



American Education: A Social Change Story
U.S. Under Secretary of Education, Martha Kanter

Hello RECSWUSA members! First, I would like to thank you for all the outstanding work you do in improving our world, and also for allowing me to share how the Department of Education is acting to expand opportunities and accelerate achievement for students locally, regionally, and globally.

The importance of education has long been understood by Rotary. As an organization, you have consistently worked to ensure an educated society by helping foster educated citizens, through programs such as the Ambassadorial and Teaching scholarships and grants. That same value lies at the heart of President Obama's vision for education in America. He recognizes the role education plays in bettering communities and securing our nation's future. For that reason, the President has set an ambitious goal: by 2020, America is to once again have "the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world." We once led the world in college completion. But for a generation now, our competitors have been passing us by.



The President has challenged us to put in place the programs, systems and supports that will ensure that our students achieve the goal. All of our work in the Department of Education is focused in this direction, from activities we're funding with stimulus dollars, to the

higher education programs in the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act, to our Blueprint for Reform, which lays out ideas for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The ESEA Blueprint

First, a word about the Blueprint. This plan for updating our main piece of K-12 legislation aims to significantly better prepare students for college so they can excel without needing remediation. We've also seized the opportunity to rethink the federal role. Secretary Duncan wants to transform the Education Department from a compliance-driven bureaucracy to an engine of innovation.

In our ESEA plan, we're taking off the blinders that focused solely on moving another percentage of kids to proficiency in 4th grade reading or 8th grade math. We do not support "teaching to the test". We have our eyes on the real prize: to graduate students ready to succeed in college and in their careers.

With its focus on improving teaching and learning and providing an excellent education to all of America's diverse learners, as well as offering greater flexibility, transparency and accountability for states, districts and schools, we are confident that our ESEA proposal is focused on the right priorities at the right time.

Higher education is now the capstone of our high expectations for all students. Meeting the President's higher education goal means we must raise our combined rate of two-year and four-year college graduates from 40% to 60%, and produce 8.2 million more undergraduates over the next decade, beyond the expected enrollment due to population growth. This is more than a potential increase in enrollment. It is a change in the expectations we place on students, faculty and institutions for student success. Colleges and universities as well as states are reexamining their policies and procedures to not only bring more students into college, but to get them across the finish line. Right now, only half of students in American higher education complete

their baccalaureate degrees within six years. We are taking steps to fix this longstanding problem across our nation.

Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

In order to better prepare students for college and careers, we must better prepare teachers for the classroom. It's time for a new era of excellence and rigor in our colleges of education where most teacher preparation takes place. In the past, the Department of Education has underinvested in quality teacher and principal preparation programs, and we are working to close this gap. In reauthorizing ESEA, we want to create policies and programs that elevate the teaching profession.

At the same time, states and districts must do more to address the persistence of weak teacher preparation programs. We're encouraged by Louisiana's progress in measuring the impact of in-state teacher preparation programs on student performance and growth. Florida and Texas are also moving in this direction.

The ingredients of a good teacher preparation program are no mystery. The best programs are coherent, up-to-date, and research-based. They provide students with mastery in content and pedagogy. They have strong field-based programs in local public schools to drive much of the coursework in classroom management and student learning. They prepare teachers who are ready to work with diverse students in high-need schools. They train future teachers to use data to inform instruction and target as well as address learning gaps, all of which are focused toward increasing student achievement.

These programs ensure one or more semesters' worth of student teaching, where students are supervised by well-qualified mentor teachers. Some carefully-run clinical programs incorporate best practices from high-performing public and charter schools and other innovative models focused on high learning outcomes. More universities are partnering with school districts, opening up lab schools, magnet schools, and charter schools, and creating professional development schools for education school students to gain clinical

experience. Others are opening their doors to alternative certification programs.

Both the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education are actively involved in the drive to link teacher preparation programs to better student outcomes. One of AACTE's most promising efforts thus far aims to develop the first nationally accessible, performance-based assessment of teacher candidate readiness.

Now, let me lay out three areas that are essential to the future of higher education: access, quality, and completion.

1. Student Access

Rotary International shares the Obama administration's vision to make education more accessible for people from all economic and social backgrounds. The Obama Administration is committed to increasing resources for students, especially those who need it the most. When the President signed the Reconciliation Act, he ensured that Pell Grants will be available for the next decade so that all Americans who want to attend college will be able to go. In brief, the new law will:

- Increase the maximum Pell I Grant award to \$5,500 next year to \$5,975¹ by 2017, by indexing the award to the Consumer Price Index for five years starting in 2013;
- Pay off most of the FY 2011 Pell Grant shortfall;
- Provide \$2.55 billion to support Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities and other Minority-Serving Institutions;

¹ Burke, Katie. "Health-Care Bill Increases Pell Grant Funding." *The Daily of the University of Washington*. 29 Mar. 2010. Web. 1 June 2010. <<http://dailyuw.com/2010/3/29/health-care-bill-increases-pell-grant-funding/>>.

- Entitle qualified nonprofit lenders to service direct loans and provide about \$1.5 billion in additional funding for these efforts;
- Invest \$2 billion over four years in community colleges through the Community College and Career Training Grant program. It is designed to help unemployed Americans, and others facing barriers to employment, gain the knowledge and skills to enter or re-enter the workforce;
- Invest \$750 million in the College Access Challenge Grant program to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in college and manage their student loans; and
- Cap a new borrower's loan payment at 10% of their net income, after adjustments for basic living costs, and forgive any remaining debt after 20 years – or, 10 years if they become a teacher, a police officer, or enter another form of public service.

So, there's a lot for us to celebrate in this landmark legislation.

The federal government continues to work to ensure all Americans access to an affordable, quality higher education.

