

**U.S. Department of Education
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
Washington, DC 20006**

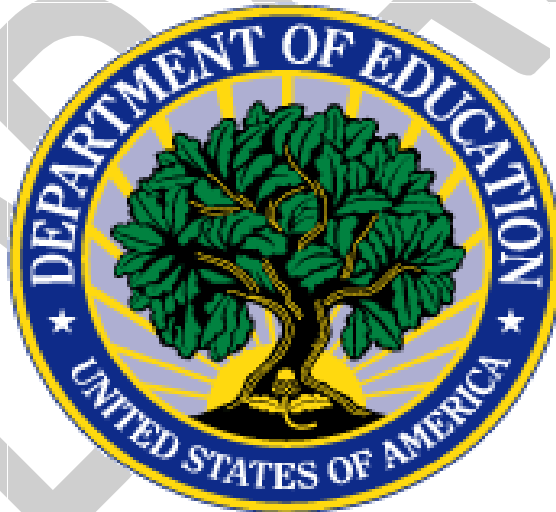
www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

**FY 2015
APPLICATION FOR GRANTS
UNDER THE
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM**

FORM APPROVED

CFDA NUMBER: 84.042A

OMB No. XXXXXXXXXXXXX



**DATED MATERIAL – OPEN IMMEDIATELY
CLOSING DATE: XXXXXX**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dear Applicant Letter	
4	
Competition Highlights	
6	
Overview Student Support Services Program	
9	
Grants.gov Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants	
12	
Application Transmittal Instructions	15
Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards	
18	
Authorizing Legislation	
66	
SSS Program Regulations	
79	
Current Year Low-Income Levels	
100	
Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs	
101	
Supplemental Information	
102	
SSS Program Profile Form	

.....
106

Part IV—SSS Program Assurances

.....
113

Part V—Prior Experience

.....
115

INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for Completing the Application Package.....118

Instructions for Project Narrative – Selection Criteria

.....
120

Competitive Preference Priorities for FY 2015.....124

List of Instructions for Standard Forms

.....
127

Instructions for the SF-424.....

.....
Instructions for Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF-424.....

.....
Definitions for Department of Education Supplemental Information For SF 424.....

.....
Instructions for ED 524 Budget Summary Form & Itemized Line Item Budget.....

.....
138

.....
Instructions for Completion of SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.....

.....
Survey Instructions on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants.....

.....
General Education Provisions Act (GEPA).....

Government Performance And Results Act (GPRA)

.....
147

Application Checklist

.....
149

Paperwork Burden Statement.....150

DRAFT

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in applying for a grant under the Student Support Services (SSS) Program. The SSS Program provides grants to institutions of higher education to operate projects that provide opportunities for academic development, student assistance with basic college requirements, and motivation for students to successfully complete their postsecondary education. The goal of SSS is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants.

This letter highlights a few items in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 application package that will be important to you in applying for a grant under this program. The “Competition Highlights” section notes some of the requirements for applying for a grant under the FY 2015 SSS Program competition. You should review the entire application package carefully before preparing and submitting your application. Information on the SSS Program is accessible at the U.S. Department of Education (Department) Web site at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>

In the FY 2015 competition, there are two competitive preference priorities: 1. Increasing Postsecondary Success; 2(a). Providing Individualized Counseling for Personal, Career, and Academic Matters and 2(b). Individual Counseling Activities Based on Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness.

Applications for FY 2015 grants under the SSS Program must be submitted electronically using the Grants.gov system. An applicant who is unable to submit an application through the Grants.gov system must submit a written request for a waiver of the electronic submission requirement at least two weeks before the deadline date. Additional information about Grants.gov submission requirements can be found in the Competition Highlights, the Notice published in the Federal Register, and in the transmittal instructions, which are included in this package. Grants.gov is accessible through its portal page at <http://www.Grants.gov>.

Also, it is imperative that your application includes a strong evaluation plan. The peer reviewers will be instructed to look closely at the potential of SSS Program applicants to successfully reach their individual project goals, which are driven by the performance indicators for the SSS Program. The evaluation plan should not only include formative and summative measures, but also address the use of appropriate controls and techniques that provide for independent evaluation. The evaluation plan should shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period and provide benchmarks for monitoring progress and measurement of that progress throughout the grant award period. You should pay close attention to the information provided in the Instructions for the Project Narrative section of this application regarding the development of your evaluation activity.

For more information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, please refer to the official Notice published in the Federal Register, and included

in this application booklet. You are reminded that the Notice published in the Federal Register is the official document and that you should not rely upon any information that is inconsistent with the guidance contained within that official document.

Thank you for your interest in the Student Support Services Program. We look forward to receiving your application.

Sincerely,

James T. Minor, Ph.D.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Higher Education Programs

COMPETITION HIGHLIGHTS

1. **SSS Program applications for FY 2015 must be submitted electronically using Grants.gov.** You are urged to acquaint yourself with the requirements of Grants.gov early as the registration procedures may require 5 or more days to complete. A more thorough discussion is included later in this application package. Grants.gov is accessible through its portal page at: **<http://www.Grants.gov>**. The requirements for obtaining an exception to the electronic submission requirement have changed and are included in the Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards (Notice) for FY 2015. If you think you may need an exception, you are urged to review the requirements promptly.
2. It is important to know that the Grants.gov site works differently than the Department's e-Application system, used in past competitions. Grants.gov does not allow applicants to "un-submit" applications. Therefore, if you discover that changes or additions are needed once your application has been accepted and validated by the Department, you must "re-submit" the application. You should know that if the Department receives duplicate applications, we will accept and process the application with the latest "date/time received" validation.
3. Please note that you must submit your application by 4:30:00 p.m. (Washington, D.C. time) on or before the application deadline date. Late applications will not be accepted. **We suggest that you submit your application several days before the deadline.** The Department is required to enforce the established deadline to ensure fairness to all

applicants. No changes or additions to an application will be accepted after the deadline date and time.

4. Electronic submission of applications is required; therefore, you must submit an electronic application unless you follow the procedures outlined in the Notice for FY 2015 and qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement.
5. Applicants are required to adhere to the page limit specified in the Application Narrative Instruction portion of the application. The Notice contains specific information governing page limits and formatting instructions. **The total page limit for the project narrative portion of the application for the FY 2015 SSS Program competition is 65 pages.** However, any application addressing the competitive preference priorities may include up to four additional pages for each of the priorities if addressed. A total of 12 additional pages can be used to discuss how the application meets the competitive preference priorities. The additional pages allotted to address priorities cannot be used for or transferred to the project narrative or any other section of the application. **Applicants addressing the priorities should include them in a separate section of the application submission, to discuss how the application meets the competitive preference priorities.**
6. All attachments must be in .PDF format. Other types of files will not be accepted. Please note, once you download an application from Grants.gov, you will be working offline and saving data on your computer. It is important to note where you are saving the Grants.gov file on your computer. You will need to log on to Grants.gov to upload and submit the application (this is different from e-Application, where you may have previously worked online and saved data to the Department's database). You must provide the DUNS number that was used when your organization registered with the System for Award Management (SAM), formerly Central Contractor Registry (CCR).

For Grants.gov related questions and assistance, please contact:

Support Desk e-Mail: support@Grants.gov
Support Desk Telephone: (800) 518-4726
Contact Telephone Hours: 24 hours, 7 days a week, except Federal holidays
Online Web Site: <http://www.Grants.gov>

Also, refer to the "Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants" section found in this application booklet.

You are reminded that the Notice published in the Federal Register is the official document and that you should not rely upon any information that is inconsistent with the guidelines contained within the official document.

7. As you develop your application, we ask you to carefully consider the specific content that you will provide in the Objectives section of the application. This part of the application should address the appropriate standardized objectives related to the participants' academic achievements, including retention, academic standing, and graduation/transfer as stated on the SSS Program Profile Sheet.

8. In the Project Narrative, you must address each of the appropriate objectives, and explain how the objective is ambitious and attainable. Applicants should use comparative data to show why the proposed percentages are ambitious based on information provided in the Need section of the Project Narrative and attainable based on the information provided in the Plan of Operation and the resources available to the project. **Applicants may not modify, amend or delete any of these objectives.**
9. Consistent with the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), applicants may submit multiple SSS program applications to address the needs of different campuses of a single institution or to address the needs of the different populations that have been identified in this application (e.g., students with disabilities; students for whom English is a second language; students entering specific disciplines of study) as appropriate recipients for project services as defined by the program regulations.
10. In the FY 2015 competition, the Department has established two competitive preference priorities. They are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Increasing Postsecondary Success (up to 10 additional points). The Department is using this Competitive Preference Priority to focus on postsecondary persistence and completion rates among students from high-need backgrounds.

Competitive Preference Priority 2(a): Providing Individualized Counseling for Personal, Career, and Academic Matters (1 additional point). The Department is using this competitive preference priority to focus on improved individualized counseling to students. The Department believes that SSS projects can play a strong role in improving postsecondary outcomes by placing a greater emphasis on proactive coaching strategies designed to increase student success.

Competitive Preference Priority 2(b): Individual Counseling Activities Based on Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness (2 additional points). In recent years, the Department has placed an increasing emphasis on promoting evidence-based practices through our grant competitions. We believe that encouraging applicants to focus on proven strategies can only enhance the quality of our competitions. Accordingly, within the competitive priority for individualized counseling (competitive preference priority 2(a)), we give additional competitive preference to applications that submit moderate evidence of effectiveness that supports their proposed strategies for providing individualized counseling.

Competitive preference priority 1 is from the Department's Notice of Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637). In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(iv), competitive preference priority 2(a) is from Section 402D(c)(1) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). Competitive preference priority 2(b) is from 34 CFR 75.266.

Applicants must address the competitive preference priorities in a separate section of the application submission to receive up to an additional 13 points. An applicant addressing the competitive preference priorities for a maximum of 13 points will receive up to an additional 13 points based on the extent to which the application contains substantive information regarding the priorities. Applicants may include up to four additional pages to address each competitive preference priority. These additional pages cannot be used for or transferred to the project narrative. A total of 12 pages can be used to discuss the competitive preference priorities.

11. All applicants must complete the SSS Program Profile form. The SSS Program Profile form contains three standardized objectives. All applicants are required to propose the percentage or number--as indicated on the form--at which each of these objectives will be met. Applicants may not modify, amend or delete any of these objectives. Instructions for submitting the form` are included in the Instructions for Completing the Application Package.
12. All applicants must provide a one-page abstract. Complete instructions for submitting the abstract are included in the Instructions for Completing the Application Package in this application. The abstract must be uploaded into the ED Abstract Form section in Grants.gov.

Information on the SSS Program is accessible at the Department's website at:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>.

OVERVIEW

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

Authorization

Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended; Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Chapter 1, Sec. 402D;
20 U.S.C. 1070a-14

Program Regulations

34 CFR part 646 Student Support Services Program

What is the Student Support Services Program?

The Student Support Services Program provides grants for projects designed to—

- (a) Increase the college retention and graduation rates of eligible students;
- (b) Increase the transfer rate of eligible students from two-year to four-year institutions; and
- (c) Foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, individuals with disabilities, homeless children and youth, foster care youth, or other disconnected students; and
- (d) Improve the financial and economic literacy of students in areas such as—
 - (1) Basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills;
and
 - (2) Basic economic decision-making skills.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

Who is eligible to receive a grant?

An institution of higher education or a combination of institutions of higher education is eligible to receive a grant to carry out a Student Support Services project.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

What activities and services does a project provide?

Required Services

A Student Support Services project must provide the following services:

(1) Academic tutoring, directly or through other services provided by the institution, to enable students to complete postsecondary courses, which may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects.

(2) Advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection.

(3)(i) Information on both the full range of Federal student financial aid programs and benefits (including Federal Pell Grant awards and loan forgiveness) and resources for locating public and private scholarships; and

(ii) Assistance in completing financial aid applications, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

(4) Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy of students, including financial planning for postsecondary education.

(5) Activities designed to assist participants enrolled in four-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, graduate and professional programs.

(6) Activities designed to assist students enrolled in two-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, a four-year program of postsecondary education.

Permissible Services

A Student Support Services project may provide the following services:

(1) Individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic matters provided by assigned counselors.

(2) Information, activities, and instruction designed to acquaint students participating in the project with the range of career options available to the students.

(3) Exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students.

(4) Mentoring programs involving faculty or upper class students, or a combination thereof.

(5) Securing temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for—

(i) Students who are homeless children and youths or were formerly homeless children and youths; and

(ii) Foster care youths.

(6) Programs and activities as described in paragraph (a) of this section or paragraphs (b)(1) through (b)(4) of this section that are specially designed for students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students who are individuals with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths, students who are foster care youth, or other disconnected students.

