



## From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

*Albert Einstein*

This month I happily cede the cover story to the folks in the field and this issue to the words and pictures featuring the students we serve as this is all the proof we need that Einstein got it right!

Best-

S.

### ***Mary Cobb-Marshall, Glen Oaks High School Counselor's speech to the 2015 GEAR UP Explorers' Club Conference:***

Dr. Cobb, distinguished guests, students, parents and other attendees, it is indeed an honor for me to stand before you and tell you why Louisiana GEAR UP matters. As a school counselor, I see the benefits of this program. Seeing the excitement of students walking on a college campus for the first time and saying, I can go here. As a counselor, I heard this and told them, yes you can. This program is benefiting students who never considered going to college because they felt they just could not go, or maybe they could not afford to go or possibly had anyone in their families to inspire them enough to want to go.

Louisiana GEAR UP gave Louisiana students opportunities to prepare for college and made them

feel like they mattered and could compete with anyone throughout the state or nation. This program allowed participants to visit colleges, take dual enrollment courses through local college partnerships, take ACT Prep and Credit Recovery courses to make it possible to graduate, qualify for TOPS and attend college. It allowed for students to take AP courses in order to start earning college credit. This program also gave students an incentive to make good grades by qualifying them for a Rewards for Success Scholarship. Many of these students now believe that college is possible and are excited about their future. It allowed for participants to receive valuable lessons through their Explorers' Clubs. These lessons taught them about life, becoming an independent and responsible young adult, and preparing for life after secondary school. The funds from this program also made it possible for my students to reach for the stars. This program made them realize that college was obtainable and the sky was the limit. These funds also allowed my students to have transportation home in the evenings so they could stay after school and take ACT Prep, Credit Recovery, and Dual Enrollment classes with Southern University, which will assist them in gaining admission into the colleges of their choice. Louisiana GEAR UP has been the support that certain schools received in order to make their students believe that anything is possible.

Over 50 percent of my seniors are admitted to college and so far students who qualify for TOPS have almost tripled from last year. Programs like Louisiana GEAR UP

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are for students who need that extra support. These funds made all of this possible.

Dr. Martin Luther King once said, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” Louisiana GEAR UP promotes this to all participants. Every student has the opportunity to become great in school if they reached for the stars and only believed in their potential.

In closing, Malcolm X stated: “Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.” This quote inspires me to hope that Louisiana GEAR UP will continue because students in Louisiana are benefiting from this amazing program.

To the students who are here tonight, I urge you to reach for the stars; never stop dreaming. You will make mistakes in life, and hopefully you will learn and not repeat them. Choose your friends carefully, become successful, believe in yourself, go out into the world and make us proud and never give up on your dreams. Good Luck on your endeavors and may God bless you.

Thank You!

***Denise Jacobs, GEAR UP Coordinator, looking back on the year in review:***

Traditionally, the Explorers’ Club Conference and Leadership Summit has been a capstone event for Explorers’ Club members. This year’s event was a program capstone, as well. To have 200 students with college acceptance letters in hand—a requirement of attendance—was no small feat. It reflects an intensive academic year that began with college kick-off events in which every single LA GEAR UP school participated and every LA GEAR UP senior received a senior year game plan.

Kick-off events were followed by Louisiana College Application Month in which LA GEAR UP and LOSFA staff traveled to every single LA GEAR UP school at least once and physically sat down at computer stations with students and helped them complete college applications and actually push the “Submit” button. Behind-the-scenes, in the office, LA GEAR UP staff mailed fee waivers, processed application payments for colleges that do not accept fee waivers, and worked with both colleges and high schools to expedite the payment process.

Then, staff began preparing for the FLY Tour, which traveled to five universities across the state and presented on financial literacy to over 600 high school students within one week.

In the midst of all these labor-intensive activities were regular school-based LA GEAR UP initiatives like campus field trips, ACT tutoring, and mentoring—the day-to-day work of LA GEAR UP.

From the beginning of the school year, the Explorers’ Club Conference and Leadership Summit was never far from our collective mind and our mission to increase the number of low-income, high-need Louisiana students who receive a postsecondary education. Since our cohort now consists of high school seniors, it seemed reasonable to extend the 2015 Conference only to Explorers’ Club members who had been accepted to college. In making this decision, we moved students from “I will” to “I have applied,” and “I was accepted.” It wasn’t easy, but we did it.

