



LOSFA LOOP

November 2010 Edition

Volume 3-11

From the Desk of the Executive Director

After months of planning and several very long days of moving and days ahead of unpacking, we are finally in our new home. I want to commend my entire staff for their diligence during this adjustment period. I want to especially acknowledge our dedicated IT staff who worked nights and weekends with our external partners to ensure our connectivity to the outside world was reestablished and working properly. Our location may have changed, but our service to the students of Louisiana will not.

Speaking of service, I was made aware of concerns expressed regarding the new Louisiana Award System. In response to these concerns we've included an update on the system in this issue of the LOSFA LOOP (Page 4). Hopefully this update will address those concerns and answer any questions that may have arisen. If not, our staff can easily be contacted and is always willing to provide assistance.

Because of an outstanding publicity campaign by the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Organization, with assistance from the National Football League, it was almost impossible not to know that October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month. A lot less prominent is the fact that November is National Homeless Youth Awareness Month. LOSFA has always been dedicated to the idea of homeless youth receiving the opportunity to pursue post secondary education. This is why the homeless youth liaisons at charter and public schools as well as the homeless youth verification form can be accessed via our website. We also work closely with Louisiana's Statewide Homeless Coordinator. This relationship was instrumental in the establishment of a new agreement with the Department of Children and Family Services to administer the Chafee Educational Training Voucher Program. This will tremendously expand our service to homeless youth and foster care alumni.

One of the contributing factors to the homeless youth phenomenon can be found in sobering statistics re-

garding those who transition from foster care. Nearly 20,000 foster care teens "age-out" of the foster care system each year. Once they reach 18, their state and foster families are no longer required to provide them with assistance. Unfortunately, many foster care teens don't have the support and life skills necessary to live on their own. Foster care studies have shown that in just four years after leaving foster care, 25 percent of "aged-out" youth have been homeless, 42 percent have become parents themselves, fewer than 20 percent are able to support themselves, and only 46 percent have graduated from high school. Because they lack the support systems most young adults take for granted, aged-out foster care teens are at high risk for substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty. We realize that the Chafee Educational Training Voucher will not totally eliminate all of the potential hazards for those who "age out" of foster care, but by providing them with up to \$5,000 annually to pursue post secondary education we can increase the probability that they will become productive citizens. We're proud to administer such a program because it aligns perfectly with our mission to "provide and promote college access".

Finally, November is also the month in which we acknowledge our veterans and celebrate Thanksgiving. To all the veterans of the armed forces we want to "give thanks" to you for your service.

--Melanie

In this edition. . .

<i>Moving Day</i>	2
<i>Award System Update</i>	4
<i>College Goal Sunday</i>	5
<i>Outreach Milestone</i>	6
<i>LOSFA Outreach</i>	6
<i>LASFAA Conference</i>	7
<i>Counselor Workshops</i>	8

Goodbye Wooddale . . .

LOSFA is no longer located on Wooddale Blvd. The agency is now located on the sixth floor of the Galvez Building on Fifth and Main Streets in downtown Baton Rouge.

The office is open for business, though we may still be working through a few minor issues. Our new address is 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802.

Both our START and general mailing addresses remain the same:

START

LOSFA

P.O. Box 91271,

P.O. Box 91202

Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9271

Baton Rouge, LA, 70821-9202

We can still be reached by phone at (800) 259-5626, ext. 1012 to answer any questions you may have.



Hello Galvez Building!



Louisiana Award System Update

The Louisiana Award System was deployed to internal LOSFA users, colleges, and students during the week of August 30th. The initial implementation plan included a phased deployment with the web application screens being deployed first, followed by payments, initial eligibility, and renewal processing (via grade updates).

We have been working with our contractor, Methods, to get back to “normal” as quickly as possible. Since implementation, we have set our priorities as web application screens that were impeding the users from entry, payment processes for LEAP/SLEAP, TOPS, Early Start, GO, and Rockefeller, initial eligibility, and renewal processing. Renewal processing is currently in the testing phase and should be the next component to go “live”.

The system has shown many positive attributes. Schools have expressed that they like the ability to have different logons and passwords created and managed by a college admin role that is also at their school. This provides a higher level of security which was lacking in the TOPS portal. Also, the TOPS portal was just for TOPS, with separate portals for additional programs. The new system also provided the internal users with college roles so that they can see what the schools see.

We have created a logical flow for processing payments – a payment request – submitted on-line or in batch and set to pending until the internal users verify the data and set the records to process, payment rejects (that includes transactions that were deleted by the users or rejected in processing), payments that have been processed and applied to a student’s record – each process has reporting that is available to all of the schools. With the school’s ability to retrieve their own data, the internal users do not have to mail reports to each of the colleges. Additionally for EFT notifications, an email is sent with an attachment of each invoice included in the payment with information defining how to access the detail information via our website. The payment information is available to the schools immediately.

We have provided additional information for students who register on the site. The students can now see all of the information that we have in our system including PDF for reprinting letters that were generated in the Award System and the ability to go on-line and submit an exception which has PDF examples of what is required for each exception reason.

We’ve included all of our Scholarship and Grant programs in one succinct application so that it is easy to see the students’ payment across application.

Our main priority is to get to normal. As our IT Division discussed steps for deployment, everyone was excited about the features of the new system, but didn’t anticipate the technical difficulties that we’ve experienced. We have been able to resolve many of our issues and each week we have fewer issues to resolve. Unfortunately, there are still issues. We are continuing to focus on renewal processing and rolling out reports and dashboards to all users. Plans are to begin renewal processing on November 12.





