

Inceptia Insight.

Winter 2015/2016

Cheers to the New Year, Successes Await!

Hard to believe 2016 is already upon us! At Inceptia, we're closing out a busy year full of new innovative product releases, many speaking engagements, and the introduction of our newly-hatched money mascot, the Knowl. This year, we have truly worked hard to introduce industry-unique solutions to help your students and school achieve success.

In this issue, we'll profile a few of our latest enhancements, including our Verification Gateway and the newly launched Financial Avenue. We'll also address the importance of taking steps to address your institution's Cohort Default Rate (CDR) – whether you're pleased with last fall's numbers or need to get to work on improvements.

We're also doing some truly exciting work alongside community organizations. Read on to find out how our recently announced partnership with a California nonprofit is helping high school students grasp personal finance early on, with Financial Avenue.

February is just around the corner, which means your draft CDR will soon be released. In the meantime, be sure to review our products and tips to protect your CDR. Every student's experience counts, and we're all in this together.

Looking forward to another year full of great strides!



Sue Downing
Vice President of Marketing

Inside Insight ...

- Client Spotlight: Bennett College for Women
- New Partnership Benefits CA High School Students
- Financial Avenue's Latest Enhancements
- Default Prevention Remains Critical – Here's why.
- New Product! Verification Gateway
- Inceptia Advisory Committee Welcomes New Members
- Exclusive Tips For Inceptia Clients

We are dedicated to finding fresh solutions for financial aid offices and schools, to contribute to the ultimate success of students. Read on to learn more.



Spreading Holiday Cheer, Fighting Hunger

Nationally, hunger is a growing issue for students – in the classroom as well as on college campuses. And for many younger students, building strong educational foundations can't be a top priority while living with the burden of food insecurity.

That's why this December, we proudly donated to **Lincoln, Nebraska's Backpack Program**, a local charity dedicated to fighting child hunger. For us, this is just another way to provide youth with foundational stepping stones, so they can focus on opportunities to learn and thrive.

Celebrating Successes

Bennett College for Women, North Carolina

Inceptia's mission is to partner with schools to help guide students away from delinquency and default. And nothing gets us more excited than hearing about the positive strides our partner institutions are making as they work to better the lives of their students.

Bennett College for Women is a private, not-for-profit 4 year college with upwards of 500 attendees. We recently chatted with Betty Watson, Coordinator of Default Management at Bennett College. Betty understands the benefits of a financial education curriculum and has a sincere passion for helping her students to master the fundamentals of personal finance. Because of this, Bennett College takes proactive steps to help their students get the basics down by utilizing Financial Avenue, Inceptia's online financial education program.

Due to the smaller enrollment size for this school, Bennett College has put into practice a fresh, comprehensive approach to financial education across campus. How do they engage students to participate in Financial Avenue's coursework? They require it – a bold yet effective strategy. Financial Avenue coursework is a required component for Bennett College students during their senior seminar. Students successfully complete coursework during their

senior year, and their grades are tracked by the Office of Default Management to confirm completion, just as if it were a part of regular curriculum.

Campus buy-in is key: this approach has the full support of the President, Dr. Rosalind Fuse-Hall and Vice President for Business & Finance, Mr. Leroy Summers at the college. In addition, Ms. Watson shares that her alumni often voice their appreciation for Financial Avenue when looking back at their college years, citing the program as another tool that helped them prepare for daily life in the "real world."

"Students need an understanding of financial basics as they go out to make their own money," Betty Watson shared. "Many students are accustomed to living on an 'allowance,' whether they're receiving federal aid, getting help from family, or both. Financial Avenue gives them an idea of real world expectations and helps them understand core financial concepts like banking, credit cards and credit ratings – so they can stay afloat. We want our students to be financially aware and responsible once in adulthood."

Kudos to the staff at Bennett College, and best wishes to continued success of their financial education efforts. Your commitment to your students' success is inspiring!

