



NEWSLINE

A publication of the
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance



LOSFA conducts TOPS seminars

During the months of February and March, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) presented a series of Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) seminars at a variety of strategic locations across the state.

The seminars, which drew a total of 875 attendees, were held at Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Mandeville, Monroe, Natchitoches, New Orleans, Shreveport and Thibodaux.

The annual TOPS Seminars are designed to inform the parents of Louisiana's high school students about the program's requirements, as well as the student's responsibilities that are necessary for successful participation.

Specifically, the 2004 seminars covered TOPS eligibility requirements, TOPS deadlines, TOPS applications, the



LOSFA Public Information and Communications Supervisor Jerri Mack presents financial aid information at the Baton Rouge TOPS seminar held on the Baton Rouge Community College campus (BRCC) Feb. 17.

Louis J. Celestin —father of an Ascension Catholic High School senior — takes note of valuable tips on TOPS offered to parents of high school students during the TOPS Seminar held in Baton Rouge Feb.17.



IN THIS ISSUE

News and Updates.....2
 Call-in Night.....3
 STS Workshops.....3
 TOPS Timeline.....4,5
 GO Youth Challenge.....5

TOPS certification process and TOPS retention requirements.

“Although the seminars offer critical information about TOPS for seniors and their parents, at LOSFA we believe that all high school students can benefit from the infor-

mation provided at these events by enabling them to prepare a plan for meeting the award's requirements,” seminar presenter Jerri Mack said.

All seminars were free and open to the general public.

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Newsline is a publication offering recent technical, procedural and feature information related to the scholarship/grant programs of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance. This publication also contains material related to Federal Title IV Student Aid Programs. While LOSFA believes that the information herein is accurate and factual, this publication has not been reviewed nor approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Additions to the distribution list and articles for publication should be submitted to: *Newsline* Editor, P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, La. 70821-9202.

NEWS AND UPDATES

LOSFA updates: LOSFA now receives ACT scores electronically via the Internet, but only if students use the **TOPS ACT code of 1595** on the ACT test registration form. Using the Internet to transmit ACT scores to LOSFA will save staff and students critical time and energy when applying for TOPS, therefore students are reminded to use the TOPS code of 1595 as one of their four college/scholarship choices when completing item "O" on the ACT test registration form.

TOPS graduate/professional policy: As set forth in law and rule, a TOPS student who successfully completes an undergraduate degree without exhausting his period of award eligibility can receive the remaining portion of his award if he enrolls in graduate or professional school at an eligible college or university no later than the fall semester following completion of an undergraduate degree, provided he has met the requirement for continued eligibility. This policy holds true even if the graduate/professional program does not lead to a degree and/or the program requires some undergraduate coursework.

Personnel: Mary Genco Parker has been named director of the Office of Student Aid and Scholarships at Louisiana State University (LSU-BR).

LOSFA promotes: On Jan. 21, **Robyn Lively** was promoted to attorney 3 in the **Legal Division**. Lively was hired by LOSFA as an attorney 1 on Oct. 15, 2001 and promoted to attorney 2 on Jan. 21, 2003.

Joyce Price was promoted to student financial aid administrator of Special Programs, a newly created position in the **Scholarship and Grant Division**, where she will administer the following programs: Rockefeller State Wildlife, TOPS Teacher, LEAP, GO Youth Challenge, Teach LA First and Paul Douglas. Price previously worked in the Loan Administration Section as a Student Financial Aid Supervisor.

Vanessa Starns has accepted a position as executive services assistant in the **Legal Division**, where she will assist attorneys in preparing for trials and hearings and utilize the electronic student loan processing system. Previously, Starns served as office coordinator in the Scholarship and Grant Division.

Mark Normand has been hired as a student loan collector in the **Collections Section**. A graduate of LSU-BR in May of 2003, Normand majored in economics prior to accepting a position at LOSFA.

LOSFA welcomes back: After a brief stint in private industry in Texas, **Christy Marchand** rejoined the **Executive Division** as LOSFA's executive secretary.

Trailblazer Camp dates and locations set for 2004

Trailblazer Camp 2004 will take place at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches July 11-13 and at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond July 25-27.

Counselors were encouraged to name one nominee and one alternate from their 2005 graduating class for participation at one of these fun-filled, three-day financial aid summer camps situated on a college campus. This year's deadline for nominees was March 12.

Trailblazer Camp offers a unique opportunity for motivated students to acquire in-depth financial aid know-how among a group of like-minded peers and provide financial aid leadership for their classmates upon returning to school in the fall.

For more information, please call LOSFA toll-free at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012.

LOSFA's third annual "Call-in Night" rings a bell with students, parents

In response to Gov. Kathleen Blanco's declaration of "February Is Financial Aid Awareness Month," the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) offered its third annual Call-in Night on Monday, Feb. 16 from 6-9 p.m.

For one night only, students and parents were able to call the agency's toll-

free hotline and speak with financial aid representatives who remained on duty after the agency's normal operating hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Callers taking advantage of the Call-in Night event received hands-on guidance from Public Information and Communications (PIC) professionals regarding the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the Tuition

Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), and other scholarship and grant programs, as well as the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) Saving Program.

Fielding the nighttime calls were the PIC Division staff of 12, School and Lender Services (SLS) Representative Jennifer Guhman and Assistant Executive Director Melanie Amrhein.



PIC supervisor Jerri Mack (right) and PIC representative Charnia Cheatwood (left) consult TOPS electronic records during Call-in Night.