(7) Other activities designed to meet the purposes of the Student Support Services Program in §646.1.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

[75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

DRAFT

IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ FIRST

U.S. Department of Education Grants.gov Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants

To facilitate your use of Grants.gov, this document includes important submission procedures you need to be aware of to ensure your application is received in a timely manner and accepted by the Department of Education.

ATTENTION – Adobe Forms and PDF Files Required

Applications submitted to Grants.gov for the Department of Education will be posted using Adobe forms. Therefore, applicants will need to download the latest version of Adobe reader (at least Adobe Reader 10.1.14). (Please note that in early 2013, Grants.gov discovered an issue with the newest version of Adobe Reader XI but it was subsequently resolved.) Information on computer and operating system compatibility with Adobe and links to download the latest version is available on Grants.gov at this link: [compatibility table](#). We strongly recommend that you review these details on [www.Grants.gov](#) before completing and submitting your application. In addition, applicants should submit their application a day or two in advance of the closing date as detailed below. Also, applicants are required to upload their attachments in .pdf format only. (See details below under “Attaching Files – Additional Tips.”) If you have any questions regarding this matter please email the Grants.gov Contact Center at support@grants.gov or call 1-800-518-4726.

- 1) **REGISTER EARLY** – Grants.gov registration involves many steps including registration on SAM ([www.sam.gov](#)) which may take approximately one week to complete, but could take upwards of several weeks to complete, depending upon the completeness and accuracy of the data entered into the SAM database by an applicant. You may begin working on your application while completing the registration process, but you cannot submit an application until all of the Registration steps are complete. Please note that once your SAM registration is active, it will take 24-48 hours for the information to be available in Grants.gov, and before you can submit an application through Grants.gov. For detailed information on the Registration Steps, please go to: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html> [Note: Your organization will need to update its SAM registration annually (formerly Central Contractor Registry (CCR).)]

Primary information about SAM is available at [www.sam.gov](#). However, to further assist you with obtaining and registering your DUNS number and TIN in SAM or updating your existing SAM account the Department of Education has prepared a SAM.gov Tip Sheet which you can find at: <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/sam-faqs.html>

- 2) **SUBMIT EARLY** – We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the last day to submit your application. Grants.gov will put a date/time stamp on your application and then process it after it is fully uploaded. The time it takes to upload an application will vary depending on a number of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection, and the time it takes Grants.gov to process the application will vary as well. If Grants.gov rejects your application (see step three below), you will need to resubmit successfully to Grants.gov before 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date.

Note: To submit successfully, you must provide the DUNS number on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov. This DUNS number is typically the same number used when your organization registered with the SAM (formerly CCR -Central Contractor Registry). If you do not enter the same DUNS number on your application as the DUNS you registered with, Grants.gov will reject your application.

- 3) **VERIFY SUBMISSION IS OK** – You will want to verify that Grants.gov received your application submission on time and that it was validated successfully. To see the date/time your application was received, login to Grants.gov and click on the Track My Application link. For a successful submission, the date/time received should be earlier than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time, on the deadline date, AND the application status should be: Validated, Received by Agency, or Agency Tracking Number Assigned. Once the Department of Education receives your application from

Grants.gov, an Agency Tracking Number (PR/award number) will be assigned to your application and will be available for viewing on Grants.gov's Track My Application link.

If the date/time received is later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, D.C. time, on the deadline date, your application is late. If your application has a status of "Received" it is still awaiting validation by Grants.gov. Once validation is complete, the status will either change to "Validated" or "Rejected with Errors." If the status is "Rejected with Errors," your application has not been received successfully. Some of the reasons Grants.gov may reject an application can be found on the Grants.gov site: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>. For more detailed information on troubleshooting Adobe errors, you can review the Adobe Reader Error Messages document at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/troubleshooting/encountering-error-messages.html>. If you discover your application is late or has been rejected, please see the instructions below. Note: You will receive a series of confirmations both online and via e-mail about the status of your application. Please do not rely solely on e-mail to confirm whether your application has been received timely and validated successfully.

Submission Problems – What should you do?

If you have problems submitting to Grants.gov before the closing date, please contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/about/contact-us.html>, or access the Grants.gov Self-Service web portal at: <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>

If electronic submission is optional and you have problems that you are unable to resolve before the deadline date and time for electronic applications, please follow the transmittal instructions for hard copy applications in the Federal Register notice and get a hard copy application postmarked by midnight on the deadline date.

If electronic submission is required, you must submit an electronic application before 4:30:00 p.m., unless you follow the procedures in the Federal Register notice and qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement and submit, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. (See the Federal Register notice for detailed instructions.)

Helpful Hints When Working with Grants.gov

Please note, once you download an application from Grants.gov, you will be working offline and saving data on your computer. Please be sure to note where you are saving the Grants.gov file on your computer. You will need to logon to Grants.gov to upload and submit the application. **You must provide the DUNS number on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov.**

Please go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/about/contact-us.html> for help with Grants.gov. For additional tips related to submitting grant applications, please refer to the Grants.gov Submit Application FAQs found on the Grants.gov <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/general-support/faqs.html>.

Dial-Up Internet Connections

When using a dial up connection to upload and submit your application, it can take significantly longer than when you are connected to the Internet with a high-speed connection, e.g. cable modem/DSL/T1. While times will vary depending upon the size of your application, it can take a few minutes to a few hours to complete your grant submission using a dial up connection. **If you do not have access to a high-speed connection and electronic submission is required, you may want to consider following the instructions in the Federal Register notice to obtain an exception to the electronic submission requirement no later than two weeks before the application deadline date.** (See the Federal Register notice for detailed instructions.)

MAC Users

For MAC compatibility information, review the Operating System Platform Compatibility Table at the following Grants.gov link: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/recommended-software.html>. **If electronic submission is required and you are concerned about your ability to submit electronically as a non-windows user, please follow instructions in the Federal Register notice to obtain an exception to the electronic submission requirement no later than two weeks before the application deadline date.** (See the Federal Register notice for detailed instructions.)

Attaching Files – Additional Tips

Please note the following tips related to attaching files to your application, especially the requirement that applicants **only include read-only, non-modifiable .PDF files** in their application:

1. Ensure that you attach **.PDF files only** for any attachments to your application, and they must be in a **read-only, non-modifiable format**. PDF files are the only Education approved file type accepted as detailed in the Federal Register application notice. Applicants must submit individual .PDF files only when attaching files to their application. Specifically, the Department will not accept any attachments that contain files within a file, such as PDF Portfolio files, or an interactive or fillable .PDF file. Any attachments uploaded that are not .PDF files or are password protected files will not be read. If you need assistance converting your files to a .pdf format, please refer to the following Grants.gov webpage with links to conversion programs under the heading of additional resources:
<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>
2. Grants.gov cannot process an application that includes two or more files that have the same name within a grant submission. Therefore, each file uploaded to your application package should have a unique file name.
3. When attaching files, applicants should follow the guidelines established by Grants.gov on the size and content of file names. Uploaded files must be less than 50 characters, contain no spaces, no special characters (example: -, &, *, %, /, #, \) including periods (.), blank spaces and accent marks. Applications submitted that do not comply with the Grants.gov guidelines will be rejected at Grants.gov and not forwarded to the Department.
4. Applicants should limit the size of their file attachments. Documents submitted that contain graphics and/or scanned material often greatly increase the size of the file attachments and can result in difficulties opening the files. For reference, the average discretionary grant application package totals 1 to 2 MB. Therefore, you may want to check the total size of your package before submission.

3/2014

APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

ATTENTION ELECTRONIC APPLICANTS: Please note that you must follow the Application Procedures as described in the Federal Register Notice announcing the grant competition.

This program requires the electronic submission of applications; specific requirements and waiver instructions can be found in the Federal Register Notice.

According to the instructions found in the Federal Register Notice, those requesting and qualifying for an exception to the electronic submission requirement may submit an application by mail, commercial carrier or by hand delivery.

If you want to apply for a grant and be considered for funding, you must meet the following deadline requirements:

Applications Submitted Electronically

You must submit your grant application through the Internet using the software provided on the Grants.gov Web site (<http://www.grants.gov>) by 4:30:00 p.m. (Washington, D.C. time) on or before the deadline date.

If you submit your application through the Internet via the Grants.gov Web site, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement when we receive your application.

For more information on using Grants.gov, please refer to the "Notice Inviting Applications" that was published in the Federal Register or visit <http://www.grants.gov>.

Submission of Paper Applications by Mail:

If you submit your application in paper format by mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier), you must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address:

**U.S. Department of Education
Application Control Center
Attention: CFDA Number 84.042A
LBJ Basement Level 1
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4260**

You must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

- (1) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark.
- (2) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.
- (3) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.
- (4) Any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If you mail your application through the U.S. Postal Service, we do **not** accept either of the following as proof of mailing:

1. A private metered postmark.
2. A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

An applicant should note that the U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, an applicant should check with its local post office.

Special Note: Due to potential disruption to normal mail delivery, the Department encourages you to consider using an alternative delivery method (for example, a commercial carrier, such as Federal Express or United Postal Service; U.S. Postal Service Express Mail; or a courier service) to transmit your application for this competition to the Department. If you use an alternative delivery method, please obtain the appropriate proof of mailing under “Applications Delivered by Mail,” and then follow the instructions for “Applications Delivered by Hand.”

Submission of Paper Applications by Hand Delivery:

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you (or a courier service) may deliver your paper application to the Department by hand. You must deliver the original and two copies of your application by hand, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address:

**U.S. Department of Education
Application Control Center
Attention: CFDA Number 84.042A
550 12th Street, SW.
Room 7039, Potomac Center Plaza
Washington, DC 20202-4260**

Note for Mail or Hand Delivery of Paper Applications: If you mail or hand deliver your application to the Department—

1. You must indicate on the envelope, and--if not provided by the Department--in Item 11 of the SF 424, the CFDA number, including suffix letter, if any, of the competition under which you are submitting your application; and
2. The Application Control Center will mail to you a notification of receipt of your grant application. If you do not receive this notification within 15 business days from the application deadline date, you should call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

Application Control Center Hours of Operation

The Application Control Center accepts application deliveries daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (Washington, D.C. time) except Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

Late Applications

If your application is late, we will notify you that we will not consider the application.

DRAFT

4000-01-U

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Student Support Services Program

AGENCY: Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of
Education

ACTION: Notice.

Overview Information:

Student Support Services Program (SSS Program)

Notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY)
2015.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:
84.042A.

Dates:

Applications Available: [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE
FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS
AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: [INSERT DATE 105 DAYS
AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of the SSS Program is to
increase the number of disadvantaged, low-income college
students, first-generation college students, and college students

with disabilities in the United States who successfully complete a program of study at the postsecondary level. The support services that are provided should increase the retention and graduation rates for these categories of students and facilitate their transfer from two-year to four-year colleges and universities. The support services should also foster an institutional climate that supports the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are historically underrepresented in postsecondary education, students with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths, students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system, and other disconnected students. Student support services should also improve the financial and economic literacy of students.

Priorities: This notice contains two competitive preference priorities. Competitive preference priority 1 is from the Department's Notice of Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637). In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(iv), competitive preference priority 2(a) is from Section 402D(c)(1) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). Competitive preference priority 2(b) is from 34 CFR 75.266.

Note: Applicants must include, in the one-page abstract submitted with the application, a statement indicating whether the competitive preference priorities are addressed. If the applicant has addressed the competitive preference priorities, this information must also be listed on the SSS Program Profile Sheet.

Competitive Preference Priorities: For FY 2015 and any subsequent year for which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, these priorities are competitive preference priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award up to an additional 13 points to an application depending on how well the application meets these priorities.

The competitive preference priorities are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1--Increasing Postsecondary Success (up to 10 additional points). _

Background:

The Department is using this competitive preference priority to focus on postsecondary persistence and completion rates among high-need students. Postsecondary completion rates among students from high-need backgrounds are unacceptably low. The Department believes that SSS projects can play a strong role in improving postsecondary outcomes by 1) placing a greater emphasis on strategies designed to increase the success of participants in

developmental education courses and accelerating student progression into credit-bearing coursework towards their degree or credential, and 2) influencing the development of non-cognitive skills. The inclusion of this competitive preference priority directly supports the overall mission and objectives of the SSS Program, as well as the Administration's efforts to increase college completion and support college affordability.

The Department is interested in receiving applications with strong plans designed to implement new and innovative strategies designed to improve outcomes in developmental education and develop students' mastery of non-cognitive skills and behaviors. Applicants addressing this priority should propose new, additional, or modified activities rather than activities they may already be engaged in. Further, applicants should demonstrate how their proposal will improve student outcomes.

