



# LOSFA LOOP

October 2016

Volume 9-10

## From the Desk of the Executive Director



**I'm possible?**

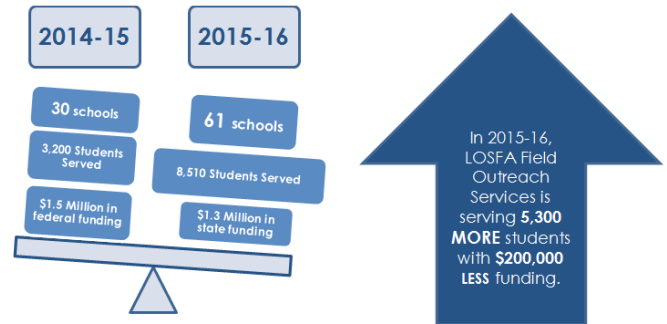
***"We regret to inform you..."***

These words, depending upon the announcement that follows, often precede disappointing or devastating news. Such was the case for LOSFA and the State of Louisiana when we were informed that we would not be receiving the 2014 statewide GEAR UP Grant we applied for. We were disappointed for our staff, who worked hard to serve the students, and who were now wondering about whether their employment was in jeopardy. We were also disappointed for the districts, who were wondering how the services being provided would be continued. Although we were granted a No-Cost Extension to complete our work with the Senior class; we were faced with the seemingly impossible task of funding the services going forward.

**"It always seems impossible until it's done."**  
*Nelson Mandela*

The one thing we knew was that we had to find a way. Mandela's sentiments were a constant guide for us as we partnered with the Board of Regents to secure state funding to continue the services we knew to be valuable to students. We combined state funding with our federal operating dollars as we embarked upon serving more students with fewer dollars: Making the impossible possible.

2014-15 and 2015-16 Program Design Comparison



Our team didn't stop there. We continued to work with students, counselors, district personnel and peer leaders to identify the needs based upon feedback from the individuals we serve. We transformed that feedback into improved services as well as expanded services.

**"Nothing is impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible!'"** *Audrey Hepburn*

We adapted Hepburn's philosophy regarding 'I'm possible' to forge even stronger relationships with districts, counselors, students and teachers. We expanded our partnerships with postsecondary institutions to bring more students to college campuses. We introduced the LOSFA 5 Point Match to provide assistance to students regarding choosing the postsecondary option that best fit their natural skills, abilities and interests.

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## From the Desk of the Executive Director *(continued)*

We gathered data, we informed stakeholders, we recruited partners and we positioned ourselves to be ready for future funding opportunities. Most importantly, we continued to develop our team by building upon the strengths of each individual and matching that to the tasks at hand. The results have been amazing.

We received word that the USDOE would be ‘funding down the slate’ of states; meaning there was a possibility that the State of Louisiana would receive GEAR UP Funding.

We planned for how we would further expand the services we developed using state and federal operating dollars in case we received the award and then...

We received the:

**We are happy to inform you...**announcement that the State of Louisiana would indeed be the recipient of a 2016-2021 GEAR UP Grant!

What are our thoughts as we look back on this journey? Ali says it best with the following words to live by when the going gets tough:

**“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they’ve been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It’s an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It’s a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.”**  
 — Muhammad Ali

Look on the following pages for more possibilities!

Best,  
S.

What is the plan for Gear Up Funding?

### GEAR UP Funding

No announcement regarding funding as of yet, but...

Outreach Services with State Funding		Outreach Services with State Funding with the Addition of GEAR UP Funding	
Students Served	24,572	Students Served	32,072
Grades Served	8 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	Grades Served	6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> and 1 <sup>st</sup> Year Postsecondary Education
Districts Served	16	Districts Served	17
Schools Served	67	Schools Served	75
Teacher/Counselor/Administrator Professional Development	150+	Teacher/Counselor/Administrator Professional Development	350+
Number of College Access Services Offered	18	Number of College Access Services Offered	24+

ELEVATE LOUISIANA: Outreach Services supports Elevate Louisiana through professional development, dual enrollment support services, and business and industry integration partnerships.

LOSFA's Vision is to be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access 10

## LOSFA Receives Seven-year Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Grant

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has been selected to receive funding under the GAINING EARLY AWARENESS AND READINESS FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS (GEAR UP). It is anticipated that the grant will be for a total of 7 years.