Even a week before the Conference, we were advising on-site school coordinators and Club sponsors to insist that students still waiting for acceptance letters also apply to an open-admissions community college. In making these demands, we know that we moved the needle. We know that without the final thrust the Conference provided, many students would still be in limbo, still awaiting their first-choice acceptance.

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## From the Desk of the Executive Director (continued)

Instead, every senior at the conference had at least one postsecondary option in hand, and some had several. Insisting on college acceptance allowed us to move from the abstract to the concrete. We emphasized career match and fit, the Louisiana job market and viable career paths, the nuts and bolts of navigating the college experience—how to manage Moodle, how to minimize test anxiety, how to retain TOPS, how to live on a budget. Every Conference session was relevant. We had moved out of the theoretical and into the now.

In the end, student comments were “awesome” and “amazing,” but the most rewarding feedback of all came from the adults—the teachers and counselors who work with students day in and day out. Adult feedback included words such as “organized,” “efficient,” “informative,” “entertaining,” and “right on point.”

We could not ask for higher praise.

## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit

### Poetry Slam

#### LA GEAR UP students spit original rhymes and rhythms

On Friday evening, student poets told their stories through the power of the spoken word. The result was an exhilarating night of poetry in which more students wanted to participate than could be accommodated. Selected participants had three minutes to recite their poems

First Place went to *Kenneth A. Tassin of East St. John High School*. Second Place went to *Jonathan Stewart and Angelliott Thomas of East St. John High School*, and *Alexis Guillot, Marksville High School*, claimed Third Place.

Honorable Mention went to *Isis Harris of Rayville High School*; *Quantae Johnson and Mark Tasker, Jr, of IMSA East High School*; *Isaiah Green of Rayville High School*; *Indonesia Wilborn of Glen Oaks High School*; and *Otis Jacobs of Avoyelles High School*.

Students received awards in the amount of \$250 for 1st Place, \$150 for 2nd Place, \$75 for 3rd Place, and \$25 for Honorable Mention.



**Thanks to Khristopher Hobbs, program coordinator, who served as Master of Ceremonies for the Poetry Slam and to the generosity of Dr. Rhonda Pruitt, Poetry Slam sponsor.**

Dr. Pruitt, D.M.D., is a graduate of Grambling State University, where she received a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a doctorate from the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey. During her senior year, Dr. Pruitt participated in the CODE (Community Oriented Dental Education) program. CODE allowed



Dr. Pruitt to fulfill her desire to give back to an underserved community by providing dental care. While in dental school, she also participated in externships at Louisiana State University and Charity Hospital. Throughout her

practice, Dr. Pruitt has continued to give back to the community and to live by her motto that to whom

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## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit *(continued)*

much is given much is required. Dr. Pruitt's practice, True Care Dental in Ruston, Louisiana, will celebrate 10 years of service in December 2015. Our special thanks to Dr. Rhonda Pruitt for sponsoring this event.

### Memorable Lines from Selected Poems

Dreams once deceased have been born again. – *Otis Jacobs*

My hands hold the world as my eyes watch its axis tilt. – *Jonathan Stewart and Angelliott Thomas*

I'm still shooting. I'm still rising. Still looking for the sun in my sky. – *Indonesia Wilborn*

I notice some only reach for the sky. I wish to grab hold and make it mine. – *Isaiah Green*

I have to keep my balance. I have to keep instep. I fear falling short. I fear messing up, and I fear failure. But I won't give up. – *Isis Harris*

### Notable Quotes from On-site Surveys

#### Students and Parents

I love it and I would like to come back again. – *Jamalcolm Beene, Florien High School*

Great job! We should have a LA GEAR UP reunion in the future. – *Briante, Jeanerette High School*

I love it! – *Keyetta Brown, Red River High School*

I greatly enjoyed my time at this conference! I had the opportunity to meet new people as well as exposure to new things. Great job LA GEAR UP! – *Reginique Green, Glen Oaks High School*

