



FSA Now

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

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Release 2 Is Here!



FSA's Students Portal is getting a facelift just in time for back to school. Student Aid Awareness (SAA) announced this week that, pending OMB approval, Release 2 is scheduled go live on September 8. To accompany the new release, SAA is changing the name of the site from the Students Portal to *Student Aid on the Web*.

"*Student Aid on the Web* is the Internet's premiere site for planning and paying for post-secondary education," said Mary K Muncie, Students Channel chief of staff and acting director of Student Aid Awareness. "The new name will allow us to better leverage the *FAFSA on the Web* brand and, more importantly, incorporate the URL, studentaid.ed.gov, into the name."

The new and improved *Student Aid on the Web* offers college-bound students and their families a single source of free information on choosing a career, selecting a school and identifying resources to pay for it. Release 2 increased functionality adding a comprehensive career and college search tool that allows users to input interests, hobbies and educational experience. In return, *Student Aid on the Web* provides a list of related career choices. The user can then request a list of colleges that offer corresponding majors, tour the

school and apply online without ever leaving the site.

The most impressive new feature is something SAA calls MyFSA, which allows users to create a personalized folder to record a student's interests, career and college searches as well as any relevant personal information. This allows students to track their progress in the college planning and application process, pre-populate fields when applying for the FAFSA and compare award letters when deciding on a final school.

Beta versions of the new site were presented to senior Department officials as well as representatives of the White House Domestic Policy Council, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. SAA plans to continue to educate the community about the site through relationships with the Tom Joyner Morning Show, ESPN Radio and Major League Baseball.

Studentaid.ed.gov was first launched in 2002 and has developed a significant following logging over one million visits last month. Annual usage is projected to exceed 15 million visits by 2004. With the launch of Release 2, *Student Aid on the Web* continues to set the standard as the online guide on planning and paying for college and career training.

We Help Put America Through School

FSA in Chicago



Region V School Relations Branch staff members (l to r) Maria Marella, George Gevelinger, Marie Fitzpatrick, Frank Campbell, Betty Bultsma and Angela Smith pose with Terri Shaw during her May visit to Chicago.

Q&A with Region V Area Case Director Douglas Parrott

What FSA functions are located in the Chicago office?

Six FSA functions are located in our office: Case Management & Oversight (CMO); Borrower Services; School Relations Branch; Financial Partner Services; Performance Improvement & Procedures Division; and External Training Branch.

How has Chicago particularly benefited by having FSA in the city?

FSA Chicago has distributed excess computer equipment to local elementary and secondary schools in low-income neighborhoods. Several Region V staff members participated in a teacher assistant program at a Chicago school, and other staff members are involved in a mentoring program at local, low-income schools. Furthermore, many staff members have attended college nights at area high schools to answer financial aid questions.

How does the Chicago office "help to put America through school?"

The regional office is comprised of dedicated employees who work to ensure that financial assistance is available to college-bound students and their families. Our office performs multiple operational functions and has a diverse staff. These aspects are a source of strength in the exchange of ideas and our ability to achieve the Department's goals. The Chicago office's employees are best characterized as a "Can Do" staff with a willingness to get the job done by going the extra mile.

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Chicago Attractions

- * **Buckingham Fountain:** this Grant Park attraction is the perfect spot for a romantic stroll.
- * **North Michigan Avenue:** known as the "Magnificent Mile," this upscale shopping district is Chicago's version of Fifth Avenue.
- * **Sears Tower and Sky Deck:** Chicago's longest view - on a clear day, one can see 80 miles in any direction.
- * **Art Institute of Chicago:** beyond the famous feline sentinels flanking this museum's steps resides one of the world's great art collections.
- * **Navy Pier:** this tourist-packed peninsula extends for more than a half-mile into the swells of Lake Michigan.
- * **John Hancock Center:** all grace and strength, it's shorter than the Sears Tower, but it's still among the world's tallest buildings.
- * **Chicago Museum Campus:** three world-class attractions within walking distance of each other give new meaning to "a day at the park."
- * **Museum of Science and Industry:** this hands-on behemoth is the antithesis of those boring "look, but don't touch" museums.
- * **Chicago Cultural Center:** a magnificent showcase of literature, art and knowledge.
- * **Wrigley Field:** a Chicago landmark since 1914, this classic ballpark is a monument to the national pastime.
- * **Chicago Lakefront Path:** one of Chicago's crown jewels, offering stunning views of Lake Michigan and the city skyline.



