



LOSFA LOOP

June 2009 Edition

Volume 2-6

From the Desk of the Executive Director

In March, I had the always pleasurable opportunity to address my colleagues in the financial aid community at the Spring LASFAA Conference. Among the topics discussed was the shortfall in Go Grant funding and, of course, everyone was concerned. Nobody wanted the students adversely affected. Staying within our tradition of addressing the needs of our community, we recently initiated an emergency rule at our commission meeting in May that we hope will alleviate those concerns. I realize that the best possible solution would be to totally eliminate the funding shortfall, but since that is beyond our control, I am confident that we came up with the next best possible solution for everybody concerned (Page 3).

Speaking of funding shortfalls, although we mentioned this in the last issue of the LOOP while discussing the TOPS application deadline, we can't stress it enough. If you are a prospective college student, current college student, parent or if you are an education professional advising any of the aforementioned entities, remember that in the event of a TOPS budget shortfall those applicants who opt to apply via the on-line TOPS application in lieu of the FAFSA will be the first to be eliminated. This fact has always been important, but in the current economic climate it is especially vital.

Despite these ongoing budgetary challenges, it is business as usual here at LOSFA with regards to the outreach that we do to inform and motivate the Louisiana populace on the benefits of higher education and how to gain access to higher education. Our activities during the month of May typified my personal belief

that education is from the "womb to the tomb" as we engaged citizens at every point along the education continuum. We were on hand at Baton Rouge Woman's Hospital's Baby Grand event geared towards expectant mothers to inform them about the importance of starting to save immediately for their children's education (Page 2). We worked with middle school students to introduce them to the concepts of college and career awareness as well as financial literacy (Page 4). We participated in the College Goal Sunday Best Practices Forum to ensure that we are privy to every possible resource as it relates to maximizing the effectiveness of Louisiana's College Goal Sunday Event for our high school students, college students and their families (Page 2). Finally, we didn't forget about our dedicated financial aid professionals as we conducted our annual Spring Financial Aid Workshops (Page 6). Despite budget shortfalls, I am sincerely proud to say that there are no shortfalls in the dedication and commitment of my staff who day after day continue to pass the T.E.S.T. (Teamwork, Excellence, Service and Transparency).

-- Melanie

In this edition. . .

<i>LOSFA Outreach.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Go Grant Changes</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>College Access 4 U!</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Financial Aid Workshop</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Spotlight on: Michelle Darling</i>	<i>7</i>

LOSFA Outreach



Earl E. Start, START Saving Program spokes-pig, was on hand at Baton Rouge Woman's Hospital for its Baby Grand event -- an event targeted to parents or parents-to-be to provide them with information and support. Along with LOSFA representatives Nicole Southern and Jessica Warner, Earl helped spread the word about LOSFA's START Saving program. Approximately 500 parents and children were able to speak to the LOSFA team about saving for their children's education.



College Goal Sunday Best Practices Forum

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance participated in the College Goal Sunday Best Practices Forum in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico from May 10th through the 13th. The forum served a dual purpose: allowing College Goal Sunday state coordinators from other states to come together to share information and as a 20 year anniversary celebration of College Goal Sunday which began 20 years ago in the state of Indiana.

Despite the fact that the state of Louisiana just held only its second College Goal Sunday event in February 2009 the state was still well represented at the Best Practices Gallery Expo, a portion of the conference in which each state had the opportunity to have a table to display College Goal Sunday marketing materials and to share ideas. Many of the other states were impressed with the concepts that Louisiana used to promote College Goal Sunday to the community and pledged to adopt some of those tactics for their states.

In addition to the Expo there were also concurrent sessions on such topics as Building relationships with TRIO and GEAR UP, Organizing College Access Events for Latino families and Engaging Rural Populations.

GO Grant

Anticipated shortfall forces re-evaluation of funding procedures

Due to the anticipated shortfall in the Louisiana GO Grant funding, it was necessary to re-evaluate program eligibility and award amounts.

LOSFA collaborated with the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Advisory Committee to develop an eligibility and award amount aimed at equitable maximization of limited dollars. Although the Board of Regents continues to advocate for increased GO Grant funding, the appropriated amount remains level-funded at this time. On May 12th, LOSFA initiated emergency rules to officiate this change.

The following method should be adhered to when packaging students for GO funding in the 09-10 Academic Year:

►Funding will be allocated to campuses as outlined in the April 16, 2009 communication sent to Financial Aid Directors.

