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

Subscribe to TG's *Enrollment Management Journal* and learn more about some of the latest research into retaining and graduating students. Find out more about the publication and begin subscribing at [www.tgslc.org/emj](http://www.tgslc.org/emj).

## Federal updates

### Economic stimulus bill finalized

Last week, Congress reached agreement on a final version of H.R.1, the new economic stimulus bill (see *Shoptalk Online* editions [489](#) and [487](#) for the history of the bill). President Obama is expected to sign the bill this week.

The compromise bill crafted by the Congressional conference committee represents a fusion of the original House and Senate bills; as such, it retains some federal student aid provisions but not others. For example, it authorizes increases in the annual Pell grant award amount, as well as increased Federal Work-Study allocations. It also provides for simplification and expansion of the current education tax credits. However, the final bill does not appear to contain the following, previously-proposed items: increases in unsubsidized Stafford loan limits, additional Perkins loan capital contributions, and funding for higher education facilities.

## **More information**

To access the text of H.R. 1, go to THOMAS, the U.S. Congress Web site, at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. In the space for "Search Bill Summary & Status," enter "H.R. 1," select "Bill Number," and then click on "Search." *Shoptalk Online* will keep readers informed of any further developments.

## **Questions about Income-Based Repayment? Don't miss this important webinar!**

Many members of the financial aid community have heard by now that a new repayment option, Income-Based Repayment (IBR), will be available to both current and new FFELP and Direct Loan borrowers as of July 1, 2009. But are you unsure how IBR works or what the associated terminology means? Join industry experts for an IBR webinar series offered by the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP) to get ready for this important new repayment option for borrowers. The first of several IBR webinars will be held on February 20, 2009, from noon to 2 p.m., CST.

### **Why lenders and servicers should attend**

IBR can be a powerful tool in your delinquency and default prevention programs, improving your organization's effectiveness in assisting borrowers to successfully repay their loans. In today's economic environment, it's more crucial than ever to ensure that borrowers are aware of this repayment option and can smoothly transition into it should they choose to do so. The availability of IBR for borrowers in adverse economic circumstances is also a point of interest for lenders wishing to use the Loan Purchase Commitment Program (put program) or Asset-Backed Commercial Paper Conduit Program (conduit) under the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (ECASLA), since repayment delinquencies can affect loans selected for inclusion in these programs.

### **Why schools should attend**

Borrowers, particularly those with relatively high federal loan debt, are keenly aware of the importance of entering the job market and achieving a reliable, adequate income. Unfortunately, they may feel pressured by those considerations to forgo employment in traditionally lower-paying professions, such as public service or social services. Financial aid staff can work to ensure borrowers understand that IBR provides reassurance to those borrowers that their loan payments will be manageable. IBR may also be an important tool for borrowers in adverse economic circumstances and could thus conceivably help borrowers from contributing to the school's cohort default rate.

### **Other resources**

Need more information but can't attend the webinar? *Shoptalk Online* has covered this topic on several occasions since it was enacted through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (see especially editions [481](#) and [482](#)). NASFAA

provides a comprehensive summary of IBR in its review of the October 23, 2008, final rules (NASFAA membership may be required to view the summary). [IBRinfo.org](http://IBRinfo.org) is a borrower-oriented site provided by the Project on Student Debt that offers a wealth of information about IBR in plain, understandable terms, and also features an IBR calculator to assist borrowers in determining their eligibility for the repayment option.

### **More information**

Register for the webinar at <http://event.on24.com/r.htm?e=135146&s=1&k=2A568B892043C6F3A6BBC05C62ED5793>. Registration is free and open to any interested party. Since this is the first of several NCHELP-sponsored IBR webinar training sessions, *Shoptalk Online* will keep readers informed as the details for additional training opportunities are announced. Each webinar will focus on different aspects of IBR.