Keep this going! – *Tamu Jack, West St. John High School*

It really was a great help to me. – *Michelle Perez, Broadmoor High School*

The 2015 Explorers' Club Summit has been an amazing experience that I am so happy to have been given. I would like to thank everyone involved for the great job they do. – *Andre' Boyer, Marksville High School*

I wanted to thank you guys for inspiring me to keep pushing myself forward. – *Cassandra Stevenson, Westgate High School*

I had a really great time here, and I wish we didn't have to leave! – *Justice Anthony, Jeanerette High School*

This was my first time attending and I loved it! The best part is meeting people all around—starting friendships with people! – *Mariah Raymond, Jeanerette High School*



**Left to Right: Executive Director of Accountability, Heidi Trosclair; Master Teacher, Belinda Bailey; and Coordinator of Secondary Education, Shannon Smith, accepted an ACT Achievement Award on behalf of West St. John High School.**

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## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit *(continued)*

Sadly, this is my last conference since I am a senior. I've enjoyed all the conferences since 6th grade. – *Ke'sha Miller, West St. John High School*

Everything was AWESOME! I can't believe the LA GEAR UP family is leaving forever & this is the last conference. \*cries\* – *Oshanae Smith, Jeanerette High School*

It was great! *Demitria Ford, Bunkie High School Student*

This was very nice and thank you. – *Jarvez Williams, Scotlandville High School*

### School Staff

I am so impressed with the organization and efficiency with which things were organized and conducted. Everything was very student-focused. The security was great and the venue was a good choice. – *Samantha Sullivan, Red River High School, On-site School Coordinator*

Very good this year! Informative and entertaining. – *Deneisha Adams, East St. John High School, On-site School Coordinator*

The planning and structure of everything for the conference was right on point. Thanks! – *Carla Jones Johnson, Broadmoor High School, On-site School Coordinator*

The students were involved a great deal. You guys did a wonderful job! – *Carla Gibson, Jeanerette High School, Explorers' Club Sponsor*

I like how it was actually just for the students. – *Dusty Boudreaux, Westgate High School, Explorers' Club Sponsor*

I hope this program continues. Our students love it, and it's so beneficial! *Jodi Cole, On-Site School Coordinator*



**Dr. Keena Arbuthnot, Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, held a Psychometrics Workshop to help students deal with test anxiety. A popular return presenter, Dr. Arbuthnot has been researching the achievement gap for the last ten years and is dedicated to helping policy makers, researchers, academics, and teachers better understand standardized testing and the Black-White achievement gap.**

Great job! Thanks! – *Shelly Rivers, Sabine Parish School Board Office*

Enjoyed myself and the kids learned a great deal of knowledge for after high school. – *Brett Zimmerman, West St. John High School, Explorers' Club Sponsor*

### Navigating the College Campus

Conference activities emphasizing campus services, familiarizes students with college options. Breakout sessions included Course Management Systems (such as Moodle and BlackBoard), The Cost of Choice, Money Matters, Housing 101, Psychometrics, Don't Blow Your TOPS, and GEAR UP University.

**GEAR UP University** followed-up on LA GEAR UP-funded campus field trips experienced by LA GEAR UP students over the past six years and reinforced campus support systems. Through rounds of Bingo, students were presented with potential issues such as these:

- I don't like my roommate. Can I get a new one?
- I'm only on campus at night. Do I need a parking pass?
- My laptop crashed, and a paper is due. Where can I get help?

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## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit *(continued)*



**Four LA GEAR UP alumni talk about their college experience in a panel presentation facilitated by Timenee Thomas, LA GEAR UP alumni and program coordinator. From L to R: Clarissa Keller, Malcolm Smooth, Ni'Gena Brooks, and Deremy Scott.**

- I need help with a paper. Where can I find someone to work through it with me?
- I don't understand an assignment and need to talk to my professor. When can I see her?

Students used candy for Bingo chips, so everyone came out a winner—even those who did not hit Bingo. By the way, if you want to try this activity yourself, it's fun and easy to create Bingo cards through free online Bingo Generators. The possibilities are endless!

