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### Smart Solutions

Will incoming freshmen be visiting your campus this summer? Help them get the most from their experience with TG's tip list for campus visits. You'll find it along with schedule planners, college repayment charts, and more through [Adventures In Education](#).

## Industry Update

### ED releases new interest rates for older variable FFELP Stafford and PLUS loans

On June 3, 2011, ED provided an announcement that outlines the variable interest rates for older FFELP Stafford and PLUS loans. Below is a summary of the current variable interest rates and those that will be effective beginning July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012.

#### Variable rates for loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 1998, and before July 1, 2006

Stafford and PLUS loans first disbursed on or after July 1, 1998, and before July 1, 2006, have variable rates that reset annually on July 1, based on the last 91-day T-bill auction in May. The new variable rates for these loans can be seen in the far right-hand column in the chart below:

Loan type	Loan status	Effective July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011	Effective July 1, 2011, to June 30, 2012
Stafford loans (subsidized and unsubsidized)	Repayment or forbearance	2.47%	2.36%
	In-school, grace, or deferment	1.87%	1.76%
PLUS loans (parent or student)	All statuses	3.27%	3.16%

#### More rates to come

Some older PLUS and Supplemental Loan for Students (SLS) loans have variable interest rates based on the weekly average of the one-year constant maturity Treasury yield for the last calendar week ending on or before June 26. As a result, new rates on such loans won't be available until late June.

Another interest rate not expected until late June is the one applicable to the Health Education Assistance Loan (HEAL) portion of federal Consolidation loans, which is based on the average of the bond equivalent rates of the 91-day T-bills auctioned for the quarter ending June 30.

## More information

ED's [announcement on the new interest rates](#) is available online and may be viewed to obtain additional rates not listed the chart provided. For questions about the interest rate changes, contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an email message to [cust.assist@tgslc.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgslc.org).

## Total and permanent disability (TPD) discharge updates

On June 6, 2011, ED provided an [electronic announcement](#) indicating that it has fully transitioned TPD discharge servicing to Nelnet. The TPD servicing includes processes and services for all TPD discharge assignments and referrals for veterans and non-veterans on behalf of ED.

Additionally, the announcement reminds schools that the contact information on the specific TPD Web pages for schools and loan holders, and for borrowers have been updated and can be accessed by clicking on the applicable hyperlink below:

- [Schools and loan holders](#)
- [Borrowers](#)

While the contact information is different on each page, the structure for each page is very similar. First, the title of each Web page is: Total and Permanent Disability Discharge and Veterans Disability Discharge. The page itself is divided into two sections: the first section provides general TPD discharge information, and the second section provides information that focuses on Veterans Disability Discharge. Each section includes the appropriate contact information depending upon whether the discharge is for a veteran or nonveteran.

## Processing relief for borrowers

ED recently provided [guidance](#) regarding FFELP borrowers seeking a TPD discharge. The new guidance permits a guarantor to accept and process a photocopy of a TPD discharge application without requiring the borrower to provide an original signature on that photocopy. This change should provide some flexibility and relief for borrowers as they complete the application process.

## For more information

For questions about total and permanent disability discharge, contact TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267, or send an email message to [cust.assist@tgslc.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgslc.org).

## Satisfactory academic progress (SAP): reviews for students in clock-hour programs

In an [electronic announcement](#) published on June 6, 2011, ED provided guidance regarding SAP reviews for students in clock-hour programs. This information will be helpful for some schools as they finalize implementation of the new SAP requirements effective July 1, 2011.

In *Shoptalk* Edition 580, TG summarized SAP final rules published on October 29, 2010. Those rules clarify, standardize, and strengthen provisions on school evaluations of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of a student's progress in a program for Title IV funding purposes.

ED's new guidance provides greater flexibility as to when a school may evaluate SAP for students enrolled in a clock-hour program. Within the limits of a school's maximum timeframe for program completion, a school may choose to evaluate SAP for *all students in a program* at one of the following points in time:

- At the point when the student's scheduled clock hours for the payment period have elapsed, regardless of whether the student attended them; or
- At the point when the student has attended the scheduled clock hours; or
- At the point when the student successfully completes the scheduled clock hours for that payment period.

The option selected by the school for all students in a program must be specified in the school's SAP policy requirements for that program.

As a reminder, the school must determine that a student has successfully completed both the clock hours and weeks of instructional time required for a payment period before providing the student with Title IV funds for the next payment period.

