



October 2007



For South Carolina's Guidance Counselors

What's Inside

\$3 Million dollar donation to help lower dropout rate

10 tips to a successful interview



Dear Counselors,

This school year has certainly started out well for SC Student Loan. Recently you may have read that we were able to assist our state in an area that has been a concern of ours for some time, the high school drop out rate. Working with State Superintendent Jim Rex and the State Department of Education, we have donated \$3 million to assist in funding the Star Academy program which is an excellent program that will give special attention to 'high risk' students at the 16 Palmetto Priority Schools.

This summer, Congress made some significant changes to federal financial aid programs. The key things your students will see over the next few years are a gradual lowering of interest rates on student loans, an increase in the Pell Grant program and a new grant for students entering the teaching profession. We will be providing additional details on these changes over the coming months.

We really appreciate the hospitality many of you have shown as we visited your campuses during the Educational Opportunity College Fairs and Financial Aid Nights you have graciously invited us to participate in. We are always glad to have the opportunity to help your students and families understand that higher education is possible.

We look forward to continue working with you to make the 2007-2008 school year a tremendous success.

Sincerely,

Chuck Sanders
President & CEO



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For additional copies of The Guide, please visit www.scstudentloan.org, and click on the "Guidance Counselors" tab in the upper right.

From SC Student Loan

Second Lowest Default Rate in the Nation

The U.S. Department of Education announced last week that the Fiscal Year 2005 national student loan Cohort Default Rate fell to 4.6 percent, down from 5.1 percent for 2004. We're very proud that our default rate continues to be well below the national Cohort Default Rate average with a rate of 1.6 percent, second-lowest in the country.

According to the Department, a greater number of borrowers consolidating their student loans contributed to the drop in the national default rate. "Borrowers took advantage of the opportunity to lock in record-low interest rates by consolidating their federal student loans," the Department said in a written statement.

According to SC Student Loan President Chuck Sanders, "We also experienced a significant increase in Federal Consolidation Loan volume over the period from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, however it was not a major factor in our reduced rate."

"This low default rate reflects the attitude and efforts of our borrowers and the excellent education provided by our staff and schools throughout South Carolina," Sanders said. "We are committed to making higher education possible for all South Carolinians which includes making repayment as convenient as possible. Our staff continues to go the extra mile to help our borrowers avoid default and that is why our rate is less than half the national average."

Since our creation in 1973, we've been able to maintain one of the lowest default rates in the country by counseling borrowers on the importance of maintaining good credit, offering excellent repayment incentives and working closely with the state's colleges and universities.

10 Key Ingredients for a Successful Interview

Whether it is for a job, a scholarship or admission to a college or university, interviewing well is a skill everyone needs. SC Student Loan's Speakers Bureau provides an interactive, fun and educational primer on how to interview successfully. The following are the ten key points that are discussed and expanded upon during this session.

1. Dress appropriately for the interview. Be clean, neat and wear a smile for the entire interview.
2. A firm, confident handshake is a must (no matter how nervous you feel).
3. Make and maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Give your full attention.
4. Prepare ahead of time. Obtain information about the organization interviewing you. Be on time; know how to get to the interview location. Practice the interview with a friend or parent.
5. Be sure to have your resume with you and provide it to the interviewer.
6. Answer all questions honestly, in a clear, confident voice. Keep your answers brief.
7. Explain specifically your qualifications and why you should be selected.
8. Ask questions.
9. Before you leave, make certain you understand what happens next.
10. Write the interviewer a brief thank you note.

Please contact Mike Fox, 800-347-2752 Ext. 5070, if you would like to discuss making this information available to your students. A list of other topics covered by the SC Student Loan Speakers Bureau can be found under the Guidance Counselor tab at www.sstudentloan.org.



From SC Student Loan

SC Student Loan Donates \$3 Million to Program Aimed at Lowering Drop Out Rate

Last month, SC Student Loan announced a \$3 million donation to improve student academic programs for the state's 16 Palmetto Priority Schools. State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex said the funds will be used to establish a Star Academy program at each school to work with students who are at-risk of dropping out.

"This generous gift will allow us to help these students make up course work where they're behind and let them get back on track toward graduating from high school and becoming productive citizens," Rex said. He said Star Academy programs are now operating successfully at nine sites in eight school districts across the state, resulting in higher grades and fewer dropouts.

It was that initial success that attracted SC Student Loan's interest in partnering with the State Department of Education, according to president Chuck Sanders.

"Our donation is part of SC Student Loan's on-going effort and mission to support education in the state of South Carolina," Sanders said. "We're pleased to offer our assistance to the Palmetto Priority Schools, and our hope is that the Star Academy will become a statewide model to help reduce the high school dropout rate."

A Star Academy functions as a school-within-a-school and takes students through an accelerated, rigorous course of study that enables them to complete eighth and ninth grade in one school year. Lessons are career-focused and tailored to the individual students' learning styles. Students are able to get extra help and study time, along with "coping skills" for success in their regular classroom setting.

The first Star Academy began in Pickens County in 2005 as a public/private partnership and expanded the next year. Most participants showed a more positive attitude toward learning, higher grades, better attendance and marked improvement in school behavior. Similar programs are now under way in Anderson School District Five, Richland School District One, Hampton School District Two, and in Greenville, Allendale, Charleston and Newberry counties as well as Pickens.

Rex said the 16 Palmetto Priority Schools must find new approaches to learning that will enable them to meet mandated student achievement goals and avoid possible state takeover. The new Star Academy programs may be able to begin as early as January 2008.



SC Student Loan President Chuck Sanders presents the check to SC Superintendent of Education Jim Rex

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