This discretionary grant program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP provides six-year grants to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve an

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## LOSFA Receives Seven-year (GEAR UP) Grant (continued)

entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. GEAR UP funds are also used to provide college scholarships to low-income students.

The 2014-21 Louisiana GEAR UP (LA GEAR UP) grant will help targeted schools increase the numbers of low-income, low-performing students who enroll and succeed in college. Extensive partnerships among the Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the University of Louisiana System, Xavier University, the Louisiana Workforce Education Initiative, and targeted schools/districts demonstrate the depth and quality of the statewide commitment to LA GEAR UP's success, ensuring institutionalization of reforms implemented.

Both cohort and priority models will serve a total of 7,500 students each year. A priority model will operate in two small Northern Louisiana schools in Sabine Parish, Ebarb High School and Zwolle High School with a large percentage of students who are part of the state-recognized Choctaw-Apache population, and in New Orleans, ReNEW Accelerated High School, which serves over-aged, under-credited students. In total, 900 students will be served in this model from 6th grade through 12th grade each year. The cohort model will operate in 54 schools serving 6,600 students each year beginning in the 6th and 7th grade and continuing through the 12th grade. A total of 75 schools will be served during the grant period. Through a series of university partnerships, LA GEAR UP will provide 7th year services to all college-bound students within both models.

Through the use of research-based strategies and a

combination of academic and nonacademic project services. LA GEAR UP will monitor grade-specific indicators and apply the results to promote student academic engagement through National GEAR UP objectives. Some specific project objectives include:

- Improve the transition of the middle grades to high school through summer programming focused on the 9th grade transition
- Reduce the need for remedial studies in high school by identifying at-risk students and providing them with additional instruction and support in mathematics and reading so students can enter high school prepared for the 9th grade
- Increase the number of students who complete the 9th grade
- Increase the number of students who pass Algebra 1 by the end of 9th grade
- Increase the number of students who take two years of mathematics beyond Algebra I by the 12th grade
- Increase the percentage of students completing dual enrollment coursework
- Increase the percentage of students completing AP coursework and taking related tests
- Increase the number of students who have a clear postsecondary path in mind and know how to reach their goals
- Increase the number of students who matriculate in the fall following graduation by reducing Summer Melt through near-peer mentoring activities to meet objectives including near-peer mentoring, academic-year clubs, summer programming, tutoring, remediation, Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, campus field trips, and college preparation / financial aid information sessions for students and families.

## NCAN National Conference: Learning, Collaborating, and Networking for College Access

National College Access Network, or NCAN, hosted its annual NCAN National Conference in Detroit, Michigan this year. The purpose of the conference is to bring college access professionals from across the nation together to collaborate, network, and develop professional knowledge. The conference was event-filled with innovative workshops, educational presentations, and inspiring guest speakers like Michael Middleton, the interim President of the University of Missouri. This year, a record-breaking number of 1,066 college access individuals attended the conference held at the Marriott Hotel at the Renaissance Center.

Three LOSFA Outreach Services staff members, Charlie Lewis, Tireka Cobb, and Tiera LeBlanc represented LOSFA at the conference. All three attended pre-conference workshops in addition to the conference. Lewis and LeBlanc attended the Leveraging Your Philanthropic Potential workshop, which was presented by Chuck Gordon of the New Kensington Group. During the workshop, he emphasized the importance of taking one's fundraising program to the next level, especially utilizing networking and relationship-building skills. "Stewardship is critical to successful fundraising, and personal connections increase the likelihood of success," remarked Gordon during his presentation.

"The Leveraging Your Philanthropic Potential workshop was very enlightening because relationship-building is critical to fundraising, especially multi-year donation commitments. It really made me realize that people would be less inclined to commit to multi-year donations without having a relationship with an organization. Relationships are key to both maintaining and growing a donor base," LeBlanc expressed after attending the insightful workshop.

Charlie Lewis, Evaluation Coordinator of LOSFA Field Outreach Services, enjoyed the Combining Training and Technology for FAFSA Completion Success workshop. "It was creative how she broke everyone up into small

groups. Within those groups, we discussed FAFSA-related gaps and how we could address those gaps. One person mentioned that her organization identified the zip codes for the least FAFSA completion, and they targeted those areas with mobile units," Lewis recalled of the workshop.

