



FSA Now

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

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July 2004

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FSA Updates its Strategic Objectives

FSA Senior Management recently refined FSA's strategic direction by adding a new strategic objective, *Deliver Student Aid Effectively and Accurately*, to the existing set of five guiding principles. FSA's Strategic Objectives are the high-level results FSA strives to achieve as an organization which help guide senior management in planning and providing direction to FSA employees and partners. In addition, these objectives provide the foundation for the Annual Performance Plan, which sets priorities and drives the FSA budgeting process during the year. While objectives are typically fluid and can change as business conditions dictate, this addition was necessitated to stress the importance of running FSA's day-to-day business.

"Until now, the Performance Plan primarily outlined strategies for discretionary spending," said Cyndi Reynolds, FSA's Director of Operational

Performance Analysis, Reporting and Internal Review Group. "The new strategic objective reinforces the notion that innovation is important and necessary as long as we keep 'the trains running,'" referring to an analogy often cited by COO Terri Shaw.

The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 outlined four goals to guide FSA in administering the Department's student aid programs. After a review of these goals against the strategic drivers that influence the PBO's ability to efficiently and effectively deliver student aid, management repositioned the four goals into five strategic objectives to ensure appropriate management focus and operational readiness. These were: (1) Integrate FSA Systems and Provide New Technology Solutions; (2) Improve Program Integrity; (3) Reduce Program Administration Costs; (4) Improve Human Capital Management; and (5) Improve Products and Services to Provide Better Customer Service.

FSA'S SIX STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Integrate FSA Systems and Provide New Technology Solutions
2. Improve Program Integrity
3. Reduce Program Administration Costs
4. Improve Human Capital Management
5. Improve Products and Services to Provide Better Customer Service
6. Deliver Student Aid Effectively and Accurately

Bridging the Gap Between FSA and Guaranty Agencies

Financial Partners' Ann Maria Fusco is hard at work in New York trying to help FSA's guaranty agencies ensure borrowers repay their loans.

Ann Maria, Financial Partner Eastern Regional Director, along with her team, organize two annual events. The Guaranty Agency Summit and the Default Aversion Session keep the lines of communication open between Department employees and guaranty agencies.

The summit is a joint venture between the Eastern and Northern Regions of Financial Partners where CFO and operations staff come together with the Department to talk about issues of interests to both parties. The guaranty agencies and the Department cooperatively set the agenda.

This year's summit will take place Aug. 31 in Boston. Expected agenda items will include: default prevention, collections, the common review initiative and the common claim review. The common review evaluates lender programs while the common claim review standardizes the forms agencies use.

This summit works to better align guarantors with FSA's policies, leading to more efficient relations and subsequently reducing costs.

"It brings to life problems that need to be worked on between FSA and guarantors," Ann Maria explained.

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We Help Put America Through School

Intern Field Trip Day

June 29, 2004



FSA interns took the day off on June 29 to explore Washington. The day began at the Spy Museum, the country's only public museum dedicated to espionage. After lunch, the group took a tour of the Capitol. The remainder of the day was left for interns to experience D.C.'s rich culture. Many decided to go to the recently opened World War II memorial. Others checked out museums along the Mall.



Volunteer Joe Weber

Joe Weber of Borrower Services/Collections won the outstanding individual volunteer award for 2002 presented by the Lutheran Social Services of Washington, D.C. He received this honor for his extensive volunteer work in a prison ministry and ex-inmate rehabilitative services. Joe served for six years on the Board of Directors of Prison Congregations of America in efforts to establish prison congregations in every state. In addition to keeping eight pen pals in five different Maryland state prisons, he distributes food and clothing to former inmates and their families several times a month. Joe is currently the vice-president on the outside council of The Community of St. Dysmas, a prison congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. During the holiday season, he gets his friends, family and co-workers to sponsor children of inmates, ex-inmates and other needy families in the Baltimore-Metro area. Last year, Joe's hard work resulted in the distribution of food baskets to 70 families and presents to more than 300 kids.



Quotable

“Good teachers everywhere strive for the same things. We live to give. We work to share. We teach because we care. We strive to become better so our students can better reach their potential. Our country owes you a great debt of thanks for your own dedication, service, and sacrifice.”

- Secretary Rod Paige addressing teachers at the recent Research-to-Practice Summit

Did You Know? Gainsharing



You can make money by spending less while on business travel! The Travel Gainsharing Program is a way to reward employees who save the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs (OIIA) money while traveling by using less expensive lodging and transportation.