Developmental Education

Each year, rather than being able to enroll in entry-level general education courses, millions of beginning college students are referred to "developmental" or "remedial" courses, based on their performance on a placement test or academic reference. These courses are designed to bring academically underprepared students to expected competency levels for college-level work.

Developmental education needs are common at all types of colleges. The share of students who take a developmental course

ranges from 23 percent at for-profit four-year institutions and 24 percent at public four-year institutions to 38 percent at for-profit two-year institutions and 40 percent at public two-year institutions.¹ The most common developmental education courses to which beginning students are referred are developmental math and reading/writing, or a sequence of courses in these subject areas.² While participation rates vary widely across States and institutions, low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students are referred to developmental education courses at much higher rates than other groups.³

Many policymakers and practitioners have called for efforts to reform current developmental education practices, in part because research suggests that participation in developmental education can hinder some students' progress towards college completion.⁴ In many cases, students in developmental education courses delay accumulation of credits towards a credential and some assume debt while depleting all or a significant portion of

¹ National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2011-12, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012. Data cites non-doctoral four-year institutions.

² Referral, Enrollment, and Completion, in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges
<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/referral-enrollment-completion-developmental.pdf>.

³ MDRC, *Unlocking the Gate*, June 2011.
(http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_595.pdf).

⁴ Bettinger, Eric P, Boatman, Angela and Terry Long, Bridget. 2013. *The Future of Children*, vol. 23 / NO. 1 / SPRING 2013, pp. 93-115. Student Supports: Development Education and Other Academic Programs. Chapter available at:
http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/23_01_05.pdf.

their eligibility for financial aid prior to enrolling in credit-bearing courses.⁵

Discouraged by the inability to enroll in courses that will allow them to advance in their programs of study, many students never even enroll in the developmental education courses to which they are referred.⁶ Far too many of the students who do enroll in developmental education courses do not complete them, eventually resulting in these students dropping out of postsecondary education altogether.⁷ The greater a student's developmental education needs, the less likely they are to complete a certificate or degree.⁸ Indeed, developmental education can be one of the leading barriers to postsecondary persistence and completion.⁹

⁵ Referral, Enrollment, and Completion, in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges
<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/referral-enrollment-completion-developmental.pdf>.

⁶ Data from the 31 Complete College America partner states indicate that roughly 22% of developmental education students at community colleges complete remediation requirements and associated "gatekeeper courses" within 2 years. See Complete College America. 2012. Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere. Available at <http://completercollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf> at page 8.

⁷ Complete College America. 2012. Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere. Available at <http://completercollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>.

⁸ Bailey, T. 2009. Challenge and Opportunity: Rethinking the Role and Function of Developmental Education in Community College. In *New Directions for Community Colleges*. (Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cc.352/pdf>). Using NELS data, Bailey estimates that less than 25% of community college students who took at least one remedial course complete a degree or certificate within 8 years, compared to almost 40 percent of community college students who did not take any remedial courses.

⁹ MDRC, *Unlocking the Gate*, June 2011. (http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_595.pdf).

In recent years, the Administration's higher education completion efforts have placed an increasing focus on improving developmental education outcomes and or non-cognitive skills through several programs and initiatives such as the 2012 Upward Bound competition, a research and development center on developmental education supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, commitments as a part of the College Opportunity Summit, the 2014 GEAR UP competition, the 2014 First in the World competition, and the Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program.

Non-cognitive factors

A promising body of research suggests that non-cognitive factors play an important role in students' academic, career, and life outcomes. Non-cognitive factors include a broad range of behaviors, strategies, and attitudes, such as academic behaviors (including attendance and homework completion), academic mindsets (including a sense of belonging in the academic community and believing that academic achievement improves with effort), perseverance (including tenacity and self-discipline), social and emotional skills (including cooperation, empathy, and adaptability), and approaches toward learning strategies (such as executive functions, attention, goal-setting, curiosity, problem-solving, self-regulating

learning, study skills, and the ability to work cooperatively with others).

The development of these skills is critical during the postsecondary years as students face new academic challenges, social comparisons, and stereotypes regarding their potential for success. How students negotiate these changes has major implications for their academic futures. For example, interventions focused on academic mindset have been shown to have a measurable impact on grades and course persistence, as well as on college enrollment and completion among low-income and minority students. Strategies focused on strengthening perseverance and social and emotional skills also have demonstrated positive outcomes. Ideally, over the course of their K-16 school experience, children and young adults will come to see themselves as competent, productive people who are able to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the larger world.¹⁰

Scholars who have studied the link between students' achievement-related beliefs and their progression through school tend to agree that one of the best levers for increasing students' perseverance and improving their academic behaviors is to support the development of an academic mindset. They have

¹⁰ Camille A. Farrington, (April 2013) University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research, Academic Mindsets as a Critical Component of Deeper Learning.

found that students with positive academic mindsets work harder, engage in more productive academic behaviors, and persevere to overcome obstacles to success. Conversely, students with negative mindsets about school or themselves as learners are likely to withdraw from the practices that are essential for academic success and to give up easily when they encounter setbacks or difficulty.¹¹

Priority:

Projects that will implement strategies that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Increasing the number and proportion of high-need students (as defined in this notice) who persist in and complete college or other postsecondary education and training.

(b) Increasing the number and proportion of high-need students (as defined in this notice) who enroll in and complete high-quality programs of study (as defined in this

¹¹ Farrington et al. (2012); National Research Council. (2012). *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century*. Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, James W. Pellegrino and Margaret L. Hilton, Editors. Board on Testing and Assessment and Board on Science Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, pp. 4-5; Strobel, Karen R. (2012, May). *Academic Motivation and School Engagement and their Links to Academic Achievement: A Follow up Report*. Paper prepared for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Palo Alto, CA: John W. Gardner Center.

notice) designed to lead to a postsecondary degree, credential, or certificate.

(c) Increasing the number and proportion of postsecondary students who complete college or other postsecondary education and training and who are demonstrably prepared for successful employment, active participation in civic life, and lifelong learning.

Note: The Department encourages applicants that address this priority to propose new and innovative strategies to improve outcomes for students in need of developmental education at the postsecondary education level such as targeted tutoring or counseling, intensive learning communities that co-enroll students in developmental and college-level courses at the same time, and other supports for accelerated developmental learning.¹² Applicants addressing this priority should propose new, additional, or modified activities rather than activities

¹² Scrivener, S. & Weiss, M.J. (2013). More Graduates: Two-year results from an evaluation of Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for developmental education students. MDRC. (http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/More_Graduates.pdf); Tung-Cheng, H., L. Ming-Che, and S. Chien-Yuan. 2013. "Designing and Implementing a Personalized Remedial Learning System for Enhancing the Programming Learning." *Journal of Educational Technology and Society* 16 (4) http://www.ifets.info/journals/16_4/3.pdf; Visher, MG, Weiss, M. J., Weissman, E., Rudd, T., & Wathington, H. The Effects of Learning Communities for Students in Developmental Education: A Synthesis of Finding form Six Community Colleges. National Center for Postsecondary Research. Retrieved from http://www.postsecondaryresearch.org/i/a/document/23011_LCSynthesisFull.pdf.

they may already be engaged in. Further, applicants should demonstrate how their proposal will improve student outcomes.

The Department also encourages applicants to propose strategies focused on the development of non-cognitive skills to improve postsecondary success. Through this competitive preference priority, we are interested in projects that will nurture the development of non-cognitive factors of the 21st century student, including the use of strategies such as learning communities, advising courses, counseling, or workshops that explicitly teach students academic growth mindset skills or develop students' sense of social belonging.¹³ Applicants addressing this priority should propose new, additional, or modified activities rather than activities they may already be engaged in. Further, applicants should demonstrate how their proposal will improve student outcomes.

Note: The Department is in the process of finalizing a new set of supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary

¹³ Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (in press). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science*. doi: 10.1177/0956797613518349; Hulleman, C. S., Godes, O., Hendricks, B. L., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2010). Enhancing Interest and Performance With a Utility Value Intervention. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, doi: 10.1037/a0019506 (<http://psych.wisc.edu/cmsdocuments/HullemanGodesH2010.pdf>); Walton, G. M. & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science*, 331, 1447-1451. http://web.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Publications_files/Walton_Cohen_2011_Science_1.pdf.

grant programs that will replace the existing Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs that were promulgated in 2010. If the effective date of the new final supplemental priorities and definitions (which is 30 days after publication) is on or before the closing date of the FY 2015 SSS grant competition: 1) "Influencing the Development of Non-cognitive Factors," a new supplemental priority, will be a separate competitive preference priority rather than a part of competitive preference priority 1, as is the case in this version of the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA), and will be worth up to 4 additional points; 2) Increasing Postsecondary Success as a competitive preference priority (currently competitive preference priority 1 in this version of the NIA) will be replaced with the new supplemental priority for "Increasing Postsecondary Access, Affordability, and Completion," but the focus on projects addressing developmental education will remain; and 3) the definition of "high-need students" will be replaced with the updated definition of this term from the new supplemental priorities and definitions. In this scenario, the number of competitive preference points awarded for Increasing Postsecondary Access, Affordability, and Completion (focusing on developmental education) will be reduced from 10 to up to 6 additional points. Whether or not the NIA is revised to include the new supplemental priorities, the Department's interest in

projects addressing developmental education and development of non-cognitive skills and the types of projects we hope to see applicants propose will remain the same.

Competitive Preference Priority 2(a)--Providing Individualized Counseling for Personal, Career, and Academic Matters (1 point)

Background:

The Department is using this competitive preference priority to focus on improved individualized counseling to students. The Department believes that SSS projects can play a strong role in improving postsecondary outcomes by placing a greater emphasis on proactive coaching strategies designed to increase student success. The inclusion of this competitive preference priority directly supports the overall mission and objectives of the SSS Program, as well as the Administration's college completion and affordability agenda.

The Department is interested in receiving applications with strong plans designed to implement new and innovative coaching strategies. Applicants addressing this priority should propose new, additional, or modified activities rather than activities in which they are already engaged. Further, applicants should demonstrate how their proposal will improve student outcomes.

College coaching

Research shows that postsecondary students who receive coaching are more likely to persist and reach completion.¹⁴ Many institutions offer counseling, advising, and mentoring opportunities to students as a form of student support. Coaching contemplates a more assertive role for counselors, advisors, and mentors. Coaches proactively contact students, including via phone, email, text messages, and social networking sites, and work with students to identify strategies for success.¹⁵ As with traditional counseling, advising, and mentoring, coaching can be provided on a wide range of topics, including personal, career, and academic matters.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. (2011). The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (Working Paper No. 16881). Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881>.

¹⁵ Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. (2011). The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (Working Paper No. 16881). Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881>; Schwebel, D.C., Walburn, N.C., Jacobsen, S.H., Jerrolds, K.L., Klyce, K. (2008). Efficacy of intrusively advising first-year students via frequent reminders for advising appointments. *NACADA Journal* 28 (2), 28-32.

¹⁶ Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. (2011). The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (Working Paper No. 16881). Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881> (academic); Campbell, Toni A. and Campbell, David E. (1997) Faculty/student mentor program: Effects on academic performance and retention. *Research in Higher Education*, 38, 727-742. <<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ558379>>. (academic); Scrivener, S. & Au, J. (2007). Enhancing Student Services at Lorain County Community College: Early results from the Opening Doors Demonstration in Ohio. MDRC. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/448/overview.html> (academic); Garis, J., & JoAnn, H. (1984). DISCOVER and the counselor: Their effects upon college student career planning progress (Rep.). Retrieved April 23, 2012, from http://www.act.org/research/researchers/reports/pdf/ACT_RR85.pdf (career); Hulleman, C. S., Godes, O., Hendricks, B. L., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2010). Enhancing Interest and Performance With a Utility Value Intervention. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, doi:

Priority:

Projects that will provide individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic matters by assigned counselors.

Competitive Preference Priority 2(b) - Individual Counseling Activities Based on Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

(2 additional points)

Background:

In recent years, the Department has placed an increasing emphasis on promoting evidence-based practices through our grant competitions. We believe that encouraging applicants to focus on proven strategies can only enhance the quality of our competitions. Accordingly, within the competitive priority for individualized counseling (competitive preference priority 2(a)), we give additional competitive preference to applications that submit moderate evidence of effectiveness that supports their proposed strategies for providing individualized counseling.

Priority:

10.1037/a0019506

(<http://psych.wisc.edu/cmsdocuments/HullemanGodesH2010.pdf>) (social belonging); Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (in press). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science*. doi: 10.1177/0956797613518349 (social belonging); Walton, G. M. & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science*, 331, 1447-1451. http://web.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Publications_files/Walton_Cohen_2011_Science_1.pdf (social belonging).

