

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: Under Secretary

Objective 1.1: Access and Affordability. Close the opportunity gap by improving the affordability of and access to college and/or workforce training, especially for underrepresented and/or underprepared populations (e.g., low-income and first-generation students, English learners, individuals with disabilities, adults without high school diplomas, etc.).

Objective 1.2: Quality. Foster institutional value to ensure that postsecondary education credentials represent effective preparation for students to succeed in the workforce and participate in civic life.

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 1.4: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Pathways. Increase STEM pathway opportunities that enable access to and completion of postsecondary programs.

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.

In FY 2016, the Department delivered nearly \$126 billion in grants, work-study, and loan assistance to more than 13 million postsecondary students at over 6,600 schools.⁴ In addition, the Department administered \$2 billion annually in grants to strengthen postsecondary institutions and promote college readiness, and nearly \$1.7 billion in grant funds for career and technical education (CTE) programs⁵ and adult education programs aimed at helping youth and adults attain the academic and technical skills and knowledge necessary to transition to postsecondary education, training, and employment.

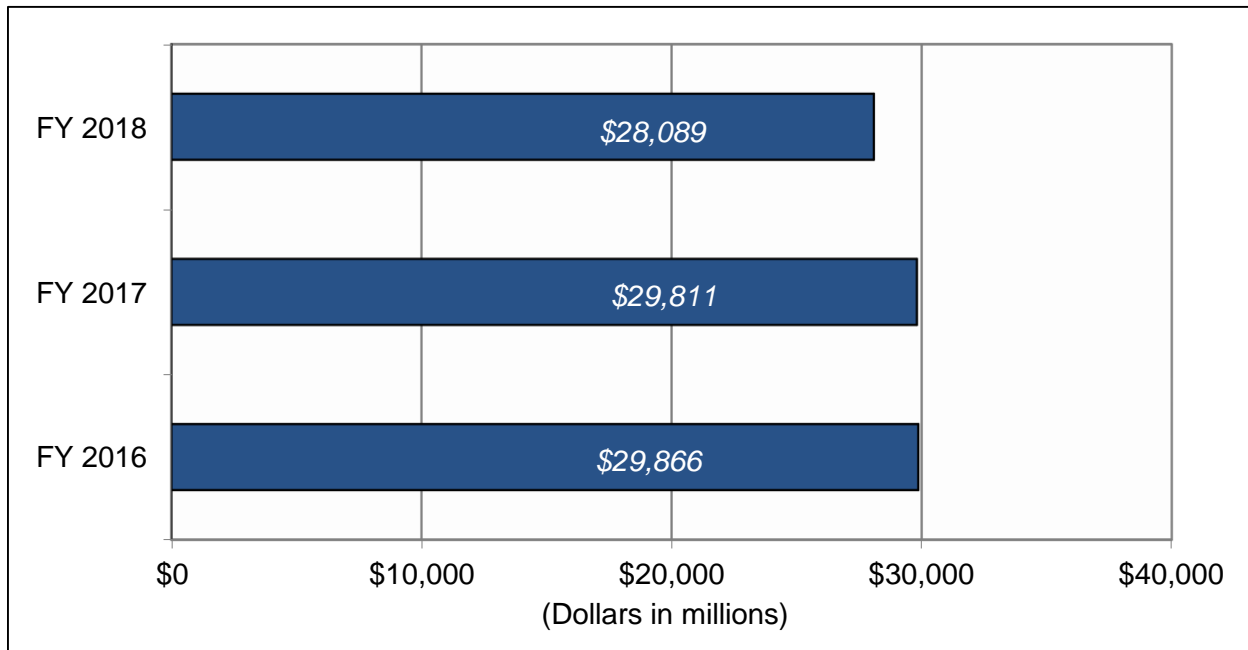
The Department developed resources, including the [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#), the [Financial Aid Shopping Sheet](#), and other loan counseling and financial literacy resources, to provide students and families with enhanced tools for informed decision-making. Additionally, the [Federal Student Aid Feedback System](#) provides a way for students, parents, borrowers, and others to file complaints about their experiences with federal aid programs and

⁴ Federal Student Aid Annual Report FY 2016.