University Basics					University Basics				
Visitor Center	TRIO	Residence Life	Union	Career Services	Library Reference Desk	TRIO	Athletic Department	Residence Life	Union
Athletic Department	Student Affairs	Library Reference Desk	Writing Center	Parking and Transportation	Office Hours	Academic Resource Center	Study Abroad	Disability Services	Recreation Center
Computer Lab	Recreation Center	The Union Free Space	Disability Services	Office Hours	Career Services	Student Affairs	The Union Free Space	Financial Aid	Computer Lab
Academic Resource Center	Registrar's Office	Counseling	Study Abroad	Health Center	Visitor Center	Writing Center	Multicultural Affairs	Tutoring Center	Enrollment Services
Financial Aid	Enrollment Services	University Honors Program	Multicultural Affairs	Tutoring Center	Parking and Transportation	Registrar's Office	University Honors Program	Health Center	Counseling

### Career Match and Fit

Conference activities emphasizing career development were based on the understanding that information on job market and employment trends results in better career-related decisions.

### In Viable Paths to Career Success in Louisiana To-

day, William Slaughter, Ph.D., MBA, Louisiana Workforce Education Initiative, dispelled the perception that high-wage, high-demand careers in skilled crafts, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and automotive maintenance are inferior to careers that require four-year college degrees.



**The Rip the Career Runway** presentation narrated by Susana Schowen, Workforce Initiatives Manager, Louisiana Economic Development, and Jenee Slocum, Ph.D., Louisiana Workforce Commission, supported the theme of viable careers as measured by <http://www.laworks.net/stars/>. LA GEAR UP State Officers created Career Maps within their ACT Profiles and these lead to runway career strips.



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## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit *(continued)*

Between ACT Profile completion, Rip the Runway, and Star Jobs, we easily met LA GEAR UP objectives to improve college guidance opportunities for a broad range of low-income students and expose students to an array of college and career options. If you ask the students, however, they'll just tell you they had fun!

In **Career Speed Networking**, Explorers' Club members upgraded their career knowledge in this career version of "speed dating." Students moved from one career professional's table to another under the direction of time keepers.

Special thanks to the community volunteers who made the Career Speed Networking event such a fast-paced success:

- Latrell Armstrong, entrepreneur
- Tom Boulton, criminal investigator
- Dr. Sujuan Boutté, teacher
- Shannon Domingue, library and information science
- Racquel Douglas, engineer
- Norrie Falgoust, criminal justice
- Denise Jacobs, communications
- Sabrina Johnson, graduate assistant
- Clarissa Keller, management
- Marcus Lewis, plumber
- Robyn Lively, attorney
- Blake Martin, millwright
- Dr. Rhonda Pruitt, dentist
- Dr. Efrain Reyes, internist
- Malcolm Smooth, teacher
- Timene Thomas, kinesiology
- Shirley Uhrain, biologist, environmental scientist
- Kendra Williams, graduate assistant





## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit *(continued)*





## Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit *(continued)*





## LOSFA's FLY Tour 2015



This year's FLY Tour premiered at the Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit. The tour then went to performances at Northwestern, Grambling, Dillard, Southeastern, and Southern universities. The Financial Literacy for You Tour (FLY), is a dynamic theatrical presentation that uses poetry, music, and drama to promote financial literacy and fiscal responsibility,

### The Student Take-aways:

"Take the ACT serious and apply for the FAFSA every year"  
 "Apply for scholarships early"  
 "Change your PIN"  
 "Don't give up on your ACT"  
 "How to manage my money while in college"  
 "The importance of money and TOPS"  
 "Try not to take out student loans"

### Comments from the Road:

"It was such a pleasure to work with your team. The skits were so engaging; I rarely see high school students so engaged as they were [at the FLY Tour]. --Monica M. White, Associate Director, Office of Recruitment, Admissions and Programming, Dillard University

"The performance was fantastic!" --Susan Schlecht, on-site school coordinator, Iberville MSA East

"Special thanks to all of you for a fantastic job." --Loretta Walton Jaggers, Ed.D., Grambling State University





## LOSFA's FLY Tour 2015





## FLY Tour 2015





*Reprinted from The Advocate, Baton Rouge Daily Newspaper*

## THE ADVOCATE

### Southern University hosts pep rally for high schoolers



Advocate staff photo by TRAVIS SPRADLING -- Southern University Human Jukebox marching band members including mellophone players Lorrell Johnson, left, and Damien Carter, both from New Orleans, blast out one of several songs designed to inspire high school students at a recruiting seminar inside the school's Student Union Wednesday.