Projects that provide supporting evidence for their individualized counseling strategy that meets the definition of moderate evidence of effectiveness (as defined in this notice). Note: An applicant addressing competitive preference priority 2(a) can earn one point based on the extent to which their project is designed to provide quality individualized counseling. Through competitive preference priority 2(b), applicants can earn two additional points by demonstrating that their individualized counseling strategies are based on research that meets the moderate evidence of effectiveness standard. Applicants seeking to address competitive preference priority 2(b) should identify a citation for one study that meets the definition of moderate evidence of effectiveness. Relevant studies will be reviewed to determine if they meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards. The What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 3.0, March 2014), can be found at: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_procedures_v3_0_standards_handbook.pdf. Applicants may submit a citation for a study of individualized counseling strategies that has already been determined by the Department to meet the What Works Clearinghouse moderate evidence of effectiveness standard or a study that has not yet been reviewed

by the What Works Clearinghouse but will meet the moderate evidence of effectiveness standard.¹⁷

The links for the citation submitted for competitive preference priority 2(b) should be provided on the Abstract and Information page of the application package. Applicants should specify on that page the findings within the study that are cited as moderate evidence of effectiveness for the proposed individualized counseling intervention and ensure that the citation and link are from a publicly or readily available source.

Definitions:

These definitions are from the Notice of Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637) and from 34 CFR 77.1.

¹⁷ Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. (2011). The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (Working Paper No. 16881). Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881> (academic); Campbell, Toni A. and Campbell, David E. (1997) Faculty/student mentor program: Effects on academic performance and retention. *Research in Higher Education*, 38, 727-742. <<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ558379>>. (academic); Scrivener, S. & Au, J. (2007). Enhancing Student Services at Lorain County Community College: Early results from the Opening Doors Demonstration in Ohio. MDRC. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/448/overview.html> (academic); Garis, J., & JoAnn, H. (1984). DISCOVER and the counselor: Their effects upon college student career planning progress (Rep.). Retrieved April 23, 2012, from http://www.act.org/research/researchers/reports/pdf/ACT_RR85.pdf (career).

High-need students means children and students at risk of educational failure, such as children and students who are living in poverty, who are English learners, who are far below grade level or who are not on track to becoming college- or career-ready by graduation, who have left school or college before receiving, respectively, a regular high school diploma or a college degree or certificate, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who are pregnant or parenting teenagers, who have been incarcerated, who are new immigrants, who are migrant, or who have disabilities.

Moderate evidence of effectiveness means one of the following conditions is met:

(i) There is at least one study of the effectiveness of the process, product, strategy, or practice being proposed that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations,¹⁸ found a statistically significant favorable impact on a relevant outcome (with no statistically significant and overriding unfavorable impacts on that outcome for relevant populations in the study or in other studies of the intervention reviewed by and reported on by the What Works Clearinghouse), and

¹⁸ The What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 3.0, March 2014), can be found at: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_procedures_v3_0_standards_handbook.pdf.

includes a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive the process, product, strategy, or practice.

(ii) There is at least one study of the effectiveness of the process, product, strategy, or practice being proposed that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations,¹⁹ found a statistically significant favorable impact on a relevant outcome (with no statistically significant and overriding unfavorable impacts on that outcome for relevant populations in the study or in other studies of the intervention reviewed by and reported on by the What Works Clearinghouse), includes a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive the process, product, strategy, or practice, and includes a large sample and a multi-site sample (Note: multiple studies can cumulatively meet the large and multi-site sample requirements as long as each study meets the other requirements in this paragraph).

Quasi-experimental design study means a study using a design that attempts to approximate an experimental design by identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in important respects. These studies, depending on design and implementation, can meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations²⁰ (they cannot meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations).

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ Id.

Randomized controlled trial means a study that employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, schools, or districts to receive the intervention being evaluated (the treatment group) or not to receive the intervention (the control group). The estimated effectiveness of the intervention is the difference between the average outcome for the treatment group and for the control group. These studies, depending on design and implementation, can meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.²¹

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14.

Applicable Regulations: This NIA is being published before the Department adopts the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements in 2 CFR part 200. We expect to publish interim final regulations that would adopt those requirements before December 26, 2014, and make those regulations effective on that date. Because grants awarded under this NIA will likely be made after ED adopts the requirements in 2 CFR part 200, we list as applicable regulations both those that are currently effective and those that will be effective at the time ED makes grants.

The current regulations follow: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The

²¹ Id.

Education Department debarment and suspension regulations in 2 CFR part 3485.

At the time we award grants under this NIA, the following regulations will apply: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The Education Department debarment and suspension regulations as adopted in 2 CFR part 3485 and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards as adopted in 2 CFR part 3474.

Regardless of the timing of publication, the following also apply to this NIA: (a) the regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 646 and (b) the notice of final supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs, published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637).

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 79 apply to all applicants except federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to institutions of higher education only.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: The Administration has requested \$838,252,000 for the Federal TRIO Programs for FY 2015, of which

we intend to use an estimated \$265,706,546 for new SSS awards under this competition and \$23,966,448 for continuation awards to current SSS grantees. The actual level of funding, if any, depends on final congressional action. However, we are inviting applications to allow enough time to complete the grant process if Congress appropriates funds for the Federal TRIO Programs. Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in FY 2016 from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$220,000 - \$360,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$282,000.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding the maximum amount listed for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education may change the maximum award amount through a notice published in the Federal Register.

FOR APPLICANTS NOT CURRENTLY RECEIVING A SSS PROGRAM GRANT

<u>Type of Project</u>	<u>Maximum Amount*</u>
Regular SSS Project Serving a Minimum of 140 Student Participants	\$220,000
Regular SSS Project Serving a Minimum of 100 Student Participants with Disabilities	\$220,000
English as a Second Language (ESL) SSS Project Serving a Minimum of 140 Student Participants	\$220,000

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Health Science SSS Project Serving a Minimum of 120 Student Participants \$220,000

Teacher Preparation SSS Project Serving a Minimum of 140 Student Participants \$220,000

Veterans SSS Project Serving a Minimum of 120 Student Participants \$220,000

*Note: For applicants proposing to serve fewer than the minimum number of student participants specified in the above table, the maximum award amount that may be requested is an amount equal to: \$1,571 per student participant for Regular, ESL, and Teacher Preparation projects; \$2,200 per student participant for Disabled projects; \$1,833 per student participant for STEM (including Health Science) and Veterans projects.

FOR APPLICANTS CURRENTLY RECEIVING A SSS PROGRAM GRANT

The maximum award amount is the greater of: (a) \$220,000 or (b) 100 percent of the applicant's base award amount for FY 2012.

For any currently funded applicant that proposes to serve fewer students than it served in FY 2012, the maximum award amount that may be requested is the amount that corresponds with the cost per participant previously established for the project in FY 2012.

Note: For an applicant currently receiving an individual SSS Program grant that has merged into another IHE that is also receiving an individual SSS Program grant, the maximum award

amount for the applicant (the merged institution) is 100 percent of the combined FY 2012 base grant award amounts for both institutions.

Estimated Number of New Awards: 1,026.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: Institutions of higher education or combinations of institutions of higher education.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching: Section 402D(d)(4) of the HEA requires that all successful applicants that use SSS Program funds to provide grant aid to students pursuant to section 402D(d)(1) of the HEA must provide matching funds, in cash, from non-Federal funds, in an amount that is not less than 33 percent of the total amount of the SSS Program funds used for this aid. This matching requirement does not apply to a grant recipient that is an IHE eligible to receive funds under Part A or Part B of Title III or under Title V of the HEA.

3. Other: An applicant may submit multiple applications if each separate application describes a project that will serve a different campus or a different population (Section 402(c)(5) of the HEA). Under section 402A(h)(1) of the HEA, the term "different campus" means a site of an IHE that--(1) is

geographically apart from the main campus of the institution;
(2) is permanent in nature and (3) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential (Section 402(h)(1) of the HEA).

Under section 402A(h)(2) of the HEA, the term "different population" means a group of individuals that an eligible entity desires to serve through an SSS grant that is separate and distinct from any other population that the entity has applied to serve using Federal TRIO Program funds, or, while sharing some of the same needs as another population that the eligible entity has applied to serve using Federal TRIO Program funds, has distinct needs for specialized services. To implement the requirement in Section 402(h)(2) of the HEA for this competition, the Secretary is designating the populations to be served as: participants who meet the specific requirements for SSS services ("regular SSS grants"), participants with disabilities ("disabled grants"), participants who need ESL services ("ESL grants"), participants receiving services in the STEM fields ("STEM grants"), participants receiving Teacher Preparation Services ("Teacher Preparation grants"), and participants who have served in the armed forces ("Veterans grants"). These different populations need different types of services. Accordingly, the Secretary has determined that projects serving these different populations

should be subject to different standards for the minimum number of participants. An applicant may submit more than one application as long as each application proposes to serve a different population. Any applicant that submits more than one application must explain why the different population of participants cannot be served by the project in the applicant's other application(s). For project types other than a regular SSS project, an applicant must propose to serve 100% of the students in the specific project type.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package: ReShone Moore, Ph.D., U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW., room 7000, Washington, DC 20006-8510. Telephone: (202) 502-7893 or by email: reshone.moore@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) by contacting the program contact person listed in this section.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission:

Requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this program.

Page Limit: The application narrative is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. You must limit the project narrative (Part III), which includes the budget narrative, to no more than 65 pages, using the following standards. However, any application addressing the competitive preference priorities may include up to four additional pages for each of these priorities, if addressed. Those 12 additional pages must be used to discuss how the application meets the competitive preference priority. The additional pages allotted to address priorities cannot be used for or transferred to the project narrative or any section of the application.

Note: For the purpose of determining compliance with the page limit, each page on which there is text or graphics will be counted as one full page.

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. Page numbers and an identifier may be within the 1" margin.

- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the project narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all

text in figures and graphs. Text in charts and tables may be single-spaced. You should also include a table of contents in the project narrative, which will not be counted toward the page limit.

- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger, or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).
- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial. An application submitted in any other font (including Times Roman and Arial Narrow) will not be accepted.

The page limit does not apply to Part I--the Application for Federal Assistance face sheet (SF 424); Part II--the Budget Information Summary form (ED Form 524); Part III-A--the Program Profile form; Part III-B--the one-page Project Abstract form; and Part IV--the Assurances and Certifications. If you include any attachments or appendices, these items will be counted as part of Part III--the Project Narrative for the purpose of the page-limit requirement. You must include your complete response to the selection criteria and priorities in Part III--the Project Narrative.

We will reject your application if you exceed the page limit, or if you apply other standards and exceed the equivalent of the page limit.

3. Submission Dates and Times:

Applications Available: [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Applications for grants under this program must be submitted electronically using the Grants.gov Apply site (Grants.gov). For information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, or in paper format by mail or hand delivery if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, please refer to section IV. 7. Other Submission Requirements of this notice.

We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements.

Individuals with disabilities who need an accommodation or auxiliary aid in connection with the application process should contact one of the program contact persons listed under For Further Information Contact in ssection VII of this notice. If the Department provides an accommodation or auxiliary aid to an individual with a disability in connection with the application process, the individual's application remains subject to all other requirements and limitations in this notice.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: [INSERT DATE 105 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

4. Intergovernmental Review: This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372 is in the application package for this program.

5. Funding Restrictions: We specify unallowable costs in 34 CFR 646.31. We reference additional regulations outlining funding restrictions in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

6. Data Universal Numbering System Number, Taxpayer Identification Number, and System for Award Management: To do business with the Department of Education, you must--

a. Have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);

b. Register both your DUNS number and TIN with the System for Award Management (SAM) (formerly the Central Contractor Registry (CCR)), the Government's primary registrant database;

c. Provide your DUNS number and TIN on your application;
and

d. Maintain an active SAM registration with current information while your application is under review by the Department and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.

You can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet. A DUNS number can be created within one to two business days.

If you are a corporate entity, agency, institution, or organization, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service. If you are an individual, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration. If you need a new TIN, please allow two to five weeks for your TIN to become active.

The SAM registration process can take approximately seven business days, but may take upwards of several weeks, depending on the completeness and accuracy of the data entered into the SAM database by an entity. Thus, if you think you might want to apply for Federal financial assistance under a program administered by the Department, please allow sufficient time to obtain and register your DUNS number and TIN. We strongly recommend that you register early.

Note: Once your SAM registration is active, you will need to allow 24 to 48 hours for the information to be available in Grants.gov. and before you can submit an application through Grants.gov.

