

Ron Bennett:

My name is Ron Bennett and I'm the director of the Systems Integration Division within Federal Student Aid of which the National Student Loan Data System falls, within that division. Myself and colleague **Valerie Shearer**, who manages, directly, the National Student Loan Data System, will be talking through, this afternoon, a little bit about what we've seen thus far in the reporting regarding gainful employment as well as Valerie will sharing with you some specific tips and tricks and other things that we've learned along the way that I think may be helpful. We would also like to encourage you to provide feedback at the end of this session regarding the different reporting methodologies that we have provided to you and there are microphones down through the middle of the aisle and these rooms are quite large so it will be very important to actually use the microphones in asking questions. With that said, the things that we're gonna talk about today – one we're gonna talk a little bit about what was asked of you in the reporting this year because this very first year reporting for gainful employment required more additional reporting than what will be likely in typical years going forward. We wanna share with you the reporting results that we've had thus far, up to the point of coming to the conference.

Valerie then will talk to you about the Top 10 errors that we're seeing because the overwhelming majority of the errors that we have seen in that reporting and the corrections that needed to follow generally are related to a lot of common themes and that's something that we have found quite typical in providing support. She will also go through reviewing your data, and things that you can do now that you may have already put in your initial submission, what you can continue to do up and to the point that we will be calculating metrics. She'll also share with you, I mean, the things that we provided were what we could do in this initial release in a very short development cycle but she'll also tell you that, as we've been providing support in this initial couple months, there are some things that we've already put in our horizon for enhancements to hopefully improve the service to you and the abilities to provide data to us. Then of course we'll have some time at the end for questions and feedback. So you'll probably see this in almost every session that you may go to regarding gainful employment but it's make sure that everyone realizes the specific "Dear Colleague" that indicated the reporting requirements of the data and then it was also how we communicated to you when we were very early on in our development cycle before we'd even begun the programming for many of the features for collecting the data was to at least get in your hands as soon as we practically could the data elements that we were going to be collecting so you could begin going through your own systems to try and figure out where all the data existed that you would need to aggregate together then to report to NSLDS and if you need to reference those, you'll be able to do that by going to this particular Gen 11/2010, or I mean Gen 2011, Number 10.

We have a number of different resources for guiding you through the reporting process and this, too, we were letting out in iterations over the course of the summer because it's as we were developing and learning more about how the things were gonna roll out to you and better instructions that we could provide, etcetera, we kept updating our user guide and other information as quickly as we could that would actually help you in your preparation so you've seen several iterations then of the NSLDS Gainful Employment User Guide out the on the IFAP website. You've also seen some Frequently Asked Questions, as people have begun reporting. We've encountered particular situations what we thought we could help others avoid then we had Frequently Asked Questions, then, that addressed some of those items, so Frequently Asked Questions, I think, was probably the most common hit piece of the Gainful Employment portion of the IFAP website just because every day, practically, there was new information coming out and then we also had an NSLDS Newsletter Number 34 that provided some additional guidance then and tips and tricks for doing the reporting through some of the different methods that we provided to you, so those are great resources if you're still trying answer some questions to take a look at that may actually help solve some of the situations that you could be encountering. What was asked of you? I think many of you would say, "We asked of a lot this year" and those of us working with you on the end would say it was an equal challenge for us to meet as well. It was a very short development cycle.

I can tell you a year ago this time at this conference; we did not think that data would be coming into NSLDS. We were still trying to figure out what that was going to be for federal student aid. It was prolly a week later that we had wrapped up where were heading with that direction and then the next thing you know, we hafta go through all the things that we do in order to develop on our end so it was an equal challenge that we can appreciate what you've been trying to get through as well, so what we ask for this initial data collection effort, I think the biggest challenge for many folks is that it's not just provide one year's worth of information, we ask you to go back and provide five award years' worth of information, starting with '06/'07, knowing that '06/'07, part of that year, could be a challenge because, for many folks, it would be outside of that period of time in which you may have records retained, which we understood but collecting what we could for '06/'07 and then all the award years since then, all the way up to 2010/2011 that just concluded the most recent July 1st, we asked you to provide all the data for those award years that you could and we know that was a big challenge for a number of folks and we heard a lot of interesting examples along the way of what challenge that was for people. We also ask you to provide for a particular set of programs and students so since we're asking the reporting for the gainful employment to be done at the award year program student level, it was

amassing that information and it was about who's enrolled in the programs in those particular award years as well as anyone who may have completed or withdrawn from those programs in those particular award years, so going back through all of those award years and figuring out who was enrolled and who had completed and who had withdrawn, et cetera, so we'd be able to get that information in, as we begin preparing towards the next big development cycle on our end, which is rolling out the actual metric calculation and then figuring out how to translate the information that you had into data being requested.

This is the first time that I can recall – and I've been in financial aid for about 22 years now – but this is the first time I recall to where we're asking something to be collected that, literally, is pulling a piece over here out of your registration or as we've learned from some their actual college's data systems as well as some information outta the bursar system and then, of course, some other relevant information outta the financial aid system, so we appreciate how that could be a challenge for many to, in order to report one successful record for a student, that you need a piece of data out of each of those places, so we know that's something that has been a big hurdle for many of you to actually work through, so also in this data-collection effort, then, format of data has been an important conversation that I know our customer service staff and their supporting development staff behind them have had to work with many of you through that because in our attempt to, in a very short time period, give you flexible methods of reporting to us which I hope that that is appreciated that at least you have some options not just a one-size-fits-all but in so doing that, the format of the data, in many cases, is also somewhat specific to the method in which chose to format, so it's important to know the very specific rules for the formatting of data for the particular method in which you are reporting because the 4 methods that we provided this year, we created a submittal template. I think the anticipation on our end and maybe a little bit of shock and dismay of the reality of it of what occurred was we thought this would be for small programs because at a limit of 50-per-spreadsheet, I think what really surprised us was the wealth of folks with hundreds of thousands of people in different programs trying to use the spreadsheet. That really surprised us a good bit because we've had this method of reporting for other things but have not seen it used to the degree that we've seen it on gainful employment. As is typical in a lot of the reporting that we have, you know, we did provide a batch capability of reporting that is fixed-width but something different that we provided this year was a comma-separated value that you could also put it in that format in order to report into – to NSLDS through batch and then, of course, for the onesy-twosies or other small groupings that you may have, we also just provided you the capability of reporting that data directly online to the NSLDS Financial Aid Professional Website directly into the system, so those were the 4

