



FSA *Now*

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In this Issue

San Francisco office hosts successful conference aimed at improving program integrity goal
Page 2

Important info on extranet address and 1-800-4-FED-AID in **Flashes**
Page 2

Candy Kane to retire from government service and FSA Web site success — read about it in **Extra! Extra!**
Page 3

My FSA Talks to new Financial Partners General Manager Kristie Hansen about her goals for her channel
Page 4

Interns Leave Imprint with Projects

As FSA makes its way into August, the season of summer interns is drawing to a close. As the interns depart, they leave behind them an impressive amount of projects and other improvements to FSA.

CIO intern Amanda Singer, a commerce major at the University of Virginia, worked all summer on a flow chart that provides information for managing new technology projects.

Because of her project, Amanda says FSA staff who start new technology projects will be better able to navigate the system. Once her flow chart is up on the intranet, she says, the process for initiating and managing a new project will be more efficient.

"Without it, people have to guess or rely on asking other people who have already done new projects," Amanda said. "If they have [my project] up on the Web, they can say, 'What's the next



Summer interns pose for a group shot during their trip to the U.S. Capitol.

step?' without having to wait for someone to help them."

Scott Lauer, a CFO intern who majors in history at Ohio University, has spent his summer updating a procedure manual for the Internal Re-

*Please see **SUMMER**, Page Three*

Data Mart Expands FP Capabilities

On Wednesday, June 19, the Financial Partners Channel announced Release 2 of the Financial Partners Data Mart, a storehouse of information about several key business functions consolidated into one location.

The new version of the Data Mart features the Lender Risk Scorecard, a tool that assigns point values to different aspects of a lender's business practices. If a lender appears to be on the brink of financial difficulty, the new scorecards will reflect that danger.

In addition to this new service, the Data Mart will continue to function as the central access point for data from FFEL, FMS, PEPS and NSLDS. It offers a variety of data and documents of interest for Financial Partners staff, such as Guaranty Agency Financial Reports and risk assessment tools for the FFEL program.

"This is a significant phase for the Data Mart," said Anna Allen, director of systems support. "It is

*Please see **DATA MART**, Page Two*

Data Mart Offers Helpful Tools

Continued from Page One

the result of a lot of hard work by our fine FP team."

The next release of the Data Mart, scheduled for October 2002, will open up the site to external users and provide improved monitoring tools and oversight ability. The

system will also offer more extensive loan-level information from other sources.

"We see many possibilities for our Data Mart as we add more information and functionality in our next release," Anna said.

Those interested in accessing the Financial Partners Data Mart should contact Willie Sutton at 202-377-3320.



flashes

Info you just might need to know

Our operating partners can access FSANet through our extranet at

<https://fsaextranet.ed.gov>

Username: sfapartner

Password: success

One number for students

There's an official way to write our hotline for students' questions about aid:

1-800-4-FED-AID. Please make a note of it.

FSA Now

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FSA Now is monthly newsletter for FSA staff and operating partners available on FSANet. To share feedback or contribute ideas, email FSA Communications, or contact Lisa Cain at (202) 377-4003.

Program Integrity in San Francisco

Regional Office Hosts Successful Conference to Push Integrity Goal

On June 5-6, the Financial Partners team from the San Francisco regional office advanced FSA's goal of achieving program integrity. "Sharing Successful Tactics" was the theme of the Information Sharing Conference on Default Aversion held in Seattle, Washington.

The conference was co-hosted by the Northwest Education Loan Association.

"In response to requests from the Western Region guaranty agencies, 50 representatives from lending institutions, servicers and secondary markets convened to exchange best practices, share ideas and participate in meaningful and open dialogue about default prevention," said Linda Elrod, director of Partner Services for the Western Region.

FSA is responsible for making sure taxpayer money gets to the right students and for collecting funds when a student finishes his or her education. The default aversion conference emphasized FSA's need to track these funds and undertake creative means for averting default.

Ensuring taxpayer money is handled respon-

sibly and with integrity is the main ingredient for removing and keeping FSA on the program integrity path and away from the General Accounting Office's High Risk List.

"With lenders willing to share their ideas

Servicers and secondary markets convened to exchange best practices, share ideas and participate in meaningful and open dialogue about default prevention.

—Linda Elrod

on default prevention, the meeting got to the nuts and bolts of default issues," said Wally Erhardt, associate director of Student Loans of North Dakota.

In the sessions, participants discussed

creative and strategic methods for eliminating student loan default. "Some techniques mentioned included radio ads, interactive websites, sophisticated technology and creative customer outreach to prevent loan default," Anthony Lowery, co-coordinator of the conference, said.

A question and answer period, following each session, provided time for participants to address additional concerns.

National Default Prevention Day is August 1, just around the corner, and the dialogue that took place in June illustrated that guaranty agencies, the lending community and FSA are all committed to actively and aggressively decreasing student loan default and increasing the integrity with which student aid funds are handled.

"The Western Region default prevention conference was so successful that, in conjunction with the National Default Prevention Day conferences, certainly student loan defaults will continue to decline," Anthony said.

Summer Interns Make Lasting Contributions

Continued from Page One

view Division. In order to perform his tasks, Scott had to familiarize himself with the often complex nature of the audit process, participating in an audit conference and researching policy issues.

"If done correctly, audits protect fiscal interests and promote accountability," Scott said. "In order to ensure this, the audit process must be well-documented. The manual I am in the process of updating will serve as a procedural bible for the Internal Review Division."