### Southern University hosts rally for high school students

**BY Elizabeth Crisp**

[ecrisp@theadvocate.com](mailto:ecrisp@theadvocate.com)

Several hundred high schoolers gathered around Southern University's Smith-Brown Memorial Union on Wednesday afternoon. A DJ played. Girls danced in sync. The Human Jukebox, Southern University's famed marching band, even made an appearance.

The pep rally had a dual purpose: cap a day of learning about financial aid and money management, and to try to lure students into attending Southern University in the fall.

"We're trying to teach kids something, without them necessarily knowing that we are

teaching them something,” joked Sujuan Boutté, executive director of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance.

The event was the latest in LOSFA’s Fly Tour — events geared toward providing guidance and encouraging low-income high schoolers to attend college.

The goal is to mix humorous skits, poetry and song to teach students about credit card debt, student loans and the importance of filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is necessary for federal grant programs, as well as Louisiana’s generous Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, which helps cover tuition costs for students who meet certain academic benchmarks and attend Louisiana colleges or universities.

“I think a lot of students don’t necessarily know much about financial aid,” said Michelle Anderson, an admissions recruiter from Southern University. “We’re giving them the tools and the information.”

For Southern University, which has seen a slumping enrollment but also has a high percentage of students who qualify for financial aid, the program seemed a perfect fit.

“Hundreds of high school seniors have chosen to come to our campus and allow us to tell our story in encouraging them to come to Southern University,” said Southern University Vice Chancellor Verjanis Peoples. “It is our goal at Southern University to increase the number of college graduates in the coming years in an effort to increase the number of educated individuals who can contribute to the workforce as leaders with knowledge-based education.”

In one skit, a parent expressed concern over a daughter’s ACT score not being higher, and the difference it could make in financial aid.

In another skit, a young woman’s boyfriend learned about the dangers of loan debt.

In Louisiana, nearly half of the college class of 2012 — the most recent statistics available — graduated owing something. The average debt load was about \$22,789, [according to the Project on Student Debt](#), and an estimated 1 in 10 Louisiana graduates defaulted on their federal student loan payments within two years of entering the repayment period, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Ty Smith, a senior at East Feliciana High School, said he hasn’t decided where to go to college yet, but he found Wednesday’s event helpful.

“It was also fun,” he said, noting that information about filling out the FAFSA was most crucial.

## Ask the LOSFA Experts!

"Ask The Experts" is a new LOSFA LOOP feature highlighting a question submitted via [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov) and the response from a LOSFA representative. This month's question was answered by LOSFA Public Information and Communications Supervisor, Kristen O'Neil.

### QUESTION:

*Subject: TOPS*

*My name is M. and I go to \_\_\_\_\_ High School. I talked to my counselor yesterday about me being able to get TOPS with the 23 I made on my ACT. I plan to go to the Louisiana Culinary Institute here in Baton Rouge and it is not considered a two or four year college. It will cost \$2,000 a month for tuition due to it being a 16 month program at a total of \$32,000 for tuition. I was wondering what exactly I can expect monthly from TOPS to cover my tuition?*

### LOSFA Response:

*Thank you for contacting our agency.*

*As you may be aware, The TOPS Performance Award, which based on your ACT score of 23 you would be eligible to apply for, covers undergraduate full time tuition at a Louisiana public college and includes an annual stipend of \$400. This award is good for four years/eight semesters. Because the Louisiana Culinary Institute is a proprietary school TOPS does not pay the full tuition amount at that school. For private and proprietary schools such as the LCI TOPS pays a weighted amount of what we pay the public colleges and universities. Currently the amount paid to the Louisiana Culinary Institute is \$494/term plus any applicable stipend. For TOPS purposes the year is broken down into 4 terms per year which would equal approximately \$1976 in tuition and an additional \$400 for an approximate amount of \$2376/year under the TOPS Performance Award.*

*Ms. M., while I would suggest you speak with someone at the Louisiana Culinary Institute regarding other*