PIC representative Jolie Adams researches a caller's student loan inquiry as part of LOSFA's special annual event in recognition of "February Is Financial Aid Awareness Month."

Student Transcript System (STS) workshops wrap-up

During the month of January, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) held a series of workshops created for non-public high school personnel regarding the Student Transcript System (STS).

The following seven locations provided easy access to the STS workshop sites from across the state: Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Monroe, New Orleans and Shreveport.

A total of 209 counselors, principals, technical support personnel and school support staff attended the workshops.

Participants viewed a lecture-enhanced power point presentation provided by LOSFA's Public Information and Communications (PIC) Division Manager Michelle Darling and Representative Susan Kaufman.

Attendees also received a comprehensive STS Training manual that accompanied the presentations. At the end of each

session the audience was afforded the opportunity to ask the presenters detailed questions regarding STS policies and procedures.

STS is the system required for electronic transmission of high school student transcripts to the Louisiana Department of Education (DOE) as part of the initial eligibility determination procedure for the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS).

TOPS significant dates and deadlines for secondary and postsecondary schools

JAN. 1, 2004	2004-2005 FAFSA available.
JAN. 30, 2004	TOPS ON-LINE APPLICATION available at www.osfa.state.la.us. (For students that do not qualify for federal grant aid; may be used as an alternative to the abbreviated FAFSA.)
APRIL 3, 2004	Final ACT test date for 2004 graduating seniors to achieve a qualifying score without a penalty being imposed.
APRIL 29, 2004	Final 2003-2004 TOPS MASTER ROSTER produced.
MAY 1, 2004	Final date for submission of FAFSA, abbreviated FAFSA or ON-LINE APPLICATION for priority consideration.
MAY 1, 2004	Final SAT test date for 2004 graduating seniors to achieve a qualifying score. (If a qualifying score is achieved on this test date, a one semester penalty is assessed because the test date falls after April of the student's senior year.)
MAY 7, 2004	The system is opened to receive Spring Academic Information (AI) submissions from colleges.
MAY 7, 2004	First 2004-2005 TOPS MASTER ROSTER produced.
MAY 13, 2004	Initial eligibility and renewal processing begins.
JUNE 12, 2004	Final ACT test date for 2004 graduating seniors to achieve a qualifying score. (If a qualifying score is achieved on this test date, a one semester penalty is assessed.)
JUNE 15, 2004	Deadline for submission of Student Transcript System (STS) data. (TOPS awards are contingent upon high school transcript data being certified by this date. TOPS processing for graduates whose STS data is not complete by this date will be delayed.)
JULY 1, 2004	Deadline for submitting FAFSA, abbreviated FAFSA or ON-LINE APPLICATION without penalty.

See TOPS processing timeline, continued on page 5

TOPS processing timeline

Continued from page 4

- AUG. 12, 2004** Begins 2005 as current billing year (colleges).
- AUG. 30, 2004** Final date for receipt of FAFSA, abbreviated FAFSA or ON-LINE APPLICATION with one semester penalty assessed.
- OCT. 29, 2004** Final date for receipt of FAFSA, abbreviated FAFSA or On-LINE APPLICATION with two-semester penalty assessed. (*Applications received after this date will not be considered.*)
- To ensure timely processing for billing and renewal, postsecondary institutions are strongly encouraged to adhere to the following deadlines:**
- JUNE 15, 2004** Deadline for submission of 2004 refunds.
- JULY 1, 2004** Deadline for submission of 3S2004 and 4T2004 billings.
- OCT. 14, 2004** Final date for submission of AY 2004 Academic Information files. (*All terms, including Summer.*)

Workshop on GO Youth ChalleNGe grant productive

In support of the GO Youth ChalleNGe grant created by the 2004 Louisiana Legislature, staffers from the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) recently met with participating cadets, their counselors and representatives from several Louisiana Technical Colleges (LTC) for a grant workshop held March 2 at Camp Beauregard in Pineville.

The GO Youth grant provides two years of tuition, equivalent to the amount of the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) Tech Award, for qualified cadets pursuing a technical program at an eligible postsecondary institution.

The GO Youth ChalleNGe Program, sponsored by the Louisiana National Guard, is

an 18-month program for troubled youths 15-19 year's old who have dropped out of high school but wish to continue their education with the goal of obtaining their General Education Degree (GED).

The program, which operates three Louisiana camps – Camp Gillis Long in Carville, Camp Minden in Minden and Camp Beauregard in Pineville – requires a six-month residential phase that includes a two-week boot camp and high school classes, followed by 12 months of off-site supervision by an appointed mentor.

In order to become eligible for the grant, cadets must not be court-ordered program participants, must have graduated from the residential phase of the program, must have earned their GED within 18 months of enrolling in the program, must be Louisiana residents for 24 months prior to enrollment in an

eligible postsecondary institution, must be U.S. citizens and must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) once a year.

As part of the workshop, participants were provided with initial and continuing eligibility requirements for the grant, billing procedures and paper-work-processing instructions.

LOSFA Assistant Executive Director Melanie Amrhein, Student Financial Aid Administrator of Special Programs Joyce Price, Information Technology (IT) Representative Sharon Chandler and Public Information and Communications (PIC) Representative Glenda Bocking presented the workshop to cadets, their counselors and representatives from Sowela Community & Technical College, and the following LTC campuses: T.H. Harris, Westside and Acadian.

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