

for school administrators on issues affecting the financial aid community

# accessupdate



## Access Group Is Proud Recipient of Top ABS Servicer Rating

We are proud to announce that Fitch Ratings recently awarded Access Group the top ABS servicer rating of “Proficient Plus” for its Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) loan servicing. This FFELP servicer rating is based on effective technology and due diligence procedures that exceed Department of Education guidelines for servicing FFELP loans.

In awarding Access Group its top rating, Fitch, a leading global rating agency, noted that Access Group’s default aversion process for FFELP loans exceeds the demands required by the Department of Education. Fitch also reported that Access Group’s disaster recovery and business continuity plans are appropriate.

In addition, Fitch assigned Access Group a Private Student Loan Seller/Servicer rating of “Proficient.” The agency noted that, as Access Group’s servicing platform matures, it is expected that operations will continually improve as the company gains further experience.

The agency also noted that the private student loan rating reflects Access Group’s collection practices, which resemble consumer loan collection practices, as well as Access Group’s disciplined approach to establishing the servicing platform over time.

According to Jean Francois, senior vice president, student and borrower services, “These ratings are beneficial to Access Group as they provide assurance to our investors and lender partners related to our servicing platform.”

Access Group’s servicing operation started in 2004 to provide the company with greater control and flexibility related to its student loan products throughout the life of the loan, and to make it easier for the company to introduce new loan products.

As of Dec. 31, 2007, Access Group serviced about \$3 billion in student loans consisting of 80,000 borrowers and 290,000 loans. About 20% of the portfolio is in repayment. Fitch expects to publish a full report detailing the qualities of Access Group that support the assigned ratings.

See [www.fitchratings.com](http://www.fitchratings.com) for more information about Fitch Ratings.

## Have you registered for a spring workshop?

It’s not too late! There’s still time to sign up for one of Access Group’s financial aid training workshops being held through March 27. Register online at [www.accessgroup.org/workshops](http://www.accessgroup.org/workshops) or call your account executive.

## Coming in April – A special Webinar presentation

Access Group is planning to offer an informative Webinar in late April on the current status of HEA Reauthorization and the negotiated rulemaking process. This informative session will be presented by Vicki Shipley, senior advisor with NCHelp, partner with XSS Partners, and member of the negotiated rulemaking committee.

This presentation was originally scheduled for late March, but with the House and Senate planning a conference to resolve differences in their respective Reauthorization bills, the Department of Education has scheduled a fourth round of negotiated rulemaking on the federal student loan program.

We will inform you when registration is available. Please stay tuned!

## Also in this issue

2008 Access Group Conference  
Planning Committee

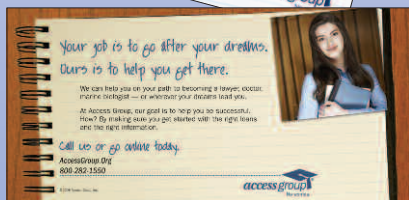
Technology Track

Borrower Education



## Have You Seen Our New Look?

To boost awareness of Access Group's brand in today's marketplace, we've rolled out a new branding campaign with a new look that's being incorporated into the company's online and print advertising, student brochures, and other materials for customers. You'll also see our new look in national print venues, social networking Web sites, student-focused publications and on-campus materials.



To see more of our new look, go to [AccessGroup.Org](http://AccessGroup.Org) and click the "Student Loans, No Worries" icon in the bottom right-hand corner.

# The 2008 Access Group Graduate and Professional Financial Aid Conference

## We Want to Hear from You!

The Access Group annual Conference is well-known for its excellent education program planned and developed by your colleagues on the Planning Committee. We invite your suggestions and ideas! If there's a topic you want to see covered ... a session you'd like to present ... a fabulous speaker you've heard and recommend, please let us know. Go to [www.accessgroup.org/conf2007](http://www.accessgroup.org/conf2007) and tell us about it!

## Mark Your Calendars Now for the 2008 Conference November 20 – 22, 2008

### Sheraton Wild Horse Pass in Chandler, Arizona

Access Group is pleased to introduce the members of the 2008 Planning Committee:

#### **Dotti Burns (Chair)**

Associate Director of Financial Aid  
Regent University  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

#### **Joseph Lindsay**

Director of Financial Aid  
Arizona State University  
Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law  
Tempe, Arizona

#### **Dan Burr**

Assitant Dean for Student Financial Planning  
University of Cincinnati College of Medicine  
Cincinnati, Ohio

#### **Carrie Steere-Salazar**

Director of Student Financial Services  
University of California - San Francisco  
San Francisco, California

#### **Cheryl Constantine**

Associate Director of Financial Aid  
Boston University School of Law  
Boston, Massachusetts

#### **Sheila Williams**

Director, Financial Aid  
Duke Divinity School  
Durham, North Carolina

#### **Steve Jordan**

Director, Student Financial Services  
A.T. Still University of Health Sciences  
Kirkville, Missouri

## New! School Services Launches Phone Line Upgrade



Now you can connect with your account executive faster than ever! As of March 3, our new telephone upgrade automatically routes your call to the internal account executive team serving your school. All you have to do is remain on the line.

