Shoptalk Online
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TG

In this issue:

Tip of the Week

Adventures In Education offers an online budget worksheet that students can use to estimate a budget for their college years. Direct your students to the calculator at www.aie.org/Calculators/budgetworksheetinschool.cfm.

Federal updates

Official Notice of Proposed Rulemaking published

As announced in last week's *Shoptalk Online* Edition 408, ED recently released an unofficial Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) addressing many topics of importance to the financial aid industry. Today, the official NPRM was published in the *Federal Register*, providing the public with a 60 day comment period.

To view the NPRM and submit comments online

- Go to www.regulations.gov.
- Select "Department of Education" from the agency drop-down menu, then click "Submit."

- In the Document ID column, select ED_FRDOC_0001-0008 (Federal Perkins Loan Program, Federal Family Education Loan Program, and William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program).
- To submit comments, click on the yellow icon next to "Add Comments."

New Military Deferment Request form approved

Yesterday, ED released Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) GEN-07-04, which announced the approval of a new Military Deferment Request form.

The new military deferment was created by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act (HERA) of 2005. The provision allows for borrowers with loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 2001, under the Federal Family Educational Loan (FFEL), Direct Loan, and Perkins Loan programs to defer repayment on eligible loans for up to three years while the borrower is serving on active duty during a war or other military operation or national emergency. Borrowers performing qualifying National Guard duty during a war or other military operation or national emergency may also qualify for the new military deferment.

Implementation of the New Military Deferment Request form

Lenders and servicers may begin to use the new form immediately, but must provide only the newly approved form to borrowers beginning October 1, 2007. However, ED clarifies that requests for the military deferment made by a borrower using other means that were in place before October 1, 2007, may continue to be processed after that date.

More information

To access GEN-07-04, visit http://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0704.html. A PDF version of the new form is also available on *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/borrowers/deferment/military.cfm.

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

TG updates

Spotlight on TG's Public Benefit Grants: Breakthrough – Austin's six-year mentoring program for students

The odds are stacked against low-income students going to college. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, students with high financial need are seven times less likely to enroll in college than wealthy students. Only 6 percent earn a bachelor's degree by age 24. In an information economy like ours, which relies on workers with highly specialized knowledge, that puts low-income students at a profound disadvantage.

There are many reasons why low-income students don't get a higher education. Little money and a lack of awareness about possible funding certainly play a part. But many low-income students don't have family support for going to college. They also often don't have peers who have gone on to get a degree and who could serve as a model to emulate. A nonprofit based in Austin, Texas has an innovative program to help just such students. Breakthrough – Austin starts working with pre-teen children in sixth grade and follows them through to graduation, offering one-on-one mentoring and college preparation services.

Currently, Breakthrough serves more than 200 students, but, with the help of a grant from TG's Public Benefit Grant Program, the organization plans to offer those services to another 45 students, all within Austin-area school districts that have low college graduation rates.

To learn more about the unique approach Breakthrough takes to helping students, *Shoptalk Online* recently sat down with Jessica D'Arcy, executive director for Breakthrough.

Q.: Your program begins working with students in the sixth grade. What are the benefits of starting at such an early age?

A.: We know from research as well as our own experience that middle school is a pivotal time for students — a time when they're making decisions about classes, peers, and goals that will affect their options down the road. By starting in sixth grade, Breakthrough can affect those choices in a positive way — by pushing students and parents toward the most rigorous classes available in their schools, by ingraining study habits that are needed for those classes, by fostering a positive peer group where it's cool to be smart, and by helping students see themselves as "college material," even if they're just 12 years old.

Another advantage to starting in sixth grade is that Breakthrough builds long-term relationships with students and families, and we then draw on those relationships when things get tough. For example, it's pretty common for our ninth-graders to struggle with the academic and social transition to high school. When those students are really down, doubting their abilities, and feeling that the hard work may not be worth it, we can remind them of those instances in which we've seen them overcome challenges, connect their high school experience to the goals they've held since middle school, and help them access their supports — peers who are on the same path, caring adults, and our own staff.

Q.: Can you describe how the program's interns work with the students?

