

In this issue:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Federal updates | 1 |
| Closed school corner | 1 |
| Reauthorization clears another hurdle..... | 2 |
| Neg Reg heads toward the finish line | 2 |
| TG updates | 4 |
| TG and THECB host third year of financial aid telethons | 4 |
| TG's annual Symposium leaves participants inspired, energized | 5 |
| Change to TG's forms distribution process and help with disclosures for APPS borrowers | 7 |
| Product spotlight: Guide to Effective Practices in Student Success (EPSS) database | 7 |
| Trends and issues | 9 |
| <i>Mapping Your Future™</i> to unveil Web site redesign..... | 9 |
| Question of the week | 9 |
| This, that, and the other | 10 |

Tip^{of} the Week

Order your DVD of TG's *FAFSA-Made-Easy* program, a special workshop designed to help students complete the FAFSA form. You can order a copy, available in Spanish and English, on *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/order/index.cfm. For more information, contact Richard Sapp at (800) 252-9743, ext. 2865, or send an e-mail message to richard.sapp@tgslc.org.

Federal updates

Closed school corner

The following table provides a list of newly reported school closures and error corrections from the Postsecondary Educational Participants System (PEPS) and from the February 2008 *Closed School Monthly Report* supplied by the Department of Education.

Newly reported closures

| OPE School ID | School Name and Address | Unofficial Closure Date | ED's Official Closure Date |
|---------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 01063337 | Houston Community College-Southwest College 12401 S. Post Oak Dr. Houston, TX 77045-2007 | N/A | 5/31/2004 |
| 03232305 | Lincoln Tech Inst.-Lincoln College of Tech. 2290 Corporate Circle Henderson, NV 89014-6398 | N/A | 10/31/2007 |

Reauthorization clears another hurdle

In *Shoptalk Online* edition [432](#), we noted that the House Education and Labor Committee had developed a Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization bill (HR 4137), and that the full House was expected to vote upon the bill shortly.

Fast forward two months: After a holiday break and several weeks of intense negotiations on an economic stimulus package, Congress has finally turned its attention back to the HEA. Last Thursday, the House voted 354-58 to approve HR 4137, also known as the "College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007."

With approved bills from each chamber in hand, a conference committee composed of members of the House and Senate will now work to craft a compromise bill. If successful, an approved bill could reach the president's desk for signing before the current HEA extension expires on March 31.

More information

To access the text of HR 4137, go to Thomas, the U.S. Congress Web site, at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. In the space for "Search Bill Text," enter "HR 4137," click on "Bill Number," and click "Search."

Neg Reg heads toward the finish line

This year's Neg Reg has proceeded at a quick clip — since our last update (see *Shoptalk Online* edition [438](#)), the TEACH grant team has concluded negotiations and the student loans team has completed the second of three rounds of discussion.

TEACH grant sessions II & III

The second session of TEACH grant negotiations ended January 24; the third and final session occurred February 6-8. Although negotiators on this team were often required to navigate previously-uncharted territory, the committee succeeded in reaching consensus on all issues.

Counseling requirements and service and repayment obligations were critical concerns for all parties, since for those recipients who do not meet the service obligations, the TEACH grant would convert into an unsubsidized Direct Loan. The draft regulations (available on ED's Neg Reg site; see link below) reflect the careful attention negotiators gave to those topics.

Other issues decided by the committee revolve around institutional eligibility, student eligibility, application and administration processes, and permissible circumstances for which the eight-year service period may be suspended.

Loan session II

During the second loan issues session (held February 5-7), negotiators focused a great deal of attention on the new income-based repayment (IBR) plan created by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA). IBR will become available July 1, 2009; discussions so far have centered primarily on calculating the monthly payment amount, documenting eligibility, disclosing information on the availability of IBR to the borrower, and determining which loan payments will be included in the 25 years of repayment required for loan forgiveness.

The loans team also discussed the public service loan forgiveness program, which will provide forgiveness of the outstanding balance of a borrower's eligible Direct loan after 120 payments, if the borrower is employed full-time in a qualifying public service job. Negotiations have so far focused on the definition of full time employment and the loan forgiveness application process.

Negotiators also discussed the definition of family size for the purpose of determining eligibility for the economic hardship deferment, the new active duty military deferment, and the definition of not-for-profit loan holder for the purpose of special allowance payments. ED has not developed draft regulations on federal preemption of state laws. It has also indicated that the development of regulations for the purpose of harmonizing HEROES waivers with other military benefits — one of the original agenda items — will be postponed at this time due to the possibility that additional changes may be made to the statute in upcoming legislation.

What's next

The loans team will hold its third and final meeting March 4-6. Proposed rules for both teams will be published in the *Federal Register* for public comment as a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. After public comments have been received and reviewed, final rules will be published in the *Federal Register*. *Shoptalk Online* will keep you informed as these events occur.

More information

Please visit ED's "2007-08 Negotiated Rulemaking for Higher Education" Web page at www.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2008/index2008.html for updates on the committees' progress.

