

## **Goal 1. Postsecondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education:**

**Increase college access, affordability, quality, and completion by improving postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults.**

**Goal Leader: Ted Mitchell, Under Secretary**

### **Public Benefit**

Increasing college access, affordability, quality, and completion by improving postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults requires attention to three equally important factors to facilitate success: availability of good consumer information and financial aid, strong motivation by students and families, and access to affordable, high-quality learning opportunities.

Prior to entering postsecondary education, prospective students need easily accessible information on the cost of attendance and financial aid; rates for career placement, graduation, and college loan defaults; labor market outcomes and projections of labor market demand; loan repayment and management options; and other subjects crucial to understanding the affordability and value of the postsecondary institutions and programs of study available. Students deserve to know that, whether they enter a college, university, career training program, or adult education program, the credential they earn will be affordable and its value will be recognized as an indication that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills for success in the workplace and in life.

Providing federal student aid in a simple, reliable, and efficient manner is primarily how the Department supports college access, affordability, quality, and completion. In FY 2015, the Department delivered nearly \$128 billion in grants, work-study, and loan assistance to almost 12 million postsecondary students at over 6,100 schools.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Department administered \$2 billion annually in grants to strengthen postsecondary institutions and promote college readiness, and nearly \$1.7 billion more in grant funds for career and technical education (CTE), adult education (including literacy and civics education), and correctional education to help youths and adults secure the skills that equip them for work, civic participation, and lifelong learning.<sup>2</sup>

The Department has taken significant steps to increase college access, affordability, quality, and completion in recent years. Resources developed by the Department, such as the [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#), the [Financial Aid Shopping Sheet](#), the [College Scorecard](#), a consolidated [student aid website](#), and new loan counseling and financial literacy resources, now provide students and families with new and enhanced tools for informed decision-making. In particular, the release in FY 2015 of a vastly expanded College Scorecard—including many important metrics that have not been published before—has set a new standard for consumer information about postsecondary education. Redesigned with direct input from students, families, and their advisers, the College Scorecard provides the clearest, most accessible, and most reliable national data on cost, graduation, debt, and postcollege

---

<sup>1</sup> [Federal Student Aid Annual Report FY 2015](#).

<sup>2</sup> Note that CTE formula funds go to both secondary and postsecondary programs; approximately 40% of the amount listed goes to postsecondary programs.

earnings. Gainful Employment regulations will also ensure that students are informed about key outcomes for occupational-oriented programs before they enroll and that programs not meeting established standards will lose eligibility for access to federal student aid funds. In addition, the Department continues to simplify the FAFSA so it is easier and faster for students to apply for aid, and has improved the process. Beginning with the 2017–18 award year, students can apply earlier and electronically retrieve tax information filed for an earlier year, rather than waiting until tax season to complete their applications. Learning about aid eligibility options much earlier in the college application and decision process will allow students and families to determine the true cost of attending college—taking available financial aid into account—and make more informed decisions. New and expanded repayment plans, including Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE), make debt more affordable for students after they leave school. America’s College Promise, the President’s proposed new federal-state partnership to make two years of community college free for responsible students, would significantly impact affordability by letting students earn the first half of a bachelor’s degree and earn skills needed in the workforce at no cost. This proposal will require everyone to do their part: community colleges must strengthen their programs and increase the number of students who graduate, states must invest more in higher education and training, and students must take responsibility for their education, earn good grades, and stay on track to graduate. The Department will build on these efforts to ensure that all Americans, regardless of their financial circumstances, will have the opportunity to access and complete an affordable postsecondary degree or other postsecondary credential.

### Analysis and Next Steps

**Objective 1.3: Completion.** Increase degree and certificate completion and job placement in high-need and high-skill areas, particularly among underrepresented and/or underprepared populations.