⁵ Of the roughly \$1.1 billion in Perkins formula funds that are distributed by states to local recipients, approximately 40 percent are allocated for postsecondary CTE programs.

institutions. The Department will use the feedback to improve the experience for current and future borrowers.

Goal 1 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities⁶ Supporting Goal 1 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 Annualized CR ⁷	FY 2018 President's Budget
FSA	DM/SAA		Student Aid Administration: Salaries and expenses	697	694	681
FSA	DM/SAA		Student Aid Administration: Servicing Activities	855	855	1,017
FSA	SFA	1.1	Federal Pell grants: Discretionary	22,475	22,433	22,433
OCTAE	CTAE	1.1, 1.2, 1.3	Adult basic and literacy education state grants	582	581	486
OCTAE	CTAE	NA	Career and technical education state grants	1,116	1,115	949
OPE	HE	1.1, 1.3	Federal TRIO programs	900	898	808
Subtotal				26,625	26,576	26,374
Other Discretionary Programs/Activities				3,241	3,234	1,715
TOTAL, GOAL 1				29,866	29,811	28,089

POC = Principal Operating Component.

CR = Continuing Resolution.


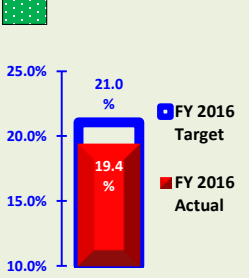
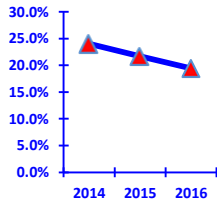

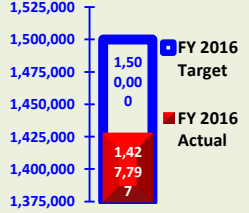
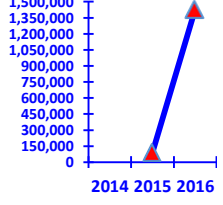
NA = Not applicable.

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

⁶ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive/formula programs.

⁷ A full-year 2017 appropriation was not enacted at the time the FY 2018 Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget is built off of the *Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2017* (P.L. 114–254). The amounts included for 2017 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

Goal 1: Details


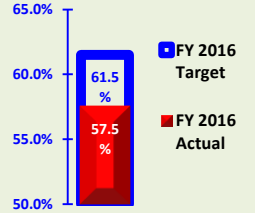
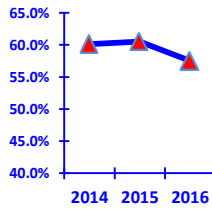
U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.1.A. Federal student loan delinquency rate DECREASE 	FY: End of FY 2014–15 21.7%	FY: 2013–14 24.0%	FY: 2014–15 21.7%	FY: 2015–16 19.4%	FY: 2015–16 21.0%	MET			18.8%	>= 3 % points below previous year's actual	
1.1.B. Web traffic to the College Scorecard¹⁰ INCREASE 	09/12/2014–9/11/2015 ¹¹ 91,011 (Excluding new Scorecard launch on Sept. 12, 2015)	NA	FY: 2015 91,011	FY: 2016 1,427,797	FY: 2016 1,500,000	NOT MET			1,800,000	TBD	

⁸ Missed target by <=1, or if percentage, <=1.3 percentage points.

⁹ Surpassed target; not just met the target. If a diminishing target, the actual was below the reduction target set.

¹⁰ Performance metric is transitioning to Strategic Goal 5 in FY 2017.


