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Tip^{of} the Week

Have questions about processing student loans for the upcoming academic year? Don't forget that you can always [ASK TG™](#).

Federal updates

Constitution Day resources are emerging

TG has recently become aware of several resources that can assist schools seeking information and materials to develop their Constitution Day programs.

Mapping Your Future™ Web site

Mapping Your Future (www.mapping-your-future.org), a public-service, nonprofit organization that provides college, career, financial aid, and financial literacy information and services, has developed a Constitution Day page with several promising resources that schools may find beneficial in fulfilling the Constitution Day provision. The Constitution Day page is available at www.mapping-your-future.org/services/constitution.htm.

NPR

National Public Radio's (NPR) award-winning series, Justice Talking, in collaboration with *The New York Times Knowledge Network*, the National Archives and Records

Administration, and other sponsors, will broadcast two free programs that schools and educational organizations can use to complement their Constitution Day programs. To obtain information and register for the programs, visit www.justicelearning.org/constitutionday.asp.

National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia has announced a new Web site they have under construction, which will offer educational and programming materials to schools, federal agencies, and other institutions nationwide to help them organize events to commemorate Constitution Day on Sept. 17. A recent press release that was posted to the FINAID listserv announces, "National Constitution Center to Offer Programs Fulfilling New Law Requiring Constitutional Education." The press release is available at www.constitutioncenter.org/PressRoom/PressReleases/2005_04_29_14312.shtml.

More information

Additional information about the Constitution Day provision is available in [Edition 306](#) of *Shoptalk Online*.

TG updates

Helpful Resources: TG Online provides free access to financial aid forms and TG publications

TG provides a quick and easy way for customers to order printed forms, brochures, publications, and other materials. By ordering through *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/forms/index.cfm, financial aid professionals can order the items their offices need to efficiently serve their families, students, and borrowers.

The *TG Online* Forms Ordering page also offers all of the common Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) forms and other TG resources in portable document format (PDF) for customers' downloading convenience, including:

- Stafford and PLUS Master Promissory Notes (MPNs),
- MPN School Certification forms,
- Deferment forms,
- Discharge and forgiveness forms,
- TG financial aid awareness pieces,
- Default aversion resources, and
- Other school and lender forms.

All materials are available free of charge. Customers who need help determining what form they need can contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Skill builders: Learn the PURR Principle

Everyone at some point has experienced poor customer service. Whether on the phone or in person, not receiving the service you expect from someone you are doing business with can cause anger and frustration and make you lose faith in that company or service provider.

In the financial aid office, you are on the giving end of customer service. Your customers are your students and families, and they depend on you to provide them with information and resources in a courteous and professional manner. How can you enhance customer service and make sure that your customers do not lose faith in you, your office, and even your school?

You could try applying the PURR Principle. The PURR Principle is a humorous student aid-focused training session designed to instill a customer-positive attitude in “frontline” staff members who assist customers over the telephone and in person.

The essential message of the PURR Principle is that the culture of the customer service staff deeply influences customer satisfaction and that customer satisfaction is its own reward.

Positivity, Understanding, Responsiveness, Respect

Sam Wilson, TG assistant vice president for customer assistance, developed this program in response to an observation he made while monitoring customer interaction in a call center environment. After realizing the need for a training presentation emphasizing customer satisfaction, along with strategies to help ensure it, Sam reworked an existing training presentation he had developed and expanded it into the PURR Principle.

“We are all customers and we all deserve to be presented with the best possible options when making typical customer decisions,” Sam said. “Because call center measures, such as speed to answer and abandon rate, are indirectly reflected through customer satisfaction, it follows that customer satisfaction is very unlikely to be high when service levels are poor and vice versa. This elevates customer satisfaction to the most important measure.”

Sam jokes that for those in search of tips on how to use subliminal messaging during your on-hold music, this is the wrong presentation. “The PURR Principle deals with team attitude, customer communication, follow up, and most importantly, showing respect for the customer,” added Sam.

A unique training approach

The PURR Principle is unlike most other training presentations. There are no slides, and the presentation parodies other typical training techniques, such as the ice breaker, introduction, flow charts, research data, and the rhetorical question.

“The PURR Principle includes all of these devices, but I poke subtle fun at them at the same time,” Sam said. “It’s humorous and lighthearted, but people walk away with a firm grasp of the message.”

Sam acknowledges that those in the financial aid industry are committed to providing the best possible service to their customers, and that they contribute to the advancement of an important social objective — to remove financial barriers to access to postsecondary education.

While the work performed in the financial aid office is important business, not to mention critical to the future outcome of our society as a whole, Sam said that is no reason why it can’t also be fun.