If you are currently registered with SAM, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you

will need to update your registration annually. This may take three or more business days.

Information about SAM is available at www.SAM.gov. To further assist you with obtaining and registering your DUNS number and TIN in SAM or updating your existing SAM account, we have prepared a SAM.gov Tip Sheet, which you can find at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/sam-faqs.html>.

In addition, if you are submitting your application via Grants.gov, you must (1) be designated by your organization as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (2) register yourself with Grants.gov as an AOR. Details on these steps are outlined at the following Grants.gov Web page:

www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html.

7. Other Submission Requirements: Applications for grants under this program must be submitted electronically unless you qualify for an exception to this requirement in accordance with the instructions in this section.

a. Electronic Submission of Applications.

Applications for grants under the SSS Program, CFDA Number 84.042A, must be submitted electronically using the Governmentwide Grants.gov Apply site at www.Grants.gov. Through this site, you will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit your

application. You may not email an electronic copy of a grant application to us.

We will reject your application if you submit it in paper format unless, as described elsewhere in this section, you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement and submit, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. Further information regarding calculation of the date that is two weeks before the application deadline date is provided later in this section under Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement.

You may access the electronic grant application for the Student Support Services Program at www.Grants.gov. You must search for the downloadable application package for this program by the CFDA number. Do not include the CFDA number's alpha suffix in your search (e.g., search for 84.042, not 84.042A).

Please note the following:

- When you enter the Grants.gov site, you will find information about submitting an application electronically through the site, as well as the hours of operation.
- Applications received by Grants.gov are date and time stamped. Your application must be fully uploaded and submitted and must be date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application

deadline date. Except as otherwise noted in this section, we will not accept your application if it is received--that is, date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system--after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements. When we retrieve your application from Grants.gov, we will notify you if we are rejecting your application because it was date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.

- The amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

- You should review and follow the Education Submission Procedures for submitting an application through Grants.gov that are included in the application package for this program to ensure that you submit your application in a timely manner to the Grants.gov system. You can also find the Education Submission Procedures pertaining to Grants.gov under News and Events on the Department's G5 system home page at www.G5.gov.

- You will not receive additional point value because you submit your application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, as described elsewhere in this section, and submit your application in paper format.

- You must submit all documents electronically, including all information you typically provide on the following forms: the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), the Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424, Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications.

- You must upload any narrative sections and all other attachments to your application as files in a PDF (Portable Document Format) read-only, non-modifiable format. Do not upload an interactive or fillable PDF file. If you upload a file type other than a read-only, non-modifiable PDF or submit a password-protected file, we will not review that material.

- Your electronic application must comply with any page-limit requirements described in this notice.

- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive from Grants.gov an automatic notification of receipt that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. (This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by the Department.) The Department then will retrieve your application

from Grants.gov and send a second notification to you by email. This second notification indicates that the Department has received your application and has assigned your application a PR/Award number (an ED-specified identifying number unique to your application).

- We may request that you provide us original signatures on forms at a later date.

Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of Technical Issues

with the Grants.gov System: If you are experiencing problems submitting your application through Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Support Desk, toll free, at 1-800-518-4726. You must obtain a Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number and must keep a record of it.

If you are prevented from electronically submitting your application on the application deadline date because of technical problems with the Grants.gov system, we will grant you an extension until 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, the following business day to enable you to transmit your application electronically or by hand delivery. You also may mail your application by following the mailing instructions described elsewhere in this notice.

If you submit an application after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date, please contact one of the program contact persons listed under For Further Information

Contact in section VII of this notice and provide an explanation of the technical problem you experienced with Grants.gov, along with the Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number. We will accept your application if we can confirm that a technical problem occurred with the Grants.gov system and that that problem affected your ability to submit your application by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. The Department will contact you after a determination is made on whether your application will be accepted.

Note: The extensions to which we refer in this section apply only to the unavailability of, or technical problems with, the Grants.gov system. We will not grant you an extension if you failed to fully register to submit your application to Grants.gov before the application deadline date and time or if the technical problem you experienced is unrelated to the Grants.gov system.

Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement: You qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, and may submit your application in paper format, if you are unable to submit an application through the Grants.gov system because--

- You do not have access to the Internet; or
- You do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system;

and

- No later than two weeks before the application

deadline date (14 calendar days; or, if the fourteenth calendar day before the application deadline date falls on a Federal holiday, the next business day following the Federal holiday), you mail or fax a written statement to the Department, explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevents you from using the Internet to submit your application.

If you mail your written statement to the Department, it must be postmarked no later than two weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax your written statement to the Department, we must receive the faxed statement no later than two weeks before the application deadline date.

Address and mail or fax your statement to: Eileen S. Bland, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW., room 7000, Washington, DC 20006-8510. FAX: (202) 502-7857.

Your paper application must be submitted in accordance with the mail or hand delivery instructions described in this notice.

b. Submission of Paper Applications by Mail.

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you may mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier) your application to the Department. You must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address:

U.S. Department of Education

Application Control Center
Attention: (CFDA Number 84.042A)
LBJ Basement Level 1
400 Maryland Avenue, SW.
Washington, DC 20202-4260

You must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

- (1) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark.
- (2) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.
- (3) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.
- (4) Any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If you mail your application through the U.S. Postal Service, we do not accept either of the following as proof of mailing:

- (1) A private metered postmark.
- (2) A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

If your application is postmarked after the application deadline date, we will not consider your application.

Note: The U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office.

c. Submission of Paper Applications by Hand Delivery.

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you (or a courier service) may deliver your paper application to the Department by hand. You must deliver the original and two copies of your application by hand, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address:

U.S. Department of Education
Application Control Center
Attention: (CFDA Number 84.042A)
550 12th Street, SW.
Room 7039, Potomac Center Plaza
Washington, DC 20202-4260

The Application Control Center accepts hand deliveries daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, except Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

Note for Mail or Hand Delivery of Paper Applications: If you mail or hand deliver your application to the Department--

(1) You must indicate on the envelope and-- if not provided by the Department--in Item 11 of the SF 424 the CFDA number, including suffix letter, if any, of the competition under which you are submitting your application; and

(2) The Application Control Center will mail to you a notification of receipt of your grant application. If you do not receive this notification within 15 business days from the

application deadline date, you should call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

V. Application Review Information

1. Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this program are in 34 CFR 646.21 and are listed in the application package.

Note: Under the "Objectives" selection criterion, 34 CFR 646.21 (b), worth eight (8) points, applicants must address the standardized objectives in 34 CFR 646.21(b)(1) through (4) related to the participants' academic achievements, including retention, good academic standing, graduation, and transfer rates. The graduation objective should be measured by cohorts of students who become SSS Program participants in each year of the project and should be compared to a relevant and valid comparison group. The graduation, certificate, and transfer rates for two-year institutions should be measured over a three-year period and that of four-year institutions should be measured over a five-year period.

2. Review and Selection Process: We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant

conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary also requires various assurances including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

For this competition, a panel of non-Federal reviewers will review each application in accordance with the selection criteria in 34 CFR 646.21. The individual scores of the reviewers will be added and the sum divided by the number of reviewers to determine the peer review score received in the review process. Additionally, in accordance with 34 CFR 646.22, the Secretary will award prior experience points to applicants that have conducted a SSS Program project within the last three Federal government fiscal years, based on their documented experience. Prior experience points, if any, will be added to the application's averaged reader score to determine the total score for each application. Of the applications that address competitive preference priority 2(b), highly rated applications from the review process, which at a minimum will include those whose funding outcomes could be affected by the awarding of

points under competitive preference priority 2(b), will then have their supporting studies reviewed to determine if the cited study submitted by the applicant meets the Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness standard and is relevant to the proposed individualized counseling strategy under competitive preference priority 2(a).

If there are insufficient funds for all applications with the same total scores, the Secretary will choose among the tied applications so as to serve geographical areas that have been underserved by the SSS Program.

3. Special Conditions: Under current 34 CFR 74.14 and 80.12 and, when grants are made under this NIA, 2 CFR 3574.10, the Secretary may impose specific conditions and, in appropriate circumstances, high risk conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable; has a history of unsatisfactory performance; has a financial or other management system that does not meet the standards in 34 CFR parts 74 or 80, as applicable or, when grants are awarded, the standards in 2 CFR part 200, subpart D; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant; or is otherwise not responsible.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices: If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN); or we may send you an email

containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN. We may notify you informally, also.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we notify you.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements: We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. Reporting: (a) If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition. This does not apply if you have an exception under 2 CFR 170.110(b).

(b) At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multi-year award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as

directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>.

4. Performance Measures: The success of the SSS Program is measured by the percentage of SSS participants that complete a program of postsecondary education. The following performance measures have been developed to track progress toward achieving program success:

1. The percentage of SSS Program participants who are still enrolled at the beginning of the next academic year or have earned a degree at the grantee institution or transferred from a two-year to a four-year institution.

2. The percentage of first-time college students served by the SSS Program who graduate from the grantee institution on time -- within four years for the bachelor's degree and within two years for the associate's degree.

3. The percentage of SSS participants taking one or more remedial course(s) who attain an associate's degree or transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution within three years or graduate with a bachelor's degree within five years from the grantee institution.

4. The cost per successful outcome.

All SSS Program grantees are required to submit an annual performance report documenting the persistence and degree attainment of their participants. Since students take different amounts of time to complete their degrees, multiple years of performance report data are needed to determine the degree completion rates of SSS Program participants. The Department will aggregate the data provided in the annual performance reports from all grantees to determine the overall program accomplishment level.

5. Continuation Awards: In making a continuation award, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.253, the extent to which a grantee has made substantial progress toward meeting the objectives in its approved application. This consideration includes the review of a grantee's progress in meeting the targets and projected outcomes in its approved application, and whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget. In making a continuation grant, the Secretary also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

VII. Agency Contacts

For Further Information Contact: ReShone Moore, Ph.D., U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW., room 7000, Washington, DC 20006-8510. Telephone: (202) 502-7893 or by email: reshone.moore@ed.gov or, if unavailable, Lavelle Wright, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW., room 7000, Washington, DC 20006-8510. Telephone: (202) 502-7674 or by email: Lavelle.wright@ed.gov.

If you use a TDD or a TTY, call the FRS, toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

VIII. Other Information

Accessible Format: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) on request to one of the program contact persons listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the Federal Register. Free Internet access to the official edition of the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations is available via the Federal Digital System at: www.gpo.gov/fdsys. At this site you can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the Federal Register, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). To use PDF, you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

You may also access documents of the Department published in the Federal Register by using the article search feature at: www.federalregister.gov. Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Dated:

Lynn B. Mahaffie,
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Postsecondary Education.

DRAFT

AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

The SSS Program for Federal TRIO Programs is authorized by the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008. An electronic version of the HEOA's amendments to the HEA may be found at the Department's website at the following address: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/statute-trio-gu.pdf>.

Please note that the official compilation of Federal law is the United States Code which is available from the Government Printing Office.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008

Title IV Student Assistance

Subpart 2—Federal Early Outreach and Student Services Programs

CHAPTER 1—FEDERAL TRIO PROGRAMS Sec. 403 (U.S. Code 1070a)

(a) GRANTS AND CONTRACTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary shall, in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, carry out a program of making grants and contracts designed to identify qualified individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, to prepare them for a program of postsecondary education, to provide support services for such students who are pursuing programs of postsecondary education, to motivate and prepare students for doctoral programs, and to train individuals serving or preparing for service in programs and projects so designed.

(b) RECIPIENTS, DURATION, AND SIZE.—

(1) RECIPIENTS.— For the purposes described in subsection (a), the Secretary is authorized, without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5), to make grants to, and contracts with, institutions of higher education, public and private agencies and organizations, including community-based organizations with experience in serving disadvantaged youth, combinations of such institutions, agencies and organizations, and secondary schools, for planning, developing, or carrying out one or more of the services assisted under this chapter.

(2) DURATION.— Grants or contracts made under this chapter shall be awarded for a period of 5 years, except that—

(A) in order to synchronize the awarding of grants for programs under this chapter, the Secretary may, under such terms as are consistent with the purposes of this chapter, provide a one-time, limited extension of the length of such an award;

(B) grants made under section 402G shall be awarded for a period of 2 years; and

(C) grants under section 402H shall be awarded for a period determined by the Secretary.

(3) MINIMUM GRANTS.— Unless the institution or agency requests a smaller amount, an individual grant authorized under this chapter shall be awarded in an amount that is

not less than \$200,000, except that an individual grant authorized under section 402G shall be awarded in an amount that is not less than \$170,000.