methods that we provided this year that you could actually choose to use to report in your data. Since we had a short development cycle on our end, we thought it was kinda important to try and have at least a beta exercise of some sort with a handful of schools because we wanted to make sure that since we were providing multiple options that we had some live test of those options for reporting that we could do some last-minute updates and changes if necessary as well as potentially prepare and anticipate the kind of guidance and issues that folks may encounter and even have our Customer Support Unit already anticipate what the resolution would be for – for what we saw from that exercise, so for about a 2-week period of time in the earlier part of September, we actually spent working with 13 different OPID's, schools, in their reporting in attempts to use the different methodologies and –and in that exercise, we actually did work with 62 different programs being supported. We got about 28,000 unique students in that exercise with about 46,000.5 distinct GE program records, so it at least gave us a good bit to actually test the waters with as we could before we opened the floodgates, if you will, on September 26 for everyone to begin reporting in.

What that exercise allowed us to do then was we did end up making some instructions, changes to the GE Submittal Template as a result of that exercise because we saw what folks were encountering and ways that we could help improve that. We did go and update the GE User Guide because we have found some additional clarity was needed as a result of the conversations and issues encountered with the beta schools and then the newsletter was developed as a result of what was experienced through this exercise and then, as I mentioned before, it gave us opportunities to refine our instructions and other troubleshooting techniques then also from our customer support part of the organization so we were able to do a number of those things and continued doing those kinda equivalent things then for the period of time from then up until, you know, recently, as the reporting continues, so as I mentioned, we started receiving data on September 26th and, unlike some processes, where the day you turn it on the flood comes in, we were a little more like the Maytag Man in the very beginning. Not quite the Maytag Man. There were a calls but it definitely was not hot-and-heavy in the beginning, which I think our Customer Service Organization probably appreciated a little bit because it gave them an opportunity to learn all these functions and come up with the troubleshooting techniques and things of that nature. That changed very quickly once we hit the beginning of November.

For the 2 weeks leading up to the November 15th deadline, we saw unprecedented call volumes and email volumes and things of that nature that we had never seen in NSLDS. Our normal week is like 1,800 to 2,300 phone calls and that's pretty much true throughout the year. We topped over 5,000 in a week, over 1,200 in a day, in the couple weeks leading up

to 15th deadline. We do know and recognize that there were a couple days where there was some longer wait times or peoples' inability to get in but the good news is that really only occurred on a couple days so, hopefully, those of you trying to get support were able to, you know, with some persistence, be able to get through those really heavy couple days that we had right on the 14th and 15th of November. The deadline, as mentioned, was November 15th but as you probably heard **John Baker** say, in one of the sessions this morning, we continue to receive data in and that's continuing on.

As far as reporting results, thus far, we're actually received – and this number was as of November 21st – but we've actually received well over 3,500 schools reporting data to us and you can see the statistics there. I think what is interesting is that we've gotten over 10 million unique student records and 20 million unique GE program records so that's a significant amount of data for your initial reporting up to this point when we're probably just at the 75-to-80-percent mark, as best as we can tell, but, in terms of the volumes, by the method in which they reported, you can see that we had a fair number, using the **5th's link batch**, and the equivalent with the comma separated so I think what the numbers actually tell us is that the 4 options that we provided that the flexibility of giving you choices is actually working because there was a fair amount being used by all the different choices and – and I think some feedback around that would be also be interesting in hearing because, like I said, this is probably the first where we've provided so many different methods of getting data into us, at least in the initial release of something new. Some of the initial impressions that we had – and we talked about this earlier – but we recognize and understand, from our conversations with you, that it was difficult for schools to pull data together when there wasn't necessarily a single system that contained all the data that we were asking of you so I think that probably one of the largest hurdles that you had to overcome and schools, this was probably – this next blow is really I think the most shocking thing to us was really had not anticipated that when we got to the point of reporting taking place and sending in this data to us that, all of a sudden, we had a new customer group that we've never supported before that – that really was not something that we had even anticipated so, as a result of that, some of the challenges was going back to some of the basics that many of you that have worked with NSLDS from the financial aid community have already learned these basics, like using **SEIG**, and what a TG mailbox is and even using the Financial Aid Professional website or headers and trailer records on Methods of Reporting. For a lot of this – for a lot of us, for many different things, whether it's NSLDS, CPS, or **COD**, these are things we've, sort of, grown to know but when you introduce a new user population that may not know those things, we found ourselves dealing with a lotta the basics then for working with folks, so that was something that we began taking into

