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Tip^{of} the Week

Consider starting a systemic default aversion program on your campus, involving your staff and faculty across the institution to help students avoid default.

Call TG at (800) 338-4752 for more information about how to get started.

Federal updates

TG releases single, bookmarked file of FSA Handbook

To assist customers in using the latest version of the *Federal Student Aid Handbook* (FSA Handbook), TG has combined all of the current volumes into one easy-to-use, searchable PDF. The PDF includes bookmarks of all the individual volumes, as well as the chapters and subheadings within each volume. The file also contains corrections (errata) made by ED after the initial volumes of the Handbook were released.

New structure

The FSA Handbook, which was released piecemeal by ED over the past few months, has undergone significant restructuring with information presented in a way that aligns it more closely with schools' awarding and disbursement activities. For instance, ED has:

- Included all information that schools need to package a student's FSA funds in one volume
- Relocated the EFC, Packaging, and Overaward chapters from Volume 1 to other volumes

- Added a new chapter to Volume 1 that details program-specific student eligibility requirements
- Relocated the Return of Title IV Funds and Cash Management chapters to new Volumes 4 and 5, respectively

Soon, ED is expected to release a comparison of changes between the 2003-2004 and the 2004-2005 FSA Handbooks. The comparison document will be posted to *TG Online* once it become available.

How to access the bookmarked Handbook

To access this practical research tool, visit *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/resources/fsa_handbook.cfm.

Questions

For questions about the FSA Handbook, contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267 or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Closed school corner

Following is a list of newly reported school closures from the Postsecondary Educational Participants System (PEPS) and from the September 2004 Closed School Monthly Report supplied by the Department of Education:

Newly reported closures

OPE School ID	School Name and Address	Unofficial Closure Date	ED's Official Closure Date
03587300	Genesis Vocational Training 7111 Harwin Dr. #105 Houston, TX 77036-2130	N/A	8/27/2004
03587301	Genesis Vocational Training 888 Wilcrest Laredo, TX 78040-4395	N/A	8/26/2004

Current special allowance rates: Quarter ending September 30, 2004

The following rates apply for the quarter ending September 30, 2004:

- The average of the bond equivalent rates of the 91-day Treasury bills auctioned during the quarter ending September 30, 2004, is 1.53 percent.
- The average of the bond equivalent rates of the quotes of the three-month commercial paper (financial) rates in effect for each of the days in the quarter ending September 30, 2004, is 1.69 percent.

The FFELP special allowance rates for the most recent quarter are available at: www.tgslc.org/pdf/sa100404.pdf.

Questions

For questions about special allowance rates, contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Trends and issues

Each month, TG provides current information about education issues through *Edufacts*. Produced by TG as a public service, *Edufacts* illustrate studies and surveys conducted by TG and other educational organizations, and trends observed. This month, *Edufacts* looks at the importance of the campus tour for students in the process of choosing a college.

Edufacts™ – October 2004



After spending months researching colleges and reading all their brochures, the list of potential schools has been narrowed down to a handful of choices. Now what? To really find out if a college or university “feels right,” students should schedule a campus tour as part of the college application and decision-making process.

Visiting a college campus in person and talking with faculty and currently enrolled students, seeing the dorms, sitting in on a class, and eating in the dining halls will provide prospective students with the vital insight needed to choose the college that best suits their needs.

Students should contact the admissions office of the colleges they would like to visit to schedule a campus tour. During the tour, they should plan on meeting with a tour guide, admissions counselors, an overnight host, professors, and students. A list of questions should be prepared beforehand.

Question topics should cover the whole range of campus life including academics, student/faculty interaction, campus environment, and technology. The following suggested questions can serve as a guide:

- How much reading and writing is expected per class?
- How and when are majors selected? Can they be self-designed?

- How available is the faculty to meet with students outside of class?
- What do students like/dislike about the campus?
- What do students do on the weekend? For fun? How many live on campus?
- What types of computers, online information and courses, and support services are available?

More information about planning for college and/or finding sources of financial aid is available on TG's public service Web site at www.AdventuresInEducation.org, or by calling the Texas Financial Aid Information Center at (888) 311-8881.

Making the most of your conference attendance — Part 2 in a series

The fall conference season is underway. Many state and regional associations are holding their annual meetings, including the Alabama, Oklahoma, and Louisiana conferences this week. Many of you are looking forward to spending time with colleagues and brushing up on the latest industry trends and developments.

In this second installment of a three-part series, *Shoptalk Online* focuses on tips to help you maximize your time at your event. To access the previous installment, see *Shoptalk Online* [Edition 274](#).

Review materials when you arrive and plot your strategy

After you register, spend a good 15 to 30 minutes reviewing conference materials to plan your agenda. Highlight those sessions you will attend. If there are two events that conflict, label one "A" for attend, and the other "H" for handouts. This will remind you to ask for copies of the materials provided at the session you will not attend.

Take useful notes and ask questions

Avoid taking down notes on everything discussed, as you may miss important points. Instead, listen closely. Take down quick notes only on those items that need clarification. Also, ask questions. Chances are, if you need clarification, others may need it as well. At the very least, presenters can use the opportunity to reinforce their points.

Meet as many people as possible

Foster relationships. Prepare a quick two- or three-sentence introduction, and use it when an opportunity arises to greet strangers. If you want to exchange information at a later date, offer your business card and commit to a quick e-mail or phone call after the event.

Sort your materials and notes for distribution when you return

Conference events always supply plenty of information. At times, it may seem like too much. However, every piece of information you collect will probably benefit someone in your office. As you receive materials, note colleague names who may benefit from the information on a corner of the document, and store materials in your survivor kit (described in the previous installment of this series). Then, when you return, you can quickly route materials.

Eat well, get rest, and exercise—and don't over do it

Avoid getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of events and neglecting your basic needs. Do not skip meals, but also resist eating too many unhealthy desserts and snacks. Plan a short 30-minute nap at a good time during the day to build up energy. Exercise if possible. A short increase in stress is natural during these activities—but don't leave yourself vulnerable to exhaustion or illness. And, of course, enjoy the event!

Upcoming event information

For a listing of several association meeting dates, visit the events calendar on *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/abouttg/calendar.cfm.



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To ask questions about *Shoptalk Online*, please contact Communications at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4732 or communications@tgslc.org.

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