Tireka Cobb, LOSFA Field Outreach Services Director, attended the FAFSA and the New World Order pre-conference workshop, which highlighted effective FAFSA completion strategies that are being utilized by organizations across the nation. "One theme that resonated amongst the representatives of the organizations was community involvement. Increasing community involvement with FAFSA initiatives will be beneficial because ultimately it can increase FAFSA submission and completion. I'm looking forward to discussing how LOSFA can garner more community involvement to get students and families to complete their FAFSA and ultimately enroll in college," Dr. Cobb exclaimed.

Overall, the staff learned a lot from the conference, and they could not wait to get back to Louisiana to share knowledge and discuss ideas to better college access in Louisiana.



**LOSFA staff members Charlie Lewis and Tiera LeBlanc pictured with Chuck Gordon of the New Kensington Group.**

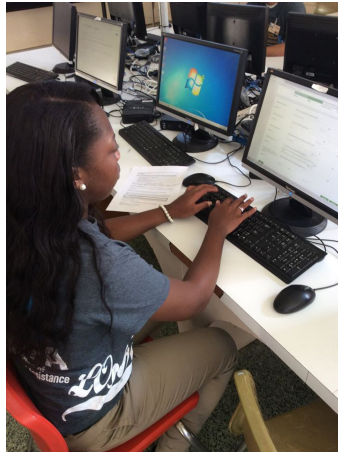


## October 1st Marks the Beginning of LCAAM, Early FAFSA Completion, and Compete to Complete

October 1, 2016 marked a very important day for Louisiana college students, especially those in the city of Baton Rouge.

First, the FAFSA was made available on October 1, and this is the first year that the FAFSA opened three months earlier. For students, this means that they can complete their FAFSAs early using 2015 tax return data. Completing the FAFSA earlier could benefit students in several ways, including earlier financial aid packaging.

**The FAFSA opened up on October 1, three months earlier than previous years. Pictured on the right is a student who began the process of FAFSA completion at a recent LOSFA Event.**



This year, the FAFSA did open on a Saturday, but we did not let that stop us from helping students complete theirs. In fact, on that day, we held a training for Trailblazer Ambassadors and FAFSA Challenge Grant Ambassadors, and many of the ambassadors completed their FAFSAs after the training.

**Trailblazer and FAFSA Challenge Ambassadors participate in a TOPS Activity during training on October 1, 2016.**



The first day of October also marked the first day of Baton Rouge's Compete to Complete campaign, which is our local FAFSA completion competition among the public high schools in East Baton Rouge Parish. The campaign was an innovative idea introduced by LOSFA after receiving NCAN's FAFSA Completion Challenge Grant. The grant, which is funded by the Kresge Foundation, is intended to increase the FAFSA completion rate in the 22 funded cities by at least five percent. LOSFA and its partners in Baton Rouge have a goal of increasing the rate by at least ten percent.

To do that, the partners have been planning initiatives and events to increase the rate of completion. One of those initiatives is the FAFSA Challenge Grant Ambassador program. This program is a leadership program in which high school seniors will serve as champions for completion of the FAFSA at their high schools. The students are encouraged to be creative and innovative in their roles to motivate their fellow students to complete the FAFSA so their schools can become the monthly FAFSA Completion Champions.

In addition to the launches of the FAFSA and Compete to Complete campaign, October marked the beginning of Louisiana College Application and Access Month, which focuses on helping high school seniors apply for college, employment, and the military. Students are encouraged to submit at least one application, and once they do so, they receive a wristband that celebrates this milestone.



**Louisiana College Application and Access (LCAAM) began on Oct. 1 and students across the state began submitting their college applications.**

## Early FAFSA completion gives students a jump on preparing for college expenses and competing for early deadline scholarships

A major change to the annual ritual of applying for student financial assistance is available to students for the first time this year as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2017-2018 academic year became available on October 1, 2016.

FAFSA is the primary all-in-one application for state student aid (including TOPS and the Louisiana Go Grant; federal student aid (in the form of Pell Grants, on-campus work-study programs and low interest federal loans; and many campus based institutional scholarships. Previously the application was not available until January.

“Some of the benefits of early FAFSA completion include an early determination of what amount (if any) of Pell Grant (free money) funding the student is entitled to receive,” said Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) Executive Director, Dr. Sujuan Boutté. “This will allow students to have an early base figure to work from in seeking out sources of additional aid needed to cover their anticipated cost of attendance with maximum time to plan accordingly,” Boutté added.

Students will also often find that the earlier they apply, the more money is available to them in the form of scholarships and grants which do not require repayment. Many, if not most, campus based aid, and some campus-selected recipients of federal aid, are drawing from finite pools of funding on a first-come, first-served basis.

