**MEETING OF THE**

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**DATE:** February 19, 2015

**TIME** 10:30 a.m.

**PLACE:** Louisiana Retirement Systems Building

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr., Commission Chair, called a meeting of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission to order at 10:39 a.m.

The following members of the Commission were present:

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr.

Mr. Ken Bradford

Mr. Nichquin Dumas

Mr. James Garvey

Mr. Walter Guidry, Jr.

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr

Mr. Michael Murphy

Mr. Wilfred Sibille

Ms. Wendy Simoneaux

Dr. Larry Tremblay

The following members were absent:

Mr. Scott Ballard

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Raymond Brandt

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr

Mr. Willie Hendricks

Mr. Myron Lawson

Mr. Richard Maciasz

Mr. Stephen Toups

Ten members were present, which did not represent a quorum, therefore, in accordance with the Meeting Notice, the Chairman called the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission to order.

The following members of the Commission’s Executive Committee were present:

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr.

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr

Mr. Winfred Sibille

Dr. Larry Tremblay

Four members were present, which did represent a quorum.

The following members were absent:

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr

Mr. Lavigne temporarily appointed Mr. Bradford, Mr. Dumas, Mr. Garvey, Mr. Guidry, Mr. Murphy and Ms. Simoneaux.

The following guests were present:

Ms. Marie Demego

Ms. Kirsten Hansen

The following staff members were present:

Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Ms. Rhonda Bridevaux

Ms. Alice Brown

Mr. Kelvin Deloch

Mr. George Eldredge

Ms. Terri Finley

Ms. Carol Fulco

Mr. Jack Hart

Ms. Tisha Lewis

Ms. Robyn Lively

Mr. Richard Omdal

Ms. Stacy Oubre

Ms. Deborah Paul

Mr. Gus Wales

Under Introductions and Announcements, Mr. Lavigne introduced Mr. Garvey, the new representative from the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Mr. Garvey commented he was glad to be serving on the Commission. Dr. Boutté introduced Ms. Demego and Ms. Hansen with Graduation Alliance which is the new operator for Louisiana Connect.

The minutes of the January 27, 2015 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission were presented for review and approval. Mr. Dumas made a motion to approve. Mr. Long seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Lavigne offered a public comment period. There were no comments.

An update on Louisiana Connect was provided by Ms. Hansen from Graduation Alliance. Ms. Hansen highlighted the growth in 2014 of Louisiana Connect in overall users. Ms. Hansen stated it was a modest growth in comparison to previous years which is to be expected during the third year of the program. Ms. Hansen stated plans are in development to increase usage by current users and to increase activation for new users. Ms. Hansen stated Graduation Alliance is committed to working with LOSFA and the Louisiana Department of Education on protecting student’s data with the new privacy laws that have taken effect within the past year. Ms. Hansen stated that preparations are underway to e-mail parents about the permission forms to determine whether they will opt in or opt out. Ms. Hansen stated a flyer about Louisiana Connect will be given to College Goal Sunday participants highlighting information about the updated student data and the value of remaining in the portal.

Mr. Lavigne asked why a parent would choose to opt in or opt out of Louisiana Connect portal or why they are given that choice. Ms. Hansen replied referencing state privacy legislation and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) rules. Ms. Hansen described the planned relationship between the district notifications and the portal notifications. Ms. Hansen stated that Graduation Alliance will then send confirmation letters to parents who opted in regarding the data refresh and to those who opted out regarding account termination options. Ms. Hansen stated implementation is scheduled for March.

Dr. Tremblay asked about the opt in and opt out procedures. Mr. Eldredge explained that there are two simultaneous issues involved. Mr. Eldredge stated that parents of students currently enrolled in the schools must opt in for LOSFA and the Board of Regents to receive the students’ data. Many of these students have accounts in Louisiana Connect whose information was put in before the law became effective. Mr. Eldredge stated Graduation Alliance is now giving parents the opportunity to opt out of new information being added or to terminate the account which would result in all information being purged. Dr. Tremblay asked if the parent does not choose an option, what happens to the information in the portal. Mr. Eldredge responded that if the parent does not choose an option the old information stays in the portal but no new information can be loaded into the portal. Dr. Boutté added that every effort is being made to streamline the communications in order to avoid confusion for the parents.

Under Program Updates, Mr. Wales, Director of Public Information and Communication, presented the Field Services report for Statewide and Concentrated services for January 2015. Mr. Wales reported that 26 TOPS Seminars were conducted statewide that reached 2,052 students and parents, four General Financial Aid workshops were conducted statewide that reached 155 attendees, two Financial Aid Literacy Programs with 72 attendees and four Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) programs reached 189 attendees. Mr. Wales reported LOSFA’s annual FaceBook Chat Night was conducted on February 10, 2015 to answer questions about financial aid and college access programs and reached almost 2,000 people. Mr. Wales also mentioned the upcoming Go Center pilot event at the East Baton Rouge Parish Library. Mr. Wales reported that 15 locations around the state are finalizing plans to conduct College Goal Sunday Events on March 1. Mr. Wales reported on the Pre and Post College Goal Louisiana events that are happening around the state in March. Mr. Wales reported on the SignalVine texting update for college freshmen. Mr. Wales stated since inception in September 2014, there are 16,301 college freshmen participating. In addition, LOSFA has sent 176,000 plus messages and LOSFA has received 3,000 returned messages and discussions with students.