A.: Last school year, we had approximately 20 interns working with students on more than 20 campuses. Each intern worked with six – 12 students for five – 10 hours each week. Generally, interns visit students on a weekly basis and check on their attendance, grades, and overall progress. Depending on the grade level, the focus of those visits might be study skills (seventh and ninth grades), early college start paperwork (tenth and eleventh grades), or registering for summer enrichment opportunities (eighth through eleventh grades). In addition, the interns help students problem-solve about any issues that are getting in the way of their success — turning in homework, time management, family issues, for example. Serious concerns are brought to the attention of the intern's supervisor — one of Breakthrough's full-time professional staff.

Q.: How do you recruit your interns?

A.: The interns are college students from The University of Texas, St. Edward's University, Huston-Tillotson University, and Texas State University. Many are Work-Study students, and some have taught for Breakthrough's summer program prior to becoming interns. We recruit through Work-Study fairs, Breakthrough's national teacher alumni network, and student groups.

About TG's Public Benefit Award Program

TG established its Public Benefit Award Program to promote college access and student retention in higher education. The program provides grants to institutions that have projects and services created to enhance academic access and success.

To receive funds, organizations are required to submit proposals that address the issue of access to postsecondary education and that focus 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/public_benefit/index.cfm.

Trends and issues

Sticky situations: Monkeying with multiple enrollment

The paths that students take in pursuing their educational dreams are as diverse as the student aid programs that help them to get there. Some students seek consistency in their higher education experience and invest their time and loyalty in a single school, while others may attend multiple schools to complete their degree requirements. A growing number of students are finding their educational goals are best met through multiple enrollment — concurrent enrollment at more than one school.

Students may enroll concurrently at multiple schools for a variety of reasons: to be able to select from a greater variety and flexibility of courses; to incur less expensive tuition costs; to take specialized courses; or to expedite the completion of their program of study. Although multiple enrollment may be a good choice for some students, it can prove challenging for the financial aid office. Establishing and maintaining policies and procedures, and facilitating communication among all schools and with the student, are essential to making multiple enrollment work.

This article is another installment in our series on sticky situations that come up occasionally in the Title IV programs — see previous articles in editions 384, 390, 394, and 402 — and addresses some common issues that arise with multiple enrollment.

Note: This article does not address multiple enrollment due to a consortium agreement between two or more eligible schools. Consortium agreements have their own set of rules, as described in the 2006-07 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, starting on page 2-128.

Applying for financial aid and completing verification

Although a student is unable to receive a Pell grant at more than one school, according to the 2006-07 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 3-66, it is possible for a student to receive a Stafford loan and/or PLUS loan at more than one school for the same period of enrollment. Each school must have a current and valid Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) on file for the student before moving forward with the awarding process — except in the case when a student is pursuing a parent PLUS loan only at each school.

In the case of verification, if the applicant has completed the verification process at one school, the other schools are not required to repeat the process. However, they must document the student's file by obtaining a letter from the school that performed the verification that includes:

- a statement that the student's application has been verified,
- the transaction number of the verified application, and
- if relevant, the reason why the school was not required to recalculate the student's EFC.

Determining cost of attendance

According to the 2006-07 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 3-66, only one of the schools may include the student's noninstitutional expenses — such as room and board—in the cost of attendance formula. However, depending on the student's situation, it may be possible to adjust some components of the cost of attendance — for example, transportation costs for travel to multiple campuses — to reflect unusual expenses.

Accounting for estimated financial assistance

In order to determine the amount and type of FFELP loan funds the school may award the student, the school must determine the student's estimated financial assistance (EFA) — the amount of financial assistance that a student, or parent on behalf of the student, will receive for the period of enrollment. The EFA includes aid from federal, state, institutional, and other sources.

However, the EFA should not include aid used to replace the student's expected family contribution (EFC). In addition, according to the 2006-07 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 3-66, loan funds awarded at one school are not to be included as estimated financial assistance by any other school the student is attending when determining the student's loan eligibility for the same period.

Student enrollment status

Remember that for a student to receive a Stafford or PLUS loan, the student must be enrolled at least half time at each school at which the student is requesting loan funds. If a student is enrolled half time at school A, and less than half time at school B, the student can receive loan funds at school A only.

Handling overlapping academic years and overawards

When awarding loan funds to a student who is enrolled in multiple schools, all schools that the student is attending are responsible for coordinating to make sure that the total amount of the loans the student receives does not exceed the applicable annual loan limit. In addition, if the academic years at each of the schools overlap, it may impact when the student will gain eligibility for a new annual loan limit. To determine the impact of overlapping academic years (either scheduled or borrower-based academic years or a combination of the two), consult the 2006-07 *Federal Student Aid Handbook* pages 3-66 to 3-71.

