**MEETING OF THE**

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**DATE:** January 4, 2016

**TIME** Immediately following the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority Meeting

**PLACE:** Louisiana Retirement Systems Building

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr., Commission Chair, called a meeting of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission to order at 10:55 a.m.

The following members of the Commission were present:

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr.

Mr. Ken Bradford

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr.

Mr. James Garvey

Mr. Walter Guidry, Jr.

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr.

Ms. Amy Marix

Mr. Winfred Sibille

Ms. Ann A. Smith

Dr. Larry Tremblay

The following members were absent:

Mr. Scott Ballard

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Raymond Brandt

Ms. Melanie Burke

Mr. Benson Kinney

Mr. Myron Lawson

Mr. Richard Maciasz

Mr. Michael Murphy

Mr. Stephen Toups

Ten members were present, which did not represent a quorum, therefore, in accordance with the Meeting Notice, the Chairman called the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission to order.

The following members of the Commission’s Executive Committee were present:

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr.

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr

Mr. Jimmy Long, Sr

Mr. Winfred Sibille

Dr. Larry Tremblay

Five members were present, which did represent a quorum.

The following members were absent:

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Lavigne temporarily appointed Mr. Bradford, Mr. Garvey, Mr. Guidry, Ms. Marix, and Ms. Smith.

The following staff members were present:

Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Ms. Rhonda Bridevaux

Ms. Alice Brown

Dr. Tireka Cobb

Ms. Gayle Daigle

Mr. Kelvin Deloch

Ms. Shanna Estay

Ms. Carol Fulco

Mr. Jack Hart

Ms. Robyn Lively

Mr. Rick Omdal

Ms. Deborah Paul

Ms. Linda Roquemore

Mr. Gus Wales

The minutes of the November 15, 2015 meeting of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission were presented for review and approval. Mr. Garvey made a motion to approve. Mr. Bradford seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Lavigne offered a public comment period. There were no comments.

Under Program Updates, Mr. Wales, Director of Public Information and Communications, presented the Field Services report for statewide services for the months of November and December 2015. Mr. Wales reported that in November and December, Public Information Division Representatives conducted two TOPS Seminars with 102 students/parents in attendance, two TOPS Browse Sessions/TOPS Check-ups at College and Career Fairs with 385 students/parents in attendance, five General Financial Aid Seminars with 800 student/parents in attendance and one College Knowledge Seminar with 83 students/parents in attendance. Mr. Wales reported on the SignalVine text messaging campaign for first time college freshman. Mr. Wales stated that 16,364 college freshmen are participating this year and that is 63 more students than last year. Mr. Wales reported that 81,623 text messages have been sent to those students, and 2,012 messages have been sent back from those students. Mr. Wales also reported that College Goal Sunday 2016 registration is open and that College Goal Sunday will take place on February 28 and March 6, 2016 at nineteen different locations around Louisiana.

Dr. Tremblay asked about FAFSA completion and how it interacts with College Goal Sunday. Mr. Bradford commented that at the BESE meeting in December, BESE adopted a policy that requires all 2018 graduates and thereafter to complete the FAFSA. Mr. Bradford stated that the intent of the policy is to try to get Louisiana up to the national average of over 50%, generating over $50 million in additional funding for students. Mr. Bradford stated that Mr. Wales has been instrumental in helping BESE develop this policy. Mr. Bradford stated that the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) will continue to work with LOSFA to build a strong relationship and outreach with high school counselors. Mr. Bradford stated that LDOE is sending a monthly newsletter providing updates on policy changes. The other item LDOE is working on with LOSFA is providing school districts information on how many students in their districts are completing the FAFSA. Mr. Bradford commented that LDOE will continue to move forward supporting the current efforts in FAFSA completion and expanding the opportunities for school districts to get the resources they need for their students to complete the FAFSA.

Dr. Tremblay stated that he did not realize that the requirement began with the graduating students of 2018. Dr. Bradford stated that the rationale behind starting the policy with the 2018 graduates is to give school systems time to set up internal structures they need to provide students support to complete the FAFSA, and this initiative also aligns with the new diploma requirements that begin with the 2018 graduates. Mr. Wales stated that the LDOE also helps promote College Goal Sunday to school counselors, school districts and superintendents. Mr. Wales also commented that beginning in October 2016, the FAFSA will be available for 2017 graduates using prior, prior year tax information in order to complete the FAFSA and it should help more families to be timely in their submission. Mr. Wales also stated that this will change the way College Goal Sunday is done and plans are to align FAFSA completion and College Application Month events since the FAFSA will be available then. Mr. Garvey commented that he has received feedback from several local school districts about concerns that the LDOE policy will create additional workload on the schools. Mr. Garvey stated that he believes that LOSFA can help with the workload by streamlining the process or providing extra man power in those schools. Dr. Boutté commented that LOSFA is seeing more requests from schools on FAFSA completion events and it is a cost savings to the districts because LOSFA does not charge for these services.

