



FSA *Now*

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

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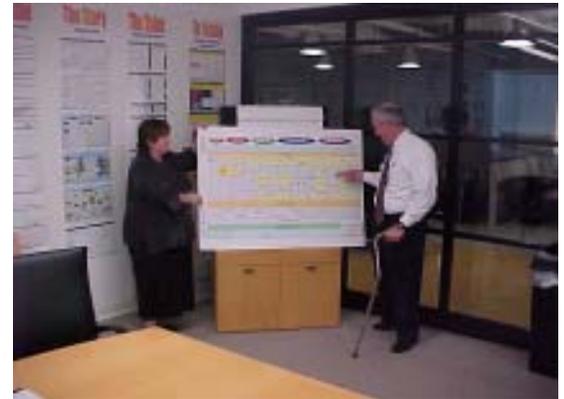
A Data Strategy Is Coming

Last August, Terri Shaw and members of the Management Council announced the development of a new project that will have a far-reaching impact on how FSA exchanges information with its partners, schools and students.

"The Data Strategy project is a data-centric approach to modernizing and integrating FSA systems to ensure the integrity of student aid programs," said Keith Wilson, Data Strategy project leader. "This is the foundation upon which the data strategy project was envisioned."

The data Strategy project will establish an enterprise-wide policy for managing and storing data and an industry-wide standard for gathering and exchanging it. Born out of the need to create a seamless, universal platform for data administration, the data strategy will enable FSA to integrate its internal systems with those of its partners to improve data quality and program integrity. Ultimately, the true beneficiary is the student.

"This project will have a profound impact on



Kay Jacks and Jerry Schubert explain the intricacies of FSA's new Data Strategy project.

the way student aid is delivered," said Paul Hill, Data Strategy co-project leader. "This will streamline our procedures, improve processing time, reduce errors and cut costs."

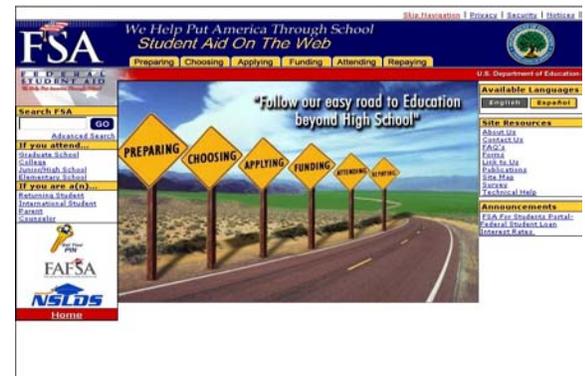
The objectives of the strategy are multi-faceted and ambitious: 1) to realign data administration by business function, not by system; 2) to provide business
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Student Aid on the Web Lauded

On October 1, the revised Student Aid on the Web was officially introduced to the higher education community during a live webcast from the Department. Terri Shaw provided a brief overview of the improved site and touched on some of its new features. Chris Chapman of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) joined Terri as NCES released a study on student and parent perceptions regarding the cost of college.

"Clearly there is a real need for public information on college costs and financing, ..." said Secretary Paige. "That's why we're pleased to announce Student Aid on the Web... This new web site does everything from assess a student's career interests to help a student apply for financial aid."

On October 8, Student Aid on the Web was



featured at the National High School Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. Yet again, Secretary Paige took the opportunity during his keynote address at the Summit to tout FSA's powerful new resource. "Student Aid on the Web is going to be a
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We Help Put America Through School

FSA in New York



Region II staff members at their office in New York.

New York's Best (according to Region II staff members)

- * **Best New York restaurant:** Carmine's on 44th Street in the theatre district. Big portions and excellent quality!!
- * **Best local cuisine:** Bagels and pizza
- * **Favorite local pro sports team:** We have two rival baseball teams, the Yankees and the Mets. We have die-hard fans for each team. Staff members are also fans of the Jets and Giants football teams.
- * **Favorite Region II college basketball and football teams:** Rutgers for both. Rutgers just trounced Army, and we believe they are well on their way to a successful football season.
- * **The most notable New York native:** U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. He was born in the Bronx and attended Morris High School and the City University of New York.

