department of Education will be notifying borrowers individually of these fee increases and providing them with additional information

Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grants

The Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant is provided to certain students whose parent or guardian was a member of the U.S. armed forces and died as a result of military service performed in Iraq or Afghanistan after the events of 9/11. Award amounts for any Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant that is first disbursed after March 1, 2013 must be reduced by 10.0 percent from the award amount for which a recipient would otherwise have been entitled. For example, the 2012–13 maximum award of \$5,550 is reduced by \$555.00, resulting in a maximum award amount of \$4,995.00; and the 2013–14 maximum award of \$5,645 is reduced by \$564.50, resulting in a maximum award of \$5,080.50.

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants

The TEACH Grant program provides grants to students who are completing, or plan to complete, coursework needed to begin a career in teaching and agree to teach, for at least four complete academic years, in a high-need field at an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families.

Award amounts for any TEACH Grant that is first disbursed after March 1, 2013 must be reduced by 6.0 percent from the award amount for which a recipient would otherwise have been eligible. For example, the maximum award of \$4,000 is reduced by \$240, resulting in a maximum award amount of \$3,760.

GEAR UP Poetry Contest Entries

What's Next for Me?

For a while I've thought about the future.
 I was blind facing a two-faced mind.
 Blind in a sea of faces but few were tutors,
 Who saw I could shine amongst my school's divine.

When I ask peers about financial aid, it was no man's
 land.
 I never felt so smart and ignorant.
 For a time I couldn't find the oasis in the sand.
 I only knew grants were good and scholarships were
 abundant.

What I really pursue is life outside my niche.

But how do I know how to go?
 I mean the outside is hard to clinch.
 All I want is the light to show.

Well guidance came and the light passed my eyes.
 LOSFA and LA Gear Up showed a line in the sand.
 They answered my cries, burdens even bigger than I.
 They enlightened my mind, no longer was I blind to a
 plan.

So, what's next for me, what's my legacy?
 Well, I only have 330 days to have it made.
 My plan is not too simple or not too flashy.
 My passion will not fade.

Engineering My Path to Success

Doors are being opened while some are being
 closed
 A feeling of excitement screaming from my head to
 my toes.

Looking into my future as far as I can see
 I'm ready to begin the ultimate journey.
 Extraordinary structures, machines, and design
 How things flow together and how they all align.
 Engines, technology, the things that most interest
 me
 Without such structure the world today would not
 be.

The strenuous campaign filled with practice and
 schooling
 Will be anything but easy, who am I fooling?
 Like the average person, I can only strive for success
 A strong need to focus and get rid of the excess.
 I realize now as the end of my high school days are
 getting near
 I'm ready to pursue my engineering career.
 I will start by getting my Bachelor's degree
 During that I will begin my work study.
 Next is my Master's, then PhD
 There will be no equation that can't be solved by
 me.

I Am Ready

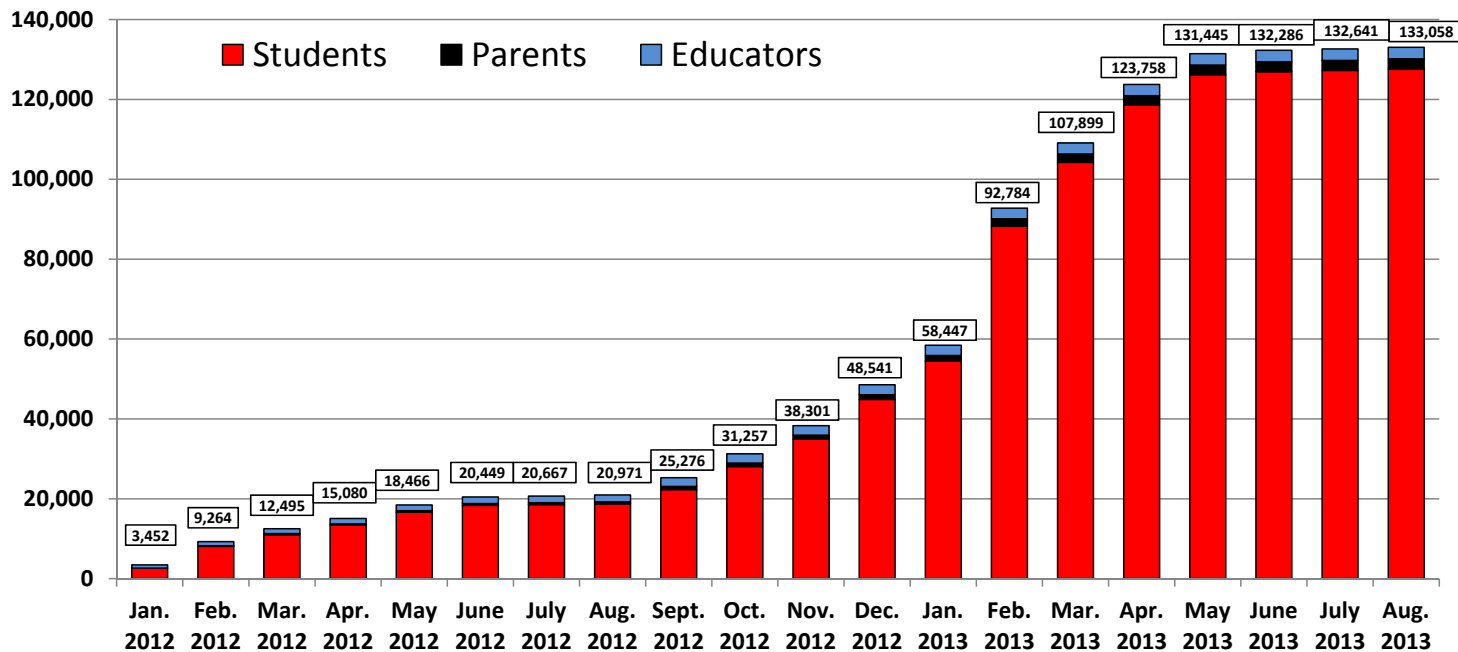
Where has my time gone?
 So many memories
 So many fun times
 And so many bad times
 Now it is all coming to an end
 Am I ready?
 College letters
 Growing up
 Responsibilities
 Am I ready?

So many questions running through my mind
 Where do I attend college?
 What do I plan to do with my life?
 Will I be successful?
 Although I am ready to grow up
 How will I function without my family caring for me?
 Am I ready?

My fun times have come and gone
 It is time for me to get up and move on
 Throughout my life I have longed for this day
 It is here now
 And I don't even know if I am ready
 I have worked so hard
 Though I have doubts or concerns
 I know I am ready
 I am ready



Active Users



The August 2013 data is as of 8/29/2013.

The current total of 133,508 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 127,519 Students, 2,630 Parents, 1,485 Community Administrators, 544 Professional School Counselors, 863 Teachers, and 17 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 LOSFA LOOP, please
contact Gus Wales at Gus.Wales@la.gov.