If lodging expenses are less than the maximum allowable lodging rate, you are entitled to half of the amount OIIA saves after a cumulative savings for the trip or a series of trips equals \$400. If you decide to stay with a friend or relative and eliminate all lodging expenses, you will receive half of the lodging rate. Similarly, if you are enrolled in a frequent flyer program and save OIIA the cost of a common carrier ticket, you are entitled to half the savings of the ticket.

This program is voluntary and appropriate savings forms must be filled out with OIIA Executive Office in order to receive these benefits. For more information, visit <http://connected1.ed.gov/po/oia/download/travel.pdf>.

FSA Hits the Halls

What are you reading on your summer vacation?



Carl Hammack: Program Analyst; Student Aid Awareness; Students Channel

Destination: Monterrey, Mexico and Dallas, Texas

Reading List: Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter by Thomas Cahill
Whale Done: the Power of Positive Relationships by Ken Blanchard
Fish: A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results by Stephen Lundin



Angela Ware: Office Automation Assistant; Financial Partners

Destination: Ocean City, Md.; New York, N.Y.; Connecticut and Pennsylvania

Reading List: Heat Seekers by Zane
My Life by Bill Clinton



Varouj John Jebian: Senior Review Specialist; Financial Partners (San Francisco)

Destination: Palm Springs, Calif.
Reading List: My Life by Bill Clinton
Dude, Where's My Country by Michael Moore
Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry by Evan Wolfson



Karen Morris: Senior Loan Analyst; Borrower Services/Collections (Atlanta)

Destination: Seattle, Wash.; cruise to Alaska; Wilmington, N. C.
Reading List: Little Scarlet by Walter Mosley
Fear Itself by Walter Mosley
The Bourne Legacy by Eric Van Lustbader
Song of Susannah (The Dark Tower VI) by Stephen King
The Dark Tower (The Final Chapter) by Stephen King

FSA Now

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FSA Hits the Halls is the first installment of a new monthly column where we randomly ask FSA employees questions to find out a little more about our staff.

From the Regions...

FSANow is looking to highlight specific regional projects. Please let us know if you have any thoughts or ideas to include in *FSANow*.

Guaranty Agencies con't from page 1

The Eastern region has held the summit for the past five years, and this is the second year that the Northern region will cosponsor the event. The Western and Southern region summit will be held during next fiscal year.

Ann Maria's other venture is the Default Aversion Information Sharing program. She started this program in 2001, inviting area guaranty agencies to participate in a forum to share best practices, to prevent default among borrowers and to learn from each other's methods through presentations.

From the start, participants were pleased with the session's concepts and effectiveness. "I came away impressed with the partnership that is being developed between the U.S. Department of Education and the guaranty agency community," said Doug Hendrickson, assistant vice president of default prevention services at Educational Management Credit Corporation. "Partnerships like this will help both the U.S. Department of Education and the guaranty agency community become more effective in managing delinquent student loan portfolios in the future."

A session was also hosted in San Francisco in 2002. That same year, the Eastern Region and Northern Region joined forces to host the Indianapolis session. Both regions co-hosted the 2003 session held in Boston.

Ann Maria hopes to expand the next session into a larger arena that accommodates all the regions as well as a greater presence from Department employees.

"The purpose is to get the guaranty agencies to talk to each other and share ideas," she said.

The next Default Aversion Information Sharing session is scheduled for May 2005 and may incorporate the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHHELP). The concept in the works for 2005 will invite FSA employees enterprise-wide to attend and learn what works best for guaranty agencies in preventing default.

LULAC Convention

Abraham Marinez, of HQ's ASEDS, and Sue Goldman, of the Dallas office, man the FSA booth at the League of United Latino American Citizens (LULAC) Convention held July 6 through 10 in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to the booth, Abraham, along with Raúl Galván, also of the Dallas office, made a presentation featuring Student Aid on the Web during the College Day segment of the convention. They also disbursed information regarding Title IV programs. This was the first year that FSA has been invited to participate in the convention.



Customer Care Face-Lift Better Serves Borrowers

Diane Spadoni, a 25-year veteran of FSA, knows how difficult it is to maintain consistency throughout borrower services. As regional director of the borrower services collections group in Chicago, she is currently charged with coordinating ombudsman support so FSA employees use a streamlined approach in dealing with customer disputes.

In the past, the ombudsman office has had liaison specialists within the collections group. Diane's customer care team will expand liaisons' knowledge to cover all four areas of borrower services: disabilities, collections, consolidations and servicing.

Diane's efforts thus far include meeting with each of the four areas to learn about their workflows and processes. This project is the first step in developing a cohesive borrower services unit that services all borrower complaints.

