



**LOSFA**

# **PRESS RELEASE**



**From the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **START deposits top \$200 million mark**

BATON ROUGE - The Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) Saving Program, Louisiana's "529" college savings plan, has passed \$200 million in deposits. As of June 2, 2009, total deposits in the state's 529 College Saving plan stood at \$200,780,167.33, representing 33,730 active accounts.

"Reaching this milestone clearly demonstrates that START's value-added benefits have proved a winning combination for Louisiana families who choose to invest in their children's education," said Melanie Amrhein, Executive Director of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA--the state agency that administers START). "It is our goal that every Louisiana family with the desire to send their children or grandchildren to college would consider the benefits of START over other savings options," she added. "No fees are charged by the state to participate and the benefits are unmatched by other programs."

The innovative college savings program was created by the Louisiana Legislature in 1995 and was first implemented in 1997, and qualifies under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code as a qualified college savings plan for both federal and state tax incentives.

Most accounts are eligible to receive Earnings Enhancements (EE), a contribution from the state that matches a percentage of annual deposits made by the account owner. The state match ranges from 2 to 14 percent, as determined by the account owner's prior year federal adjusted gross income.

Savings may be used to pay qualified expenses at any accredited college or university, in or out of state; at the Louisiana Technical College, all campuses; and at state-approved proprietary schools eligible for federal financial aid programs.

Designed to help make education affordable for all Louisiana students, START allows account owners to save in a conservative, interest-bearing account managed by the Louisiana Treasurer (the Louisiana Principal Protection Option, which earned 4.65% interest in 2008) or in several equity investment options managed by the Vanguard Group, Inc. Owners may also choose a combination of both.

START account owners who are Louisiana residents may deduct their annual START deposits from the income reported on their Louisiana income tax forms, up to \$2,400 per account per year, or \$4,800 per beneficiary for account owners who file jointly.

For more information, contact LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012, or visit us online at [www.startsaving.la.gov](http://www.startsaving.la.gov).