*aid that may be available to you, I would also like to suggest your investigating other options leading to a career in Culinary Arts which may be more cost effective and provide you with the same education you desire but without a large financial burden upon graduation. For example, Nicholls State University in Thibodeaux, LA is home to the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute, one of the fastest growing programs at Nicholls and one of only a few schools to offer a Bachelor's degree in Culinary Arts. They offer extensive job placement assistance and graduates are able to pursue diverse career paths in food and beverage management, single-unit restaurants, chain restaurants, off-shore catering, culinary research, teaching, culinary nutrition, hotel and casino foodservice operations, and much more. It's one of the best bargains in culinary education in the country. If you were to enroll in this program TOPS would cover your full time undergraduate tuition at Nicholls for four years; However, if a four year degree is not what you're looking to attain, Nicholls also offers a two year Associate of Science Degree in Culinary Arts. You can learn more by going to <http://www.nicholls.edu/culinary> as well as <http://www.jfolse.com/culinary.htm>*

*In addition, the Capital Area Technical College in Baton Rouge has recently merged with Baton Rouge Community College and they offer a 21 month diploma program in Culinary Arts & Occupations. This program prepares students to work in service, production, fast foods, and baking areas of the food service industry. The program content includes American Culinary Federation information and guidelines for approved Chef training and accreditation and students will be provided with safe and efficient work practices, basic occupational skills, employability skills, and strong work ethics. If you were to attend here TOPS would cover your full time tuition amount for the diploma period and you could then use your other remaining*

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## Ask the LOSFA Experts! (continued)

semesters of eligibility for additional training and/or education in your chosen field. You may learn more by going to <http://www.catc.edu/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=471>

Another possibility would be Delgado Community College in New Orleans. They offer programs in Culinary Arts and Hospitality, Culinary Arts, Pastry Arts, Catering and a Chef Apprenticeship program. TOPS would cover your full time tuition amount at Delgado as well. You can learn more by going to <http://www.dcc.edu/academics/business-technology/culinary-arts-hospitality/culinary-art.aspx>

*Ms. M., I hope you find this information helpful and that you take the time to consider other options that may be available to you. Choosing the right college that will offer you the best social and emotional match as well as being the most cost effective can be daunting. Our hope and mission is that students get the education they desire which leads them on the path to a successful and fruitful career and that they accomplish this with as little or no student loan debt as possible.*

*If you have any additional questions regarding TOPS or need assistance please feel free to contact our office any time. We may be reached by phone at 225-219-1012, 800-259-5626 or by email at [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov). Thank you and have a great day.*

Kristen O'Neil

LOSFA Public Information and Communications Supervisor

When you Ask The LOSFA Experts, you get a complete, comprehensive and accurate answer. Please submit your questions about TOPS, Go Grant, TOPS Tech Early Start, the START Saving Program, college access and admissions, how to choose the right postsecondary option for your particular career goals, FAFSA completion, and all forms of student financial assistance to [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov). You will receive a response within 24 hours. Or, you may contact LOSFA by phone at 800-259-5626.

## May 11 is LA GEAR Up Day at the Capitol

- MAY 11, 2015 ■
- 10:00 am To 2:00 pm ■
- ROTUNDA ■
- LOUISIANA STATE CAPITOL ■

**LA GEAR UP Day at the Capitol** commemorates GEAR UP—Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs—a federal college access initiative providing students and families the support and resources they need for college success. GEAR UP has improved educational outcomes for millions of low-income, minority and disadvantaged students across the United States.

To date, LA GEAR UP has impacted over 20,000 Louisiana students, 17 Louisiana parishes, and 60 Louisiana schools through college and career readiness interventions such as tutoring, mentoring, financial literacy, college scholarships, campus trips, and student academic-year peer leadership clubs.

LA GEAR UP 2014-15 State Officers are organizing the event.

**Getting Involved:** If you would like to help or attend LA GEAR UP Day at the Capitol, e-mail LA GEAR UP Program Coordinator [denise.jacobs@la.gov](mailto:denise.jacobs@la.gov).



## Trailblazer Leadership Summit 2015-16

LOSFA's Trailblazer program is getting a facelift with a new look, feel and attitude!

Today's young people are busy during the summer and many simply can't devote three days and two nights to the program. LOSFA wants to accommodate the needs of today's students and open the program up to as many as possible, thus the new format will shift to a series of single-day leadership conferences to be held throughout the year.

