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Smart Solutions

Find some great ways to design and implement a campus financial literacy program through TG’s Positive+Balance CommunitySM. Hear from peers, share your insights, and download TG’s financial literacy presentations for free. [Register](#) and find out more.

TG Report

TG helps spread the word on financial aid with *FAFSA Made Easy* program

Each year, TG produces an informative program on completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Available in English and Spanish, the *FAFSA Made Easy* program offers tips and information for completing the FAFSA section by section.

The free program will be available to ship starting February 1; however, schools and other institutions can begin ordering the program now. Higher education institutions as well as high schools, libraries, community outreach groups, and faith-based organizations are encouraged to register to receive the program. In turn, they can act as host sites, offering the program to students and families.

To receive the program

Organizations can [register to receive](#) the *FAFSA Made Easy* program at TG's public service Web site, *Adventures In Education*. To promote the program, registered organizations will receive a packet, which includes posters, flyers, a sign-up sheet, an evaluation form, and other materials. The DVD of the 45-minute program will be shipped separately for orders made before January 25. After this date, promotional packets and DVDs will be mailed together.

"The great benefit of the DVD is that organizations can show the program when and where needed," said Richard Sapp, TG's director of pre-college success. "The program can also be broadcast over public access and school district television outlets."

Incentives for students

College-bound students who view the *FAFSA Made Easy* program can enter a drawing to win a scholarship or grand prize. Five \$500 scholarships will be distributed to winners; the grand prize will be a laptop or desktop PC. To enter, students must complete an evaluation form for the *FAFSA Made Easy* program. Host sites can make copies of the evaluation form and return completed forms to TG.

Winners of the scholarships and computer are under no obligation to obtain student loans from any lending institution or have their loans guaranteed by TG.

To learn more

For more information, contact TG's director of pre-college success Richard Sapp at (800) 252-9743, ext. 2865, or send an e-mail message to richard.sapp@tgsllc.org.

TG to offer support at key Financial Aid Awareness Month events in Texas

During Financial Aid Awareness Month, TG joins with dozens of other institutions across Texas, promoting financial aid awareness and lending support to those seeking financial aid. TG will offer assistance at events scheduled throughout February, including College Goal Sundays. A partial list of events follows. Note that these events are open to all families and students interested in completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), including students currently enrolled in college or those interested in enrolling.

Financial Aid Saturdays

TG staff members will meet with families and students at events called "Financial Aid Saturdays," hosted by 13 Austin-area independent school districts (ISDs), including Austin, Del Valle, Georgetown, Hays, and Round Rock. Held every Saturday from February 6 to March 27, these workshops provide guidance for completing and submitting the FAFSA. TG will train volunteers from the Central Texas business community who will offer assistance at the workshops. TG will also train volunteers for a pilot Financial Aid Saturday program planned for the Dallas area. Tax professionals from Community Tax Centers will be on hand at select locations to help complete tax forms necessary for the FAFSA. To learn more about planned activities, contact TG's assistant director of pre-college success Bonita Peebles at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4784, or send an e-mail message to bonita.peebles@tgslc.org.

Hispanic outreach

On February 6, TG representatives will attend the fourth annual *Feria Para Aprender*, a health, education, and social services fair to be held at the Travis County Exposition Center in Austin. Team members will provide college awareness material and answer questions on how to prepare and pay for college. To learn more, contact Bonita Peebles at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4784, or send an e-mail message to bonita.peebles@tgslc.org.

College Goal Sunday

Texas' College Goal Sunday is an annual event, offering information about financial aid and assistance to families and students filling out the paperwork required to qualify for aid. These events bring together colleges, high schools, families, and students at 33 locations throughout the state. This year, Texas' College Goal Sunday will be held on February 21. Students and families will be able to ask questions about the FAFSA as well as learn how to complete and submit the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA). A complete listing of host locations and other event details is [available online](#).

And more to come

Throughout February, TG offers support for numerous other financial aid fairs and workshops. For details, please contact Bonita Peebles at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4784, or send an e-mail message to bonita.peebles@tgslc.org.

