**MEETING OF THE**

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**DATE:** September 22, 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

Ms. Melanie Burke

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr

Mr. Walter Guidry, Jr.

Mr. Benson Kinney

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr.

Mr. Michael Murphy

Mr. Winfred Sibille

The following members were absent:

Mr. Scott Ballard

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Raymond Brandt

Mr. James Garvey

Mr. Myron Lawson

Mr. Richard Maciasz

Ms. Amy Marix

Ms. Ann A. Smith

Mr. Stephen Toups

Dr. Larry Tremblay

Nine 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. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr

Mr. Winfred Sibille

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

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Dr. Larry Tremblay

Four members were present, which did represent a quorum.

Mr. Lavigne temporarily appointed Mr. Guidry and Mr. Murphy.

The following staff members were present:

Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Ms. Rhonda Bridevaux

Ms. Alice Brown

Ms. Gayle Daigle

Ms. Shanna Estay

Ms. Carol Fulco

Ms. Bonnie Ghassemi

Mr. Jack Hart

Ms. Robyn Lively

Mr. Jerry Oubre

Ms. Deborah Paul

Ms. Linda Roquemore

Mr. Gus Wales

The minutes of the August 20, 2015 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission were presented for review and approval. Mr. Guidry made a motion to approve. Mr. Ehlinger 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 August 2015. Mr. Wales reported that in August, Public Information Division Representatives conducted one TOPS Seminar with 80 students/parents in attendance and one TOPS Seminar for high school counselors with 45 counselors in attendance. Mr. Wales also reported that representatives gave a legislative update to counselors at six Louisiana Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Offices (LACRAO) workshops across the state.

Dr. Boutté, Executive Director, reported on the Field Outreach Services Report for concentrated and intensive services. Dr. Boutté presented a calendar for September and October with all the Louisiana College Kick Off events that cover the students’ Senior Year Game Plan and the 5 Point Match tool. Dr. Boutté stated that the College Kick Off events will roll over into October and Louisiana College Application Month will start. Dr. Boutté stated that LOSFA is partnering with postsecondary institutions to provide hands-on, one-on-one assistance to help students apply to at least one postsecondary institution and to help students who do not have the ability to pay to obtain fee waivers. Dr. Boutté thanked Mr. Guidry who talked about the lack of LOSFA services in Lake Charles, and she informed the Commission that LOSFA Field Outreach Services have added Washington-Marion and LaGrange High Schools to intensive services schools. Dr. Boutté commented that a staff member has been doing live tweets and live Instagram posts during the events and examples of the posts are included in the packet.

Mr. Hart, Assistant Executive Director of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, presented the financial statements update. Mr. Hart presented the financials for the period ending July 2015. Mr. Hart reported the financial statement for July 2015 showed the Operating Fund closed the month of July with net assets of $7.8M and the Federal Fund closed with net assets of $7.3M. The Federal Fund had a decrease for the month of $21K and an increase of $121K for the ten months. The reserve ratio increased to 0.661% on a portfolio of $1.11B. The Operating Fund had a decrease for the month of $286K and $2.9M for the ten months. Also rehabs were $3.2M for the month and $26M for the current year, both of which are 10% below last year. Mr. Hart commented on a letter from Navient on rehabs sold effective October 1, 2015.

Ms. Paul, Scholarship and Grant Program Director, presented a Go Grant update as of September 17, 2015. Ms. Paul stated that schools have started billing for the 2015-2016 academic year. Ms. Paul stated that the deadline for billings will be November 1 for the fall semester and fall quarter for Louisiana Tech.

Ms. Paul presented a John R. Justice update as of September 10, 2015. Ms. Paul stated that three awards are still in the process of being awarded due to the fact that recipients need to send in required documentation to receive the award. Ms. Paul stated that LOSFA received notification of funding for next year and awards will increase by $100. Mr. Lavigne asked about the item on the agenda about the John R Justice Program. Ms. Paul replied that currently selected recipients have 45 days to send in the required documentation. Ms. Paul stated that applicants must state their income on the application along with other criteria and once selected, they must send in the required documentation that support what the application states. Ms. Paul stated that some of the selected recipients decide not to accept the award or they are no longer working as a public defender or prosecutor, and that when an award is declined, another recipient is selected, and then that recipient has 45 days to comply. Ms. Paul stated that by changing the deadline for the time allowed to provide documentation helps the efficiency of the program.

Ms. Paul presented the TOPS Update. Ms. Paul reported that postsecondary institutions have begun billing for TOPS and LOSFA is processing payments to the schools. Mr. Sibille asked what the total enrollment for the postsecondary institutions is. Dr. Boutté commented that LOSFA will not have these numbers but the Board of Regents could provide those numbers.

Dr. Boutté presented the Executive Director’s update. Dr. Boutté commented on an article about what types of job are going to college graduates. Dr. Boutté commented on FAFSA changes taking effect in 2016. Dr. Boutté stated that beginning with high school graduates of 2017, students will be able to submit the FAFSA in October 2016 and income tax data from income tax year 2015. Dr. Boutté commented that it would make it easier for students and parents to file the FAFSA earlier, to file the FAFSA around the same time they apply for college, and to use completed tax information to reduce the chance of error and the chance of being selected for verification.

Under Committee Reports, it was proposed that the Commission receive the Approved Minutes of the March 2015 and June 2015 Advisory Committee Meeting that were adopted at its meeting on September 11, 2015. Mr. Long made a motion for approval. Mr. Sibille seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Under New Business, it was proposed that the Commission consider amending Section 221 and 223 of the Commission’s Advisory Committee’s Bylaws to change the membership of the Committee and related provisions. Mr. Guidry made a motion for approval. Mr. Ehlinger seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider ratifying a Budget Adjustment for Fiscal Year 2015-2016, decreasing the appropriation for the Admin./Support Services Program in the amount of $25,452. Mr. Sibille made a motion for approval. Mr. Guidry seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider entering into a contract with Methods Technology Solutions, Inc. to provide application development support to enhance the Louisiana Award System’s student portal. Mr. Long made a motion for approval. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider amending Sections 2005, 2007, and 2009 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to provide that an applicant for the John R. Justice Loan Repayment Program must sign a service agreement as part of the application process and to shorten the time period in which an applicant must provide all supporting documentation. Mr. Ehlinger made a motion for approval. Mr. Long seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider and act upon the attached request for exception to the TOPS regulatory provision that requires a student to file the FAFSA no later than 120 days after the July 1 following the one year anniversary of graduation from high school. The Commission’s rules do not provide for an exception to the FAFSA deadline, but the Commission has allowed a student to file the FAFSA late under extremely limited circumstances when the student was able to demonstrate that it was not possible to file timely due to circumstances totally outside the student’s control. The student has presented facts and documentation that the student believes justifies the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance. Staff recommended denial of the exception. Mr. Sibille motioned that staff’s recommendation to deny the request for exception be rejected and that an exception to the FAFSA deadline be granted. Mr. Bradford 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. Guidry made a motion of approval of requests from Morgan (587722), Ambrojhae (449525), Michael (421368), and Aliyah (538317). Mr. Bradford seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Murphy made a motion to adjourn at 11:22 a.m. Mr. Guidry seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVED:

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Chairman