►The Education Cost Gap calculation will remain the same: The Louisiana Basic College Costs plus \$2,000 minus the individual student's full time Pell Award.

►The ECG amount will change from an indicator to an actual award amount for the academic year. Awards will range from \$200 to \$2,000 per academic

year, depending upon the amount of the student's ECG.

►Students with ECGs greater than \$199 would be awarded the actual amount of the ECG, up to a ceiling of \$2,000.

►Students with ECGs greater than \$2,000 would be awarded the maximum award of \$2,000. Students with ECGs of \$199 or less would not qualify to receive GO awards.

►GO will not be awarded for the summer semester, with LOSFA funds or with school funds.

Schools will have autonomy relative to award distribution, e.g., first come, first served; priority to incoming students; priority to continuing students; or another method in line with the school's priority order. Schools are required to document the chosen priority/distribution method as a matter of policy and to adhere to the policy in a consistent manner. Documentation of compliance should be sufficiently present for audit purposes.

If you have further questions, please contact Bonnie Lavergne at 225-922-0412.

Calculation of Full Time, Half Time and Less Than Half Time GO Awards

Students must have an ECG of at least \$200 to be eligible for a GO Grant for any enrollment status. The ECG calculation for all awards is still performed using the student's full time LBCC and Pell Grant Amount. With an ECG of at least \$200, the GO Grant annual amount for full-time is set at the ECG or \$2000, whichever is less, half-time is set at the ECG or \$1000, whichever is less and less than half-time is set at the ECG or \$500, whichever is less.

Examples:

►Student A is enrolled less than half time with an ECG of \$350. The annual amount for less than half time is \$500. The student would be awarded \$350 annually.

►Student B is enrolled less than half time with an ECG of \$485. The annual amount for less than half time is \$500. The student would be awarded \$485 (\$243; \$242 per semester or \$162; \$162; \$161 per quarter) annually.

►Student C is enrolled half time with an ECG of \$1005. The annual amount for half time is \$1000. The student would be awarded \$1000 annually.

►Student D is enrolled half time with an ECG of \$773. The annual amount for half time is \$1000. The student would be awarded \$773 (\$387; \$386 per semester or \$258; \$258; \$257 per quarter) annually.

►Student E is enrolled full time with an ECG of \$2500. The annual amount for full time is \$2000. The

LOSFA presents:

College Access 4 U!



David Roberts, LOSFA's Assistant Executive Director for Marketing and Outreach, discusses higher education issues with a group of students from Capitol Middle School in Baton Rouge. The College Access 4 U! pilot program was tested at the school and proved to be a success.



Jason Orgeron, Coordinator of LOSFA's College Access Center at Baton Rouge Community College, leans in to answer a student's question at the College Access 4 U! pilot program.

Twenty-five handpicked Capitol Middle School students took a few specialized classes last month.

The classes, the pilot testing of 'College Access 4 U!', was aimed at showing students that higher education is a viable, accessible option for them.

"It's not about going to a particular school," LOSFA's School and Lender Services representative Jennifer Guhman said, "it's about following your dreams."

Split into three sessions, the program focused on helping students identify the types of education needed for specific careers, where to receive the necessary training, how to gain admittance and how to pay for higher education.

The program, sponsored by LOSFA, LSU, Campus Federal Credit Union and 100 Black Men of Metro Baton Rouge, brought in speakers from local universities, community colleges and technical schools, to show the students the educational options available to them.

The idea is to take students and "show them how



Jennifer Guhman hands out information to students at Capitol Middle School during the College Access 4 U! pilot program.



Mychon Deslandes, coordinator for LSU's Office of Enrollment Management, helps a student at College Access 4 U! pilot program at Capitol Middle School in Baton Rouge.



Dr. Robert Rene, Associate Director of Southern University's Office of Admissions and Recruitment, speaks to a class of Capitol Middle School students about college admissions

far they can go."

In one of the activities, the students were allowed to act as an admissions committee for a school, determining which applicants were accepted and which were rejected. The activity served to give the students perspective on what schools are looking for in an applicant and how they can meet those expectations.

At the end of the program, the students were given a portfolio of information, to keep them on track and for them to share with others.

"We had students talking about going to college who had never considered it before," Guhman said.

Guhman is putting together a College Access 4 U! manual, so that the program can be repeated at

other sites across the state.

