



FSA Now

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

Issue III Volume III

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In this Issue

*Student Aid on the Web
wins award*

Page 2

Ethics Matters in FSA

Page 2

Extra! Extra! FSA Assists

Page 3

My FSA interviews

Victoria Edwards

Page 4

FSA Career Zone

Workforce Support Services' Human Resources department and FSA University have joined forces to provide career support services for FSA employees. The product of this collaboration, the Career Zone, provides career management services and professional development training to employees across FSA.

The goal of the Career Zone is to prepare employees for the typical changes that occur within any large organization and provide them with the resources necessary to navigate the organizational lifecycle. "Change is a regular occurrence in the federal government," said Career Zone Acting Manager Dwayne Rumber. "Through the Career Zone, we hope to provide staff with the necessary resources and tools to support them in managing their careers."

The Career Zone has two components, Career Management Services and Training. Career Management Services assists employees with resume and KSA writing, interviewing techniques and skills development. The Career Zone established the Brown Bag Book Club to expand employee knowledge of topics such as leadership, mentoring and motivation. FSA staff members can view Career Zone videos on such topics as motivational leadership, participate in group discussions or review the vast resources housed in the Career Zone library.

Career Zone Training classes offer employees skills exchanges, Learning Labs and the Career Zone Tech series. Skills exchanges are interactive peer-to-peer workshops, which provide employees with the opportunity to learn from each other. The Career Zone Tech series trains staff on FSA's modernization efforts including data strategy, Common Origination & Disbursement (COD) and Systems Security. The Learning Labs provide staff with opportunities to improve skills relevant



Workforce Support Services General Manager Calvin Thomas and Career Zone Acting Manager Dwayne Rumber watch as Terri Shaw presides over the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Career Zone's Open House.

to both their personal and professional objectives.

Workforce Support Services established the Career Zone three years ago. The first Career Zone training workshop was held in October 2001. Since then, over 1,000 staff members in Washington, DC and the regional offices have attended Career Zone training workshops.

The Career Zone hosted an Open House for headquarters employees on February 10th – 12th in its new 7th floor UCP suite. The Career Zone staff is comprised of an office administrator and two full time counselors. Counselors are available for one-on-one counseling appointments. They also facilitate workshops and continue to expand the Career Management offerings. Additional Career Zone services, including career management activities, will expand to the regional offices in late spring. These services will be customized to meet the specific needs of individual regional offices.

For more information and a calendar of events for the Career Zone, visit us on the Web at http://fsanet/career_zone.

We Help Put America Through School

FSA's Portal for Students and Parents Wins Best in Government Award!

Each year at FOSE, the Federal Leadership Council's Showcase of Excellence presents a showcase of federal government IT projects representing the finest implementations of citizen-centric electronic government. From the IT programs nominated to the CFO Council, Federal Acquisition Council and the Chief Human Capital Officers Council for consideration, ten are selected to demonstrate their program in the Federal Leadership Council Showcase of Excellence. Two IT programs are then chosen by the Federal Leadership Council Executive Committee to receive the year's Showcase of Excellence Award. This year's Showcase of Excellence Award went to FSA's Student Aid on the Web. It is an indication that Student Aid on the Web is one of the very best applications developed in all of government!

Student Aid on the Web was cited for successfully integrating into one Web site all of the functions related to college selection, admissions, student aid and career information while furthering FSA's mission of increasing electronic filings and awareness of federal student aid. Because the Web site integrates these functions, students and parents will be more likely to use a "one-stop shop" for college admission and aid information, as well as applications for college and student aid. By Adam Essex



Student Aid on the Web Program Manager Adam Essex, Students Channel General Manager Jennifer Douglas and Students Channel Chief of Staff Mary K. Muncie represented FSA at the awards luncheon held at the Washington DC Convention Center.

FAFSA Outreach



Terri Shaw encourages students and parents to file their FAFSA during a recent interview.