Q & A with Region II Financial Partners Director Ann Maria Fusco and Area Case Director Bob McKiernan

Which three words best describe the New York office? Why?

Collegiality. The New York staff not only work together as a team in the office and the field, but they meet and socialize in non-work environments. For example, as New York is famous for its first-run plays, we have several staff members who regularly visit the theatre district as a group to attend the best that Broadway has to offer and to dine at Carmine's—New York's best restaurant.

Versatility. The case management staff members in New York and Washington provide integrated oversight and technical assistance to over 600 institutions that participate in the federal student assistance programs. To accomplish this the case team staff have been cross-trained to handle several oversight functions. That's versatility for you!

Diversity. New York City continues to serve as one of the gateways to the United States for immigrants who wish to live and work in our great country. As such, we have a very diverse population that draws those who seek to enter from the far corners of the world. Our workforce in Region II reflects that diversity. We are proud of our diversity and we draw strength from it.

What is the biggest challenge Region II is currently experiencing?

The biggest challenge Region II is currently experiencing is our office work environment. We are located a city block away from the World Trade Center that is now being rebuilt. This construction is very noisy and at times the pile driving can be quite disturbing. But we'll manage as New Yorkers always do.

Describe some projects Region II staff members are currently working on.

The area case director is a core team member of the eCMO (Electronic Case Management & Oversight) workgroup. This is a major new project that will bring improved technology to the case management business processes. By integrating data from all current FSA systems into one information source for use by all of Case Management & Oversight, we can make better decisions about schools.

Another case management project involves data analysis on students attending foreign schools. Our staff, including a regional systems analyst, joins the Washington, DC foreign school team and queries the National Student Loan Data System. They review data for compliance and based on the results of the review provide technical assistance if necessary. The New York case management team performs foreign school program reviews in conjunction with the foreign school team in Washington and provides training to foreign school officials. Just this month, the financial aid director from Ben-Gurion University in Israel came to New York and received training from our Institutional Improvement Specialist Steve Tessitore and the Regional Training Officer Sandy Santana.

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Fusco & McKiernan Q & A, con't

The Financial Partners staff members are involved in national reviews of guarantors and servicers, as well as reviewing exceptional performer applications.

What is the best thing about working in Region II?

For most of the New York regional office staff, the best thing about working in Region II is our location in the greatest city in the world. New York City and the nation's capital took a severe blow on September 11, 2001. In addition to the tragic loss of life on that day, the economic recession was deeper in New York as a result of the attack, but we showed the world our grit and determination and bounced back better than ever in true New York tradition. New York is a helleva town.

Do you have any interesting stories from last month's blackout?

The blackout was a great adventure for some staff, especially Frances Mannino, Joanne Salamo and Tom Whiting who are all Brooklyn residents. After the lights went out the original plan was for Fran, Joanne and Tom to take a simple walk over the Brooklyn Bridge and take a quick bus trip home once they hit Brooklyn. To paraphrase Robert Burns, the best laid plans oft go astray.

The Brooklyn Bridge was wall-to-wall people, with pedestrians overflowing into the traffic lanes slowing everything to a crawl (picture Times Square on New Year's Eve, then double or triple it). The Bridge was actually swaying from all the pedestrian and car traffic trying to get over it - total gridlock. Surviving the Brooklyn Bridge experience, trying to actually get on a bus in Brooklyn was impossible. Churches were putting out folding chairs at bus stops (an example of New York hospitality), with people virtually camping out at the bus stops trying to get home, but you just could not get on a bus (the few that were running).