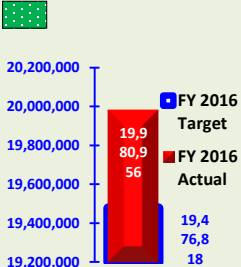
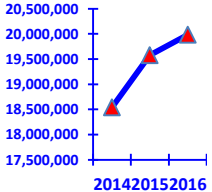
¹¹ In the 2015 APR, the baseline was noted as being a fiscal year. However, the baseline was measured using 09/12/2014–09/11/2015 data. The period did not align with the fiscal year in order to exclude anomalous data from the release of the new College Scorecard on September 12, 2015.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.1.C. Percentage of first-time FAFSA filers among high school seniors¹² INCREASE 	SY: 2012–13 59.2%	SY: 2013–14 60.1%	SY: 2014–15 60.5%	SY: 2015–16 57.5%	SY: 2015–16 59.5%–61.5%	NOT MET			NA	NA	
New Metric: Number of first-time FAFSA filers among high school seniors	Application Cycle Applicants 5-Year Average 2012/13–2016/17 2,016,304	AY: 2014–15 (FY: 2014) 2,021,691	AY: 2015–16 (FY: 2015) 2,009,155	AY: 2016–17 (FY: 2016) 2,015,138	NA	NA	NA		2,016,304	2,021,345	NA


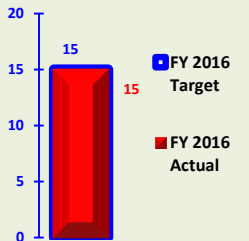
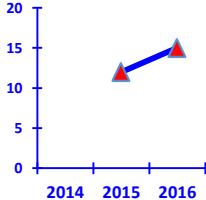

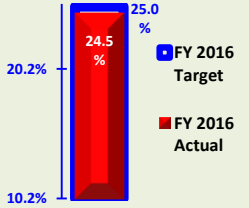
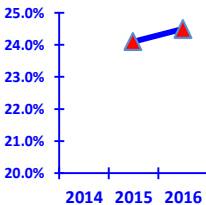
¹² Revising metric language (in the 2014 and 2015 APR read as: “Percentage of high school seniors filing a FAFSA”) to align with how the metric is captured in the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Strategic Plan. All of the underlying assumptions and calculation methodologies were confirmed by FSA to be the same. Retiring metric at conclusion of FY 2016. Please see appendix B for additional information pertaining to the metric’s retirement. The FY 2017 target was 56.5%–58.5%, and FY 2018 was +/- one percentage point over prior year’s actual.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.1.D. Index of national aggregate annual earnings of VR consumers (based on the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes, hours worked, and hourly wages of VR consumers)	FY: 2010 \$57,971,317	FY: 2014 \$61,800,214	FY: 2015 \$64,688,320 ¹³	FY: 2016 \$66,791,933	FY: 2016 \$65,608,896	MET	<p>67,000,000 66,500,000 66,000,000 65,500,000 65,000,000</p> <p>66,791,933 Target 65,608,896 Actual</p> <p>FY 2016 Target FY 2016 Actual</p>		\$66,921,074	\$68,259,495	<p>68,000,000 66,000,000 64,000,000 62,000,000 60,000,000 58,000,000</p> <p>2014 2015 2016</p>
INCREASE 											

¹³ Metric was TBD in the 2015 APR due to data not being available until FY 2016. The metric was **MET**.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
<p>1.1.E. Index of national aggregate annual earnings of Transition-Age Youth (based on the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes, hours worked, and hourly wages of VR Transition-Age Youth)</p> <p>INCREASE</p> 	FY: 2010 \$15,971,665	FY: 2014 \$18,540,576	FY: 2015 \$19,579,074 ¹⁴	FY: 2016 \$19,980,956	FY: 2016 \$19,476,818	MET			\$19,866,354	\$20,263,681	



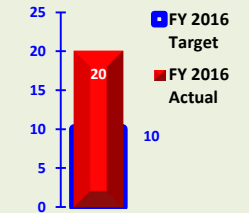
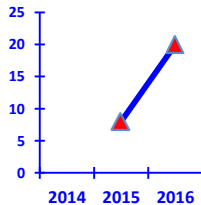


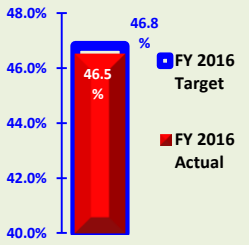
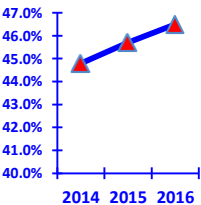
¹⁴ Metric was TBD in the 2015 APR due to data not being available until FY 2016. The metric was **MET**.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.1.F. Number of data points or other information reports released on the FSA Data Center ¹⁵ INCREASE 	FY: 2009–14 Aggregate 12	NA	FY: 2014–15 12	FY: 2015–16 15	FY: 2015–16 15	MET			15 ¹⁶	TBD	
1.2.A. Pell enrollment at IHEs with high graduation rates ¹⁷ INCREASE 	AY: 2013–14 24.1%	NA	AY: 2013–14 24.1%	AY 2014–15 24.5%	AY 2014–15 25.0%	NOT MET			AY 2015–16 26.0%	AY: 2016–17 27.0%	