**Objective Leader:**

Jon O’Bergh, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary (OUS)

**Explanation and Analysis of Progress:**

The Department made progress through a variety of activities to support this strategic objective, especially by embedding a focus on completion in more grant competitions. One competition incorporated a competitive preference priority to increase postsecondary access, affordability and completion: Predominantly Black Institutions. The Department awarded grants to Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions that are designed to increase the number and proportion of high-need students who are academically prepared for, enroll in, or complete on time college, other postsecondary education, or other CTE. In the Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant competition, the Department incorporated two competitive preference priorities: one to support tutoring, counseling, and student service programs designed to improve academic success, including innovative and customized instruction courses designed to help retain students and move the students rapidly into core courses and through program completion; and one to develop and implement high-quality online or hybrid credit-bearing learning opportunities that reduce the cost of higher education, reduce time to degree completion, or allow students to progress at their own pace. First in the World grants, discussed in strategic objective 1.2, also support practices that improve college completion. The IES announced a competition to establish a Research Network on Scalable Practices to Support College Completion, and expects to award a grant during the first quarter of FY 2016.

The Department launched a new National Activities Project to study CTE stackable certificates. During the project's first year, the Department will gather information and convene knowledgeable stakeholders. During the second year, the Department will provide technical assistance to the field. A new CTE innovation program proposed in the FY 2016 budget, the American Technical Training Fund, would support the development and implementation of new models and practices at the local level.

The College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus program, also proposed in the FY 2016 budget, would provide \$7 billion in mandatory budget authority over 10 years to support colleges that successfully enroll and graduate a significant number of low- and moderate-income students on time and encourage all institutions to improve their performance.

Many students that enter higher education are not college ready. Improving the community college developmental education system is an important element of improving community college completion. In 2015, the Department launched "Supporting Student Success: Adult Education and Remedial Education Reform in Community Colleges," a national activity to improve developmental education practices across several states.

The Department cohosted with the White House a College Opportunity Summit on December 4, 2015, focused on completion and affordability, as well as on partnerships between P-12 and higher education to promote educational quality and seamless transitions from high school to college. Almost 300 commitments were announced at the summit to improve college opportunities for young people in communities across the country through college readiness partnerships, college advising, improving STEM learning and degree completion for underrepresented students, and helping more students complete their degrees.

In an effort to scale up successful practices that lead to completion, especially in the area of remedial education, the Department developed communities of practice among minority-serving community colleges. Lead institutions were identified, recruited, and trained. Two communities of practice have been launched as of October 2015. Subsequently, on November 16–17, 2015, approximately 130 minority-serving community colleges met at the Department and exchanged promising practices; received technical assistance from the Department and 13 federal agencies; and heard from leading authorities in the fields of minority-serving institution research, philanthropy, and student success strategies. Several colleges stepped forward to join the other lead colleges in growing the communities of practice that will continue the capacity-building dialogue with the federal agencies.

The Department achieved its performance target for metric 1.3.A with an educational attainment rate of 45.7 percent. The Department also achieved its performance targets for metric 1.3.B with a retention rate of 72.9 percent for full-time students and metric 1.3.C with a retention rate of 43.1 percent for part-time students. Given the Department's limited ability to impact retention rates overall, the Department proposes alternative metrics to replace 1.3.B and 1.3.C for FY 2016.

### **Challenges and Next Steps:**

The Department's ability to significantly impact completion rates on a large scale nationwide depends on Congressional support for programs proposed through the budget process. There is also a time lag in that actions and changes initiated in any particular year will take several years to show results as the cohort progresses through its educational programs. The Department will continue to incorporate postsecondary completion as a competitive preference priority in grant competitions where appropriate.

While the Department achieved its FY 2015 performance target for educational attainment, the targets in future years are set to grow at increasingly accelerated rates in order to reach the President’s 2020 goal of 60 percent degree attainment. However, while increases in high school graduation rates (one of the factors that feed into the attainment rate) are growing, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that fewer high school graduates are opting for college than they were in 2009—65.9 percent in 2013 and 68.4 percent in 2014, compared to a high point of 70.1 percent in 2009.<sup>3</sup> Total fall enrollment has declined as well, falling by an estimated 3.6 percent in 2014 from an enrollment surge in 2010.<sup>4</sup> These data may be attributable to the natural cycle of higher enrollment rates during economic downturns followed by comparatively lower rates as the economy improves, but these trends may impact the ability to achieve the targeted growth in the attainment rate unless institutions significantly increase the percentage of students who complete their programs of study. Despite efforts to support college completion for underrepresented students, equity gaps in the attainment rate based on race, ethnicity, and disability status have not lessened.

