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## Our Mission

The U.S. Department of Education's mission is *to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

## Mission and Organizational Structure

**Who We Are.** In 1867, the federal government recognized that furthering education was a national priority and created a federal education agency to collect and report statistical data. The Department was established as a cabinet-level agency in 1980. Today, the Department supports programs in every area and level of education.

**Our Public Benefit.** While recognizing the primary role of states and school districts in providing a high-quality education, the Department is committed to helping ensure that students throughout the nation develop skills to succeed in school, college, and the workforce. The Department supports efforts to help students succeed regardless of background or circumstance by encouraging challenging content, setting high expectations for all students, and monitoring academic progress.

The Department's largest fiscal responsibility is a portfolio of student loans (see the [Financial Highlights](#) and [Notes](#) sections of the *Agency Financial Report* [AFR]). The second-largest fiscal responsibility is grants to states, mostly for elementary and secondary education, awarded based on both statutory formulas (see the chart on page 6 of the AFR) and competitions. The third largest fiscal responsibility is student aid to help pay for college through Pell Grants, Work Study, and other campus-based programs (see the [Notes section](#) of the AFR).

The Department also supports research, collects education statistics, enforces civil rights statutes, and carries out competitive grant programs to promote innovation (see [The Department's Approach to Performance Management section](#)).

## Our Organization in Fiscal Year 2016

This chart reflects the coordinating structure of the U.S. Department of Education in FY 2016.