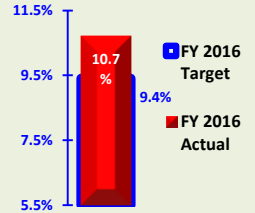
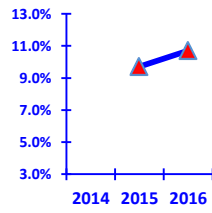
¹⁵ Metric is aligned with an Agency Priority Goal.

¹⁶ Initial FY 2017 target of 30 provided in the 2015 APR was inclusive of FY 2016's total of 15, thus making the total a cumulative 30. However, the actual FY 2017 target is 15 new releases.

¹⁷ "High graduation rate" is defined as 65 percent or higher, which is roughly the 75th percentile.


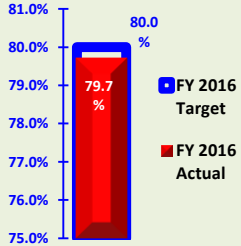
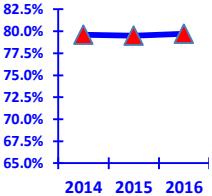

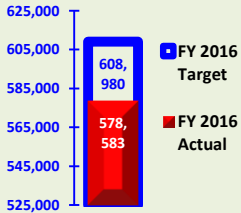
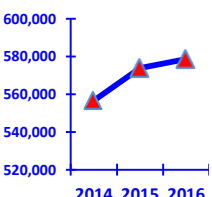
U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.2.B. Number of states that develop or strengthen career pathways policies, guidance, or legislation INCREASE 	FY: 2015 8	NA	FY: 2015 8	FY: 2016 20	FY: 2016 10	MET	 		37	50	
1.3.A. Degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort¹⁸ INCREASE 	Current Population Survey (CPS) Year: 2012 44.0%	CPS Year: 2013 44.8%	CPS Year: 2014 45.7%	CPS Year: 2015 46.5%	CPS Year: 2015 46.8%	NOT MET	 		48.4%	50.5%	

¹⁸ Metric is aligned with an Agency Priority Goal.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.3.B. Enrollment in IHEs below the minimum earnings threshold^{19,20} DECREASE 	AY: 2012–13 9.7%	NA	AY: 2012–13 9.7%	AY: 2013–14 10.7%	AY: 2013–14 9.4%	NOT MET			NA	NA	

¹⁹ In the 2015 APR, the initial metric was identified as “Enrollment in IHEs where students’ median earnings 10 years after entering college are below a minimum earnings threshold.” The metric’s verbiage was condensed to “Enrollment in IHEs below the minimum earnings threshold.” Retiring metric at conclusion of FY 2016. Please see appendix B for additional information pertaining to the metric’s retirement. The FY 2017 target was 9.0 percent.

²⁰ “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-two-year institutions, \$26,000 for two-year institutions, and \$35,000 for four-year institutions.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2016		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
Indicator Measurement Direction		2014	2015	2016	2016	2016	Missed ⁸	Exceeded ⁹	2017	2018	
1.3.C. Persistence among first-time filing aid recipients²¹ INCREASE 	FY: 2015 79.5% ²²	FY: 2014 79.6%	FY: 2015 79.5%	FY: 2016 79.7%	FY: 2016 78.5%-80.5%	MET			78.7%–80.7%	+/- one % point over prior year's actual	
1.4.A. Number of STEM postsecondary credentials awarded INCREASE 	AY: 2010–11 531,018	AY: 2011–12 556,696	AY: 2012–13 573,911	AY: 2013–14 578,583	AY: 2013–14 608,980	NOT MET			637,672 ²³	TBD	

