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LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS

Department of Education Could Improve Its Monitoring and Assistance





Highlights of [GAO-04-961](#), a report to the Secretary of Education

LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS

Department of Education Could Improve Its Monitoring and Assistance

Why GAO Did This Study

Congress has expanded the number of low-income and minority serving institutions eligible for grants under Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act and nearly doubled funding for these grants in the last 5 years to about \$432 million in fiscal year 2004. Institutions eligible for funding under Titles III and V include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Alaska Native Serving Institutions, Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions, and other postsecondary institutions that serve low-income students. Given the recent expansion, we examined these programs to determine (1) how institutions used their Title III and Title V grants and the benefits they received from using these grant funds, (2) what objectives and strategies the Department of Education (Education) has developed for Title III and Title V programs, and (3) to what extent Education monitors and provides assistance to Title III and Title V institutions.

What GAO Recommends

We recommend that Education take steps to ensure that monitoring and technical assistance plans are carried out and targeted to at-risk grantees.

In commenting on a draft of this report, Education generally agreed with GAO's findings and recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-961.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia M. Ashby, (202) 512-8403, ashbyc@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Grantees most commonly reported using Title III and Title V grant funds to strengthen academics, and they reported a wide range of benefits. Most grantees reported using their grants to fund efforts designed to strengthen academics, and we estimate that over three-quarters of the grantees reported initiatives that focused on improving student services (e.g., tutoring) and outcomes for students (e.g., course pass rates). The most commonly reported benefits were related to improvements in academic quality and student services and outcomes. While grantees reported a wide range of benefits, most also reported challenges in implementing their projects that sometimes resulted in the need for additional time at the end of the grant to complete their efforts.

Percentage of Grantees Reporting Benefits, by Grant Program

Benefit	Title III				Title V
	Strengthening Institutions	Tribal Colleges	Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian	Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Hispanic Serving Institutions
Academic quality	91	75	100	100	89
Student services and outcomes	82	63	100	96	63
Institutional management	64	63	88	96	85
Fiscal stability	18	75	13	82	56

Source: GAO analysis.

Education has developed objectives and strategies designed to strengthen Title III and Title V institutions by improving financial sustainability, technological capacity, academic quality, student services and outcomes, and institutional management. While Education has developed data to determine its progress in four of these areas, it is still in the process of developing data for measuring increased technological capacity.

Education has developed plans and tools to enhance its monitoring of and assistance to Title III and Title V grantees, but it has made limited progress in implementing these initiatives. Specifically, Education has not fully implemented its monitoring plan or completed its new electronic monitoring tools, and a new training curriculum to enhance the monitoring skills of staff. We found that only one-quarter of staff conducted two required site visits, and most visits that were conducted were not selected based on the requisite risk criteria. Also, staff were not aware of updated department guidance and, as a result, did not always properly monitor grantees. We also found that Education's ability to provide technical assistance was limited. For example, Education has acknowledged that its failure to provide information on eligibility criteria has resulted in uncertainty about the eligibility of over three-quarters of Title V grantees.

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Abbreviations

HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
HEA	Higher Education Act
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institutions
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

September 21, 2004

The Honorable Rod Paige
Secretary of Education

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Beginning in 1965, Congress created several programs under the Higher Education Act (HEA) to support postsecondary institutions that provide low-income and minority students with access to higher education. Congress reaffirmed its commitment by expanding the number of assistance programs in reauthorizing HEA in 1998 and has steadily increased funding since then.¹ Appropriations for these programs have nearly doubled from about \$230 million in fiscal year 1999 to about \$432 million in fiscal year 2004. Given the recent expansion of these programs, we examined them to determine (1) how institutions used their Title III and Title V grants and the benefits they received from using these grant funds, (2) what objectives and strategies the Department of Education (Education) has developed for Title III and Title V programs, and (3) to what extent Education monitors and provides assistance to Title III and Title V institutions.

To determine how institutions used Title III and Title V funds and the resulting benefits, we developed a data collection instrument and reviewed grant files for a stratified random sample of 104 of the 206 Title III and Title V grant recipients, including the grant application, grant

¹These programs include Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions; Title III part A American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities; Title III, part A Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions; Title III, part B Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Title V, part A Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions. Throughout the report when we refer to Title III and Title V programs or grants we are referring to these specific programs. Our review did not include Title III, part B Historically Black Professional or Graduate Institutions; part D HBCU Capital Financing; or part E Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program.

performance reports, and related correspondence.² Additionally, we conducted site visits to nine of the postsecondary institutions included in our sample based on type of program participation and geographic proximity to one another. These institutions included four Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Georgia, two Tribal colleges in North Dakota, and three Hispanic Serving Institutions in Texas. To determine the objectives and strategies Education has developed for Title III and Title V programs, we talked with Education officials and reviewed program and planning documents. To determine how Education monitors and provides assistance to the Title III and Title V grantees, we interviewed Education and postsecondary institution officials and reviewed documents, including program policies and guidance. A more detailed explanation of our methodology is included in appendix I. We conducted our work between July 2003 and August 2004 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

Grantees most commonly reported using Title III and Title V grant funds to strengthen academic quality, and they reported a wide range of benefits. An estimated 87 percent of grantees reported initiatives that focused on strengthening academic quality by enhancing faculty effectiveness and academic offerings, and we estimate that over three-quarters of the grantees reported initiatives that focused on student services (e.g., tutoring) and outcomes for students (e.g., course pass rates). To a lesser extent, grantees reported using the funds to improve the financial condition and management of their institutions. Grantees reported benefits that related to each of these areas, but the most commonly reported benefits were related to improvements in academic quality and student services and outcomes. For example, one Hispanic Serving Institution in Texas that used much of its Title V grant to construct and

²Percentage estimates for Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions, Title III, part B Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Title V Hispanic Serving Institutions are based on the sample and are subject to sampling error. Unless otherwise noted, we are 95 percent confident that the results we obtained for these programs are within +/- 10 percentage points of what we would have obtained if we had received responses from the entire population. There is no sampling error associated with Title III, part A programs that cover Tribal Colleges, Alaska Native Institutions, and Native Hawaiian Institutions because we included the entire population in our review. Each sample element was subsequently weighted in the analysis to account for all members of the population, including those that were not selected. Unless otherwise noted, when we make estimates to the entire population of grantees, we are 95 percent confident that the results we obtained are within +/- 7 percentage points of what we would have obtained if we had included the entire population within our review.

renovate science facilities reported it was better able to meet the growing demand for science courses resulting in improvements in outcomes for science students, such as retention and course completion. While grantees reported a wide range of benefits, most grantees also reported challenges in implementing their projects. As a result of implementation challenges, some grantees needed additional time at the end of the grant period to complete planned activities.

To fulfill its overall objective of strengthening Title III and Title V institutions, Education has developed strategies—assisting grantees in enhancing financial sustainability and increasing technological capacity—and supporting objectives—improving academic quality, fiscal stability and institutional management, and student services and outcomes. To assess its progress in implementing the objectives and strategies, Education has developed targets for five performance measures. Education has developed performance data for four measures, and is in the process of developing performance data for its measure of increased technological capacity from grantee performance reports. Regarding its strategy of enhancing financial sustainability, the department reported that the percentage of institutions with a positive fiscal balance decreased slightly from 71 percent in fiscal year 2001 to 69 percent in fiscal year 2002, thereby falling slightly below the fiscal year 2002 target of 74 percent. Education attributes the decline in performance to decreases in state contributions to higher education. Education exceeded its fiscal year 2002 performance targets for improving academic quality, fiscal stability and institutional management, and student services and outcomes based on data taken from its annual grantee performance reports.

Education has taken steps to enhance its monitoring of and assistance to Title III and Title V grantees, but has made limited progress in implementing its initiatives. Specifically, Education has developed monitoring plans, partially developed electronic monitoring tools, and created plans to provide additional training to enhance the monitoring skills of staff. However, Education has not fully implemented its monitoring plan or completed development of a new training curriculum for program staff. We found that only one-quarter of program staff conducted two site visits as required in the department's monitoring plan, and with respect to those that were conducted, most of the sites visited were not selected based on the risk criteria specified in the plan. Additionally, because the department has not completed its electronic monitoring tools, it has continued to rely on paper-based monitoring systems that have not provided complete, consistent, and timely information needed for monitoring. For example, during our review of

grant files, Education could not locate 3 of 112 files we requested, and for another 11 files, documents critical to department monitoring efforts were missing. We also found that department staff were not aware of updated department guidance and as a result did not always follow the guidance for monitoring grantees. For example, program staff told us they did not conduct required site visits because of a lack of preparation related to inadequate training. We also found that Education's ability to provide technical assistance was limited. For example, Education has acknowledged that its failure to provide information on eligibility criteria has resulted in uncertainty about the eligibility of over three-quarters of Title V grantees. Further, Education did not readily use feedback it obtained from grantees to target assistance, and some of the opportunities it provides grantees to offer feedback may not encourage open communication.

