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

Thinking about spring training opportunities? Consider TG Speakers Bureau, a comprehensive menu of training in skills and knowledge vital to financial aid offices. You'll find a listing of workshops on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm).

## Federal updates

### ED extends Common Review Initiative pilot

Isn't it amazing what teamwork can accomplish? One of the many noteworthy models of successful partnering within the financial aid community is the Common Review Initiative (CRI), which exemplifies the advantages and rewards of working together toward a common cause. The CRI recently completed a two-year pilot program, and the results were so impressive that ED extended the pilot program through December 31, 2007.

#### What is the CRI?

The regulatory requirements of 34 CFR 682.410(c)(1) state that guarantors must conduct periodic reviews of FFELP lending partners. In a CRI review, instead of every guarantor conducting a separate review of each lender, several guarantors

reviewing a particular lender combine resources to form a cross-guarantor team that performs the review on behalf of all participating guarantors. ED also participates in the CRI process by conducting a review of LaRS lender reporting activities related to federal interest and special allowance benefits. The result is a more efficient and less redundant review process for the affected guarantors, lenders, servicers, and ED.

### **Compliments about CRI from ED**

In its letter announcing the extension of the CRI pilot, ED states, "Observations of the pilot conducted to date indicate that the quality of guaranty agency reviews, the method for picking the reviews, and the standardization of the process have improved tremendously through the CRI process . . . the CRI process makes the guaranty agency review process stronger and has reduced redundancy."

### **More information**

TG is pleased to be a participant in the CRI process, and we encourage our customers to visit the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP) CRI information page at [www.nchelp.org/pages/page.cfm?id=24](http://www.nchelp.org/pages/page.cfm?id=24) for more information.

## **TG updates**

### **TG publishes new report: Financial barriers to higher education significant for Texas students**

An estimated 47,000 bachelor's degrees may be lost each year in Texas due to financial barriers students face, according to a new TG report prepared for the 80th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature that convened last week.

TG, the nation's fourth-largest student loan guarantor, assessed the enrollment rates of Texas high school graduates in 2004 and determined that economically disadvantaged but college-prepared students were 20 percent less likely to attend a college or university than their more affluent peers.

The report to the Legislature — *Ready, willing, and unable: How financial barriers obstruct bachelor-degree attainment in Texas* — was required of TG by its most recent Sunset review. TG will continue to provide legislators with similar reports annually.

Sue McMillin, TG President and CEO, said the financial barriers faced by many Texas high school graduates pose a threat to the success of the "Closing the Gaps" initiative that calls for college enrollment to increase by 500,000 students in Texas by 2015.

"As a Texas-based and Texas-founded company serving more than one million Texas students each year, we share a common goal expressed in the 'Closing the

Gaps' initiative that must be achieved if we are to ensure the future economic and social well-being of Texas through a well-educated population," McMillin said. "It is our hope that these annual reports to the Texas Legislature can become a reliable tool for current and future policymakers."

The report also examined other perceived barriers such as academic readiness and availability of information about planning and paying for college. In general, more Texas students are graduating from high school and more of those students are completing a college preparatory curriculum than ever before.

"The findings presented in this report align with similar reports in the national arena, namely the most recent publications from the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education and the Congressional Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance," said Jeff Webster, TG assistant vice president for research and analytical services. "Many of the barriers to higher education are related. That's why we believe that focusing efforts on financial barriers can go a long way toward changing family expectations, promoting academic preparation, and giving students the hope needed to learn how to navigate the various pathways to college enrollment."

The report concludes with several policy recommendations and proposals for further research to be conducted in the future. The complete report is available online at [www.tgslc.org](http://www.tgslc.org).

### **More about TG's research services**

To learn more about TG's comprehensive research products and services, visit *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/research/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/research/index.cfm).

### **Mark your calendars for 2007 TG Conference**



Looking for a fresh perspective on customer service? How about a workshop that explains concisely some of the latest developments in student aid? Or perhaps you'd like to learn more about the robust suite of products and services TG offers free to business partners. You'll find all of these things in a well-crafted training event that draws hundreds of financial aid professionals to Austin each year — the TG Annual Conference.

The 2007 TG Annual Conference will be held April 3 – 5 at the Hilton Austin Hotel in downtown Austin, Texas. This year's conference, which is themed "Heart and Soul," recognizes the spirit of care that so many financial aid professionals live by as they work to make college a reality for students. The financial aid field can be challenging, even stressful, but those dedicated to its mission find ways to cope that inspire others and serve as an example of personal strength.

