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## Tip<sup>of</sup> the Week

For the latest information available for schools and students affected by Hurricane Katrina, visit TG’s Hurricane Katrina information page on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/abouttg/disaster\\_relief.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/abouttg/disaster_relief.cfm).

## Federal updates

### Updated information available pertaining to Hurricane Katrina

Since last week, there have been a couple of developments pertaining to Hurricane Katrina and its impact on the administration of federal student aid. These developments include:

- New resources posted to the Federal Student Aid Web page that contains information for students, borrowers, and schools affected by Katrina. These resources include:
  - A collection of frequently asked questions (FAQs) for students, parents, borrowers, and schools (those impacted by the hurricane and those receiving displaced students).

- A new electronic announcement from ED (the fifth of the series) that provides guidance on verification, dependency overrides, and professional judgment.

To access the page, visit <http://ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/katrina.html>.

- An announcement by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings that the Bush administration will ask Congress for \$227 million in aid for affected students and schools (those impacted by the hurricane and those receiving displaced students). According to the proposed plan, the funding would:
  - Provide affected student loan borrowers with 6 months of deferment on their federal student loans.
  - Allow affected students that were enrolled in impacted schools that are temporarily closed to keep the federal student aid they were given to attend during the current term.
  - Allow impacted schools that are temporarily closed to keep the federal student aid they had already received for the academic year.
  - Provide schools receiving displaced students with \$1,000 for each student.
  - Give the Secretary of Education additional regulatory waiver authority to help displaced students.

### **More information**

Students, parents, schools, lenders, servicers, and guaranty agencies may contact ED with questions related to Hurricane Katrina by sending an e-mail message to [KatrinaFSAHelp@ed.gov](mailto:KatrinaFSAHelp@ed.gov). You can also contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to [cust.assist@tgsic.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgsic.org).

### **Reauthorization watch**

TG has updated its Higher Education Act reauthorization page on *TG Online* with information on and links for the following recent developments:

#### **Senate reauthorization bill: The Higher Education Amendments of 2005**

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee unanimously approved the comprehensive reauthorization bill, [S. 1614](#), on September 8. The bill, sponsored by Sens. Mike Enzi and Edward Kennedy, contains the Committee's recommendations for amending the federal student aid provisions, including those pertaining to student loans. The bill will be reported to the Senate Budget Committee as part of the budget reconciliation process or will be reported to the full Senate for its consideration, if the reconciliation process is postponed. To view the bill text, visit [www.tgsic.org/reauth/reauth\\_bills\\_109.cfm#S1614](http://www.tgsic.org/reauth/reauth_bills_109.cfm#S1614) and click on "Text of Bill" at the bottom of the listing.

## Higher Education Act extension legislation

On September 15, the House Education and the Workforce Committee introduced [H.R. 3784](#), the Higher Education Extension Act of 2005. The bill, sponsored by Rep. John Boehner, proposes to extend the Higher Education Act (which will expire on September 30, 2005) through March 31, 2006.

### More information

To stay current with the latest updates on developments in the reauthorization process, visit TG's HEA reauthorization Web page on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/reauth/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/reauth/index.cfm).

## TG updates

### TG receives award for excellence in customer service

Providing excellent customer service is a cornerstone of our business practice of caring for our customers. Our dedication to customer service recently was recognized with a local business award.

The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce named TG the best nonprofit company in the customer service category of the 2005 Austin Business Awards program. The Chamber of Commerce president presented Kim Alexander, TG vice president for customer focus, with the award at a ceremony held on August 24 in Austin, Texas.

TG was among a record-high 146 companies competing for recognition in four categories. Each category included four divisions: nonprofit, small business, medium-sized business, and large business. Only one winner was named in each division.

As a nominee in the customer service category, TG outlined its customer service policies and standards, described team member training programs, and included testimonial letters from customers highlighting exceptional service.

The event emcee shared these testimonials with the audience: "The customer service and thorough knowledge of the various resources available made this call extremely productive. All of my questions were answered," and "I especially appreciate the kindness and considerations you showed me in our phone conversation. Thank you for treating me like a human being."

TG also noted several measures, including the following scores from customer satisfaction surveys that demonstrate the corporation's success in exceeding expectations (scores are a four-year average on a five-point scale).

- Satisfaction with TG's primary call center: 4.75
- Satisfaction with TG's business integration team: 4.81
- Satisfaction with TG's repayment counselors: 4.66

- Satisfaction with TG training events: 4.75

“It’s widely acknowledged that customer service is a key differentiator among guarantors in the student financial aid community, and TG’s philosophy and culture have always reflected the importance of responding to customers quickly and providing reliable services,” said Sue McMillin, TG president and CEO. “Because we care about our business partners and the families and students we serve, we measure our efforts and hold ourselves to high standards. It’s gratifying that the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce has recognized our efforts and affirmed our commitment to providing exceptional service.