More information

For more information on awarding aid to students enrolled at multiple schools, call TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267 or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Ten ways to maximize your training experience

With the NASFAA conference on the horizon, you may be wondering about how you can get the most out of the training sessions and workshops you attend. Here are some general tips to consider in preparing for NASFAA — or for any training or conference. This general guide should help you ensure long-term rewards for yourself and even benefit those with whom you share your new knowledge and information.

1. **Set training objectives:** Create a brief list of things you want to learn at the event. Include people you want to meet, organizations you want to learn more about, or processes or policies about which you need guidance. If a particular event does not cover a topic of interest, ask around. Association conferences offer a rare opportunity to have one-on-one contact with a wide variety of industry experts.

2. **Share with coworkers where you're going and why:** Your office mates, even those in related function areas, may have specific requests for information or provide you with the names of contacts that could be helpful. If possible, share a brief agenda of the topics to be covered, in case someone needs information slated to be covered at the conference.

3. **Plan to network:** Chances are that the people you most need to talk to will have time to meet with you, but ask early. If a person's time is in high demand, consider scheduling a "group" lunch with colleagues who may have other topics to discuss. This way, your contact may be more willing to join you, meet your colleagues, and focus on your topics or needs.

4. **Prepare a "conference survival" kit:** Buy or obtain a sturdy, multi-pocket organizer folder. To assemble your kit, include your itineraries, event mailings, maps, travel confirmations, a supply of business cards, and other items that you will need for your attendance. Keep this folder handy on your desk before the event, and drop in notes as you think about your tasks and to-do items.

5. **Prioritize your sessions:** After you register, spend 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.

6. **Be a selective note-taker:** Avoid taking down notes on everything discussed — you may miss important points. Instead, listen closely. Take down quick notes only on those items that need clarification. Also, ask questions. If you need clarification, others may need it as well. At the very least, presenters can use the opportunity to reinforce their points.

7. **Maximize your contacts:** Foster relationships. Prepare a quick two- or three-sentence introduction, and use it when an opportunity arises to greet new acquaintances. 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.

8. **Organize your materials for sharing:** 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 "survival kit" (described in the previous installment of this series). When you return, you can quickly route materials.

9. **Preserve what you learn:** Identify three to five of the most important ideas or concepts you learned at the conference. Summarize them in an e-mail or one- or two-page "idea log." Explain how these ideas could be implemented in your office and share it with your supervisor. If appropriate, distribute this document to your other colleagues — it may start discussions for future improvements in your office.

10. **Enjoy the conference:** There are other rewards beyond the obvious for an enjoyable conference experience. You're more likely to remember information and follow up on colleague contacts, if you've liked and enjoyed the event. You're more likely to put to use what you've learned. Also, in the end, if you found you spent your time profitably at a financial aid conference, you're more likely to feel more committed, interested, and ultimately happier about working in the industry. This, of course, has long-term benefits for you and for those who work with you.

To learn more

Would you like to learn more about the many training opportunities TG offers through its Speakers Bureau? Visit www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm to read the training catalog. Keep in mind that TG can tailor training to meet the needs of your financial aid office. To find out how, contact the TG Speakers Bureau at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4650, or send an e-mail message to businesspartner.services@tgslc.org.

Question of the week

Q.: I know that a school can make a dependent student independent in certain circumstances and on a case-by-case basis by using a dependency override, but is it possible to make an independent student dependent if the student lives at home with parents and has no income of his or her own?

A.: No, according to the 2007-08 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, Application and Verification Guide (AVG), page AVG-24, a financial aid administrator may override only from dependent to independent. However, if an independent student receives substantial support from others, a school may use professional judgment to adjust the cost of attendance or FAFSA data items such as untaxed income.

The 2007-08 AVG volume of the *Federal Student Aid Handbook* is available for download on *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/policy/fsa_handbook.cfm.

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.

This, that, and the other

Women will make up 60 percent of undergraduate enrollment by the year 2016, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Since 1970, women's undergraduate enrollment increased more than three times as fast as men's and surpassed men's enrollment in 1978. In 2005, women made up 57 percent of undergraduate enrollment.

From 2006 to 2016, both men's and women's undergraduate enrollments are projected to increase, but less than they did from 1995 to 2005.

To learn more about the latest trends in enrollment growth, visit the NCES Web site at www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2007/section1/indicator08.asp.

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.

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

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