**MEETING OF THE**

**LOUISIANA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**DATE:** November 17, 2015

**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 10:47 a.m.

The following members of the Commission were present:

Mr. F. Travis Lavigne, Jr.

Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer

Mr. Ken Bradford

Ms. Melanie Burke

Mr. Jeffery Ehlinger, Jr.

Mr. James Garvey

Mr. Walter Guidry, Jr.

Mr. Benson Kinney

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

Mr. Raymond Brandt

Mr. Myron Lawson

Mr. Richard Maciasz

Mr. Michael Murphy

Mr. Stephen Toups

Dr. Larry Tremblay

Twelve members were present, which did represent a quorum.

The following staff members were present:

Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Ms. Rhonda Bridevaux

Ms. Alice Brown

Ms. Claire Callier

Dr. Tireka Cobb

Ms. Gayle Daigle

Mr. Kelvin Deloch

Ms. Shanna Estay

Ms. Carol Fulco

Mr. Jack Hart

Ms. Ebony Holmes

Ms. Robyn Lively

Ms. Stacy Oubre

Ms. Deborah Paul

Mr. Gus Wales

Mr. Marcus Warren

The following guest was present:

Chris Sonnier

The minutes of the October 20, 2015 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission were presented for review and approval. Mr. Sibille made a motion to approve. Mr. Long 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 October 2015. Mr. Wales reported that in September, Public Information Division Representatives conducted 20 TOPS Seminars with 11,959 students/parents in attendance, 30 TOPS Browse Sessions/TOPS Check-ups at College and Career Fairs with 1,889 students/parents in attendance, four FAFSA/Federal Aid Program Seminars with 1,395 students/parents in attendance, one Financial Literacy Seminar with 30 students/parents in attendance, seven General Financial Aid Seminars with 3,375 students/parents in attendance, and three College Knowledge Seminars with 316 students/parents in attendance.

Mr. Wales reported that the Public Information Division conducted four School Counselor Webinars on October 28 and October 29, 2015. Mr. Wales reported that 272 school counselors from across Louisiana registered to take part in the webinars. The webinars covered updates on TOPS Legislative changes, on LOSFA services provided to counselors and students, on upcoming FAFSA changes and the FSA ID, an overview of LOSFA College Access events and information on how high schools can participate in those events, a TOPS update, and an overview of LOSFA Special Programs, including GO Grant and Chafee. Also, a live Professional School Counselor Workshop attended by 97 counselors was held at Baton Rouge Community College on October 1.

Mr. Lavigne asked for an explanation of the dots on the map included in the Field Services Update. Dr. Boutté stated that the dots are representations of events held in each of the areas and the bigger the dots, the more events that took place in that area.

Mr. Sibille asked if the public was better informed each year by LOSFA participating in events across the state and if it was making a difference in their knowledge about the different programs offered. Mr. Wales commented that there is still some confusion out there about the programs, but LOSFA does its best to educate them about the programs. Mr. Wales stated that concentrated and intensive services is doing an amazing job of informing students not only about the programs available, but also offering step by step instructions on the college application process. Dr. Boutté stated that LOSFA is offering more one-on-one assistance and following up with each student instead of just giving out information and expecting the student to follow up.

Dr. Cobb, Director of Field Outreach Services, reported on the Field Outreach Services Report for concentrated and intensive services. Dr. Cobb stated that Field Outreach Services started off the year with College Kick-Off Events at 63 schools that are part of concentrated and intensive services. Dr. Cobb stated that the College Kick Off events informs the students how to connect to post-secondary schools and the workforce after high school. Dr. Cobb stated that following the College Kick Off events was Louisiana College Application Month (LCAM) coordinated by Ms. Ebony Holmes and Ms. Charlie Lewis. Dr. Cobb commented that LCAM provides assistance with college applications and LOSFA provided direct support at 51 high schools; however a total of 80 high schools participated in the event. Dr. Cobb stated that approximately 6,770 college applications were submitted during the month of October and into early November. Dr. Cobb reported on TOPS Check Up events at various high schools across the state. Dr. Cobb reported that schools are receiving support in ACT prep courses and campus field trips. Dr. Cobb stated that students from the Monroe City School district will be visiting the University of Louisiana at Lafayette campus and the Louisiana State University campus on Wednesday, November 18 for campus field trips. Dr. Cobb mentioned that the SignalVine campaign to high school students is underway and that staff members are sending out reminders about scholarship deadlines and ACT registration deadlines as well as other helpful tips for high school seniors. Dr. Cobb also mentioned that LOSFA participated in the Southern University and Grambling State University High School Days where students were able to connect to those programs and see what campus life is all about. Dr. Boutté commented that LOSFA also paid college application fees for students who could not afford those fees and for whom no waiver was available. Dr. Boutté also commented that LOSFA is working with a postsecondary institution on an ACT Boot Camp for students whose scores are not where they need to be. Dr. Boutte also highlighted the partnership between the staff of Grambling State University’s College of Education and LOSFA to provide training for pre-service teachers on creating a college going culture in schools. Dr. Boutté went on to note that the pre-service teachers, who received the training, will be presenting their first demonstration lessons at Grambling Laboratory School on Friday, November 20.