Dr. Boutté, Executive Director, presented the Field Services report for Intensive Services on behalf of Dr. Cobb. Dr. Boutté reported 108 high school students will be attending a field trip to Fletcher Technical Community College on February 24, 2015 to learn about programs at the college. Dr. Boutté reported that the LA GEAR UP Explorers’ Club and Leadership Conference will be held in March 12 - 14, 2015 in Baton Rouge. Dr. Boutté reported students must have been accepted to college in order to attend the conference this year. The Louisiana Youth Congress helped design the agenda for the conference and assisted with conference arrangements. Dr. Boutté reported that the first LA GEAR UP day at the legislature has been scheduled. Dr. Boutté reported the FLY Tour will occur in March at several postsecondary schools around Louisiana. Dr. Boutté reported on the SignalVine text messaging campaign with high school seniors. Dr. Boutté reported LA GEAR UP is working with LA GEAR UP schools to increase their FAFSA completion rates by 25% this year. Dr. Boutté reported that LA GEAR UP’s Denise Jacobs has been selected as a Virtual Learning Consultant with NCAN. Mrs. Jacobs is tasked with sending out messages on the best practices in Louisiana as well as learning about other best practices around the country.

Mr. Hart, Assistant Executive Director of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, presented the financial statements update. Mr. Hart presented the financials for the period ending January 31, 2015. Mr. Hart reported the financial statement for January 2015 showed the Operating Fund closed the month with net assets of $9.4M and the Federal Fund closed with net assets of $7.1M. The Federal Fund had a decrease for the month of $27K. The reserve ratio was 0.60% on a portfolio of $1.17B. The Operating Fund had a decrease for the month of $302K and $1.3M for the first four months of Federal Fiscal Year 2015. Rehabs were $3.0M for the month; which were 19% below the current projection but consistent with the prior year actual.

Ms. Paul, Scholarship and Grant (S/G) Program Director, presented a GO Grant update as of February 12, 2015. Ms. Paul reported a current balance of $10M dollars remaining in GO Grant allocations and pending payment requests of over $1M which will process on February 19, 2015. Ms. Paul stated LOSFA is working with schools to make sure they use their allocations by the March 24, 2015 deadline.

Ms. Paul presented a John R. Justice update as of February 19, 2015. Ms. Paul reported LOSFA has received 20 applications for the current award year with an application deadline of April 30, 2015. Ms. Paul stated that 6 Public Defenders have applied and 14 Prosecutors have applied. Ms. Paul reported no applications from the 2nd and 5th circuits have been received but LOSFA is working in those areas to make sure lawyers are notified of this program.

Mr. Hart presented the first item under the TOPS Update which is a letter from the Commissioner of Administration to the State Treasurer requesting they provide the seed advance that Dr. Boutté requested in January. Mr. Hart reported that LOSFA has received the seed advance so there will be no delays in processing TOPS payments. Mr. Hart reported LOSFA has been fully funded for the appropriation for the TOPS Tobacco Settlement. Mr. Hart presented the TOPS Actual versus Budget Expense sheet as of February 12, 2015.

Dr. Boutté presented the Executive Director’s update. Dr. Boutté reported on the FAFSA Completion Project. The agreement allows LOSFA to tell the district or the entity which students have completed a FAFSA in their district or entity. Dr. Boutté reported that as of February 12, 2015, LOSFA has received agreements from 9 public school districts, 5 charter schools and 1 non-public school. Dr. Boutté showed some charts from a report produced by Government Accountability Office (GAO). Dr. Boutté showed a blog from the College Savings Plan network (CSPN) on the effort to rally support for positive changes to 529 college savings programs. Dr. Boutté presented data requests on TOPS, TOPS Tech and TOPS Early Start students from the Louisiana Department of Economic Development.

Under New Business, the first item was a proposal that the Commission consider the use of the Request for Proposals process to solicit proposals to provide application development support to enhance the Louisiana Award System’s student portal. Mr. Sibille made a motion for approval. Mr. Bradford seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The second item under new business was a proposal that the Commission consider and act upon Requests for Exception to the TOPS Provisions that Require Students to Enroll Full-Time, to Remain Continuously Enrolled, and to Earn at Least 24 Credit Hours During the Academic Year. Mr. Dumas made a motion of approval of requests from Brittany (536607), Jasmine (472751), Kayla (559389), and Gaige (468602). Ms. Simoneaux seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Long made a motion to adjourn at 11:43 a.m. and Mr. Guidry seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVED:

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Chairman