consideration then as we refined instructions or the template instructions or the guide or things of that nature, recognizing that and really the group that we wound up spending a lot more time with that we'd never really spent any time with, from NSLDS, was a lotta – a lotta campuses using their Institutional Research staff to help us support the cause, so that was probably one of the biggest unexpected things that we encounter and trying to help them get through the basics, then, of their first interaction with NSLDS. Some other things that we encountered in terms of difficulties were lack of familiarity with SEIG but also things like Edconnect software, submitting a data file and understanding how that whole process, going, when someone's reporting in batch, how that whole process goes from the school to, you know, SEIG, and then gets to NSLDS, not a direct-connection kind of thing, as well as understanding what a message class was and that there were specific message classes to the specific methodology that you were using for reporting and understanding which one of those that you actually had to use in order to get the data sent to us correctly. Also folks were not necessarily aware that the TG Mailbox that you at the school have when you're reporting, in batch, that that needed to be established in a profile page that we have under the GE Reporting List webpage on our website that we needed to understand who to expect that data from for your institution so these were simple things to actually help people resolve once we understood what the situation was but, like I said, a lot of it became some fairly rudimentary kinda things in the work that we do but because of the nature of the user population with being brand-new, it was important to actually teach them those other things as well. Other things in terms of, on the backside, I think some folks who are looking to use, like, the **fixed width** batch method may not have anticipated the IT programming support need in order to prepare such a process so I think they had to, in many senses, some folks switched the method at the end because they didn't have the programming support to do that particular method or it took a little bit longer then to prepare a submission as a result of realizing programming support that they may need. We've not done a whole lotta comma-separated value reporting mechanisms in the NSLDS sphere as of this point in time but we did find that folks had some issues with things like pattern photo records, things such as having some unusual characters that the system's not expecting in headers and footers, which, unfortunately, the way the system works in this kinda processing, we can't – you can't even get to the point that we recognize what the file is and who it's from and things of that nature because these unusual characters, you know, prevent the system from going any further, so it was navigating through those kind of issues.

Field length confusion and how that works and comma-separated versus fixed-length was another as well as – and I sorta chuckled at this one in asking my staff, “Well, what do we really mean by to quote or not to

quote?” But in comma-separate value reporting it’s that comma is telling the system when the next field is coming on to – to understand this is the next field. Well, if a comma is actually part of the data that you’re trying to tell us, like if my name was Ronald Bennett, Jr., so you were putting “Bennett, Jr.” in the Last Name field, in order for me to understand – meaning system – understand that that comma isn’t separating 2 fields, then you need to put quotes around it so that’s what we mean by “to quote or not to quote.” You only quote the comma when the comma is actually data you are trying to tell us, not something that’s trying to separate one field from another field but that was something that we encountered with some folks, so those are some of the nuances that they encountered. On the Submittal Template, since so many more people use the template than we would’ve probably anticipated, this is where we found, actually, our Customer Support Challenge to bet the greatest and so template was designed for direct data entry but we found that a lot of our users, as they were pulling data from other spreadsheets and things of that nature, we’re trying to copy-and-paste into the template and that created some challenges because, as you know, when you’re copying-and-pasting into spreadsheets, you gotta be very specific on whether you wanted to pull the formatting over from one spreadsheet to another, so if it was pulling it over as numeric, like an SSN, when we really think of an SSN as text because if your SSN is 009, Numeric gets rid of those zeros but a text type or a character type does not. That was a very, very common theme that we saw through the folks that were trying to use a template.

Also and I alluded to this before but the template was anticipated for small programs to be reported so it was limited to 50-per-file but we saw folks using multiple hundreds or even into the thousands, trying to do reporting this way, so it just became an operational challenge for them to use it and actually easily get the data reported into us, so we – we found ourselves trying to help folks and support them through doing such a process when it was not easy with such a limitation placed on it and then they tried to use a template without additional information for the GE User Guide and we have instructions built in the template. We even put out a new template with improved instructions after the beta but what we found were folks presume that all the instructions necessary were in the help that we were providing in the template itself but that was more instructions around the formatting of a particular column or field whereas you also needed to know some of the business rules of when to report something, which you would’ve only found in the actual User Guide. A good example being if they’re enrolled in a program, you provide us the least amount of information but if they’ve completed or withdrawn, then you provide us a lot more information, such as the institutional or private depth that the student had associated with that program in that award year, so those are some of the challenges that we saw as well that the folks didn’t realize that they also needed to take a look at the GE Guide and business rules behind

when they would report certain fields versus when not. Some other things that we saw, then, in creating spreadsheets, we talked about the cutting-and-pasting is difficult because it can change the format. We also saw folks leading up to the 15th deadline deciding to switch from the template to trying to use the comma-separated value and this is where you get in the challenges that some fields look different when they're reported in batch than the way you deal with them in spreadsheets.

Dates became very problematic for a lotta folks in those particular situations, so those were other things that we saw that people were encountering and proly the biggest no-no [*laughter*] that we saw, unfortunately, was – was in folks' need to – to garner support in trying to meet these reporting requirements. We really went through a lot of different channels and avenues to give assistance, so we had spreadsheets being sent to folks all over the Department of Ed that were not directly involved with the reporting or assisting with the reporting or assisting with the reporting to NSLDS but all of these files were coming in unprotected so privacy data was at risk there because folks were just emailing unprotected files with Social Security numbers and things, so we definitely wanted to pause and remind everyone that we appreciate the challenge of you trying to meet the need but – but we still wantcha to be, you know, mindful of protecting the PII when you're trying to get support and, I think, too, also, I'd encourage you that when the issues that you're having are about NSLDS, reporting into NSLDS, that's what our Customer Service Center is there for. That's what the email box that you can also use is there for so you can actually encrypt a spreadsheet and have it password-protected and send the spreadsheet and one email, send a password in another one to actually control and protect that identity kind of information so I would take that back and just encourage you to share that so folks will be mindful that all the good work we've done in the last few years to become good stewards of protecting PII data, we don't wanna rush to accomplish this to also put – put folks' information at risk and, with that, I will actually turn it over to Valerie, Miss Shearer, and she can talk to you about our experiences.

