

## **Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) Overview FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)**

### **Question: Who Is LOSFA?**

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is a state agency and the administrative arm of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) and the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority (LATTA). **LOSFA's Vision is "To be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access".** **LOSFA's Mission is "To Promote and Provide College Access".**

Among the programs now administered by LOSFA under the direction of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) and the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority (LATTA) are Louisiana's premier merit-based scholarship program, the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS); the state's 529 college savings plan, the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) program; the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership program (LEAP); the Go Grant, the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program and the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship program. In addition, LOSFA was the U.S. Department of Education's designated guarantor of Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL) in Louisiana before the elimination of FFEL under the Healthcare and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 which was signed into law March 30, 2010, effective July 1, 2010.

### **Question: What is TOPS?**

TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) is a program of state scholarships for Louisiana residents who attend one of the Louisiana Public Colleges and Universities or institutions that are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. There are four different TOPS scholarships: Opportunity, Performance, Honors and Tech Awards. The qualifications for the different TOPS scholarships are based on a grade point average in a specific curriculum and ACT score. Check <http://www.osfa.state.la.us/schgrt6.htm> for the specific TOPS scholarships' requirements, eligible institutions and the application procedure.

### **Question: Who Can Apply for the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship?**

The Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship is a competitive scholarship that awards \$2000 annually for an undergraduate student and \$3,000 annually to a graduate student pursuing a degree in **forestry, wildlife or marine science** at a **Louisiana Public College or University**. The cumulative maximum award is \$12,000 for up to three years of undergraduate study and two years of graduate study. For more detailed information on the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship including eligibility requirements and the application procedure: <http://www.osfa.la.gov/rock.htm>

### **What is Trailblazers?**

Each summer, LOSFA conducts "Trailblazer" camps for rising high school seniors. The Trailblazer Program is a unique approach to training high school students about the availability of financial aid as a means of access to postsecondary education. The program includes a comprehensive three-day training workshop, presented on a college campus by LOSFA personnel and other financial aid professionals for the purpose of educating selected high school rising seniors about the college admissions process and how to obtain financial assistance for college. One student is nominated by each public and non-public high school in the state. Under the direct supervision of the high school guidance counselor, each Trailblazer is expected to use every opportunity to share knowledge of financial aid procedures with peers throughout

their senior year of high school. Each Trailblazer is given a manual outlining all aspects of the federal and state financial aid programs available.

### **Question: What Type of Outreach does LOSFA conduct?**

LOSFA is extremely active in the dissemination of college access information within the state. A special emphasis is placed on assisting students from low income families and first generation college attendees locate and obtain the resources necessary to pursue and complete a postsecondary education. To these ends, LOSFA regularly partners with other entities including the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Louisiana Department of Education, the LA Gear Up and Trio programs, the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and others. LOSFA provides information on financial literacy, college guidance and professional development for counselors.

LOSFA annually provides presenters for individual high school financial aid workshops for parents and students. In Academic Year 2009-2010, LOSFA conducted financial aid and college access workshops at 300 individual schools. 64,121 Louisiana students and parents attended LOSFA financial aid and college access presentations around the state.

LOSFA employs a staff of public information specialists who are available to assist students and parents via telephone from 8:00 AM until 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday. LOSFA's financial aid hotline number is 800-259-5626, extension 1012. LOSFA can also be contacted via e-mail at [custserv@osfa.la.gov](mailto:custserv@osfa.la.gov). All e-mails are answered within 24 business hours.

Each year, LOSFA conducts workshops for high school guidance counselors at a minimum of seven locations around the state. These workshops are designed to update counselors about the student financial aid process so they can best assist their students in preparing for their crucial first year of college. At each workshop, LOSFA representatives and financial aid professionals instruct counselors on the latest changes to both federal and state aid programs, completion of the FAFSA and other LOSFA services. In state fiscal year 2009-10, 1,950 Louisiana high school guidance counselors attended LOSFA workshops conducted by our Public Information and Communications Division.

Throughout each year, LOSFA produces and distributes numerous publications, brochures, bulletins, newsletters and posters explaining all of the student financial assistance programs available to Louisiana students. LOSFA also maintains a web site that contains a wealth of useful financial aid/college access information. LOSFA distributes a monthly electronic newsletter called the "LOSFA LOOP" as well as a quarterly electronic newsletter dedicated to news regarding the START Saving Program called "The STARTing Line". In an effort to better engage students, LOSFA has developed and maintained a presence on various social sites popular with students such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Flickr in addition to creating an interactive portion of the LOSFA website geared towards middle school students called "College Knowledge": <http://www.osfa.la.gov/collegeknowledge>. For a free subscription to either of LOSFA's electronic newsletters or to access LOSFA's social site network go to <http://www.osfa.state.la.us/connected.htm>.

LOSFA is the statewide coordinator of Louisiana's College Goal Sunday event. In conjunction with the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA), LOSFA coordinates this free event designed to help Louisiana college bound students and their families with the financial aid application process. Financial Aid professionals are on hand at several locations throughout the state to help complete the necessary paperwork (Free Application for Federal Student Aid—FAFSA) to get the funding needed to go to college with a particular focus on helping low-income, first-generation college students and their families. Since 2008, Louisiana's College Goal Sunday event has taken place in

February of each year. For information on Louisiana's next College Goal Sunday event go to <http://www.osfa.la.gov/CollegeGoalSunday.shtml>