### **Learn more**

To find out more about TG’s products and services and how they can help your school improve its service to students and families, contact TG strategic partnerships at [tgnational@tgslic.org](mailto:tgnational@tgslic.org) or TG customer services at [tgtxschools@tgslic.org](mailto:tgtxschools@tgslic.org).

## **Texas Tech simplifies award notification process with TG Awards By Web™**

Packaging financial aid awards for all of your students often is the busiest time of year in the financial aid office. But once packaging is finished, notifying your students of their financial aid awards — and getting them to respond to them in a timely fashion — can be an equally time consuming process.

TG has helped Texas Tech University streamline this process with TG Awards By Web™, our online financial aid award notification system, which helps the financial aid office work more efficiently by guiding students through the awarding process.

Jim Anderson, associate director systems, in the Texas Tech office of student financial aid, said that before his office implemented TG Awards By Web, they were physically printing and mailing paper award letters and then having students sign and return the letters.

“This process was time consuming and expensive,” he said. “And the need for emergency loans was rising for those students who didn’t apply for financial aid on time.”

### **How TG helped Texas Tech**

With TG Awards By Web, the financial aid office can quickly update students’ award packages. Students can accept or decline their awards online in just minutes, and they have online access to their financial aid information.

“Paper award letters can become out of date quickly,” Anderson said. “In TG Awards By Web, changes can be made immediately, and students can view an updated award package in 24 to 48 hours. Awards also can be updated as needed with important announcements, dates, and policy changes.”

He also noted that this means students can get their financial aid funds credited to their accounts faster, lessening the need for emergency loans.

Anderson estimates that TG Awards By Web has saved Texas Tech more than \$19,000 per award year. Because of its success, Texas Tech now processes 100 percent of its award notifications with TG Awards By Web.

Texas Tech's ability to notify students of their financial aid award package earlier has given the school a competitive edge in admissions, because many students consider the amount of financial aid received when selecting a school.

"TG Awards By Web will increase enrollment, resulting in an increase in revenue for the university," Anderson said. "It also highlights Texas Tech as a technology leader by offering this service to all students who have applied for aid and been accepted."

### **Other features of TG Awards By Web**

TG Awards By Web's student interface can be customized with each school's logo.

In addition, TG Awards By Web integrates seamlessly with TG Loans By Web™. This means that students awarded federal student loans are passed from TG Awards By Web to TG Loans By Web to complete a promissory note online and receive a TG guarantee immediately.

Finally, TG Awards By Web includes the Counselor Portal, which allows students to participate in virtual conversation with the school's financial aid counselors. These conversations serve as a resource for offices to develop "Frequently Asked Questions," as well as a way to reduce student phone calls and office visits.

### **More information**

To learn more about TG Awards By Web, contact your TG representative. You may also contact TG product support at (800) 332-1455 or send an e-mail message to [product.support@tgsic.org](mailto:product.support@tgsic.org).

## **Skill builders: Avoiding the poison grapevine**

Remember in junior high when you and your classmates would sit in a circle and you would whisper something in the person's ear next to you, and then that person would whisper it to the next person and so-on, until it made its way back to you?

Was the information that was repeated back to you at the end of the game the same information you initially whispered in the first person's ear? Probably not.

Well, you may be grown up and work in an office now, but information is still being miscommunicated. In fact, you've probably heard it around your office — the gossip and the rumors that are spread about everything from new policies and procedures to personnel changes to stories about your coworkers' personal lives.

## **What's the big deal?**

Participating in and even listening to the gossip that makes its way around any office can be distracting, morale-lowering, and *wrong*, not to mention that it can negatively impact your credibility and reputation if you spend your time involved in the gossip and rumor mill.

On the other hand, staying informed about changes in your office or at your institution is important. Often, the office "grapevine" provides an informational network that can be relied upon to give staff members a heads up about impending changes.

So, how can you keep the office grapevine from turning into the "poison" grapevine? Pat Woods, TG assistant manager for corporate learning and development, offers a TG Speakers Bureau training session that focuses on just that — *The Poison Grapevine*.

"Gossip is always going to be in the workplace," Pat said. "But, it is important not to depend on it for your information."

## **How can *The Poison Grapevine* help?**

*The Poison Grapevine* looks at how gossip and rumors are perceived differently — gossip is often seen as idle chatter, while a rumor is more specific. Pat encourages participants to talk about why society is drawn to rumors and gossip, such as that found in supermarket tabloids, and explores what reinforcement the person spreading gossip or rumors is seeking.

"Often, those who participate in rumors and gossip want to feel powerful or in control," Pat said. "In this class, we encourage people to look at their behavior and make better choices. We often feel like 'everyone does it, so what is the big deal?' But, you have to ask yourself how you would feel if the gossip were about you."