COO intern Dana Malach has several projects related to FSA's summer intern program. When applications for summer internships started pouring in this spring, Dana helped her supervisor go through applications and recruit candidates, a vital part of the process that brings fresh faces to FSA each summer.

Once the interns were selected, Dana consulted with supervisors in determining projects for everyone, in addition to finding interns a place to sit and providing them with the necessary tools to do their jobs. This summer, Dana has helped interns with a host of



Summer interns pause at the John F. Kennedy gravesite at Arlington National Cemetery.

issues, including payroll, field trips, human resources, e-mail and several others.

"In large part, what COO does is try to make the environment for other employees at FSA a desirable place to work," Dana said of her department. "It's a way to get interns to know what FSA is about and to get to know their supervisors."

Kyle Smits, a CIO intern working on a Master's degree in communication, culture and technology at Georgetown University, combines his skills in writing and technology to create a series of newsletters for the students.gov Web site.

Over the course of the summer, Kyle has created several newsletters designed for release at different times of the year. The newsletters provide information to subscribers who are interested in learning more about student-related services from the government. In addition to his writing duties, Kyle helps clean up the Web site and writes new content.

"Students.gov provides information for students and their families, making it easier for them to find information about getting financial aid or finding the right college," Kyle said.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Candy Kane to Retire from FSA

Candy Kane announced her impending retirement from federal service on July 17. Candy has been with the government more than 30 years and has served as FSA Chief of Staff since December 1998, the inception of the Performance Based-Organization (PBO). Candy will retire August 16.

Successful Sign-Ups

FSA Web sites are having great success in getting our customers to subscribe to our services. For example, 5,841 people have signed up to receive "InfoSource," a newsletter that provides information about features on the students.gov Web site. And thousands of Direct Loan borrowers are signing up for e-services at <http://dlservicer.ed.gov>. So far, 6,013 have signed up to pay bills online and 9,491 to receive e-correspondence about loans.

Direct Loans on the Web

Soon, Direct Loan borrowers will have a new way to view and pay their loan bills — through popular Web sites like Lycos, Yahoo and Bank of America. Made possible through a partnership with CheckFree, one of the largest aggregators in the industry, this new service is set to start operating on July 29.



My FSA

My FSA sat down to talk with Kristie Hansen, the new General Manager of the Financial Partners Channel.

Q: What are your first impressions of FSA?

A: I am really impressed by the number of people here who believe in the work — in the mission and their piece of that. There are a lot of dedicated, skilled people and many of them are unsung heroes to the outside world. People have been really welcoming, and it's been wonderful for me. I really appreciate that so much.

Q: Why is it important to you, personally and professionally, to work in student financial aid?

A: I believe very strongly in the bottom line that we are here to enhance opportunities for all students to go to school and not let financial barriers prevent that access. I've been outside of government looking at the system for some time, and it's very easy to be critical of government. I've always tried to be constructive, but at some point, it's very valuable to be on the inside.

If I look back on the various jobs I've had, I feel best about those when I was coming from the perspective of a government entity. You're not only responsible for making sure all the doors are open, but that it's done in an accountable way.

Q: How have your previous work experiences in financial aid prepared you for working at FSA?

A: I was a general counselor for a guaranty agency and learned a great deal about working at the local level and their feelings about the federal government and its role in administering programs at the national level. Before that, I was the general counselor for the Auraria National Education Center combined campuses in Colorado and had contact with the students and three financial aid officers on campus. I became more appreciative of what students are concerned about and how they try to manage the cost of education. Through contacts on campus, I heard informally about the cost and the difficulties of the financial aid process, the layers of reporting and processing and how very much financial aid officers have to do — it seemed awkward.

When I was living in Prague, I worked on a program for the World Bank and the Department of Education in Hungary that had to do with the restructuring of higher education, one aspect of which was guaranteed school loan programs. I worked with

them through different models and I described how it works here [in the United States] — anyone outside the US would find it staggeringly difficult. It's more incredible because it works well despite the awkwardness.

Since then, I see that many things have been simplified. Modernization efforts are so critical. We've got a long way to go and I'm happy to be here to work on that.

Q: How do you hope to guide the Financial Partners Channel?

A: The most important thing in this channel is that it's had three general managers in three years. I think it's really important to stabilize leadership. Efforts that have happened already under the last two general managers, to examine what people are doing and how it fits in with modernization, I certainly will be continuing. I've observed that Financial Partners, in some ways, is the least understood channel. We're not here to put out new products — our job is to support the financial partners, who are doing most of the work themselves. We're really here to support them and pay them, frankly.

Our other job is to look over the shoulder of our financial partners. We've tried to move from the strictly audit perspective to one that's closer to working collaboratively, identifying the issues together and trying to see improvement and give them a chance before contemplating a hammer. All the regional offices have taken a new role of partnership in the financial partners they oversee.

Q: What do you think will be your biggest challenge here?

A: I find each of the issues that have been brought to me are really interesting and added together are important, though individually many seem like small concerns. My challenge will be to "get out of the weeds" and make sure I'm concentrating on the larger priorities of the channel. There's a good staff to handle all of these issues.

As they get to know me, the staff will understand and see I'm not looking over their shoulder. I have a passion of detail and genuinely find these things interesting! But I need to let the staff get on with it!