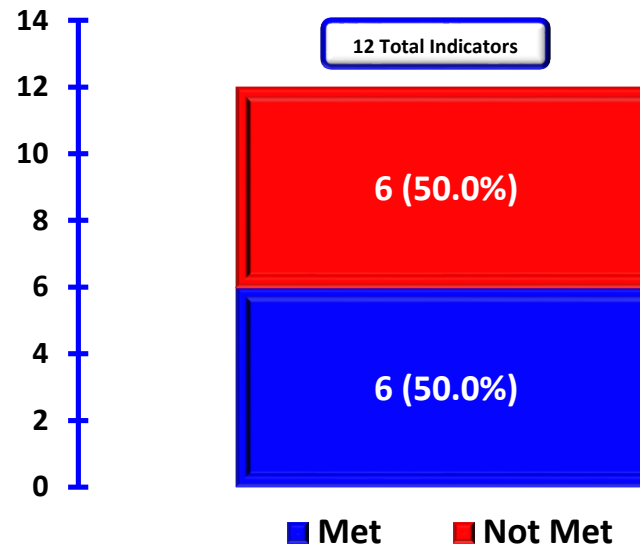
²¹ Revising metric language (in 2015 APR read as: “FAFSA Renewal Rate”) to align with how the metric is captured in the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Strategic Plan. All of the underlying assumptions and calculation methodologies were confirmed by FSA to be the same.

²² Modifying the baseline data to account for the actual being 79.5% (79.47%); however, the decimals were dropped by FSA when the metric was initially reported.

https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/FY_2015_FSA_Annual_Report_official.pdf

²³ FY 2016 target reduced from 691,000 to 637,672 due to a calculation error in how the targets were initially calculated.

Goal 1 FY 2016 Indicator Performance Summary



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:

- 1.1.A. Federal Student Aid (FSA) Data Center; annually
- 1.1.B. Google Analytics data from College Scorecard; annually
- 1.1.C. The denominator is the number of graduating seniors according to the most recent projection by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (Table 219.10 within the Digest of Education Statistics). The numerator is from FSA's Central Processing System and is based on the number of applications during the first nine months of the application cycle that are—as of September 30 of the first year of the application cycle—complete (not rejected); first-time filers; incoming freshmen, with or without previous college attendance; age 18 or less as of June 30 of the first year of the application cycle; reporting high school diploma attainment; and attended a high school in the 50 states and Washington, DC; annually
- 1.1.D. Rehabilitation Services Administration-911 (RSA-911); annually
- 1.1.E. RSA-911; annually
- 1.1.F. FSA Data Center; annually
- 1.2.A. Data from College Scorecard; annually
- 1.2.B. Development data from the National Skills Coalition, possibly supplemental with data from the Association of State Legislators and Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP); annually
- 1.3.A. NCES Digest of Education Statistics, Table 104.30 (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_104.30.asp), Number of persons age 18 and over, by highest level of educational attainment, sex, race/ethnicity, and age: 2015. Tabulated from Current Population Survey data, U.S. Census; annually
- 1.3.B. Data from College Scorecard; annually

- 1.3.C. FSA's Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) system; annually
- 1.4.A. IPEDS; annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 1.1: Access and Affordability. *Close the opportunity gap by improving the affordability of and access to college and/or workforce training, especially for underrepresented and/or underprepared populations (e.g., low-income and first-generation students, English learners, individuals with disabilities, adults without high school diplomas, etc.).*

FY 2016 Implementation Strategy

Although the Department has limited ability to directly impact college costs or control price, the Department made progress toward strategic objective 1.1.

The Department's implementation strategy in FY 2016 continued to focus on providing consumer tools and better information about postsecondary institutions to help students make more informed decisions; modifying and simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); expanding access to income-driven repayment plans; and improving customer service related to student aid.

FY 2016 Barriers to Success

Although many states are beginning to increase appropriations per full-time equivalent student, state-level funding for higher education overall remained low compared to levels before the recent recession. The Department had little influence over state funding decisions and was limited in its ability to impact affordability. Nonetheless, the Department will continue to explore ways to help ensure that borrowers are able to manage student loan debt.