The new format will combine the financial aid and college access training the Trailblazer program has provided for more than two decades with the leadership and mentoring skills training originally developed for the Louisiana GEAR UP Explorers Club participants. In addition, the new Trailblazer program will allow students who excel to earn one of five \$1,000.00 scholarships.

A new Trailblazer participant selection process is also being introduced. This too is intended to be a teaching experience. Instead of limiting student nominations to one primary and one alternate per high school, we would like all rising seniors (current juniors) who aspire to participate in the Trailblazer experience to apply directly to LOSFA. This will provide the added benefit of teaching the students how to access, complete and submit a formal application...a learning process that will benefit them when it comes time to apply for college admission, financial aid, scholarships and housing. The Trailblazer application form may be accessed at [www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/trailblazerapplication.pdf](http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/trailblazerapplication.pdf). When completed, the application should be Emailed to [tbapp@la.gov](mailto:tbapp@la.gov); faxed to 225-208-1496; or mailed to LOSFA, Trailblazer Leadership Program, P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202.

One section of the application does require that the counselor confirm their school, that they are in good academic standing, their grade level, their grade point

average, their ACT score and that they are on a path toward some form of or some type of postsecondary education.

The application asks students to describe their involvement in clubs, activities and/or teams, any leadership positions held or honors/awards earned, and any other school or community activities, and recognitions received. They are also asked to describe their communication skills and experiences. Students are then asked to answer a challenge question from which we will be able to evaluate their communication and critical thinking skills.

Finally, the application must be signed by both the student and parent.

Applicants must also attest that they are able to attend the first Trailblazer Leadership Summit to be held on June 6th, 2015, at Southeastern Louisiana University for students in the southern part of the state or on June 13, 2015, at LSU-Alexandria for students in the northern part of the state.

The deadline for receipt of applications is April 17, 2015.

Once applications are reviewed and evaluated, applicants selected to participate in the 2015-16 Trailblazer program will be notified during the week of April 27, 2015.

As always, Trailblazers will be trained to assist both school counselors and LOSFA with the dissemination of critical financial aid and college access information to their peers throughout the academic year. In addition, students selected will receive leadership training, have the opportunity to serve as Trailblazer officers, and work on teams with students from other schools to accomplish specific goals.

# Thank You! Acknowledgements Page

LOSFA would like to say THANK YOU to the following individuals, businesses, business owners, colleges and universities who helped make the following events possible.

## **College Goal Sunday (including Pre and post FAFSA Completion Events)**

Louisiana Association of Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP  
 Louisiana Jump\$tart Coalition  
 Council of Student Body Presidents (COSPB)  
 LOSFA Trailblazers  
 Calcasieu Business and Career Solutions Center (Stephanie Simeon, Janika Boutte)  
 Central Louisiana Economic Development (Dustin Matthews)  
 Louisiana Workforce Commission (Missy Grimmatt)  
 North Oaks Medical Center (Dana Goblowsky)  
 RoyOMartin Lumber Company (Raymond Peters)  
 SAPA Extrusions (Ron Ballman)  
 Sasol North America (Carrie Courville)  
 Baton Rouge Community College  
 Bossier Parish Community College  
 Career Academy Charter High School  
 Central Louisiana Technical Community College (Alexandria, Cottonport, Ferriday, Jena, Leesville, Oakdale, Winnfield)  
 Delgado Community College – West Bank Campus  
 Dillard University  
 Fletcher Technical Community College  
 Lake District Family Dentistry (Dr. Courtney P. Ritcher, DDS)  
 Louisiana Delta Community College  
 Louisiana State University-Alexandria  
 Louisiana State University - Shreveport  
 Louisiana Tech University  
 New Orleans Charter Math and Science High School  
 River Parishes Community College  
 South Louisiana Community College  
 Southeastern Louisiana University

Southern University – Baton Rouge  
 Southern University – New Orleans  
 Southern University - Shreveport  
 SOWELA Technical Community College  
 University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
 USA Funds  
 Xavier University  
 WBRZ-TV 2une In  
 Zachary High School

## **Library Open House/Go Center**

East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library (Sonya Gordon, Mary Stein)  
 WAFB-TV Nine News This Morning  
 LA GEAR UP

