

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff

FSA NOW



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The Career Zone team is delivering its message to employees one region at a time.

FSA's Career Zone tours the regions

FSA's Career Zone staff's mission is to assist all employees develop their careers and skills. To accomplish this task, they traveled to seven of FSA's regional offices in the last two months. They plan to visit the remaining offices in Atlanta, Boston and Chicago by the end of the year.

"Our focus is to raise awareness as it relates to the Career Management segment of the Career Zone," Career Zone Manager Dwayne Rumber said. "But, we are also building relationships with regional offices' employees by allowing them the opportunity to put faces with names."

Career Zone staff began each presentation with a general overview of the opportunities available through the Career Zone. Following that, staff responded to specific regional Career Management needs, as indicated on questionnaires that were sent to each regional office prior to the visit. As a result,

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FSA undergoes Extreme Makeover

Federal Student Aid is the recipient of the Extreme Hiring Makeover. The initiative launched Sept. 14, 2004 by the Partnership for Public Service (PPS) will improve how the federal government recruits and hires talented workers.

FSA is acting as one of the pilot agencies, along with the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services of the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Nuclear Security Administration of the Department of Energy.

The goal of Extreme Hiring Makeover is to streamline hiring at each agency, and ultimately serve as role models to other agencies in improving hiring processes throughout the federal government. One way the program hopes to fix the problem is to implement the most effective private sector hiring techniques inside the federal government.

PPS has united a number of private and public sector organizations in order to help FSA, CMS and NNSA solve their human capital issues. These organizations will be donating their products and services in order to help participating agencies improve their practices and further develop their workforce.

In addition to PPS, Monster Government Solutions, ePredix, AIRS, CPS Human Resource Services, Brainbench, Human Capital Institute and Korn/Ferry International will comprise the Extreme Hiring Makeover team.

It will be the responsibility of these agencies to evaluate the current processes, determine solutions and implement new practices.

FSA's chief operating officer Terri Shaw is pleased to be a part of the pilot program. At the project launch, Terri expressed a need at FSA for "speed and quality" in the hiring process.

Current hiring processes in the government often take six months to a year to finalize. According to Terri, that time frame is unacceptable. "If it takes 30 days to hire someone, that is too long. Talented people are not going to wait around for us."

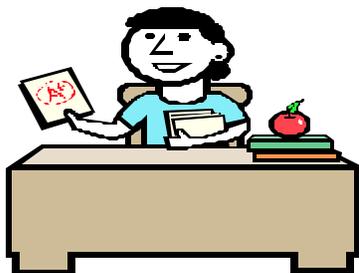
Recent research conducted by Penn, Schoen, Berland & Associates, Inc. suggests that Terri is right. Nearly 70 percent of college juniors and seniors said that are not willing to wait more than four weeks.

That fact, compounded by the significant number of federal employees eligible for retirement within the next five years, more than half, is making it more and more difficult for the government to recruit and retain the best and the brightest.

By working with PPS and the other organizations, FSA hopes to replenish and develop a talented workforce who will continue to meet the changing needs of students and their families. While there is no projected completion date, Terri said she hopes to see results as early as January.

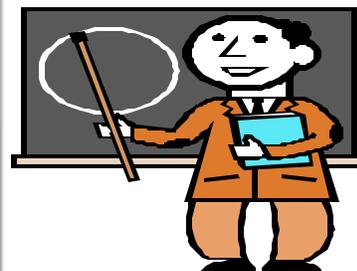
PPS also assisted in developing FSA's Human Capital Plan, released last month. PPS is a "nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to meeting the people needs of government by inspiring a new generation to serve and transforming the way government works."

We Help Put America Through School



FSA Hits the Halls

Who was your most memorable teacher?



Vincent Clark



**Sr. Guarantor & Lender Review Specialist
Financial Partners (NY)**

Mrs. Iola R. Smith

Psychology Professor

“She believed it was important for young students to challenge themselves with a variety of course work and to gain exposure to the many cultures that made up our college campus. In addition to being a fine teacher, she also played a role as counselor, mentor and a source of encouragement to the many students who crossed her path. It has been over 35 years since my work-study chats with Mrs. Smith and I don’t remember a lot about the principles of psychology, but I do remember a dedicated teacher who inspired students with her wit and wisdom.”

Kerry L. O’Brien

Not pictured.

**Institutional Review Specialist,
Denver Case Management Team**

**Mr. Narveson
Junior High Algebra**

“He never saw my disability. He only saw a young lady eager to learn. His patience and teaching created the needed foundation that allowed me to excel in math with great enthusiasm. His influence directly affected my future educational pursuits. The result... a B.A. degree in mathematics and a teaching certificate.”

