

# What's Inside



- When is a Private Loan Better than a Federal PLUS Loan?  
Applying for College: The Paper Trail  
*see page 2*
- Managing Time  
More Questions for Choosing a College  
*see page 3*
- Financial Aid Glossary  
*see page 4*

A Newsletter for South Carolina's Guidance Counselors

# The Guide

Fall 2010  
Edition

Dear Counselors,

We hope your 2010/11 school year is off to a great start. It is our pleasure to have met many of you at the CACRAO Guidance Counselor Conferences earlier this year. While the student loan industry has changed dramatically these last few months, we are pleased to report that SC Student Loan is still here to serve you.

What has changed? All federal loans are now made directly by the federal government and serviced by out of state organizations. We are still administering the forgivable SC Teachers Loan and one of the best private loan programs in the nation, our Palmetto Assistance Loan (PAL). While we have had to curtail some of our travel, we are still available to assist with financial aid night presentations when possible. We are certainly always happy to help with questions that you, your students and their parents might have regarding the financial aid process, and we are delighted to continue providing this newsletter.

We believe it is very important for every student and family to realize that higher education is possible. We will continue to search for avenues that will allow us to expand our outreach efforts. We greatly appreciate all of the support you have provided to us and we look forward to continuing our relationship.

We hope you find this newsletter beneficial. Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions for future editions.

Sincerely,  
  
Mike Fox

  
Arthur Pinckney



**For additional copies of *The Guide*, please visit our website, and click on the "Schools" tab at the top of the page, then "Guidance Counselors," and finally "News and Updates."**

SOUTH CAROLINA  
**Student Loan**<sup>®</sup>

PO Box 21487 • Columbia, SC • 29221  
(800) 347-2752 • (803) 798-0916

[www.scstudentloan.org](http://www.scstudentloan.org)

# When is a Private Loan Better than a Federal PLUS Loan?

Right now...with SC Student Loan's Palmetto Assistance Loan (PAL). Parents should shop and compare but with a lower interest rate, lower fees and better local service, the PAL may be the better alternative for parents that need additional loan assistance.

PAL Loan:	PLUS Loan:
✓ Fixed interest rate as low as <b>7.15%</b>	Fixed interest rate set at <b>7.90%</b>
✓ Fees are <b>1 - 3%</b> of loan amount	Fees are <b>2.5 - 4%</b> of loan amount
✓ Borrow from <b>local, non-profit in SC</b>	Borrow from <b>federal government</b>
✓ Live, <b>personal service</b> from small company	<b>Limited service</b> from large, out of state company

## Applying for College: The Paper Trail

Completing the application for enrollment accurately, completely and professionally can have a major impact on the results. Since few applicants ever meet the people evaluating them, the paper trail speaks volumes about who they are. Attention to detail on the application represents how seriously the applicant is taking the application process.

Some of the more common mistakes applicants should try to avoid are as follows:

**Missing deadlines:** Sometimes applicants don't understand what all is involved and do not allow enough time. Sometimes there is confusion with all the terms; Early Action, Early Decision, Rolling Admissions, etc. Applicants need to know what they are applying for and when the materials are due. Remember other items such as financial aid, scholarships, and dorms all have separate and different deadlines. Keep track of them all.

**College Name in Essay:** Many applicants use the same essay for multiple colleges. If the college offers an essay of choice, it just makes sense. But be careful. If a college's name is used, be sure it is changed everywhere in the essay. Carelessly leaving the wrong college name in the essay sends a very wrong message.

**Notifying Guidance Counselors:** The proliferation of on-line applications and common applications has made it easy to simply point and click to start the application for some schools. Unfortunately some applicants forget to notify their guidance counselor that they have applied. Since most colleges need academic transcripts, counselor and teacher recommendations, the application is not complete until they are received. Applicants should always notify their guidance counselor when they start an application.

**Lead Time for Letters of Recommendation:** High school seniors often procrastinate and wait till the last minute to ask teachers, coaches or employers to write letters of recommendation. Popular teachers and coaches may get overlooked. Applicants should ask at least three weeks in advance....the sooner, the better.

The bottom line is applicants need to get organized, follow directions and have someone else proof everything prior to submission.