In this report we are making a recommendation to the Secretary of Education to take action to ensure that monitoring and assistance plans are carried out, including completing its automated monitoring tools and training programs.

In written comments on a draft of this report, Education generally agreed with our findings and recommendation. Education's written comments are in appendix IV.

Background

Postsecondary institutions that serve large proportions of economically disadvantaged students are eligible to receive grants from Education through Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act, as amended, to improve academic quality, address institutional management issues, and improve student services and outcomes. Institutions eligible for funding under Titles III and V include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Institutions, and other undergraduate postsecondary institutions that serve low-income students. While these institutions differ in terms of the racial and ethnic makeup of their students, they serve a disproportionate number of financially needy students, and have limited financial resources, such as endowment funds, with which to serve them. (See app. II for characteristics of Title III and Title V institutions and their students.) Title III and Title V legislation outlines broad program goals for strengthening participating institutions, but provides grantees with flexibility in deciding what approaches will best meet their needs. An institution can use the grants to focus on one or more activities that will help it achieve the goals articulated in its comprehensive development plan—a plan that an applicant must submit

with its grant application outlining its strategy for achieving growth and self-sufficiency. (See app. III for a description of how the grantees we visited used the grants.) Table 1 briefly describes the characteristics and eligibility criteria of Title III and Title V grant programs.

Table 1: Characteristics and Eligibility Criteria of Title III and Title V Grant Programs

Grant program	Type of grant ^a	Duration	Wait-out period ^b	Eligibility criteria
Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	Competitive	5 years	2 years	Average educational and general expenditures that are low compared with those of other institutions that offer similar instruction. An enrollment of needy students—at least 50 percent of students receive need-based federal financial assistance or a substantial percentage of students receive Pell Grants compared with those in other institutions. Accredited or making reasonable progress toward accreditation.
Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	Competitive	5 years	None	Must meet the same eligibility criteria as required for Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions, and be designated by law as a Tribal College or University.
Title III, part A Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian	Competitive	5 years	None	Must meet the same eligibility criteria as required for Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions. Additionally, must have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 20 percent Alaska Native or at least 10 percent Native Hawaiian.
Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Formulaic/noncompetitive	5 years	None	Designated by law as, among other things, any college or university that was established prior to 1964, and whose principal mission was, and is, the education of African Americans.
Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	Competitive	5 years	2 years	Must meet the same requirements as institutions that qualify for Title III Part A. Additionally, must meet requirements to be considered an Hispanic Serving Institution—at least 25 percent of full-time equivalent students are Hispanic, of which no less than 50 percent are low-income individuals.

Source: The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Department of Education

^aInstitutions in Title III, part A, and Title V, part A, receive grants based on a ranking of applications from a competitive peer review evaluation. Institutions in Title III, part B, receive grants based on a formula that considers, in part, the number of Pell Grant recipients, the number of graduates, and the number of students that enroll in graduate school within 5 years after earning an undergraduate degree.

^bThe minimum number of years institutions must wait before they are eligible to receive another grant under the same program.

Since its inception, one of the primary missions of Title III has been to support Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which play a significant role in providing postsecondary opportunities for African American, low-income, and educationally disadvantaged students. These institutions receive funding through Title III, part B, in part, to remedy discriminatory action of the states and the federal government against Black colleges and universities. Until the Higher Education Act was amended in 1998, other institutions that serve financially needy students—both minority serving and nonminority serving—competed for funding under Title III, part A. In 1998, the Higher Education Act was amended to create new grant programs designated for Tribal Colleges, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Institutions, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. These programs have provided additional opportunities for Minority Serving Institutions to compete for Title III and Title V funding. Specifically, in 1999, 55 Hispanic Serving, Tribal, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Institutions were awarded new grants through the expanded programs. Table 2 shows the increase in support since the new programs were first funded in 1999.

Table 2: Title III and Title V Funding by Program, Fiscal Years 1999 and 2003

Type of grant	Funding (in millions of dollars)		Number of institutions funded	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	\$60	\$81	180	257
Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	3	23	8	29
Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian	3	8	8	19
Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	136	214	98	97
Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	28	92	39	188 ^a
Total	\$230	\$418	333	590

Source: Department of Education.

^aIn 2003, 188 Hispanic Serving Institutions received 220 grants. Thirty-two of the institutions received two grants—an individual grant and a cooperative grant. Institutions that receive cooperative grants partner and share resources with another postsecondary institution—which may or may not be eligible for Title V funding—to achieve common goals without costly duplication of effort.

The grant programs are designed to increase the self-sufficiency and strengthen the capacity of eligible institutions. Congress has identified many areas in which institutions may use funds for improving their academic programs. Authorized uses include construction, maintenance, or renovation of educational facilities; purchase or rental of telecommunications equipment or services; support of faculty development; and purchase of library books, periodicals, and other educational materials.

Grantees Reported a Wide Range of Uses and Benefits for Title III and Title V Grants but Cited Some Implementation Challenges

In their grant performance reports, grantees most commonly reported using Title III and Title V grant funds to strengthen academic quality and reported a wide range of benefits. Specifically, we estimate that 87 percent of the grantees reported using their grant funds to improve academic quality, and an estimated 77 percent reported using their funds to improve student services (e.g., tutoring) and student outcomes (e.g., course pass rates). We estimate that over half of the grantees reported using their funds for initiatives that focused on improving institutional management and fiscal stability. A majority of the grantees cited benefits related to improvements in academic quality and student services and outcomes, and we estimate that over half of institutions reported benefits related to institutional management and fiscal stability. However, our review of grant files revealed that many institutions experienced challenges, such as staffing problems, which resulted in implementation delays.

Efforts to Improve Academic Quality

Most of the grantees—ranging from one-half of Title III, part A Tribal program grantees to all grantees in the Title III, part A Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian program—reported focusing at least one of their grant activities on improving academic quality. The goal of these efforts was to enhance faculty effectiveness in the classroom by providing training and development opportunities for faculty and to improve the learning environment for students by improving academic offerings and providing appropriate educational materials, such as laboratory equipment and library materials. Some examples include:

- Spelman College, a historically black women’s college in Georgia, used part of its Title III, part B grant to fund a two-semester course that focused on the dispersion of Africans throughout the world. This writing-intensive course introduced students to their cultural background and how it relates to the experiences of others in order to promote critical thinking and interdisciplinary research. Spelman College has plans to develop a minor in this area.

-
- The University of the Incarnate Word, a Hispanic Serving Institution in Texas, used most of its Title V grant to strengthen student learning by focusing on four areas of faculty development: pedagogy, technology, globalization, and mentoring. Specifically, the university conducted technology workshops to promote the integration of technology into the curriculum and provided funding for faculty to participate in summer professional development programs and conduct international research.

Most of the grantees also reported that they derived benefits related to their efforts to improve academic quality. An estimated 76 percent reported enhancements to faculty development, including increased faculty participation in professional development activities. We estimate that 80 percent of the grantees reported improving academic quality by making enhancements to academic programs, including revising and developing courses, establishing new academic programs, receiving new accreditations, and acquiring equipment, library books, and other educational materials. Some examples of benefits derived include the following:

- At the University of the Incarnate Word, where most of the faculty have received intensive technology training, over 200 members of the faculty are using an online course management system as a Web-based resource for instruction. Faculty can create Web pages for the courses they teach, allowing students to access course syllabi and assignments as well as communicate with their professor and other students in the class.
- The College of Southern Idaho, a Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions grantee in Idaho, reported that with Title III funding it was able to enhance more than 30 courses and develop a new accredited health science program in radiologic technology. The college also reported that two faculty members it provided fellowships had completed advanced degrees by the end of the grant period.

Table 3 shows the distribution of uses and benefits related to improving academic quality.

Table 3: Percentage of Grantees Reporting Uses and Benefits Related to Improving Academic Quality

	Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian	Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	Estimated total
Uses	82	50	100	96	78	87
Benefits	91	75	100	100	89	94
Faculty development	73	38	25	82	81	76
Academic programs	70	63	100	96	56	80

Source: GAO analysis.

Efforts to Improve Support for Students and Student Success

We estimate that over three-quarters of the grantees—ranging from 55 percent of Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions grantees to nearly all Title III, part B HBCU grantees—reported focusing at least one initiative on improving student services and outcomes. This area includes tutoring, counseling, and student service programs designed to improve academic success, along with those efforts the primary focus of which is increasing student outcomes such as retention and graduation rates, academic achievement, and entering higher degree programs. Examples of how grantees have focused their activities on improvements in this area include:

- Morehouse College, a historically black college in Georgia, used part of its Title III grant to fund a wellness center for its all-male student body. The center provides individual and group counseling and offers workshops and seminars on topics like depression and the skills students need to achieve academic success. The center also offers services to accommodate the increase in students documented with learning disabilities.
- United Tribes Technical College, a tribal college in North Dakota, focused on increasing retention and persistence of its students by using its Title III grant to renovate a one-stop center for student services, pay tutors, and equip a wired computer laboratory in the facility.
- The University of Texas at San Antonio, a Hispanic Serving Institution in Texas, used most of its Title V grant to establish learning communities where students enroll in clusters of courses in which the course content is linked. At the heart of the learning communities is the Freshman Seminar, a course that introduces students to resources that will help them succeed in college.