Chicago's Best (according to Region V staff members)

- * **Best Chicago restaurant:** Charlie Trotter's
- * **Best local cuisine:** deep-dish pizza
- * **Favorite local pro sports team:** Harlem Globetrotters (don't be fooled by the name - this team originated in Illinois!)
- * **Favorite Region V college basketball and football teams:** basketball - University of Illinois; football - Notre Dame
- * **The most notable Chicago native:** Jean Baptiste Point du Sable (Chicago's first permanent settler)

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Updated Standards and Products Guide

The updated FSA Technology Standards and Products Guide v.4.0 is now available on FSAnet. The Standards and Products Guide is your source for information on FSA-supported technologies and products. It includes a comprehensive list of pre-approved, commercial technologies for use in the FSA computing environment and an overview of the Federal Enterprise Architecture. Please contact Denise Hill with any comments or suggestions.

HBCU Training

The Region IV School Relations Office, the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education recently sponsored Program Integrity and Accountability Training Sessions for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). The two-day workshops were presented during June and July at eight HBCU campuses across the country as well as at the Department's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The program was created in response to HBCU requests for specific training to enhance schools' financial aid program integrity and accountability. Major topics presented at the workshops included verification, reconciliation, ED Web sites, return of Title IV funds and satisfactory academic progress.

Approximately 361 HBCU financial aid and management staff members attended the workshops, representing 84 institutions nationwide. According to Region IV School Relations Officer Keisha Berkley, 95 percent of participants expressed very favorable reactions to the training. "The HBCU community responded enthusiastically with excellent enrollment, highly favorable evaluations and comments and requests for additional training in the future," said Keisha.



The Region IV School Relations Office: (back row, left to right) Ron Hudson, John Pierson, Columbus Lee, Connie Kaschub, Paul Kaeser; (seated, left to right) Opal Dobbins, Keisha Berkley, Laura Hall, Kenneth Banks. (Not Pictured: Wood Mason)

Training Sites
Philander Smith College
Dillard University
Texas Southern University
Coahoma Community College
Miles College
Shaw University
Spelman College
Meharry Medical College

FSA Software Developers Conference

Approximately 125 software providers, schools and third-party servicers attended the FSA Software Developers Conference held on August 14-15, in Arlington, VA. FSA presenters and panel members included Jerry Schubert, Paul Hill, Keith Wilson, Denise Hill, Holly Hyland, Jim McMahon, Rosemary Beavers and Ginger Klock.



Rosemary Beavers of COD and her fellow panelists share software information with conference participants.

Intern Fair

On August 4, FSA sponsored an Intern Fair for departing summer interns. Roughly 30 interns participated in the two-hour event, which provided the group an opportunity to show off the diverse set of projects they completed during the summer. Prior to the Fair, each intern created a display board that showcased their job responsibilities and activities. Interns displayed their creations at the Fair and competed for cash awards for the top three presentations. "The Intern Fair provided a forum where the students had an opportunity to display their creativity and contributions to FSA," said Intern Coordinator Dwayne Rumber. "It was competitive, spirited and fun. Everyone was a winner!"



Intern Fair winners (left to right): Dexter Ang, CIO and Kate Caballero, COO, co-third place; Erica Shein, Ombudsman, second place; and Adonna Bannister, Ombudsman, first place.



Students Channel intern Heidi Sondermann shares her Intern Fair presentation with Financial Partner Services General Manager Kristie Hansen.

FSA Outreach to Native American Community

In support of the Department's goal of increasing access to postsecondary education, FSA is conducting an outreach campaign to raise awareness of federal student aid programs among the Native American community.

Student Aid Awareness' Cindy Cameron and Carl Hammack and Borrower Services' Adara Walton attended Crow Fair, a Native American powwow in Montana, on August 16-17. The three staff members distributed FSA, ED and Office of Indian



Education brochures at the powwow, which regularly draws over 45,000 people from across the country.

Kay Jacks and Region VIII staff members Dan Whiting, Jacque Straub and Deborah Tarpley recently attended the 13th annual Salish Kootenai College Tribal College Workshop in Montana. Over 100 attendees from tribal college financial aid, business and registrar offices attend sessions geared to their specialties as well as general interest session updates. The conference represents a unique opportunity for the staff of tribally-controlled institutions to get together with their peers at a meeting dedicated to their unique interests and concerns.

