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ABSTRACT

This study examined the rate of participation in, and default on loans from, the Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) and the Federal Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS) programs. In particular the study sought to know the volume of loans made to students or parents of students attending proprietary (trade) schools and other postsecondary educational institutions, the extent of borrowing by parents of freshmen and by freshmen students as compared to such borrowing for students in their second or subsequent years of schooling, and the amount of defaulted loans. The study proceeded by soliciting loan volume data for fiscal years 1989 to 1991 from 11 of the largest guaranty agencies, which together accounted for 63 percent and 62 percent of the PLUS and SLS total loan volumes. Ten of the agencies also provided loan default data. The review found that \$1.7 billion in PLUS loans and \$3.7 billion in SLS loans were made during the period. In addition most of the PLUS loan volume went to parents of students attending nonproprietary schools and most of the PLUS volume increase was among non-freshmen at nonproprietary schools. New loan defaults increased during each of the 3 years and totaled almost \$109 million for PLUS loans and \$1.4 billion for SLS loans. Numerous tables and figures supplement the text. (JB)

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GAO

September 1992

PARENT AND SUPPLEMENTAL STUDENT LOANS

Volume and Default Trends for Fiscal Years 1989 to 1991

ED350956



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Human Resources Division

B-249978

September 22, 1992

The Honorable Edward M.
Chairman, Committee on Labor
and Human Resources
United States Senate

The Honorable William D. Brock
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Postsecondary Education
Committee on Education and the
House of Representatives

This fact sheet responds to your request for information on Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) and Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS) for parents who have dependent children in college per year, to a maximum of \$5,000 per student (generally those who are subject to the same loan limits as those who can obtain PLUS and SLS loans in addition to other financial aid, such as Federal Pell Grants).

Specifically, we developed this fact sheet in 1991 on the (1) volume of PLUS and SLS loans of students attending postsecondary education institutions, (2) the amount of PLUS and SLS loans by freshmen students as compared to second or subsequent year students, and (3) the interest rates on PLUS and SLS loans.

Background

PLUS and SLS loans are made through private lenders and credit unions. The lenders are guaranteed by the Federal Student Loan Guaranty agencies, who are part of the Department of Education.

Both PLUS and SLS loans carry an interest rate based on the 52-week Treasury bill rate.

¹PLUS and SLS loans are part of the Federal Student Loan Program under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. They are also known as Consolidation loans.

²Subsequent to our review, the Higher Education Act of 1992 increased borrowing limits and interest rates for PLUS and SLS loans.

rates change each July. For example, the interest rate for the period July 1, 1991, through June 30, 1992, was 9.34 percent. Repayment of loans under both programs must generally begin within 60 days after loans are made. New PLUS and SLS loans made nationwide in fiscal year 1991 totalled \$1.1 billion and \$1.9 billion, respectively.

Scope and Methodology

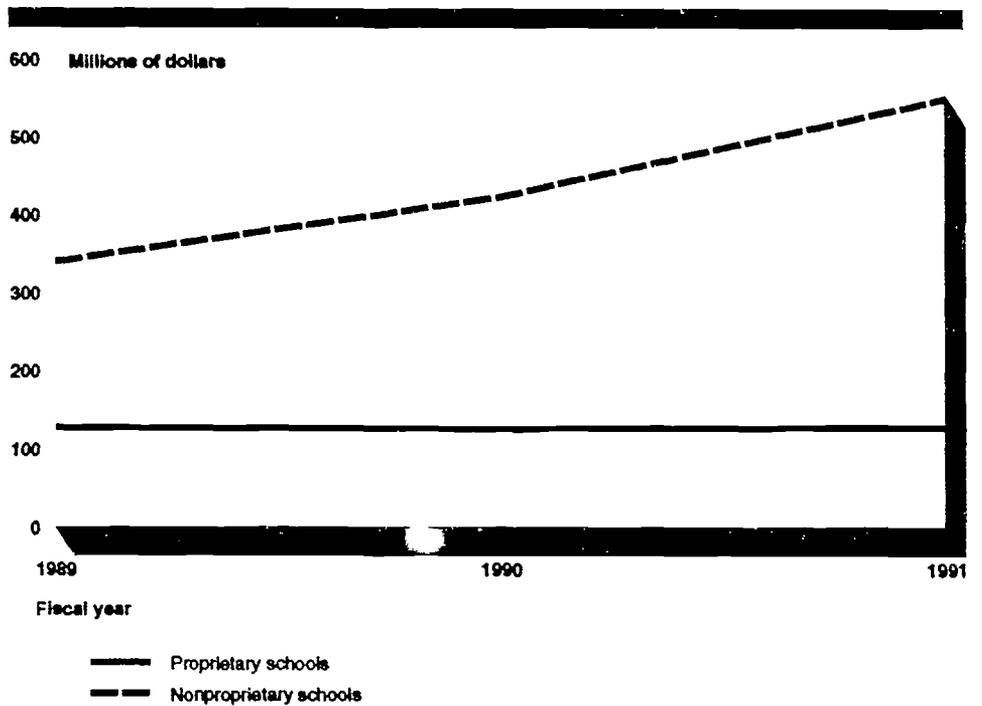
We attempted to obtain PLUS and SLS loan volume data for fiscal years 1989 to 1991 from 12 of the largest guaranty agencies. However, the New York guaranty agency was unable to provide the requested data within our time frames. The remaining 11 agencies guaranteed 63 percent and 62 percent of the PLUS and SLS total loan volumes, respectively, during the 3-year period. In addition, the Virginia guaranty agency was unable to provide the requested default data. As a result, we received and analyzed loan volume data from 11 agencies and loan default data from 10 agencies. (A list of the agencies is contained in app. I.) We did not verify the accuracy of the data submitted by the guaranty agencies.