During the last few weeks, FSA Communications in conjunction with OPA and Ketchum Public Relations have conducted extensive outreach through local news outlets urging parents and students to file their FAFSA. The interviews feature Secretary Paige, Terri Shaw, Steve Johnson (Director, Office of Financial Aid at Howard University) and several students talking about available financial aid funds and the ease of filing online. To date, interviews have aired 152 times on 104 TV stations in 77 markets across the country, with a total potential audience of 5.9 million viewers! For more information, e-mail Joe.Aiello@ed.gov.

Ethics Matters in FSA

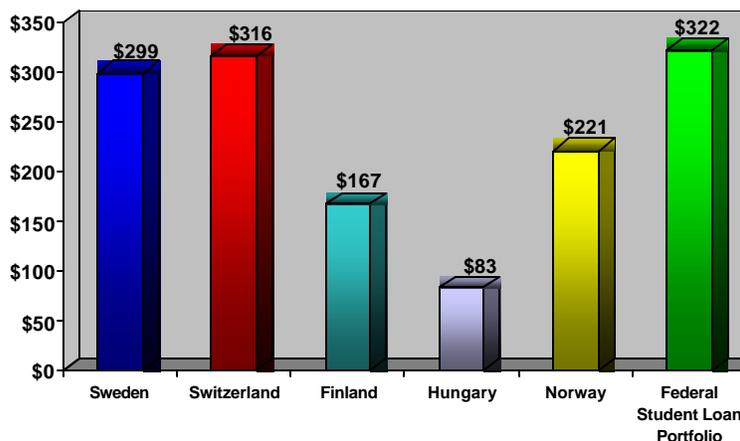
Letters of Recommendation

There may come a time when a personal friend or former co-worker asks you to write a letter of recommendation on his or her behalf. Department employees may provide letters of recommendation using official stationery and title only when: 1) the letter is for an individual with whom the employee has worked with in the course of Federal employment; or 2) the letter is for an individual who is seeking employment within the Federal government. If you find that you are writing a letter of recommendation for a personal friend whom you have not dealt with in the Federal government, you may refer to your official position in the body of the letter, but you must refrain from using official stationery and may not sign the letter using your official title. The purpose of this law is to avoid situations where there is an improper appearance of governmental sanction of certain job candidates. Call Sean Dent at 202-401-6213 for advice tailored to your specific situation.

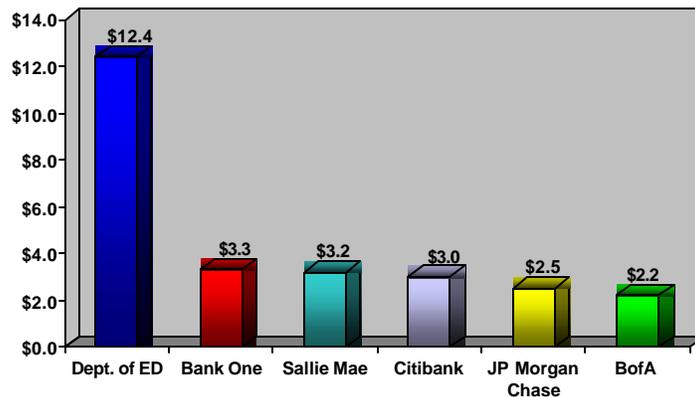
This is the first in a series of periodic articles by Sean C. Dent, an Ethics Attorney in the Office of the General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Education. The articles will focus upon the unique ethics issues affecting employees of FSA.

Student Aid Fast Facts

Federal Student Loan Portfolio Value Compared to Selected Countries' GDP - FY 2003



Largest Title IV Loan Originators – FY 2003



EXTRA! EXTRA!

What Is FSA Assists?

This April, FSAnet will unveil the newest resource for inquiring minds within FSA - FSA Assists. As the name implies, FSA Assists is an online forum for employees to pose questions to FSA management about issues impacting FSA.

How do I renew a contract? What's the proper procedure for performing an EDPAS review? When can I expect to see my cost of living increase? FSA Assists will get you the answer.

