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Smart Solutions

The end of the semester means moving time for many of your students, especially graduates. Help these students cut potential stress and costs from their moving experience with *Adventures In Education’s* “Relocation Guide.”

TG Report

Next week’s TG conference to feature ED speakers, varied industry topics

Held from April 26-29 at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center on the University of Texas at Austin campus, the TG Annual Training Conference promises an eclectic training experience focused on issues important to today’s higher education community, including Wednesday’s sessions on default aversion

and financial literacy, and Thursday's sessions on policy changes and access and outreach subjects.

Ramit Sethi, New York Times bestselling author of *I Will Teach You To Be Rich*, will present the keynote address on Wednesday, April 27, at 8:30 a.m.

Jeff Baker of ED's policy liaison and implementation staff, and Dan Weaver, assistant commissioner, business and support services division, for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), will deliver the federal and state updates, respectively, during the general session on Thursday, April 28, at 8:30 a.m.

Along with diverse trainings on default aversion strategies and financial literacy education, the conference features regulatory sessions that explore the Program Integrity final rules, veterans issues, Return of Title IV funds, and much more.

TG will also simulcast two sessions from this year's event — one that reviews a recent study released by the Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) on loan delinquency and default, and another on problematic financial behaviors among consumers.

Register for the simulcasts

To register for [the simulcast sessions](#), visit *TG Online*. A Web address to access the simulcasts will be provided to all registrants prior to the day of the event.

Presentations available

Most TG conference session presentations are [currently available online](#). Recordings of selected sessions, along with all presentation materials, can be viewed online after the conference. Watch for a notice on accessing these materials in a future edition of *Shoptalk*.

Hotel details

TG's hotel room block reservation for the conference at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center has expired. Rooms may still be available at the conference hotel but not at the conference rate. For alternative arrangements, attendees are encouraged to contact the [Doubletree Austin Hotel — University Area](#) located at 1617 N I-35.

Registration information

View the [complete agenda](#) for this year's conference online and register. The 2011 TG Annual Training Conference offers flexible registration choices, including options to attend half-day workshops, one or two full days at special discounted rates, or the full four-day agenda. Online registration is closed. However, participants can show up and register in person.

To speak with someone directly about the conference, contact TG's event planning coordinator Judith Cunningham at (800) 252-9743, ext. 2905, or send an email message to judith.cunningham@tgslc.org.

Supplement your exit counseling materials with TG resources

In the welter of completing coursework, finding a job, and moving, your students may not be focused on one of their prime responsibilities after graduation: paying back student loans. Exit counseling offers a key opportunity to help your students prepare for repayment and get off to a strong financial start after college.

An online or in-person exit counseling session can equip students with facts about their debt, information on their rights and responsibilities as borrowers, and repayment options. TG offers resources to help you amplify the message of exit counseling, including a brochure that explores the repayment process and a set of online presentations.

Repayment Overview brochure

TG has consolidated several brochures to create a comprehensive pamphlet that describes loan repayment. The *Repayment Overview: A Guide to Repaying Your Federal Student Loan* brochure replaces the *FAQ*, *Options After Default*, *Student Loan Default*, and *Managing Repayment* publications, and offers information on:

- Repayment plans
- A comparison of payments under each plan
- Other options for managing repayment, including deferment, forbearance, and consolidation
- Advice for working with a loan holder
- Understanding default and its consequences
- Ten tips to avoid default
- Rewards of consistent repayment



To order

The brochure, available in Spanish and English, can be [ordered online](#).

Online modules

TG and the Council for the Management of Educational Finance (Council) have assembled a series of presentations and handouts, which can enhance the loan repayment information you offer departing students. These materials serve both FFELP and FDLP borrowers, providing guidance on borrower responsibilities, repayment plans and options, the consequences of default, and much more.

TG and the Council developed the curriculum to help postsecondary institutions train their staffs, who can, in turn, help borrowers manage their student loan debt. These presentations have been created to deliver a consistent message to students — that repayment is an obligation, that repayment plans are flexible and designed to meet borrower needs, and that help is available if necessary.

The entrance and exit counseling materials, titled "[Creating Consistency in Educational Finance: A Training Curriculum](#)," are available through *TG Online*.

More information

For questions about loan entrance or exit counseling, contact TG Customer Assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Remind your graduating students of a few spending plan essentials

By Sharon Cabeen, TG's director of financial literacy operations

One of the wonderful things about my work is that I find opportunities to help others understand the basic concepts of financial literacy even when I am "off-duty." Take for instance a recent plane trip I took to Washington, D.C. I was scheduled to present at a school workshop there; my subject was "Spending Plans: Meeting Goals the Simple Way," which is a module from the TG Financial Literacy Program.



My seatmates and I exchanged greetings and then went about our own business. Immediately, the young lady who sat next to me took out a thick stack of receipts and announced that plane time was "life-organizing" time – which, in her case, meant receipt-organizing.