Valerie Shearer:

Well, it starts off saying I'm going to talk about the Top 10 but the Top 10 is, kind of, just lessons learned from – for those who provided data and for us who – and our design of the product, so we're gonna talk about the Top 10 Common Mistakes that were made and I'm also gonna talk about things that we've learned that we know we need to do to improve the product and I'm hoping that you will help us today and give us some real input on what we can do to enhance the GE data collection process, so the first thing we're gonna look at is the Top 10 Errors. The Number 1 error, which we thought we covered when we designed the GE User Guide was to first tell you before you can provide data to NSLDS for GE, you had to use a page on our website, under the Enrollment tab, and that was to

provide us with the **TG** mailbox from which you will be submitting data. We tried to cover it in our – our webinars, both of the ones we did on NSLDS reporting, but we didn't seem to get it completely through that you had to first tell us the TG mailbox in order for us to go out and recognize your GE data submittal, so that was actually our Number 1 error. The other errors that you'll see is that we had a lot of errors that were related to the Amount fields and that's because we required that all of the 8 characters' digits for the amounts be filled in. If it was \$400.00, we got 4-0-0 input but you needed to put all the leading zeros in and so we think we need to improve our instructions to stay always to make sure that all the leading zeros are there but we just wanna make sure you know when we ask for an Amount field and the spaces are there, they all hafta have the zero amount in it.

The other thing that we found with the Top 10 Errors is if you look at it, it was the fields that needed to be completed when you're reporting completers or people who have withdrawn. We really needed you to tell us if the student had completed the program or had withdrawn. There were fields required to be reported, like the amount of institutional financing or the amount of private loans. Those were the fields that were required but they were not always completed and they caused a number of errors. When you submitted the data to us, we only returned to you the first 5 errors, so if you had a record that had more than 5 errors and you corrected the first 5, you might've got that record back because there were additional errors.

We gave you back in our error-submittal process; we first acknowledge that you have submitted the data. In a number of schools we're a little concerned that they didn't get error-acknowledgement files and that was because we weren't able to read their file in the SEIG mailbox so we weren't able to pick it up. Our user guide instructed those schools to call our helpdesk if, after 48 hours, you didn't get an error-acknowledgement file, so there was little confusion that when we sent out the Dear President letters that some schools thought they had submitted their data but they never received an error-acknowledgement file because the file wasn't picked up by NSLDS but those are lessons learned and we hope – we're looking at ways that we can improve the process of telling you about things when your file is not processed by NSLDS. Huh, one of the things, uhm, we – I think Ron just covered the numbers of who had reported so I'll just go to the next one. Another common mistake that we're seeing now is that we had 97 schools only report records for completers.

I know that there's a lot of talk about how we're gonna do the metrics and the metrics – well, some of 'em will be based on completers but you need to report all students who are either enrolled or who have withdrawn from a GE program for the 2006 forward years so for those schools who only

reported their completer records, you still need to go out and report all of the records for the other students who have enrolled in the GE programs from 2006 forward. We also found that schools were using the outdated zip code lists. We encourage and we put a Frequently Asked Question and electronic announcement out to remind schools that they needed to use the 2010 zip code list. We're finding we set up the NSLDS GE reporting so that you could report your students as they withdraw from programs, going forward, but we're finding that some schools have already started reporting students who are enrolled at this point and remember students are, for the 2011/12 enrolled year, you hafta report them as if their enrollment status as of June 30th, 2012. It's okay to report those students who withdraw or complete a program currently but you don't report enrolled students until after June 30th because that's the effective date we wanna know for those students for that for the 2012 award year so it's just a warning.

Now is the time for you to review your data. There were a lot of errors. We just went over the Top 10 Errors but there is a lot of errors and you have an opportunity now to correct your data because remember the quality data ensures that we calculate your informational metrics correctly, so you can use a number of messages on NSLDS to review your data. One of the things – one of the Number 1 errors – or it's not a Number 1 but it's an error that a lotta people are having is the accessing conflict and that's a little bit more difficult error to work because you hafta work with other NSLDS data providers so what we did is under the A Tab on NSLDS, we created a page called the SSN Conflict, so the SSN you submitted when you got it back because it was in conflict with another data provider, you can go out under the A Tab and go to the SSN Conflict, enter the SSN that is in conflict and we're gonna tell you the data providers that you are having an error with. You're going to hafta contact that data provider to find out – to compare your information. What we always advise before you start that process is to first check inside your own offices with the Financial Aid Office to make sure that the SSN name and date-of-birth that you are using is the same SSN name and date-of-birth that was used to award A.

If that's correct then the next step is to go in and use this page to find out who you're in conflict with and then you're gonna contact them to compare what you have versus what they have. If you find they're in error, many of our data providers have standards for documentation to change the SSN and they will ask you for what kind of documentation you have to support that in order for them to see if they can use that documentation to up their SSN on name and date-of-birth but you're going to hafta work, individually, with those data providers. You do have more than the 10 days that you have to correct data because we know it takes time to correct those kind of conflicts. If you need assistance on how you

should proceed with correcting an SSN conflict, you can get advice from our NSLDS Customer Service Line and they'll help you in following the correct procedures to work with other NSLDS data providers to correct your SSN conflicts. Remembering that your debt measures are going to be based on your zip code credential level, the first thing you need to do is, kinda, just take a look at the data that you've reported to make sure we have some abilities to sort how your data – to sort all the data and you can sort by both zip code and credential level so maybe you can take the opportunity to review the data you have reported.

We also wanna make sure those who are reporting dental and medical internships, that was really only supposed to be for professionals who are at Credential Level 7 but we have a number of schools who have, for example, the dental hygiene program and they require the students to do an internship that were reporting. Yes, we wanna make sure that, again, is only used for those students who are in a professional, medical or dental program at the Credential Level 7. As I said, we offer you the ability to review your data by sorting it on NSLDS. You would use this page, under the Enroll Tab, under GE List, you would bring it up. You can review all of your records by just hitting Retrieve with the asterisk in, showing that you want all data, but if you wanna take an opportunity to do a quality review, you could, for example, I would recommend that you look at zip code and Credential Level, sort all of your data that you've entered and you can review that data online to see how you can correct your data.