Carolyn Craddock



**Management and Program Analyst,
WSS (DC)**

**Miss Word
Fourth Grade Teacher**

“She loved history. She believed if you wrote it, you owned it, and it was like history came alive on the paper for me. She made it a story. She always encouraged us to make it ours. And, that’s when I first considered being a teacher because I realized teachers help scope who we are.”

Mr. Bonowitz

High School Football Coach

“Mr. Bonowitz taught me the importance of an education. Even though he was my football coach and demanded that I worked hard on the field, he also demanded just as much from me off the field in my studies.”

Chris Farr



**Conference Team Lead,
Communications (DC)**

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



Ethics Matters by Sean Dent

Outside Activities

The Standards of Ethical Conduct require you to obtain approval prior to engaging in outside teaching, speaking or writing that is related to your official duties.

It is safe to assume that a particular activity relates to your official duties if: 1) you are invited to speak or write because of your official position with the Department, 2) the invitation was extended by someone whose interests may be affected by performance or nonperformance of your official duties, or 3) the subject matter of your presentation deals with a present or former assignment of yours.

In addition to teaching, speaking or writing activities, you are also required to obtain approval prior to serving as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, agent, attorney, contractor, consultant, employee, advisory committee member or active participant for a prohibited source of the Department.

If you believe that you require approval for a specific outside activity, the first step is to complete an Outside Activity Request Form. Upon completing the Outside Activity Re-

quest Form, you should forward it to your supervisor for approval, and then to the Ethics Division for concurrence or non-concurrence. This form may be found at: http://wdcrobiis08/doc_img/oaform.doc.

Following approval of your Outside Activity Request form, you will be subject to certain limitations. First, you will not be allowed to use your official title or position to identify yourself in connection with the activity. However, you will be permitted to include your official title in a series of other biographical details as long as it is not given greater prominence than other details.

Second, you will be prohibited from participating personally and substantially in any Department matters that will have a direct and predictable effect on the financial interest of the outside entity. Of course, you will be expected to perform this activity only when you are not on duty!

As always, call Sean Dent at 202-401-6213 for advice tailored to your specific situation.

FSA Now

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FSA Now is a monthly newsletter for FSA Staff available on FSAnet. To share feedback or contribute ideas, e-mail FSA Communications.

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extra! Extra!

National Cohort Default Rates Announced
Student loan default rates were a record low 5.2 percent for FY2002. "Low interest rates, strong program management, making debt repayment a priority and improved service by the Federal Student Aid office (FSA) contributed to the low default rates," said Secretary Paige.

FSA Employee Wins Pennant
Daniel Pollard was awarded an "I Won a Budget Battle" pennant for correctly answering a Budget Battle question in The National Journal, which asked which two federal organizations manufacture money. Daniel successfully identified the answers: The Bureau of Engraving and Printing and the U.S. Mint.

!! All-Employee ALERT !!

Updated Emergency Guides Released

OPM recently released updated emergency guides for federal employees and managers to prepare for an emergency event. All employees are encouraged to download the new guides and review them.

The two updated emergency guides now provide guidance on telework arrangements, designation of emergency personnel and shelter-in-place protocols.

In addition to the guides for federal employees and managers, OPM also produced a national and Washington, D.C., specific emergency preparedness guide for families. The guides can be found on FSA Net under Emergency Preparedness.

Publications process revamped

As part of FSA's most recent efforts to align FSA's publication processes with ED, a training session is being developed for those employees who create certain recurring FSA publications.

The purpose of the training is to learn the roles and responsibilities of FSA writers, FSA Communications and OPA. Employees will also have an opportunity to express concerns and make improvements to the new FSA publication process.

It will also be useful in giving employees a frame of reference for where to get support and assistance when needed during the publications process.

For questions or more information, contact Joe Aiello at (202) 377-4002.

From the Regions...

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

Career Zone promoted throughout the regional offices

Continued from page 1

various workshops including resume building, interview critiques and one-on-one confidential career counseling were held.

In some cases, Career Zone staff helped employees use their learning coupon by finding appropriate courses to fit their needs. The regional visits also acted as a vehicle to solicit feedback on how the Career Zone can improve itself.

Regional employees welcomed the Career Zone's presentation. Most were impressed by the Career Zone's regional outreach.

Antonio Galvan, San Francisco office

"The tour itself is the best way to familiarize all employees with the services available to us. My years with the Department has shown employees are more receptive to learning/career activities with Headquarters staff than the local TDC contractors."

Esther Ross, Seattle office

"Professional development programs that identify employee skills in advance may prove to be beneficial in meeting the future challenges of the employee and the Department."