I turned to my presentation and was quietly studying the material when the young lady said, "Excuse me, but are you going to be teaching that to someone?" I replied "Yes," and a long conversation ensued, which made clear how eager this young woman was to pick up a few tips and hone her money management skills.

As it turns out, she is a recent college graduate in her first job. Her parents had obviously encouraged her in positive financial behaviors: she had her money organized in an online program which separates out expenses by type; she was contributing at a satisfactory level to her 401K; she had a small emergency savings account; and she didn't have debt — a big plus. But still, she had questions about what else she needed to do to manage her money well. In this regard, she was like many young adults I meet, people who feel insecure about their financial skills and clearly anxious to make sure they "get it right."

Luckily, the financial literacy training session I was to present offered great fodder for an impromptu review. And review we did, talking through these guideposts of setting an effective spending plan, including:

- Assessing your resources.
- Making a list of items you purchase regularly to ensure they match, not exceed, your income.
- Crafting an emergency plan for when you do exceed your financial resources.
- Paying yourself first.
- Always giving yourself "mad money," that is, money that you can spend on a whim as a reward or just for the heck of it. (We talked about this practice at length as she seemed to need permission to enjoy life in such a way at this early stage in her career.)
- Considering how to adapt and adjust your plan based on ever-evolving values and life circumstances.

We discussed personal values, given how critical understanding our own values is to the financial decisions we make throughout life. The really wonderful thing was she totally got it. She said the conversation actually inspired her to keep doing the right things in terms of managing money. Let me tell you, for someone like me, who is a teacher at heart, that is a great thing to hear. At one point, she even asked me if I would help her establish her own spending plan and cash flow statement!

In retrospect, this experience reminds me of several things: First, how frank discussions on money matters offered at key times, such as in college or just before graduation, can go a long way toward empowering young consumers to take charge of their financial behavior. And second, helping even just one individual experience that "eureka moment" about the benefits of saving, budgeting, and setting a spending plan can make any work to that end worthwhile.

About Sharon Cabeen

With more than 25 years of management and program development experience, Sharon Cabeen manages the TG Financial Literacy Program, including the development of new financial literacy services and products. Cabeen has been a certified credit counselor since 1985. She also holds the designation of Accredited Financial Counselor with the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE).

Learn more about the TG Financial Literacy Program

The TG Financial Literacy Program is comprised of ten 15-minute presentations with accompanying activities, workbooks, and speaker's scripts. Modules cover a range of topics, such as managing credit and saving and investing. Illustrations, content, and format for each module are tailored to appeal to students from high school through college. The entire program places an emphasis on teaching by interaction, the better to gain and keep attention on such important topics as budgeting and saving. Session participants will receive workbooks that contain glossaries, FAQs, suggested resources for further study, and information on key concepts.

Browse a list of [TG Financial Literacy Program modules](#) to learn more about TG's program or to request a "Train-the-Trainer" session for your staff who can then train students on a given topic.

TG closed half-day on Good Friday

TG will be closed for a half-day this Friday, April 22, starting at 12 p.m. Central Time. TG will resume normal business hours of operation on Monday, April 25.

Industry Update

ED invites schools to participate in the Quality Assurance Program

On April 8, 2011, ED published a notice in the *Federal Register* inviting schools to participate in the Quality Assurance Program (QAP). For schools who may be interested, the notice instructs schools to send a letter of application to ED's Quality Assurance mailbox at quality.assurance@ed.gov any time after April 8, 2011. Schools that currently participate in QAP may continue to do so, and are not required to submit a new letter of application. This article will provide additional background information about the QAP to help schools better understand the purpose of the program and the influence and value it has on Title IV administration.

An overview of QAP

As described in [Section 487A](#) of the Higher Education Act (HEA), the QAP supports the improvement of Title IV administration by not only providing schools with certain regulatory relief, but also allowing schools to implement individualized school systems that reduce administrative burden and improve compliance with the Title IV rules. This approach supports the overall goal of enhancing program integrity within the federal student aid delivery system. Incidentally, while the QAP primarily focuses on verification as described in the supplementary information in the *Federal Register*, other areas that ED may consider as part of QAP include “the processing and disbursement of student aid and entrance and exit interviews.”

School participation and criteria for consideration

Although ED is responsible for determining the school criteria and consideration, the statute stipulates that the criteria include “demonstrated institutional performance... and shall take into consideration current quality assurance goals.” Also, while schools participating in QAP vary in size and scope, ED seeks to expand participation so that practices and information gathered can be used to assist all schools who administer Title IV programs.

In the *Federal Register*, ED notes that the letter of application should reflect a school’s commitment to:

- Improving the accuracy of school verification
- Increasing school flexibility to manage Title IV funds while maintaining accountability for the correct utilization of those funds
- Using FSA Assessments to strengthen stewardship of Title IV funds.