We estimate that 62 percent of the grantees reported that they derived benefits related to their efforts to improve student services, and an estimated 75 percent reported that they derived benefits related to their efforts to increase student outcomes. In the area of student services, grantees primarily reported increases in the numbers of students using student services, such as counseling and tutoring. Increase in student retention was the most commonly reported benefit in the area of student outcomes. For example, Laredo Community College, an HSI in Texas, used its Title V award to construct and renovate science facilities to meet the growing demand for science courses. With state-of-the-art laboratories, the college reported subsequent improvements in outcomes for science students, such as increases in course pass rates, retention, and enrollment in further postsecondary study. Table 4 shows the distribution of uses and benefits related to improving student services and outcomes.

Table 4: Percentage of Grantees Reporting Uses and Benefits Related to Improving Student Services and Outcomes

	Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian	Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	Estimated total
Uses	55	63	75	96	67	77
Benefits	82	63	100	96	63	85
Student services	33	38	50	86	52	62
Student outcomes	79	63	88	79	63	75

Source: GAO analysis.

Efforts to Improve Institutional Management

We estimate that 54 percent of the grantees reported focusing at least one activity on improving institutional management, which comprises the efforts to increase capacity and manage institutional operations. Examples in this area include improving the technological infrastructure, providing training and development opportunities for noninstructional staff, constructing and renovating facilities, establishing or enhancing management systems, and establishing an institutional research office, among others. Nearly all grantees in the Title III, part B HBCU program and half of the grantees from the Title III, part A Tribal Colleges program indicated that at least one activity focused on improving institutional management. For example,

- Stone Child College, a tribal college in Montana, reported that it used part of its Title III grant to implement an institutional assessment

program that involves a comprehensive assessment of all instructional programs and services.

- Tougaloo College, a historically black college in Mississippi, reported that it used grant funds to support institutional research, assessment, and planning activities, as well as repairing and renovating facilities to enhance the appearance and safety of the campus.

An estimated 84 percent of the grantees reported that they derived benefits related to their efforts to improve institutional management, primarily by enhancing technology. We estimate that two-thirds of grantees reported technology-related benefits, including overall improvements to the technological infrastructure, increases in the number of classrooms wired for the Internet, and increases in Internet access and the numbers of computers available to faculty and students. Several of the grantees we visited credited Title III and Title V programs with helping them to stay current technologically. For example, Morehouse College credited Title III funding with helping the institution establish a technological infrastructure. Title III paid for the installation of high-speed Internet lines, wiring all buildings on campus, including dormitories, and connecting all the buildings to a common network. An official at Morehouse told us that the college’s emphasis on technology stems from the need to compete with other institutions for the best students and to ensure that students graduate with technology skills that are necessary for the workplace. Table 5 shows the distribution of uses and benefits related to improving institutional management.

Table 5: Percentage of Grantees Reporting Uses and Benefits Related to Improving Institutional Management

	Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian	Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	Estimated total
Uses	15	50	25	96	11	54
Benefits	64	63	88	96	85	84
Technology	42	38	63	82	67	66

Source: GAO analysis.

Efforts to Improve Fiscal Stability at Grantee Institutions

We estimate that about one-half of the grantees reported focusing at least one of their activities on improving fiscal stability, and there was wide variation across programs.³ Examples of ways grantees can use grant funds to improve fiscal stability include such activities as establishing or enhancing a development office to improve contributions from alumni and the private sector, establishing or improving an endowment fund, and increasing research dollars. Seventy-one percent of grantees in the Title III, part B program, and 63 percent of grantees in the Title III, part A Tribal Colleges program reported at least one activity focused on improving fiscal stability. Only one grantee from the Title III, part A Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian program had an activity focused on improving fiscal stability, which may be due to greater limitations on how Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian institutions have been able to use funds in this area. For example, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian institutions have not been able to use grant funds to improve endowment funds, whereas grantees in the other programs have.⁴ One example of how a grantee has used funds to improve fiscal stability is:

- Sitting Bull College, a tribal college with campuses in North Dakota and South Dakota, used grant funds to develop its fund-raising capacity and to establish an endowment. Because the college does not receive any state funding, it relies heavily on federal funding, primarily from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. College officials think that increasing fiscal stability is central to becoming more self-sufficient.

An estimated 57 percent of the grantees reported that they derived benefits related to their efforts to improve fiscal stability, primarily through endowment building.⁵ Grantees from the Title III, part A Tribal Colleges program and Title V, part A HSI program reported increases in their endowments most frequently. Laredo Community College, an HSI in Texas, was able to establish an endowment that will provide scholarships for math and science students in perpetuity. Over 5 years it matched \$250,000 from its Title V grant with private contributions. Officials said as a 2-year institution, the college didn't have much experience with fund

³The 95 percent confidence interval for the estimated percentage of grantees that reported using grant funds to improve fiscal stability is from 44 to 58 percent.

⁴In the application package for Title III, part A, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian institutions are prohibited from using grant funds for endowment.

⁵The 95 percent confidence interval for the estimated percentage of grantees that reported improvements to fiscal stability is from 51 to 63 percent.

raising prior to the grant, and having the ability to use federal funds to match private donations energized both the campus and the community to raise funds. These fund-raising efforts have led to endowments for other academic programs, such as business and nursing. Table 6 shows the distribution of uses and benefits related to improving fiscal stability.

Table 6: Percentage of Grantees Reporting Uses and Benefits Related to Improving Fiscal Stability

	Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian	Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	Estimated total
Uses	21	63	13	71	48	51
Benefits	18	75	13	82	56	57
Endowment	18	63	0	11	44	21

Source: GAO analysis.

Grantees Cited Implementation Challenges

While grantees reported a wide range of uses and benefits, most grantees also reported challenges in implementing their projects. We estimate that 80 percent of the grantees reported at least one challenge related to the implementation of the grants. Difficulties related to hiring and staffing were the most frequently cited, with an estimated 46 percent of grantees indicating this had been a problem.⁶ For example, officials from Sitting Bull College told us that its remote location made it difficult to attract and retain qualified personnel. To address this problem, the institution has focused on providing training and education to faculty and staff to develop talent from within the college. Other challenges were not cited frequently but included construction delays, challenges implementing technology and distance learning, and state budget shortages.

As a result of implementation challenges, grantees often needed additional time to complete planned activities. According to department regulations, grantees generally have the option of extending the grant for 1 year after the 5-year grant cycle has ended to obligate remaining funds. According to Education, for example, 45 percent of the 55 grantees in the Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions program that ended their 5-year grant period in September 2003 had an available balance greater than \$1,000, ranging from 0.5 percent (about \$8,000) to 19 percent (about \$328,000) of the total

⁶The 95 percent confidence interval for the estimated percentage of grantees that reported hiring and staffing challenges in implementing their grants is from 38 to 54 percent.

grant. Sixteen of the 25 institutions that had carryover greater than \$1,000 continued to draw down funds in the year following the 5-year grant. In the Title III, part B program, 80 percent of the 96 grantees that ended their 5-year grant period in September 2002 had funds remaining at the end of the 5-year period, ranging from 0.09 percent (about \$12,000) of the total grant to 40 percent (about \$2.2 million) of the total grant. According to department officials, all of these grantees indicated they would take the additional time they are allowed to spend the funds.⁷ Department officials told us that unexpended funds are common among HBCUs because they often use these funds to supplement large construction projects, which take several years to complete.

Education Has Developed Objectives and Strategies to Strengthen Institutions and Is Developing Corresponding Performance Information

Education has developed objectives and strategies designed to strengthen Title III and Title V institutions by improving financial sustainability, technological capacity, academic quality, student services and outcomes, and institutional management. Education has developed five measures to assess its progress in achieving its objectives and is still in the process of developing data for one of these measures.

⁷In 2003 Education granted a one-time extension to HBCUs that did not obligate all their grant funds by the end of the 5-year grant period that ended in September 2002, allowing them until September 2006 to obligate the funds. Education granted this extension because of perceptions that grantees were confused by a provision in the Higher Education Act that allowed grantees 10 years from the date of the initial grant to spend the funds. According to Education, most HBCUs received their initial grants in 1987, so this provision no longer applies to these institutions. We are awaiting information from Education's General Counsel regarding the department's justification for extending the period of time grantees had to obligate funds for more than 1 year beyond the 5-year period.