David Bartlett, Kansas City office

"In many instances the regional office staff are the first impression of the Department of Education to our school customers. The notices of training and special events hosted by the Career Zone are in a room in UCP. Rarely is an equivalent training offered in the regional offices. Continuous improvement of the job skills of all FSA staff, DC and the Regional Offices, must be ever-growing before we can become a truly high performing organization. The Career Zone's com-

mitment and follow-up of the regional visits will go a great distance in helping FSA reach new heights."

Sherry Cole, Denver office

"I thought the visit from the Career Zone was a necessary resource for employees. It has been over 15 years since I have encountered anything like what they offered. I was impressed and I would encourage other employees to take advantage of this resource."

Steve Eisenberg, New York office

"The Career Zone regional tour demonstrates to regional employees that headquarters considers employees to be its most significant asset, and that employees' career development is an integral part of a successful organization."

Although the Career Zone staff has returned to D.C., regional employees can still receive career management through distance counseling. Career counselors can critique resumes or conduct mock interviews with regional employees through video conferencing, fax, telephone and e-mail. Dwayne encourages regional employees to continue using the Career Zone as a resource. Professional development programs that identify employees skills in advance may prove to be beneficial in meeting the future challenges of the employee and Department.

"I think Career Zone provides staff with the resources and tools to manage their careers," he said. "It shows that FSA has a vested interest for its employees to develop their skills and find the right fit for themselves. By growing the staff, it grows the organization."

Eastern and Northern Regions Host Guaranty Agency Summit

The Eastern/Northern Regions Guaranty Agency Partnership Summit was held in Boston on Aug. 31. This was the sixth such annual summit for 40 guaranty agency senior staff members to meet with Financial Partners staff from the Regions and Central office. The agenda, developed in response to input from guaranty agencies, covered topics including program reviews, guaranty agency scorecards, Common Review Initiative, NSLDS, Policy, Common Claims Initiative, Voluntary Flexible Agreements and Collections.

-by Ann Maria Fusco



All- Employee Meeting

THURSDAY, OCT. 28, 2004
1 P.M. - 3 P.M.

COO Terri Shaw will speak to employees and then take questions. HQ employees can watch on their computers while regional employees are asked to attend the video-conference screening.

Around FSA



ABOVE: FSA staff man the table at ED's annual Back-to-School Fair held Tuesday, Sept. 14 at FB-6 in order to promote higher education opportunities available through financial aid.

RIGHT: FSA employees answer questions at the ED Pavillion at the National Council of Negro Women Inc.'s 19th annual Black Family Reunion held on the National Mall Sept. 11-12. Twenty-one employees conducted outreach to more than 5,000 families with potential students.

CONFERENCE UPDATE

EAC Dates: Nov. 1-4 in Orlando*
Nov. 30 - Dec. 3 Las Vegas

Total Registrants as of 9/20: 2,455

For more information:
<http://edeworkshop.ncspearson.com/welcome.htm>

*Orlando attendees: Please be sure to obtain an absentee ballot from your state. For more information about absentee voting: <http://www.fvap.gov/links/statelinks.html>



School Relations Branch develops WebEx Training

The School Relations Branch in partnership with Pearson Government Solutions developed WebEx Training for schools, an interactive virtual classroom for delivery of real-time online training.

WebEx allows participants to access training at their own computers. Each participant is provided with a training time, toll-free number, web site URL, link to a downloadable guide and sign-on password. Participants also receive Powerpoint presentations and software demonstrations to reinforce the material.

"We developed these training modules in response to requests from schools to provide training that did not require them to travel away from their offices," explains project leader Mark Gerhard.

Two SRB staff members conduct the training from their regional office. Trainees can submit questions to their instructor to be answered individually or in front of the class. Ten participants are allowed for each hour to hour-and-one-half session.

WebEx eliminates cost and inconveniences associated with traveling to regional training facilities or to schools. In this academic year, SRB has provided Pell and Direct Loan training for more than 500 participants in over 60 sessions. This volume of on-site training would have cost FSA more than \$100,000.

"Using WebEx allowed us to provide small group instruction at participants' desks without requiring travel by School or ED Staff," Mark said. "Distance education has allowed us to focus our training on the right staff, at the right time for them."

Other SRB team members who worked on the project included Frank Campbell and Angela Smith, Chicago; Margaret Day, Denver; Virginia Hagins and Robert Vallas, San Francisco; Laura Hall, Atlanta; Craig Rorie, Philadelphia; and Matt Staples, Kansas City.

In our next issue....

FFEL Program Training with Australian Embassy

Default Prevention Training in Puerto Rico