Our review was conducted between October 1991 and May 1992 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Loan Volumes

The 11 guaranty agencies guaranteed nearly \$1.7 billion in PLUS loans and \$3.7 billion in SLS loans that were made during fiscal years 1989 to 1991. As shown in figure 1, most of the PLUS loan volume went to parents of students attending nonproprietary schools—increasing from \$339 million in 1989 to \$550 million in 1991.

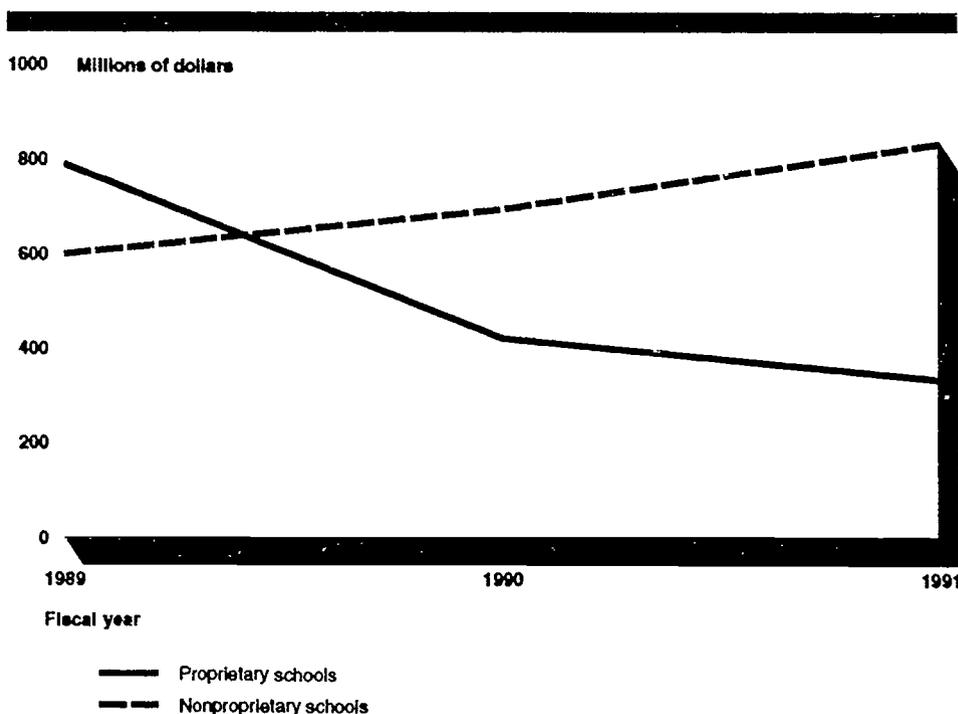
Figure 1: Most PLUS Loan Volume Went to Parents of Nonproprietary School Students (Fiscal Years 1989-91)



Most of the PLUS volume increase—about \$140 million—was among nonfreshmen at nonproprietary schools. PLUS loan volume at proprietary schools, on the other hand, remained relatively constant at about \$126 million and most of these loans were made to parents of freshmen students; that is, students attending their first year of school. (Tables II.1 and II.2 contain further details on PLUS loan volume activity.)