## **This year's program**

The TG Conference offers participants a rounded menu of workshops, training sessions, and open forums, which serve the interests of all those who work in financial aid. Training is divided into educational tracks, each track providing a series of sessions on topics like FAM systems, debt management and default aversion, school interests, lender interests, electronic processing and training, professional development, program integrity, and college access and success.

## **To register or to learn more**

Visit *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/tgconference/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/tgconference/index.cfm) to register or to find out more about the 2007 TG Annual Conference. Registration is waived for school attendees. For other participants, early registration is \$100, which increases to \$125 after February 23.

If you prefer to speak with someone directly, contact Judith Cunningham at (800) 252-9743, ext. 2905, or send an e-mail message to [judith.cunningham@tgslc.org](mailto:judith.cunningham@tgslc.org).

## **Spotlight on TG's Public Benefit Grant Program: LULAC National Education Service Center – Dallas**

TG works hard to open doors for students. Just one example is its Public Benefit Grant Program. For FY 2007, the program awarded more than \$3.5 million in grants to institutions doing research or offering services that help ensure the academic access and success of college students, especially students from populations traditionally underrepresented on college campuses.

One grant went to an organizational arm of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC is an educational nonprofit agency that has as its mission the empowerment of the Hispanic/Latino community. Over the years, LULAC's National Educational Service Centers (LNESEC) have helped hundreds of thousands of low-income, Latino students go to college.



A center located in Dallas has put together a unique mentoring program, called the Vertical Mentoring Program, which targets high schools in Dallas and Harris Counties of Texas. The program works to raise college enrollment rates by building bonds between current college students and students in high school. TG's grant helps to fund the center's program, supporting it in various ways.

Recently, *Shoptalk Online* took the opportunity to learn more about the program by talking with the Dallas LNESEC's director and an architect of the Vertical Mentoring Program, Ray De Los Santos.

**Q.:** Can you describe the Vertical Mentoring Program?

**A.:** The Vertical Mentoring Program is based on the premise that each of us can benefit from the support of someone who has been on the life paths that we are now traveling. The idea is that we can reach out to those who come after us to help them get to the next level. That way, they don't stumble through the same barriers that we had to overcome.

As a Latino growing up in Corpus Christi, I often heard the story about Latinos being like crabs — as soon as one of them started to make some headway, the others below would pull it down. I knew that this was not true, because many Latinos had helped me in my lifetime. I knew that I, with the help of others, had to create a program modeled on all the efforts small and large that had supported me in my life.

I found much inspiration for what I was looking for in servant/leader concepts popularized by Robert Greenleaf, Stephen Covey, and others. I thought that, working through the LULAC infrastructure, the program could have a great impact on our community. The Vertical Mentoring Program allows a small group of adult mentors to efficiently and inexpensively reach a great number of students.

**Q.:** How do the mentors work with high school students?

**A.:** Each of our participating LULAC Youth Councils devotes one of its weekly meetings each month to the program by having the college students present a brief panel presentation on a variety of college admissions and financial aid topics. The entire program is designed to last 20 – 30 minutes with an additional 15 minutes for questions and answers and for interaction. This interaction period can deal with a variety of issues including community service or fundraising projects. We hope to build bridges between the high school students and the colleges and universities that the young adult students represent.

Also, senior LULAC Youth Council members will be individually mentored as they go through the college admissions/financial aid application process. We hope that, when they choose their college, they will take with them a desire to participate in our collegiate programs as future mentors.

**Q.:** How will the program increase the college enrollment of first-generation students?

**A.:** Eighty-two percent or more of the students participating in our LULAC Youth and Young Adult programs are first-generation students, who come from populations that are underrepresented on college campuses. We anticipate that, if we can maintain a 85 – 90 percent success rate in getting students into a college or university of their choice, we will have greatly impacted the number of students who attend college and their family members.

**Q.:** How will the TG grant be used in LULAC's mentoring program?

**A.:** The TG grant will help us to develop the infrastructure necessary to efficiently operate and expand our program. The grant will be used in a number of different ways, including these:

- To provide 60 \$1,000 scholar/mentor stipends for our LULAC Young Adult mentors.
- To develop program handbooks as guides for our future high school and college sponsors.
- To kick-start our development efforts and create a self-sustaining program designed to ensure the long-term future of the program.
- To provide two student advisors who work with the youth and young adult sponsors and officers to promote the development of the new and existing councils.

### **TG's award process**

To receive funds, all awarded institutions, including the LULAC Center in Dallas, had to submit proposals that addressed the issue of access to postsecondary education. More specifically, awards went to institutions with programs and services that focused on the needs of first-generation college students, students from high schools with low college-going rates, and/or students who are underrepresented in higher education.