Financial Wellness:

California Dreamin' Becomes a Reality

This fall, Inceptia and the San Diego Financial Literacy Center (SDFLC) teamed up to help California high school students achieve financial wellness. With this partnership, Inceptia's online financial education program, Financial Avenue, combined with SDFLC's current efforts will provide students with a robust financial education toolset, to better equip them for financial capability.

Financial Avenue offers engaging online courses and tutorials specially designed to address the learning needs of Millennials and the up and coming Gen Z students. Students increase their knowledge of money fundamentals; from building credit and deciphering credit reports, to avoiding identity theft, to budgeting and paying for college. Courses like "The Psychology of

Money" also help students understand their personal relationship with money so they can identify triggers, alter spending habits, and become more financially aware.

Through education, the SDFLC empowers students and families to make smart financial decisions and develop positive personal finance habits for life. By offering additional financial guidance to students through this partnership with Inceptia, the SDFLC is providing an invaluable service to the San Diego community that will have a positive impact on future generations.

To learn more about Financial Avenue, please visit www.financialavenue.org.



"Our partnership with San Diego Financial Literacy Center gives us an exciting opportunity to connect with high school students and offer them valuable financial literacy resources they may not receive anywhere else. Together, we can put them on track to financial success early on."

Randy Heesacker
President and CEO, Inceptia

Partnering for Success

At Inceptia, we believe a robust financial education should start early. That's why we strive to offer Financial Avenue to high school students through partnerships with nonprofits across the nation.

- San Diego Financial Literacy Center (SDFLC), California
- Financial Beginnings, Oregon
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)



Redefining Financial Education: The “New” Financial Avenue

At Inceptia we are continually adapting to the needs of students and the industry, which means finding ways to innovate our existing award-winning products. This year we re-released our online financial education program, Financial Avenue, offering ten new courses created with the input of a vast team of experts in financial aid, financial education, e-learning/instructional design, and behavioral psychology. But we’ve also refreshed the program in other exciting ways.

The national conversation is trending on ways not only to address financial knowledge, but how to understand our behaviors around money in order to achieve financial *wellness*. With this in mind, our Psychology of Money course, co-written with a behavioral psychology expert, was designed to help students first understand *why* they make the money choices they do. With this knowledge in hand, students can better assess ways to alter their behavior and create healthy habits to find balance when it comes to personal finance.

Financial Avenue also focuses heavily on behavior modification, as well as knowledge gain. Students are given customized action plans to help them apply what they learn to daily activities. In 2016, we will also release the behavioral assessment tool, a unique feature which allows us to gauge the baseline knowledge, attitude, and behaviors that students carry financially when entering the program, so we can study how these factors change after students are exposed to financial education.

Finally, we created a library of resources for educators and financial aid pros to help promote Financial Avenue on campus and integrate the courses into existing curriculum or workshops.

Get your Knowl posters!

Looking for another way
to promote Financial
Avenue to students on
your campus? Get visual!

Simply log in to your
Financial Avenue Dashboard.
Once there, select Materials
Order Form under the
Marketing Toolkit options
to request your eye-catching
Knowl posters today!

Marketing Toolkit

- Article Templates
- Course Flyers
- Program Brochure
- Student Registration Guide
- Email Assets

Educator Toolkit

- Course PowerPoints and Prezis
- Embeddable Videos
- Lesson Plans and Activities
- Best Practices

Financial Avenue is building a brighter tomorrow by helping create solid financial futures. If you haven’t implemented Financial Avenue at your campus, call us today to learn more or preview a demo: 888.529.2028, ext. 6306.

Despite Nationwide CDR Drop, Prevention Remains Critical

The release of Cohort Default Rates (CDR) last September has left some higher education professionals feeling... rather optimistic. Nationwide, CDRs have declined to 11.8 percent for students who entered repayment between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012. That's nearly a two percentage point improvement (or almost 14 percent decrease) from 2011, when rates across all sectors of higher education (public, private and for-profit institutions) were at 13.7 percent.