They decided on a walking tour of Brooklyn, all the while hoping that the further they got into Brooklyn the easier it would be to catch a bus, car service or some other means of transportation. No luck (almost made you miss the NY subways). But it was an amazing walk. You would be walking down a dark side street unable to see anything, when all of a sudden you would see people setting up cars so the headlights shined on the sidewalk, barbecues were being set up, music was playing and people were partying. They left New York about 5PM in the daylight and arrived at Tom's house in Brooklyn in total darkness about 5 hours later (still no buses). Finally, Fran and Joanne were able to get their cell phones working and made arrangements for someone to pick them up and get them the rest of the way home. A very interesting experience, but one they would rather not repeat.

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

As mentioned earlier, collegiality is one of the words that best describe the New York regional office. For us that means that staff from all components within the Financial Partner and the Application, School Eligibility and Delivery Services work with each other to provide the best possible services to our customers and partners.

We have been through a lot together. Some of what we have gone through most people will never experience in their work life. This has made us a work family, which influences how we treat each other and work together. The best thing about the office is that we work together to put America through school - we are a team and our work products show it.



New York Attractions

[Circle Line Sightseeing](#) (212-563-3200) – This is a boat tour around Manhattan – provides lots of history and cool sights. It's really nice on the river on a hot day.

[Empire State Building Observatory](#) (212-736-3100)

[Heliport](#) (West 30th Street & 12th Ave., 212 563-4442)

[Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) (212-535-7710) - Worth the trip – Pay special attention to the European paintings section and the serenity garden. The view from the rooftop is outstanding. Accessible to Central Park.

[Statute of Liberty](#) (212-269-5755) - Cannot visit the island for security reasons. Ellis Island is a nice spot as well.

[Broadway Theater Ticket Info](#) (212-239-6200) - Some good shows playing now and can be seen for cut rates if you purchase on the day of the show.

[World Trade Center Site](#) – Broadway & Fulton

[FSA Region II Office](#) - 75 Park Place (corner of Park Place and Greenwich)

[Seaport Village](#) - try it for a shopping change (instead of the Trump Plaza or Lord & Taylor — don't forget Bloomies!)

<http://www.nycvisit.com/home/index.cfm>

You must visit this Web site BEFORE you come to New York – it is full of information on activities and things to do in the city.

EXTRA! EXTRA!



Terri Shaw's Anniversary Celebration

On September 3, Terri celebrated her one-year anniversary as FSA's Chief Operating Officer. "This has been a great first year," said Terri. "We have been through a lot together, and I am very proud of the accomplishments the FSA team has achieved since last September."

Terri poses with the cake she received at her anniversary party.

Lunch with the Secretary

CFO's Frank Kesterman attended the ED Employee Luncheon with Secretary Paige on September 4. The conversation focused on how ED employees can "view ourselves and our work in the context of making the Department an exemplary place to do meaningful work for the benefit of society," said Kesterman. "It was one of the most enlightened luncheon discussions that I have had the pleasure to enjoy in a very long time."

2003 Electronic Access Conferences

The Electronic Access Conferences (EAC) are just around the corner. The first EAC is November 2-5 in San Diego, followed by a Software Developers Conference on November 6. Approximately 1,837 people have registered for the San Diego EAC. The second EAC is December 2-5 in New Orleans. Currently, 1,209 people are registered for this conference.

The theme of this year's EAC is "Getting Aid Right." The conferences will feature multiple general sessions, more than 40 interest sessions, a computer lab, hands-on training, a cyber cafe and an Ask A Fed desk. The keynote speaker is Susie Kay, founder and president of Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund in Washington, DC. Hoop Dreams provides a college prep mentoring program, an internship program, a Princeton Review SAT prep program and scholarships for inner-city high school students.

For questions on conference specifics, please visit the EAC website at <http://edeworkshop.ncspearson.com/welcome.htm>.

Cohort Default Rates

On September 15, FSA released the 2001 Cohort Default Rates to participating schools. Terri Shaw and Sally Stroup held a press conference on September 16, to publicly announce that the 2001 National Cohort Default Rate dropped to an all-time low of 5.4 percent, down .5 percent from 2000. Special thanks to Patricia Trubia and her entire Cohort Default team of Frances Robinson, Zachary Vroman, Beverly Stern, Linda Young, Carolyn Bush, Donna Bellflower, Mary McGeorge and Rosemary Foltis for all their hard work.