Education Developed Objectives and Strategies Designed to Strengthen Institutions

Education has established a series of objectives and strategies for its Title III and Title V programs. In its 2002-2007 strategic plan, Education established an objective to strengthen HBCUs, HSIs, and Tribal Colleges. To achieve this objective, Education has developed supporting strategies to assist grantees in enhancing financial sustainability and increasing technological capacity. Education has used annual meetings for grantees as a forum to provide technical assistance to institutions on financial management issues and to promote technological capacity. Education has also established objectives in its annual program performance plans to improve academic quality, fiscal stability and institutional management, along with student services and outcomes.⁸

To assess its progress in meeting the objectives it established in its strategic and program performance plans, Education has developed five performance measures. To determine its progress in its strategic objective to strengthen HBCUs, HSIs, and Tribal Colleges, Education established performance measures related to financial sustainability and technological capacity. Specifically, Education established a performance target that by fiscal year 2007 it will increase the percentage of institutions with a positive fiscal balance—Education’s measure of financial sustainability—to 99 percent from the fiscal year 1999 baseline of 69 percent.⁹ Education also established a performance target for increasing the percentage of institutions that increase their investment in technology. To determine its progress in meeting the objectives in its program performance plan, Education has set a target that at least 75 percent of the goals grantees establish related to (1) academic quality, (2) fiscal stability and institutional management, and (3) student services and outcomes will be met or exceeded.

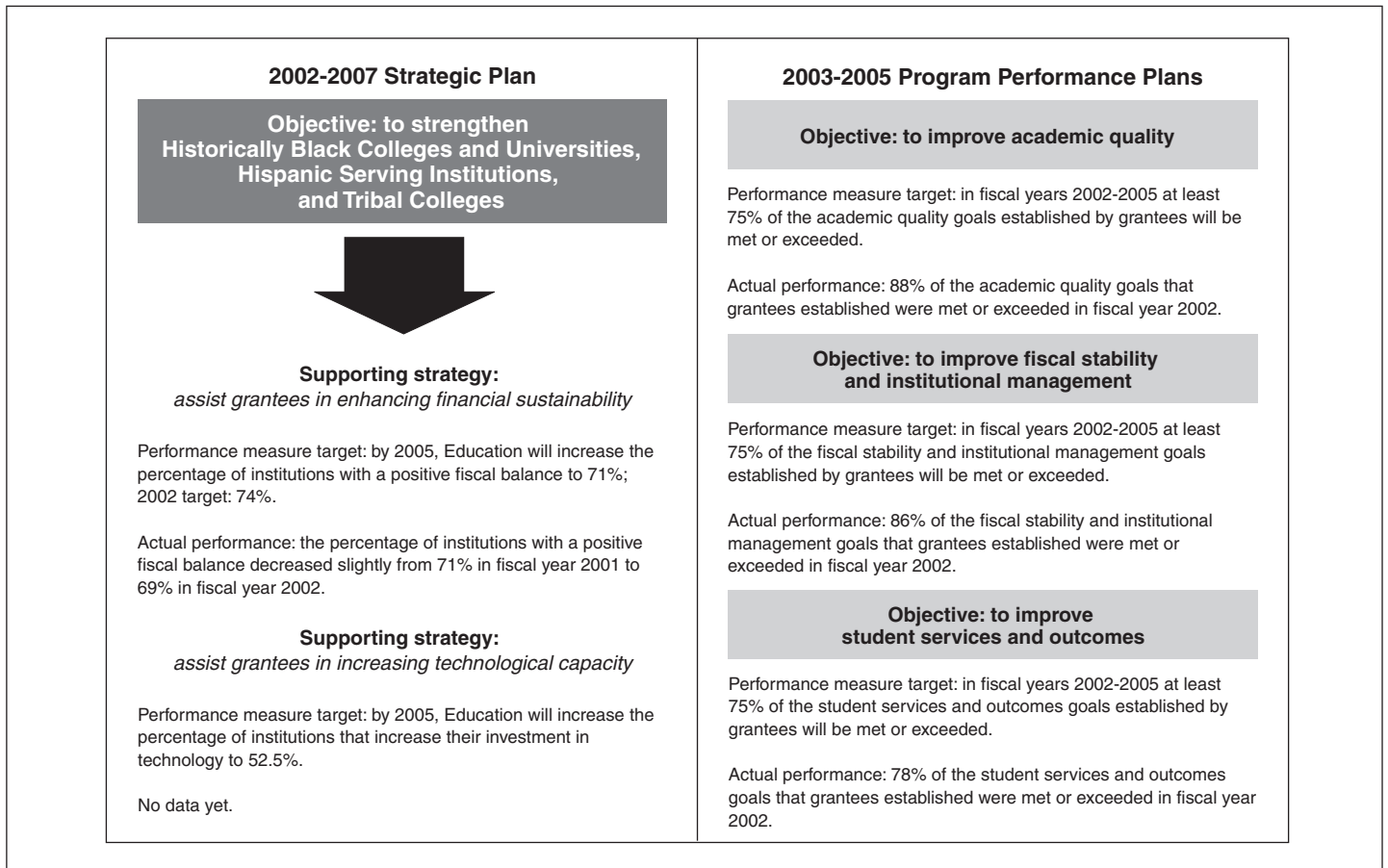
⁸The 2002-2007 Strategic Plan established a set of high-level strategic objectives, which may or may not relate to specific programs and corresponding outcome measures. Education’s program performance plans are used to determine the success of each program and the relationship between program-specific funding and results.

⁹According to Education, positive fiscal balance is determined by identifying positive change in the fiscal status of grantees during the federal fiscal year using information that institutions report each year through its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. In assessing an institution’s performance, Education reviews data on revenues, expenditures, and assets.

Education Is Making Progress in Developing Performance Data

Education has developed performance data for one of the two performance targets established in its 2002-2007 strategic plan and has developed performance data for its program performance plan targets. Specifically, Education has developed performance data to determine its impact in increasing financial sustainability and is in the process of developing data to determine its impact on technological capacity at institutions. Regarding its goal to increase financial sustainability, the department reported that the percentage of institutions with a positive fiscal balance decreased slightly from 71 percent in fiscal year 2001 to 69 percent in fiscal year 2002, falling below the original target that it established for fiscal year 2002 of 74 percent. In its 2002-2007 Strategic Plan, the department set a goal that 84 percent of institutions have a positive fiscal balance by 2004. Education subsequently lowered its target for 2004 to 70 percent to reflect decreases in state contributions to higher education—a significant source of funding for most Title III and Title V institutions—to which it attributed the decline in fiscal balance performance. To measure its progress in meeting its objective to strengthen HBCUs, HSIs, and Tribal Colleges through improved technological capacity, Education expects to report later in 2004 on the impact of its efforts in this area using information on technology-related activities reported by grantees in recently submitted annual grantee performance reports. Education has developed data for the performance measures in its program performance plan. Regarding its goals to improve academic quality, fiscal stability and institutional management, and student services and outcomes, Education exceeded its fiscal year 2002 performance targets for each of the three measures based on data taken from its annual grantee performance reports. Figure 1 illustrates the measures Education has developed to measure progress in achieving its objectives, along with its progress in developing data to determine whether it is meeting its performance targets.

Figure 1: Education’s Plan to Track Progress in Meeting Objectives for Title III and V Programs



Source: U.S. Department of Education.

Education Has Not Fully Implemented Its Initiatives to Improve Monitoring and Assistance, Resulting in Limited Monitoring and Assistance

Education has taken steps to enhance its monitoring of and assistance to Title III and Title V grantees by developing monitoring plans; creating electronic monitoring (e-monitoring) tools, such as the performance reports submitted by grantees to document performance; and providing additional training to department staff to develop their monitoring skills. However, Education has yet to fully implement many of these initiatives. We found that Education has not fully implemented its monitoring plan, made full use of its new electronic monitoring tools, or completed development of a new training curriculum for program staff. Additionally, we found that Education's ability to target assistance was limited and that it has not made full use of grantee feedback for targeting assistance. As a result, Education's monitoring and assistance have been limited.

Education Has Taken Some Steps to Improve Its Monitoring and Assistance Activities

Education has created monitoring plans, electronic monitoring tools that document grantee progress, and training opportunities for staff. Some of these steps have been undertaken in response to reports issued by Education's Inspector General in 1996 and 2000, which identified the need for systematic monitoring of the department's Title III and Title V programs.¹⁰

Created Monitoring Plans

In 2002, Education's Deputy Secretary directed each program within the agency to develop a monitoring plan to place greater emphasis on performance monitoring for all grantees. In addition to asking whether grantees were achieving results, program officials were also to consider what assistance could be provided by Education to help grantees accomplish program objectives and incorporate in their planning an increased departmental emphasis on compliance with the law and guarding against potential risks. In response to the Deputy Secretary's directive, Education developed a monitoring plan for Title III and Title V grantees that calls for department staff to (1) conduct risk assessments, (2) perform a minimum number of site visits each year, and (3) follow up with grantees regarding their performance reports.