Key Milestones and Future Actions

In 2016, the Department implemented two major changes to the FAFSA. The first change was to make the FAFSA available to students and families three months earlier than usual. In the past, the FAFSA was available January 1 for the upcoming financial aid award year (July 1 through June 30). Beginning with the 2017–18 financial aid application cycle, the FAFSA became available October 1 of the year prior to the upcoming award year (2017–18 FAFSA filing began October 1, 2016). By having the FAFSA available earlier, the financial aid process generally will coincide with the college admissions application and decision cycle, allowing schools and states to provide financial aid information sooner to students and families. The second change involved the year for which tax information is collected on the FAFSA. Prior to FY 2016, when completing a FAFSA, applicants provided income information from the prior tax year (i.e., 2015 income information for the 2016–17 FAFSA). Beginning with the 2017–18 FAFSA, income information from one tax year earlier—the so-called “prior-prior year”—will be collected. As a result of this change, students will be able to complete their FAFSA using information from an already-completed tax return.

The Department continues to enhance the online [FAFSA® Completion Tool](#), which helps financial aid professionals, school administrators, and guidance counselors track and increase FAFSA completion. The tool also provides FAFSA completion rates for school districts, allowing communities to tailor communications, support, and counseling to students while helping schools monitor their progress.

Federal Student Aid (FSA) published [reports](#) about applications for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program, enrollment in income-driven repayment plans, and data on cohort

default rates. As of September 2016, nearly 5.8 million Direct Loan borrowers were enrolled in income-driven repayment plans—such as income-based repayment, Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE)—a 38 percent increase from September 2015 and a 110 percent increase from June 2014. [Cohort default rates](#) continued to decline from 14 percent in 2010 to 11 percent in 2013.

Beginning in January 2016, the Department required all Direct Loan servicers to provide enhanced disclosures to borrowers and strengthened consumer protections. The recompetition of loan servicer contracts commenced in March 2016, with the goal of ensuring that servicers help borrowers responsibly make affordable monthly payments on their student loans. The final selection of a service is scheduled to be made and a contract should be awarded in FY 2017.

Students, parents, and others can now provide feedback about their Title IV federal student aid experience via a streamlined, centralized portal, the [Federal Student Aid Feedback System](#). Launched July 1, 2016, the system enhances customers' ability to provide feedback and receive a timely and meaningful resolution. Customers can submit feedback about applying for and receiving federal loans, grants, and work study, as well as feedback about their experiences with federal loan servicers, collection agencies, and the Department itself. Complaints submitted through the feedback system are tracked from intake to resolution and will inform the continual improvement of the Department's customers' experience, regardless of where they are in the student aid process. Through the system, the Department has the ability to monitor the resolution process, intervene as needed, and compile data about complaints in order to improve the applicant and borrower experience. In FY 2017, the Department will publish the first annual report about feedback system data.

The Department announced institutional participants in four experiments under the [Experimental Sites Initiative](#) conducted under FSA's experimental sites authority. The Department announced participating institutions in the Dual Enrollment experiment in May, participating institutions for Second Chance Pell in June, participating institutions in Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships in August, and participating institutions in the Loan Counseling experiment in December 2016.

Objective 1.2: Quality. *Foster institutional value to ensure that postsecondary education credentials represent effective preparation for students to succeed in the workforce and participate in civic life.*

FY 2016 Implementation Strategy

The Department's implementation strategy to address postsecondary quality included: using regulatory authority to strengthen program integrity; taking steps to strengthen accreditation oversight; fostering innovation by providing flexibility where appropriate, and testing ideas through experimental sites projects; encouraging the postsecondary community to focus on student learning that is validated through the assessment of actual learning outcomes; addressing teacher preparation initiatives to improve teacher quality; and promoting information about successful evidence-based programs and strategies.

FY 2016 Barriers to Success

The Department had limited authority and funding to promote innovative, evidence-based strategies and practices for college access and completion.