SLS loan volume for proprietary and nonproprietary schools decreased from \$1.4 billion in 1989 to \$1.1 billion in 1990, and then increased by \$50 million in 1991. However, contrasting loan volume trends developed between the two kinds of schools. Figure 2 shows that in 1989 a higher volume of loans was made to students at proprietary schools than at nonproprietary schools—\$787 million and \$597 million, respectively. By the end of fiscal year 1991, the reverse was true. SLS loans to students at proprietary schools decreased to \$330 million, while SLS loans to students at nonproprietary schools increased to \$830 million.

Figure 2: SLS Loan Volume Increased at Nonproprietary Schools and Decreased at Proprietary Schools (Fiscal Years 1989-91)

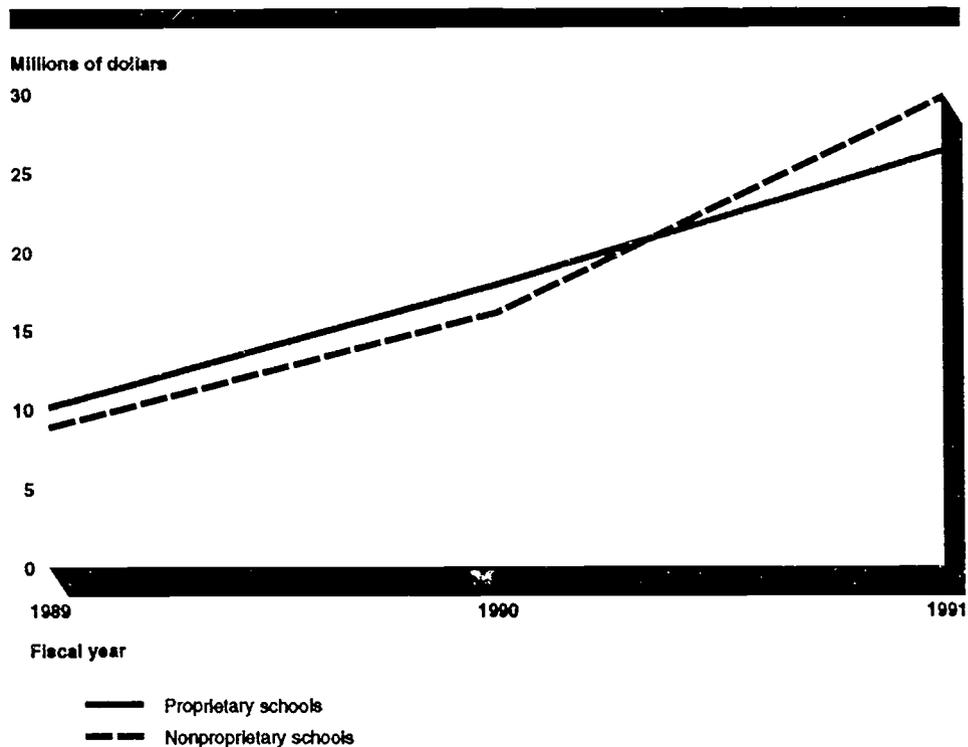


SLS loan volume for freshmen students at proprietary schools declined from \$718 million to \$265 million. In comparison, volume to nonfreshmen students at nonproprietary schools increased from \$486 million to \$713 million. (Tables II.3 and II.4 contain further details on SLS loan volume activity.)

Loan Defaults

New defaults, which increased each year during fiscal years 1989-1991, totalled almost \$109 million for PLUS loans and \$1.4 billion for SLS loans that were guaranteed by the 10 guaranty agencies. As shown in figure 3, PLUS loan default volume increased at both proprietary and nonproprietary schools during this 3-year period—from \$10 million to \$26 million and from \$9 million to \$30 million, respectively.

