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## TG UPDATES

### This Thursday: Join Us for TG’s Fall Teleconference

It’s not too late to register for this fall’s teleconference on Student Loan Forgiveness and Employee Repayment Programs. Following the success of TG's last telephone conference on Negotiated Rulemaking, TG continues this service offering by focusing on another important industry issue.

The conference will include discussions of teacher and child care forgiveness programs for Stafford borrowers. The session will also feature information about employee student loan repayment benefit programs, such as those offered by some federal agencies and private companies to recruit and retain key staff, as well as programs offered by the U.S. military. Presenters for this teleconference include Sam Wilson, TG's Assistant Vice President of Customer Assistance, and Steven Smith, TG's Assistant Vice President for Strategic Planning.

#### Teleconference Details

The telephone conference will take place this Thursday, September 26, 2002, from 2-3 p.m. (Central). The presentation will be followed by a question-and-answer session.

This event is free of charge and open to unlimited participants from any institution. Please submit any questions in advance to Sheila Casey at [sheila.casey@tgslc.org](mailto:sheila.casey@tgslc.org) to ensure that they are answered. Registrants will receive a web address where they can review materials related to the topic prior to the telephone conference.

#### Participation

To register and obtain further details, contact Premiere Teleconferencing at (800) 289-0579 and reference confirmation number 462649. On Thursday, registrants should call (800) 474-8920 promptly at 1:50 p.m. and again reference the confirmation number.

## **TG to Co-Host Regional Hearing on Student Financial Aid**

In collaboration with the College Board, the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, and the Pathways to College Network, TG will co-host a regional field hearing focusing on student financial aid and its impact on access to higher education. Milt Wright, TG's President and Chief Executive Officer, has also been invited to speak at the event.

The hearing is part of a National Dialogue on Student Financial Aid (NDSFA) that the College Board launched last fall. The goal of the NDSFA is to revive and refocus the nation's discussion about financial aid so that access to higher education for all prepared students is once again at the center of our country's funding priorities.

The hearing will be held in San Antonio on Wednesday, October 2, 2002, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the International Center, located at 203 South St. Mary's Street. Local and regional student and parent groups, education administrators, higher education officials, business leaders, and experts in financial aid will be invited to provide written statements and oral testimony on a variety of student financial aid issues.

Similar hearings have already been held in Chicago and Sacramento.

### **Upcoming Dialogue Activities**

Future activities of the NDSFA include the release of reports and papers presented during the National Dialogue, along with the release of a final report and recommendations in December. A meeting of the National Dialogue's Blue Ribbon Panel is also scheduled for Friday, November 1, 2002, in Atlanta during the College Board's National Forum.

### **More Information**

To learn more about the National Dialogue on Student Financial Aid, contact Jenny Town at [jtown@collegeboard.org](mailto:jtown@collegeboard.org). To find out more about the College Board's National Forum, visit <http://www.collegeboard.com/forum>.

## **A Day in the Life of TG Collections**

with Phillip Cervin, Vice President for Collections

The purpose of TG Collections is to recover defaulted loans after a claim has been paid to the lender. Most borrowers pay their loans in full without becoming delinquent or going into default. However, when borrowers do fail to repay their loans, TG Collections must begin the recovery process to help maintain the federal fiscal interest and continue FFELP funding for students.

Recovering defaulted loans requires:

- Good customer service skills,
- Knowledge of how to use sophisticated tools, and
- Information about relevant federal laws and regulations.

Phillip Cervin, TG's Vice President for Collections, states, "It takes a certain level of commitment and the ability to develop a feel for the process. There's more to collecting loans than people realize."

### **Recovery Process**

Specifically, TG Collections comprises several unique areas of expertise. The Default Recovery unit works with borrowers early in the collections process to secure voluntary payments from borrowers. Should these efforts prove unsuccessful, the Account Management unit takes over collection activities, setting in motion various processes to secure payments through mandated processes such as administrative wage garnishment and Treasury Offset.

The Account Information Specialists (AIS) team assists both units by handling incoming calls to Collections from borrowers, schools, lenders, and legal counsel for those accounts that are in a current repayment status, referred to a collection vendor, or assigned to the Department of Education (ED).

(Watch for additional information in future “Day in the Life” articles on TG Collections’ support areas and the Account Management unit.)

### **Frontline of Recovery**

The Default Recovery unit has four recovery teams. These teams concentrate directly on collecting payments from defaulted borrowers. This unit must maintain a balance between recovering defaulted loans and providing customer service. At the same time, the unit must stay in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

In addition to contacting borrowers about their defaulted loans, this unit’s Recovery Specialists counsel borrowers on the consequences of default and available options for getting out of default. Borrowers often don’t realize that TG offers many programs that can help them, such as:

- Repayment options,
- Loan reinstatement, and
- Loan rehabilitation.

### **Solutions and Tools**

Team members have many excellent collection tools at their disposal, including advanced technology systems and specialized reference aids such as quick reference cards. One of these tools, the Collections Reference Guide, covers important information that can be conveyed to borrowers. These resources help Recovery Specialists meet their goals.