Clearly, default prevention strategies on U.S. campuses are making a positive impact. So why should default prevention remain a top priority for schools, even though the national default rate is dropping?

Time Flies

Although your rate may look good at the moment, things can escalate surprisingly quickly. Incidents of default increase dramatically in the third year after repayment begins. So students entering repayment now may be in the danger zone in a few short years. Why wait to address the issue?

Reputation

Across all areas of higher education, CDRs are becoming a benchmark of reputation and success. As the national dialogue over student loan debt grows, students, parents, and the media are applying more scrutiny to institutions based on their numbers.

By proactively taking time for one-on-one chats with borrowers, discussing issues specific to a students' situation, and informing them of their repayment options, schools can greatly increase the chances of students' successful repayment – which in a roundabout way, also bolsters their institution's reputation.

Empowerment

These days, students need additional tools – beyond their degree and career planning – to help them achieve successful repayment. This is where financial education comes in. Empower former students by giving them confidence to work with their loan servicers and find financial wellness in adulthood.

You have a chance to make a life-long impact on your students. That could include alumni, ready to support their alma mater through involvement, donations and word-of-mouth cheerleading. It may also be students who left school early to pursue other opportunities. In any case, your efforts give students options to create the successful futures we all know they deserve.



The Greater Good

No matter what your CDR is, defaulted student loans are a burden each student carries as they try to get their career off the ground. Every student counts. Sanctions and benefits are persuasive motivators that encourage schools to work with their borrowers toward reducing default – not to mention the financial cost to taxpayers and our communities. There is a larger, “we’re all in this together” incentive at hand as well.

No matter what your rate was for 2012 or your soon to be released draft 2013 rate will be, you owe it to your students to be proactively implementing an effective default prevention strategy to ensure they have the financial tools required for successful repayment. Let us help you craft a comprehensive default prevention strategy on your campus to show compassion that goes beyond academic education.

A strong default aversion program could be the unique campus resource that sets your school apart from the rest. Contact Inceptia to learn more.

Verification Gateway:

A Streamlined Solution for Students & FAOs

The financial aid verification process is a critical and complex requirement that tends to be both daunting for students *and* time-intensive for your already busy staff. That's why we're eager to announce the launch of Inceptia's Verification Gateway, an innovative financial aid verification system that is automated, fully secure, meets federal regulatory requirements, and will change the way your students and your school handle verification.



The goal is to simplify the verification process for students, parents and schools from start to finish.

For students and their families, Verification Gateway is a secure, user-friendly portal that covers every step in the financial aid verification process. Students will receive an initial email letting them know they've been selected for verification. After authenticating their identity using our mobile-friendly online portal, students are led through an interview process customized specifically to their verification requirements (parents of dependent students follow a similar process). During the process, helpful tips remind students what is needed, exactly where to find it, and also provides convenient options for submitting required documentation, including uploading documents by snapping photos from mobile devices. Branded e-communications and text messages (by request) keep students apprised of their progress. Throughout, our highly trained Verification Specialists are available to answer questions via a toll-free number. The goal is to simplify the verification process for students, parents and schools from start to finish.

For administrators, Verification Gateway increases staff effectiveness and efficiency while reducing resources tied to verification. This solution is turnkey and can be rapidly deployed with minimal training from experienced Inceptia staff. Best of all, your school will receive

completed verifications faster, meaning you will be able to package students more quickly and greatly increase the likelihood that those students will select your institution.

Within the portal, your staff have access to view daily verification processing activity, view or run multiple reports, and easily review and upload documents. Each school client can customize their portal to fit their institution's brand. All verifications are processed at Inceptia's FISMA secure corporate headquarters, where our Verification Specialists provide school and student customer service as well as regular manual quality control checks.

Inceptia continues to innovate our products with the goal of streamlining the intricate and ever changing world of financial aid to benefit both students and institutions. And with the recent Prior-Prior Year (PPY) updates to the FAFSA, Verification Gateway's release is timely to alleviate regulatory workload. End result: your staff can spend more time with students – instead of paperwork.

