

Course Overview



Welcome to “SFA Traditions: Celebrating Our Mission”!

Every organization has its traditions. Over the years, SFA has established a proud tradition of serving the American public by providing financial aid to millions of students. The traditions of SFA are built around its mission – helping to put America through school.

Webster’s Dictionary defines a “tradition” as “the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction.” SFA’s traditions are its unwritten rules, its ways of doing business, its values and culture as reflected in the actions, behaviors and beliefs of its employees.

As SFA transforms itself into a performance-based organization, or PBO, it is a time to renew time-honored traditions that have served the agency well in providing financial aid to millions of Americans. It is also a time for SFA to incorporate new traditions that are consistent with the new demands being placed on it.

At the core of these traditions is SFA’s mission which, like a compass, guides SFA’s employees in a common direction and toward a common sense of purpose – serving America’s students. For this mission to be carried out effectively, SFA employees hold themselves to high standards that steer them on a course of performance excellence.

“Best in business” organizations – those that are widely renowned for their excellence in what they do – regularly surface and celebrate their traditions, enabling their employees to connect to them on a daily basis. This causes the people who work for those organizations to embody a sense of purpose and pride in their work. In many “best in business” public organizations, traditions enable employees to find meaning in the difference that their programs make in people’s lives.

This course will enable SFA employees to refresh their connections to SFA’s collective sense of purpose and pride in their work. It will

reconnect them to the desires and needs of students -- the ultimate customer of their products and services. It will also connect them to each other and the work they do collectively “to help put America through school.”

This course is the second in a series of “core curriculum” courses designed to align all SFA employees around a common purpose and focus on students, to foster a set of cultural traditions that embody performance excellence, and to create a shared understanding of how SFA as a federal agency supports the system of student financial aid. The first course was “PBO at the Frontlines,” which was delivered in Spring, 2000. The third course will be “Student Aid Front to Back” that will be delivered in early 2001.



Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will:

- ⇒ See the student aid process through the student’s eyes;
- ⇒ See how we help people reach their dreams, and how millions of people reaching their dreams strengthens America; and
- ⇒ Own SFA’s mission and standards and understand how all that we do is guided by them.

Our Plan for the Day

The day will consist of the following sections:

- Walking in the Student’s Shoes
- SFA: Through the Eyes of Students
- The Heritage of SFA: Honoring the Past
- SFA As A PBO: The Four Standards
- Making A Difference: It Starts With Me

- Wrap-Up, Evaluation and Graduation