Dr. Cobb, Director of Field Outreach Services, reported on the Field Outreach Services Report for concentrated and intensive services. Dr. Cobb reported that the month of October was Louisiana College Application Month. Dr. Cobb stated that the fee waiver budget was placed in the packet with a list of qualifying criteria. Dr. Cobb reported that LOSFA provided 86 schools across the state in 41 parishes one-on-one assistance to help 5,000 students complete almost 10,000 applications. Dr. Cobb stated that LOSFA is working with postsecondary institutions that do not accept the fee waivers to ensure the application fees are paid on behalf of the students, and LOSFA is following up with these students to determine whether or not they are accepted into the institution where the fee waiver was paid.

Dr. Cobb stated as LOSFA continues to work with the schools, more requests for services are coming in for outreach. Dr. Cobb stated that due to these requests, the program design has changed. Dr. Cobb stated that outreach services are currently being offered at 43 intensive service schools. Dr. Cobb stated that intensive services schools are schools that have performance deficiencies, D or F schools, schools that have a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students or a high percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Dr. Cobb stated that outreach services are currently being offered at 28 concentrated service schools. Dr. Cobb stated that the concentrated services schools could have some of the same performance deficiencies as intensive services schools, but not require as much assistance from LOSFA. Dr. Cobb stated that outreach services are also being provided to 38 statewide services schools. Dr. Cobb summarized that outreach services are currently being provided to 109 schools impacting over 16,000 students. Dr. Cobb stated that in the former GEAR UP program, the grant allowed LOSFA to target 3,200 students with $1.5 million. Dr. Cobb reported that the numbers are changing through the different services offered by LOSFA. Dr. Cobb stated that most of the outreach listed as provided to statewide service schools resulted from Louisiana College Application Month (LCAM).

Dr. Cobb stated that looking at the program update, there is a trend line of the increase in students that LOSFA serves. Dr. Cobb stated that there is a list of schools along with certain initiatives that all concentrated and intensive service schools must participate in before year end. Dr. Cobb also stated LOSFA has one middle school and one elementary school participating and LOSFA provides training to teachers on how to build a college-going culture in these schools.

Dr. Cobb reported on the media coverage done by Ms. Claire Caillier using social media sites. Dr. Cobb stated LOSFA has a large following of students and other postsecondary organizations on social media and they are re-tweeting the information posted by LOSFA.

Dr. Cobb reported on the GO Alliance conference. Dr. Cobb stated that LOSFA presented its best practices at the conference and requests have come in for LOSFA to help train other states in best practices used by LOSFA.

Dr. Cobb reported on the Third White House Reach Higher Education Convening. Dr. Cobb stated that this initiative makes sure that counselors have the information and training they need to lead college and career readiness at their schools. Dr. Cobb stated as a state team and a state agency LOSFA is providing a college and career readiness training course to school counselors in the New Orleans area.

Dr. Cobb reported on the SignalVine text message platform for high school seniors. Dr. Cobb stated that currently over 1,200 seniors are receiving college and career readiness text messages. Dr. Cobb reported on why the text messaging campaign was so important, stating that students are constantly on their cell phones and 97% of text messages are read whereas less than 5% of e-mails are read every day.

Dr. Cobb reported on the one-on-one mentoring and coaching. Dr. Cobb stated that the one-on-one mentoring program offers services to disconnected youth at concentrated and intensive services schools. Dr. Cobb stated that in addition to one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring also takes place. Dr. Cobb mentioned that these services to date have provided college and career counseling, assistance with applying for an FSA ID, career inventory, and résumé writing workshops. Dr. Boutté added that students are referred to the mentoring program by their school counselor.

Mr. Hart, Assistant Executive Director of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, presented the financial statements update. Mr. Hart presented the financials for the period ending October 2015. Mr. Hart reported that the financial statement for October 2015 showed the Operating Fund closed the month of October with net assets of $7.9M and the Federal Fund with net assets of $7.2M. The Federal Fund had a decrease of $44K for the month and the reserve ratio decreased to 0.74% on our portfolio of $1.1B. The Operating Fund had a decrease of $169K for the month. Also, rehabs were $2.6M for the month, which are 63% under 2014 and 16% under projection. Mr. Hart reported on the seed letter sent to the Commissioner of Administration on December 16, 2105 requesting $74M for TOPS for SFY 2016. Mr. Hart also reported on the Independent Service Auditor’s report done by KPMG on Navient for FFY ending 2013 on servicing provided.

Mr. Lavigne asked if there has been any action on the seed letter. Mr. Hart responded that because of the turnover in the administration, no action has been taken. Dr. Tremblay asked if the $49M from the tobacco fund is a seed loan in anticipation of release of the funding. Mr. Hart stated yes because the tobacco settlement payment usually comes in around April.