To facilitate early FAFSA availability, the tax forms to be used in completing the document are now from “prior-prior” year taxes. Thus, 2015 student and parent federal tax returns will be used in completing the 2017-2018 FAFSA.

As Louisiana’s first choice for college access, LOSFA has a number of ongoing FAFSA completion assistance initiatives in progress. Among them are:

### FAFSA Challenge Grant

The FAFSA Challenge Grant was awarded by NCAN to LOSFA for the City of Baton Rouge as one of 22 U.S. cities selected to receive \$54,000. The grant aims to raise FAFSA completion rates among high school seniors in East Baton Rouge Parish by 10 percent for the graduating class of 2017. Schools with the highest growth of FAFSA completion will win school and individual prizes. **11 EBR public schools are participating in the challenge, which is targeting over 2,000 students.**

### LOSFA Trailblazer Ambassadors

The LOSFA Trailblazer Ambassador Leadership Program enhances the mission of promoting and providing college access through student engagement and outreach. Trailblazers aid in fostering a college-going culture among their peers by participating in LOSFA-sponsored and school based college access events. Trailblazers will also assist their peers and their peer’s parents with obtaining their FSA ID’s and completing the FAFSA. **There are currently 54 Trailblazer Ambassadors across the state.**

### FAFSA Ambassadors

FAFSA Ambassador Student leaders were nominated in eight (8) Baton Rouge area public high schools to serve as FAFSA Challenge Grant Ambassadors. These students will help to facilitate the challenge at the school level. The ambassadors are also tasked with coming up with creative ways to get their fellow students to participate and complete the FAFSA. **There are currently 12 FAFSA Ambassadors located in EBR.**

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## **Early FAFSA completion gives students a jump on preparing for college expenses and competing for early deadline scholarships (continued)**

### **FAFSA Fridays**

FAFSA Fridays occur every Friday in October where parents of students in East Baton Rouge Parish and surrounding areas will have the opportunity to complete the parent portion of the FAFSA including obtaining their FSA ID. Applications completed will count toward individual high school goals for the FAFSA Challenge Grant. The sessions will be held every Friday in October from 10 am to 5 pm in the Claiborne Conference Center Computer Lab. Other locations include area libraries and churches. ***There are currently over 10 FAFSA Friday events scheduled.***

### **LOSFA Go Alliance Academy**

High school counselors, teachers, and administrators from 17 Louisiana high schools will participate in the LOSFA Go Alliance Academy Module Three online course, "Financial Aid and College Applications." The 19 participants registered will learn how to assist parents and students with understanding the cost of postsecondary education options and with exploring the types of aid students can receive based on the FAFSA. LOSFA partners with the Louisiana Counseling Association to allow participants to earn 30 CEUs upon successful completion of the course. ***There are currently 7 unique college and career readiness Go Alliance Academy courses that can be offered.***

### **FAFSA Office Hours**

A LOSFA representative will be online for real-time chat support to assist applicants with completing the FAFSA. Office Hours will be held during the dates listed below from 5pm to 7pm.

***Wednesday, October 26***

***Monday, October 31***

### **Louisiana College Application and Access Month (LCAAM)**

Louisiana College Application and Access Month occurs each October. During LCAAM, LOSFA and its partners focus on helping students navigate their postsecondary plans and guiding them through the application process. Students are encouraged to submit at least one application, whether it be to an education institution, employer, or military organization. Families are also encouraged to attend LCAAM events, as the events will feature resources related to FAFSA assistance, college applications, military applications, and employment searches and applications. ***To date, more than 75 LCAAM events have been scheduled.***

### **Financial Aid/FAFSA Professional Development and Training**

Financial Aid and FAFSA Professional Development and Training include both workshops and webinars on the FAFSA, TOPS, College Knowledge and General Financial Aid Information. These workshops can be requested by schools, school districts, church/civic groups, employers or other types of business and industry. ***Since August 2016, over 150 school staff received financial aid/FAFSA professional development and training.***

### **Cross-Curricular College Access Activities**

Cross-Curricular College Access Activities are classroom lessons that integrate content and skills from multiple college access areas into one cohesive learning experience. During these lessons, middle and/or high school students can learn and apply the LOSFA 5-Point Match, explore their career interests along with colleges that offer their degree, examine their cost of living after college, and learn about financing

