



PRESS RELEASE



From the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

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Information Contact: Gus Wales

Phone Number: (225) 219-7576

E-mail: gwales@osfa.la.gov

Scheduling Contact: Suzan Manuel

Phone Number: (225) 219-7598

E-mail: smanuel@osfa.la.gov

Louisiana Connect College and Career Access Portal Ready for Student and Parent Account Activation

- **LOSFA announces statewide media tour to support the Louisiana Connect launch**

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) today announced the launch of a media tour intended to raise awareness among Louisiana middle and high school students and parents about the comprehensive new, nationally acclaimed, Louisiana Connect college access and career planning Web portal.

Louisiana Connect provides tools and resources to help students plan for life after high school, find colleges where they can be successful and launch rewarding careers. Importantly, Louisiana Connect provides guidance counselors, parents, teachers and advisors with a full suite of tracking dashboards, reporting capabilities, and communication tools to help students navigate the process.

As part of this statewide initiative, a data-driven web portal was designed to give students, parents, counselors, and administrators a “one stop shop” for college and career planning. This centralized tool provides students with access to create an online portfolio, including career assessments, GPAs, course history, test scores, graduation requirements, and extracurricular activities– in addition to providing them with alerts on key milestones for college applications, scholarships, and financing deadlines.

Students and parents can access the online portfolio virtually anywhere. They will have the ability to view their progress as they explore their career interests, build a resume, and college list. Parents can also suggest colleges and scholarships to their child, chart historical college admission outcomes, and calculate financial aid information.

LOSFA’s goal is to provide every Louisiana student with the opportunity to successfully pursue and persist in a postsecondary environment. Thus, this exciting new tool is being offered to Louisiana students and families at no cost. Parents and students are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity by registering for their accounts today. Student registrations are underway under the supervision of guidance counselors at both public and non-public middle and high schools throughout the state. Parents may enroll by visiting: www.louisianaconnect.org, clicking the first time login icon, then selecting the parent option, and entering their child’s information.

The Louisiana Connect portal was designed and constructed (according to LOSFA specifications) by ConnectEDU®, the Web-based leader in empowering students to manage their education, launch their careers, and secure a more stable financial future. ConnectEDU currently has similar portals in five states including Louisiana, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan and Texas.

One of the major benefits of the portal will be the ability to match high school students with colleges and other postsecondary programs that best fit their future educational and career goals. The practical application of that particular feature (as developed by ConnectEDU) as a means of revolutionizing the college admissions process has received national recognition from a number of sources, including the Chronicle of Higher Education. In a recent posting, Chronicle writer Marc Parry wrote:

One company getting buzz is ConnectEDU, sometimes described as an eHarmony for college matchmaking. Its founder and CEO, Craig Powell, dreams that students won't even have to apply to college "because an algorithm will have already told them and the schools where they would fit best."

"Louisiana Connect is one of the most comprehensive college and career planning resources available to students today," said Powell. "With these tools, Louisiana students will be empowered to manage their education, launch their careers, and secure a more stable financial future," he concluded.

"This technology represents the cutting edge of college access and career planning in the twenty-first century," said LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein. "And, for once, this is not something that's happening only in states like Massachusetts...it is actually happening right here in Louisiana," she continued. "In fact, we believe that the Louisiana Connect portal is the most comprehensive and inclusive such site in existence today," Amrhein added.

"In addition," Amrhein said, "we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the unprecedented level of cooperation and support LOSFA has received from the Louisiana Department of Education both in the form of data sharing and in promoting the use of the Louisiana Connect portal to the state's middle and high schools."

Specifically, the portal allows students to:

- Connect with colleges and universities that are a match for their educational and career goals
- Learn about careers and connect with employers
- Find scholarships and other programs designed to help the student succeed
- Access an exclusive News Feed and Event Planner
- Build a profile to highlight individual skills and achievements
- Learn how a college education can be affordable
- Compare costs and academic offerings from various in and out of state schools

Other Louisiana Connect portal highlights include:

- Individual Graduation Plan: Integration of state-mandated Individual Graduation Plan (5-Year Plan), driving all 8th-12th grade students to the web portal
- Data Integration: Louisiana Department of Education student data loaded into the web portal, pre-populating student profiles, and driving college, scholarship and career matching
- College Searching & Matching: Guided college searching, matching and comparison tools
- Scholarship Searching & Matching: Scholarship searching and matching, including the ability for counselors to upload local scholarships
- Career Exploration & Planning: Interest, Skills & Values assessments mapped to occupation profiles, internships, and career planning strategies
- Dashboards & Reporting: Resources that empower counselors to help students stay on track to graduate

Another major component of the Louisiana Connect portal is the Talent Connect™ module which allows students to connect with potential employers. Some of the state’s largest employers, including Bollinger Shipyards, Roy O. Martin, and CLEECO, are already on-board and many more are in the process of finalizing their participation. The Talent Connect feature will allow qualified students to apply for internships, part time and summer employment, scholarships, and other opportunities in industries they feel are relevant to their educational and career goals.

In an effort to raise awareness of the portal’s availability and potential, LOSFA Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, David Roberts, and Louisiana Connect State Director Brian Dennis will embark on a statewide media tour beginning January 17 and continuing through January 27. Louisiana media outlets are encouraged to schedule interviews with Roberts and Dennis during this time as a service to Louisiana students and parents.

Roberts and Dennis will be available for interviews in the following cities on the following dates:

Tuesday, January 17	Lafayette Lake Charles
Wednesday, January 18	Baton Rouge Hammond
Friday, January 20	New Orleans Houma
Monday, January 23	Alexandria
Tuesday, January 24	Shreveport
Wednesday, January 25	Monroe
Thursday and Friday, January 26-27	Make Up dates

To schedule an interview, contact Suzan Manuel at (225) 219-7598

About LOSFA

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is a state agency and is the Administrative arm of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission and the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority. Some of the programs administered by LOSFA include Louisiana's premier merit based scholarship program, the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS); the state's 529 college savings plan, the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) program; the state's primary need based grant program, the Louisiana Go Grant; and the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship program.

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