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/CollegeGoalSunday.shtml

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM Locations 2011 February 20th, 2011 2 - 4 P.M.

Alexandria

Louisiana State University - Alexandria

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge Community College

Southern University - Baton Rouge

Bossier City

Bossier Parish Community College

Grambling

Grambling State University

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 Camp

Dillard University

Ruston

Louisiana Technical 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.

LOSFA Surpasses 500,000 Outreach Attendees

In September of 2010, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) surpassed the half-million mark in the number of Louisiana students and parents who have attended outreach events since LOSFA began tracking attendance in 1999.

Since July 1, 1999, 524,117 Louisiana students and parents have attended LOSFA outreach presentations throughout the state.

“LOSFA’s mission is to provide college access information to all citizens of Louisiana,” said Executive Director, Melanie Amrhein. “Reaching the significant milestone of 500,000 attendees at LOSFA outreach events is evidence that we are achieving that mission,” she added.

LOSFA administers an ever-growing assortment of state scholarship and grant programs including the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), the state’s premiere merit based scholarship; the TOPS Tech Award Program, a merit based scholarship for students pursuing postsecondary vocational, technical or non-academic training or certification; the Louisiana Go Grant, the state’s need-based grant program, the Early Start and TOPS Tech Early Start programs which fund dual enrollment in postsecondary credit courses while students are still in high school; the START Saving Program, Louisiana’s 529 College Saving program; The Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship program for students majoring in Forestry, Wildlife or Marine Science; and the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) program, another need based program that provides a combination of state and federal funds to needy students.

Other available presentation topics include “Financial Literacy for You” (FLY) and “College Knowledge”, an introduction to the myriad of available state, federal, institutional and private sources for funding postsecondary education geared to middle and early high school students.

LOSFA maintains a staff of Public Information Representatives who are well versed on all of the above programs and are available year-round to make informational program presentations upon request at Louisiana high schools, middle schools, public libraries, civic association sponsored events, faith-based events, etc.

To schedule a LOSFA presentation, schools or student advocacy groups may call 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012.

LOSFA Outreach



Sigmund Morel and Jennifer Guhman, members of LOSFA’s Financial Literacy and Development section, took part in Finance Park last month, reaching out to junior high students with a message of financial literacy.

Finance Park is sponsored by Junior Achievement and was held from September 27 through October 29, 2010 at Cortana Mall in Baton Rouge. Finance Park teaches 8th graders how to make “real life” decisions on budgeting, paying bills, keeping a checkbook and other financial literacy topics. Finance Park hosted approximately 170 students on the 2 days Morel and Guhman volunteered.

For more information, go to: <http://batonrouge.ja.org/>

LOSFA at LASFAA Conference

The Louisiana Association of Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) Fall Conference took place in Lafayette, October 27th to 29th. The theme of the conference was “A New Dawn, A New Day and A New Financial Aid”. LOSFA staff served on the Program committee and also served as conference exhibitors. Jerry Oubre of LOSFA's Audit Section conducted a session on Compliance Issues and Policy Updates. Alice Brown, LOSFA's IT Division Director, along with Deborah Paul, LOSFA's Scholarship and Grant Division Director, conducted two sessions on LOSFA's New Louisiana Award System. As is customary during the LASFAA Fall Conference, LOSFA also provided a state update.



LOSFA at La. Council for Social Studies Conference



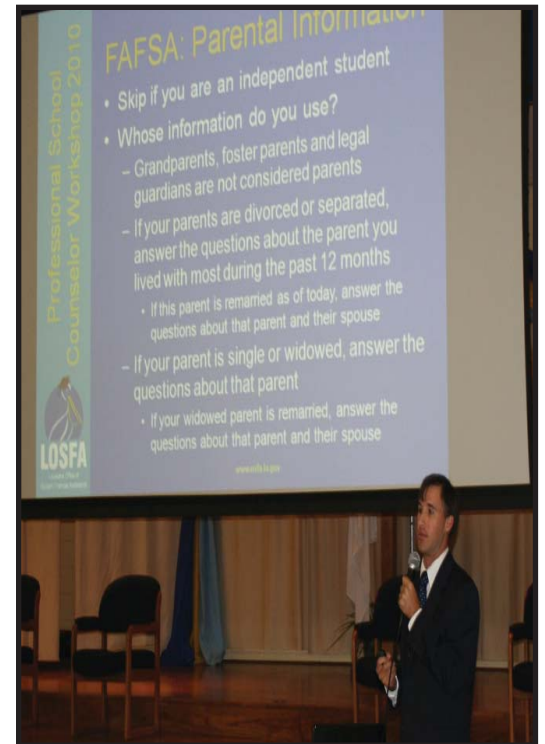
LOSFA's Financial Literacy and Development section attended the Louisiana Council for Social Studies Conference last month, sharing information about the agency's Financial Literacy for You (FLY) program with 250 attendees.

The conference was held in Shreveport and attracted teachers from across the state. LOSFA provided them with materials and information to take back to their schools about FLY, as well as other agency programs.

Professional School Counselor Workshops

The Professional School Counselor Workshops have been completed, but if you couldn't make it, don't worry. If you weren't one of the 867 counselors who attended the nine workshops, LOSFA will be happy to provide you with information about changes to our programs. Give us a call at (800) 259-5626, ext. 1012 and let us answer your questions or schedule a presentation.







LOSFA's Social Media



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



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



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



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA



<http://www.louisianatopsprogram.com/>

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.