



## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: **Pam D. Hutchinson**  
VP of Public Affairs  
(225) 923-0020  
hutchinson@lpfa.com

### **Financial Aid Awareness Month helps students focus on college costs Lela offers \$6,000 in education scholarships**

BATON ROUGE—Throughout February, the Louisiana Education Loan Authority (Lela) is reaching out to parents and students with information about options available to finance their college education. As part of Financial Aid Awareness Month (FAAM) in February, Lela is also conducting a Cash for College Video Contest, which is new this year and encourages students to use their creative talents to focus on their higher education.

“The most important thing we want students and parents to recognize is that they have available options for financing their higher education and they must apply early,” said Joni Leggio, Assistant Vice President of Lela, Louisiana’s nonprofit student loan provider. “It’s always been important to begin the application process early, but the growing concern of limited loan access makes it especially important for this upcoming school year.”

Lela’s 2009 FAAM outreach campaign includes increased communication through Internet avenues such as Facebook and an informational website, [www.GoFAAM.com](http://www.GoFAAM.com), which gives students and their parents a user-friendly approach to the process of learning about their financing options. The website enables students to see when financial aid workshops will be held in their area, and provides a link to the Department of Education’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), as well as scholarship opportunities. FAAM activities are available to all students but focus on college-bound high school seniors and their parents.

“Completing the FAFSA is the first step students should take in the process of obtaining financial aid,” Leggio said. “This application is required for federal financial assistance and as part of the process of obtaining one of Louisiana’s TOPS scholarships. The application can be filled out online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).”

Students who visit [www.GoFAAM.com](http://www.GoFAAM.com) will also be presented with different ways to apply for the \$6,000 in scholarship funds that Lela is awarding in February. One way is Lela's Cash for College Video Contest, where high school seniors produce and submit short videos to Lela on the theme: "How can you change the world with a college education?" Three students will be selected to receive a \$1,000 scholarship each for producing the best video. Six \$500 scholarships will also be awarded through drawings from financial aid workshop attendees and students who register on [www.GoFAAM.com](http://www.GoFAAM.com) in February.

"This awareness campaign is both fun and educational and will engage students in the process of understanding the importance of obtaining an education," Leggio said. "We are hoping that students realize that all it takes is some imagination and a digital camera or cell phone with video settings to participate."

Other state and private universities or organizations offering scholarship opportunities may require separate application procedures, so students should contact each sponsoring organization for details. February is the best time to start this process, since most universities have early deadlines for completion of the initial paperwork.

All Louisiana high school seniors are eligible for the FAAM video contest and are encouraged to submit an entry. The videos, which can be produced on cell phones with video capabilities and on video cameras, should be no longer than three minutes. Winners will be judged by votes cast on the Lela YouTube Channel and by a panel of judges. For a complete list of contest rules and guidelines, visit [www.GoFAAM.com](http://www.GoFAAM.com).

Interested persons can learn more about student loans and other financial aid options by contacting Lela at (800) 228-4755 or visiting the Lela website at [www.lela.org](http://www.lela.org). The site includes extensive information and many links regarding financial assistance for college.

Lela is a division of the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority, a nonprofit trust established to bring lower cost financing assistance and advantages to the citizens of Louisiana at no cost to the state. Lela acts as a low cost source of student loan financing for higher education. Lela has assisted over 365,000 students since 1984.

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