# Managing Time

Time is important to all of us but effectively managing time for a college freshman is a skill that can make a world of difference. Is managing time really that important? For a student, managing time is really managing themselves and it allows them to be happier, more effective and more successful. They will achieve more, have more free time to do what they enjoy, meet deadlines and eliminate tons of stress. The following are some thoughts on time management that students should keep in mind as they begin their college careers.

- **Make a list and prioritize the list.** Note whether tasks are fixed, have to be done in a certain time period (classes, jobs) or flexible (studying, social events, time with friends). Update the list regularly.
- **Use a planning guide or calendar.** As a college student, there is just too much going on to keep it all in your head. Set aside time for certain tasks and

remember things always take longer than expected. Divide and conquer large tasks. Don't try to do it all at one time and always stay focused on the final goal.

- **Don't over commit.** Learn to say 'No'.
- **Control distractions.** Turn off the TV, find a quiet corner in the library, turn off your phone.
- **Just get started.** Sometimes that is the hardest part, don't procrastinate.
- **Don't let time be an enemy.** Make it a strong ally and the chances of success in college expand exponentially.



## More Questions for Choosing a College

Choosing the right college is a difficult decision. There are so many factors to be considered such as size, location, majors offered, cost, financial aid, etc. Here are a few of the less obvious questions that students and parents may want to consider.

1. **Is the office of residential life accessible to the students? Can students switch if they get a terrible roommate, and how long does the process take?**

Students eat, hang out and study in their rooms and it needs to be a place where they feel comfortable. If they face tension or argument in their rooms, it may cause their grades and social development to suffer.

2. **What is the ratio of residential/live-in counselors to students? How many hours a day are they required to be available to the students? How are they chosen and by what criteria are they evaluated?**

Residential advisers (RAs) are the first line of defense in ensuring a student's physical and emotional health. They should be trained to spot signs of trouble such as depression, tension among students and eating disorders, and they should know basic first aid. They should also be people that make students feel comfortable.

3. **What is the crime rate on campus?**

Colleges and universities are required to produce an annual report that includes statistics relating to criminal offenses reported to the police. Request a copy and read it.

4. **Does the school provide student escorts to accompany students walking home late at night?**

Students sometimes have evening classes or study sessions. Make sure that the college or university offers some way for students to get home safely after a long night at the library.

5. **Can you pick your academic advisor? How do current students feel about the advising system?**

Students often change majors several times. A good advisor can help a student plan their classes, make career-planning decisions and graduate on time.



# Financial Aid Glossary

Students and their parents need to know the following terms when applying for financial aid.

**Cost of Attendance (COA):** The total cost of attending college for one academic year. It includes, but is not limited to, tuition, fees, room, board, supplies, transportation and personal expenses.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** This is the amount a family is expected to contribute towards a student's education. It is based on the family earnings, savings, size of family, the number of students in college, and is computed by the FAFSA.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The form that must be completed after January 1 of the senior year in high school by the student and parents. [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)

**Financial Need:** This is the amount the financial aid office will try to meet with financial aid. It is computed by subtracting the Expected Family Contribution from the Cost of Attendance.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** A report summarizing the information reported on the FAFSA. The Expected Family Contribution is provided on this report. It is sent directly to the student from the federal government. The financial aid office uses this report to determine the student's eligibility for financial aid.

**Federal Direct Stafford Loan:** A low-cost education loan made to the student. This loan can be subsidized (interest paid by the federal government during specified periods) or unsubsidized (interest accrues and is the borrower's responsibility to pay). Payments are not required while the student is enrolled on at least a half time basis. This is the lowest cost loan and the first one a student should obtain.

**Federal Direct PLUS Loan:** A low-cost education loan made to the parent(s) of a college student. Interest is not subsidized. Payment can be delayed while the student is in school.

**Private Student Loans:** Education loans made by private organizations to students and parents. Interest is not subsidized, but the rate may be lower than the Federal Direct PLUS Loan. Example: The Palmetto Assistance Loan (PAL) offered by SC Student Loan.



## South Carolina's Only Nonprofit Student Loan Provider



[www.scstudentloan.org](http://www.scstudentloan.org)  
(800) 347-2752