For example, in this one, we wanna look at this student's particular record and see that there was an error. We went. This is the list that would come up. We would enter the Number 1 and then we have the opportunity to either update that record or deactivate it if we found that it was in error. Because we are looking at programs in a specific way, there are certain fields that you can't correct and you'll hafta deactivate a record. Whenever you need to make a change in the Award Year, the student's Social Security Number, his institutional OP ID, his different Credential Level because that is the way we identify a program you'll hafta deactivate that record and enter a new one in order to correct it.

Again, if you wanna change Program, Attendance, Begin and End Date, those are also fields that you have to deactivate the record and enter a new one. To deactivate, again, I showed you how to bring up the record. You simply hit Deactivate. The record is no longer active in NSLDS. We do retain it and then you can go into NSLDS online or you can use a submittal template or any other – or SAG upload in order to correct the data. In order to correct data in batch, it's the same rules.

You can't correct the Award Year or anything that identifies the programs or the date but you can correct the amounts or the students' status. You

can do that in batch by simply resubmitting that identical record to NSLDS with the correct information in it. We know there's room for improvement. We had to bring this up very quickly and we know that there are things that we need to do to improve your ability to correct data and to even upload data, so some of the things that we know that we're gonna be working on is on our online screen we intend to improve the template process to allow more than 50 records. We want to do a way online that you can sort on records and find a way – and sort those records and mass deactivation instead of doing one-record-at-a-time.

We also want to give you the ability, especially when you've found that you need to make a correction for a number of records, the way to do online update by mass, and we know that you need reports. We know that you need a tool in your hand to pull back the data you've submitted so you can analyze it and see what you've reported. Those are the things we know that we need to work on for the online tool. At the same time we're looking at how we can enhance and improve our batch method so we wanna make sure that we can add gainful employment to the SAIG process so you can simply go out there and add SAIG as you do any other function – under SAIG like you do any other function that you do at the department. We wanna give you the ability to use the batch process to deactivate the records and we're also going to be coming up with an XML format for those who want to use it and we're working with **PESK** to set that up, presently.

We'd like to remind you of all of the things we have out there under the User Guide that you can use. We constantly keep the User Guide updated. As we make enhancement to the process, you will see the User Guide will be enhanced. We're constantly trying to do newsletters. When we find that you have an issue, we try to go out and create a newsletter that will make it handy for you to have a reference on reporting to e-data or anything to NSLDS on IFAP and, again, we remind you to use the Frequently Asked Questions, especially under the Reporting, Frequently Asked Questions, you will find that they are all related to NSLDS and what you should and shouldn't do, so we're hoping you're gonna help us out. We're hoping that you're gonna give us some feedback that will help us improve either our template process, our batch process, the CSB process or anything online, please.

Jesse:

Hi, I'm Jesse, from New Mexico, and I just have a question. I'd like to know if we did this right or not but I had a student – or many students who started, say, June of the '06/'07, okay? And then they went '07/'08 and they graduated at the end of our summer, which is July 29, which would've been '08 but that's part of the '08/'09 year, so they're enrolled, enrolled and the completed so we would have 3 years on 'em?

Valerie Shearer: Exactly.

Jesse: Oh, I did it right! *[Laughter]*

Audience: Uhm, I just had a comment. We waited until late November or almost to November 15th to submit and while we had to resubmit the same file several times, I would like to say thank you. The FAQ's on the IFAP page were remarkably helpful without having to call NSLDS because I was dreading have to call and wait my turn in the queue, so thank you for putting all that out there. I did have a couple, maybe, improvements. Is there any way, when we submit online for an individual record, is there any way it will tell us when we're creating new record without knowing it?

We have many users who are helping us do the GE reporting and while I know that updating a program attendance date will actually create a new record, they may not know that. Is there any capability to have like a big red stop-doing-this flag?

Valerie Shearer: We'll put it down and consider that because we know that's an issue, too, that duplicate records were created by simply trying to correct something.

Audience: Okay my other two things are any future guidance? I know my office would really appreciate not only including the regulations – some of our offices are confused at why we're asking for the information in the format that we're asking for it and it would be nice to be able to direct them back to that – and also, maybe, providing either an archived or an NSLDS how-to-use-this screen for non-financial aid administrators because we don't have the time to create a training for our Institutional Research Office on how to use NSLDS and it would be very helpful.

Valerie Shearer: Yes, and that's a lesson learned for us because what we said to a number of people trying to submit data, "Talk to your Financial Aid officer, they can help you out," so lesson learned. Help pages: I hope that everybody remembers that we do have help pages that any time you're on an NSLDS site that you can press the question mark and the Help Page will actually come up.

Patricia Garrett: I'm from Columbus State and my name is Patricia Garrett. I have a student whose information is old and we're trying to report it, a Social Security conflict comes up and it's with another school. Now we can see data from all schools if we just knew the information so is that possible you can display what that school is submitting so we'll know, okay, this is what's not in-sync because the school said that that student is not theirs. They don't have that student in their record so I'm at a standstill.

Valerie Shearer: Well, the problem is is that we simply can't give you back, without you having the Social Security, name and date-of-birth because of privacy. We can't simply give it back to you what the other school reports but maybe we can look at our error files and when we return an error of giving you more information about what we have. Got that?

Debbie: Yes, hi. My name is Debbie and I have a question with regarding to -- we hope successfully inputting the information, we corrected anything when it was rejected but as -- you know, we'd like to make sure that our information is correct and mention that, eventually, there will be a report. When I went in to try to retrieve, I only was able to retrieve a couple at a time. There's no way to retrieve an entire list?

