

## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Statement by  
Arne Duncan  
Secretary of Education  
on the  
U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Committee:

I want to begin by thanking Congress for your work on the 2014 appropriation for education. I appreciate the funding increases that you included in the fiscal year 2014 appropriation. However, it's important to recognize that total discretionary funding for the Department of Education, excluding Pell Grants, remains below the fiscal year 2010 level, and I worry about the long-term impact of the continuing slide in Federal education funding on the health of our economy and our democracy.

### **PRESIDENT OBAMA'S 2015 BUDGET REQUEST**

Turning to 2015, the overall discretionary request for the Department of Education is \$68.6 billion, an increase of \$1.3 billion, or 1.9 percent, over the 2014 level. Within this total, we have six key priorities: (1) increasing equity and opportunity for all students; (2) strengthening support for teachers and school leaders; (3) expanding high-quality preschool programs; (4) improving school safety and climate; (5) promoting educational innovation and improvement; and (6) ensuring access to affordable and quality postsecondary education.

### **EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY**

We are requesting \$300 million for a new Race to the Top – Equity and Opportunity competition centered on improving the academic performance of students in our Nation's highest poverty schools. RTT—Opportunity grantees would support: (1) developing systems that integrate data on school-level finance, human resources, and academic achievement;

(2) developing and retaining effective teachers and leaders in high-poverty schools;  
(3) increasing access to rigorous coursework; and (4) other evidence-based activities that mitigate the effects of concentrated poverty.

### **SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS**

A second priority in our 2015 request is to provide significant support for school teachers and leaders who are implementing new college- and career-ready (CCR) standards, turning around our lowest-performing schools, and using new evaluation systems to improve their practices. A key request in this area is \$200 million for ConnectEDucators, that would help educators transition to using technology and data to personalize learning and improve instruction, in support of the FCC's ConnectED initiative to equip our Nation's schools and libraries with high-speed connectivity. The program would benefit educators and students by creating high-quality, open digital learning resources aligned to CCR standards; using digital tools to personalize learning and implement new assessments; analyzing real-time data to improve student outcomes; using technology to increase student engagement; and providing remote access to effective educators.

We are requesting \$2.3 billion for Excellent Instructional Teams, which would provide both formula grants and competitive awards to help States and LEAs increase the effectiveness of teachers and principals. This total includes \$2.0 billion for Effective Teachers and Leaders State Grants to provide flexible, formula-based support for States and LEAs; \$320 million for the Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund to reform school leader advancement and compensation systems; and \$35 million for a transformed School Leadership program to expand the Department's focus on current school leaders aimed at strengthening essential leadership skills.

## **EXPANDING HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL**

The third major priority in the 2015 request is to continue the President's commitment to expanding educational opportunity for millions of children through a \$75 billion mandatory Preschool for All program that would partner with States to support universal access to high-quality preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families. Our preschool request also includes \$500 million to expand the Preschool Development Grants program that would help build State and local capacity to implement high-quality preschool programs.

In addition, we are requesting \$441.8 million for the Grants for Infants and Families program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), an increase of \$3.3 million to help States implement statewide systems of early intervention services for all eligible children with disabilities from birth through age 2 and their families.

## **AFFORDABILITY AND QUALITY IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

Our 2015 request also includes key initiatives to improve affordability and quality in postsecondary education. For example, we are asking for \$7 billion in mandatory budget authority over 10 years for new College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus grants to reward colleges that successfully enroll and graduate a significant number of low- and moderate-income students on time. This initiative would support innovations to further increase college access and success by providing funding to eligible institutions based upon the number of Pell students they graduate on time. The Satisfactory Academic Progress initiative would make changes to the Pell Grant eligibility provisions by strengthening academic progress requirements to encourage students to complete on time. The Budget would also provide Pell Grant eligibility to students who are co-enrolled in adult and postsecondary education as part of a career pathway program to

allow adults without a high school diploma to gain the knowledge and skills they need to secure a good job.

