2006-2007 Annual Report
Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid
Loyola University New Orleans

Executive Summary:
This report summarizes the efforts of staff members in the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid during the 2006-2007 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 2006–2007 academic year.

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 continues to be tested in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina’s devastation of the Gulf Coast in August 2005.

Staffing Changes + Challenges
Two veteran counselors resigned in July 2006. They were quickly replaced by two counselors from the Financial Aid Office at Tulane University. Each counselor had been on Tulane’s staff for a little over a year. They came into our staff with a basic familiarity with the SIS system and a basic background in all federal student aid regulations.

Carolina Thompson’s son was involved in a serious automobile accident in mid-August so she was out of the office on Family Medical Leave until late in the fall. It is a testament to her dedication that she continued to help in whatever way she could the entire time she was out on leave.

Several members of the staff struggled throughout the majority of the year with “Katrina-related” housing issues. Most were resolved by the end of the year. Kim Rankins is now commuting in daily from LaPlace. Kim does a marvelous job in handling the reception area in addition to her other administrative duties, including those that used to be handled by Colette Fortuna, the office’s other administrative assistant. Colette’s position was not filled after she failed to return to New Orleans in January 2006.

The counselors have a schedule for backing up Kim in the reception area. While this arrangement is not optimal, it has worked for the majority of the time. It does become problematic during the month before and after the start of each semester when there is a tremendous amount of activity in our office.

Congress unexpectedly created three new federal programs in legislation passed in early 2006. All three programs were inaugurated at the start of the 2006-2007
The Graduate PLUS program expanded eligibility for Federal PLUS Loans to graduate and professional students. As a general rule, the Grad PLUS Loan offers better terms than the private, credit-based loans that the graduate and law students were using so we did see a shift in the types of loans that we processed for the year.

The Academic Competitiveness Grant ("ACG") and SMART Grant programs were and will continue to be a massive administrative challenge. The legislation was passed quickly without significant input from the aid community, the statute imposes a significant burden on the schools to document that the students completed a “rigorous academic program” while in high school. The second burden is to track students’ progress to the next “Title IV academic year grade level”. An “academic year” for Title IV programs is comprised of a minimum of 24 earned hours AND 30 weeks of instructional time. This definition almost mandates the manual tracking of all recipients’ progress.

Correctly classifying transfer students will become another huge challenge.

The Department of Education issued implementation “guidance” throughout the year on this program as they also struggled to develop a coherent policy for the program. I ended up handling most of these awards since “truth” kept changing as the year progressed.

Since the initial regulations for the ACG Program were released in the middle of the summer, we let the students have the 1st year award of $750 in addition to their original Loyola package. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 at the end of their first Title IV academic year in order to receive a “second year” award of $1,300.

We anticipate that a minimum of 1/3 of the freshmen recipients will not be able to recover sufficiently from their academic performance during the 2006 fall semester to have a cumulative 3.0 at the conclusion of their first Title IV academic year.

For the 2007-2008 freshmen that were packaged before May 1, 2007, we assumed that we would be able to document “rigor” for the majority of accepted students. We included as assumed ACG award for all Pell-eligible students as part of our normal packaging parameters.

Continuing Support for Recovery:
Students from the hurricane impacted areas benefited from a number of programs during the 2006-2007 academic year. Since the University was given wide discretion in awarding under most of these programs, I ended up doing most of the actual awarding of these funds while the staff concentrated on all other programs.

- Rebuild Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Program
  These funds originally came from the Department of Education. The state Office of Student Financial Assistance then disbursed funds to all impacted
colleges and universities. We received a total of $301,119 for the 2006-2007 academic year that we distributed to 328 undergraduates. The maximum award was $1,000. These funds are non-renewable.

- **“SEOG-K“ funds**
  The Department of Education awarded Loyola University over $2.2 million additional “campus-based funds” (Federal SEOG, Perkins Loan, and Federal Work–Study) throughout the 2006 spring and summer semesters. They allowed us to transfer all funds into the SEOG program, which is a grant. Any funds that were not allocated by the end of summer could be “carried forward” applied to the 2007 fall semester IF the disbursement could be made before September 30, 2007. We applied $311,054 in SEOG awards to the accounts of metro area students for the 2007 fall semester.

- **Texas Book Allowance**
  The Texas Guaranteed Loan Agency sent $15,000 which they requested we award in $500 increments to help students with book costs for the fall semester.

- **Qatar-Katrina Scholarship Fund**
  This is the final program that was added late in the fall semester. To date, we have awarded $336,610 of the $466,000 total received for the 2006-2007 academic year for awards through the 2007 summer semester. We have just begun awarding funds for summer so we anticipate additional funds will be awarded to metro area students.

- **Miscellaneous Funded Scholarships**
  Several individuals and groups also donated funds for students who were impacted by Katrina. We worked with Institutional Advancement staff to identify recipients according to the wishes of the donors.

**Relations with the U.S. Department of Education**

- I was invited by the Department of Education to speak at both of their annual Federal Student Aid Conferences on the topic of Disaster Preparation and Recovery. All sessions were well received by conference participants who completed the program evaluations.
  - [Disaster Preparation + Recovery Presentation at Fall 2006 FSA Conferences](#)

- I was chosen as an “alternate” voting member for the Department of Education’s “negotiated rulemaking” panel that met in Washington in February, March, and April to review proposed regulations for the ACG and SMART Grant Program for the 2007-2008 academic year. Alternates could participate in all discussions but could not participate in the final vote to determine whether or not the panel could reach consensus on the proposed regulations.

- The main benefit of participating in the negotiated rulemaking process is that it permitted me to update Department staff on the continued struggles that our metro area students are experiencing as well as the struggles metro area
institutions are having in recruiting new students. In January 2007, the initial response that I received from the Department was that there was nothing more that they would be able to do to help the Gulf Coast schools/students. By the last meeting in April, Department officials indicated that they “may have” found a way to channel additional campus-based funds to the Gulf Coast schools by the end of the summer.

**Volunteer Activities**
We continue to be active members of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

**Community Service**
At the request of the high school counselors, I spoke at Ben Franklin, Dominican, New Orleans Science and Math Charter School, De La Salle, and Brother Martin. I also participated at a college night at Mc Main High School and I spoke to the students participating in Loyola’s Upward Bound Program.

Throughout the year, I sent e-mail messages to the area high school guidance counselors with information on new federal aid programs and websites, I recently sent information to help them answer any questions that they may be receiving from parents who are following the news about various investigations into the student loan industry.

**Upcoming Challenges:**
- Families of currently enrolled metro area kids continue to face enormous financial challenges. How will we keep those kids in school once all of these “special” programs end?

- The current multiple investigations of the Student Loan industry will have some residual impact on our operations
  A. Operating Budget will need to absorb printing costs covered by lenders. We have mandatory consumer information requirements as part of Title IV program participation guidelines
  B. Lender reps will no longer be able to cover Collette’s unfilled position during “peak” processing times during registration.

I restructured the office’s web site this month to include links to all new federal grant and loan programs. I also switched all possible program information links from lender sites to the new upgraded “Student Aid on the Web” site administered by the Department of Education.

- The second 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.

- If all segments of Gov. Blanco’s budget are approved in the current legislative session, we MAY have a new need-based grant program for Louisiana residents who are eligible for Pell Grants starting with the 2007-2008 academic year.

- Congress is scheduled to debate and reauthorize the Higher Education Act this year. This is the Act that controls all federal financial aid programs. I will be working with our Federal Relations Officer as needed.

- We will continue to work with the Institutional Advancement staff to improve the administration of the endowed scholarship program.