Executive Summary:
This report summarizes the efforts of staff members in the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid during the 2005-2006 academic year. This was an unprecedented time in the history of the city and region. Despite their own personal hardships, staff members worked tirelessly to help students return to campus for the 2006 spring semester.

Mission Statement:
As part of the Office of Enrollment Management, staff members in the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid are committed to supporting the University’s goals of enrolling and graduating a highly talented and diverse student body.

This mission was tested in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina’s devastation of the Gulf Coast in August 2005.

2005 Fall Semester – Life in Exile and Preparing for the Return to New Orleans

While the university and aid office had done some minimal emergency/disaster planning, except for the university’s Information Technology staff, no one ever dreamed of the scenario we faced after Hurricane Katrina. The University of Houston graciously offered space in their student center which housed a minimal administrative staff. Their Law School also opened their doors to our entire Law School.

Cathy Simoneaux and Nadine Laurent were summoned to Houston and worked there until the end of the semester. Carolina Thompson and Claudia Aguirre worked from remote locations until the campus was reopened in late November 2005.

The higher education community generously responded to the Department of Education’s call for them to open their doors to all students who were displaced by Katrina. Member schools of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, following the lead of Fr. Charles Currie, were particularly generous in their response.

Thanks to the work of our Information Technology staff, basic mainframe operations on the Student Information Systems were working within 2 weeks of the storm. The vast majority of our Title IV disbursements were made the Friday before Katrina struck (as classes were scheduled to begin on Monday) so we were able to share that information with the "host
This facilitated the processing of all federal aid for the remainder of the year with minimal impact to our students.

We will always remember the tremendous support we received from the higher education community and staff from the U.S. Department of Education during this difficult time in our history. These efforts are documented at http://www.loyno.edu/financialaid/intranet/Katrina%20Overview.htm

2006 Spring I and II Semesters

Approximately ½ of the staff were displaced by Hurricane Katrina. We all continue to struggle with juggling our professional responsibilities while rebuilding our personal lives.

Colette Fortuna did not return to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Her position will not be filled until the enrollment situation stabilizes.

As we are also dealing with many local families who are overwhelmed by their circumstances, we developed a basic resource page of “other resources” that may be helpful to them. We are spending much more time with our local families trying to make sure that they follow through with all requirements to insure we can process all aid possible for their students. Our local families are just overwhelmed by the challenges they are facing.

Support from the U.S. Department of Education

Senior staff members with the Department of Education have been remarkably and consistently supportive of all schools whose students were impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Because of their leadership, we have had nothing but positive interactions with the entire staff throughout this time.

A team from the Department of Education visited New Orleans in January 2006. They subsequently arranged to send additional campus-based aid funds to all impacted schools for distribution to local students. These funds were a proverbial “life-saver” for our local families.

Due to the turnover in many aid offices, the Department sent a team of training officers to New Orleans for a workshop that we hosted at Loyola.

These efforts are documented at http://www.loyno.edu/financialaid/internal/katrina-federal-resources-and-documents

Support from the State of Louisiana

Unfortunately, the state was much less supportive of the schools and students impacted by Hurricane Katrina. These discussions are documented at http://www.loyno.edu/financialaid/internal/katrina-louisiana-programs-and-references
Congressional Changes to Federal Student Aid Programs during 2005-2006

Life went on in the rest of the world, so staff had to also deal with a number of other changes to federal aid programs.

On February 8, 2006, President Bush signed the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 (the “HERA”), Pub. L. 109 171, which made significant changes to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (the “HEA”), and reauthorized the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program.

- Changes made to the loan programs (DCL 06-02)
- Creation of the Academic Competitiveness Grant and SMART Grant Programs (GEN 06-04)
- Changes Made to the General Provisions of all Title IV aid Programs (GEN 06-05)

Most of these changes will be effective July 1, 2006. So we needed to spend some time planning how we will implement these changes.

Volunteer Activities

We continue our active participation in the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. We appreciate the generous support of our colleagues during this time.

Since there was a tremendous amount of interest in the recovery of New Orleans, Cathy Simoneaux also volunteered as a media contact with the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Upcoming Challenges:
Families of currently enrolled metro area kids continue to face enormous financial challenges. How will we keep those kids in school if the feds fail to renew their support? Many of the metro area students received aid from all of the special Katrina related funds and still could not pay the remaining outstanding balance on their Loyola accounts. We had to make one-time, non-renewable (in theory) disbursements of additional funds from the endowed scholarship accounts to keep these students in school.

- To deal with these ongoing challenges, we continue to expand the information on our “Recovery Resource” Page at http://www.loyno.edu/financialaid/disaster-recovery
- We will continue to work with Tommy Screen and Cyndy Littlefield to cement support for relief efforts from the Department of Education and Congress.

The first year of the Academic Competitiveness and SMART Grant Programs will continue to pose a significant administrative burden on the office as we attempt to master the multiple, convoluted requirements mandated by the current statute.
We will continue to work with the Institutional Advancement staff to improve the administration of the endowed scholarship program.