

# Archived Information

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## Goal 3. Ensure access to postsecondary education and lifelong learning.

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Postsecondary education is becoming ever more important to both individual and national well-being. Given current trends, at least two years of postsecondary education will be increasingly necessary in the next century to gain higher earnings and improved job opportunities. Although American higher education is regarded internationally as high-quality, almost 35 percent of our own high school graduates do not immediately attend postsecondary education. Moreover, postsecondary enrollment and completion rates are significantly lower for blacks and Hispanics and for students from lower- and middle-income families than for whites and those from higher-income families. Although enrollment rates have been rising in recent years, postsecondary education remains an elusive option for too many American high school graduates.

Besides helping to ensure postsecondary training for our young people, the Education Department encourages lifelong learning, whether it is graduate school, adult basic education, advanced technical training, or training in job entry skills. Lifelong learning is important particularly for persons with disabilities, adults lacking basic skills, and those whose job skills need upgrading or who require retraining because of labor market changes. Persons with disabilities are at least twice as likely as people without disabilities to be unemployed, which is estimated to cost society in excess of \$2 billion annually.

To help guarantee access to postsecondary education and lifelong learning, the Education Department continues to make progress in key areas, ensuring that the following four objectives are met:

**Objective 3.1: Secondary school students get the information, skills, and support they need to prepare successfully for postsecondary education.** Achievement of Goals 1 and 2 will go a long way toward making this a reality. The Education Department also needs to help motivate students to continue their education beyond high school by providing them with earlier and better information about what the benefits of postsecondary education are, what admission requirements are, how much college costs, and how they can get financial aid to help pay postsecondary costs.

**Objective 3.2: Postsecondary students receive the financial aid and support services they need to enroll in and complete a high-quality educational program.** Financial aid is provided to eligible postsecondary students to assist them in pursuing a postsecondary education.

**Objective 3.3: Postsecondary student aid delivery and program management is efficient, financially sound, and customer-responsive.** An efficient, effective, and customer-friendly financial aid delivery system is a hallmark of an effective student aid delivery system.

**Objective 3.4: All educationally disadvantaged adults can strengthen their literacy skills and improve their earning power over their lifetime through lifelong learning.** Best practices are identified, and performance data systems are updated. These steps greatly enhance the quality of rehabilitation and adult education programs by providing feedback for program development, supporting coordination with other Federal agencies, and improving employment outcomes for adults on welfare, those with disabilities, and those who have low levels of skills and education.