Of course, if you wish to speak with another Access Group staff member, you can bypass the routing system by pressing "0" and entering the person's extension. And if you don't know the extension, you'll have the option of dialing by the staff member's last name.



## eAccess Tip of the Month

(Access Group presents helpful tips for our eAccess users.)

### Searching for Student Information

There are many ways to search for student information in eAccess. Each search produces a results grid that will appear on the page below the search parameters box. Here are some tips to better help you navigate and use the results grid:

- You can sort by a particular piece of data by clicking any of the column headers.
- You can look for a particular student in a list of records by typing the SSN (in the input box above the results column headers). If found, that loan record is sorted to the top of the list.
- You can select or deselect all records at once by clicking the Select All, Deselect All hyperlink above the column headers of the search results grid. (This works for all results, not just those shown on the page.)

## Reminder Memos

### PLUS Loan Increases

For PLUS Loans, please remember that Access Group's original credit decision is valid for 180 days from the date the credit agency report was pulled for a borrower. To determine the date the credit report was obtained, go to eAccess, click the Loan Overview option, and enter the borrower's Social Security number. When you identify the loan in question, either Grad PLUS or Parent PLUS, you'll see the date the application was received.

To process an increase on an existing PLUS Loan, you must verify the date of the credit inquiry. If within the 180 day window, your account executive can accept your request to increase the certification, make sure the guarantee is increased, and schedule the disbursement of the additional funds over the phone or by e-mail.

### Borrower Authorization Needed

If your office initiates loans on behalf of students, you must obtain permission from the student authorizing you to do so. Such authorization is especially important if you are initiating PLUS and/or private loan applications, which are credit-based and therefore trigger an inquiry on a student's credit record.

#### To obtain authorization

For entering students who will be signing their PLUS MPN or private loan application, include an authorization form with their award letters or packets. If your office is not already doing this, check with your school's legal counsel about wording for the authorization form. And remind returning students, who don't need a new PLUS MPN, that they will receive a fresh inquiry on their credit record as you initiate the new loan.

## Borrower Education

Access Group offers you and your staff the following resources:



### 2008 Federal Exit Counseling Presentation

– This generic presentation has been revised to include information about the two new federal student loan repayment options, Income-Based Repayment and Loan Forgiveness for Public Service. It's also been updated with the 2008 HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2008.

Please feel free to use all or any part of this presentation for your exit counseling sessions with students. It is posted as a PowerPoint presentation in the Counseling Presentation Library under Entrance & Exit Counseling in the Financial Aid Administrators section of [AccessGroup.Org](http://AccessGroup.Org).

**Income-Based Repayment (IBR) Worksheet** – Even though the new IBR option will not be available until July 1, 2009, Jeff Hanson, our director of borrower education services, has updated and posted a worksheet you can download to help determine whether a borrower would be eligible for this repayment option based on the current poverty guidelines. The revised worksheet, which reflects the new HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2008, is posted on the Debt Management Handouts page under Debt Management in the Financial Aid Administrators section of [AccessGroup.Org](http://AccessGroup.Org).

## Coming Soon – New WiseBorrower® Posters!

In our ongoing effort to help you improve the financial literacy of your students, Access Group has created a new series of colorful wall posters with messages related to wise borrowing, good credit and much more! They'll be on their way to you by the end of the month.



## 3-Month LIBOR for First Quarter 2008

The current index effective for January, February and March 2008 is **5.131%**.

Access Group's private loan interest rates vary quarterly, based on the 3-month LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate) on the last business day of the second month of the prior calendar quarter.

The effective 3-month LIBOR index is posted on [AccessGroup.Org](http://AccessGroup.Org). Click "Interest Rates" for the LIBOR index and for our interest rate comparison calculator, which you or your students can use to compare interest rates based on LIBOR, Prime or 91-day T-bill indexes.

Interest rates for Federal Stafford Loans and Federal PLUS Loans are also posted on the Interest Rates page, along with a link to our Federal Loan Interest Rate poster.

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### Toll-free lines:

**School Services**  
800-227-2151  
800-449-8204 (fax)

**Customer Contact Center**  
800-282-1550

**AccessGroup.Org**  
**NeedAccess.Org**

**Federal Stafford Loan  
and Federal PLUS Loan**  
Lender Code: 808851

*To subscribe to an electronic version of this newsletter, e-mail your name and your school's name to your internal account executive or to [schoolservices@accessgroup.org](mailto:schoolservices@accessgroup.org).*

  
**access group**  
*The nonprofit graduate loan specialist*

# Monthly Planner



Look for Access Group staff at these early spring events:

<b>March 24 – 27</b>	American Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers Annual Meeting	Orlando, FL
<b>March 27 – 28</b>	Pacific Financial Aid Association Conference	Honolulu, HI
<b>March 30 – April 2</b>	Tennessee Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Spring Conference	Memphis, TN
<b>April 4</b>	New Hampshire Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Annual Meeting	Manchester, NH
<b>April 6 – 8</b>	Western Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Annual Conference	Seattle, WA
<b>April 8 – 11</b>	Alabama Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Spring Conference	Orange Beach, AL
<b>April 9</b>	New Jersey Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Spring Meeting	Somerset, NJ
<b>April 11</b>	MD-DE-DC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Annual Conference	Annapolis, MD