Questions can be posted anonymously or with attribution; it's up to you. Topics that require anonymity are assumed to be sensitive in nature and will be treated as such. Thus, FSA Assists will only provide the original poster access to these questions or their answers.

As part of the FSA Water Cooler, FSA Assists will join the Chalk Board where employees can post announcements such as lunch invitations, retirement celebrations or lost items. The Car Pool will also return to connect employees in need of a ride. FSA Assists is in the final phases of being tested and is due to be released in the coming weeks.

Terri Shaw's Regional Office Tour II

On March 24, Terri officially kicked off her 2004 regional office tour in Boston. While there, she spoke with staff and answered questions. In the coming months, she plans to visit the remaining regional offices to share experiences from the past year and address questions from those in attendance.

Spring Conference Update

The Spring Conference is being held at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers in New York City. This year's conference includes a symposium on higher education access and awareness; the Ed Town Hall meeting with Terri Shaw and Assistant Secretary for Post Secondary Education Sally Stroup; and a keynote address by Secretary Paige. More than 1,300 financial aid professionals registered for the Spring Conference. This marks the largest attendance in the Conference's history! For more information on the Spring Conference, go to <http://edeworkshop.ncspearson.com/Spring.htm>.

FSA Now

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MyFSA

FSA Now talked to School Eligibility Channel General Manager Victoria Edwards

Q: How long have you been at FSA?

A: I have been at FSA since 1977. I started out at FSA as a program reviewer and worked in the compliance area for about 17 years before moving to the Direct Loan program. There I provided HBCUs with technical assistance. My one-on-one technical assistance allowed me to create precedent-setting solutions to a cross section of institutions that were experiencing Title IV program administrative activities.

Q: What are the biggest changes you have seen at FSA?

A: The biggest change was FSA's transition to a PBO. The PBO has and continues to give us greater opportunities to balance our program compliance responsibilities and customer service. This ensures that the PBO puts the customers first; it encourages the best outcomes for students, schools and the Department of Education.

Q: Describe School Eligibility's responsibilities.

A: SEC monitors schools' program compliance of the Title IV programs along with providing guidance on how to improve their program administration. We work to ensure that program funds are properly used to help put America through school. We are also responsible for taking enforcement actions against schools that are unable to comply with our statutes and regulations.

Q: How many staff members do you oversee in School Eligibility?

A: We have 270 staff members across the nation – in headquarters and the 10 regional offices.

Q: How many reviews does School Eligibility conduct annually?

A: Last year, we conducted about 3,354 comprehensive compliance reviews of schools, which represents 54 percent of all schools. This includes recertification of eligibility, resolving deficient compliance audits and reviewing "flagged" financial statements. We also conducted about 245 on-site program reviews.

Q: How have some of the new technologies FSA now uses helped School Eligibility perform its responsibilities?

A: The eZ audit process allows schools to electronically submit their financial statements and audits. This major conversion in our process will strengthen our monitoring of the 6,169 schools that must submit annual audits and financial statements. In the past, these schools submitted their reports on paper. This means we will have about 18,000 fewer pieces of paper to track. Also, eCMO (electronic Case Management & Oversight) will provide our channel with an electronic workflow tool, which will standardize the work for all case managers and deploy the work across the case management team. It will also monitor a variety of data "triggers," to alert case managers of possible school compliance violations.

Q: What is your vision for School Eligibility?

A: My vision for School Eligibility is that all institutions and schools that participate in the Title IV programs should be able to manage our programs in compliance with our regulations. This improved administrative capability will benefit institutions, the Department and taxpayers. To reach this goal, we continue to collaborate with our partners; monitor schools program compliance; and operate with pride, trust and excellence.

Q: Describe your previous work experience.

A: I began my career as a financial aid officer at Towson State University and then moved on to Bowie State University before joining the Department of Education. It was a great experience and I enjoyed the interaction with the students.

Q: What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

A: I love to travel. I'm going to Ghana, Benin and Togo this July with my church; we plan to adopt an African village. I am very excited about it. I also enjoy spending time with family and friends going to plays, movies and bowling.