### To learn more

For more information about SAP final rules, visit [TG's Program Integrity Final Rules Web page](#). In addition to a one-page summary of the new SAP requirements and a more detailed *Shoptalk* article, the page provides a checklist of federal requirements and options for schools, and a flowchart illustrating how to proceed when a student fails to meet SAP requirements.

You can also contact TG's customer assistance team at (800) 845-6267, or send an email message to [cust.assist@tgsdc.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgsdc.org).

## Gainful Employment final rule published in *Federal Register*

On June 2, 2011, ED released a prepublication final rule document on the gainful employment (GE) program debt measures. The published version of the final rule is now available in the *Federal Register* dated June 13, 2011. These new regulations on program metrics for student debt levels and repayment success become effective on July 1, 2012.

In addition, visit TG's [Program Integrity Web page](#) to access the following "TG Tools" to assist schools as they begin studying the final rules:

- [Topical Index of Gainful Employment Debt Measures](#) — a quick guide to what you'll find and where you'll find it in the June 13, 2011, *Federal Register*
- [GE Implementation Time Frames chart](#) — a visual look at the time frames in which the new GE debt measures operate at the program level

### Informational rates to be provided

As noted in TG's GE Implementation Time Frames chart above, the final rule provides that for the debt measures calculated for fiscal year (FY) 2011, ED will provide a school with the debt-to-earnings ratios and the loan repayment rate for each GE program offered by the school for informational purposes (only). The informational rates will include borrowers who entered repayment or completed programs during FY 2007 and FY 2008 for the loan repayment rate or debt-to-earnings ratios, respectively. The informational rates are intended to help schools initially evaluate the performance of a program with respect to the GE debt measures.

### To learn more

See TG's [special edition](#) of *Shoptalk* on this topic published on June 8, 2011.

Check ED's [Gainful Employment Information Page](#) for updates that provide the latest guidance on implementation of the GE rules on disclosures, reporting, new programs, and debt measures for programs.

## Closed school corner

The following table provides a list of newly reported school closures and corrections from the Postsecondary Educational Participants System (PEPS) and from the June 2011 *Closed School Monthly Report* supplied by ED. Schools listed are those with which TG has done business or to which TG has otherwise provided services.

### Newly reported closures

OPE School ID	School Name and Address	Unofficial Closure Date	ED's Official Closure Date
00363405	<b>Texas State Technical College- Palacios</b> 100 Marine Center Dr. Palacios, TX 77465-9599	N/A	12/10/2010

## TG Report

### TG issues new publication examining how top-performing community colleges succeed

TG has released a new publication that examines high-performing community colleges in Texas and the practices these schools have in common that lead to success.

*With Great Challenges Come Great Opportunities: Promising Practices of Texas Community Colleges* was written to highlight new and existing strategies these schools are employing to improve student outcomes, and to encourage other community colleges to examine their current initiatives in light of these strategies.

In the report, three Texas community colleges with proven success in student and community outcomes shared their perspectives on their institutional philosophies, programs, and services. The schools were chosen for their higher than average persistence, workforce placement, and Pell grant recipient rates and for their lower than average cohort default rates. The report provides a summary of recurring themes discovered among these institutions to help guide community colleges as they formulate future initiatives.

"The spotlight on the community college's role in higher education has never been brighter," said Donna Smith, director of TG's Center for Financial Aid Policy in Community Colleges. At the same time, Texas community colleges serve students with a multitude of diverse goals, from academic degrees to technical certifications, remedial education, recreational self-fulfillment courses, and more. "This diversity of needs poses significant challenges to a community college's ability to produce successful outcomes," said Smith.

“This report provides insight into the strategies that that help community colleges do that,” said Smith. “We believe this analysis can help schools achieve greater levels of success for the diverse student populations and communities they serve.”

### To learn more

Review the publication [online](#).

## Simulcast sessions announced for the 2011 TG Student Success Symposium for Community Colleges

TG’s Student Success Symposium for Community Colleges is designed to allow attendees to participate in discussions about ways to create a culture of engagement, and hear case studies highlighting effective best practices. For those who are interested in this kind of valuable information but can’t make it to Austin for the day-long event, TG will simulcast two of the day’s sessions, allowing remote viewers to view, and participate in, the sessions. Like their counterparts at the TG campus, virtual attendees can expect to take away an understanding of the importance of accountability, the use of data to drive decisions, and practical steps for implementing comprehensive enrollment management planning and default management.