Valerie Shearer: There is. When you use the asterisk in the fields -- let's see, can I go back to it? What?! *[Laughter]* You only get ten at a time? Oh, okay, we need to work on that.

You only get ten at a time I'm told. That would be a problem. Thank you. *[Laughter]*

Debbie: All right, I just wanna make sure that I didn't lose it.

Valerie Shearer: Okay.

Leslie: My name is Leslie. I'm with North Central University and we're a for-profit school so most of our programs are GE programs. The only error that we have remaining are all SSN errors and we have -- we're a very small office but we're a graduate school and so we have a lot of students who old names being reported from like where they got their undergraduate degree. IT really is expected of us that we call of those people listed on the SSN conflict and try to get that resolved. I mean we have numerous numbers of people with a different name and we've gone through our records to see if it's an error on our part and it's the other agency.

Valerie Shearer: Mmm-hmm, uh-huh. We know that it's an issue and we -- *[laughter]* we know it's an issue. We are working on how we can assist you. We know that there's not always a lot of time to do it. All I can say is, "Stay tuned" because we know it's an issue and we're working on it.

Leslie: Well, the department -- I know there's no real set time limit. I'm just thinking because some of our students have now graduated they're no longer with us. We don't have their documentation, stating their married name, for example, which is the biggest one we have. Is there really -- we're not gonna be held liable to a time limit if we're having to call these students to get this documentation because we honestly don't have it?

Valerie Shearer: We know that you're working it and that's what we want you to do.

Leslie: Okay, okay.

Valerie Shearer: We're gonna hafta come up with tools with this. This is a challenge for us, too, so we're working on it but thank you for the feedback because that's what we need.

Audience: Good afternoon. I have two questions. One should be easy. The other one should – it's kinda like difficult for me. First the second – the hard question is that we have a police academy program at our college. However that really wasn't – oh, sorry.

Valerie Shearer: I can't hear him.

Audience: Can you hear me now?

Valerie Shearer: Now, yes, thank you.

Audience: Oh, okay. We have a police academy program at our college. However we didn't have like a zip code or a sip code for that program, so how should we report that?

Valerie Shearer: There should be a zip code for [crosstalk] –

Audience: There should be a zip code for it?

Valerie Shearer: There is. Just go to the zip code list.

Audience: Zip code page? Okay.

Valerie Shearer: And there are zip codes for you to choose from. In fact there'll be multiple zip codes to choose from, so you need to classify the program.

Audience: Classify the program?

Valerie Shearer: Mmm-hmm.

Audience: Okay, thank you and the second question was when we submitted our original file, we were one of the colleges that didn't get a error report and I was just trying to figure out what the page that you said that we had to do in order to get to where we had to go to in Enrollment, click on Enrollment.

Valerie Shearer: Well, first of all the Error Report, if you submit it by batch, it's going to go to your SAIG mailbox so the first thing you need to do is make sure you don't have an Error Acknowledgement file in your SAIG mailbox.

Audience: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: That'll tell you whether or not you have submitted. If you don't find that file, you can call our helpdesk and they'll help you determine if your data was, in fact, processed.

Audience: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: So that's the first thing you need to do but check your SAIG mailbox because that's where your Error Acknowledgement file set.

Audience: Okay, thank you.

Audience: Hi, I just have another comment in regard to the Social Security conflict. The issue that we've been running into is even when we do contact, like, a service provider, they don't know what to do to resolve the conflict. We don't have the documentation although we're getting, like, a clean **ISERT**, saying that everything matches up to the Social Security Administration and we contacted them and they don't know what to do. I've actually had to go through and contact the student, get the information, open up a ticket with NSLDS to be able to resolve that, so even though we've only got a handful of them, there's a lotta time that's spent because even though it tells you who to contact, you contact that person and they still don't know what to do to resolve it.

Valerie Shearer: So it sounds like we need to educate our data providers [*crosstalk*] --

Audience: Yes, please.

Valerie Shearer: and look – and so we'll work on that.

Audience: Thank you.

Devon: Hi, my name is Devon. I hadda question – I don't know if any other schools had this problem – we had just a handful of students who had an error where it said, "Program end date invalid and I was wondering if trailer schools were having this problem?"

Valerie Shearer: You were trying to report a program end date after June 30th?

Devon: Uhm, yes.

Valerie Shearer: No, then that would be a problem.

Devon: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: The – you would hafta report two records for that particular GE program.

Devon: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: The one that ends on – he’s enrolled or she’s enrolled, as of June 30th, and then if he graduated on July 1st, then you report that he completed on July 1st.

Devon: Okay, thank you.

Audience: I have a question about the program attendance date beginning in this award year on the report. If the student started a program, maybe in a previous award year, and they have not completed or withdrawn but maybe they’re on leave-of-absence, whadda you report?

Valerie Shearer: **Cynthia**, what did you say?

Audience: So they were not enrolled in that award year at all.

Valerie Shearer: A leave of absence is withdrawn.

Audience: So if they’re on leave of absence then you must handle them [*crosstalk*] –

Valerie Shearer: Right and that would different from what you report. In Enrollment, you report leave of absence. For GE you report withdrawn and then when the student returns to school, that’s the new enrollment period.

Audience: Okay, thanks.

Audience: Hello.

Valerie Shearer: Hello.

Audience: This might not be the proper forum but what I’m concerned about, we are a Banner School and we attempted to use the software for reporting that Banner provided and, at a very late date, had to abandon it because we weren’t able to pull the correct data so I was just wondering if NSLDS is continuin’ to work with Banner or Datatel or any of the other software providers to perfect the way that this data’s gonna be pulled.

Valerie Shearer: No, we put all of our requirements in our NSLDS User Guide and we expect the software vendors – because the schools are ultimately

responsible so we expect the software vendors to be in compliance with our user guide and that's about all we really do with any servicer, sorry.

