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A Newsletter for South Carolina's Guidance Counselors

The Guide

Spring 2010 Edition

Dear Guidance Counselors,

Thank you for all of your support over the past several years. You have allowed us to come into your schools and provide presentations for financial aid nights, junior and/or senior days and nights, career fairs, and Teacher Cadet classes. We have had a great time meeting and working with you, your students, and their families. We hope that we have provided you with helpful and useful information. We are grateful for every opportunity you have given us to ensure that South Carolinians are equipped with the financial knowledge to make higher education possible.

Due to recent legislative changes regarding student loans, all colleges and universities will be required to use the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program beginning July 1, 2010. This will eliminate the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) which we have administered for over thirty-five years. This change will cause us to lose the vast majority of our loan volume and the revenue that accompanied it. We will continue to provide our private loan, the Palmetto Assistance Loan (PAL), and we will continue to administer the SC Teachers Loan Programs.

When this legislative change became inevitable, we had no choice but to start cutting our budget. On March 1, we regretfully had to stop printing college and career materials for our South Carolina schools. We know that this program was a tremendous help to many of you over the years, and we appreciate your understanding that we simply had no alternative but to cancel this service. Unfortunately, we now find that we must continue to cut the services we have gladly offered to the citizens of our state. The final drawing for the \$1K Giveaway scholarship will take place on August 15, 2010. Those individuals who have already entered will remain eligible, and we will continue to accept entries through August 14, 2010. Finally, our outreach efforts including our financial aid nights and other Speakers Bureau presentations are being suspended while we further evaluate our business operations.

It has been a pleasure working with such an outstanding group of Guidance Counselors in South Carolina. We wish you and your schools the very best in the future. Please stay in touch and hopefully we will find a way to work with you again soon. On behalf of SC Student Loan, thank you for everything you do to make the dream of a college education a reality for so many of your students.

Warmest regards,

Mike Fox
Mike Fox

Arthur L. Pinckney
Arthur Pinckney



For additional copies of *The Guide*, please visit our website, and click on the "Schools" tab in the upper right, then "Guidance Counselors" then "News and Updates."

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Going to School? Need a Loan? Need a Friend? Get a PAL!

If your students and families need extra money for college with a **fixed interest rate as low as 7.15%**, our Palmetto Assistance Loan (PAL) might be just what they need. We are the only local, non-profit lender in South Carolina, so our sole purpose is to help achieve dreams.

The PAL can be used to pay for educational expenses, such as tuition and fees, room and board, books, school supplies, transportation, and a computer. Students, parents of students, and legal guardians of students may apply.

Benefits of a PAL:

- No application fee.
- An origination fee as low as 1%.
- The interest rate will never change after loan approval.
- Your PAL interest payments may be tax deductible.
- You can choose to pay the interest while enrolled to help lower your monthly payments once you complete your education.



Forgiveness Sake! You could be eligible for loan forgiveness

Below you will find information concerning forgiveness on both the SC Teacher and Stafford Loans. Students interested in becoming teachers should apply for a SC Teachers Loan first and then a Stafford Loan, if needed. In addition, please share this information with members of your faculty and staff since they may be eligible for forgiveness benefits.



SC Teachers Loan

A South Carolina Teachers Loan is forgiven at the rate of 20% or \$3,000, whichever is greater, for each full year of teaching in a South Carolina public school in a critical subject or critical geographic area. If you teach in a public South Carolina school in a critical subject and a critical geographic area, your loan will be forgiven at the rate of 33 1/3% or \$5,000, whichever is greater, for each year of full-time teaching.

The subject areas which are critical at the time you apply, or later, will be honored for forgiveness when you begin teaching. A critical geographic area must be officially critical at the time of your employment.

Stafford Loan

If you received a Stafford Loan on or after October 1, 1998, and you teach full time for five consecutive years in a low-income school, you might be eligible to have a portion of the loan cancelled. This applies to Federal Stafford and/or Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans.

You may receive forgiveness of up to \$5,000 if you teach in a designated elementary or secondary school and up to \$17,500 if you teach in certain specialties such as special education and math or science on the secondary level.

Ten Questions Parents Should Ask When Considering a College

Choosing a college is not easy. The things that are important to a student aren't always the same things that concern a parent. Parents may want to review this list of questions as they progress through the selection process.



- 1. Are they your student's kind of people? Will your student find a place he or she fits in?**
Does your child require a close-knit student community, or are they most excited by the possibilities of a very large student body? Are they looking to connect with peers from a similar background, or do they desire a diverse group of students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds? You know your child best; assess their needs, personality and comfort level.
- 2. Is the office of residential life accessible to the students? Can students switch if they get a terrible roommate, and how long does that process take?**
Students eat, hang out and study in their rooms, and it needs to be a place where they feel comfortable. If the student faces tension or arguments in their rooms, it may cause their grades and social development to suffer.
- 3. 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 your child'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 students feel comfortable with.
- 4. What are the hours at the student health clinic? What about 24-hour emergency care? What does the college's health insurance cover, and are pre-existing conditions included in the coverage?**
Get the answers before taking your son or daughter off your own insurance.
- 5. What kind of psychological counseling or support groups are available? What resources are available for students dealing with stress or emotionally difficult situations?**
During the college years, students often have some big issues to deal with. Find out who will be there when you're far away.
- 6. What is the crime rate on campus?**
The Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 requires all colleges and universities to produce an annual report of their safety and security procedures, as well as statistics relating to criminal offenses reported to the police. Request a copy and read it.
- 7. 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. If they don't, it could be a sign that the school doesn't take the necessary measures to ensure students' safety and welfare.
- 8. What is the average increase in tuition and when are tuition increases next expected? Does the school have provisions to help students and parents cover the increases?**
By asking these questions, you can plan your finances appropriately and not be hit with unpleasant surprises.
- 9. 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.
- 10. How competitive is the school and is it an environment your son or daughter can handle?**
Too much stress can cause illness and depression, lead to poor performance and even cause students to drop out. Talk to current students at the school. Ask them how many all-nighters they pulled last semester. Ask them to rate the level of competitiveness on a scale of 1 to 10. Do they have time for themselves? Do they spend their weekends in the library?

A competitive school isn't necessarily bad and can often inspire students to further achievement. The important thing is to ask whether it's the kind of environment in which your child thrives.

By Melissa Bears, FastWeb

South Carolina's Only Nonprofit Student Loan Provider



www.scstudentloan.org
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