The collections process has been streamlined over time, thanks in part to technology and automation. For example, before inbound borrower calls are sent to a Recovery Specialist, they are routed through an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and TG’s computer system to retrieve account information. The borrower’s information is then displayed on the specialist’s screen at the same time the specialist accesses the call. Team Leaders use an application called Control IT that allows them to listen to the Recovery Specialist’s call and review the account as it appears on the specialist’s screen.

The Internet is also an important tool for TG Collections. It aids team members in locating certain borrower information on web sites designed for that purpose.

### **Focus on Customer Service**

TG Collections differs from many other collection departments. First, it is customer service oriented. Collections team members must keep in mind that the negative effects of defaulting on a student loan are more onerous than defaulting on other types of credit. Second, team members follow the philosophy that the recovery process is a team effort, promoting the concept that what is best for the team member is best for the team and ultimately for the borrower.

Recovery Specialists must have a background in customer service that can and often does encompass a wide range of previous service jobs, from retail stores to call centers. Recovery Specialists must also have the ability to communicate comfortably on the telephone with borrowers.

TG Collections continuously seeks to find ways to improve customer service through programs like its Customer Speaks Survey. This program provides recovery team members with direct customer feedback—an intrinsic, yet vital, incentive program in itself. Here are some borrower responses from recent surveys:

- “I truly believe that TG has gone above and beyond the call of duty in assisting me.”
- “It’s very hard to deal with all your bills and life’s ups and downs. TG made it a lot easier than it could have been.”

## **Specialized Training**

TG’s Collections Training Specialist trains new team members under an aggressive program that provides the basic knowledge needed to successfully collect on accounts. New team members learn how to maneuver through their various job duties during individual training sessions with the Training Specialist and other team members. The program also incorporates specialized training courses taken by new team members, including:

- The Administrative Wage Garnishment process,
- Assignment to ED,
- The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, and
- The Treasury Offset process.

New Recovery Specialists, for instance, are given coaching exercises and work closely with seasoned Recovery Specialists listening to their calls. One top Recovery Specialist explained that when he sits with a new team member, he uses a fishing analogy to explain what it takes to collect: “The more you cast in your line, the more opportunities there are to catch more fish. It’s the same with collecting, the more calls you make, the more people you talk to, the more collecting you can do.”

Coaching is an ongoing process involving call monitoring and telephonic quality control. Monitoring allows the Team Leader to provide guidance to the Recovery Specialists when necessary. Guidance includes follow-up memoranda, copies of which are kept for team members’ use in a compilation of procedures, policies, and team member job requirements.

## **Incentive Tracks**

TG Collections has crafted incentive programs to reward team members, keep team members from experiencing burn-out, and help team members stay motivated. Recovery Specialists have two incentive tracks that are based on individual performance and team performance.

Incentive programs include contests and games, like the Super Bowl contest in which Recovery Specialists work within their teams to meet contest goals and receive points. The team with the most points wins the Super Bowl and receives a prize. Another game is modeled after the board game Monopoly™. This game requires knowledge of federal regulations and is often used as a tool for learning regulations that affect Collections. TG Collections also maintains a Wall of Excellence on which Recovery Specialists and Account Management team members are recognized for outstanding service.

TG is continually recognized for its creative incentive programs by ED and the collection community. TG often hosts collection groups from around the country, sharing information and best practices. Phillip also visits collection operations in other organizations to discuss TG’s environment, technology, incentive programs, and hiring practices.

“Because of TG’s incentive program, Recovery Specialists want to be on the phones, even though collecting is a very intense regimen,” said Phillip.

## Cooperation and Assistance

TG Collections relies on its internal partners for support, information and advice. Its key partners include:

- Policy and Regulatory Affairs (PRAF), providing policy advice;
- Legal, assisting with contracts and borrower issues;
- Program Review, Compliance Administrative Operations, and Internal Audit, helping Collections maintain compliance and identify various opportunities for improvement;
- Information Technology, providing system support; and
- Accounting, providing payment processing and reporting.

TG Collections also works closely with its external industry partners. Among the groups that TG Collections relies on the most are its vendors, lenders, schools, trustees, outside legal counsel, and ED.

## Industry Initiatives

TG, as a leader in the industry and, as an active member of the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP), has worked on initiatives headed by the NCHELP Debt Management Committee. Among these initiatives, TG has assisted in the production of publications in the area of Administrative Wage Garnishment, and in areas such as best practices, recovery, and other activities that impact borrowers.

## Helping Borrowers

Above all else, Collections wants to help borrowers improve their situations by overcoming default and managing their debt. “It is in TG’s best interest to try and help the borrower to get out of default. That’s what we are here for, because the burden is on everyone when you are looking at defaulted loans,” said Phillip.

Information that can help borrowers in managing repayment, including loan consolidation information, ways to avoid default, and a borrower’s rights and responsibilities is available at [www.tgslc.org/tgslc/borrowers/index.htm](http://www.tgslc.org/tgslc/borrowers/index.htm). Information that can specifically help borrowers to understand the consequences of defaulting on their student loans is available at [www.tgslc.org/tgslc/borrowers/conseque.htm](http://www.tgslc.org/tgslc/borrowers/conseque.htm).