¹⁰Office of the Inspector General, Department of Education, *Office of Higher Education Programs Needs to Improve its Oversight of Parts A and B Of the Title III Program*, ACN: ED-OIG/A04-90013 (Atlanta, Ga.: December 27, 2000). Office of the Inspector General, Department of Education, *Process Enhancements in the HEA, Title III, Institutional Aid Program Would Increase Program Efficiency, Despite Limited Resources*, ACN: 04-60001 (Atlanta, Ga.: March 27, 1996).

In assessing risk, department staff are to review a variety of sources, including annual performance reports, and consider 19 factors affecting the ability of the grantees to manage their grants in the areas of project design, administration and implementation, funds management, communication, and performance measurement. According to the department's plan, on the basis of the results of risk assessments, staff are to follow up with grantees that have issues and select at least two for site visits. Follow-up can take many forms, ranging from telephone calls and e-mails to on-site compliance visits and technical assistance. Technical assistance can involve many activities designed to aid the institution in its administration of the grant. Although Education's preferred approach is to try to inform grantees of steps they can take to address grant administration issues, grantees can also be subject to some restrictions based on risk assessments. For instance, if a grantee is designated as "high risk," Education can impose conditions on the grantee's ability to access grant funds. The risk factors used by Education to identify high-risk grantees are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Education's Risk Criteria for Title III and Title V Grantees

Risk categories	Criteria for high-risk determination
Project design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="505 1152 1523 1213">1. Grant lacks support on campus. Grantee develops and writes application without significant participation of the college community. <li data-bbox="505 1220 1523 1276">2. Grant design is problematic. Proposed project objectives and timelines are unrealistic, unclear, or lack appropriate baseline data. <li data-bbox="505 1283 1523 1339">3. Evaluation is not a focus of the grant. Proposed evaluation plan is not complete and will not provide adequate data to evaluate project. <li data-bbox="505 1346 1523 1402">4. Grantee roles are not clear. Lines of authority and responsibility are not clear within the project and in relation to the president's office.
Administration and implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="505 1415 1523 1472">5. Grant lacks key personnel. Key personnel had not been hired halfway into the grant's first year. <li data-bbox="505 1478 1523 1505">6. Grant cannot retain key personnel. Frequent turnover in project administration. <li data-bbox="505 1512 1523 1568">7. Grantee lack of knowledge about the grant. College president/CEO is not knowledgeable about grant. <li data-bbox="505 1575 1523 1631">8. Grant administrators do not participate in program activities. College does not send representatives to scheduled workshops/meetings and remains distant from program office. <li data-bbox="505 1638 1523 1694">9. Institution cannot or does not maintain proposed commitments. Institution fails to honor space and resource commitments halfway into the grant's first year. <li data-bbox="505 1701 1523 1787">10. Grantee administrators disagree and cannot resolve issues. Cooperative arrangement partners lose focus on common objectives, and have not established an administrative mechanism to handle conflict. <li data-bbox="505 1793 1523 1858">11. Other institutional problems exist that put grant funds at risk. Institution is facing significant problems that go beyond grant administration, such as finances or accreditation.

Risk categories	Criteria for high-risk determination
Funds management	12. Grantee has slow or fast drawdowns. Funds are not being expended at the rate expected by project activities and timelines.
	13. Grantee has difficulty expending awarded funds. Significant carryover of funds from one year to the next without adequate explanation.
	14. Inconsistencies with reported grant information. Discrepancies exist between expenditures reported and funds drawn upon in Education's payment system.
	15. Institution has problems managing other federal grants/funds. Other government audits reflect problems with managing other federal funds.
Project communication issues	16. Grantee requests assistance from Education to resolve problems. Institution asks for assistance or intervention to deal with a problem.
	17. Grantee cannot readily provide project information. Project administrators do not respond to requests for updated or revised project information by program office.
Performance measurement	18. Institutional reports indicate problems. Performance reports indicate the existence of problems or significant delays.
	19. Grantee does not follow through on proposal. Performance reports do not correlate with project activities outlined in application.

Source: Department of Education, Fiscal Year 2003 Institutional Development for Undergraduate Programs' Monitoring Plan.

Developed and Piloted E-Monitoring Tools

In response to a 2000 Inspector General report that found Education needed a systematic approach to monitor Title III grantees, including resolving and enforcing compliance issues, Education developed and piloted electronic monitoring tools designed to enable department staff to standardize monitoring practices and better track performance and fiscal problems. These tools include (1) an e-monitoring system that maintains and tracks daily interactions with grantees, (2) an online institutional performance reporting system, (3) an improved automated payment tracking system, and (4) an electronic on-site monitoring report. Education has implemented its online institutional performance reporting system and intends to begin implementing the other tools across its programs by the end of fiscal year 2004. Officials we spoke to indicated that some of these actions were either in the final stages of development or being piloted with other grant programs.

The department's e-monitoring system is designed to access funding information from existing systems, such as its automated payment system, as well as to access information from a departmental database that contains institutional performance reports. Education anticipates that the system will improve its monitoring process by providing staff ready access to such important information as regulatory citations and alerting staff to needed monitoring actions. Officials think moving to electronic monitoring from a paper-based process will improve recordkeeping and

documentation, enhancing the ability to identify and track areas of concern for individual grantees and across the programs.

Also, as a key component of its e-monitoring system, Education has developed the online institutional performance reporting process. Specifically, Education implemented an annual reporting process in fiscal year 2003 that requires grantees to submit standardized information about their performance electronically. As a result, the new performance reports were designed to allow department staff to more quickly and systematically identify and follow up with grantees on difficulties they are facing regarding their grants. Also, department staff are required to review these reports to assess whether adequate progress has been made to justify continued funding.

Education is also in the process of redesigning its automated grant payment system to provide information staff need to monitor grantee transactions and to connect it with its e-monitoring system. In a 2003 report on its monitoring efforts, Education indicated that program staff would be heavily engaged in the redesign of its automated payment system to identify problems and necessary modifications associated with the system's usage. Additionally, because the system was designed to reflect mostly financial information about grantees and not as a performance monitoring system, Education plans to make information from its automated payment system accessible through its e-monitoring system to eliminate the number of systems program staff have to access to monitor grantees.¹¹

Education also plans to launch an electronic on-site review report to better target its assistance and increase Education's ability to track and resolve findings identified during on-site reviews. This tool is designed to reinforce adherence to the department's standardized reporting format that is to be used during on-site reviews. The electronic report will be integrated with the e-monitoring system.

Plans to Expand Training

To improve its training program, Education has developed a corrective action plan to provide courses over the next 3 years to address the training needs of its staff. In its fiscal year 2004 monitoring plan, Education reported that there is a need to move beyond the generic training that is

¹¹Its automated payment system does contain limited nonfinancial information such as the due dates for institutional performance reports and the date reports were submitted.

traditionally offered to staff toward training that has both real world applications and a programmatic context. Consequently, Education's training plan called for training to provide specific guidance on its new monitoring procedures.

Lack of Progress Implementing Initiatives Has Resulted in Uneven Monitoring and Assistance

We found that the department's lack of progress in implementing its plans to improve monitoring activities, automate related processes, and train its staff has resulted in uneven monitoring and assistance for Title III and Title V grantees. For example, we found that Education has yet to make full use of its risk-based plan to select grantees for its monitoring visits and technical assistance. In fact, our review of site visit documentation showed that risk factors were only employed to select 5 out of 26 grantees visited in fiscal year 2003. Of these 26 institutions, most had been selected according to other factors such as geographic proximity to another grantee.¹² Staff we met with acknowledged that they had not conducted risk assessments for their grantees, and most were unaware of the new requirement to do so. We also found that only one-quarter of department staff completed two site visits in fiscal year 2003, as required.

Because the department had not completed its e-monitoring efforts, it has continued to rely on paper-based monitoring systems, which have not provided complete, consistent, and timely information used in monitoring. For example, during our review of grantee program files, Education could not locate 3 of 112 files we requested. Additionally, another 11 files did not contain all required materials, such as institutional performance reports. Further, the department could not fully account for and provide documentation of completed site visits. These files are the primary resource used by department staff to inform monitoring and assistance efforts.

Finally, because the department has not yet implemented its new training curriculum, its staff were not aware of updated department guidance and as a result did not always follow department guidelines for monitoring grantees. For example, department staff told us they did not conduct required site visits because of a lack of preparation related to inadequate training. One senior department official we spoke with agreed that existing

¹²Geographic proximity is considered an appropriate method to use when choosing institutions for site visits.

training was inadequate, adding that the training could not translate the art of monitoring to inexperienced department staff.