Each session will last approximately an hour and fifteen minutes, and will tackle vital topics in enrollment management. The planned sessions will include the following information.

- **With Great Challenges Comes Great Opportunities: Promising Practices of Texas Community Colleges**

Wednesday, June 22, 10:45 a.m. – Noon Central Time

Community colleges face significant challenges meeting the changing educational and workforce needs of their students. TG visited three Texas community colleges that met those challenges. Colleges invited to participate were selected based upon multiple quantifiable dimensions: persistence, successful outcomes for workforce students, percent of Pell grant recipients, and institutional cohort default rates (CDR). Each visit enabled TG staff to learn about the institution’s culture, programs, and services, and allowed time for participants to talk openly about their perceptions of the institution. A summary of recurring themes, including a culture of improvement and significant faculty, staff, and community involvement, will be highlighted.

- **Creating Courageous Conversations that Cultivate a Culture of Student Success for Disenfranchised Populations**

Wednesday, June 22, 12:45 p.m. – 2 p.m. Central Time

Two dissimilar colleges in dissimilar communities embraced comprehensive engagement strategies to accelerate the closing of the student achievement gap. Lee College, a fifth-year Achieving the Dream (ATD) college and an Hispanic-serving Institution, is in the heart of the petrochemical industry with a large workforce education component and history of engagement. Blinn College, a second-year ATD college, is primarily a transfer institution for Texas A&M University with a soft history of stakeholder engagement. This presentation will highlight the evolution of comprehensive integrated engagement processes, including *Where Have All the Cowboys Gone* and *Brownies and Brainstorming*. Participants will have the opportunity to assess types of engagement methodologies and how to move forward in developing a plan for systemic engagement.

### **To register and for more information**

Visit [TG Online](#) to register for one or both of these sessions, and to find out more about this program.

## **Four ways to get the most from attending conferences**

As summer arrives, many financial aid professionals are preparing for their attendance at the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) Annual Conference, to be held this year from July 17-20 in Boston. And, before you know it, the fall conference season will be underway. Many of you are looking forward to spending time with colleagues and brushing up on the latest industry trends and developments.

In this article, *Shoptalk* focuses on tips to help you maximize your time at conference events.

### **Review materials when you arrive and plot your strategy**

After you register, spend a good 15 to 30 minutes reviewing conference materials to plan your agenda. Highlight those sessions you will attend. If there are two events that conflict, label one "A" for attend, and the other "H" for handouts. This will remind you to ask for copies of the materials provided at the session you will not attend.

### **Take useful notes and ask questions**

Avoid taking down notes on everything discussed, as you may miss important points. Instead, listen closely. Take down quick notes only on those items that need clarification. Also, ask questions. Chances are, if you need clarification, others may need it as well. At the very least, presenters can use the opportunity to reinforce their points.

## **Meet as many people as possible**

Foster relationships. Prepare a quick two- or three-sentence introduction, and use it when an opportunity arises to greet strangers. If you want to exchange information at a later date, offer your business card and commit to a quick email or phone call after the event.

## **Sort your materials and notes for distribution when you return**

Conference events always supply plenty of information. At times, it may seem like too much. However, every piece of information you collect will probably benefit someone in your office. As you receive materials, note colleague names who may benefit from the information on a corner of the document, and store materials in your survivor kit (described in the previous installment of this series). Then, when you return, you can quickly route materials.

## **Eat well, get rest, and exercise**

Avoid getting caught up in the hustle and bustle of events and neglecting your basic needs. Do not skip meals, but also resist eating too many unhealthy desserts and snacks. Plan a short 30-minute nap at a good time during the day to build up energy. Exercise if possible. A short increase in stress is natural during these activities — but don't leave yourself vulnerable to exhaustion or illness. And, of course, enjoy the event!

## **Upcoming event information**

For a listing of several association meeting dates, visit the [events calendar](#) on *TG Online*.

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## **News Briefs**

One key to eliminating debt is having a clear understanding how you accumulated debt in the first place. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, a significant number of Americans have a very minimal, or no, understanding of the debt they are in, nor the terms of the debt vehicles that make up a large portion of their existing debt, including mortgages and credit cards. Even worse, however, is that many Americans don't have a working understanding of the fact that they don't understand basic economic concepts, essential elements of knowledge needed to successfully manage debt. To learn more about the study, read [this article](#) from the *Huffington Post*.



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