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## **Early FAFSA completion gives students a jump on preparing for college expenses and competing for early deadline scholarships *(continued)***

their postsecondary choice, including learning about the FAFSA and other forms of financial aid. ***Over 30 middle schools have committed to conducting LOSFA supported Cross-Curricular activities with their 8th grade students during AY 2016-17, targeting over 4,300 students.***

### **FAFSA Seminars and FAFSA Completion Workshops**

These events focus on assisting Louisiana college-bound students and their families with completing the financial aid application process. LOSFA partners with postsecondary financial aid professionals to staff these events to ensure student and parent completion of the FAFSA in an effort to obtain the funding needed for college, especially for economically disadvantaged or first-generation college students. ***There are currently over 32 FAFSA Seminars and/or FAFSA Completion Workshops during AY 2016-17.***

### **Financial Literacy for You Tour**

Financial Literacy for You (FLY) Tour is a theatrical presentation designed to provide high school seniors

with information and resources related to financial awareness, academic performance, and college preparation. Topics such as FAFSA, money management and credit building are brought to life as LOSFA staff members perform entertaining skits and scenes using poetry, music, and drama. The live performance, which is written and performed by staff members, will be hosted on the campuses of select postsecondary institutions across the state of Louisiana during Financial Aid Awareness Month in February. There are currently 8 scheduled FLY Tour events at the following campuses:

***Louisiana State University  
Dillard University  
Southeastern Louisiana University  
SOWELA Technical Community College  
Nunez Community College  
CLTCC-Ferriday  
Southern University-Shreveport  
CLTCC-Alexandria  
Grambling State University***

LOSFA is a program under the Louisiana Board of Regents.



# FAFSA FRENZY

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) may qualify students for many forms of aid, including “free money” like scholarships and grants. If you decide not to fill out the FAFSA, you could be leaving all of that money on the table.

## NEED HELP FILLING IT OUT?

**STOP BY ONE OF OUR FAFSA FRENZY DAYS TO GET HELP AND COMPLETE THE FAFSA!**

### **Every Friday in October (10AM - 5PM)**

Claiborne Building (1201 North 3rd Street)  
1st Floor Conference Center Computer Lab, Room 1-147

### **Friday, October 28 (12PM - 5PM)**

Baton Rouge Community College (201 Community College Drive)  
Magnolia Building, 1st Floor Computer Lab

### **Wednesday, November 2 (3PM - 8PM)**

Delmont Gardens Branch Library (3351 Lorraine Street)  
Computer Room

### **Thursday, November 10 (11AM - 1PM; 3PM - 8PM)**

EBRP Scotlandville Branch Library (7373 Scenic Highway)  
Meeting Room



**Partners:** LOSFA,  
EBRPSS, LELA, CCTC,  
BRCC, BRAC, BOR,  
LDOE, and Career  
Compass

To complete the FAFSA, visit [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) • For more information on LOSFA, visit [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

# FAFSA FRIDAYS

**COME COMPLETE THE PARENT  
PORTION OF THE FAFSA AND GET HELP  
WHILE DOING IT.**

## WHO?

All parents of high school seniors or  
college students

## WHEN?

Every Friday in October  
10 AM - 5 PM

## WHERE?

**Claiborne Conference Center Computer Lab**  
**1st Floor, Room 1-147**  
1201 North Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

To complete the FAFSA, visit: [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) or [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

For more information, visit [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

Have questions? Email [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov)

**If your child goes to  
a public high school  
in East  
Baton Rouge  
Parish:**

That's even better!  
Completing the  
FAFSA will not only  
benefit your child, but it  
will also  
benefit his or her school  
in the  
Compete to  
Complete FAFSA  
Challenge.

In the challenge, the  
school with the  
highest growth of  
FAFSA completions in a  
month will win  
awesome prizes.  
Students  
will also be competing  
for individual prizes such  
as graduation supply  
vouchers.



**Partners:** Louisiana Office of  
Student Financial Assistance,  
Career Compass, East Baton  
Rouge Parish School System,  
Louisiana Education Loan  
Authority, College to Career  
Transition Coordinator, Baton  
Rouge Community College, Baton  
Rouge Area Chamber, and the  
Board of Regents

# LOSFA's Social Media Sites



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



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



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



<http://instagram.com/LOSFA001>



For more information, contact the  
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance  
A program under The Board of Regents

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 the LOSFA LOOP, please  
contact Gus Wales at [Gus.Wales@la.gov](mailto:Gus.Wales@la.gov).