Key Milestones and Future Actions

To improve accreditation transparency and promote outcome-driven accountability, the Department publishes a chart with each accrediting agency's stated student achievement measures and key student and institutional metrics arranged by accreditor. The Department also requires accreditors to submit decision letters when they place institutions on probation, and the Department publicly posts releasable portions of such letters. The redesigned [accreditation webpage](#) better informs the public regarding the Secretary's recognition process and provides a one-stop information repository for accreditation-related information. Accreditation staff at the Department now have regular access to critical outcomes data, state and federal litigation reports, and other information about each accreditor's schools prior to conducting accrediting agency reviews. This information is also provided to the [National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity](#).

This year, the Department issued two letters to accreditors. The first, released in March 2016, is a "Terminology Letter," which clarifies terminology and requirements for reporting to the Department. The second was an April 2016 "Flexibility Letter," which clarifies and encourages accreditors to use flexibility to focus monitoring and resources on student achievement and problematic institutions or programs.

The Department published several significant regulations. In October 2015, the Department published [final regulations on debit cards](#) to protect students from unscrupulous actions by financial institutions concerning student access to financial aid funds. Additionally, in August 2016, the Department, in collaboration with the Department of Labor (DOL), published final regulations to implement the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA). WIOA reforms the public workforce development system through enhanced coordination and collaboration across education and training programs, including employment and training programs administered by DOL, and adult education programs and vocational rehabilitation programs for individuals with disabilities administered by the Department. The final regulations assist states in implementation efforts, including fostering more cohesive planning within economic regions, enhancing performance accountability for education and employment outcomes, strengthening employer engagement, and improving access to education and workforce services for individuals with significant barriers to employment, among other efforts. The final regulations included program-specific rules related to adult education programs and vocational rehabilitation programs, as well as joint [WIOA regulations](#) related to unified and combined state plans, performance accountability, and the one-stop system.

The Department published final regulations on Borrower Defense to Repayment in October 2016 (effective July 1, 2017, with several provisions slated for early implementation) and State Authorization of Distance Education programs in December 2016, with implementation taking effect in July 2018. The Department published the Gainful Employment debt-to-earnings rates in January 2017 and will implement the rest of the requirements of the regulation by July 2017.

In October 2015, the Department announced an initiative through FSA's experimental sites authority to address alternative methods for quality assurance—dubbed Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships, or [EQUIP](#). The Department evaluated applications and in August 2016, invited eight institutions to continue to Phase 3 of the selection process. In Phase 3, these institutions will begin to set up their proposed programs and apply to the Department for final approval, which is expected during FY 2017.

The Department conducted a number of grant competitions that incorporated evidence-based activities, including TRIO Talent Search, TRIO Educational Opportunity Centers, and several

programs for minority-serving institutions. In October 2015, the Department (the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education ([OCTAE]) awarded nine pilots under the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3) program. The notice inviting applications (NIA) for [round two](#) (FY 2015) was published in April 2016, and for [round three](#) (FY 2016) in August 2016. The agencies selected one pilot finalist for round two and six pilot finalists for round three. P3 tests the hypothesis that additional flexibility for states, localities, and tribes can help overcome some of the significant hurdles in providing intensive, comprehensive, and sustained service pathways and improving outcomes for disconnected youth.

Objective 1.3: Completion. Increase degree and certificate completion and job placement in high-need and high-skill areas, particularly among underrepresented and economically disadvantaged populations.

FY 2016 Implementation Strategy

While the federal government has no direct impact on the educational attainment rate, the Department established annual targets since increasing the percentage of adults who have completed a college degree is a key Department objective. For the first time, the rate this year fell just short of the target by 0.3 percentage points. Future targets, set at progressively larger increases, may be difficult to achieve.

With few tools to impact completion on a large scale, the Department's implementation strategy focused on the ability to convene partners, disseminate noteworthy practices through reports, conduct research, and conduct prize challenges that support pathways in CTE.

FY 2016 Barriers to Success

The Department's ability to significantly impact completion rates nationwide depends on Congressional support for programs. Another factor affecting the Department's ability to impact completion rates was the time lag between actions and changes initiated in the current year and results that will take several years to manifest as the current cohort moves through its multiyear educational program.