Education's Ability to Target Assistance Has Been Limited

While Education provides technical assistance through conferences, pre-application workshops, and routine interaction between program officers and grantees, a senior department official acknowledged that Education needs to do more to target technical assistance. He said that one of the department's goals is to move from focusing on the process of awarding grants to a more programmatic emphasis where the needs of the grantees guide the services that are offered. One of the key areas of technical assistance that Education is targeting for improvement is educating grantees about eligibility criteria. In response to concerns Education's Inspector General raised about awards made in the Title V, part A Developing Hispanic Institutions program, earlier this year Education completed a review of all Title V grantee files to determine whether grantees were eligible for the awards. On the basis of this review, Education concluded that there were questions surrounding the eligibility of more than three-quarters of the 220 grantees that have received funds through the program. Education found that 12 institutions should not have received grants because their percentages of low-income Hispanic students were below the required 50 percent. In other cases, the department indicated that it could not determine eligibility because institutions made calculation errors, institutions did not report percentages, or the institutions' calculation methods could not be determined. The department concluded that 47 of the grantees used the correct calculation method and met the eligibility assurance requirement that at least half of its Hispanic students are low-income but noted that there were still concerns that some of these institutions may have had documentation problems. Education has attributed these irregularities to confusion about how to meet eligibility requirements stemming from insufficient guidance it provided to applicants as well as an institutional lack of systematic data collection. As a result, Education decided that it would not take action in this specific instance against any of the grantees with eligibility concerns. Education has taken steps to address the problem, including developing new guidance for applicants and verifying all eligibility assurances that applicants submit. Education plans to assist grantees with the eligibility process at pre-application workshops.

Education's ability to target assistance is limited in two ways: it does not readily use the feedback it obtains from grantees, and its feedback mechanisms may not encourage open communication. For example, a senior official told us that feedback Education collected via surveys from

grantees at conferences has not been used in planning assistance efforts. Additionally, one of Education's feedback mechanisms may limit communication because it identifies grantees and is tied to funding decisions. Specifically, Education provided grantees with the opportunity to comment on ways to improve the services the department provides in their annual performance reports, which department staff review to determine whether sufficient progress has been made to continue funding. Department officials told us that Education is considering ways to collect feedback from grantees separate from the performance reporting process for all its grant programs.

Conclusions

Congress has demonstrated its support for Title III and Title V programs by expanding the number of institutions covered and by nearly doubling funding to these programs since 1999. Title III and Title V programs are designed to provide additional resources to institutions that face challenges providing a quality education to low-income and minority students who are typically underrepresented in postsecondary education. While Title III and Title V programs provide important resources to address some of the most critical needs of these institutions, the need for monitoring and assistance does not end with the award of a grant. These institutions, because they have limited resources, sometimes need additional assistance to help them implement their projects. Consequently, Education's role in monitoring and providing assistance to Title III and Title V grantees is critical to the success of these programs. Education has taken steps to enhance its monitoring and assistance efforts. However, by failing to carry out an effective process to identify and target oversight and assistance to at-risk grantees, Education has fallen short of ensuring that these institutions have all the tools they need to fulfill the programs' objectives. Education recognizes that it must work in partnership with its grantees to enhance the quality of and access to postsecondary education and has put in place plans that would allow it to better monitor and assist grantees. Education needs to fully implement these plans to provide oversight and assistance to those institutions most in need.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Secretary of Education take steps to ensure that monitoring and technical assistance plans are carried out and targeted to at-risk grantees and the needs of grantees guide the technical assistance offered. These steps should include completing its automated monitoring tools and training programs to ensure that department staff are adequately prepared to monitor and assist grantees and using appropriately collected feedback from grantees to target assistance.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Education for review and comment. In written comments on a draft of this report, the Department of Education agreed with our recommendation to carry out and target its monitoring and technical assistance plans to at-risk grantees. Education has made a commitment to complete the implementation of its monitoring, training, and technical assistance efforts in a timely manner. Education also provided technical comments, which we incorporated where appropriate. Education's comments appear in appendix IV.

Copies of this report will be sent to the congressional committees and subcommittees responsible for the Higher Education Act; the Honorable Joshua Bolten, Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties. Copies will also be made available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact me on (202) 512-8403 or Bryon Gordon at (202) 512-9207. Other contacts and acknowledgments are listed in appendix V.

Sincerely yours,



Cornelia M. Ashby
Director, Education, Workforce,
and Income Security Issues

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

We reviewed Title III and Title V grant programs to determine (1) how Title III and Title V institutions are using the grants and the benefits they have derived, (2) what objectives and strategies the Department of Education (Education) has developed for Title III and Title V programs, and (3) to what extent Education monitors and provides assistance to Title III and Title V institutions.

To determine how institutions used the funds and the benefits derived, we reviewed grant files for a stratified random sample of 104 of the 206 Title III and Title V individual development grant recipients.¹ We reviewed grant applications and grantee performance reports to develop a standardized data collection instrument. We completed the data collection instrument for each grantee in our sample, and each record was independently reviewed by another staff person for clarity and accuracy.

To identify these recipients, we obtained from Education a list of grantees for specific grant cycles. The grant cycles were chosen to allow us to review documentation from as many years of the 5-year grant cycle as possible or to allow for the review of comparable information. For example, we selected 1999-2004 as the grant cycle for grantees from three of the programs in our review because 1999 was the first year awards were made in these programs. For the Title III, part B program, we looked at available data from the 2002-2007 grant cycle because performance reports comparable to those provided by grantees in other programs were not available from a previous grant cycle. The grant cycles are shown in Table 8.

¹Our sample originally included 112 grantees. However, 8 grantees were dropped from the sample. Education could not locate files for 3 grantees, 1 grantee lost accreditation and was no longer eligible for funding, 2 grantees had not submitted annual performance reports to Education, and the annual reports for 2 grantees contained too many reporting errors to include in the sample.

Table 8: Grant Funding Cycles for Programs in Our Sample

Program	Grant cycle	Total number of grantees	Sample size	Final number of cases reviewed
Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	10/1998-9/2003	55	35	33
Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	10/1999-9/2004	8	8	8
Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions	10/1999-9/2004	8	8	8
Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	10/2002-9/2007	96	33	28
Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions	10/1999-9/2004	39	28	27

Source: GAO calculations based on Education data.

We stratified our sample by the five programs and within these strata randomly selected grantees. Our sample was statistically drawn and weighted so that we could generalize the results of our review across programs. As with all samples, our review of grant files is subject to sampling errors. The effects of sampling errors, due to the selection of a sample from a larger population, can be expressed as confidence intervals based on statistical theory. Sampling errors occur because we use a sample to draw conclusions about a larger population. If a different sample had been taken, the results might have been different. To recognize the possibility that other samples might have yielded other results, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular sample's results as a 95 percent confidence interval. The 95 percent confidence interval is expected to include the actual results for 95 percent of samples of this type. Our sample sizes were selected to give us results within +/- 10 percentage points of what we would have obtained if we had surveyed the entire study population within each program. Because we included the entire population for the Title III, part A programs that cover Tribal Colleges, Alaska Native Institutions, and Native Hawaiian Institutions, there is no sampling error associated with the results presented for these programs. Each sample element was subsequently weighted in the analysis to account for all members of the population, including those that were not selected. When we make estimates to the entire population of grantees, we are 95 percent confident that the results we obtained are within +/- 7 percentage points of what we would have obtained if we had included the entire population within our review unless otherwise noted.

We analyzed data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to better understand the kinds of students they serve.² To assess the completeness of the IPEDS data, we reviewed the National Center for Education Statistics' documentation on how the data were collected and performed electronic tests to look for missing or out-of-range values. On the basis of these reviews and tests, we found the data sufficiently reliable for our purposes. Additionally, we conducted site visits to nine of the postsecondary institutions included in our sample based on type of program participation and geographic proximity to each other. These institutions included four Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Georgia, two Tribal colleges in North Dakota, and three Hispanic Serving Institutions in Texas.

To determine what objectives and strategies Education has developed for Title III and Title V programs, we talked with Education officials and reviewed program and planning documents. To determine how Education monitors and provides assistance to the Title III and Title V grantees, we talked with Education officials and reviewed program policies and guidance.

²IPEDS is a system of surveys designed to collect data from all primary providers of postsecondary education. These surveys collect institution-level data in such areas as enrollments, program completions, faculty, staff, and finances. Data are collected annually from approximately 9,600 postsecondary institutions, including over 6,000 institutions eligible for the federal student aid programs.

Appendix II: Characteristics of Title III and Title V Grantees by Program

	Title III, part A Strengthening Institutions	Title III, part A Tribal Colleges	Title III, part A Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions	Title III, part B Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Title V, part A Hispanic Serving Institutions
Average undergraduate enrollment	6,391	286	3,388	2,692	12,643
Gender					
Male	43	32	40	38	41
Female	57	68	60	62	59
Race/ethnicity					
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	88	6	<1	<1
Asian/Pacific Islander	9	<1	54	1	8
Black	7	<1	2	75	11
Hispanic	18	1	3	1	55
White	57	9	31	21	20
Nonresident alien	2	<1	3	1	3
Unknown	6	1	3	1	3
Control					
Private not-for-profit	12	50	13	39	23
Public	88	50	88	61	77
Type					
2-year	79	100	75	18	54
4-year	21	0	25	82	46
Percentage of students with federal grant^a	34	78	23	59	57
Open admissions policy^b					
Yes	73	100	75	36	65
No	27	0	25	64	35
On campus housing					
Yes	42	13	50	79	35
No	58	88	50	21	65

Source: Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

^aFederal grants include Pell Grants and other federal grants awarded to individual students.