All-Employee Meeting

The next FSA All-Employee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 21, 2003, from 1:30-3:30 pm EST at the Hyatt Regency-Capitol Hill at 400 New Jersey Avenue, NW. Employees unable to attend in person may join the meeting via teleconference. If you have any special needs or require assistance, please contact Linda Holland at 202-377-3712.

FSA Now

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Data Strategy, con't

experts better access to data to facilitate decision making; 3) to develop universal student/borrower identifiers comprised of social security number, name and date of birth; 4) to establish a universal identification system for partner organizations; and 5) to map out the "as-is" and "to-be" flows of data throughout the lifecycle of the Title IV aid delivery process.

Six teams were assigned to focus on solving different pieces of the Data Strategy puzzle. Jeanne Saunders is tasked with leading the group establishing the Standard Student Identification Method (SSIM), a common set of identifiers for students/borrowers. Paul Hill is leading the Routing ID/Enrollment and Access Management team which will review FSA's current Enrollment and Access Management environment, research ways to streamline the business process for trading partners, and establish a single, common identifier for every trading partner interacting with FSA systems and services. Holly Hyland heads the XML Framework team tasked with identifying a single set of standards for data exchange. Denise Hill leads the Technical Strategies group, which is charged with recommending the common set of technologies and standards including Internal and External Data exchange, Web Usage, Web Services, and Data Storage that need to be in place to support the Data Strategy recommendations and solutions. Jane Holman oversees the Data Quality team charged with identifying those "high-impact" data integrity and quality issues and ensuring they are included in the overall data quality methodology. Finally, Keith Wilson of FSA's CIO division leads the Data Framework Team, a steering committee comprised of Team leaders from the five teams overseeing the Data Strategy project.

The first phase of the project, the development of the strategy, is almost complete with a final deliverable expected by the end of December. In Phase II, the teams will establish a sequencing plan for how best to implement the Data Strategy. Future phases will be defined by the sequencing plan and will include the actual implementation of the strategy. The sequencing plan is expected to take approximately 12 months to complete with future phases being implemented over the coming years.

"No other POC has ever attempted a project of this scale," said Wilson. "This is a mammoth undertaking that will transform student aid."

Congratulations to...

On October 16, Region II staff member Patricia Edelson received the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency Award for Excellence. The award recognizes Patricia's work on the Career Beacon Institute case. She provided her expertise to ED's OIG investigative staff, whose work led to multi-jurisdictional prosecutions.

Student Aid on the Web, con't

tremendous resource for millions of people, especially high school students. I encourage you to see the site..."

Student Aid Awareness anticipates over 15 million visitors will use the site over the next year with usage rates expected to climb as word of the site spreads among the high school community.

Mary Kay Munice, Students Channel chief of staff and acting director of Student Aid Awareness, commends all those involved in creating the Web site for their hard work in developing a valuable resource for students and parents.

Did You Know...



ED's Mentoring Program

ED's Office of Management is sponsoring a department-wide mentoring program called *Teachable Moments*. As part of the Department's Human Capital strategy, mentoring will be used to develop employee skills to support fulfillment of the Department's mission and strategic plan, transfer institutional knowledge and cultivate learning. Mentoring Program features include: shared learning in an informal and flexible mentoring relationship; short-term mentoring engagements to meet immediate performance goals; long-term engagements for career path development; and a Web-based mentoring application that supports engagement and facilitates communication between participants.

Contact Lucinda Nobles at lucinda.nobles@ed.gov for more information on the mentoring program.

Terri Visits "The Lone Star State"



Terri converses with Region VI staff members at an employee dinner.

On October 8-9, Terri Shaw visited FSA's Region VI office in Dallas. This visit concludes Terri's first tour of FSA's regional offices to meet with FSA staff.