(c) PROCEDURES FOR AWARDING GRANTS AND CONTRACTS.—

(1) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.— An eligible entity that desires to receive a grant or contract under this chapter shall submit an application to the Secretary in such manner and form, and containing such information and assurances, as the Secretary may reasonably require.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—

(A) PRIOR EXPERIENCE.— In making grants under this chapter, the Secretary shall consider each applicant's prior experience of "high quality service delivery," as determined under subsection (f), under the particular program for which funds are sought. The level of consideration given the factor of prior experience shall not vary from the level of consideration given such factor during fiscal years 1994 through 1997, except that grants made under section 402H shall not be given prior experience consideration.

(B) PARTICIPANT NEED.— In making grants under this chapter, the

Secretary shall consider the number, percentages, and needs of eligible participants in the area, institution of higher education, or secondary school to be served to aid such participants in preparing for, enrolling in, or succeeding in postsecondary education, as appropriate to the particular program for which the eligible entity is applying.

(3) ORDER OF AWARDS; PROGRAM FRAUD.—

(A) Except with respect to grants made under sections 402G and 402H and as provided in subparagraph the Secretary shall award grants and contracts under this chapter in the order of the scores received by the application for such grant or contract in the peer review process required under paragraph (4) and adjusted for prior experience in accordance with paragraph (2) of this subsection.

(B) The Secretary shall not provide assistance to a program otherwise eligible for assistance under this chapter, if the Secretary has determined that such program has involved the fraudulent use of funds under this chapter.

(4) PEER REVIEW PROCESS.—

(A) The Secretary shall ensure that, to the extent practicable, members of groups underrepresented in higher education, including African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, and Native American Pacific Islanders (including Native Hawaiians), are represented as readers of applications submitted under this chapter. The Secretary shall also ensure that persons from urban and rural backgrounds are represented as readers.

(B) The Secretary shall ensure that each application submitted under this chapter is read by at least three readers who are not employees of the Federal Government (other than as readers of applications).

(5) NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS AND CONTRACTS. —

The Secretary shall not limit the number of applications submitted by an entity under any program authorized under this chapter if the additional applications describe programs serving different populations or different campuses.

(6) COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS.—

The Secretary shall encourage coordination of programs assisted under this chapter with other programs for disadvantaged students operated by the sponsoring institution or agency, regardless of the funding source of such programs. The Secretary shall not limit an entity's eligibility to receive funds under this chapter because such entity sponsors a program similar to the program to be assisted under this chapter, regardless of the funding source of such program. The Secretary shall permit the Director of a program receiving funds under this chapter to administer one or more additional programs for disadvantaged students operated by the sponsoring institution or agency, regardless of the funding sources of such programs. The Secretary shall, as appropriate, require each applicant for funds under the programs authorized by this chapter to identify and make available services under such program, including mentoring, tutoring, and other services provided by such program, to foster care youth (including youth in foster care and youth who have left foster care after reaching age 13) or to homeless children and youths as defined in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

(7) APPLICATION STATUS.— The Secretary shall inform each entity operating programs under this chapter regarding the status of their application for continued funding at least 8 months prior to the expiration of the grant or contract. The Secretary, in the case of an entity that is continuing to operate a successful program under this chapter, shall ensure that the startup date for a new grant or contract for such program immediately follows the termination of the preceding grant or contract so that no interruption of funding occurs for such successful applicants. The Secretary shall inform each entity requesting assistance under this chapter for a new program regarding the status of their application at least 8 months prior to the proposed startup date of such program.

(8) REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION BY THE SECRETARY.—

(A) GUIDANCE.— Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the Secretary shall issue Non regulatory guidance regarding the rights and responsibilities of applicants with respect to the application and evaluation process for programs and projects assisted under this chapter, including applicant access to peer review comments. The guidance shall describe the procedures for the submission, processing, and scoring of applications for grants under this chapter, including --

- (i) the responsibility of applicants to submit materials in a timely manner and in accordance with the processes established by the Secretary under the authority of the General Education Provisions Act;
- (ii) the materials steps the Secretary will take to ensure that submitted by applicants are processed in a proper and timely manner;
- (iii) steps the Secretary will take to ensure that prior experience points for high quality service delivery are awarded in an accurate and transparent manner;
- (iv) steps the Secretary will take to ensure the quality and integrity of the peer review process, including assurances that peer reviewers will consider applications for grants under this chapter in

a thorough and complete manner consistent with applicable Federal law; and

- (v) steps the Secretary will take to ensure that the final score of an application, including prior experience points for high quality service delivery and points awarded through the peer review process, is determined in an accurate and transparent manner.

(B) **UPDATED GUIDANCE.**— Not later than 45 days before the date of the commencement of each competition for a grant under this chapter that is held after the expiration of the 180-day period described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall update and publish the guidance described in such subparagraph.

(C) **REVIEW.**—

- (i) **IN GENERAL.**— With respect to any competition for a grant under this chapter, an applicant may request a review by the Secretary if the applicant—

- (I) administrative, or scoring error made by the Department, an agent of the Department, or a peer reviewer, with respect to the scoring or has evidence of a specific technical, processing of a submitted application; and

- (II) has otherwise met all of the requirements for submission of the application.

- (ii) **TECHNICAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR.**— In the case of evidence of a technical or administrative error listed in clause (i) (I), the Secretary shall review such evidence and provide a timely response to the applicant. If the Secretary determines that a technical or administrative error was made by the Department or an agent of the Department, the application of the applicant shall be reconsidered in the peer review process for the applicable grant competition.

- (iii) **SCORING ERROR.**— In the case of evidence of a scoring error listed in clause (i)(I), when the error relates to either prior experience points for high quality service delivery or to the final score of an application, the Secretary shall—

- (I) review such evidence and provide a timely response to the applicant; and

- (II) if the Secretary determines that a scoring error was made by the Department or a peer reviewer, adjust the prior experience points or final score of the application appropriately and quickly so as not to interfere with the timely awarding of grants for the applicable grant competition.

- (iv) **ERROR IN PEER REVIEW PROCESS.**

- (I) **REFERRAL TO SECONDARY REVIEW.**— In the case of a peer review process error listed in clause (i)(I), if the Secretary determines that points were withheld for criteria not required in Federal statute, regulation, or guidance governing a program assisted under this chapter or the application for a grant for such program, or

determines that information pertaining to selection criteria was wrongly determined missing from an application by a peer reviewer, then the Secretary shall refer the application to a secondary review panel.

(II) **TIMELY REVIEW; REPLACEMENT SCORE.**— The secondary review panel described in subclause (I) shall conduct a secondary review in a timely fashion, and the score resulting from the secondary review shall replace the score from the initial peer review.

(III) **COMPOSITION OF SECONDARY REVIEW PANEL.**— The secondary review panel shall be composed of reviewers each of whom—

(aa) did not review the application in the original peer review;

(bb) is a member of the cohort of peer reviewers for the grant program that is the subject of such secondary review; and

(cc) to extent practicable, has conducted peer reviews in not less than two previous competitions for the grant program that is the subject of such secondary review.

(IV) **FINAL SCORE.**— The final peer review score of an application subject to a secondary review under this clause shall be adjusted appropriately and quickly using the score awarded by the secondary review panel, so as not to interfere with the timely awarding of grants for the applicable grant competition.

(V) **QUALIFICATION FOR SECONDARY REVIEW.**— To qualify for a secondary review under this clause, an applicant shall have evidence of a scoring error and demonstrate that—

(aa) points were withheld for criteria not required in statute, regulation, or guidance governing the Federal TRIO programs or the application for a grant for such programs; or

(bb) information pertaining to selection criteria was wrongly determined to be missing from the application.

(v) **FINALITY.**—

(I) **GENERAL.**— A determination by the Secretary under clause (i),(ii), or (iii) shall not be reviewable by any officer or employee of the Department.

(II) **SCORING.**— The score awarded by a secondary review panel under clause (iv) shall not be reviewable by any officer or employee of the Department other than the Secretary.

(vi) FUNDING OF APPLICATIONS WITH CERTAIN ADJUSTED SCORES.— To the extent feasible based on the availability of appropriations, the Secretary shall fund applications with scores that are adjusted upward under clauses (ii), (iii), and (iv) to equal or exceed the minimum cut off score for the applicable grant competition.

(d) OUTREACH.—

(1) IN GENERAL.— The Secretary shall conduct outreach activities to ensure that entities eligible for assistance under this chapter submit applications proposing programs that serve geographic areas and eligible populations which have been underserved by the programs assisted under this chapter.

(2) NOTICE.— In carrying out the provisions of paragraph (1), the Secretary shall notify the entities described in subsection (b) of the availability of assistance under this subsection not less than 120 days prior to the deadline for submission of applications under this chapter and shall consult national, State, and regional organizations about candidates for notification.

(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.— The Secretary shall provide technical training to applicants for projects and programs authorized under this chapter. The Secretary shall give priority to serving programs and projects that serve geographic areas and eligible populations which have been underserved by the programs assisted under this chapter. Technical training activities shall include the provision of information on authorizing legislation, goals and objectives of the program, required activities, eligibility requirements, the application process and application deadlines, and assistance in the development of program proposals and the completion of program applications. Such training shall be furnished at conferences, seminars, and workshops to be conducted at not less than 10 sites throughout the United States to ensure that all areas of the United States with large concentrations of eligible participants are served.

(4) SPECIAL RULE.— The Secretary may contract with eligible entities to conduct the outreach activities described in this subsection.

(e) DOCUMENTATION OF STATUS AS A LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUAL.—

(1) Except in the case of an independent student, as defined in section 480(d), documentation of an individual's status pursuant to subsection (h)(4) shall be made by providing the Secretary with—

- (A) A signed statement from the individual's parent or legal guardian;
- (B) Verification from another governmental source;
- (C) A signed financial aid application; or
- (D) A signed United States or Puerto Rico income tax return.

(2) In the case of an independent student, as defined in section 480(d), documentation of an individual's status pursuant to subsection (h)(4) shall be made by providing the Secretary with—

- (A) A signed statement from the individual;
- (B) Verification from another governmental source;
- (C) A signed financial aid application; or
- (D) A signed United States or Puerto Rico income tax return.

(3) Notwithstanding this subsection and subsection (h)(4), individuals who are foster care youth (including youth in foster care and youth who have left foster care after reaching age 13),* or homeless children and youths as defined in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, shall be eligible to participate in programs under sections 402B, 402C, 402D, and 402F.

**appears to be a typographical error -- that the Congress intended to include youth who left foster care after reaching age 18.*

(f) OUTCOME CRITERIA.—

(1) USE FOR PRIOR EXPERIENCE DETERMINATION.— For competitions for grants under this chapter that begin on or after January 1, 2009, the Secretary shall determine

an eligible entity's prior experience of high quality service delivery, as required under subsection (c)(2), based on the outcome criteria described in paragraphs (2) and (3).

(2) DISAGGREGATION OF RELEVANT DATA.— The outcome criteria under this subsection shall be disaggregated by low-income students, first generation college students, and individuals with disabilities, in the schools and institutions of higher education served by the program to be evaluated.

(3) CONTENTS OF OUTCOME CRITERIA.— The outcome criteria under this subsection shall measure, annually and for longer periods, the quality and effectiveness of programs authorized under this chapter and shall include the following:

(A) For programs authorized under section 402B, the extent to which the eligible entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives established in the entity's application for such program regarding—

- (i) the delivery of service to a total number of students served by the program;
- (ii) the continued secondary school enrollment of such students;
- (iii) the graduation of such students from secondary school with a regular secondary school diploma in the standard number of years;
- (iv) the completion by such students of a rigorous secondary school program of study that will make such students eligible for programs such as the Academic Competitiveness Grants Program;
- (v) the enrollment of such students in an institution of higher education; and
- (vi) to the extent practicable, the postsecondary education completion of such students.

(B) For programs authorized under section 402C, the extent to which the eligible entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives for such program regarding—

- (i) the delivery of service to a total number of students served by the program, as agreed upon by the entity and the Secretary for the period;
- (ii) such students school performance, as measured by the grade point average or its equivalent;
- (iii) such students academic performance, as measured by standardized tests, including tests required by the students State;
- (iv) the retention in, and graduation from, secondary school of such students;
- (v) the completion by such students of a rigorous secondary school

program of study that will make such students eligible for programs such as the Academic Competitiveness Grants Program;
(vi) the enrollment of such students in an institution of higher education; and
(vii) to the extent practicable, the postsecondary education completion of such students.