Ms. Paul, Director of Scholarships and Grants, presented a GO Grant update as of December 2, 2015. Ms. Paul stated that LOSFA is waiting on Louisiana Tech to bill for winter quarter. Ms. Paul stated that the GO Grant balance is currently $13.76M of the allocation. Ms. Paul stated that postsecondary institutions can bill after the 14th class day for the spring semester. Ms. Paul stated that based on projections, all the GO Grant funding will be used up in the spring semester and no funding will be available for the summer semester.

Ms. Paul presented a John R. Justice update as of December 21, 2015. Ms. Paul stated that all the awards have been made for 2015 year. Ms. Paul stated that the current applications are on the website for the 2016 award year. Ms. Paul stated that they have until April 30, 2016 to apply for the program. Dr. Tremblay asked if the payment is restricted to a certain type of loan that they may have received as a student. Ms. Paul stated that no, it is not limited to a certain type of loan. Ms. Paul stated that when they apply, the applicant must send all of their outstanding loan balances to LOSFA, and they select which loan they want the award to go toward. Ms. Paul stated that the funds are sent directly to the lender and the applicant must have a minimum balance of $10,000 of debt to qualify for the program.

Ms. Paul presented the TOPS Update. Ms. Paul stated that page 69 of the packet shows the current fiscal year versus actual expenses for the TOPS Program and starting on page 71, all the schools that have submitted billing for the Fall Semester for TOPS are listed. Ms. Paul stated that TOPS bills are paid on a weekly basis. Ms. Paul stated that calls are coming from students who may not have been as successful as they thought they were in the fall semester and LOSFA is advising them on what they need to do to keep their TOPS award or regain their TOPS award at the end of the spring semester.

Dr. Boutté presented the Executive Director’s update. Dr. Boutté reported on the presentation given to the Governor Elect’s Transition Team.

Under Committee Reports, it was proposed that the Commission receive the Approved Minutes of the September 2015 Advisory Committee Meeting that were adopted at its meeting on December 11, 2015. Mr. Guidry made a motion for approval. Mr. Bradford seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Lavigne asked that three items under Old Business be approved *in globo*. The items under Old Business were: that the Commission consider publication of final rule to amend Sections 705 and 805 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to amend the time by which a student must have attained the required cumulative grade point average to maintain their award and to amend Section 803 to add an expiration date to the current TOPS Tech core curriculum; that the Commission consider publication of final rule to amend Sections 221 and 233 of the Commission’s Advisory Committee’s Bylaws to change the membership of the Committee and related provisions; and that the Commission consider publication of final rule amending Sections 2005, 2007, and 2009 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to provide that an applicant for the John R. Justice Loan Repayment Program must sign a service agreement as part of the application process and to shorten the time period in which an applicant must provide all supporting documentation. Dr. Tremblay made a motion for approval of the three items *in globo.* Ms. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Under New Business, it was proposed that the Commission consider amending the adoption of meeting dates for the period February through June 2016. Mr. Sibille made a motion for approval. Ms. Marix seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider a contract with FOCUS Training Inc., to provide consulting services to enhance the effectiveness of LOSFA's Field Outreach Services and Public Information Departments. Dr. Tremblay made a motion for approval. Mr. Long seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider and act upon Requests for Exception to the TOPS Provisions that Require Students to Enroll Full-Time, to Remain Continuously Enrolled, and to Earn at Least 24 Credit Hours During the Academic Year. Mr. Sibille made a motion of approval of requests from Rebekah (595868), Christina (542201), Hunter (651828), Gabriel (663723), Brooke (591598), Megan (616069), and Hillary (475279). Mr. Ehlinger seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission approve and support the recommendations in the Board of Regents report on House Resolution 178 of the 2015 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature and that the staff draft a letter stating the LASFAC action, the chairman sign the letter and submit the letter to the Board of Regents. Dr. Tremblay reported that the resolution calls for the Board of Regents in consultation with LASFAC to review financial aid programs in the state. Dr. Tremblay stated that the report provides a little history of financial aid in colleges and universities and primarily reports on the merit-based program, TOPS, and the need based aid based, GO Grant, and makes some recommendations to the Legislature. Dr. Tremblay stated that in regards to TOPS, the recommendation was to revisit Senator Donahue’s bill from last year that passed both chambers but which was vetoed by the governor. Dr. Tremblay stated that the recommendations for GO Grant are to make an attempt to fully fund the GO Grant, to look at some of the eligibility criteria, to look at the distribution system for GO Grant, and to look at the idea of coming up with a different program or to make part of GO Grant program a requirement that schools match the dollars going to their school one-to-one. Mr. Guidry made a motion for approval. Ms. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Ms. Smith made a motion to adjourn at 11:48 a.m. Mr. Guidry seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVED:

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Chairman