



LOSFA LOOP

September 2008 Edition

Volume I-5

From the Desk of the Executive Director

It may have taken us a little longer to keep you in the "LOOP" this month than what is customary, but just like the rest of the great state of Louisiana LOSFA has been affected by Hurricane Gustav. In order to prepare for the impending threat of the hurricane and to protect our students, our website was powered down on Saturday, August 30th to allow time to adequately process and backup our systems. In addition, we ceased processing outgoing mail after the close of business Thursday, August 28th. Due to power failure and damage to our building we were inoperable from Tuesday, September 2nd through Friday, September 5th. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused, but obviously it was all unavoidable. Fortunately, we were able to resume all normal business operations on Monday, September 8th and we are glad to be back to working towards our vision, which is to be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access. Speaking of Louisiana, I want to express a sense of great pride in the manner in which our state prepared for this impending disaster and how civic and community leaders, businesses, schools, law enforcement and neighbors

worked together to help one another ease the distress brought on by such an event. All of these aforementioned entities continue to work together to help heal the after affects. We are currently developing policy on Gustav Exception Requests for TOPS recipients and will have that information out to the schools shortly. All of us at LOSFA wish you, your students and your campus a speedy recovery from the storm and we look forward to seeing all of you in the great city of Baton Rouge next month at the LASFAA Conference!

--Melanie

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Attention Students: News You Can Use

Information for All High School Graduates

►The 2008 Legislative Session enacted HB1075 that provides relief to students impacted by either Hurricane Katrina or Rita. This legislation allows retroactive consideration to graduates of 2007 and 2008 that were not able to return to Louisiana in time to graduate from an eligible Louisiana High School. The Act also extends those provisions to those students who are planning to graduate in 2009. For the specific criteria for award consideration under this Act, visit our web site.

►When completing an application or forms, care should be taken to make sure the Social Security Number, Date of Birth and first and last name are entered correctly. If any of these three facts are entered incorrectly consideration for award will be delayed. All information provided by the student must be the same as reported by the high school.

►For more information on program requirements that may impact the award of high school students, a Q & A document is available on our web site.

Information For All Students

►Important information should be shared with students who elected first to enroll in an out of state institution but who wish to return to an eligible Louisiana institution. The student must have met all the requirements for an award at the time of graduation from high school and meet continuation requirements while enrolled in an out-of-state college or university. The form can be found on the LOSFA website in forms and the form number is TOPS0006 - TOPS Application to Return from an Out-of-State College. The application to return along with official copies of the out-of-state transcript(s), must be submitted no later than July 1 immediately following the academic year in which he enrolls in an eligible Louisiana institution

►Returning Military personnel who are eligible to apply for a TOPS award, should first file a FAFSA or on line application, then submit a request along with a copy of discharge papers. Requests should be sent to the scholarship/grant division at P.O Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.

►Scholarship/Grant division frequently has information to be shared with students including correspondence regarding their award(s). It is important that students update mailing addresses and email addresses whenever a change occurs.



LOSFA 2008 Professional School Counselor Workshops

New this year: financial aid information for middle school counselors!

Training for high school counselors and other personnel about LOSFA programs is scheduled to begin on September 29 in Alexandria, as the annual Professional School Counselor Workshops begin.

There are nine workshops scheduled around the state, each focusing on the FAFSA, TOPS, the Early Start Program and a general financial aid review, Public Information supervisor Michelle Darling said.

"This is our annual time to talk to counselors about TOPS and give them tips on the trouble areas and try to make it easier for them."

Also, Nancy Beben, Director of the Louisiana Department of Education's Division of Curriculum Standards, will make a presentation on Core 4 and how it will relate to the TOPS Core Curriculum during each of the workshops.

Topics this year include hot issues with TOPS and counseling aids for TOPS including new additions to the LOSFA homepage and demonstrations on how to use the Student Transcript System to ensure students are on track to receive a TOPS award.

Additionally, this year debuts the Middle School Counselor Workshops. Held in the afternoon following the high school counselors event, the hour and a half program will let middle school counselors know about LOSFA programs relevant to middle school students.

They will include an overview of the TOPS program and general financial aid, as well as a presentation on the START Saving program. At the sites nearest Baton Rouge, START

spokespig Earl E. START is scheduled to appear.

The decision to include a presentation to middle school counselors was made because of research suggesting that middle school was prime time to "reach out and let (students) know about higher education and available financial aid for higher education," Darling said.

Workshop Dates and Locations

September 29: Alexandria – LSU-A, Continuing Education Building, Industry Room

September 30: Monroe – ULM, University Conference Center, Banquet Hall

October 1: Shreveport – LSU-S, Technology Center, Room 209

October 2: Lake Charles – McNeese State University, Student Union, Para Ballroom

October 3: Lafayette – Chenier Auditorium

October 6: Baton Rouge – Southern University, Student Union Ballroom

October 8: Mandeville – Castine Center at Pelican Park

October 9: New Orleans – Delgado Community College, Student Life Center Gym

October 10: Thibodaux – Nicholls State University, Student Union Ballroom

High School Counselors:
Registration & Continental Breakfast: 8:00 a.m.
Workshop: 8:30 a.m. – noon

Middle School Counselors:
Registration : 1 p.m.
Workshop: 1:30 – 3p.m.

In every issue of LOSFA LOOP, we will highlight a specific division within the agency. This issue we highlight:

Loan Administration

It isn't a large department in terms of size -- only seven employees -- but Loan Administration is a busy place.