### **E-ANN includes reminder of deadline to execute MLSA**

Last week, ED released Electronic Announcement (E-ANN) #48, which reminds lenders of the March 31, 2009, deadline for executing the 2008-09 Master Loan Sale Agreement (MLSA) if they wish to sell 2008-09 FFELP loans to ED under the Loan Purchase Commitment Program (put program) available through the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (ECASLA).

For lenders that have already executed a Master Participation Agreement (MPA) with ED to take advantage of the Loan Participation Purchase Program (participation program), the E-ANN reminds those lenders that they have until July 1, 2009, to execute the MLSA if they also want to use the put program to redeem any of the participation interest sold to ED.

### **For more information**

The E-ANN is available online at <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/ffelp>.

## **TG updates**

### **Get the training advantage: Register for the 2009 TG Annual Training Conference**

Each year, TG hosts a training conference on industry issues that draws hundreds of attendees and earns high marks for content. If you're looking for more return on your training investment, consider the varied menu of the 2009 TG Annual Training conference, which will feature sessions on the latest legislative developments (including the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (ECASLA)), workshops on financial literacy, and seminars to help sharpen your professional skills.



The 2009 TG Annual Training Conference, to be held at the Renaissance Hotel in Austin, Texas, from April 22-24, is themed "Stepping Up for Students — The Rhythm of FFELP." This year's event throws a spotlight on the dedication, energy, and momentum of financial aid professionals who help make college a reality for millions of students.

The 2009 conference offers over 60 sessions and kicks off with a conference overview from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22. This session provides a comprehensive look at the conference agenda and a short preview of special events. After a full first day of workshops, including sessions on default management and Income-Based Repayment, attendees will gather for a special reception roundtable called the TG Jukebox Jam, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

### **Meet and greet TG's many experts**

From borrower benefits to policy and technical expertise, TG works to offer great service to schools and lenders. The TG Jukebox Jam will provide a forum for learning about these offerings in a roundtable format with TG team members. Conference attendees will hear from TG experts on customer service, TG's financial literacy and default management tools, as well as TG's products and services that can help schools and lenders in their work with students.

### **Learn more about products with the help of TUG**

Board members of the TG Users Group (TUG) will serve as speakers in several sessions focused on TG products. TUG board members will also work as facilitators for product sessions that offer opportunities for providing feedback on TG tools. Note that the TUG meeting will not be held the morning prior to the start of the conference.

Other sessions consider the role of creativity in a productive work life, the growing importance of financial literacy skills in college and career, and an effective approach to customer service. Attendees will enjoy musical entertainment during the Thursday evening reception, which follows "in step" with the conference theme.

The conference's closing day begins with a general session on the state of student aid and concurrent sessions on varied regulatory and industry topics, including entrance and exit counseling and the Return of Title IV funds.

### **To learn more and register**

Find out more about this year's varied agenda by visiting *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/tgconference/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/tgconference/index.cfm). You can register for the conference at [www.tgslc.org/tgconference/register.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/tgconference/register.cfm).

## **TG to host Student Success Symposia**

TG offers a series of workshops for community colleges, independent colleges, and public universities interested in improving student persistence and success. These workshops, or Student Success Symposia, will focus on a variety of enrollment factors, for example:

- the state of institutions within the given sectors;
- the redefinition of retention and student success; and
- ways to create a culture of engagement.

### **Inside the seminar**

Attendees will learn about comprehensive enrollment management planning, including some practical steps to serve students, such as discussing financial management alongside academic issues and lifestyle choices.

TG's Student Success Symposia are designed to provide unbiased, unaffiliated training for all industry practitioners interested in improving student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates across the academic community. The views expressed by the symposia presenters are their own, not necessarily those of TG, and do not represent an endorsement of any particular program or policy.

### **Symposia dates and locations**

- Columbus, Ohio — community colleges (March 20)
- Austin, Texas — independent colleges and universities (May 21-22)
- San Antonio, Texas — four-year public universities (June 4-5)

### **To learn more and register**

To register for this event, visit *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/training/symposia/register.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/training/symposia/register.cfm).

