**3MEETING OF THE**

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**DATE:** October 20, 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 10:38 a.m.

The following members of the Commission were present:

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr.

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Ken Bradford

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr

Mr. Walter Guidry, Jr.

Mr. Benson Kinney

Mr. Myron Lawson

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr.

Ms. Amy Marix

Mr. Winfred Sibille

Ms. Ann A. Smith

Dr. Larry Tremblay

The following members were absent:

Mr. Scott Ballard

Mr. Raymond Brandt

Ms. Melanie Burke

Mr. James Garvey

Mr. Richard Maciasz

Mr. Michael Murphy

Mr. Stephen Toups

Twelve members were present, which did represent a quorum

The following staff members were present:

Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Ms. Rhonda Bridevaux

Ms. Alice Brown

Ms. Gayle Daigle

Mr. Kelvin Deloch

Ms. Shanna Estay

Ms. Carol Fulco

Mr. Jack Hart

Ms. Bonnie Lavergne

Ms. Robyn Lively

Mr. Richard Omdal

Ms. Stacy Oubre

Mr. Gus Wales

Mr. Marcus Warren

Under Introductions and Announcements, Dr. Boutté introduced Mr. Marcus Warren, the newest employee for the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance. Mr. Warren is a graduate of Southern University and previously worked for the Louisiana Senate. Mr. Warren will be working in Publications within the Public Information Division.

The minutes of the September 22, 2015 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission were presented for review and approval. Dr. Barnes-Teamer 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.

Under Program Updates, Mr. Wales, Director of Public Information and Communications, presented the Field Services report for statewide services for September 2015. Mr. Wales reported that in September, Public Information Division Representatives conducted 13 TOPS Seminars with 1,532 students/parents in attendance, 23 TOPS Browse Sessions/TOPS Check-ups at College and Career Fairs with 8,163 students/parents in attendance, three FAFSA/Federal Aid Program Seminars with 920 students/parents in attendance, and one General Financial Aid Seminar with 80 parents in attendance. Public Information Representatives also conducted one Financial Literacy Seminar at the request of an employer with 40 employees in attendance. Mr. Wales reported that on September 26, LOSFA conducted a Leadership Training for Trailblazers on the campus of Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC). Trailblazers learned about changes to the TOPS Tech Award, about Louisiana College Application Month (LCAM), and about upcoming changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as well as the Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID. Trailblazers had the opportunity to apply to colleges while attending the training. BRCC provided an admissions presentation to the Trailblazers.

Mr. Wales reported that LOSFA conducted a School Counselor Workshop hosted by BRCC on October 1, 2015. There were 97 counselors from South Louisiana high schools in attendance. Counselors were updated on TOPS Legislative changes. They also received: updates on LOSFA services provided to counselors and students; updates on upcoming FAFSA changes and the FSA ID; an overview of LOSFA College Access events and information on how their high schools can participate in those events; a TOPS update; and an overview of LOSFA Special Programs, including GO Grant and Chafee. Counselors also received a presentation from the BRCC Admissions Office and were able to spend some time exploring different majors offered at BRCC. Mr. Wales reported on the NEXT magazine and the Educational Pathways publications highlighting LOSFA college access services/events throughout the year.

Dr. Boutté, Executive Director, reported on the Field Outreach Services Report for concentrated and intensive services. Dr. Boutté reported on College Kick Off events. Dr. Boutté reported that students at this outreach event received their first wrist-band that says “I am going to college”. Dr. Boutté reported that 43 schools participated, representing 25 districts with over 4,900 students reached. The College Kick Off event ran over into October because of so much interest in the event. In October, staff are on the road participating in Louisiana College Application Month (LCAM). Dr. Boutté reported that to date, there have been 331 participants with 624 applications submitted at LCAM events.

Dr. Boutté reported on the social media coverage at these events. Dr. Boutté reported that staff are doing live tweets from the events. Mr. Guidry was in attendance at one of the events in Lake Charles. Mr. Guidry commented that Ms. Timenee Thomas had him so excited he wanted to apply to college. Mr. Guidry reported that it did not take the kids long to get excited about applying to college, and he commended the staff on a job well done.

Dr. Boutté commented on new partnerships with several national and local boards. Dr. Boutté reported that LOSFA has been invited to assemble a team to serve on the National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success (NCSCPS) and to attend the White House Convening in partnership with the White House’s College Opportunity Agenda and the First Lady’s Reach Higher Initiative, the National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success, and the University of North Florida (UNF). Dr. Boutte stated that Dr. Tireka Cobb and Ms. Juterh Nmah will be attending the event.

