

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Happy Holidays!

This year has flown by and we know this month will follow suit. Our team has been busy this past year laying the groundwork for a smoother path to college access for Louisiana students. Here's a look at our TOP 3!

First Up: **Louisiana College Application Week!**

The American College Application Campaign, an effort of the American Council on Education (ACE), is a national initiative to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. This initiative began in 2005 in one high school in North Carolina and has since expanded to 24 states and the District of Columbia. The purpose is to help high school seniors navigate the college admissions process and ensure each participating student submits at least one admissions application. LOSFA team member Nyetta Meaux and former LOSFA team member Shannon Domingue collaborated with key education stakeholders in the State of Louisiana to develop and implement Louisiana College Application Week (LCAW). LCAW provided an opportunity for our team to galvanize partnerships with other college access organizations and gain valuable feedback from the students themselves on the issues they see as the greatest obstacles on the college access path. Look for

a wrap up story on Louisiana College Application Week in the January LOOP!

On Deck: **College Goal Sunday!**

The most common obstacle from the viewpoint of the students: Financial Aid for college! This validated our emphasis on the second major event: College Goal Sunday (CGS). Funded originally by a Lumina Grant and now by grant funds from USA Funds and the College Access Challenge Grant, the goal of CGS is to assist students with filing the FAFSA: the gateway to federal aid and the application for TOPS and the GO Grant. This national initiative has been a part of LOSFA's service mix since 2008. LOSFA team member Gus Wales heads up this event and has done a tremendous job making this a statewide effort. CGS provides information on state and federal financial aid available along with the steps families need to take in order to access and maximize the amount of gift aid received. This initiative solidifies partnerships with Campus Financial Aid personnel and the Council of Student Body Presidents (COSBP). Families attending get firsthand information about programs, assistance with filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and student life. Look for more information on CGS for 2014 in the January edition of the LOOP.

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Tireka Cobb Named Assistant Director of Louisiana GEAR UP

Tireka Cobb has been named Assistant Director of Louisiana's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (LA GEAR UP).

Cobb previously served as LA GEAR UP Evaluation Coordinator/Program Analyst. She replaces former LA GEAR UP Assistant Director Shannon Domingue who recently vacated the position to pursue further career and educational opportunities.

As Assistant Director, Cobb will be working closely with participating schools and districts in various areas, including budget management, communications, and program development and management. She will also assume responsibility for operation of the Rewards for Success scholarship program and the Make a Difference grant application and grant making process for LA GEAR UP.

"I look forward with great excitement to the challenges and opportunities ahead as Assistant Director for Louisiana GEAR UP," Dr. Cobb said. "We will continue to work with our staff and partners to increase access to

post-secondary education to underserved populations, including working closely with the START Saving Program staff to disburse over \$1.8 million in Rewards for Success scholarships to students," she added.

As Assistant Director for Louisiana GEAR UP, Cobb will serve as operational manager of the LA GEAR UP

state grant under the direction of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) Executive Director, Dr. Sujuan Boutté.

"We are extremely fortunate to have someone with Tireka's enthusiasm, knowledge and experience to lead LA GEAR UP into its next stage as the cohort

advances closer toward its goals of graduation and college participation," Boutté said.

Cobb earned her Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Educational Leadership and Research, specializing in Educational Technology from Louisiana State University. She successfully defended her dissertation entitled, "Networked Learning: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Distance Education in Comparison to Traditional Education," during the fall semester, 2012.



From the Desk of the Executive Director *continued*

Coming Soon: FLY Tour 2014-College Quest!

We've gotten students to apply and we've assisted them with filling out the FAFSA! So what's left to do? Turns out that there's a lot!! The FLY Tour 2014: College Quest is a dynamic theatrical presentation that uses poetry, music and drama to make high school students aware of how financial aid decisions made early in their lives can have a lasting impact on their futures. The production will also present information relative to support services available to students on college campuses and pre-college tasks that must be completed prior to the students' first day of class. LOSFA Team members Ebony Holmes, Britt Kelly, Nyetta Meaux, and Kendra Woods, all gifted performers, are bringing this production to a school near you this spring!

Three events, one objective: Promoting and Providing College Access to Louisiana Students!

Best-
S.

Kyleigh Quiroga joins LOSFA's Public Information and Communications Division

Kyleigh Quiroga graduated from the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication in May 2013 with a degree in mass communication and a public relations concentration.

She is an avid reader (genre doesn't matter), loves spending time with family and friends, watching movies, going to concerts and catching up on her giant list of TV shows.

Fall is her favorite season because she is a football junkie and a huge LSU and Tom Brady fan (Geaux Tigers; Geaux Patriots)! She is excited to work at LOSFA because it gives her the opportunity to use her public relations skills while giving back to the people of Louisiana.

She loves the customer service aspect of the job and enjoys helping people of various ages with their financial aid questions and concerns.



Not too late to attend STS Workshop Training

Representatives from LOSFA's Public Information and Communications (PIC) division will conduct workshops for non-public school personnel who use the Student Transcript System (STS). These workshops are open to anyone who uses STS or supervises someone who uses STS, and anyone who would find it useful to know how STS works.