## **Financial Literacy for You (FLY)**

ACT (John Clark)  
 ACT (Joe Crus)  
 Dillard University (Monica White)  
 Grambling State University (Katina Crowe)  
 Grambling State University (Larnell Flannagan)  
 Grambling State University (Latari Fleming)  
 Grambling State University (Janet Guyden)  
 Grambling State University (Shemia Herron)  
 Grambling State University (Dr. Loretta Jagggers)  
 Grambling State University (Dr. Damon Wade)  
 Baton Rouge High School (Ms. Taylor Rising)  
 Northwestern State University (Jana Lucky)  
 Southeastern Louisiana University (Tara Laborde)  
 Southern University (Michelle Anderson)  
 Southern University (Shaquille Dillon)  
 Southern University (Erin Fulbright)  
 Southern University (Anthony Jackson)  
 Southern University (Dr. Luria Young)  
 Southern University (Dr. Verjanis Peoples)

***continued on page 17***

## Thank You! Acknowledgements Page

### Louisiana GEAR UP Annual Explorers' Club Statewide Conference and Leadership Summit

Career Speed Networking Event (Tom Boulton)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Dr. Sujuan Boutté)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Shannon Domingue)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Racquel Douglas)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Norriee Falgoust)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Clarissa Keller)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Lady Royale)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Marcus Lewis)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Robyn Lively)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Blake Martin)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Willie McCorkle III)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Rhonda Pruitt)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Efrain Reyes)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Malcom Smoot)  
 Career Speed Networking Event (Shirley Uhrain)  
 Dillard University (Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer)  
 East Feliciana High School (LaRhonda George)  
 East Baton Rouge Parish Schools (Ramos Orlando)  
 Glen Oaks High School (Mary Cobb Marshal)  
 Grambling State University (Rudolph Ellis)  
 Hilton Baton Rouge Capital City Downtown Hotel  
 (Katie Aponte)  
 Hilton Baton Rouge Capital City Downtown Hotel  
 (Adrienne Kors)  
 Hilton Baton Rouge Capital City Downtown Hotel  
 (Allan Richards)

Louisiana Economic Development (Susana Schowen)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP Alumni (Ni'Gena Brooks)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP Alumni (Clarissa Keller)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP Alumni (Deremy Scott)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP Alumni (Malcolm Smoot)  
 Louisiana State University (Dr. Keena Arbuthnot)  
 Louisiana State University (Buddy Ethridge)  
 Louisiana Workforce Commission (Dr. Jeneé Slocum)  
 Louisiana Workforce Education Initiative (Dr. William Slaughter)  
 St. James Parish Public School System (Shannon Smith)  
 St. James Parish Public School System (Heidi Trosclair)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP State Officer Team (Antonio Alexander)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP State Officer Team (Ariel Battley)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP State Officer Team (Dorian Campbell)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP State Officer Team (Oscar McClain)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP State Officer Team (Darius Spurlock)  
 Louisiana GEAR UP State Officer Team (Alexicia Thomas)  
 Southern University (Shaquille Dillon)  
 Southern University (Toi Bonnet, student volunteer)  
 West Saint John High School Master Teacher (Belinda Bailey)

### Thank you, Mr. Ron Ballman of SAPA Extrusions

In the March 2015 LOSFA LOOP College Goal Sunday wrap-up story, we expressed our gratitude to the Louisiana business and industry representatives who attended various College Goal Sunday events to speak to the students and parents in attendance about the influx of jobs coming to Louisiana in the near future and the types of education beyond high school that will

be necessary in order to qualify for those employment opportunities. Regrettably we failed to include Mr. Ron Ballman, Plant Manager for the SAPA Extrusions, Inc. facility in Delhi, Louisiana. Mr. Ballman spoke at the Louisiana Delta Community College event. Thank you, Mr. Ballman, and please forgive the accidental omission.

## LOSFA's Social Media Sites



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For more information, contact the  
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance:

By Phone: 800-259-5626

By E-mail: [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov)

By Mail: P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202

Web Address: [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

For submissions, opinions, or comments for the LOSFA LOOP,  
please contact Gus Wales at [Gus.Wales@la.gov](mailto:Gus.Wales@la.gov).