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Tip^{of} the Week

Annually, TG offers a management workshop geared to help higher education professionals polish their leadership skills. You'll find a description of the Financial Aid Leadership Symposium online as well as an application for applying to the program at www.tgslc.org/training/leaders/index.cfm.

Federal updates

ED releases final volumes of the 2007-08 FSA Handbook — TG offers complete bookmarked version

With the release of Volume 3, Calculating Awards and Packaging, and Volume 6, Campus-Based Programs, of the new 2007-08 *Federal Student Aid Handbook* (FSA Handbook), all volumes of the latest edition of the FSA Handbook are now available. To assist customers in using the FSA Handbook as a whole, TG has combined all of its volumes into one easy-to-use, searchable PDF. The PDF includes bookmarks of all the individual volumes, as well as bookmarks of the chapters and appendices within each volume. TG will make updates to the bookmarked file as they become available from ED.

Accessing the bookmarked FSA Handbook

To access this practical research tool, visit *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/resources/fsa_handbook.cfm.

Questions

For questions about the 2007-08 FSA Handbook, contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267 or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

TG updates

TG now updates NSLDS twice a month

Schools and lenders want the latest and most complete data when they request student loan information from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS). TG helps ensure the completeness and accuracy of data with a timely reporting of its loan data to NSLDS. To provide customers with even better access, TG now reports its updates to NSLDS two times a month.

The first TG submittal still includes Lender Manifest, Common Account Maintenance (CAM), and Enrollment Reporting submissions. The second submittal will include CAM updates, Real Time Access™ (RTA) changes, and new loan guarantees that have occurred between the first and the second submittal.

All submissions and changes must be received at TG by 10 a.m. on their respective dates to ensure timely processing.

The updates will appear on NSLDS on Monday of the following week, per the schedule below.

Revised 2007 NSLDS Data Provider Schedule

TG Submission File Date	NSLDS Viewable Date
August 24	August 27
September 7	September 10
September 21	September 24
October 12	October 15
October 26	October 29
November 9	November 12
November 21*	November 26
December 14	December 17
December 28	December 31

* Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, lenders must have their updates in on Wednesday.

To learn more

For questions, concerns, or other issues related to submissions to be included in the TG monthly NSLDS file, send an e-mail message to TG's data reporting team at good.data@tgslc.org, or call (800) 801-8416.

Spotlight on TG's Public Benefit Grants: "Follow My Lead: From Application to Matriculation"



The *colonias* of Texas are rural settlements that line the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Unincorporated and therefore lacking basic services like running water, electricity, sanitation, and even streets, these communities often begin as one or two family units and then expand. Cameron Park in the Rio Grande Valley is one of the largest colonias in Texas with a population of 6,000. According to the U.S. Census, the average house in Cameron Park is valued at about \$28,000; the average household earns about \$24,000 — subsistence-level

wages for even the smallest family.

Children growing up in a community like Cameron Park generally don't believe a college degree is attainable. Oftentimes, their goal is simply to survive and feed the family. So they go right to work out of high school, if they go to high school at all. The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) wants to turn this perception around with an outreach program — "Follow My Lead: From Application to Matriculation" — specifically designed for the needs of teens growing up in the colonias. TG supports this program with a grant from its Public Benefit Grant Program.

"Follow My Lead" offers mentor services and scholarships to high schools in the Brownsville area. These mentors guide seniors and juniors through various college applications, including forms for admissions and scholarships. At the same time, mentors serve as examples to students, since many of them come from the colonias.

Mari Chapa, director of financial aid at UTB/TSC and an administrator of the "Follow My Lead" program, describes the particular benefit of such an approach.

"It is often difficult for our student population to make that transition from high school to college," she said. "And it is a well-documented fact that, in many arenas, we learn better from our peers than from our 'superiors.' These students — mentors and high school students — are able to identify with each other because of their age group, and, moreover, because they come from similar demographic and cultural backgrounds."

The parent connection

The “Follow My Lead” mentoring services are geared to help students manage a variety of obstacles to a higher education, including cultural notions regarding education; a lack of guidance in the public school system; and complex forms such as the FAFSA. Mentors also help convince parents to let their children go to college, which can be as difficult as persuading the students themselves to go.

“We really strive to educate parents that high school is not an end but a bridge to a higher degree and a better economic condition,” said Mari. “Mentors often share their life experiences so these families can relate. When their children finally enroll in college, the parents beam with pride, telling others: Thus first-generation college students begin a new cycle.”

Once at school at UTB/TSC, “Follow My Lead” offers students access to a wide range of support services to ensure they stay in school, including a learning assistance center, learning communities, leadership and success peer groups, faculty advising, and academic advising. And the program is developing even more support services for the coming academic year — with the vision of graduating ever more colonias students from both high school and college.

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/publicbenefit/index.cfm.