To order publications and other resources

If you'd like to promote financial aid awareness on your campus, or provide materials in outreach efforts of your own, consider TG's posters and publications, provided at no charge. Visit *TG Online* to [order any of these materials](#).

Register for TG's upcoming California regional trainings

In the last two years, federal student aid programs have seen a number of dramatic changes. TG's regional trainings provide a forum for exploring some of the latest federal, regulatory, and industry changes. Even better, they're free, presented by TG experts, and offer a candid setting for asking questions and sharing insights.

This February, TG offers regional trainings in or around three of California's major cities. Trainings will be offered in San Diego on Tuesday, February 23; in the Los Angeles area on Wednesday, February 24; and in the San Francisco area on Thursday, February 25. The workshops will run 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Pacific Time. More details about workshop locations are [available online](#).

Training topics will include:

- **Financial literacy:** In this interactive session, learn how you can promote financial literacy among your students and add to their money management skills. Participants will divide up into small groups and discuss strategies for educating students on credit, debt, and other issues. Attendees will take away a comprehensive list of suggested strategies, which they can implement on campus.
- **Federal update:** Learn about recent activities that may affect the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and other federal student aid programs. The session will offer updates on various issues including federal common forms, *Dear Colleague/Partner* letters issued by ED, proposed and final federal regulations, and pending legislation.
- **Income-Based Repayment basics:** Find out how Income-Based Repayment (IBR) could benefit certain borrowers by minimizing monthly payments. This segment of the program describes how borrowers qualify for IBR, outlines IBR's potential benefits to borrowers and schools, and offers ideas for educating borrowers about IBR.

Join the dialogue

Register for the California regional trainings through *TG Online*.

To learn more

Visit *TG Online* to [browse the TG Speakers Bureau training catalog](#). Keep in mind that TG can adapt training sessions to meet the needs of your campus. To find out how, contact your account executive at (800) 252-9743.

Vexed by verification? Plan to attend TG's upcoming industry webinar

With the 2010-11 FAFSA processing cycle underway, schools are likely thinking about how best to approach the next wave of verification. For a refresher on the finer points of household size, number in college, adjusted gross income, taxes paid, and untaxed income and benefits, mark your calendar for TG's webinar on Verification in the Financial Aid Office. This webinar will be offered on Thursday, January 21, 10 a.m.-11 a.m. Central Time, and will be repeated on the same day at 3 p.m.-4 p.m. Central Time.

This session will define verification, review how applications are selected for verification, identify what information must be verified, and discuss how that information should be verified.

To register

Visit *TG Online* to [register for this and other upcoming TG webinars](#). Click each listed webinar link to begin the registration process.

Help your students learn the ABCs of credit card use

The beginning of a semester is a great time to offer your students an instant education on the value of using credit wisely. During a difficult economy, more students may be tempted by credit cards. Some studies, such as a recent one released by Sallie Mae, show that a growing number of students are turning to credit cards to cover essential purchases, such as college text books and even tuition, not just pizza or spring break vacation.

TG's college and career planning Web site, *Adventures In Education (AIE™)*, offers students help in several ways, including interactive tools and information on smart credit practices. AIE defines a basic set of consumer behaviors for using credit cards. Help your students build a strong financial foundation with these tips.

- **All you need is one:** Credit cards can be all too tempting — easy to apply for and easy to use. To set a firm limit on what you spend, take out only one card.

One card will make it easier to set a regular pattern of purchases and repayment — and establish a good credit history.

- **Read between the lines:** Before you take out a credit card, educate yourself. What is the interest percentage rate? Are there annual fees attached? Is there a different interest rate for cash advances? Get the answers before you settle on a card.
- **Make sure you can swing it:** Everyone lives on a budget. Work your monthly credit card expenses into your monthly budget and ensure you can handle the extra costs.
- **Overpay:** If you are not able to pay the balance in full, pay at least twice the minimum monthly payment. Paying more eliminates the debt faster and gives you more room to spend on essential items, like household expenses.
- **Do the math:** Check your receipts against the monthly statement you receive. That way you can see patterns in your purchases, consider the amount you spend, and keep a close eye on what you're being charged for interest.
- **Make a deal:** Watch out for "low introductory" rates. These can sometimes turn into higher rates if a payment is missed or comes in late. Also, be aware of annual fees. Many companies may charge an annual fee just to have the credit card itself.

