



# LOSFA LOOP

June 2013 Edition

Volume 6-6

## From the Desk of the Interim Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

...and they're off! I could literally hear the sound of the starter gun in my head when I began the role of Interim Executive Director of LOSFA. The next emotion was the rush of adrenaline that comes with knowing that you've been entrusted with the responsibility for something that is much larger and more important than yourself...and that you've got big shoes to fill as well. Melanie has been the calm and confident voice of LOSFA for the past 6 years and her dedication to financial aid has touched all she has come into contact with. Our team is committed to continuing to build upon the great work she has done during this time of transition.

I have received well wishes of congratulations as well as sentiments of condolences-although I'm happy to say that the congrats outweigh the condolences☺ I am confident that both of these sentiments will be in order depending upon the day or the hour as our agency settles in for the transition to the road ahead. These are challenging and simultaneously exciting times in the field of college access and it brings to mind a favorite quote of mine by Theodore Roosevelt that has carried me through more than 3 decades of service in the field of education and training:

**"Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."**

It's an easy piece of wisdom to adopt for those of us whose passion centers on helping students and the families who journey with them achieve their dreams. We've been busy building an infrastructure and a team at LOSFA that is working hard to support you in doing just that! Summer is a busy time for us as we take stock of the prior year, pausing to reflect and learn from it while planning to grow as a result of those lessons. Here's what we know that validates the work we do is well worth the effort.

During the 2012-13 Academic Year, 30,373 high school graduates of 2012 filed the FAFSA, which is the application for TOPS. Of that number, 21,419 were determined eligible for TOPS-a total of slightly more than 70%! Although there are many who feel that changes are needed to the program to ensure sustainability of funding, the

one thing that this number shows is that the policy work we've all put in is paying off. Students are challenging themselves to take rigorous coursework, taking the ACT in order to meet the required score and pushing themselves to make the grades to qualify.

The upcoming classes are also working hard to position themselves to follow in the footsteps of the 2012 graduates. We have seen tremendous growth in Louisiana Connect this past 6 months. We relished the fact that our first year of growth outpaced states with portals by the same vendor by over 5 times. We are ecstatic as we look at the statistics since January 2013. The number of activated accounts has grown from 48,541 the first week in January to 130,333 the last week in May!

Students are actively taking interest/values/skills assessments and using the results to explore and plan for college and career paths that are best suited to their unique abilities. They are connecting with postsecondary institutions in an effort to find the institution that fits them best, planning to take the coursework that will gain them admission and tracking their progress towards getting there.

On the subject of getting there-our GEAR UP staff has worked tirelessly to revamp the Summer Transition Programs (STPs) and the ensuing Summer Academic Year Learning Programs (SAYLPs) to focus on the Countdown to College. We are smiling broadly as we see busy rising 11th and 12th graders signing up for STPs to prepare academically, socially and logistically for college admissions. Some of the programs filled to capacity the first day the application period opened!

In the midst of challenge, change and transition lies opportunity, continuous improvement and the desire to forge ahead to create new paths for the students and families we all care so deeply about. I'm proud to serve during this transition and excited about working hard during the days ahead. Until next time-

Best,  
S.

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## Sujuan Boutté Named LOSFA Interim Executive Director

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) has named Dr. Sujuan Boutté as Interim Executive Director of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA).

Boutté assumed her new role on June 1, following the retirement of former Executive Director, Melanie Amrhein.

"I consider being entrusted with this leadership role a great honor," said Boutté. "Melanie has dedicated years of service to the agency and we owe her a great deal of gratitude for her work. Looking forward, I have the privilege of guiding a team of hard working individuals who are truly dedicated to providing college access services to Louisiana students and families. I am also committed to continued collaboration with our network of partner agencies and organizations to provide equity of access to the individuals we proudly serve."

In addition to her role as Interim Executive Director, Boutté also serves in her current position as LOSFA's Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operations Officer. In this capacity she oversees the agency's Scholarship and Grants, START, GEAR UP, CACG and Information Technology divisions.

Before assuming her current role at LOSFA, Boutté served as a Workforce Planning Executive Consultant at the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) for two years.

Prior to her stint with LDEQ, Boutté was LOSFA's Chief Research and Planning Officer. During her tenure, she was instrumental in conforming the agency's strategic plan to statutory and regulatory standards. Subsequently she established procedures

to ensure that the agency's strategic plan, operating plan and performance standards remained aligned and that the agency's performance indicators were properly and timely reported.

Boutté also served as Assistant Secretary of Workforce Development at the former Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL) for more than seven years. While with LDOL she provided oversight of the federal job-training program (The Workforce Investment Act), in addition to managing the Employment Services Program (Job Service Offices), the Community Service Block Grant Program (Community Action Agency Offices) and the Incumbent Worker Training Program.