TG updates

TG and THECB host third year of financial aid telethons

For the third time in the last few years, TG and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) are combining their efforts to produce a series of telethons on financial aid. Their objective is simple but far-ranging: Reach out to students and families interested in college, but facing financial obstacles, by televising a special call-in program — the College Access and Affordability Telethon — in targeted viewing areas in Texas. The telethons offer one more way to connect with families who need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) and want more information about the financial aid process.

This year, TG and THECB are offering two versions of the telethon, one set of programs devoted to Spanish-speaking audiences and another version in English. The telethon series kicked off last week with Spanish-language programs broadcast by Univision cable stations in Austin (February 4), Dallas (February 6), and San Antonio (February 7).

Representatives from TG and THECB staffing the telethon offered callers information about the FAFSA, TASFA, and directed parents and students to other resources helpful in learning the financial aid process. (Representative from the Texas Women's University G-Force assisted during the Dallas telethon.) In cases where the caller didn't have ready access to the Internet, representatives offered to mail a packet of information on the FAFSA.

This week's events

For the second week of telethons, TG and THECB will be hosting the program in English in the east Texas region (Tyler). Telethons conclude next week with broadcasts in San Antonio and El Paso.

During the newscasts, the number for the Texas Financial Aid Information Center (TFAIC) and the College for Texans Web site are displayed prominently on the screen for viewers. Reporters also interview financial aid experts to discuss the various ways to pay for college and to help students and families find out more about navigating the financial aid process.

About the telethon

The College Access and Affordability Telethon is an initiative started by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) as a part of the College for Texans campaign. Members of TG's educational alliances and customer assistance teams, along with other TG volunteers, and the THECB staff take calls from college-bound students, their families, and others.

These college access-related telethons have generated thousands of calls to the TFAIC, which is staffed by TG's customer assistance team. Peak call times are during and immediately following a newscast, as well as the following mornings.

Learn more

For more information about the College Access and Affordability Telethon, you may contact the Texas Financial Aid Information Center at (888) 311-8881, or visit www.CollegeForTexans.com.

TG's annual Symposium leaves participants inspired, energized



Members of this year's Symposium class participate in a brainstorming exercise. Pictured l to r: Thelma Martinez (Lone Star College), Jess Mangold (Texas State University), Eric Cooper (UT San Antonio), Kim Canady (UT San Antonio), Raymond Clarke (Southern University), Bridgette Ingram (Texas A&M), Summer Kokic (Southern Methodist University), Rhonda Beauchamp (Texas State Technical College)

It's rare to find a well-rounded management workshop, polished in content and presentation; it's rarer still to find one that tailors its topics to the needs of financial aid professionals. TG offers just such an opportunity with its annual Financial Aid Leadership Symposium, a training experience crafted to help financial aid professionals advance in the profession.

This week-long workshop examines the dynamics of leading — teambuilding, coaching, ethics, accountability, for example — but applies them in situations and scenarios familiar to those who work in a financial aid office (FAO). TG has been offering the training annually for three years, and participants consistently rate the experience high, both for the “big picture” it offers of financial aid, and for the thoroughness and enthusiasm of presenters.

“You all have given me the knowledge and confidence to make a difference,” said one attendee at this year's Symposium, held February 4-8 in Round Rock, Texas. The event brought together 15 financial aid professionals from all institution types — public, private, four-year, and two-year colleges. Participants scored the 2008 Symposium a

4.87 out of 5.0. They especially appreciated the open atmosphere that the Symposium fosters, an environment of trust and honesty which allowed each person to share his or her particular challenges and questions.

“The environment was very safe and reassuring and made participation very easy,” said one attendee. Another said, “I now feel like I am part of the bigger picture and part of the financial aid community, not just an employee in my office.”

Career-building exercises

The Symposium organizes its content around 15 modules presented by seasoned trainers who know the regulatory and work routines of a financial aid office.

Individual and group exercises help to sharpen each participant's understanding of the qualities and skills vital to effective leadership, including the ability to motivate others, promote vision in the workplace, and negotiate change.

According to TG senior corporate trainer Tom Rebstock, one exercise helped attendees gauge their current strengths as leaders in order to build on those abilities.

"Participants spent Monday night reviewing their individual Leadership Assessment Instrument reports," said Tom. "This is a 360-degree feedback assessment that provides feedback from peers, subordinates, and supervisors on specific leadership skills and competencies."

This year, modules were added on other topics, including communications styles and systems thinking. Response was enthusiastic, said Tom, with many attendees doing well in presentation assignments and other interactive projects.

Staying in touch

Each year, the Symposium's alumni traditionally find benefit from one of the many perks of the training: continued candid feedback from friends and colleagues met at the event. After graduating, alumni stay in touch via an informal e-mail network, or 'feedback tree,' that allows members to bounce ideas and questions off each other — a form of connection that lasts as long as members need it.

"Each cohort finds this especially helpful, since they can rely on another source of advice and inspiration in each other," said Tom.

This year's cohort will likely take advantage of such a benefit, according to Tom. Members quickly bonded, sharing information openly and honestly. "They are driven and focused," said Tom. "They are very much committed to using the experience of the Symposium to become better leaders back at their respective financial aid offices."