Audience: Lemme ask for clarification on that. Now if you have a program that started during an academic year but it ends after June 30th, it's still that academic year but you're saying it should've been reported for the [crosstalk] –

Valerie Shearer: It's two GE records.

Audience: next academic year.

Valerie Shearer: You'll hafta report two GE records because the GE period is July 1st to June 30th.

Audience: Right.

Valerie Shearer: So if you cross over then you hafta report. If that program only went over to July 2nd, you would hafta report June 30th for one Award Year and then the next Award Year for the 2 days for July.

Audience: Hi, I'm sorry to go back to the SSN conflict again but [crosstalk] –

Valerie Shearer: That's okay.

Audience: I have one that I just don't know how to resolve. It was in '06/'07 and the student actually graduated in '06, never received any title for aid from us but we have an SSN conflict so the only SSN information that we have is what they provided on their admissions application and when I reached out to the lender who it's in conflict with, they said, "Oh, that's not the name and date-of-birth that we have" and we don't have any way of contacting this student now. The program doesn't keep great alumni records.

Valerie Shearer: Sure.

Audience: So what do I do with that student? Do I just deactivate them?

Valerie Shearer: Well, if he's not – if he had a conflict, he didn't get on and, unfortunately, if you aren't able to resolve it without proper SSN, you simply can't report that record.

Audience: Okay so do I need to send a notice about that to that GE-reporting email address or do we just let it go? Because we're getting an error on it right now, so.

Valerie Shearer: No all you need to do is document your attempts to correct that you did contact the data provider.

Audience: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: They don't have the same information. You don't have a way to contact them then that's all you can do is to document that you attempted to.

Audience: Perfect, thank you.

Ron Bennett: It's probably important to note though what she's bringing up is what GE is doing for us that's a little different than the SSN conflict; it's the first time that we're getting in non-Title 4 Recipient data, so we're seeing these nuances, so when Valerie said that we understand that we need to do some work around this. It something that we're actually working to see what options have for the reporting that we can try to find better mechanisms for managing these nuances that are new to us. Yes?

Audience: Hello, I have a question.

Valerie Shearer: Mmm-hmm.

Audience: For the last six years we were very similar reporting for **Sirius** system for the Department of Homeland Security for thousands and thousands of international students, using XML-based processing. It's a well-developed process and very little effort it takes to report it. Is there any way for you to look at the direction?

Ron Bennett: I don't think we heard.

Valerie Shearer: You're working on XML?

Ron Bennett: Yes, hello? Uhm.

Valerie Shearer: We're working on XML and we hope to have it for next year's reporting for sure.

Audience: Hello, I guess I wanna touch base on the concept of lessons learned and it goes something that you reference when it comes to **tech ref**, speakin' about Banner, I'm not with Banner but I am with another software vender. You indicated that in that technical refer there are business rules and the ED tech ref and the COD tech ref, you have very extensive business rules and this tech ref, all of your business rules fits within the one page and to be truthful, and going back to banner and any other software vendor or for an institution that's developing it. I'll use an example when we talk about how much we report and institutional loans and then we talk about how

much we talk about for student that maybe withdrew in one year and you're reporting for that and then reentered. When we were talking about how much you're reporting, it basically says that you report for the entire program and not just for the Award Year and it really doesn't give you the business rules of what happens if the student withdrew and then you're reporting in that year and then the student came back and you're reporting another year, there's nothing in the business rules, there's nothing on the Q&A site. I did get an answer after probably about a month and a half from someone responding to that email but there really are not extensive business rules in that technical ref like you have in the ED tech ref so I can understand why these vendors are struggling with the guidance that's being provided.

Valerie Shearer: So we need to enhance our guidance?

Audience: I would say so, yes.

Valerie Shearer: We will.

Audience: Thank you.

Valerie Shearer: Okay.

Audience: My question – can you hear me?

Valerie Shearer: Yes.

Audience: My question has to do with the locking down of data. Is there a point? We were told that we had 'til November 30th to correct any errors. We have more 300 Social Security number conflicts. We're a very large graduate program and there's no way we can get those corrected in that time period. Is there – is there a time where this data will be locked down and we can't make any more corrections to it?

That's my first question.

Valerie Shearer: If those students are completers, you will need the completers for the 2008/'09 year. When we do the first SSN Social Security Number run in January, late January, those students, if they've not been corrected, won't get into those but if they're students who are in more current years, you can continue to work those until we actually do more calculations so I would say that you really have until mid-January to try to work as many as you can, focusing on students who have completed.

Audience: We've had the same issue that we can have up to five data providers all in conflict and we're not – you know, we call them and they're not even sure

what to do so it would be helpful if there was a letter that went out to the providers themselves to explain that schools are gonna be contacting them or maybe even a template that we could use to report out those kinds of conflicts because it has been very frustrating.

Valerie Shearer: We're actually been in discussion with a couple data providers who have said, "Now what exactly am I supposed to do?" So we do need to improve our guidance to them, too.

Audience: The second question I have has to do with zip codes. Our PPA has zip codes. We tried to update them when the new zip codes came out. Those codes weren't available at the time. They hadn't been updated on the **Ecore** site so we put the codes that are currently on our PPA in the file, which are not the most current codes, I don't think, because we wanted to make sure that there wasn't a conflict between what we're approved to provide and what we are providing, so we're thinking we're gonna have to, at some point, go in and update some of those zip codes as well.

Valerie Shearer: We're thinking that's prolly gonna be a common correction that we hafta figure out how schools are gonna need to make corrections, too. It's on our list because we know that a number started out with old zip codes, when we reminded everybody to go to the 2010 list, so we – it's on our list of figuring out what we can do to help you correct it.