## **From R2T4 to customer service, TG offers spring training to suit your needs**

This spring conference season, TG will participate at a variety of conference events designed to sharpen your knowledge on financial aid and give you a fresh perspective on work. Over the coming months, TG will offer sessions at conferences in West Virginia, Kansas, Arizona, Oklahoma, and other places. To learn more about these trainings, read through the following short session descriptions. You'll find a complete listing of events that TG will attend at [www.tgslc.org/abouttg/calendar.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/abouttg/calendar.cfm).

*West Virginia Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (WVASFAA) Conference, Canaan Valley, W. Va., April 1–2*

- **Best Practices in Customer Service:** Participants will share specific steps and procedures that have proven successful in serving students. Participants will also take away a list of best practices for implementing these customer service principles.
- **What's My Communication Style?:** This interactive workshop is designed to help the financial aid professional discover the strengths and weaknesses of different communication styles. Using an assessment tool, the financial aid professional will learn their preference for one of four communication styles, identify the various facets of communication, and learn how to use their own style to improve communication with students, parents, and their colleagues in the higher education industry.

*Kansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (KASFAA) Spring Conference, Topeka, Kan., April 2*

- **Dealing with Difficult Students:** Explore a six-step model to defuse confrontational customers and handle difficult situations. Participants will practice via role-playing exercises based on real financial aid scenarios.

*Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA) Spring Symposium, Phoenix, Ariz., April 9*

- **R2T4 — Basics and Beyond:** The Return of Title IV funds (R2T4) calculation is one of the most challenging duties that a financial aid officer must perform. This session will help demystify the R2T4 calculation for new and seasoned financial aid officers. The course provides some general principles of the R2T4 process, explains the elements of an R2T4 calculation, and provides recommendations on how to avoid some of the more common R2T4 findings in a program review.
- **Verification in the Financial Aid Office:** Whether you're a new or experienced aid administrator, verification can be a frustrating and intimidating process without the right knowledge and tools. In this session, participants review basic verification requirements, discuss what information must be verified versus what schools may choose to verify, and address common, recurrent questions.

*Oklahoma Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (OASFAA) Conference, Midwest City, Okla., April 16*

- **Pizza Cravings and Credit Cards:** It's tempting for students to obtain a credit card when they're pressured almost daily to apply for one. But do they know the real cost of items purchased on a credit card? Come see this presentation of TG's Positive+Balance™ financial literacy session on credit cards, which includes a demonstration of TG's virtual credit card purchase simulator.

*Delaware–District of Columbia–Maryland Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (DEDCMDASFAA) Spring Workshop, Annapolis, Md., April 16*

- **Working with You Is Killing Me™:** Feeling caught in an emotionally distressing situation at work? This session helps participants unhook from emotional pitfalls in the financial aid office as well as manage difficult personalities.

### To learn more

Would you like to learn more about the many industry training opportunities TG offers through its Speakers Bureau? Visit [www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/speakers/index.cfm) to review the complete training catalog. Keep in mind that TG can adapt a particular training session to meet the needs of your financial aid office. To find out how, contact your account executive at (800) 252-9743, or send an e-mail message to [relationship.management@tgslc.org](mailto:relationship.management@tgslc.org).

## This, that, and the other

TG's college and career-planning Web site, *Adventures In Education (AIE™)*, offers students a robust scholarship search engine with information on more than 10,000 scholarships with a combined value of more than \$7 billion. Visitors to the site can access this information quickly through various search options. Using the "Quick Search" option, AIE visitors enter relevant keywords and then choose the type of search to run — by an exact phrase, by all words in the description, or by any word in the description. Using the "Advanced Search" button, users can tailor a query according to a set of criteria specified on various selection tabs, including Me, My Place, My School, My Interests, and My Jobs. The results page for a query present a variety of key information about scholarships, including award amounts, deadlines, contact information, the number of awards offered, and the type of award.

To try out AIE's Scholarship Search for yourself, visit [www.AIE.org/scholarships](http://www.AIE.org/scholarships). To explore the entire site, visit AIE at [www.AIE.org](http://www.AIE.org).



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