To learn more about financial aid training

TG offers the Financial Aid Leadership Symposium for a fee to participants. If you'd like to learn more about the annual event, watch for announcement articles in *Shoptalk Online*.

To find out more about TG's other training opportunities in industry and FFELP-related issues, contact your account executive. You can also visit www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm to review the catalog for the TG Speakers Bureau, a series of workshops on financial aid and industry topics provided at no cost to schools.

Change to TG's forms distribution process and help with disclosures for APPS borrowers

TG is gearing up for 2008-09 processing, and, as part of that effort, is reviewing all current processes and services. This article announces two upcoming changes, one to TG's Preprint service and one to TG's Application and Printing Service (APPS).

Regarding the Preprint service, TG will continue to make blank Stafford and PLUS master promissory notes (MPNs) and school certification forms available to customers; however, effective March 31, 2008, we will discontinue customizing these forms with the school's or lender's identifying information in the upper right hand corner.

Also, effective March 31, TG will begin including a revised Addendum with each MPN generated through TG's Application and Printing Service (APPS). TG's APPS process populates an MPN with information provided by a borrower and prints and mails that MPN (and the appropriate Addenda) to the borrower for signature. The revised Addendum covers both changes made by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 (HERA) and by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) of 2007. The Addendum currently being used only notifies borrowers of changes made by HERA.

TG will assume responsibility for disclosing new loan terms authorized by the CCRAA to borrowers who received their loans through the TG APPS process during the period from October 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008. March 31 is the last day that TG will provide the HERA-only Addenda; October 1 is the effective date of the CCRAA. Lenders will provide borrowers with the appropriate disclosures using other loan origination systems.

To learn more

If you have any questions, please contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Product spotlight: Guide to Effective Practices in Student Success (EPSS) database

In May of last year, TG and the Educational Policy Institute (EPI), a nonprofit research center devoted to the study of educational opportunity, released a new Web-based tool to provide postsecondary institutions with access to varied strategies for improving student success.

The Effective Practices in Student Success (EPSS) database is a free resource for institutions of higher education, and allows schools to search a database of over 100 programs by geography, institutional level, selectivity, and a variety of other variables to find strategies that fit their requirements as an institution.

The EPI and TG solicit schools to submit their program information for inclusion in the database. Entries are peer-reviewed before being added. Each program must have some empirical evidence of success to be included in the EPSS.



Recently, TG and the EPI produced a companion booklet to the database, describing its objectives, providing a categorical analysis of the various featured programs, and, at the end, including a how-to section on using the EPSS database.

Inside the database guide

TG and EPI are committed to serving colleges and universities as they develop strategies for helping students graduate from college. The database offers numerous examples to that end, many of which can be tailored to fit the particular needs of other campuses.

The *EPSS Overview and Guidelines* booklet describes the diversity of these programs, detailing program goals and missions, the targeted demographics of particular programs, and the components that can be found in each, e.g., student services, academic services, or curriculum and instruction.

The booklet also considers who these programs serve, in this case, mainly undergraduate students and those students facing particular obstacles in going to college and remaining through to graduation; for example, first-generation students.

The how-to section at the back of the guide describes how to register to use the database, and then how to search its contents by filtering on various characteristics or details, such as program services, target population, educational type, etc. This section also details the online rating system by which users can rate and comment on featured programs.

Finally, the EPSS offers a way to submit programs for inclusion in the database. Submitted entries are sent through peer review before being posted online.

To order the guide

You can order the *EPSS Overview and Guidelines* booklet by visiting *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/order/index.cfm.

To learn more

Institutions interested in the EPSS can visit www.educationalpolicy.org/epss. Registration is free, and institutions are encouraged to add to the database.

Trends and issues

***Mapping Your Future*[™] to unveil Web site redesign**

Mapping Your Future is putting the finishing touches on a complete Web site redesign. The redesign, scheduled for implementation during the evening of March 28, will occur in conjunction with a move to a new Web domain — www.MappingYourFuture.org — and will change the Web site's file structure and navigation. The current edition of *Mapping Your Future's* online newsletter includes information about the following areas:

- Redesign training
- Web domain
- Staff e-mail addresses
- Design and content
- Linking to *Mapping Your Future*
- Student instructions for completing Online Student Loan Counseling
- Links to schools' customized pages
- Spread the word
- Broken link results
- Integrating Online Student Loan Counseling
- Integrating features and content
- ExitExpress
- ServicerExpress

To learn more

If you have questions, send an e-mail message to CariAnne Behr at carianne@mappingyourfuture.org, or call CariAnne at (573) 634-8641.

Question of the week

Q.: Can a school require an application other than the FAFSA for federal student aid?

A.: No. Page 3 of the 2008-09 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, Application and Verification Guide states:

"The FAFSA is the only form students must fill out to apply for Title IV aid. A school cannot require extra information from students except for verification or

resolution of conflicting information. However, a school may require additional information for other purposes, such as packaging private or institutional aid. If the school collects additional information that affects Title IV eligibility, it must take the information into account when awarding Title IV aid."

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

TG will be closed on Monday, February 18, in observance of Presidents Day. TG will resume normal business hours on Tuesday, February 19.



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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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