Mr. Garvey arrived during program updates.

Mr. Hart, Assistant Executive Director of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, presented the financial statements update. Mr. Hart presented the financials for the period ending August 2015. Mr. Hart reported the financial statement for August 2015 showed the Operating Fund closed the month of August with net assets of $7.5M and the Federal Fund with net assets of $7.2M. The Federal Fund had a decrease of $107K for the month and an increase of $14K for the 11 months. The reserve ratio decreased to 0.651% on our portfolio of $1.11B. The Operating Fund had a decrease for the month of $322K and $3.3M for the 11 months. Also, rehabilitation loans were only $1.2M for the month, which is substantially below both 2014 and the current year projection. This is primarily due to the implementation of new procedures following the recent Dear Colleague letter issued by the Department.

Ms. Lavergne, Special Programs Director, presented a GO Grant update as of October 15, 2015. Ms. Lavergne stated that schools began billing for GO Grant after the fourteenth class day and the ninth class day for Louisiana Tech. Ms. Lavergne reported that approximately $7.1M in payments have been processed to schools. Ms. Lavergne reported that 11 schools have pending payment requests that should be processed this week and that of the 11 schools, 6 of them submitted their first for GO Grant billing for this academic year. Ms. Lavergne stated that the Fall Semester billing deadline is November 2 and all schools were notified by blast e-mail. Ms. Lavergne reported that schools that have not billed yet will be contacted to see if the schools need any assistance in getting their billings sent in a timely manner.

Ms. Lavergne presented a John R. Justice update as of October 1, 2015. Ms. Lavergne stated that five public defenders have received their awards and nine prosecutors have received their awards. Ms. Lavergne stated that one award for a prosecutor is yet to be disbursed in the second circuit and LOSFA is waiting on documentation to support the application.

Dr. Tremblay asked about the appropriations for next year for the John R. Justice program. Dr. Boutté stated that LOSFA has been notified of the appropriation for next federal fiscal year. Ms. Lavergne commented that the appropriation has increased for next year.

Ms. Lavergne presented the TOPS Update. Ms. Lavergne stated that processing of 2015 graduates is still underway and that billing for TOPS began after the fourteenth class day and ninth class day. Ms. Lavergne also stated that payments continue to be made for previous academic years as needed.

Mr. Lavigne asked what the total cost of TOPS for this year is. Mr. Hart responded that $284M is projected but only $265M was appropriated, resulting in an approximate shortfall of $19M.

Mr. Guidry asked about three schools who have zero numbers on the TOPS report. Dr. Boutté responded that those schools have participants and have not billed yet or that they have errors in the billing received by LOSFA. Dr. Boutté stated that LOSFA works with the schools having difficulty billing for TOPS and GO Grant payments.

Mr. Sibille asked if TOPS is still more or less funded. Dr. Boutté responded that TOPS is still more or less funded and the Budget Office and the Board of Regents are aware of the potential shortfall in the budget.

Dr. Boutté presented the Executive Director’s update. Dr. Boutté reported on the official 3-year Cohort Default Rate for fiscal years 2009-2012 which is 8.6%. Dr. Boutté reported that fewer loans are going into default and the rate is going down. Dr. Boutté reported on an article from the Lumina Foundation on the make-up of college students. Dr. Boutté reported on the budget presentation to the Board of Regents.

Under New Business, it was proposed that the Commission consider a Budget Adjustment for Fiscal Year 2015-2016, decreasing the appropriation for the Admin/Support Services Program and the Scholarship/Grants Program in the amounts of $1,543,620 and $1,457,198, respectively, for a total of $3,000,818. Mr. Sibille made a motion for approval. Mr. Kinney seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed 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. Bradford made a motion of approval of requests from Canesra (642550), Tiyana (643666), Katherine (43095), Sean (613041), Megan (583151), Lanie (552507), Andrew (598934), Blake (471505), Crystal (663112), Ariana (643160), John (553109), Jake (43503), and Adrienne (543367). Mr. Guidry seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dr. Tremblay asked about the legislation that passed on personally identifiable information and how it affected TOPS students for initial eligibility. Dr. Boutté replied that staff spent a lot more time manually processing students and gave examples of scenarios where students could have possibly not been awarded due to names not matching in the Award System. Dr. Tremblay thanked the staff for the extra effort they put into processing the students this year.

There being no further business, Ms. Marix made a motion to adjourn at 11:20 a.m. Ms. Smith seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVED:

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Chairman