A former educator with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, master's degree in Elementary School Administration and a specialist's and doctorate degree in Education Technology from Northwestern State University (NSU), Boutté has over 31 years experience in education and high level management positions.

Prior to her LDOL work, Boutté served for more than two years as Director of Public Service for NSU and for one year as coordinator of IBM's Teacher Training in Technology Program – where she forged partnerships with cable, phone and emerging technology companies to aid in teacher training.

Boutté started her career as a teacher. She taught for 13 years, spending the majority of her teaching career at NSU's Lab School, where she formed partnerships with BellSouth, McDonalds, Winn Dixie and other private industries to provide hands-on learning materials and experiences for her students in the classroom.



Former LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein with members of the Louisiana Student Financial Aid Commission (LASFAC) and the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority following her last official LASFAC/LATTA meetings. Pictured (from left) are Scott Ballard (LSU Board of Supervisors), Dr. Sandra Harper (LAICU), Barbara Baier (Treasurer's Office), John Williams (Louisiana Bankers Association), Amrhein, F. Travis Lavigne (LASFAC/LATTA Chairman), Wendy Simoneaux (LSU Board of Supervisors), and Michael Murphy (LCTCS).

## Inaugural Trailblazer Camp Attendee Remembers Experience Fondly

In 1994 Shanta Harrison attended the inaugural Trailblazer Camp at Louisiana State University (LSU). Twenty years later, Dr. Shanta Harrison-Proctor looks back on her camp experience as a jumping off point for her current success.

Harrison-Proctor said that she is not at all surprised that Trailblazer Camps are still being held 20 years after she attended because of the invaluable information that they offer to high school students. She was honored to be chosen to attend the camp and made sure to share what she had learned with her peers when she returned to Glen Oaks High School in Baton Rouge.

After graduating from Glen Oaks, Harrison-Proctor went on to earn her bachelor's degree in Political Science from Southern University (SU) in 1999. She believes that attending Trailblazer Camp gave her an advantage when it was time to apply for college acceptance.

"I definitely think I was far more prepared and well equipped than my classmates," said Harrison-Proctor. "I imagine that I fared much better in the process from having that prior exposure. It provided an excellent platform for the exposure of what being a college student could perhaps be and gave me a preview to the internal workings of student preparation and financial aid exposure and what the necessary tools that one might need to successfully matriculate through a college experience."

Harrison-Proctor said that Trailblazer Camp opens the doors to college education for students who might otherwise not know where to begin their application process.

"Many parents are unsure of what that application process entails," said Harrison-Proctor. "Particularly for those who are in need of financial aid where there is not that legacy component to provide the necessary exposure, tips, and advice on what needs to happen and what pitfalls to avoid."

"Having the Trailblazer program in place is extremely beneficial simply because the student population that it serves would more than likely not have that information otherwise. Most of the families who are in need of financial aid may not have that historical or institutional memory of applying and matriculating successfully through a college program or degree plan."

"I don't know if it was in a formalized, collaborative format, but by sheer nature of my leadership roles in high school and also having a certain sphere of influence, I was always willing to provide information and share with peers," said Harrison-Proctor. "Some folks looked to me for information as to what



*Shanta Harrison at the inaugural Trailblazer Camp at LSU in 1994*

to do because they were coming from a demographic similar to mine and would not otherwise have had the knowledge. Even though there might have been a desire to enroll in a university, they likely would not have known what the steps were in order to be able to get in and pay for it at the same time."

She was able to take what she learned at the camp and use it to successfully enroll in college and pursue financial aid options to help her earn her undergraduate degree. Following her graduation from SU, Harrison-Proctor attended LSU where she earned her master's degree in Vocational Education and a doctorate in Human Resource Education and Workforce Development.

Her professional career has included appointments to the Louisiana State Senate, the LA Legislative Black Caucus, international organizations, and teaching at LSU. In 2006, she was appointed as Executive Director of the Governor's Office on Women's Policy for Louisiana. Today, she owns her own consulting business, HP Executive Solutions, LLC.

She serves as the Director of the National Women's Council and is the Vice President of Katy Two-Way Immersion Support Team (TWIST). She is a member of the Women of Color Network and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Doctoral Scholars Association. Additionally, she serves on the boards of the Louisiana Women's Foundation, the Waller Pregnancy Care Center, and the Leadership Council of the Center for Women and Government at Nicholls State University.

While Harrison-Proctor has not kept up with any of her fellow camp attendees, which she attributes to a lack of Facebook access at the time, she fondly remembers the camaraderie at the 1994 camp and urges this year's attendees to form long-lasting connections when they embark upon their Trailblazer Camp experience this summer.