Above left: Carl Hammack, Adara Walton and Cindy Cameron show off the FSA booth at the Crow Fair.

Above right: The Grand Entry kicks off the powwow each afternoon. The entire center of the "arbor" (the circular area where the dancing takes place) gradually fills with men, women and children in full regalia.

Parrott Q & A, con't

What is unique about the Chicago office?

Staff members in the Chicago office display a high level of effort and commitment in supporting new FSA projects and initiatives. Regional FSA employees involved in these initiatives appreciate the opportunity to contribute to FSA performance objectives and enhance their own professional development. For example, Earl Flurkey, senior institutional review specialist, was a member of the Accelerated Recertification work group responsible for streamlining the recertification process; Byron Scott, senior financial analyst, played a vital role in the development and implementation of the eZ Audit System that allows schools to submit their compliance and financial statements to the Department electronically, thus reducing the paper burden for all stakeholders; Herschel Wallace, institutional review specialist, is a member of the Title IV Cash Management Life Cycle Training work group which is responsible for the development and delivery of an external training course on the Title IV Cash Management Life Cycle; Mark Holland, institutional review specialist, is a member of the Verification Training work group that is developing the course on how to conduct verification program reviews at schools with potential problems with the verification requirements. Last but not least, Hearl Bacon, senior institutional review specialist, an original member of the Foreign Schools work group, continues to provide a high level of effort and commitment with foreign school eligibility.

What else would you like FSA to know about the Chicago team?

The CCMT is willing to always pitch in and feels that helping our internal customers is just as important as helping our external customers. We are looking forward to the changes envisioned from a new project called eCMO. This project will identify how technologies used by CMO can be enhanced to help achieve the FSA strategic goal of reducing risk and improving customer satisfaction. It will also address CMO's objective of creating a desktop of the future that enables the case teams to become more efficient and effective at controlling risks associated with postsecondary schools' eligibility for Title IV programs.

FSA Now

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My FSA

FSA Now talked to new Deputy Chief of Staff Doug Flamm

Q: Describe your role at FSA.

A: As Deputy Chief of Staff, I work closely with Debbie Price, FSA's chief of staff, in coordinating a wide range of initiatives and activities. I assist in directing staff activities within the Office of the Chief Operating Officer and work closely with senior FSA staff on operational and administrative issues.

Q: What has been, or will be, your biggest challenge as Deputy Chief of Staff?

A: FSA's mission is important to our nation and being part of such an important undertaking is certainly a great challenge. I'm excited to be part of FSA, and I hope to make a lasting contribution here.

Q: Tell us about your previous professional experience. How will those experiences assist you in performing your duties?

A: I come to FSA from the Department's Office of the Deputy Secretary where I served as the Administrative Officer. In that position, I

worked closely with both the Deputy Secretary and the Under Secretary on a wide range of operational and administrative issues. I have over 20 years of management experience in both the private and public sectors, and I look forward to using that experience to contribute to FSA's future success.

Q: If you could describe yourself in three words, which words would you choose? Why?

A: Personable, organized, and goal-oriented. While I strive to be organized and goal-oriented in order to accomplish as much as possible, I enjoy people and take pleasure in working with others to achieve common goals.

Q: When you're not working at FSA, what do you enjoy doing?

A: I enjoy staying physically fit by running, lifting weights and backpacking. I also enjoy working with my hands (I'm slowly but surely remodeling my own home). In addition, I'm active in my church. Most of all, I enjoy spending time with my family.

Did You Know...

Web Development Training



ConnectED provides ED employees quick and easy access to a variety of Web development tools. The intranet's Web Development training section has software samples, tutorials and numerous other resources that can teach a novice Web development basics or enhance one's skills. Web development tools featured in this section include: HTML Cheat Sheet, a list of the most common HTML tags; Encyclopedia of Web Terms, an online dictionary and search engine for computer and internet technology; and graphics and Web writing tutorials.

To view the Web Development training section, go to <http://connected/index.cfm?navid=271>.

Correction

In the July edition of *FSA Now*, the article entitled "FSA Hosts CEG Fellows" incorrectly stated that Conversations with Leaders was a program sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government. Actually, it is an initiative started by the Class of 2002 Senior Fellows from ED.