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Tip^{of} the Week

Registration for the 2005 TG Conference, "*Breakthrough! Higher expectations in higher education*" is now available. For more information and to register, visit www.tgslc.org/tgconference.

Federal updates

Spellings sworn in as ED Secretary

Yesterday, Margaret Spellings was sworn in as the eighth Secretary of Education after the Senate confirmed her selection on January 20, 2005. President Bush nominated Spellings for ED Secretary after former secretary Rod Paige resigned last November.

Spellings is known by many as an advocate of accountability and as an experienced policy advisor. Her knowledge, skills, and talents will be vital as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act approaches.

Spellings selects staff

As one of her first actions, Secretary Spellings selected a new chief of staff and two new deputy chiefs of staff. David Dunn will serve as the new chief of staff for ED. Dunn is a former special assistant to President Bush, whose past experience includes providing guidance in educational policy. Dunn's deputy chiefs of staff are Emily Kertz Lampkin and Robin Gilchrist. Prior to their new posts, Lampkin served as the ED's director of communications and outreach for No Child Left Behind, and Gilchrist was the liaison to education associations at ED.

TG congratulates Secretary Spellings and her staff and wishes them success in their new roles at ED.

Stroup stays

In other news at ED, Sally Stroup, Assistant ED Secretary, Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), has decided to stay on under Secretary Spellings. Rumors were rampant that Stroup may resign and move on to other opportunities. Stroup confirmed in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* interview yesterday that she would continue in her role as the head of higher education policy at ED.

More information

For more information about Secretary Spellings and her staff, visit www.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/index.html.

Extended education benefits target reservists and National Guard members

The recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act of 2005 (Act) implements a number of provisions that improve benefits for certain activated reservists and National Guard members. Included in Chapter 1607 of the Act is an extension of educational benefits under the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

Who benefits

Prior to the implementation of Chapter 1607, only active duty service members were entitled to educational benefits under the Montgomery G.I. Bill. Now, certain reservists and National Guard members called to active duty on or after September 11, 2001, in response to a war or national emergency may be eligible for these benefits. Specifically, an individual may be eligible to receive a monthly educational assistance allowance under Chapter 30 of the Montgomery G.I. Bill based on his or her length of active duty at the following rate:

- 40 percent of the monthly allowance for 90 consecutive days but less than one continuous year of active duty service;
- 60 percent of the monthly allowance for one continuous year but less than two continuous years of active duty service; or
- 80 percent of the monthly allowance for two or more continuous years of active duty service.

A disabled veteran is also eligible for 40 percent of the monthly allowance if disabled in the line of duty (and subsequently released from duty) prior to completing 90 consecutive days of active duty. An individual is eligible as soon as he or she reaches the 90-day point even if the individual is no longer on active duty.

Length of eligibility

A reservist or National Guard member may take advantage of these benefits as long as the individual remains a member of the Armed Forces. A veteran disabled in the line of duty has up to 10 years to take advantage of the extended benefits. All eligible members and disabled veterans may receive up to a maximum of 36 months of benefits under the extended provisions of the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

More information

The Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Homeland Security are currently working on an implementation plan for this educational benefit. Visit the Veterans Affairs educational benefits Web site at www.gibill.va.gov for more information on the new benefit, for implementation updates, and for details about how individuals may apply.

Financial aid programs no longer high-risk

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) announced last week that ED's federal student aid programs have officially been removed from its list of high-risk areas, 14 years after the programs made the list. The GAO designates as high-risk areas those within the federal government that it determines to be most vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.

In 1990, the GAO deemed ED's federal student aid programs high-risk due to a number of concerns, including "poor financial management and weak internal controls, fragmented and inefficient information systems, and inadequate attention to program integrity as evidenced by high default rates and the numbers of ineligible students participating in the programs." After a number of positive key maneuvers by ED and Congress— including the creation of ED's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) in 1998— ED was able to address the problems identified by the GAO and create sustainable improvements in the management and internal control of the federal student aid programs.

More information

To view the complete GAO High-Risk Series report, visit www.gao.gov/new.items/d05207.pdf.

TG updates

TG hosts media event to promote FAFSA completion

This week and next, TG and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) are working together on the FAFSA Telethon. The goals of the event are to promote February as Financial Aid Awareness Month and to remind college-bound students and parents to complete the FAFSA.

Representatives from various CBS and Univisión television affiliates will record segments or conduct live broadcasts during their evening newscasts from TG's offices in Round Rock, Texas, on February 1, 3, 8, and 9. TG experts, along with volunteers from THECB, the University of Texas at Austin, El Centro Community College, Dallas Baptist University, University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University, St. Edward's University, and volunteers from some of our lender partners, Chase Education First, Citibank Student Loan Corp., will answer calls to the Texas Financial Aid Information Center (TFAIC) hotline at (888) 311-8881. The experts and volunteers will let students know about the many resources available to help them plan and pay for higher education.

In addition to the four events scheduled for February, an initial session was held Thursday, January 27, at the KTVT studios in Dallas. During that single afternoon and evening, 3,403 calls were received through the TFAIC hotline — more than twice the number of calls normally answered in one month.

For more information about TG's college planning resources, visit www.AIE.org.

Trends and issues

College and financial aid questions to be answered during online chat

Students, high school counselors, and parents can get answers to their college and financial aid questions and receive assistance with federal financial aid forms during a Tuesday, February 8, 2004 live chat event at www.mapping-your-future.org. Financial aid experts from all over the country will answer questions during the chat event, scheduled for 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. CST.

Topics

The chat is designed to help students, who are planning to attend a college or university in the upcoming academic year, understand the college application and financial aid process. During the chat, students and their families will learn more about:

- Paying for school
- Choosing a career
- Completing the FAFSA
- Determining eligibility for federal student aid
- Figuring financial need and expected family contribution

How to join

Anyone with Internet access can join the chat by visiting www.mapping-your-future.org on the afternoon of the chat and selecting the chat session. Simple instructions will explain how to join the event.

This, that, and the other

ED has announced the schedule for a series of one-day workshops titled *Managing Edits and Program Reviews: Paths for Success*, a program that includes a combination of interactive case studies, group exercises, and lecture to provide participants with an understanding of the program review and external audit processes. These workshops are primarily designed for financial aid administrators and business officers of postsecondary institutions that participate in the federal student aid programs. Presidents of proprietary institutions as well as representatives from third-party servicers are also encouraged to attend.

To view the schedule and to register for a workshop, visit www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/training/index.html.



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