**"Embrace the Trailblazer opportunity to the fullest capacity," said Harrison-Proctor. "Listen, learn, connect and, if nothing else, network with the other students that are there because you truly don't know what their outcomes will be and there could be potential for future success for you right there in that room."**

Harrison-Proctor currently promotes financial aid awareness through her work with a college-readiness program at Rice University in Houston that is designed for students entering into 9th grade.



*Dr. Shanta Harrison-Proctor*

## 2013-2014 TOPS Amount Announced for LAICU Schools

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission approved the 2014 award year amount for TOPS recipients who attend institutions that are part of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU) at its May meeting.

The TOPS award for students attending LAICU schools in 2013-2014 will be \$4,086 a year or \$2,043 per semester.

## Deadline Extended for John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program 2nd Circuit District Public Defender Applicants

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has extended the application deadline for the John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program for public defenders in the 2nd Circuit District.

The John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program in Louisiana provides for the payment of eligible educational loans (both Federal Family Education Loan Program [FFELP] and Federal Direct Loans) for state and federal public defenders and state prosecutors employed in Louisiana who agree to remain employed as public defenders and prosecutors for at least three years.

This year the award for public defenders is \$5,000.

“We’re making an additional recruitment effort in the 2nd Circuit District to inform public defenders of the opportunities available through the John R. Justice Grant Program,” said former LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein. “We value public service and feel that public defenders practicing in the northern part of the state need

to be made aware that through their service, they may be eligible to have a portion of their student loans repaid.”

The application is now available and the deadline to apply is June 7, 2013. There is no paper application for the award; only the online application is accepted.

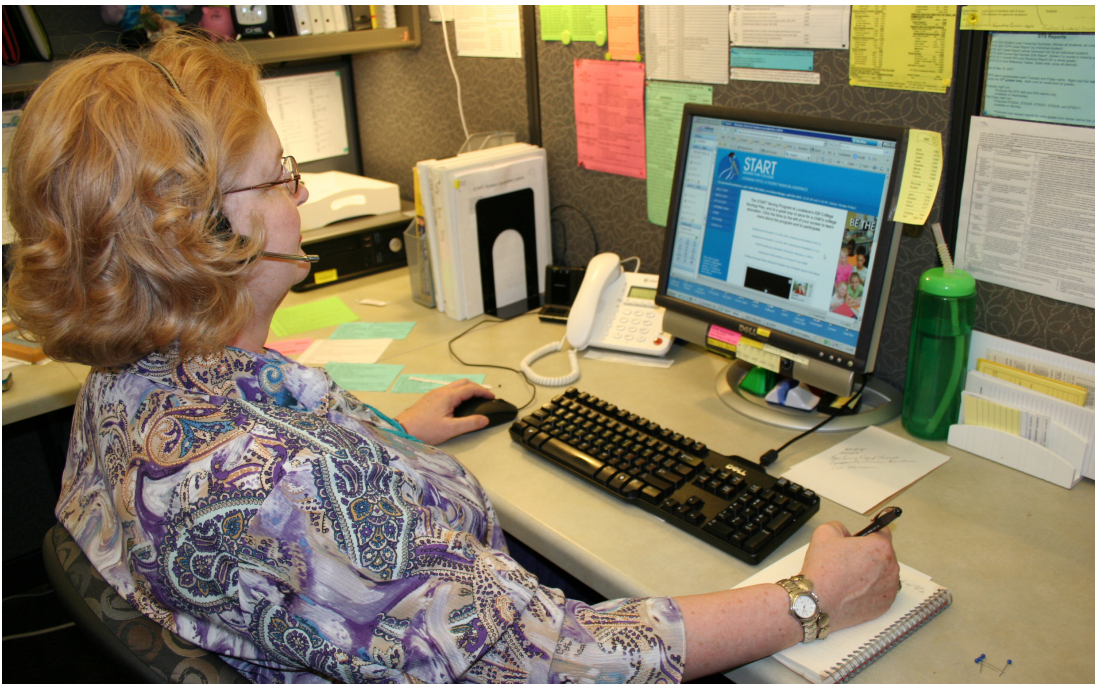
To check eligibility requirements or to apply, visit <http://www.osfa.la.gov/index.jsp?SRC=/jrjustice.htm>.



### Former Trailblazer Camp Attendees Awarded Scholarships

*L to R: Former Trailblazer Camp attendees Kia Roybiskie of West St. John High School, Meaghan Overstreet of White Castle High School, and Trent David of Brusly High School were named 2013 Boo Grisby Scholarship Recipients during a ceremony on May 9. The Boo Grisby scholarship is administered by Career Compass of Louisiana.*

# LOSFA Outreach



In observance of national "529 Day", LOSFA conducted a START Saving Program Call In Night and Facebook chat from 6:00 until 9:00 p.m. on May 29 (5/29). Pictured is LOSFA Public Information representative Kate Herke who participated in the event.