(C) For programs authorized under section 402D—

- (i) the extent to which the eligible entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives regarding the retention in postsecondary education of the students served by the program;
- (ii)(I) in the case of an entity that is an institution of higher education offering a baccalaureate degree, the extent to which the entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives regarding the percentage of such students completion of the degree programs in which such students were enrolled; or
(II) in the case of an entity that is an institution of higher education that does not offer a baccalaureate degree, the extent to which such students met or exceeded the entity's objectives regarding—
 - (aa) the completion of a degree or certificate by such students; and
 - (bb) the transfer of such students to institutions of higher education that offer baccalaureate degrees;
- (iii) the extent to which the entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives regarding the delivery of service to a total number of students, as agreed upon by the entity and the Secretary for the period; and
- (iv) the extent to which the entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives regarding the students served under the program who remain in good academic standing.

(D) For programs authorized under section 402E, the extent to which the entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives for such program regarding—

- (i) the delivery of service to a total number of students served by the program, as agreed upon by the entity and the Secretary for the period;
- (ii) the provision of appropriate scholarly and research activities for the students served by the program;
- (iii) the acceptance and enrollment of such students in graduate programs; and
- (iv) the continued enrollment of such students in graduate study and the attainment of doctoral degrees by former program participants.

(E) For programs authorized under section 402F, the extent to which the entity met or exceeded the entity's objectives for such program regarding—

- (i) the enrollment of students without a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, who were served by the program, in programs leading to such diploma or equivalent;
- (ii) the enrollment of secondary school graduates who were served by the program in programs of postsecondary education;
- (iii) the delivery of service to a total number of students served by the program, as agreed upon by the entity and the Secretary for the period; and

(iv) the provision of assistance to students served by the program in completing financial aid applications and college admission applications.

(4) MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS.— In order to determine the extent to which each outcome criterion described in paragraph (2) or (3) is met or exceeded, the Secretary shall compare the agreed upon target for the criterion, as established in the eligible entity's application approved by the Secretary, with the results for the criterion, measured as of the last day of the applicable time period for the determination for the outcome criterion.

(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.— For the purpose of making grants and contracts under this chapter, there are authorized to be appropriated \$900,000,000 for fiscal year 2009 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the five succeeding fiscal years. Of the amount appropriated under this chapter, the Secretary may use no more than one half of 1 percent of such amount to obtain additional qualified readers and additional staff to review applications, to increase the level of oversight monitoring, to support impact studies, program assessments and reviews, and to provide technical assistance to potential applicants and current grantees. In expending these funds, the Secretary shall give priority to the additional administrative requirements provided in the Higher Education Amendments of 1992, to outreach activities, and to obtaining additional readers.

(h) DEFINITIONS.—For the purpose of this chapter:

(1) FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT.— The term “first generation college student” means—

(A) An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or

(B) In the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree.

(2) LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUAL.— The term “low-income individual” means an individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census.

(3) DIFFERENT CAMPUS.— The term ‘different campus’ means a site of an institution of higher education that—

(A) is geographically apart from the main campus of the institution;

(B) is permanent in nature; and

(C) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.

(4) DIFFERENT POPULATION.— The term ‘different population’ means a group of individuals that an eligible entity desires to serve through an application for a grant under this chapter, and that –

(A) is separate and distinct from any other population that the entity has applied for a grant under this chapter to serve; or

(B) while sharing some of the same needs as another population that the eligible entity has applied for a grant under this chapter to serve, has distinct needs for specialized services.

- (5) VETERAN ELIGIBILITY.— No veteran shall be deemed ineligible to participate in any program under this chapter by reason of such individual’s age who—
- (A) served on active duty for a period of more than 180 days, and was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable;
 - (B) served on active duty, and was discharged or released there from because of a service connected disability;
 - (C) was a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces called to active duty for a period of more than 30 days; or
 - (D) was a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of a contingency operation (as that term is defined in section 101(a)(13) of title 10, United States Code) on or after September 11, 2001.

* * *

**Sec. 402D HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965 20 U.S.C. 1070a–14
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

(a) Program authority

The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as student support services which shall be designed—

- (1) to increase college retention and graduation rates for eligible students;
- (2) to increase the transfer rates of eligible students from 2-year to 4-year institutions;
- (3) to foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths (as such term is defined in section 11434a of title 42), students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system, or other disconnected students; and
- (4) to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students, including—
 - (A) basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills; and
 - (B) basic economic decisionmaking skills.

(b) Required services

A project assisted under this section shall provide—

- (1) academic tutoring, directly or through other services provided by the institution, to enable students to complete postsecondary courses, which may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects;
- (2) advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection;
- (3)(A) information on both the full range of Federal student financial aid programs and benefits (including Federal Pell Grant awards and loan forgiveness) and resources for locating public and private scholarships; and
- (B) assistance in completing financial aid applications, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 1090(a) of this title;

(4) education or counseling services designed to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students, including financial planning for postsecondary education;

(5) activities designed to assist students participating in the project in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, graduate and professional programs; and

(6) activities designed to assist students enrolled in two-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, a four-year program of postsecondary education.

(c) Permissible services

A project assisted under this section may provide services such as—

(1) individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic matters provided by assigned counselors;

(2) information, activities, and instruction designed to acquaint students participating in the project with the range of career options available to the students;

(3) exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students;

(4) mentoring programs involving faculty or upper class students, or a combination thereof;

(5) securing temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for—

(A) students who are homeless children and youths (as such term is defined in section 11434a of title 42) or were formerly homeless children and youths; and

(B) students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system; and

(6) programs and activities as described in subsection (b) or paragraphs (1) through (4) of this subsection that are specially designed for students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths (as such term is defined in section 11434a of title 42), students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system, or other disconnected students.

(d) Special rule

(1) Use for student aid

A recipient of a grant that undertakes any of the permissible services identified in subsection (c) may, in addition, use such funds to provide grant aid to students. A grant provided under this paragraph shall not exceed the Federal Pell Grant amount, determined under section 1070a(b)(2)(A) of this title, for which a student is eligible, or be less than the minimum Federal Pell Grant amount described in section 1070a(b)(4) of this title, for the current academic year. In making grants to students under this subsection, an institution shall ensure that adequate consultation takes place between the student support service program office and the institution's financial aid office.

(2) Eligible students

For purposes of receiving grant aid under this subsection, eligible students shall be current participants in the student support services program offered by the institution and be—

- (A) students who are in their first 2 years of postsecondary education and who are receiving Federal Pell Grants under subpart 1 of part A of this subchapter; or
- (B) students who have completed their first 2 years of postsecondary education and who are receiving Federal Pell Grants under subpart 1 of part A of this subchapter if the institution demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary that—
 - (i) these students are at high risk of dropping out; and
 - (ii) it will first meet the needs of all its eligible first- and second-year students for services under this paragraph.

(3) Determination of need

A grant provided to a student under paragraph (1) shall not be considered in determining that student's need for grant or work assistance under this subchapter and part C of subchapter I of chapter 34 of title 42, except that in no case shall the total amount of student financial assistance awarded to a student under this subchapter exceed that student's cost of attendance, as defined in section 1087ll of this title.

(4) Matching required

A recipient of a grant who uses such funds for the purpose described in paragraph (1) shall match the funds used for such purpose, in cash, from non-Federal funds, in an amount that is not less than 33 percent of the total amount of funds used for that purpose. This paragraph shall not apply to any grant recipient that is an institution of higher education eligible to receive funds under part A or B of subchapter III or subchapter V of this chapter.

(5) Reservation

In no event may a recipient use more than 20 percent of the funds received under this section for grant aid.

(6) Supplement, not supplant

Funds received by a grant recipient that are used under this subsection shall be used to supplement, and not supplant, non-Federal funds expended for student support services programs.

(e) Requirements for approval of applications

In approving applications for projects under this section for any fiscal year, the Secretary shall

- (1) require an assurance that not less than two-thirds of the persons participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application—
 - (A) be individuals with disabilities; or
 - (B) be low-income individuals who are first generation college students;
- (2) require an assurance that the remaining students participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application be low-income individuals, first generation college students, or individuals with disabilities;
- (3) require an assurance that not less than one-third of the individuals with disabilities participating in the project be low-income individuals;
- (4) require that there be a determination by the institution, with respect to each participant in such project, that the participant has a need for academic support in order to pursue successfully a program of education beyond secondary school;

(5) require that such participants be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at the institution which is the recipient of the grant or contract; and

(6) consider, in addition to such other criteria as the Secretary may prescribe, the institution's effort, and where applicable past history, in—

(A) providing sufficient financial assistance to meet the full financial need of each student in the project; and

(B) maintaining the loan burden of each such student at a manageable level.

DRAFT

TITLE 34—EDUCATION
CHAPTER VI—OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PART 646—STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

Section Contents

Subpart A—General

- §646.1 What is the Student Support Services Program?
- §646.2 Who is eligible to receive a grant?
- §646.3 Who is eligible to participate in a Student Support Services project?
- §646.4 What activities and services does a project provide?
- §646.5 How long is a project period?
- §646.6 What regulations apply?
- §646.7 What definitions apply?

Subpart B—How Does One Apply for an Award?

- §646.10 How many applications may an eligible applicant submit and for what different populations may an eligible application be submitted?
- §646.11 What assurances and other information must an applicant include in an application?

Subpart C—How Does the Secretary Make a Grant?

- §646.20 How does the Secretary decide which new grants to make?
- §646.21 What selection criteria does the Secretary use to evaluate an application?
- §646.22 How does the Secretary evaluate prior experience?
- §646.23 How does the Secretary set the amount of a grant?
- §646.24 What is the review process for unsuccessful applicants?

Subpart D—What Conditions Must Be Met by a Grantee?

- §646.30 What are allowable costs?
- §646.31 What are unallowable costs?

§646.32 What other requirements must a grantee meet?

§646.33 What are the matching requirements for a grantee that uses Student Support Services program funds for student grant aid?

Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14, unless otherwise noted.

Source: 61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—General

§646.1 What is the Student Support Services Program?

The Student Support Services Program provides grants for projects designed to—

- (a) Increase the college retention and graduation rates of eligible students;
- (b) Increase the transfer rate of eligible students from two-year to four-year institutions; and
- (c) Foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, individuals with disabilities, homeless children and youth, foster care youth, or other disconnected students; and
- (d) Improve the financial and economic literacy of students in areas such as—
 - (1) Basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills; and
 - (2) Basic economic decision-making skills.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.2 Who is eligible to receive a grant?

An institution of higher education or a combination of institutions of higher education is eligible to receive a grant to carry out a Student Support Services project.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

§646.3 Who is eligible to participate in a Student Support Services project?

A student is eligible to participate in a Student Support Services project if the student meets all of the following requirements:

(a) Is a citizen or national of the United States or meets the residency requirements for Federal student financial assistance.

(b) Is enrolled at the grantee institution or accepted for enrollment in the next academic term at that institution.

(c) Has a need for academic support, as determined by the grantee, in order to pursue successfully a postsecondary educational program.

(d) Is—

(1) A low-income individual;

(2) A first generation college student; or

(3) An individual with disabilities.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

§646.4 What activities and services does a project provide?

(a) A Student Support Services project must provide the following services:

(1) Academic tutoring, directly or through other services provided by the institution, to enable students to complete postsecondary courses, which may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects.

(2) Advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection.

(3)(i) Information on both the full range of Federal student financial aid programs and benefits (including Federal Pell Grant awards and loan forgiveness) and resources for locating public and private scholarships; and

(ii) Assistance in completing financial aid applications, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

(4) Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy of students, including financial planning for postsecondary education.

(5) Activities designed to assist participants enrolled in four-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, graduate and professional programs.

(6) Activities designed to assist students enrolled in two-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, a four-year program of postsecondary education.

(b) A Student Support Services project may provide the following services:

(1) Individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic matters provided by assigned counselors.

(2) Information, activities, and instruction designed to acquaint students participating in the project with the range of career options available to the students.

(3) Exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students.

(4) Mentoring programs involving faculty or upper class students, or a combination thereof.

(5) Securing temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for—

(i) Students who are homeless children and youths or were formerly homeless children and youths; and

(ii) Foster care youths.

(6) Programs and activities as described in paragraph (a) of this section or paragraphs (b)(1) through (b)(4) of this section that are specially designed for students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students who are individuals with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths, students who are foster care youth, or other disconnected students.

(7) Other activities designed to meet the purposes of the Student Support Services Program in §646.1.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

[75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.5 How long is a project period?

A project period under the Student Support Services program is five years.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11)

[75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.6 What regulations apply?

The following regulations apply to the Student Support Services Program:

(a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75 (except for §§75.215 through 75.221), 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98, and 99.

(b) The regulations in this part 646.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.7 What definitions apply?

