



LOSFA LOOP

January 2012 Edition

Volume 5-1

From the Desk of the Executive Director

January is the month for new beginnings, resolutions for change and the end of all our bad habits. Unfortunately, most resolutions made on January 1 are forgotten or abandoned shortly after they are made (at least mine are). That's just human nature. Change is hard! But change can also be life altering, uplifting and positive! The dreams of Dr. King, whose memory is commemorated this month, and many others were made possible by a desire for change.

The world we work in requires us to be resilient, flexible and creative. We must be eager to embrace change, wherever and whenever it occurs. The launch for the Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning Portal has brought about a new opportunity for students, parents, counselors, access providers, colleges and employers to utilize a powerful tool to change their daily lives and enhance the educational experiences for all those that have the opportunity to access the portal. In an effort to raise awareness of the portal's availability and potential, we will embark on a statewide media tour beginning January 17th and continuing through January 27th.

As we begin 2012, we at LOSFA look forward to a year full of steps forward with our colleagues on new and continuing initiatives, collaborations and projects.

Looking back on 2011, we also want to commend LSU, University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Louisiana Tech on their outstanding football seasons and bowl invitations. Well done!!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

--Melanie

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LOSFA Outreach



Public Information and Communications Representative Kate Herke (left) conducted Student Transcript System (STS) training last month at the Louisiana Technology Center in Baton Rouge. Open to counselors from across the state, it was broken into beginners and advanced sessions and attended by 92 people.

The workshops included discussion on an expanded, more detailed STS Manual designed to assist counselors in training others to use the system.

January is National Mentoring Month

National Mentoring Month is the time each year when our nation spotlights the importance of mentors and the need for every child to have a caring adult in his or her life. When you serve as a mentor, you enrich your own life as much as you do the life of a child. In order to be a mentor or find a mentor in your local area go to <http://www.nationalmentoringmonth.org/>.

February is Financial Aid Awareness Month



The purpose of Financial Aid Awareness Month is to let Louisiana students and their families know that a college education is not just a dream, but is in fact attainable. There are numerous sources of financial aid available. February is the key time to begin the application process in order to be considered for all aid programs offered at state and federal levels.

A listing of LOSFA's scheduled events for February can be found at our Web site at <http://www.osfa.la.gov>. If you would like to schedule an event, please contact Jerri Mack at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 7583.

LOSFA Extends Hours for Special Financial Aid Call-In and Facebook Chat Night

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) will conduct its annual "Financial Aid Call-In and Facebook Chat Night" on Monday, Feb. 6, from 6-9 p.m.

During these special evening hours, callers may contact LOSFA with questions about the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), other federal and state student aid programs, and the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) Saving Program -- Louisiana's 529 college savings plan.

LOSFA's customer service representatives will also provide on-the-spot advice and assistance for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid -- also known as the FAFSA -- which is the convenient single application for most state and federal aid programs.



Kendra Woods is just one of the many Public Information and Communications representatives who will be working the phones on Call In Night to assist callers.

Callers from outside the Baton Rouge area may use the toll-free number at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012. Callers from inside the Baton Rouge area may use the local number at 219-1012.

Students and parents who are active on Facebook are encouraged to "like" LOSFA's Facebook page. After doing so, questions may be submitted on the LOSFA Facebook page and will be answered immediately during the two hour "live chat".

LOSFA's normal call-in hours for student financial aid information are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The annual "Financial Aid Call-In Night" is designed to assist callers who are unable to call during regular business hours.



Sarah Reed, Public Information and Communications Representative, looks over some paperwork during the last week of 2011. She and other LOSFA staff assisted START account owners in making deposits during December 27-29, in order for those deposits to be deductible from their 2011 Louisiana taxable income.



The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) Presents:



A Special Financial Aid Call-In Night

Monday, February 6, 2012
6-9 p.m.

For one night only, we will extend our financial aid hotline hours
as a convenience to students and their parents.

