



LOSFA PRESS RELEASE



From the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

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Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning Portal Exhibits 573 Percent Rate of Growth in Student Users

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) today released the Louisiana Connect college access and career planning Web portal (www.louisianaconnect.org) user data collected during the 2012-2013 school year, which illustrates the growth within all user groups, highlighted by a 573 percent increase in student users.

“We are extremely pleased with the phenomenal rate of growth the Louisiana Connect portal has demonstrated,” said LOSFA Interim Executive Director Dr. Sujuan W. Boutté. “These user figures validate our belief that, when made aware of the tools contained within the portal, both students and parents readily recognize the benefits it offers,” she added.

The Louisiana Connect portal provides tools and resources to help students plan for life after high school, find colleges where they can be successful, and launch rewarding careers. Louisiana Connect also provides professional school counselors, parents, teachers and advisors with a full suite of tracking dashboards, reporting capabilities, and communication tools to help students navigate the process.

In August 2012 the portal had a total of 20,971 users. By the end of the school year (May 2013) the portal user total was 131,445.

When viewed by user groups, the 10-month growth of the Louisiana Connect portal included a 573 percent increase in student users, a 373 percent increase in parent user accounts, and a 62 percent increase in educators (counselors and teachers).

The rate of growth can be attributed to many factors, including the launch of the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) and TOPS Progress Tracker tools within the portal as well as the addition of on-demand videos, new and improved user guides, and a streamlining of the processes used to manually import data for schools.

In addition to the growth in user numbers, the number of recruiting messages sent from Louisiana college partners to students via the Louisiana Connect portal during the same time period increased by 29 percent.

The Louisiana Connect college access and career planning portal allows students to:

- Connect with colleges and universities that are a match for their educational and career goals

- Learn about careers and connect with employers
- Find scholarships and other programs designed to help the student succeed
- Access an exclusive News Feed and Event Planner
- Build a profile to highlight individual skills and achievements
- Learn how a college education can be affordable
- Compare costs and academic offerings from various in and out of state schools

Other Louisiana Connect portal highlights include:

- Integration of state-mandated Individual Graduation Plan
- Louisiana Department of Education student data loaded into the web portal, prepopulating student profiles, and driving college, scholarship and career matching
- Guided college searching, matching and comparison tools
- Scholarship Searching & Matching including the ability for counselors to upload local scholarships
- Career Exploration & Planning: Interest, Skills & Values assessments mapped to occupation profiles, internships, and career planning strategies
- Dashboards & Reporting: Resources that empower counselors to help students stay on track to graduate and to earn targeted scholarships and grants

In addition, LOSFA is working with numerous college access organizations, Gear-Up and TRiO programs and community organizations throughout the state to participate and alert students through the portal of various opportunities and events that will assist with postsecondary education preparation and financing.

Future portal enhancements that are in various stages of development include:

- Integration of Louisiana Connect with the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Star Jobs Web site
- The development, in partnership with Board of Regents, The Louisiana Department of Education and the Louisiana Workforce Commission of public landing pages that will provide valuable college access and financing resources to populations without active Louisiana Connect accounts including adult-learners who are returning to school or seeking career makeovers
- The development of a Louisiana Connect smart phone application that will be beta tested this summer.

About LOSFA

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is a state agency and is the Administrative arm of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission and the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority. Some of the programs administered by LOSFA include Louisiana's premier merit based scholarship program, the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS); the state's 529 college savings plan, the Student Tuition Assistance, Revenue Trust (START) program, and the state's GEAR UP Program; the state's primary need based grant program, the Louisiana Go Grant; the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship program; the Chafee Educational Training Voucher program, and the John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment program.

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