Two more workshops are scheduled on **Thursday, December 5, and Friday, December 6** at the Louisiana Technology Park in Baton Rouge, located at 7117 Florida Boulevard (in the Bon Carre Mall).

Below are descriptions of the three different types of workshops as well as a schedule of when each will be held.

Beginners/Intermediate Classes: appropriate for beginners and for intermediate users who want or need a refresher. These are less detailed than the all-day classes, and do not allow time for much practice or for much discussion between groups from different schools.

All-day Classes: appropriate for beginners, for users unsure of their expertise, and for users who are familiar with STS on an everyday basis, but not experienced beyond basics, as well as users who want or need a refresher. Includes practice with one's own school's data.

Advanced Classes: appropriate for intermediate and advanced users. Includes instruction (primarily about non-standard situations), practice, and discussion, with emphasis on solutions one school uses that may be useful to other schools.

Registration is open online only. The registration URL was sent to all non-public schools and counselors in November. If you still would like to attend Thursday or Friday workshops, please e-mail kate.herke@la.gov or ebony.holmes@la.gov.

Kate Herke, Public Information and Communications Representative, conducts a STS Workshop at the Louisiana Technology Park on December 3, 2013.

Thursday, December 5:

Beginners through Advanced – 8:30 – 4:00

Friday, December 6:

Intermediate/Advanced – 8:15 – 11:35

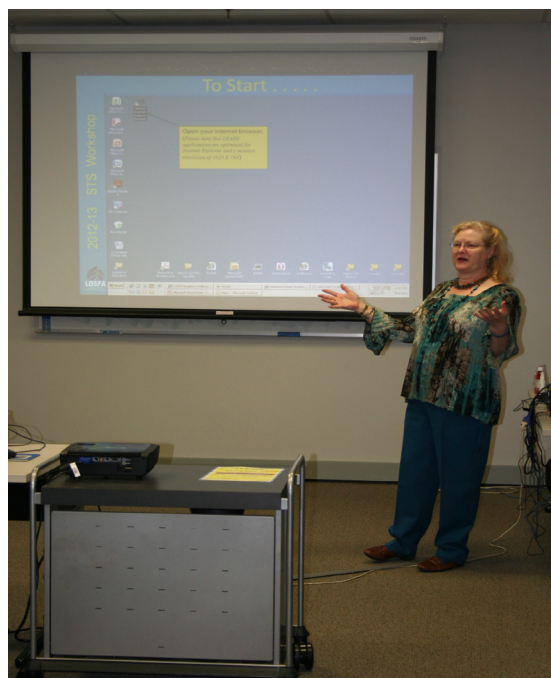
Beginners – 12:10 – 4:00

Please note that each of these is a stand-alone workshop. While anyone who wants to do so is welcome to attend more than one workshop, beginners, for instance, only need to attend on Friday, not both.

Please note that the Thursday workshop is an all day event – it is not intended that beginners come only for the morning or that advanced users come only for the afternoon.

The Thursday workshop will have a one-hour lunch break.

All participants MUST already have a login to STS when they arrive at the workshop. If your login is new, please test it before arriving so that class time is not used addressing problems with your login.



Important End-of-Year Deposit Deadline Reminders for START Account Owners

The Louisiana START Saving Program reminds Account Owners of the following:

If you wish to open a new account for a new beneficiary and take advantage of the 2013 state tax incentives, new applications with deposits must be submitted prior to 3:00 p.m. on December 30th in order to be processed timely.

The deadline for receipt of START Saving Account deposits to be eligible for exclusion from income reported on your 2013 Louisiana state tax return is 3:00 p.m. CST on Monday, December 30th. Deposits must be received, not simply postmarked, by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance or the START Saving Program by that date. Deposits not received by December 30th may not be deducted until your tax return for 2014 is filed. You do not have until April 15 to deposit to your account and still deduct it from your 2013 state income taxes.

Deposits should be payable to the START Saving Program and may be delivered one of four ways:

1. Regular mail addressed to START Saving Program, Post Office Box 91271, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9271. Please allow mail time since deposits must be received and not simply postmarked.
2. Overnight delivery addressed to 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802.
3. In-person START deposits can be made in the Mobile/Manchac Room on the first floor of the Galvez Building (602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802) from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Thursday December 26th, Friday December 27th, and Monday December 30th. Parking is available in the Galvez Parking Garage on North Street and can be validated

by the START Representative who assists you with your deposit.

4. Online payment for START account deposits is now available on the START Saving Web site, www.startsaving.la.gov. You can log into your START account, select the "Deposit Forms" option from the menu and then select "Electronic Online Deposit". From there, you can select the account(s) into which you want to make a deposit and indicate the amount you wish to deposit. One deposit can be distributed among a maximum of five accounts. If you have more than five accounts, you will have to log back into your START account and select the additional accounts in a second transaction. When online payment is selected, you will be transferred to a secure Web site operated by First Data Corporation, PayPoint. On the PayPoint site, you will see the LOSFA logo, the START title, a listing of a maximum of 5 accounts with the amount selected for deposit, and two payment options. You can select to pay by electronic check or by credit card. The credit cards accepted are Mastercard and Discover. You will enter your financial data on the PayPoint secure Web site to complete the deposit transaction. LOSFA will not receive any credit card or checking account financial information from First Data. A convenience fee will be charged to use the online payment process to cover the transaction costs and thus keep the START Savings Program free of administrative fees. The fee will be in addition to the amount of the deposit(s). The fee will be displayed prior to your final authorization of the payment.