Dial **800-259-5626, Ext. 1012** (toll free)
or **219-1012** (Baton Rouge local)

or **Chat Live on Facebook** (www.facebook.com/LOSFA)
to obtain the answers to your questions relating to all forms of
financial aid for higher education.

LOSFA staff will be manning the phones and computers to help you
with such varied topics as:

- *Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)
- *Other Scholarships and Grants
- *Student Loans
- *START Saving Program
- *Assistance in Completing the
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

We Hope To Hear From You!
(800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012 or (225) 219-1012



Latest Update

- ▶ All public and non-public high schools and middle schools in the state have had their school accounts activated and lead counselors (Community Administrators) have been assigned.
- ▶ Public middle and high school counselors have been provided with instructions on how to assist students in activating their individual accounts.
- ▶ With assistance from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), demographic data from the Student Information System (SIS) for all public middle and high school students has been loaded and the process of student and parent account activation is underway.
- ▶ Non-Public middle and high school lead counselors (Louisiana Connect Community Administrators) have been provided with instructions on how to submit demographic data to pre-populate accounts for their students. The process of receiving and loading this data is underway.
- ▶ Again in cooperation with the LDOE, the Individual Graduation Plan module is still on track for a mid-to-late January launch.
- ▶ LOSFA Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, David Roberts, and ConnectEDU Louisiana State Director, Brian Dennis, are planning a mid-January media tour around the state to raise awareness of the portal and encourage student and parent account activation.
- ▶ LOSFA has enlisted the assistance of our Trailblazers in taking the lead in activating their individual Louisiana Connect accounts, assisting their guidance counselors in getting the word out to their peers, and encouraging their fellow students to activate their accounts.

The first Trailblazer to respond was Grace White from Southwood High School. Grace made the following post on the Trailblazer Facebook page:

"I have set up my account on Louisiana Connect! I am in the process of getting the rest of my classmates at Southwood High School registered. I'll keep y'all posted on what is happening."

Thank you Grace!

Louisiana Connect College and Career Access Portal Ready for Student and Parent Account Activation

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) recently announced the launch of a media tour intended to raise awareness among Louisiana middle and high school students and parents about the comprehensive new, nationally acclaimed, Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning Web Portal.

Louisiana Connect provides tools and resources to help students plan for life after high school, find colleges where they can be successful and launch rewarding careers. Importantly, Louisiana Connect provides guidance counselors, parents, teachers and advisors with a full suite of tracking dashboards, reporting capabilities, and communication tools to help students navigate the process.

As part of this statewide initiative, the data-driven web portal is designed to give students, parents, counselors, and administrators a “one stop shop” for college and career planning. This centralized tool provides students with access to create an online portfolio, including career assessments, GPAs, course history, test scores, graduation requirements, and extracurricular activities— in addition to providing them with alerts on key milestones for college applications, scholarships, and financing deadlines.

Students and parents can access the online portfolio virtually anywhere. Students will have the ability to view their progress as they explore their career interests, build a resume, and college list. Parents can also suggest colleges and scholarships to their child, chart historical college admission outcomes, and calculate financial aid information.

LOSFA’s goal is to provide every Louisiana student with the opportunity to successfully pursue and persist in a postsecondary education environment. This exciting new tool is being offered to Louisiana students and families at no cost. Parents and students are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity by registering for their accounts today. Student registrations are underway under the supervision of guidance counselors at both public and non-public middle and high schools throughout the state. Parents may enroll by visiting: www.louisianaconnect.org, clicking the first time login icon, then selecting the parent option, and entering their child’s information.

The Louisiana Connect portal was designed and constructed (according to LOSFA specifications) by ConnectEDU®, the Web-based leader in empowering students to manage their education, launch their careers, and secure a more stable financial future. ConnectEDU currently has similar portals in five states including Louisiana, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan and Texas.