### **To learn more**

If you'd like to learn more about TG's Public Benefit Grant Program, you'll find a description of its purpose and process on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/publicbenefit/](http://www.tgslc.org/publicbenefit/).

## **Tech Report**

### **AdvanTG Web™ tool tips: Setting application purge dates**

Because AdvanTG Web™ (AdvanTG Web) processes a variety of loan requests that are transmitted in different ways — including borrower-initiated records and school-initiated records — it's good practice to periodically check the purge criteria in AdvanTG Web. Purge criteria defines how long records will be saved in a school or lender's AdvanTG Web database.

There a number of reasons to check purge limits on loan requests and loan records. Review ensures that records are accessible as long as they are needed. It also ensures that records are deleted when they no longer serve a purpose or no longer provide a meaningful history. Keep in mind that low purge limits mean less data is saved in AdvanTG Web. This reduces the time for generating search results and processing data. It also allows for more accurate completion estimations for loan requests in process.

## Guidelines for setting purge limits

Here are some helpful guidelines to consider when setting purge limits.

- **PLUS Credit Connection™ (PCC) borrower-initiated requests:** In this process, a parent can use TG Loans By Web™ (LBW) at any time to request a PLUS loan. However, schools may not certify the PLUS loan until months later. And lenders' marketing campaigns to both students and parents may begin much earlier than the loan period start date. Therefore, it is important to set an appropriate purge limit for loan requests awaiting certification that allows sufficient time to certify the request before records are purged.
- **Large volume processing for non-TG loans:** Schools that process large volumes of non-TG loans may want to set their purge limits higher to retain information that may be required to populate or create change transactions.
- **LBW borrower-initiated loan requests (Stafford):** In this flow, borrowers can initiate a loan request at any time. However, if a borrower submits a loan request only to learn he or she has not completed all necessary paperwork, such as the FAFSA, the school may want the record to remain in AdvanTG Web. That way, the borrower has time to complete their missing information and submit the record. In this case, set the purge limits for this flow to at least 120 to 150 days.
- **Other factors — volume of outstanding loan requests and processing time:** Some schools may set their loan request purge high to allow processing of applications year round, while others want to accommodate students who wait until the last minute to request a loan. Conversely, more automated schools may establish a deadline for students to complete their loan requests. For all these cases, set purge dates to be in a range of 60 to 90 days.
- **Setting purge criteria for loan requests awaiting certification:** Although there is not a one-size-fits-all approach for purge criteria settings, TG suggests setting the purge for loan requests awaiting certification between 120 and 150 days. This ensures optimum AdvanTG Web performance.
- **Review purge limits on regular basis:** TG finds that many schools set purge criteria between 120 and 365 days for most loan requests. TG recommends that schools review their purge criteria on a regular basis — at least yearly. It is even more important to review criteria any time a school implements a new process, e.g., PCC, LBW borrower-initiated flow, etc.

### To learn more

For more information about application record purge limits, or to learn more about PCC and LBW, contact TG Product Support at (800) 332-1455; or send an e-mail message to [product.support@tgslc.org](mailto:product.support@tgslc.org).

## Trends and issues

### Question of the week

**Q.:** Does the FFELP have a nursing loan forgiveness program?

**A.:** The FFELP does not, but there is a federal loan repayment program called the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program (NELRP). The NELRP, which is authorized by the Public Health Service Act, recruits and retains professional nurses who will dedicate their time to providing health care to underserved populations. The program allows registered nurses who are selected for funding the opportunity to have 60 percent to 85 percent of their qualifying loan balance repaid by the federal government in exchange for 2 - 3 years of service in a critical shortage facility.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a Web site that contains information regarding the NELRP; the Web site outlines eligibility and service requirements for the program. To learn more about the NELRP, visit <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/loanrepay.htm>.

### Do you have a question?

If you have a question that needs an answer, feel free to *Ask TG™*. *Ask TG* is TG's online query tool for borrowers, schools, and lenders. It includes a database of frequently asked questions about financial aid, student loan processing, and TG's products and services. To submit a question to *Ask TG*, visit [tgslc.custhelp.com](http://tgslc.custhelp.com).

## This, that, and the other

TG offices were closed on Tuesday, January 16, and till noon on Wednesday, January 17, because of severe weather.



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*Shoptalk Online* is published by TG. Unless specifically noted, the policies and procedures outlined in *Shoptalk Online* apply only to loans made under the TG guarantee and not to loans underwritten by other guarantors.

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