Big changes are coming. Reach out to us today to learn more about this industry innovation!

Meet Our School Advisory Committee

At Inceptia, we like to think of ourselves as curious experts – always looking for industry-leading solutions to help students and their schools find success. So in order to stay in touch with our partner schools and industry-trending items, we enlist help “on the ground,” in the form of our Inceptia School Advisory Committee.

This committee was assembled to provide counsel and insight for Inceptia to develop innovative, industry-leading solutions. In turn, our advisory committee’s input ultimately helps schools impact retention and graduation rates, streamline their financial aid processes, and foster financial mentorship with students. Members participate in thoughtful discussions around best-practices and trends, and share ideas for new opportunities and partnerships.

We’re pleased to welcome the following professionals to Inceptia’s School Advisory Committee. Professional bios are available at <https://institute.inceptia.org/our-experts/>:

Melody Bell

Executive Director
Financial Beginnings

Amy Cable

Director of Financial Aid
Enrollment Services
Baton Rouge Community College

Scott Cline

Director of Financial Aid
California College of Art San Francisco

Elijah Herr

Cohort Default and
Communication Coordinator
Portland Community College

Leigh Ann Hussey

Director of Financial Aid -
Perkinston Campus
Mississippi Gulf Coast
Community College

Shellee Kilbride

Corporate Director of Financial Aid
Prospect Education / Charter College

Anthony S. Marin, Ph.D.

Director, Student Affairs
New Mexico State University

Dawn Lowe

Director of Financial Aid
Howard Community College

Nate Peterson

Assistant Director of One Stop
Student Services
University of Minnesota

Megan Scherling

Program Coordinator
University of Nebraska Lincoln

Joan Zanders

Director Student Financial
Aid/Support Services
Northern Virginia Community College

“Our School Advisory Committee has been a tremendous asset in helping us evaluate and improve our products while also recommending new products for us to bring to market. All members are leaders within the industry, and we are proud to have them serve on the committee.”

Sue Downing
Vice President of Marketing, Inceptia



Just for Clients: Be Extra-Extra Prepared for Prior-Prior Year Rush

It's official – the countdown to prior-prior year (PPY) data has begun. Now that students will be able to file a FAFSA in October, this means a change in tasks and priorities for financial aid officers. There may be some juggling in your future, so how can you prepare now for the changes ahead?

Our top 3 tips:

1 Stay On Top of the Latest

As with any new protocol, there are a lot of unanswered questions. Check out the Inceptia Institute, and track industry influencers and financial aid associations to be sure you know the latest expectations and deadlines around the new rules.

2 Find Ways to Streamline

Look for ways to update and simplify your existing processes. Can you combine efforts with a colleague to make both your duties easier? Are there ways to automate or outsource certain tasks to alleviate your workload?

3 Don't Forget to Breathe

Stress in the financial aid office is the real deal. Create a five minute morning stretch session, bring some chocolate-covered goodies to share, or fill the office coffee pot with "the good brand" for a few days. Even the little things can get your team through busy times unscathed.

Inceptia's innovative products and services are designed to alleviate stress, increase staff efficiency, and help your students achieve successful futures. To learn more, contact us at inceptiasales@inceptia.org or visit Inceptia.org.

About Inceptia

Inceptia, a division of National Student Loan Program (NSLP), is a nonprofit organization providing premier expertise in higher education access, student loan repayment, analytics, default prevention, financial education and verification. Our mission is to support schools as they arm students with the knowledge needed to become financially responsible adults. Since 1986, we have helped more than two million students achieve their higher education dreams at 5,500 schools nationwide. Annually, Inceptia helps more than 180,000 students borrow wisely, resolve their delinquency issues and successfully repay their student loan obligations. Inceptia educates students on how to pay for college, guides borrowers through loan repayment counseling, and provides default prevention strategies and services to schools. More information at Inceptia.org.