Ms. Smith asked if the ACT prep courses are done in clusters or are individualized. Dr. Cobb replied that it varies by school, depending on the school situation. Ms. Smith clarified that as an example, if you had four local schools in an area, do you offer the course to all four schools or do you offer the course to each individual school? Dr. Cobb responded that these prep courses could be clustered if that worked for the schools, but the courses could also be offered at individual schools.

Mr. Sibille asked how much money is being spent on the Louisiana College Application fees. Dr. Cobb stated that the budget is $46,000, but LOSFA has not spent that amount on the application fees. Dr. Cobb stated that many of the schools take the fee waivers for students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch or economic hardship. Mr. Sibille asked what the criteria was to get the fee waiver. Dr. Cobb stated that LOSFA is using the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) fee waiver application and that the application lists about seven different scenarios where a student could qualify for the fee waiver. Dr. Cobb stated that the NACAC fee waiver criteria would be provided to members at the next meeting.

Ms. Marix asked if colleges and universities could refer students to LOSFA if they are having trouble with the college application fees. Dr. Boutté stated that, yes, students can be referred to LOSFA.

Mr. Hart, Assistant Executive Director of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, presented the financial statements update. Mr. Hart presented the financials for the period ending September 2015. Mr. Hart reported that the financial statement for September 2015 showed the Operating Fund closed the month of September with net assets of $8.1M and the Federal Fund with net assets of $7.5M. The Federal Fund had an increase of $243K for the month and $257K for the year. The reserve ratio decreased to 0.770% on our portfolio of $1.1B. The Operating Fund had an increase for the month of $603K and decrease of $2.7M for the year. Approximately $414K was due to the replacement of Operating Funds with state funding for the months of July and August. Also, rehabs were $5.8M for the month, which is 44% over 2014 and 71% over projection.

Mr. Hart reported on the recap of the Budget Request for 2017. Mr. Hart stated that the significant change is that the projected increase in TOPS from 2016 to 2017 is $8.6 million or 3%. Mr. Hart stated that the requested amount is $28.3 million or 10.7% more than the amount appropriated for 2016 and that the amount includes a budget shortfall for 2016. Mr. Hart stated that requests were also made for an increase in GO Grant of $36.5 million based on the school-needs survey conducted last spring and for an increase in state funding for state program operations of $9 million for 2017.

Ms. Paul, Director of Scholarships and Grants, presented a GO Grant update as of November 16, 2015. Ms. Paul stated LOSFA processed awards for $12.6 million out of a total allocation of $26.4 million. Ms. Paul reported that LOSFA worked with schools to get their billings in before the fall deadline. Ms. Paul stated that the balance is $13.8 million which is a little over half of the total allocation for the year. Mr. Sibille asked if it was anticipated that all the allocations will be used. Ms. Paul stated that yes, all the GO Grant funds should be used by the end of the spring billing deadline.

Ms. Paul presented a John R. Justice update as of November 4, 2015. Ms. Paul stated that one remaining award is yet to be disbursed, and LOSFA is working with that prosecutor to get the documentation to process the award. Ms. Paul stated that applications are taken from January 1st to April 30th for the new award year.

Mr. Hart presented the TOPS Update. Mr. Hart presented the TOPS Actual vs. Projected sheet that LOSFA develops about this time each year. Mr. Hart stated that the sheet shows a projected shortfall of $21.7 million.

Dr. Boutté presented the Executive Director’s update. Dr. Boutté reported on a letter from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) seeking applications from postsecondary institutions to offer Dual Enrollment programs for limited income, first generation students utilizing the Pell Grant. Dr. Boutté stated that this is an experimental project by the USDOE. Dr. Boutté stated that an email was sent to the system representatives, in case institutions within the system wish to apply, and LOSFA has heard from two institutions that are willing to apply and willing to partner with LOSFA on this dual enrollment project. Dr. Boutté commented on the publication of the Misperceptions of TOPS and the presentation to Baton Rouge Area Chamber which gives detailed information on TOPS.

Under Old Business, it was proposed that the Commission consider publication of final rule to amend Sections 301, 703, 801, 803, 805, 1005, and 1903 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to implement Acts 101, 230, and 403 of the 2015 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature. Mr. Long made a motion for approval. Dr. Barnes-Teamer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

It was proposed that the Commission consider publication of final rule to amend Section 703 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to add Photography I, Photography II, and Digital Photography as equivalents of Art in the TOPS Core Curriculum for students graduating from high school in 2018 and later. Mr. Sibille made a motion for approval. Mr. Ehlinger seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Under New Business, it was proposed that the Commission consider the adoption of meeting dates for the period January through June 2016. Ms. Smith made a motion for approval. Mr. Kinney 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 Madison (643884), Caroline (569576), Quade (635997), Giovanni (538191), Ashleigh (615975), Emily (649912), and Emily (604808). Mr. Garvey seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Long made a motion to adjourn at 12:30 p.m. Mr. Guidry seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVED:

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Chairman