In most cases, inquiries come through the ombudsman office, where they re-route the facts to the customer care team. The ombudsman office explains to the borrower that a designated liaison group in that particular area will review his situation. The revamped customer care unit will handle inquiries for the broader customer

group represented by Borrower Services.

"From the ombudsman office perspective, the customer care team is an excellent way to demonstrate the power of collaboration and leveraging of expertise across responsibilities," said Deb Wiley, FSA Ombudsman.

Currently the ombudsman fields hundreds of inquiries annually. While some take as little as two minutes to resolve, others involve a more in-depth analysis. The new system will expedite that process.

"Once CSB is fully implemented, staff can look at a loan from cradle to grave. All the information will be right at their fingertips," said Diane.

The ultimate goal of the project is to look at each situation with fresh eyes, to make people feel valued and, even if they don't necessarily get the answer they want, to make each customer feel heard.

The customer care team consists of three to six members each from Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and D.C. The project, which is expected to be completed within the year, will better service the borrower who often has problems in multiple departments.

FSA Then and Now: From Intern to Employee

The Chius are helping put America through school. All three of them.

When Julia Chiu started her internship at FSA in the summer '02, she had no idea that two years later she would be helping to manage interns.

Julia began as a summer intern before beginning graduate school at Harvard University. After working in the COO's office under Candy Kane and Mark Washington, Julia decided to come back the following summer to intern in CIO. There, she worked primarily under Charlie Coleman with students.gov.

When a full-time position later became available in that office, she accepted and started full time in November.

Her summer experience in CIO made for a smooth transition into her new position as a program analyst. She was also already familiar with the Department of Education as well as FSA programs and policies, and much of what she learned as an intern was useful in her permanent position.

Julia is currently working on the inter-agency GovLoans.gov, a part of the E-Gov initiative in the President's Management Agenda. The site offers a one-stop shop for federal loans, bringing together five government agencies.

Julia, who is still occasionally mistaken as an intern, found her summers at FSA to be worthwhile. Now, she can offer her expertise to current interns, including her two younger sisters, Lulu and Ruby, who are interning at FSA this summer.

"Have fun. Learn something. Ask questions, and remember how your job affects the citizens," Julia said. "It's important to tie the little mundane things you do to the big picture."

Lulu and Ruby, both sophomores at UC-Berkeley, knew about FSA's summer internship program from Julia's experience, and at their sister's suggestion, decided to apply.

Why did Julia take the job? "Being from a family with four children, I would not have been able to attend college, much less graduate school, if it were not for federal student aid....I know firsthand how important financial aid can be and working at FSA gives me the chance to provide the same opportunities to other students who otherwise can not afford to go to college."

Ruby says, "I saw the internship as a great opportunity to see the inner workings of not only a government office, but of an office in which I, a college student receiving financial aid, have a personal interest. I had also heard from Julia that this was a great place to work because interns actually receive real projects to do, not menial filing and photocopying tasks like in other internships. Coming to DC was also a bonus!"



Julia Chiu, center, encouraged her sisters Ruby, left, and Lulu, right, to follow in her footsteps as FSA interns.



Dick Coppage stands with employee MAJ (P) Robert G. Smith

FSA EMPLOYEE HONORS BOSS

FSA's MAJ (P) Robert G. Smith of the U.S. Army recently recognized Dick Coppage as a "Patriotic Employer" for his support when MAJ Smith was on duty in the Army. This award recognizes employers who are helpful to their employees who serve as reservists.

As part of the 305th Military History Detachment, a three-person unit, MAJ (P) Smith provides historical guidance to people by conducting oral history interviews and collecting documents and artifacts to supplement the oral history. In addition to his most recent deployment in Iraq, he dealt with the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the Pentagon and Guantanamo Bay. MAJ Smith's duties for the five months he spent in Iraq included gathering information and writing a report about the 11th Air Regiment deep attack in the Karbala region and its implications for Army aviation for the Chief of Staff of the Army. In his travels, his unit was ambushed twice. Seeing mass graves from Saddam Hussein's regime strengthened his appreciation for freedom and reinforced his commitment to serve the country. "It's an American duty to love and support your country," he said.

MAJ (P) Smith's family has a history of serving in military operations dating back to the Revolutionary War. MAJ Smith enlisted in the Army after he obtained his master's degree in history from Penn State University. Generally people do not enlist with graduate degrees, but he wanted to know what it was like to fight and maintain a tank before he was placed in command of many tanks.

MAJ (P) Smith, who becomes a Lieutenant Colonel in September, lives in Germantown, MD with his wife Katie and two sons. He works in Liquidation of Schools Perkins Portfolios.

"Good people are supposed to be recognized no matter where they serve."

-MAJ (P) Smith