One of the major benefits of the portal will be the ability to match high school students with colleges and other postsecondary programs that best fit their future educational and career goals. The practical application of this particular feature (as developed by ConnectEDU) as a means of revolutionizing the college admissions process has received national recognition from a number of sources, including the Chronicle of Higher Education. In a recent posting, Chronicle writer Marc Parry wrote:

One company getting buzz is ConnectEDU, sometimes described as an eHarmony for college matchmaking. Its founder and CEO, Craig Powell, dreams that students won’t even have to apply to college “because an algorithm will have already told them and the schools where they would fit best.”

“Louisiana Connect is one of the most comprehensive college and career planning resources available to students today,” said Powell. “With these tools, Louisiana students will be empowered to manage their education, launch their careers, and secure a more stable financial future,” he concluded.

“This technology represents the cutting edge of college access and career planning in the twenty-first century,” said LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein. “And, for once, this is not something that’s happening only in states like Massachusetts...it is actually happening right here in Louisiana,” she continued. “In fact, we believe that the Louisiana Connect portal is the most comprehensive and inclusive such site in existence today,” Amrhein added.

“In addition,” Amrhein said, “we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the unprecedented level of cooperation and support LOSFA has received from the Louisiana Department of Education both in the form of data sharing and in promoting the use of the Louisiana Connect portal to the state’s middle and high schools.”

Specifically, the portal allows students to:

- ▶ Connect with colleges and universities that are a match for their educational and career goals
- ▶ Learn about careers and connect with employers
- ▶ Find scholarships and other programs designed to help the student succeed
- ▶ Access an exclusive News Feed and Event Planner
- ▶ Build a profile to highlight individual skills and achievements
- ▶ Learn how a college education can be affordable
- ▶ Compare costs and academic offerings from various in and out of state schools

Other Louisiana Connect portal highlights include:

- ▶ Individual Graduation Plan: Integration of state-mandated Individual Graduation Plan (5-Year Plan), driving all 8th-12th grade students to the web portal
- ▶ Data Integration: Louisiana Department of Education student data loaded into the web portal, pre-populating student profiles, and driving college, scholarship and career matching
- ▶ College Searching & Matching: Guided college searching, matching and comparison tools
- ▶ Scholarship Searching & Matching: Scholarship searching and matching, including the ability for counselors to upload local scholarships
- ▶ Career Exploration & Planning: Interest, Skills & Values assessments mapped to occupation profiles, internships, and career planning strategies
- ▶ Dashboards & Reporting: Resources that empower counselors to help students stay on track to graduate

Another major component of the Louisiana Connect portal is the Talent Connect™ module which allows students to connect with potential employers. Some of the state’s largest employers, including Bollinger Shipyards, Roy O. Martin, and CLECO, are already on-board and many more are in the process of finalizing their participation. The Talent Connect feature will allow qualified students to apply for internships, part time and summer employment, scholarships, and other opportunities in industries they feel are relevant to their educational and career goals.

College Goal Sunday



MMM... A Money Sundae?

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM is an event that will help you melt away the tedious process of filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to obtain financial aid. Free on-site assistance from area college financial aid professionals will be provided.

For more information, including what you need to bring, visit us at our Web site.
www.osfa.la.gov and click on College Goal Sunday

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM Locations 2012 February 26th, 2012 2 - 4 P.M.

Alexandria
Louisiana State University - Alexandria

Baton Rouge
Baton Rouge Community College
Southern University

Bossier City
Bossier Parish Community College

Hammond
Southeastern Louisiana University

Houma
Fletcher Technical Community College

Lafayette
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Lake Charles
SOWELA Technical Community College

Lutcher
Lutcher High School

Monroe
Louisiana Delta Community College

New Orleans
Delgado Community College - West Bank Campus
Dillard University
Xavier University

Tallulah
Louisiana Delta Community College

Check our Web site for additional site locations and specific room locations at each site.

The College Goal Sunday program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc, and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM is sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) with funding from a Lumina Foundation for Education grant.

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<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, Ext. 1012

By E-mail: custserv@osfa.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 LOSFA LOOP, please
contact David Roberts at droberts@osfa.la.gov.