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Reminders for START Account Owners *continued*

On or before the third week of January, START account owners will be mailed a notification of total deposits made in 2013 to be used for state income tax return filing purposes.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call us at 800-259-5626. As always, we do appreciate your continued support of the START Saving Program.



Give the Gift of Higher Education

Are you looking for the perfect gift for a loved one this holiday season? Consider giving the gift of higher education through a START Saving account!

With the rising cost of education, students find themselves with more expenses than scholarships and grants can cover. This is why it is so important to start saving for a child's college education early.

You can contribute to your loved one's future education this holiday season by opening a START Saving account in their name or donating to their existing account. To open an account, simply complete the application online at www.startsaving.la.gov or download, print, and complete the paper application and submit it to: START Saving Program, P.O. Box 91271, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9271.

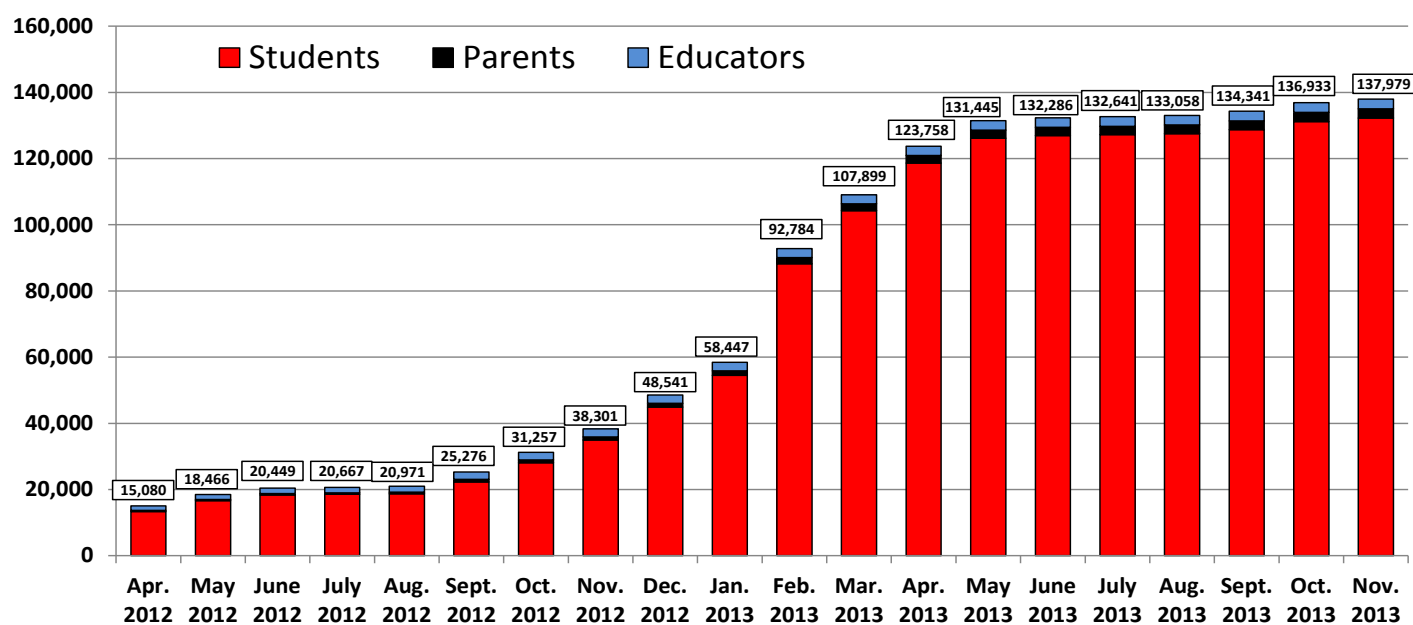


Printable gift certificates are available at <http://www.startsaving.la.gov/savings/forms.jsp>. Show a special child in your life how invested in their future you are today by giving them the gift of higher education!

Printable gift cards are also available with Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa themes.



Active Users



The November 2013 data is as of 11/27/2013.

The current total of 137,979 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 132,216 Students, 2,814 Parents, 1,544 Community Administrators, 521 Professional School Counselors, 875 Teachers, and nine Scholarship Managers.

LOSFA's Social Media Sites



<http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.twitter.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.youtube.com/LOSFA1000>



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA



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

By Phone: 800-259-5626

By E-mail: custserv@la.gov

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

Web Address: www.osfa.la.gov

For submissions, opinions, or comments for the LOSFA LOOP, please
contact Gus Wales at Gus.Wales@la.gov.