Key Milestones and Future Actions

In support of CTE, the Department announced winners of the [CTE Makeover Challenge](#) and the grand prize winner of the [Reach Higher Career App Challenge](#). The Department also developed and published on November 2, 2016, an [EdSim Challenge](#) notice with the intent to announce winners in summer 2017. The challenge calls upon the gaming, developer, and educational technology communities to design simulated environments that prepare America's students for a more competitive world through high-quality CTE. In September 2016, the Department awarded a \$2 million [Pay for Success](#) (PFS) grant for providing technical assistance on the first two phases of a PFS project: a feasibility analysis in four local CTE sites, and transaction structuring for those local sites where a PFS project is deemed feasible.

The Department participates in the Interagency Working Group on Supports for Postsecondary Success, which meets regularly to plan joint activities in support of access and completion for low-income students.

Objective 1.4: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Pathways. Increase STEM pathway opportunities that enable access to and completion of postsecondary programs.

FY 2016 Implementation Strategy

The number of STEM postsecondary credentials awarded is shaped by actions taken by postsecondary institutions, by state and local agencies through funding decisions, and by market forces and job creation trends. Many external factors impact this objective, but the Department's STEM Team, within the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), employs the following strategies to support this objective:

- strengthening the Department's existing STEM programs;
- enhancing interagency collaboration focused on STEM by fostering stronger linkages across agencies that have STEM education programming and collaborating with other agencies;
- using convenings, events, speeches, and other mechanisms to highlight models, interventions, and data, and share leading practices and policies for formal and informal STEM learning at the federal, state, and local levels;
- partnering with nongovernment strategic partners to support STEM; and
- identifying and helping to cultivate, disseminate, and encourage adoption of innovative, promising, and evidence-based practices to influence and shape the future of STEM education.

FY 2016 Barriers to Success

The STEM Team identifies programs within the Department and across the federal government that are well suited for enhancing and increasing STEM participation through strategic use of STEM priorities. For programs that have already implemented STEM strategies, the STEM Team lends its expertise for program review and evaluation. The investments at the Department that address STEM degree and credential completion in particular were limited to select programs that target minority-serving institutions. The Department will continue to promote STEM pathway opportunities within the Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) structure that includes community colleges, as well as engage with specific STEM-focused initiatives led by corporate and philanthropic entities that help elevate the quality of STEM programs and advance STEM participation, such as STEM [Learning Ecosystems](#).

Trends for females and minority students point to continued challenges in broadening participation in STEM. For example, in January, the National Science Foundation (NSF) National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) released the 2017 *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering* report, the federal government's most comprehensive look at the participation of these three demographic groups in science and engineering education and employment. The report found that while women have reached parity with men in educational attainment, they have not done so in employment in science and engineering. Furthermore, underrepresented minorities (black, Hispanic, and American Indian or Alaska Native) account for disproportionately smaller percentages in both science and engineering education and employment.

Key Milestones and Future Actions

CoSTEM has established a task force which is working to enhance the undergraduate experience of STEM majors through a formally chartered interagency working group led by NSF. The group is focused on four major objectives:

- evidence-based practices to improve undergraduate learning and retention in STEM;
- community college efforts to both support two-year students and create bridges between two- and four-year postsecondary institutions;
- research experiences that involve both university-industry and university-federal entity partnerships, particularly for students in the first two years; and
- promoting mathematics success to help combat excessively high failure rates in introductory math courses at the undergraduate level.

Representatives from the Department have been instrumental in bringing new focus to the role of community colleges and articulation programs in supporting undergraduate STEM education.

Other areas of the Department are bolstering support for STEM, as well. STEM education is an integral component of CTE. OCTAE is leading initiatives seeking to increase knowledge of and access to postsecondary STEM opportunities. For example, the EdSim challenge is seeking next generation Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality to improve teaching in areas including STEM. As additional examples, the CTE makeover challenge will incorporate “making” and “maker spaces” into CTE programs by upgrading or modernizing facilities that meet the needs of manufacturing in the 21st century. The Reach Higher App challenge will spur innovation in career exploration by empowering students with individualized career and education information. And the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (WHI-HBCU) convened events and panels in FY 2016 to share best practices across HBCUs for supporting and retaining students in STEM fields.