Explore AIE's financial literacy resources

Learn more about TG's assorted financial literacy tools by visiting AIE. For questions about AIE, contact TG's communications team at communications@tgslc.org.

Industry Update

ED releases Pell Grant charts

On January 13, 2010, ED published a *Dear Colleague Letter* (DCL) P-10-01 announcing the eagerly awaited Pell Grant payment and disbursement schedules for the 2010-11 award year (July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011). Schools must use these charts in awarding all 2010-11 Pell Grant awards for full-time, three-quarter-time, half-time, and less-than-half-time students. Note that each of the schedules (full-time, three-quarter-time, half-time, and less-than-half-time) spans two pages in order to display the extended maximum eligible Expected Family Contributions (EFC) up to 4617.

The maximum Pell Grant award for the 2010-11 award year will be \$5,550, which is an increase of \$200 from the 2009-10 award year. This figure includes the maximum amount of \$4,860 appropriated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act,

2010 (P.L. 111-117), as well as the automatic \$690 increase established by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (CCRAA).

Also keep in mind that the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) modified the determination of the minimum Pell Grant award, so that for the 2010-11 award year, the minimum award is ten percent of the appropriated maximum, or \$486. However, students whose EFC equals at least five percent of the appropriated maximum (243) are eligible for the minimum award of \$486 plus the CCRAA-added \$690, for a total minimum award for a full-time student of \$1,176.

For more information

DCL P-10-01 and the accompanying charts are available on the Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) Web site at <http://ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/P1001.html>.

ED issues correction notice on treatment of AmeriCorps benefits

On January 14, ED released an Electronic Announcement that provides the following guidance on the treatment of AmeriCorps benefits in awarding federal student aid.

“The purpose of this announcement is to inform institutions that the 2009-2010 *Federal Student Aid Handbook* in Volume 3 on page 3-144 incorrectly indicates that AmeriCorps awards or benefits are no longer estimated financial assistance (EFA). This general statement is not accurate. AmeriCorps awards or benefits are generally EFA for purposes of the Federal Title IV student assistance programs, as they have been in the past. Also as in the past, AmeriCorps awards or benefits are not to be included as EFA when determining eligibility for subsidized Stafford loans, but are included as EFA for unsubsidized Stafford loans. In addition, while AmeriCorps awards or benefits are EFA, an institution may, as in the past, for the Campus-Based, ACG, National SMART Grant, and the TEACH Grant programs exclude as EFA a portion of any subsidized Stafford loan that is equal to or less than the amount of the student’s AmeriCorps award or benefit paid for the cost of attendance.”

More information

The [announcement](#) is also available on the Information for Financial Aid Professionals Web site. If you have questions about this topic, please contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Policy Resources

Ask the Policy Expert

Q.: When will fiscal year (FY) 2008 cohort default rates (CDRs) be available?

A: ED announced release dates for CDR information in the December 28, 2009, [Technical Update GA-2009-05](#), which was revised January 6, 2010.

For both the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program (FDLP), ED will calculate draft FY 2008 CDRs on January 2, 2010, and release them on February 8, 2010.

ED will calculate official FY 2008 FFELP and FDLP CDRs on July 31, 2010, and release them on September 13, 2010.

Do you have a question?

Feel free to *Ask TG™*. *Ask TG*, TG's online query tool for borrowers, schools, and lenders, offers a database of frequently asked questions about financial aid, student loan processing, and TG's products and services. To submit a question, visit tgsic.custhelp.com.

News Briefs

Each year, the processing of thousands of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) submissions can be delayed because of errors that are easy to prevent. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) has prepared a list of common FAFSA errors. The association also offers tips on filling out the application in the most efficient way. Students and families may find this resource helpful, especially since completing the FAFSA incorrectly can affect the amount of a student's financial aid. [Review NASFAA's FAFSA tips and common errors.](#)



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

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