^bThis is an admission policy whereby the institution will accept any student who applies.

Appendix III: Overview of How Grants Have Been Used by Institutions We Visited

Title III, part B Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities we visited in Georgia

Grants awarded to	Grant uses and benefits
<p>Clark Atlanta University</p> <p>Clark Atlanta University, a private comprehensive historically black university in Atlanta, Georgia, was formed in 1988 by the consolidation of Clark College, a 4-year liberal arts college founded in 1866, and Atlanta University, a graduate institution, founded in 1869. In fall 2002, 3,864 undergraduates were enrolled, of which 94 percent were black and 71 percent were women.</p> <p>Type: 4-year or above</p> <p>Highest degree offered: doctorate</p> <p>Award periods and amount funded: 10/1997-9/2002: \$11.3 million 10/2002-9/2007: \$6.7 million^a</p>	<p>Clark Atlanta University reported focusing its Title III, part B grant on efforts that will improve student services and student outcomes and academic quality. The university has used its funds to provide support to strengthen student communication skills, including reading, writing, and speech. Funds have also been used to provide tutoring and supplemental instruction in selected academic programs. Another of Clark Atlanta's efforts is designed to enhance retention by integrating instructional support programs and student services to ensure academic success for students.</p> <p>Clark Atlanta originally proposed an effort to improve its ability to provide distance-learning courses. However, this effort was reexamined once a new president was appointed and more was known about the costs of implementing distance learning. According to the project director, these concerns led the institution to shift the focus from distance learning to an emphasis on instructional technology infusion and Web-enhanced course instruction. Flexibilities in the program allowed the institution to make this change.</p> <p>While its current grant began in 2002, Clark Atlanta, like other HBCUs, has benefited from the continued funding Title III, part B provides. Specifically, officials at Clark Atlanta have credited Title III with enabling it to build and sustain its technological infrastructure and facilitating the infusion of technology into instruction.</p>
<p>Fort Valley State University</p> <p>Fort Valley State University, a public historically black university, was founded as Fort Valley State College in 1939 and became Fort Valley State University in 1996. Located in Fort Valley, Georgia, it is the state's only 1890 land grant institution. In fall 2002, 2,193 undergraduate students were enrolled, of which 94 percent were black and 56 percent were women.</p> <p>Type: 4-year or above</p> <p>Highest degree offered: master's</p> <p>Award periods and amounts funded: 10/1997-9/2002: \$8.3 million 10/2002-9/2007: \$4.8 million^a</p>	<p>Fort Valley State University reported using its Title III, part B grant to fund a number of efforts to improve academic quality, student services and outcomes, and institutional management. For example, to improve academic quality, the university reported using grant funds to establish a major in juvenile justice and a population studies center—the first of its kind in the state university system—to prepare students for careers as demographers. Fort Valley has also focused its grant efforts on strengthening its fine arts program. As part of its faculty and staff development program, the university reported providing two faculty members with funding that led to an advanced degree.</p> <p>To improve student services and outcomes, the university reported using grant funds to establish an academic success center, which is responsible for providing advisement services and referrals for additional services. The university also reported using the grant to enhance support services for students enrolled at its outreach sites. Specifically, the university has increased tutoring and counseling services for students at these locations for whom traveling to the main campus might not be practical. The university reported an increase in the pass rate for the Georgia Regents exam for students who participated in academic enrichment services.</p> <p>Fort Valley also reported using its current Title III grant to upgrade its network in support of its objective to redesign the system architecture and ensure that existing hardware is continuously upgraded. In particular, Title III funds were used to replace network hardware and outdated servers, increasing the overall speed of the network. Officials at the university told us that Title III funds from earlier grant periods provided the base funding to establish the college's technological infrastructure.</p>

**Appendix III: Overview of How Grants Have
Been Used by Institutions We Visited**

Grants awarded to	Grant uses and benefits
<p>Spelman College</p> <p>Spelman College, a private historically black liberal arts college for women in Atlanta, Georgia, was founded in 1881. In fall 2002, 2,121 undergraduate women were enrolled at the college, 97 percent of whom were black.</p> <p>Type: 4-year or above</p> <p>Highest degree offered: bachelor's</p> <p>Award periods and amounts funded:</p> <p>10/1997-9/2002: \$7.2 million</p> <p>10/2002-9/2007: \$4.3 million^a</p>	<p>Spelman reported using its grant to focus on improving academic quality and institutional management. Specifically, the grant has been used to strengthen writing, promote interdisciplinary teaching and research, integrate educational technology into the learning environment, and support an advanced program in computer science. To improve institutional management, Spelman has used its grant to ensure that the college has access to appropriate levels of technical computing and networking support services essential to effective use of technology resources for education and research.</p> <p>According to the project director, Title III funds have enabled Spelman to purchase sophisticated computer equipment for its computer science and math students that it would not have been able to obtain otherwise. Students who major in computer and information science acquire cutting-edge knowledge of the discipline. We toured a facility at the college that houses test networks for teaching purposes. In teams, students attempt to break into the test networks, enhancing their knowledge of network security without harming the college's actual network. Spelman also used Title III funds to wire each room in the dormitories on campus to enable students to connect to the campus network using a laptop or personal computer. The director of the project thinks technology will always be a key area covered by Title III funds at the college because it frees up funds to meet other needs.</p>
<p>Morehouse College</p> <p>Morehouse College is a private historically black liberal arts college for men located in Atlanta, Georgia. Established in 1867 in the basement of a Baptist church to prepare black men for the ministry and teaching, the school received full accreditation in 1957. In fall 2002, 2,738 undergraduate men were enrolled, 94 percent of whom were black.</p> <p>Type: 4-year or above</p> <p>Highest degree offered: bachelor's</p> <p>Award periods and amounts funded:</p> <p>10/1997-9/2002: \$6.9 million</p> <p>10/2002-9/2007: \$4.4 million^a</p>	<p>Morehouse College reported using its grant to fund several efforts designed to support students, improve technological capacity, promote faculty development, and develop a holistic approach to strategic planning and assessment to determine the effectiveness of academic programs and services. To support students, Morehouse has used its grant to support a tutoring initiative designed to retain freshmen, as well as a learning resource center that provides study space, a 24-hour computer lab, and supplemental educational materials for all students. Morehouse has also used its grant to cover the cost of professional counselors in its wellness center, which provides counseling, disability services, and workshops on a variety of topics such as test taking and study skills.</p> <p>Morehouse has relied on Title III funding to help build its technological infrastructure. For example, Title III funds have been used to pay for the installation of high-speed Internet lines, wiring of all buildings on campus including dormitories, and connecting all the buildings to a common network. An official at Morehouse told us the college's emphasis on technology stems from the need to compete with other institutions for the best students and to ensure that students graduate with technology skills that are necessary in the workplace.</p> <p>Morehouse reported that it has also used Title III funds to develop a strategic planning and assessment model that it will use to determine the overall effectiveness of its programs and services, including documenting student learning outcomes. Related to its efforts to promote faculty development, it has provided fellowships to help two faculty members complete advanced degrees.</p>

**Appendix III: Overview of How Grants Have
Been Used by Institutions We Visited**

Title V, part A Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions we visited in Texas

Grants awarded to	Grant uses and benefits
<p>University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)</p> <p>UTSA, a public Hispanic Serving Institution in San Antonio, Texas, was founded in 1969 to serve the needs of the multicultural population in the San Antonio area and South Texas. In fall 2002, 48 percent of the 18,729 undergraduate students enrolled were Hispanic, and 55 percent were women.</p> <p>Type: 4-year or above</p> <p>Highest degree offered: doctorate</p> <p>Award period and amount funded: 10/1999-9/2004: \$2 million</p>	<p>The University of Texas at San Antonio reported focusing its grant on improving student services to increase retention and graduation rates. Specifically, the university used its Title V grant to establish learning communities where cohorts of 25 students are enrolled in three linked courses. At the heart of the learning communities is the Freshman Seminar, a course that introduces students to resources that will help them succeed in college. Each course in a learning community is linked by a theme that connects the classes within the learning community to one another, offering students the opportunity to study a given topic from various points of view.</p> <p>UTSA reported it has used the grant to provide training for faculty to enhance their teaching techniques and understand the developmental needs of students in their classes. Officials at the university told us that the learning communities have changed how professors teach and that they understand their role in retaining and graduating students. One faculty member we spoke to said even though he has always received fairly high ratings from his students, he considered himself an average teacher before participating in the learning communities. He thinks he's more effective in the classroom now and credits the learning communities with the increased confidence he has about teaching and better relationships with faculty. Students we talked to agreed that being enrolled in three courses with the same group of students helped them connect more easily with other students and resources on campus, as well as teaching them about how to succeed in college.</p>
<p>Laredo Community College (LCC)</p> <p>LCC, a public Hispanic Serving Institution is located in Laredo, Texas, an isolated border town that is 150 miles from any major city in the United States. In fall 2002, 94 percent of the 7,766 undergraduate students enrolled were Hispanic and 59 percent were women.</p> <p>Type: 2-year</p> <p>Highest degree offered: associate's</p> <p>Award period and amount funded: 10/1999-9/2004: \$2.2 million</p>	<p>Laredo Community College reported using its Title V award to meet the demand for health care workers in the area. Since the grant was awarded to the college in 1999, two new hospitals have been built and work on a third facility is under way. The college has used its Title V grant primarily to increase student access and success in math and the sciences; for example, by providing funds for a new science facility to house 20 percent more students and by paying to renovate and update laboratory facilities and equipment. Title V funds covered 40 percent of the costs of construction for the new facility, and the college raised the remaining funds. The new building replaces a facility more than 30 years old that did not meet current safety standards.</p> <p>LCC also reported using its Title V grant to provide a comprehensive faculty development program designed to integrate technology and retention strategies into the curriculum. Officials at the college said the institution chose to focus its grant activities on faculty because they believe retention is driven by instruction. Changes in instruction and the curriculum due to this training are credited with the nursing program's recently achieving a 100 percent student pass rate on certifying examinations.</p> <p>LCC designated \$250,000 from its Title V grant to develop an endowment fund for the college. By matching each dollar provided by Title V, the college has used one-half of the interest generated annually from the endowment to provide scholarships for math and science students. College officials told us that the matching component has generated a substantial amount of interest in the community, with endowments being developed to benefit students in other disciplines.</p>