It's never boring in her department, supervisor Pam Abbott says. "If you like roller coasters, here we are."

There are no typical days in Loan Admin, she says. The department may handle 5,000 to 6,000 transactions a week -- but sometimes a person can spend an entire day on one very complex loan. It's a busy place and employees have to be able to multitask.

There are things that can make the job difficult, but despite the challenges, the division works hard to make certain the needs of borrowers, lenders and schools are met.

"Every transaction that comes in here is top priority," administrator Linda Williams said.

So, what does loan administration entail? The department's responsibilities include:

- ▶ providing problem solving and customer service to schools, lenders and lender servicers
- ▶ assisting schools and lenders in resolving loan guarantee/origination issues
- ▶ assisting with reinstatement of borrower eligibility, including bankruptcy, disability and borrowers in default
- ▶ ensuring the information in the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) matches the information in the Eagle system
- ▶ keeping track of lender changes and transfers
- ▶ assisting with loan reinstatements
- ▶ assisting in reallocation of loan types to prevent an overaward
- ▶ handling demographic updates -- changes in address, phone number, email address, name, date of birth, etc.
- ▶ providing servicing updates -- changes in



Loan Administration

Rhonda Noble, Linda Williams, Pam Abbott, Student Worker: Claiborne Crockett, Wanda Shaffer, Nell Rivet and Evelyn Moreland.

- graduation date, withdrawal date, disbursement date, deferments or forbearances, cancellations, repayment dates and other transaction
- ▶ tracking, billing and posting payment of Federal Default Fee
- ▶ maintaining email loan processing mailbox to handle cancellations, reinstatements, etc.
- ▶ processing SSN changes and assisting in SSN conflict resolutions

Who gets the credit for providing all those services smoothly? Abbott praises her employees, "We have a talented bunch."

She also encourages lenders and schools to take advantage of email support. Emails sent to the loan processing mailbox are answered promptly.

She said it's important for customers to know "we're there for them. We love our schools."

Saying Goodbye

After working in Loan Administration for eight years, Evelyn Moreland is leaving for a job in Homeland Security. She says she expects to still be seen around LOSFA because her co-workers have become "like family" to her.



LOSFA Outreach

LOSFA representative Jerri Mack presents a College Admissions and Financial Assistance Workshop at the Carver Branch of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library on Saturday, Aug. 23, 2008. The event was sponsored by the Nu Gamma Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Sorority, Inc and Lambda Kappa Kappa chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Forty high school students and their parents attended and received information regarding the college application process and on TOPS and financial aid. Nu Gamma Omega members also assisted students with applying for college and scholarships on-line after the presentations.



Grambling staff members attending the HBCU Tour were: Special Services Coordinator Valencia Clemons, Director of Student Activities David "Rusty" Ponton, Gift Information Processor Brenda Williams, David Roberts (LOSFA), Admissions Recruiter Nikelyia Lard and Alumni Relations Administrative Assistant Glenda Jones.

LOSFA Assistant Executive Director for Marketing and Outreach David Roberts spoke about financial aid and College Goal Sunday to students at Grambling State University during an event sponsored by the Tom Joyner Foundation. The foundation supports historically black colleges and universities. The event was part of the annual Tom Joyner HBCU Tour!, designed to expose promising students to educational options.

Employee Spotlight

With nearly 90 years of experience between them, these employees are here for the long haul

Twelve employees, four divisions and halls lined with boxes of folders – that was LOSFA twenty-eight years ago.

Sound unlikely? That's the way Lenora Young, Lynda Whittington and Robert Pollage remember things. They should know, since they are the LOSFA employees that have been here the longest.

"We had no computer system at all," Whittington said. "We had to send changes downtown, on paper, and we'd get quarterly updates."

"We manually typed all the collection letters," Pollage said.

It was a different world, with different rules, regulations and ways of doing things. There were only 12 full-time employees and only four divisions: New Loans, Accounting, Collections and Scholarship and Grants.

Whittington started in Collections, which had only four employees, Pollage started as a student worker and Young started in Accounting. Each of them have weathered multiple administrations, at least four building relocations and now work in the Loans Division.

So, what makes a person stay with the same agency for their entire career?

"I like it because it keeps changing," Whittington said. "The whole atmosphere changes. I like the fact we're doing something, we're not just pushing paper."

The ability to be part of shaping the agency's mission is also appealing. Whittington was instrumental in developing the Default Prevention department, which now employs 60 people.

It's been a good experience for Young, who has enjoyed the ability to move from department to department. Pollage, who remembers days of coming to



Robert Pollage, Lenora Young and Lynda Whittington, seated, have each worked for LOSFA for approximately 28 years, longer than any other current LOSFA employees.

work to find four boxes full of reports that needed to be reviewed immediately stacked on his desk, credits the people he works with for his sticking around.

"It's different from any place else," he said of LOSFA. "The people help us stay."

All three advise newer LOSFA employees to stick around. "If you don't like how things are going, give it a day or two," Pollage said. The benefits of a LOSFA career are plentiful, they all agree.

"The idea that you've provided a beneficial service to the public makes the work seem worthwhile," he said.

Whittington agreed, adding that she's pleased with "the purpose of the work we're doing, helping kids

go to college.”

Young emphasised the “good working relationships” that LOSFA provides and the ability to move up in the agency.

While none of them expected to stay at LOSFA as long as they have, they have only positive things to say about their experience.

“Stick around,” Whittington said. “Great things continue to happen.”



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.