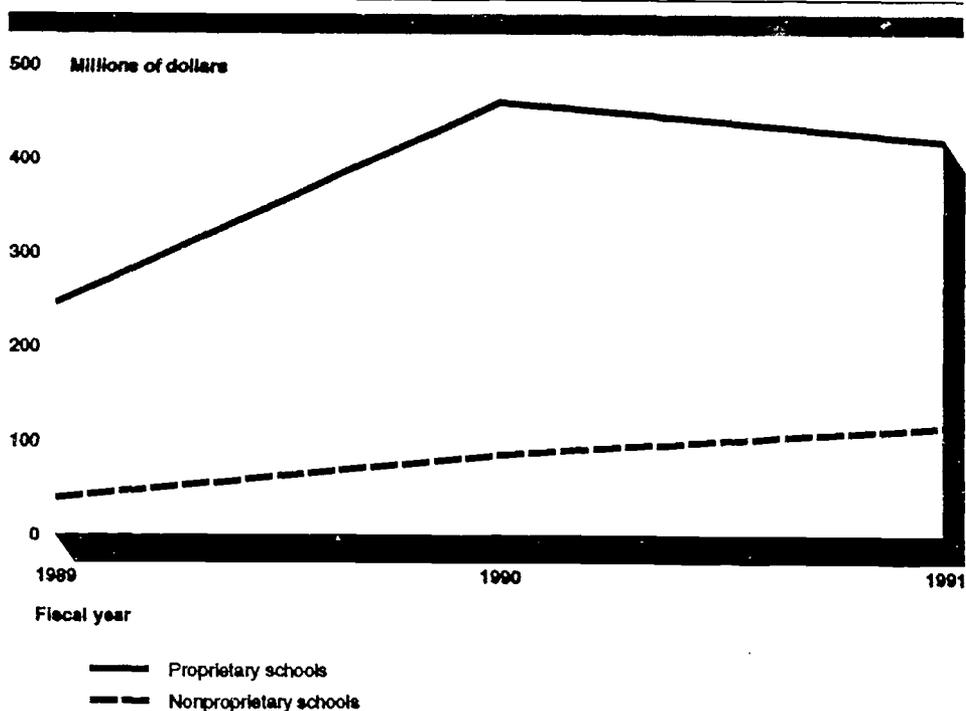
Figure 3: PLUS Loan Defaults Increased at Both Proprietary and Nonproprietary Schools (Fiscal Years 1989-91)



PLUS loan default volume increased the greatest among parents of nonfreshmen students at nonproprietary schools. Defaults on loans made to these borrowers increased from \$4.1 million in 1989 to \$14.7 million in 1991, an increase of 262 percent. (Tables II.5 and II. 6 contain further details on PLUS loan default activity.)

SLS loan default volume also increased at both proprietary and nonproprietary schools during fiscal years 1989 to 1991, although SLS loan defaults had declined in 1991. Figure 4 shows that defaults at proprietary schools went from \$245 million in 1989 to \$460 million in 1990, and then decreased to \$419 million in 1991. SLS defaults at nonproprietary schools increased from \$39 million in 1989 to \$115 million in 1991.

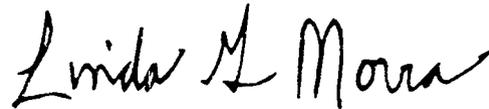
Figure 4: SLS Loan Defaults increased at Both Proprietary and Nonproprietary Schools (Fiscal Years 1989-91)



Proprietary school borrowers accounted for \$1.1 billion (about 83 percent) of \$1.4 billion in total SLS loan default volume over the 3-year period. Freshmen borrowers at these schools were responsible for \$1 billion of these defaults. (Tables II.7 and II.8 contain further details on SLS loan default activity.)

We did not obtain written comments on this fact sheet from the Department of Education or other interested parties. We did, however, discuss its contents with Department program officials, who agreed with its contents.

We are sending copies of this fact sheet to other congressional committees, the Department of Education, and other interested parties. Should you wish to discuss its contents, please call me at (202) 512-7014. Other major contributors to this fact sheet are listed in appendix III. In addition, other selected GAO products concerning student loans and defaults are listed opposite the inside back cover.



Linda G. Morra
Director, Education and
Employment Issues

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Abbreviations

GAO	General Accounting Office
PLUS	Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students
SLS	Supplemental Loans for Students

Guaranty Agencies Providing Loan Volume and Default Data

Agencies Providing Data

- California Student Aid Commission
- Colorado Student Loan Program
- Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation
- Higher Education Assistance Foundation
- Massachusetts Higher Education Assistance Corporation
- Nebraska Student Loan Program, Inc.
- Ohio Student Loan Commission
- Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency
- Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
- United Student Aid Funds, Inc.
- Virginia State Education Assistance Authority¹

¹Provided only loan volume data.

Loan Volume and Default Data

PLUS Loan Volume Activity (Fiscal Years 1989-91)

Table II.1: Proprietary School PLUS Loan Volume, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands

Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$105,473	\$20,935	\$126,408
1990	101,752	23,381	125,133
1991	98,650	28,027	126,677
Total	\$305,875	\$72,343	\$378,218
Change in dollars (1989-91)	-\$6,823	\$7,092	\$269
Change in percent (1989-91)	-6.5%	33.9%	0.2%

Table II.2: Nonproprietary School PLUS Loan Volume, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands

Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$156,367	\$182,583	\$338,950
1990	183,533	238,619	422,152
1991	227,069	322,971	550,040
Total	\$566,969	\$744,173	\$1,311,142
Change in dollars (1989-91)	\$70,702	\$140,388	\$211,090
Change in percent (1989-91)	45.2%	76.9%	62.3%

SLS Loan Volume Activity (Fiscal Years 1989-91)