Though lighthearted in its approach, the PURR Principle is serious in its intent and is broadly applicable across many student aid customer situations.

More information

You can request the PURR Principle training for your office through the TG Speakers Bureau page on *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm.

To learn more about the PURR Principle, contact Sam Wilson at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4623, or send an e-mail message to sam.wilson@tgslc.org.

PLUS Credit Connection™ saves University of St. Thomas time, resources, improves customer service

TG’s PLUS Credit Connection™ (PCC) provides schools and parents with electronic notification of PLUS loan approvals from lenders in just minutes. This capability, offered through TG Loans By Web™, saves schools valuable time by allowing them to submit only approved loans for guarantee.

Anna Arambulo Martz, a financial aid counselor at the University of St. Thomas (UST), said using PCC has saved her countless hours of PLUS loan processing time, which she can now spend assisting students and performing other important tasks.

Before PCC

Martz had been employed at UST for just a month and a half before she was

University of St. Thomas
Houston, Texas

- 4-year, private, Catholic
- Fall 2004
Enrollment: 3,648

promoted to financial aid counselor and began processing loans. She quickly learned that certifying PLUS loans through the system the school had in place then was extremely time consuming. Because of this and UST’s other financial aid processing needs, the office implemented AdvanTG Web™.

“One of the reasons why we were eager to switch

to AdvanTG Web for our daily FFELP loan processing was because of PLUS Credit Connection,” Martz said.

Parents seeking a PLUS loan at UST must have a FAMS-created ID that links the parent and student together on the loan certification. The creation of this ID had involved a lot of time and information gathering because forms were often received with incomplete information. Martz had to track down the missing information in order to complete the loan certification.

“It took me a lot of time and energy to certify PLUS loans. To have many of them come back as denied by the lender was frustrating,” Martz said. “Time could have been better spent seeing students or performing other tasks during my first peak season as a financial aid counselor.”

How PCC helped

With PCC, Martz does not have to certify a loan until she knows for sure that it has been approved by the lender.

“An added bonus is the Application Information Report in AdvanTG Web, which provides me with all of the demographic information I need to create a parent ID in our FAMS and to certify the loan,” Martz continued. “If I get a denial from a lender, I simply cancel the PLUS and award the additional unsubsidized (Stafford) loan (to the student), which takes very little time.”

When the UST financial aid office staff was considering the various products available to process FFELP loans, Martz said that in order to improve efficiency and customer service to its students, they wanted to eliminate as much paper as possible from their day-to-day loan processing.

“We felt that TG Loans By Web and AdvanTG Web and, by extension, PCC, would help us come closer to that goal,” Martz said.

Satisfied customers

In addition to making the financial aid office run more smoothly, TG’s products and services now allow UST students to enjoy the simplicity and the convenience of paperless processing. Martz said her students have also noticed an improvement in their customer service.

“I ask students every chance that I get what they think of the change, and the students have spoken very favorably of our new paperless loan process,” Martz said. “Students are delighted that they can complete their awards online from the comfort and convenience of their computers.”

More information

To learn more about AdvanTG Web, TG Loans By Web, and TG PLUS Credit Connection, contact your national account representative or school consultant. You

may also contact TG product support at (800) 322-1455, or send an e-mail message to product.support@tgslc.org.

Coming up...

The following events are scheduled for the upcoming month.

NASFAA

Annual Conference
July 3 – 6
New York, NY
www.nasfaa.org

Independence Day

July 4
TG offices closed

National Association of College and University Business Officers

Annual Meeting
July 10 – 12
Baltimore, MD
www.nacubo.org

TG Texas Regional Training

July 15
Houston, TX
www.tgslc.org

TG National School Committee Meeting

July 27
Round Rock, TX
www.tgslc.org

TG Lender and School Advisory Committee Meeting

July 28
Round Rock, TX
www.tgslc.org

ATLE Board Meeting and Workshop

July 28 – 29
Round Rock, TX
www.atle.org

Legislative update

The June 21 issue of TG's *Legislative Report* includes an update on the remaining few weeks of the first session of the 109th Congress, including the status of 11

appropriations bills yet to be passed. Keep up with the latest developments by reading the full report on *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/lege_report/index.cfm.

This, that, and the other

Research scientists at some colleges are shedding their reputation of being aloof and maybe just a little intimidating by adopting pets for their laboratories, according to an article in the June 24 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Cats, iguanas, and Jack Russell terriers have found homes in the chemistry and biology labs of various colleges and universities. Some serve as mascots and others as good luck charms, but all of them keep their owners company during research sessions that can last until the wee hours of the morning. To learn more, visit <http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v51/i42/42a00601.htm>. Chronicle membership is required to access the article.



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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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