Managers can help put a lid on office gossip by providing staff with thorough and correct information about office and institutional issues, especially information that is considered critical or controversial.

"I tell managers that they need to get the information out there, that partial or incorrect information can be what starts people talking," Pat said. "Managers need to pay attention to what people are talking about, so they can step in and quash it, if necessary. Sometimes you have to tell people the correct information, even if it's not necessarily good news."

## **More information**

To learn more about *The Poison Grapevine* or TG's other Speakers Bureau training sessions, visit the TG Speakers Bureau page on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm). To schedule TG Speakers Bureau event, call (800) 252-9743, ext. 4650, or send an e-mail message to [customer.services@tgslc.org](mailto:customer.services@tgslc.org).

## Question of the week

**Q:** What is the definition of delivery and disbursement in association with FFELP loans?

**A:** The Department of Education uses the term disbursement to apply to the issuance of all types of financial aid from the school to the student. However, to distinguish between the transfer of funds between lender and school and the transfer of funds between school and student, the *Common Manual* uses "disbursement" for lender activities and "delivery" for school activities. Both terms are defined as follows:

**Disbursement:** The transfer of loan proceeds by individual check, master check, or electronic funds transfer (EFT) by a lender to a borrower, a school, or an escrow agent. (*Common Manual* Glossary)

**Delivery:** A school's processing of Stafford and PLUS loan proceeds and delivery of those proceeds to borrowers. (*Common Manual*, Chapter 8)

### More information

For more information about disbursement versus delivery, see TG's *Topsy-turvy terminology* article in *Shoptalk Online* edition [215](#).

### Do you have a question?

If you have a question that needs an answer, feel free to Ask TG™. To submit a question to *Ask TG™*, visit <http://tgslc.custhelp.com>.

## Trends and issues

### The in-school consolidation "aftermath": Counseling students

After a two-week hiatus due to the news surge related to Hurricane Katrina, *Shoptalk Online* continues its series on the implications of the in-school consolidation rush that occurred earlier this summer. This week's article concerns how to counsel students who have consolidated while in school.

#### General counseling

Now that in-school consolidation is a part of our "vocabulary," schools may have to rethink the way they discuss loans with students. For example, if you have a student who consolidated while in school, you may want to advise the student to contact his or her Consolidation loan holder to make sure that the holder is aware that the student is still attending school. The student may want to ensure that the holder has put his or her Consolidation loan in an in-school deferment status (and is not, therefore, expecting payments).

For another example, when discussing student loan repayment with a student who consolidated while in school, you may need to be mindful that the student waived his or her grace period in order to enter repayment early and consolidate his or her loans. The student is, therefore, not going to have a six-month grace period on that Consolidation loan when the student leaves school, and will instead have to begin repayment on that loan right away. On the other hand, if the student has additional Stafford loans outside of the Consolidation loan (obtained either before or after the Consolidation loan), the student may still be entitled to a grace period on *those* loans.

Finally, a student who consolidated while in school and was able to lock in a low, fixed interest rate may assume that the interest rate will transfer to any future student loans the student obtains to complete his or her education. You may need to provide such a student with information that any loan outside of the Consolidation loan carries its own applicable interest rate.

### **Exit counseling changes**

Based on this change in “vocabulary,” schools may decide to amend their exit counseling materials, being careful to provide special information to those students who consolidated while in school. These students are going to need to know what is going to happen once they leave school, including information about the absence of a grace period for a Consolidation loan and deferment options that students may want to pursue directly after exiting school (such as the unemployment deferment) to temporarily delay the repayment obligation on their Consolidation loan. Schools may also want to include in their exit counseling materials information about the various repayment lengths available for certain Consolidation loan amounts and the added interest that a student with a longer repayment period will have to pay over the life of his or her Consolidation loan.

### **More articles in this series**

To read previous articles in this series, visit *Shoptalk Online* editions [318](#), [319](#), [320](#), and [321](#).

### **Questions**

For questions, call TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to [cust.assist@tgslc.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgslc.org).

## **This, that, and the other**

Known as “helicopter parents” for the way they hover over their children’s lives, many of today’s super-involved parents are becoming increasingly bold in phoning school administrators to complain about their children’s dorm rooms, roommates, and grades – and many colleges are beginning to take a firmer stance against them. According to an Associated Press article, baby-boomer parents have become so heavily involved in their children’s lives that college administrators believe the parents are hindering the educational process and preventing their children from

solving their own problems, a necessary step in becoming independent adults. To find out how some colleges are dealing with the issue, you can read the August 29 article at [www.cnn.com/2005/EDUCATION/08/29/helicopter\\_parents.ap/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2005/EDUCATION/08/29/helicopter_parents.ap/index.html).



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