Audience: Okay and I wanted to thank you for providing the template. Of course we couldn't use it. We had more than 250,000 records to send you but it did provide us with an ability to collect the data in a consistent format. Of course we had to change some of the directions but given that we did report more than 250,000 records to you, we would love to be able to look at those records and, right now, we have no ability to check to make sure that you've got the right data.

Valerie Shearer: Yeah.

Audience: Thank you.

Valerie Shearer: That's a problem.

Audience: Hello.

Valerie Shearer: Hi.

Audience: We occasionally have students who are enrolled in Spring Semester and then they no longer are enrolled at our institution but they completed their graduation requirements, other than maybe an incomplete grade, so they don't actually apply for their credential until the end of summer semester,

which is after the June 30th cutoff so we don't have enrollment to report for the following year. How would you like us to report those?

Valerie Shearer: I've been told we're working on a Frequently Asked Question on this so you will soon get an answer because I don't know.

Audience: Thank you.

Valerie Shearer: [Laughter]

Audience: Oh, I would just -- I'd like to add one more comment to the Social Security Number conflict issue, which is it's very frustrating to plug that in and have the screen come up and you go to the school that's in the conflict and it says, "No contact information."

Valerie Shearer: Yes, I encourage everyone in the room; if you're a school please give us your contact information. That -- yes.

Audience: So that's -- that [crosstalk] --

Valerie Shearer: It comes -- and that -- that -- that is self-entered by all schools so schools please update your contact information.

Audience: And my second question is just to confirm that I'm understanding correctly the process if we have a record that was rejected and we look through and we realize it's because it's a duplicate so we can't correct it, you know? We say that student had an '06/'07 and '07/'08 and, for some reason, a 3rd one was created that was some combination of those 2. The '06/'07 is fine. The '07/'08 is fine and we just would just ignore this rejected 3rd record because it doesn't go to anything.

Valerie Shearer: Yes.

Audience: Using our schools system process of creating a batch file, it created three records for student who only needed two.

Valerie Shearer: Mmm-hmm?

Audience: So we have a rejected record on file but we can't correct it because there's two accepted ones in the file already!

Valerie Shearer: Okay but the -- so you're saying you don't want it. You don't need to necessarily correct that. It's just a rejecting because your system created it and you didn't want it to load and your concern is that we're looking at the fact that you had an error and you didn't correct it.

Audience: Correct.

Valerie Shearer: We haven't got that far, so I don't think you have anything to worry about.

Audience: [Laughter] All right, we're safe ignoring it, then.

Valerie Shearer: And one thing that I wanna – I just got handed a note to make sure that I say this about SSN conflict. When you see on the SSN page that there are multiple data providers that have that – that are listed for that SSN that means that both of those data providers are in agreement so you don't hafta contact all of them. You only hafta contact one. I don't know if that helps.

Audience: I have a question. Uhm, I submitted all of our files with a fixed-width and there was one section received -- Fellow Direct Loans -- that was not filled out correctly so that needs to be corrected for all students. Is there any way to resubmit the file just to fix that field?

Valerie Shearer: It was a Fellow Direct Loan field?

Audience: Yes.

Valerie Shearer: Don't worry about it. Fellow Direct Loan: Do you have aid -- that question? Does the borrower have aid? Is that – I'm sorry.

Audience: Did the borrower received Fellow Direct Loans that wasn't filled out correctly in her files and I need – I – I'm wondering [crosstalk] –

Valerie Shearer: I was just told for you to contact the GE mailbox, GE Questions Mailbox and you will get an answer.

Audience: Okay, thank you.

Audience: I have a question in regards to the zip codes again and I was just emailed a problem back at the institution that I work a, they're working on the GE file errors right now and the question is the Code Board changed our zip code for Vocational Nursing Program, mid-year, so, therefore, do we show that the students withdrew from the Vocational Nursing program and then went into the Vocational Nursing Program, open up two records for each student, one showing the old zip, the new ones showing the new zip?

Valerie Shearer: That's very much a policy question and she's talking. Email the GE Questions Mailbox; I was just told, sorry, because that's a policy question. I can only really help you with reporting it.

Audience: Okay

Valerie Shearer: I'm not sure how you're supposed to do that.

Audience: Okay, okay, and reiterate what you stated about using the 2010 zips, is that going back from 2006, change all those zip codes to reflect the 2010?

Valerie Shearer: Yes.

Audience: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: Yes.

Audience: Okay, thank you.

Audience: Good afternoon. I have a question about Social Security numbers. Our institution leaves it as an option for our students to provide Social security numbers. Now is that going to change or is that a requirement?

Valerie Shearer: If you don't have Social Security numbers you can't report GE so it's up to you whether you wanna properly report.

Audience: Well, we haven't in the past. We just wanted to know if it's something that we should. Our Admissions Department is trying to figure out if it's *[crosstalk]* –

Valerie Shearer: I think you should send that question to the GE Questions Mailbox.

Audience: Okay, okay, thanks.

Valerie Shearer: Oh, I need to remind you about the Question-and-Answer session that is on today, 2:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m., at 3:35 p.m., and it's all about questions and answers for GE.

Audience: Sorry, I have two more questions. One of the ladies earlier mentioned that we have until Mid-January to update SSN conflicts. For what years is that? Are those older data?

Valerie Shearer: Hold on. I'm getting *[crosstalk]* –

Audience: Oh, okay. *[Laughter]*

Valerie Shearer: I'm conferencing. *[Laughter]* 2008/2009 should be your focus but we're also looking at those students who are in repayment so just – just – you – yeah.

Audience: Okay.

Valerie Shearer: You – you –yeah.

Audience: Thank you and then the second was there's data service providers on the SSN conflict and then sometimes there's schools, so you're saying we only have to contact one of those individuals because they all are reporting the same information?

Valerie Shearer: Yes.

Audience: All right, thank you.

Valerie Shearer: Okay, thank you! And I hope to see you at the GE Questions Session!

[Applause]