She said that many other schools have expressed interest in the program and she hopes to be able to hold sessions at additional schools in the coming months.

If you are interested in more information, or in having a College Access 4 U! program for your school, call (225) 925-7692.

Continued from Page 3

student would be awarded \$2000 annually.

►Student F is enrolled full time with an ECG of \$1831. The annual amount for full time is \$2000. The student would be awarded \$1831 (\$916; \$915 per semester or \$611; \$610; \$610 per quarter) annually.

Don't Forget!

TOPS application deadline is approaching!

In order to receive the TOPS award for the school year 2009-2010, graduating high school seniors must apply by July 1, 2009.

Applications received after July 1, 2009 (but before July 1, 2010) will not be eligible for funding until school year 2010-2011.

Questions? Call 800-259-5626, ext 1012.

Spring 2009 Financial Aid Workshops

Representatives from LOSFA conducted the annual Spring Financial Aid Workshops on May 12th and 13th, gathering together financial aid professionals from across the state at Northwestern State University and Delgado Community College.

Lissa Powell, Regional Training Executive Sallie Mae Services, conducted the training, while LOSFA representatives were on-hand to answer questions.

LOSFA's School and Lender Services representative April Matessino said, "Workshop attendees learned a lot of great information about the Year-Round Pell Grant and Cohort Default Rates. This information is vital to the financial aid staff as they process aid for the 09-10 school year. In this ever changing environment, it is important for financial aid officers to receive guidance about Federal and State Updates, which we are happy to provide to Louisiana schools."

Binders of material discussed at the workshop are

also available to schools. If you were unable to attend and would like a copy of the materials discussed at the workshop, please contact your SLS representative.

Workshop Highlights:

- ▶ Latest guidance on industry changes and how you can best prepare for new programs, rules and regulations
- ▶ Cohort default rate -- what you can do to ensure your institution is not caught off guard by recent legislative changes
- ▶ How to uncover and resolve conflicting information that can affect a student's eligibility for financial aid

Where we've been. . .

. . .and where we'll be.

▶ LA Gear Up Conference, Ruston, La. Tech University, 410 attendees

▶ College Knowledge/Career Fair, Bossier City, Bossier Parish Community College, 400 attendees

▶ Our Lady of the Lake Healthy Kids FunFest, Baton Rouge, Mall of Louisiana, 430 attendees

▶ LA GEAR UP Pathfinder Workshop, Ruston, La Tech University, June 1, 1 p.m.

▶ St. Charles Parish Council Employee Benefits Fair, Hahnville, June 2, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

▶ LA GEAR UP Pathfinder Workshop – Grambling State University (CSI Camp), 1 p.m.

To schedule a LOSFA presentation at your school, business or civic organization, call Michelle Darling at 225-922-2027

Desire for unique custom jewelry leads to engaging side business

It started simply enough in 2001. Michelle Darling, Public Information and Communications Supervisor, had a problem and found a way to solve it.

"I really like jewelry, and I need custom sizes," she said. So, she picked up some supplies and a few how-to books and taught herself how to make jewelry.

Eight years later, Darling has her own Web site (www.absolutelydarling.com) and is a regular seller at local arts and crafts fairs.

"My goal is to make high-quality jewelry at affordable prices."

Necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings -- she makes them all. Her wire wrap rings -- which can be made in a matter of minutes -- range from sizes 2 to 10, with custom orders available. She works with around 40 natural stones, from semi-precious stones like rubies and emeralds to jasper and snowflake obsidian.

Darling said she enjoys the design process and "seeing someone wear something I've made." She regularly participates in the Greenwell Springs Baptist Church Carnival, the St. Luke's Arts and Crafts Show and the Broadmoor Arts and Crafts Show.

She has a number of repeat customers, including a



mother-daughter duo that "needs a new ring every show."

Anyone interested in learning jewelry-crafting could do as she did and teach themselves, or there are always classes to take, she said.

While she didn't intend to start a side business, it's been a good experience for her. So good, that she's thinking of spending her time traveling the country attending craft shows when she retires.



These are examples of the jewelry made by LOSFA's Michelle Darling available for purchase on her Web site www.absolutelydarling.com. Darling works with over forty different stones, ensuring that there's something to catch the eye of just about anyone on her site.

**LOSFA wants to thank the following partners for collaborating
with us to coordinate College Access 4 U!**



. . .and those who participated in the program



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.