## More to Come

Watch for additional articles on TG Collections in this “Day in the Life” series. Upcoming articles will explore the TG Collections team’s effort to recover on defaulted loans by employing a variety of collection tools, from wage withholding to Treasury offset and other resources.

# TRENDS AND ISSUES

## JobGusher™ to Host Online Job Fair Featuring Banking Jobs for Students

The banking industry can provide students with a great opportunity to learn about personal finance. Students looking for employment in banking during the fall can turn to JobGusher™ for assistance. JobGusher will host an online job fair featuring banking jobs for students from September 30 through October 6, 2002.

JobGusher is a student-focused online job recruitment service dedicated to connecting students and recent graduates with full-time and part-time entry level positions, internships, seasonal employment, and other career opportunities.

### **How It Works**

At the Online Job Fair, students can view all participating employers and available positions by visiting [www.JobGusher.com](http://www.JobGusher.com) and clicking on the ticket in the upper right-hand corner. Jobseekers can decide which positions to apply for on the spot and submit an electronic application immediately. For employers, Participation in the Online Job Fair provides exposure for employers and access to job seekers without the high costs usually associated with traditional job fairs.

After visiting the Online Job Fair, students can return to the JobGusher home page, click on "Find a Job," and conduct an expanded search for other opportunities in their area, such as full-time positions and internships.

### **How to Participate**

There is no cost for job seekers to attend the Online Job Fair. To participate, they simply need to visit [www.JobGusher.com](http://www.JobGusher.com) anytime from September 30 through October 6.

Employers wishing to participate must be registered with JobGusher. For more information on exhibiting, contact [customercare@jobgusher.com](mailto:customercare@jobgusher.com).

### **More Information**

For more information on JobGusher, visit [www.JobGusher.com](http://www.JobGusher.com) or call 1-866-JOB-GUSH. JobGusher is a service of Education Assistance Services Inc., a subsidiary of Texas Guaranteed (TG).

## **Series Part I: Preparing for the Conference Season**

The fall conference season is close at hand. Many state and regional associations are gearing up for their annual meetings, including the 2002 Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFAA) Conference, October 15-18, in Galveston. Many of you are looking forward to spending time with colleagues and brushing up on the latest industry trends and developments.

To help you get a step up on your participation at these conferences, Shoptalk Online is offering a three-part series on valuable tips to make the most of your attendance. In this issue, we focus on planning before you attend.

### **Prepare an outline of attendance objectives**

Create a brief list of things you want to learn or objectives you want to achieve at the event. This list should include people you want to meet, organizations you want to understand, or processes or policies about which you need guidance. If a particular event does not cover a topic of interest, ask around. Association conferences offer a rare opportunity to have one-on-one contact with a wide variety of industry experts.

### **Share your plans with colleagues**

Tell all of your office mates, even those in related function areas, that you will be attending the event. They may have specific requests for information or provide you with the names of contacts that could be beneficial. If possible, share a brief agenda of the topics to be covered, in case someone needs information that will be provided at the conference.

### Make appointments early

Chances are, the people you most need to talk to will have time to meet you, but ask early. If a person's time is in high demand, consider scheduling a "group" lunch with colleagues that may not have critical topics to discuss. This way, your contact may be more willing to join you, meet your colleagues, and focus on your topics or needs.

### Prepare a "conference survival" kit

Buy or obtain a sturdy, multi-pocket organizer folder. To assemble your kit, drop in your itineraries, event mailings, maps, travel confirmations, a supply of business cards, and other items that you will need for your attendance. Keep this folder handy on your desk before the event, and drop in notes as you think about your tasks and to-do items. When it's time to go, grab your folder, secure it in your portfolio or briefcase, and you're ready for travel!

### Upcoming event information

For a listing of several association meeting dates, visit TG's Events Calendar at <http://www.tgslc.org/tgslc/abouttg/dates.htm>.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The September 18 issue of the *Legislative Report* offers articles on congressional activities affecting education related bills nearing adjournment. The report also contains a summary of a joint committee meeting on public school finance held by the state of Texas. Read the details at [http://www.tgslc.org/tgslc/publications/lege\\_report/index.htm](http://www.tgslc.org/tgslc/publications/lege_report/index.htm).

## THIS, THAT, AND THE OTHER

Want to make your students famous? Send their pictures in to the office of Federal Student Aid (FSA)! According to a recent announcement, the FSA School Channel is redesigning the Schools Portal at <http://www.fsa4schools.ed.gov> and is seeking pictures of students and schools to incorporate into the graphic design of the web site.

School officials must ensure that they have obtained necessary permission before releasing images to FSA. For more information on this opportunity to put your school "in pictures," access the FSA announcement at <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/0919schoolphotos.html>.

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Edited by TG Communications and Policy and Regulatory Affairs.

Designed by TG Communications.

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