Left and Above: New and expecting parents learned about the START Saving program at Woman's Hospital's Baby Grand event in Baton Rouge on May 4. Members of LOSFA's Public Information and Communications (PIC) outreach team spread START's message of saving for college from an early age and gave the crowd information on how to start saving for their children's' educations..

# 3 ways to receive notification of your TOPS status:

Processing for 2013 high school graduates awaiting their initial TOPS award begins the first week of June. Processing will continue weekly until all eligible students are awarded.

Three ways to receive notification of your TOPS Status!



For more information, please contact the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) at 1-800-259-5626 or e-mail [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov).

## 1

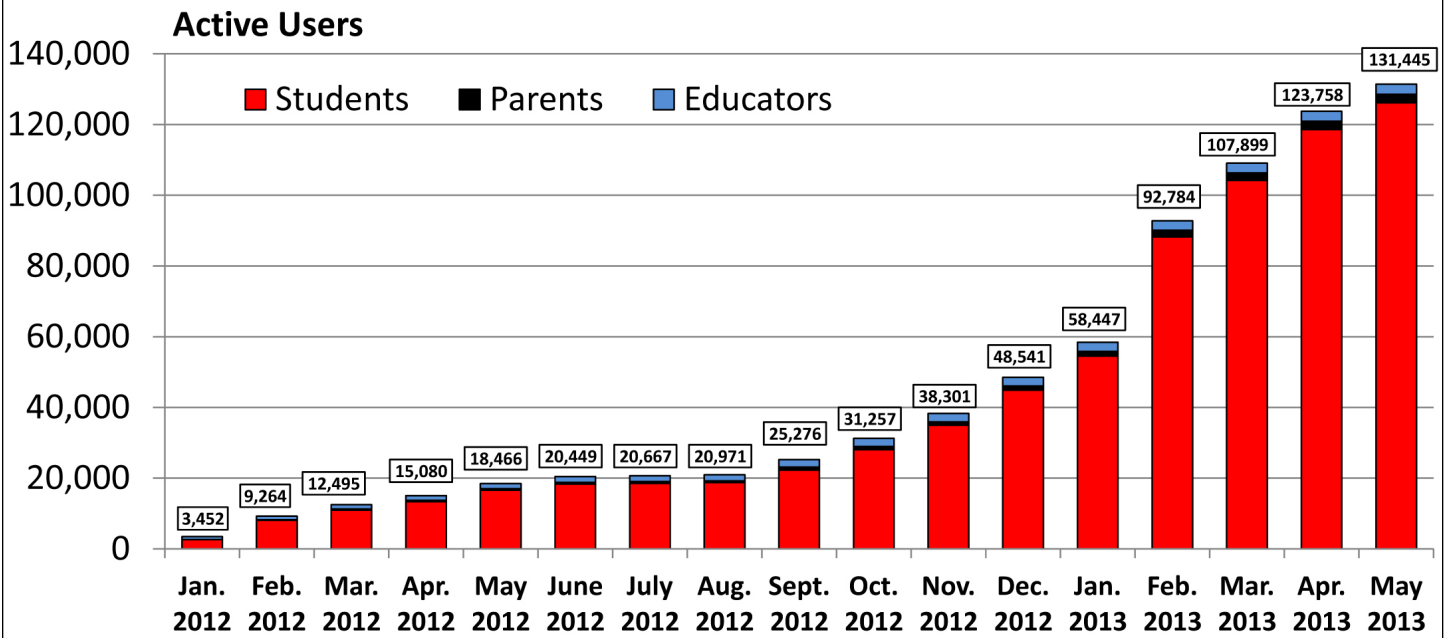
Create an account on the Louisiana Connect Portal: <http://www.osfa.la.gov/louisianaconnect>  
Once you have an account on the Louisiana Connect portal you can provide a mobile telephone number in order to receive a text message once your TOPS status has been determined.

## 2

Create an account on the Louisiana Award System: <https://www.osfa.la.gov/AwardSystem>  
Once you have an account on the Louisiana Award System you can check your account at anytime for your TOPS status.

## 3

Wait to receive notification via United States mail.



May data as of 5/29/2013.

The current total of 131,445 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 126,176 Students, 1,458 Community Administrators, 531 Professional School Counselors, 2,410 Parents, 853 Teachers, and 17 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](http://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](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 LOSFA LOOP, please  
contact Gus Wales at [Gus.Wales@la.gov](mailto:Gus.Wales@la.gov).