2. Quality Educational Programs and Services

Regaining our position as a leader on the world stage will require a richer, fuller understanding of other cultures and countries. For that reason, this administration is placing increased value on international and foreign language studies, and I would like to speak specifically to the important role of quality in international education. Andre Lewis has been appointed as the new Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Education. This position was included in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act because Congressman Holt and his colleagues recognized the need for leadership in international education at the U.S. Department of Education. When Congressman Holt received the 2009 Language Flagship Leadership Award from the

American Councils for International Education in May 2009, he called upon congressional leaders and the country in general "to reach a political consensus in this country that our government must change course and stop undervaluing and under-investing in foreign language education. Leaders from both parties should recognize the issue's importance and bring forth strategies to increase our interest and our ability in foreign languages." Andre Lewis brings a wealth of experience in his previous work at the State Department and in global economic development for the city of Los Angeles as well as degrees in Russian Studies and Law.

The Department of Education has historically taken an active role in improving connections between American institutions and those abroad, however, that role is strengthening considerably. The International Education Programs Service, which is housed in the Office of Postsecondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education, administers 14 grant programs with annual funding of approximately \$125 million in FY 2010. The Service funds higher education institutions, organizations, and individuals to improve the nation's capacity in foreign languages, especially the less commonly taught languages, such as Arabic, Japanese, Afrikaans, and Tagalog,² area and international studies, and international business.

Ten of the 14 programs are authorized by Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and four are authorized by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (Fulbright-Hays Act) of 1961. All of the programs, including abstracts of recently awarded grants and grant application packages, are described in detail on our international program web site: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps.

Our Title VI National Resource Centers fund courses in approximately 120 foreign languages, and our Foreign Language and

² "Universities Address U.S. Needs in Less Commonly Taught Languages." *International Education Programs Service*. U.S. Department of Education, 30 Aug. 2005. Web. 1 June 2010. <<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/lctlanguages.html>>.

Area Studies Fellowships sponsor students studying approximately 110 different languages every year. We also provide overseas advanced language training for U.S. students through the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad program in a range of priority languages covering the regions of the Middle East, Africa, South Asia Asia/Pacific and Eurasia. These students spend a summer, a semester, or sometimes even a full academic year studying less commonly taught languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Thais, Turkish, or Yoruba.

Additionally, we support innovative approaches to language learning and proficiency assessment through our network of 15 Language Resource Centers. In fact, we have identified a list of 78 less commonly taught languages spoken in regions all over the world. When feasible, colleges and universities funded by the International Education Programs Service are encouraged to engage in projects that incorporate any of the less commonly taught languages.

In FY 2010, we will award nearly 600 grants to colleges, universities, and individuals under programs administered by IEPS. The focus will continue to be on area studies or international business, international studies, and foreign language learning. We especially encourage our grantees to include under-represented populations (African American, Hispanic, Native American students, faculty, and administrators) in the programs that we administer. And, during FY 2010, we developed priorities that addressed the need to extend participation in international education and foreign language learning to a more diverse group of students, faculty, and institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribally Controlled Colleges.

3. College Completion

The third part of our agenda aims to ensure that more students complete a college education. As I said before, only half of students in our colleges and universities obtain a baccalaureate degree in six years. At community college, only about 25% finish in six years. This is a

national tragedy for individual students and for our country. We must do all we can to address this crisis. What can we do to ensure a better match between student aspirations and their performance? How can we curb the college drop-out or stop-out rate? What are the barriers to college completion and what are we doing about them? These are the questions we are asking at the federal level.

When a student fails to graduate, it is often a failure shared by the student and the institution. We must ensure that there will be fewer cracks for students to slip through, with increased student support services, learning communities, freshmen year programs, better tutoring, more scholarship support, and more carefully targeted, evidence-based interventions.

So that is our reform agenda: Access, Quality and Completion to meet President Obama's 2020 goal.

Leadership

Let me close with a few words about leadership. Recently, Daniel Pink told a technology gathering in Minnesota, "We need to prepare kids for their future, not our past." Pink is an economist and author, not an educator, but his comment is relevant to our charge as education leaders. Our students must succeed in a very different world than the one any of us grew up in. And their success rests on their ability to be innovative, entrepreneurial, and even visionary.

What does that mean for us? I think it means that it is not enough to educate students for a job today.

We must remember that our colleges and universities are sanctuaries of knowledge and engines for advancing our democratic society.

Today's students will have many jobs, and will change careers a number of times, so they have to be equipped for lifelong and continuous learning. They have to demonstrate the outcomes that the

American Association of Colleges & Universities has captured in their recent study "Raising the Bar."

The study revealed that 89% of employers want colleges and universities to place more emphasis on written and oral communication.³ Some two thirds of them also want more emphasis on science and technology, global knowledge, teamwork skills, cross-cultural competence, and ethical decision-making.

As leaders, we need to equip students with the experiences, skills and resources to succeed in their future – a future in which they'll hold multiple jobs of increasing complexity, as members of increasingly diverse communities.

We need to look at what works, according to our best research – and bring it to scale. We need to launch a sophisticated access-quality-completion campaign on every campus of every institution – in order to reclaim America's place as first in the world, by 2020.

Our students are children born in the emerging knowledge economy. Preparing them to be 21st century leaders is a challenge for them and a change for us. But *we* have to demonstrate our own leadership now, so our students can step confidently and capably into the leadership roles that await *them* in the future.

As President Obama said earlier this year, "Our goal is to put us on a path to raise the quality of American education, to prepare our children to succeed in their lives and their careers, and to secure America's success in the 21st century." We can do this. Thank you for giving me the chance to share our agenda with you, and thank you for your time and commitment to service.

³ *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*. Study. Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2010. Web. 1 June 2010. <http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2009_EmployerSurvey.pdf>.