Table II.3: Proprietary School SLS
Loan Volume, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands			
Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$718,253	\$68,693	\$786,946
1990	361,763	56,366	418,129
1991	265,909	64,492	330,401
Total	\$1,345,925	\$189,551	\$1,535,476
Change in dollars (1989-91)	-\$452,344	-\$4,201	-\$456,545
Change in percent (1989-91)	-63.0%	-6.1%	-58.0%

Table II.4: Nonproprietary School SLS
Loan Volume, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands			
Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$111,000	\$486,234	\$597,234
1990	100,990	589,946	690,936
1991	117,036	712,862	829,898
Total	\$329,026	\$1,789,042	\$2,118,068
Change in dollars (1989-91)	\$6,036	\$226,628	\$232,664
Change in percent (1989-91)	5.4%	46.6%	39.0%

PLUS Loan Default Activity (Fiscal Years 1989-91)

Table II.5: Proprietary School PLUS Loan Defaults, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands

Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$8,975	\$1,123	\$10,098
1990	15,996	1,864	17,860
1991	23,179	3,171	26,350
Total	\$48,150	\$6,158	\$54,308
Change in dollars (1989-91)	\$14,204	2,048	\$16,252
Change in percent (1989-91)	158.3%	182.4%	160.9%

Table II.6: Nonproprietary School PLUS Loan Defaults, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands

Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$4,771	\$4,052	\$8,823
1990	8,795	7,266	16,061
1991	15,082	14,682	29,764
Total	\$28,648	\$26,000	\$54,648
Change in dollars (1989-91)	\$10,311	\$10,630	\$20,941
Change in percent (1989-91)	216.1%	262.3%	237.3%

SLS Loan Default Activity (Fiscal Years 1989-91)

Table II.7: Proprietary School SLS
Loan Defaults, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands			
Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$227,676	\$17,428	\$245,104
1990	431,121	28,692	459,813
1991	384,387	34,162	418,549
Total	\$1,043,184	\$80,282	\$1,123,466
Change in dollars (1989-91)	\$156,711	\$16,734	\$173,445
Change in percent (1989-91)	68.8%	96.0%	70.8%

Table II.8: Nonproprietary School SLS
Loan Defaults, by Kind of Student

Dollars in thousands			
Fiscal year	Kind of student		Totals
	Freshmen	Nonfreshmen	
1989	\$15,236	\$23,714	\$38,950
1990	34,955	49,761	84,716
1991	45,886	68,826	114,712
Total	\$96,077	142,301	\$238,378
Change in dollars (1989-91)	\$30,650	45,112	\$75,762
Change in percent (1989-91)	201.2%	190.2%	194.5%

Major Contributors to This Fact Sheet

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Related GAO Products

Student Loans: Characteristics of Defaulted Borrowers in the Stafford Student Loan Program (GAO/HRD-91-82BR, Apr. 26, 1991).

Student Loan Lenders: Information on the Activities of the First Independent Trust Company (GAO/HRD-90-183FS, Sept. 25, 1990).

Defaulted Student Loans: Analysis of Defaulted Borrowers at Schools Accredited by Seven Agencies (GAO/HRD-90-178FS, Sept. 12, 1990).

Supplemental Student Loans: Legislative Changes Have Sharply Reduced Loan Volume (GAO/HRD-90-149FS, Aug. 3, 1990).

Financial Problems in the Stafford Student Loan Program (GAO/HRD-90-52, July 27, 1990).

Supplemental Student Loans: Who Are the Largest Lenders? (GAO/HRD-90-72FS, Feb. 21, 1990).

GAO's Views on the Stafford Student Loan Program (GAO/HRD-90-13, Feb. 20, 1990).

Supplemental Student Loans: Who Borrows and Who Defaults (GAO/HRD-90-33FS, Oct. 17, 1989).

Guaranteed Student Loans: Comparisons of Single State and Multistate Guaranty Agencies (GAO/HRD-89-92, July 11, 1989).

Guaranteed Student Loans: Analysis of Student Default Rates at 7,800 Postsecondary Schools (GAO/HRD-89-63BR, July 5, 1989).

Defaulted Student Loans: Preliminary Analysis of Student Loan Borrowers and Defaulters (GAO/HRD-88-112BR, June 14, 1988).

GAO's Views on the Default Task Force's Recommendations for Reducing Default Costs in the Guaranteed Student Loan Program (GAO/HRD-88-7, Feb. 2, 1988).

Guaranteed Student Loans: Legislative and Regulatory Changes Needed to Reduce Default Costs (GAO/HRD-87-76, Sept. 30, 1987).

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