Second, we would use \$4 billion in mandatory funding to create a State Higher Education Performance Fund that would make 4-year competitive grants to States to support the successful implementation of performance-based policy and funding reforms that encourage and reward college affordability and ensure that students attend and complete postsecondary education.

Third, our 2015 request proposes \$100 million to expand support for the First in the World fund to make competitive awards to support improving educational outcomes, including on time completion rates, and making college more affordable for students and families, particularly for low-income students. The request also asks for \$75 million for College Success Grants for Minority-Serving Institutions, which would make competitive awards to minority-serving institutions designated under Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act.

Lastly, we are continuing our efforts to help student borrowers with existing debt to manage their obligations through income-driven repayment plans. Our 2015 request proposes to extend Pay As You Earn, which caps student loan payments at 10 percent of discretionary income, to all student borrowers.

## **EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT**

We continue to support innovation and improvement in elementary and secondary education, beginning with \$165 million for Investing in Innovation (i3), an increase of \$23.4 million, to maintain strong support for using an evidence-based approach to scale up the most effective approaches in high-need areas. The i3 request would provide up to \$49.5 million for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Education, an initiative that would pursue

technological breakthroughs with the potential to improve the effectiveness and productivity of teaching and learning.

Second, we are requesting \$150 million for a new High School Redesign program to support the transformation of the high school experience by funding competitive grants to school districts and their partners to redesign high schools to help ensure all students graduate from high school with college credit and career-related experiences or competencies.

Third, our 2015 request seeks \$170 million in new funding for a comprehensive STEM Innovation proposal to transform STEM education. This total includes \$110 million for STEM Innovation Networks to provide competitive awards to LEAs in partnership with institutions of higher education, other public agencies, and businesses to help increase the number of students who are effectively prepared for postsecondary education and careers in STEM fields. We also are asking for \$40 million to support STEM Teacher Pathways that would make competitive grants for recruiting recent college graduates and mid-career professionals in the STEM fields in high-need schools. An additional \$20 million would support the activities of a National STEM Master Teacher Corps, which would identify models to help America's brightest math and science teachers make the transition from excellent teachers to school leaders and advocates for STEM education.

In addition, the Budget provides a \$100 million increase for Special Education State Grants. This increase would support Results Driven Accountability incentive grants to improve special education services for children with disabilities. States awarded these grants would identify and implement promising, evidence-based reforms while also building State and local capacity to improve long-term outcomes.

Our 2015 request also includes a request of \$1.1 billion for a reauthorized Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education program. The reauthorization proposal would build on the experience of the i3 program by creating a discretionary fund aimed at promoting innovation and reform in CTE and replicating the success of proven models.

### **IMPROVING SCHOOL SAFETY AND CLIMATE**

The 2015 request would continue support for the Now is the Time school safety initiative by providing \$50 million for School Climate Transformation Grants to help create positive school climates that support effective education for all students; \$45 million for a Successful, Safe, and Healthy State and Local Grants program that would award grants to increase the capacity of States, districts, and schools to create safe, healthy, and drug-free environments; and \$25 million for Project Prevent grants to help LEAs break the cycle of violence through expanded access, school-based strategies that prevent future violence.

### **OPPORTUNITY, GROWTH, AND SECURITY INITIATIVE**

The Administration's Budget also includes a separate \$56 billion Opportunity, Security, and Growth Initiative. Our Education Budget would use this initiative to include additional investments of \$250 million for Preschool Development Grants, \$300 million for the ConnectEDucators initiative, \$200 million for Promise Neighborhoods, and also could be used to make other investments to ensure students have access to high-quality education, from preschool to college. All of these funds are in addition to the discretionary requests under the caps.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, our 2015 Budget reflects the President's determination to make the investments necessary to secure America's future prosperity. I look forward to working with the Subcommittee to secure support for the President's 2015 Budget for education.