

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

***Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)
Bulletin***

TOPS BULLETIN NUMBER:	T2014-7
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DISTRIBUTION:	College and University Chancellors, Financial Aid Offices and Registrars, LAICU Chancellors, Financial Aid Offices and Registrars, Louisiana Community and Technical College System Deans and Louisiana Community and Technical College System Personnel
TOPICS:	Reporting Academic Information for TOPS and Non-TOPS Students to the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance – FERPA Compliance

LOSFA is responsible for determining the initial and continuing eligibility of TOPS recipients each semester based on the students' academic record. There are many cases where we must evaluate the academic performance of students who are awarded late, who completed hours prior to their first time full-time enrollment, and who may be eligible for removal from a suspended or cancelled status. **Therefore, it is critical that schools provide LOSFA with all information allowed under the law, including the academic record of any student ever awarded TOPS and who continues to appear on the Master Roster, regardless of status code and regardless of whether the student received TOPS at the school the student is currently attending.**

On April 26, 2006, LOSFA requested an opinion from the United States Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) in response to concerns expressed by a number of colleges and universities regarding the transmission to LOSFA of students' education records (academic information) relating to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

In his response to LOSFA, LeRoy Rooker, Director of FPCO, writes that it is not a violation of FERPA for a postsecondary institution to provide LOSFA with education records on any student who has applied for or who has received or is receiving student financial aid if that information is necessary to determine eligibility, the amount of the award, the conditions of the award, or to enforce the terms of the award.

Under the guidance given by Mr. Rooker's letter, LOSFA requests that once a new award recipient is recognized on the TOPS Master Roster, the school immediately forward all academic records, by semester, for that student. Academic information may also be released to appropriate third parties for scholarship purposes if the school has obtained students' permission for the release of their information through the admission application or other data gathering instrument. Schools that wish to forward to this office the academic information for all students who have signed such a release may continue to do so.

For additional information on this policy, contact Robyn Lively, Senior Attorney at Robyn.Lively@la.gov. For assistance with technical information regarding reporting students' academic records, please contact John Bell, Program Manager John.Bell@la.gov.