***Subpopulation Breakout for Metric 1.3.A: Degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort, by race/ethnicity and disability status\****

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian	Two or More Races	Disability
<b>Percentage, 2012</b>	51.6%	32.6%	22.6%	68.7%	37.2%**	29.3%**	45.7%	20.9%
<b>Percentage, 2013</b>	52.4%	33.2%	22.7%	70.9%	41.4%**	25.1%**	46.7%	19.1%
<b>Percentage, 2014</b>	53.6%	33.0%	24.0%	71.5%	30.6%**	21.4%**	44.4%	21.0%

Note: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

\* Disability is defined as: deaf; blind; difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; difficulty doing errands alone.

\*\* Interpret with caution; small sample sizes reduce the reliability of these estimates.

Data Source and Frequency of Collection: NCES tabulations of data from the Current Population Survey, Census; annually

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, College Enrollment and Work Activity of High School Graduates News Release, April 22, 2014, and April 16, 2015: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgqec.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Educational Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 2014, “Table 303.10. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control of institution: Selected years, 1947 through 2024”: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_303.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_303.10.asp).

Goal 1 – Strategic Objective 1.3

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	2013 Actuals	2014 Actuals	2015 Actuals	2015 Current Year Targets	Current Year Results	2016 Out-Year Targets	2017 Out-Year Targets
<b>1.3.A.</b> Degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort <sup>5</sup>	Current Population Survey (CPS) Year: 2012 44.0%	CPS Year: 2012 44.0%	CPS Year: 2013 44.8%	CPS Year: 2014 45.7%	45.6%	<b>MET</b>	46.8%	48.4%
<b>1.3.B.</b> Retention rate of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates: Full-time <sup>6</sup>	AY: 2011 71.9%	AY: 2011 71.9%	AY: 2012 71.8%	AY: 2013 72.9%	72.1%	<b>MET</b>	NA	NA
<b>New Metric:</b> Enrollment in IHEs where students' median earnings 10 years after entering college are below a minimum earnings threshold <sup>7</sup>	AY: 2012–13 9.7%	NA	NA	AY: 2012–13 9.7%	NA	NA	9.4%	9.0%
<b>1.3.C.</b> Retention rate of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates: Part-time <sup>8</sup>	AY: 2011 41.7%	AY: 2011 41.7%	AY: 2012 42.2%	AY: 2013 43.1%	42.6%	<b>MET</b>	NA	NA
<b>New Metric:</b> FAFSA renewal rate	FY: 2015 79%	NA	NA	FY: 2015 79%	NA	NA	+/- one percentage point over prior year's actual	+/- one percentage point over prior year's actual

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

**1.3.A.** NCES Digest of Education Statistics, Table 104.30 ([http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_104.30.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_104.30.asp)), Number of persons age 18 and over, by highest level of educational attainment, sex, race/ethnicity, and age: 2013. Tabulated from Current Population Survey (CPS) data, U.S. Census; annually

**1.3.B.** IPEDS Data Center; annually

**1.3.C.** IPEDS Data Center; annually

<sup>5</sup> Metric is aligned with an APG.

<sup>6</sup> Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 72.1% and 72.3%, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> “Minimum earnings threshold” is defined as the median earnings above the level of an institution at the 25th percentile for students 10 years after entering college, which equals \$19,000 for less-than-2-year institutions, \$26,000 for 2-year institutions, and \$35,000 for 4-year institutions.

<sup>8</sup> Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 42.9% and 43.5%, respectively.