**Appendix III: Overview of How Grants Have
Been Used by Institutions We Visited**

Grants awarded to	Grant uses and benefits
<p>University of the Incarnate Word University of the Incarnate Word, a private liberal arts, Catholic institution in San Antonio, Texas. In fall 2002, 55 percent of the 3,337 undergraduate students were Hispanic and 67 percent were women.</p> <p>Type: 4-year or above</p> <p>Highest degree offered: doctorate</p> <p>Award periods and amount funded: 10/1999-9/2004: \$1.6 million</p>	<p>The focus of the University of Incarnate Word grant is on strengthening student learning through faculty development. The university aimed to change the classroom culture to better serve its diverse student body, particularly Hispanic students, by focusing on pedagogy, globalization, technology, mentoring, and recruitment and retention of minority faculty. According to one official at the university, students at the institution mirror the demographics of San Antonio, but the faculty did not and faculty were interested in how they could be more effective with these students. The university reported that it used its grant to develop and implement a linguistic and cultural diversity workshop to train faculty in how to cope with differences in learning among students from different cultures, and has provided Spanish language instruction to faculty. The university also used its grant to research models for recruiting and retaining minority faculty and is incorporating recommendations into its strategic plan.</p> <p>To promote globalization and research, Incarnate Word reported that it used the grant to provide faculty with grants to conduct research abroad. For example, using her newly acquired technology skills and seed money from Title V, one professor led a student expedition to map the ruins of an ancient Mayan city.</p> <p>Another key focus of the grant has been providing technology training to increase the infusion of technology into the classroom. According to university officials, most faculty at the college have participated in summer institutes and workshops, and many are creating Web pages for their courses using a course management software. The Web pages can be used to post syllabi and assignments, as well as to communicate with students in the class</p> <p>The university plans to sustain its faculty development activities at the conclusion of the grant using a portion of the interest from the endowment it has raised using grant funds.</p>

**Appendix III: Overview of How Grants Have
Been Used by Institutions We Visited**

Title III, part A Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities we visited in North Dakota

Grants awarded to	Grant uses and benefits
<p>United Tribes Technical College (UTTC)</p> <p>UTTC, a private tribal college located in Bismarck, North Dakota, was established in 1969 as an employment training center. In fall 2002, 89 percent of the 463 undergraduate students enrolled were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 59 percent were female.</p> <p>Type: 2-year</p> <p>Highest degree offered: associate's</p> <p>Award periods and amounts funded:</p> <p>10/1999-9/2004: \$1.4 million</p> <p>10/2002-9/2003: \$1.7 million^b</p>	<p>United Tribes Technical College reported that it used its Title III grant to develop comprehensive student services. In particular, the college leveraged its Title III funds with funds from the Department of Commerce to create a one-stop center that houses most services students need, such as registration, advising, tutoring, counseling, computer labs, a cafeteria, and student bookstore. The college also reported that it used grant funds to develop a retention model specifically designed to meet the needs of American Indian students. Officials told us that funds were also used to address retention because tribes don't have the resources to adequately prepare students for college.</p> <p>College officials also told us that grant funds were used to enhance student records management, improving communication between offices that interact with students, such as admissions and registration. The college has installed a system designed to consolidate its many separate databases that were housed in each student service office on campus.</p> <p>Officials at the college told us that the Title III grants it has received over the years have been an important source of funding, allowing the college to pursue institutional goals while freeing up other institutional funds to provide tuition assistance to needy students. Officials told us that the college does not participate in the federal student loan programs because it does not want to risk losing eligibility to participate in the federal Pell Grant program if loan default rates are too high.</p> <p>In 2002, United Tribes Technical College received a 1-year construction grant, which it has used to enhance its technological infrastructure, including enhancing connectivity to the North Dakota University System's interactive video network.</p>
<p>Sitting Bull College (SBC)</p> <p>SBC, is a public tribal college located on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, which spans parts of both North and South Dakota. The main campus is in Fort Yates, North Dakota, with satellite campuses in McLaughlin and Mobridge, South Dakota. In fall 2002, 89 percent of the 214 undergraduates enrolled at the college were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 74 percent were women.</p> <p>Type: 2-year</p> <p>Highest degree offered: associate's</p> <p>Award periods and amounts funded:</p> <p>10/1999-9/2004: \$2.1 million</p> <p>10/2002-9/2003: \$1.2 million^b</p>	<p>Sitting Bull College reported that the focus of its grant has been to improve student services and outcomes, along with fiscal stability. Officials told us that there is an acute need for services that will help bring students up to the college level because most students enter the college with below average skills in math, reading, and English. To address the academic deficiencies many students have, Sitting Bull college proposed learning assistance programs that would help students improve basic skills and additional student services. Officials told us that students who score below the 12th grade level in core courses are now required to take appropriate foundations courses. In the past many students opted out of these courses because they don't count toward graduation requirements, but they were failing as a result. Title III funds were used to renovate a building and purchase software and computers for this effort. The college has also implemented a survey designed to identify students at risk of failing or dropping out.</p> <p>Sitting Bull College also reported that it used grant funds to develop its fund-raising capacity and to establish an endowment. Because the college does not receive any state funding, it relies heavily on federal funding, primarily from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. College officials acknowledged that increasing fiscal stability is central to becoming more self-sufficient.</p> <p>In 2002, Sitting Bull College received a 1-year construction grant through Title III, which it is using for construction of a new campus.</p>

Source: GAO's analysis of grant activities from site visits and grantee performance reports submitted to the Department of Education.

**Appendix III: Overview of How Grants Have
Been Used by Institutions We Visited**

^aGrants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities are based on a formula that is calculated each year based in part on the number of Pell Grant recipients, the number of graduates, and the number of students that enroll in graduate school within 5 years after earning an undergraduate degree. Funding information for subsequent years of the grant cycle was not available from Education

^bIn addition to receiving a 5-year development grant through Title III, part A, these Tribal colleges were awarded a 1-year construction grant.

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Education



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

SEP 13 2004

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Ms. Cornelia M. Ashby
Director, Education, Workforce,
and Income Security Issues
United States General Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Ashby:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on your draft report, *Low-Income and Minority Serving Institutions: Department of Education Could Improve Its Monitoring and Assistance (GAO-04-961)*. We are pleased that the report highlights the substantial benefits to students and institutions resulting from the increased funding of the Title III and Title V grant programs. Using the program funds, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian Institutions, and other institutions that serve low-income students are making significant progress in strengthening academic quality, as well as improving the financial condition and management of their institutions.

In general, we agree with the information in the report and the General Accountability Office's (GAO) recommendation that the Department take steps to ensure that monitoring and technical assistance plans are carried out and targeted to at-risk grantees and that the needs of the grantees guide the technical assistance. While the report identifies areas for improvement, it also documents many of the action plan steps the Department is currently implementing. Our actions are already making improvements in the areas of monitoring, training, and technical assistance and we are firmly committed to completing our plans in a timely manner.

We have provided technical comments to the report separately.

We appreciate the GAO's analysis and work in this important area of continuing to develop low-income and minority serving institutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally L. Stroup".

Sally L. Stroup

1990 K STREET, N.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

Our mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.

Appendix V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

Contacts

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Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, Karen Burke, Carl Barden, Carla Craddock, Kim Gianopoulos, Catherine Hurley, Sheila Nicholson, Jim Rebbe, and Vanessa Taylor made important contributions to this report.

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