ED will review applicants to determine if they meet statutory requirements, but may also consider the school’s financial responsibility, administrative capability, program review or audit findings, or additional considerations as outlined in the regulations and *Federal Student Aid Handbook*. Finally, once selected to participate, the school completes the process by signing an amendment to its Program Participation Agreement (PPA).

QAP tools available

QAP has led to the creation of innovative tools that help schools “assess, measure, analyze, correct, and prevent compliance problems.” These tools include the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) Analysis Tool and the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Assessments. The ISIR analysis tool enhances a school’s ability to better understand its FAFSA applicant population. As an example, it allows the school to view the elements on a student’s FAFSA application that have changed based on verification along with the impact the changes will have on the applicant’s

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and aid eligibility. On the other hand, the FSA assessments provide a framework to assist schools in developing policies and procedures in various areas of Title IV administration. These areas include verification, satisfactory academic progress, return of Title IV funds, fiscal management, student eligibility, and much more.

Overall, the ISIR analysis tool and the FSA assessment modules can help schools enhance their services and strengthen compliance with Title IV rules.

Regulatory relief for schools under QAP

For those schools that currently participate in QAP, ED waives certain verification requirements that would normally be part of the school's management system. According to ED's [QAP website](#), the regulatory exemptions for participating schools include the ability to:

- Use alternative standards to document policies and procedures for verification other than those normally required as described in §668.53 (a)(1) through (4).
- Identify which applicants are subject to verification other than ED selected applicants as described in §668.54 (a)(1)(2) and (4). In this instance, a school establishes its own verification criteria based on specific analysis of its applicant pool and data from ED's Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR) Analysis Tool.
- Decide which specific items in the ISIR will be verified rather than verifying all five items as listed in §668.56.
- Determine the standards, other than those outlined in §668.57, as to what constitutes "acceptable documentation" for those items verified.
- Establish deadlines for submitting documentation rather than using an ED-determined deadline as described in §668.60 (a).

Value of participation and additional information

School participation in QAP is beneficial to and affects the entire financial aid community. While participating schools may find regulatory relief, ED reviews the quality assurance conducted by these schools; and based on the results of the participation, ED must make recommendations to Congress suggesting how the HEA may be amended to strengthen the integrity and improve the administration of the Title IV programs.

For questions about QAP, schools can contact ED's QA staff at quality.assurance@ed.gov. In addition, ED's video session at the 2010 Federal Student Aid conference — [Changes to Verification –The QAP Program Refined](#) — will provide more insight about the program and its direction given the new final rules

on verification (which are effective July 1, 2012) as well as the implementation of the IRS Data Retrieval process.

ED publishes corrections to Program Integrity final rules and preamble language

In the [April 13, 2011, Federal Register](#), ED announced a number of corrections regarding the preamble discussion and regulatory language found in the [October 29, 2010, Program Integrity final rules](#). These corrections are effective July 1, 2011, with the exception of corrections regarding verification — interim disbursement provisions in §668.58 which are effective July 1, 2012.

Summary of corrections

These corrections improve the clarity and accuracy of the preamble and final rule language in the following ways:

- Resolve “typo” errors.
- Adjust the placement of text in the state licensure chart in the preamble section, to clarify the applicable state approval or licensure process requirements for each organizational type of postsecondary institution (educational institution, business, or charitable organization).
- Clarify the description of state approval or licensure rules to specify when a postsecondary institution must be explicitly named by a state, with respect to whether a school’s state approval will be viewed as sufficient to support its eligibility for Title IV program participation.
- Clarify that incentive compensation provisions apply to either a person or an entity engaged in student recruitment, enrollment, or financial aid decisions.
- Correct preamble guidance regarding the disbursement of Title IV funds to a student enrolled less than half-time in a payment period, in connection with return of Title IV funds rules for programs offered in modules.
- Clarify ED’s intentions with respect to potential misrepresentations and misleading statements.
- Update language regarding interim disbursements to reflect that Stafford loans will be disbursed only in the Federal Direct Loan Program when the new verification rules take effect in 2012.

To learn more

For more information on the Program Integrity final rules, please contact TG's Customer Assistance team at (800) 845-6267, or send an email message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

News Briefs

Some colleges are trying to take the guesswork out of course advising, replacing flesh-and-blood advisors with online versions that recommend classes according to a student's academic performance, field of study, and course requirements — the way some websites recommend music or movies based on a consumer's choices. One such school is Austin Peay State University in Tennessee, which recently piloted a "robot advisor" system. According to administrators, the system's great advantage is its more objective approach. An online advisor can consider several factors at one time in making its suggestions, whereas human advisors might skew their guidance by looking only at one variable — the requirements of a major, for example. [Learn more about how some colleges are reinventing the college advising experience](#) by reading the complete *Chronicle of Higher Education* article. Note that some *Chronicle* articles are available by subscription only.



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