Read the latest *Edufacts*[™] — August 2007

The August 2007 edition of *Edufacts* focuses on an effective and economical approach to preventing student loan default — Voluntary Flexible Agreements between the Department of Education (ED) and guaranty agencies.

Two-thirds of all college students in America now rely on loans to finance their education, and, with the escalating cost of college, the amount of money being borrowed by students continues to rise rapidly.

In 1993, students took out \$20.7 billion in federally subsidized loans to pay for college. By 2003, borrowing for college had jumped to \$49.1 billion, a 137 percent

increase. And as more money is being borrowed, the risk of borrowers defaulting on student loans also increases.

But a few years ago Congress authorized ED to enter into Voluntary Flexible Agreements (VFAs) with a select group of student loan guaranty agencies. These agreements put in place an innovative approach that enhances program integrity, increases cost efficiencies, and improves the availability and delivery of student financial aid.

The VFAs emphasize strategies to prevent delinquency and default of federal student loans. They also allow guaranty agencies to develop alternative funding models and to experiment with different performance-based methods of default prevention.

By most estimates, the limited program has been successful. Cohort student loan default rates have been reduced by 47 percent, and the four guarantors with VFAs are deriving more of their revenue through delinquency and default prevention rather than from collections of defaulted loans. A major reason for this trend is that guarantors are contacting borrowers during the six-month grace period between graduation — or a drop to less than half-time enrollment — and the start of loan repayment, as opposed to waiting until a borrower is delinquent on monthly payments.

To learn more

To read the complete edition of the August *Edufacts* or to review other editions, visit www.tgslc.org/edufacts/index.cfm.

Fall training watch: Attend TG sessions at these conferences

Say you were just starting in financial aid and needed to take a “Financial Aid 101” class — a course that gave you the basics of surviving in the world of financial aid. Two topics on your list of things to learn might include federal regulatory changes and developing good customer relations with students. Training on “requisite courses” like these is exactly what TG had in mind for some upcoming fall conferences.

In October, TG will be offering sessions at various conferences, including events in Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida. Session topics include the latest federal regulatory developments and ways to handle challenging customers. To learn more about these training opportunities, read through the following short session descriptions. If you attend any of these workshops, you're sure to gain insight in the financial aid field or learn something to help you in your career. A complete listing of conferences which feature TG training can be found online at www.tgslc.org/abouttg/calendar.cfm.

A partial list of TG's upcoming conference trainings

Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) Fall Conference, Shreveport, Louisiana, October 10

- **Diversity: Dealing with Difficult Students:** Ever faced a student — or parent — who is upset and expects you to fix the problem immediately? Explore a six-step model to diffuse emotional customers and deal with difficult situations. Participants will practice using real-life customer service scenarios drawn from financial aid.

Alabama Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA) Fall Conference, Auburn, Alabama, October 11

- **Federal Update:** This session offers a summary of recent activity pertaining to common forms, *Dear Colleague Letters*, proposed federal regulations, and pending legislative changes. Attendees will also get a high-level overview of recent ED and congressional actions.

Florida Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (FASFAA) Fall Conference, Destin, Florida, October 17

- **What Do You Say?™:** When faced with a challenging situation with a customer, it's often the first few seconds — and your first words — that determine your success or failure. This fast-paced and entertaining program answers the question "What Do You Say?" in those first, awkward moments in dealing with unhappy customers. Topics cover a variety of situations, including how to respond when your customer is disappointed, when your customer won't let you help, when you can't say yes, and when your customer feels wronged.

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.

Trends and issues

Question of the week

Q.: Where is it written that a school must certify a loan by the last day of the loan period?

A.: Section 6.15, School Certification of the Loan, of the *Common Manual* as well as 34 CFR 668.164(g)(2) of the federal regulations addresses this issue. Section 6.15 says:

“A school must certify the borrower’s loan eligibility by the end of the loan period or the date on which the student ceases to be enrolled at least half time, whichever is earlier. If the school does not certify the loan by the earlier of these two dates, the loan cannot be disbursed.”

[\$668.164(g)(2)(ii)(A); §682.207(f)]”

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

The College Board's *Trends in Student Aid* publication offers an annual snapshot of the condition of student aid in the U.S., including grants, loans, work-study, and education tax benefits. The 2006 edition has some interesting facts about the amount and type of loans that students are borrowing. Among other things, the report notes that increases in Stafford Loan volume over the past decade are the result of an increase in the number of loans issued, not increases in the constant dollar value of the loans.

The report finds that total loan volume grew more rapidly in the PLUS program than in the Stafford student loan program in every year back to 1996. Also, the unsubsidized Stafford Loan program has grown more rapidly than the subsidized Stafford Loan program.

And perhaps no surprise to anyone is the fact that loans from private lenders continue to increase relative to the federal loans provided through the student aid system. According to the report, private student loans now total \$17.3 billion, having grown at an average annual rate of about 27 percent between 2000-01 and 2005-06 — after adjusting for inflation.

You can read the complete report at www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost06/trends_aid_06.pdf.



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

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