(a) *Definitions in EDGAR.* The following terms used in this part are defined in 34 CFR 77.1:

Applicant

Application

Award

Budget

Budget Period

Department

EDGAR

Equipment

Facilities

Fiscal year

Grant

Grant Period

Grantee

Project

Project period

Public

Secretary

Supplies

(b) *Other definitions.* The following definitions also apply to this part:

Academic need with reference to a student means a student whom the grantee determines needs one or more of the services stated under §646.4 to succeed in a postsecondary educational program.

Combination of institutions of higher education means two or more institutions of higher education that have entered into a cooperative agreement for the purpose of carrying out a common objective, or an entity designated or created by a group of institutions of higher education for the purpose of carrying out a common objective on their behalf.

Different campus means a site of an institution of higher education that—

- (1) Is geographically apart from the main campus of the institution;
- (2) Is permanent in nature; and
- (3) Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.

Different population means a group of individuals that an eligible entity desires to serve through an application for a grant under the Student Support Services program and that—

- (1) Is separate and distinct from any other population that the entity has applied for a grant to serve; or
- (2) While sharing some of the same needs as another population that the eligible entity has applied for a grant to serve, has distinct needs for specialized services.

Financial and economic literacy means knowledge about personal financial decision-making, which may include but is not limited to knowledge about—

- (1) Personal and family budget planning;
- (2) Understanding credit building principles to meet long-term and short-term goals (*e.g.*, loan to debt ratio, credit scoring, negative impacts on credit scores);
- (3) Cost planning for postsecondary or postbaccalaureate education (*e.g.*, spending, saving, personal budgeting);
- (4) College cost of attendance (*e.g.*, public vs. private, tuition vs. fees, personal costs);
- (5) Financial assistance (*e.g.*, searches, application processes, differences between private and government loans, assistanceships); and
- (6) Assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

First generation college student means—

- (1) A student neither of whose natural or adoptive parents received a baccalaureate degree;
- (2) A student who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one parent and whose supporting parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree; or
- (3) An individual who, prior to the age of 18, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or an adoptive parent.

Foster care youth means youth who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system.

Homeless children and youth means persons defined in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 1143a).

Individual with a disability means a person who has a disability, as that term is defined in section 12102 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*).

Institution of higher education means an educational institution as defined in sections 101 and 102 of the Act.

Limited English proficiency with reference to an individual, means a person whose native language is other than English and who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny that individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms in which English is the language of instruction.

Low-income individual means an individual whose family's taxable income did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount in the calendar year preceding the year in which the individual initially participated in the project. The poverty level amount is determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Participant means an individual who—

- (1) Is determined to be eligible to participate in the project under §646.3; and
- (2) Receives project services that the grantee has determined to be sufficient to increase the individual's chances for success in a postsecondary educational program.

Sufficient financial assistance means the amount of financial aid offered a Student Support Services student, inclusive of Federal, State, local, private, and institutional aid which, together with parent or student contributions, is equal to the cost of attendance as determined by a financial aid officer at the institution.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65790, Oct. 26, 2010]

Subpart B—How Does One Apply for an Award?

Source: 75 FR 65791, Oct. 26, 2010, unless otherwise noted.

§646.10 How many applications may an eligible applicant submit and for what different populations may an eligible application be submitted?

(a) An eligible applicant may submit more than one application as long as each application describes a project that serves a different campus or a designated different population.

(b) For each grant competition, the Secretary designates, in the Federal Register notice inviting applications and other published application materials for the competition, the different populations for which an eligible entity may submit a separate application.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14; 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3)

§646.11 What assurances and other information must an applicant include in an application?

(a) An applicant must assure the Secretary in the application that—

(1) Not less than two-thirds of the project participants will be—

(i) Low-income individuals who are first generation college students; or

(ii) Individuals with disabilities;

(2) The remaining project participants will be low-income individuals, first generation college students, or individuals with disabilities; and

(3) Not less than one-third of the individuals with disabilities served also will be low-income individuals.

(b) The applicant must describe in the application its efforts, and where applicable, past history, in—

(1) Providing sufficient financial assistance to meet the full financial need of each student in the project; and

(2) Maintaining the loan burden of each student in the project at a manageable level.

(c) The applicant must assure the Secretary in the application that a student will not be served by more than one SSS project at any one time and that the SSS project will collaborate with other SSS and McNair projects and other State and institutional programs at the grantee-institution so that more students can be served.

(d) The applicant must assure the Secretary in the application that the institution's financial aid office will consult with the SSS project with respect to which SSS participants should receive grant aid and the amount of the grant aid awards.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1840-NEW5)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

Subpart C—How Does the Secretary Make a Grant?

§646.20 How does the Secretary decide which new grants to make?

(a) The Secretary evaluates an application for a new grant as follows:

(1)(i) The Secretary evaluates the application on the basis of the selection criteria in §646.21.

(ii) The maximum score for all the criteria in §646.21 is 100 points. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses with the criterion.

(2)(i) If an application for a new grant proposes to continue to serve substantially the same population and campus that the applicant is serving under an expiring grant, the Secretary evaluates the applicant's prior experience of high quality service delivery under the expiring grant on the basis of the outcome criteria in §646.22.

(ii) The maximum total score for all the criteria in §646.22 is 15 points. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses with the criterion.

(iii) The Secretary evaluates the PE of an applicant for each of the three project years that the Secretary designates in the Federal Register notice inviting applications and the other published application materials for the competition.

(iv) An applicant may earn up to 15 PE points for each of the designated project years for which annual performance report data are available.

(v) The final PE score is the average of the scores for the three project years assessed.

(b) The Secretary makes new grants in rank order on the basis of the applications' total scores under paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this section.

(c) If the total scores of two or more applications are the same and there is insufficient money available to fully fund them both after funding the higher-ranked applications, the Secretary chooses among the tied applications so as to serve geographic areas that have been underserved by the Student Support Services Program.

(d) The Secretary does not make a new grant to an applicant if the applicant's prior project involved the fraudulent use of program funds.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65791, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.21 What selection criteria does the Secretary use to evaluate an application?

The Secretary uses the following criteria to evaluate an application for a new grant:

(a) *Need for the project* (24 points). The Secretary evaluates the need for a Student Support Services project proposed at the applicant institution on the basis of the extent to which the application contains clear evidence of—

(1) (8 points) A high number or percentage, or both, of students enrolled or accepted for enrollment at the applicant institution who meet the eligibility requirements of §646.3;

(2) (8 points) The academic and other problems that eligible students encounter at the applicant institution; and

(3) (8 points) The differences between eligible Student Support Services students compared to an appropriate group, based on the following indicators:

(i) Retention and graduation rates.

(ii) Grade point averages.

(iii) Graduate and professional school enrollment rates (four-year colleges only).

(iv) Transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions (two-year colleges only).

(b) *Objectives* (8 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the applicant's proposed objectives in the following areas on the basis of the extent to which they are both ambitious, as related to the need data provided under paragraph (a) of this section, and attainable, given the project's plan of operation, budget, and other resources.

(1) (3 points) Retention in postsecondary education.

(2) (2 points) In good academic standing at grantee institution.

(3) Two-year institutions only. (i) (1 point) Certificate or degree completion; and

(ii) (2 points) Certificate or degree completion and transfer to a four-year institution.

(4) Four-year institutions only. (3 points) Completion of a baccalaureate degree.

(c) *Plan of operation* (30 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the applicant's plan of operation on the basis of the following:

(1) (3 points) The plan to inform the institutional community (students, faculty, and staff) of the goals, objectives, and services of the project and the eligibility requirements for participation in the project.

(2) (3 points) The plan to identify, select, and retain project participants with academic need.

(3) (4 points) The plan for assessing each individual participant's need for specific services and monitoring his or her academic progress at the institution to ensure satisfactory academic progress.

(4) (10 points) The plan to provide services that address the goals and objectives of the project.

(5) (10 points) The applicant's plan to ensure proper and efficient administration of the project, including the organizational placement of the project; the time commitment of key project staff; the specific plans for financial management, student records management, and personnel management; and, where appropriate, its plan for coordination with other programs for disadvantaged students.

(d) *Institutional commitment* (16 points). The Secretary evaluates the institutional commitment to the proposed project on the basis of the extent to which the applicant has—

(1) (6 points) Committed facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, and other resources to supplement the grant and enhance project services;

(2) (6 points) Established administrative and academic policies that enhance participants' retention at the institution and improve their chances of graduating from the institution;

(3) (2 points) Demonstrated a commitment to minimize the dependence on student loans in developing financial aid packages for project participants by committing institutional resources to the extent possible; and

(4) (2 points) Assured the full cooperation and support of the Admissions, Student Aid, Registrar and data collection and analysis components of the institution.

(e) *Quality of personnel* (9 points). To determine the quality of personnel the applicant plans to use, the Secretary looks for information that shows—

(1) (3 points) The qualifications required of the project director, including formal education and training in fields related to the objectives of the project, and experience in designing, managing, or implementing Student Support Services or similar projects;

(2) (3 points) The qualifications required of other personnel to be used in the project, including formal education, training, and work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project; and

(3) (3 points) The quality of the applicant's plan for employing personnel who have succeeded in overcoming barriers similar to those confronting the project's target population.

(f) *Budget* (5 points). The Secretary evaluates the extent to which the project budget is reasonable, cost-effective, and adequate to support the project.

(g) *Evaluation plan* (8 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the evaluation plan for the project on the basis of the extent to which—

(1) The applicant's methods for evaluation—

(i) (2 points) Are appropriate to the project and include both quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures; and

(ii) (2 points) Examine in specific and measurable ways, using appropriate baseline data, the success of the project in improving academic achievement, retention and graduation of project participants; and

(2) (4 points) The applicant intends to use the results of an evaluation to make programmatic changes based upon the results of project evaluation.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1840-NEW5)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65791, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.22 How does the Secretary evaluate prior experience?

(a) In the case of an application described in §646.20(a)(2)(i), the Secretary—

(1) Evaluates the applicant's performance under its expiring Student Support Services project;

(2) Uses the approved project objectives for the applicant's expiring Student Support Services grant and the information the applicant submitted in its annual performance reports (APRs) to determine the number of prior PE points; and

(3) May adjust a calculated PE score or decide not to award PE points if other information such as audit reports, site visit reports, and project evaluation reports indicates the APR data used to calculate PE points are incorrect.

(b) The Secretary does not award PE points for a given year to an applicant that does not serve at least 90 percent of the approved number of participants. For purposes of this section, the approved number of participants is the total number of participants the project would serve as agreed upon by the grantee and the Secretary.

(c) The Secretary does not award PE points for the criterion specified in paragraph (e)(1) of this section (Number of participants) if the applicant did not serve at least the approved number of participants.

(d) The Secretary uses the approved number of participants, or the actual number of participants served in a given year if greater than the approved number of participants, as the denominator for calculating whether the applicant has met its approved objectives related to paragraph (e)(2) of this section (Postsecondary retention) and paragraph (e)(3) of this section (Good academic standing).

(e) For purposes of the PE evaluation of grants awarded after January 1, 2009, the Secretary evaluates the applicant's PE on the basis of the following outcome criteria:

(1) (3 points) *Number of participants*. Whether the applicant provided services to no less than the approved number of participants.

(2) (4 points) *Postsecondary retention*. Whether the applicant met or exceeded its objective regarding the participants served during the project year who continue to be enrolled in a program of postsecondary education from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or who complete a program of postsecondary education at the grantee institution during the academic year or transfer from a two-year institution to a four-year institution during the academic year.

(3) (4 points) *Good academic standing*. Whether the applicant met or exceeded its objective regarding the participants served during the project year who are in good academic standing at the grantee institution.

(4) (4 points) *Degree completion (for an applicant institution of higher education offering primarily a baccalaureate or higher degree)*. Whether the applicant met or exceeded its objective regarding the current and prior participants receiving a baccalaureate degree at the grantee institution within the specified number of years.

(5) *Degree completion and transfer (for an applicant institution of higher education offering primarily an associate degree)*. Whether the applicant met or exceeded its objectives regarding the current and prior participants at the grantee institution who—

(i) (2 points) Complete a degree or certificate within the number of years specified in the approved objective; and

(ii) (2 points) Transfer within the number of years specified in the approved objective to institutions of higher education that offer baccalaureate degrees.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1840-NEW10)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11; 1070a-14)

[75 FR 65792, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.23 How does the Secretary set the amount of a grant?

(a) The Secretary sets the amount of a grant on the basis of—

(1) 34 CFR 75.232 and 75.233, for new grants; and

(2) 34 CFR 75.253, for the second and subsequent years of a project period.

(b) If the circumstances described in section 402A(b)(3) of the HEA exist, the Secretary uses the available funds to set the amount of the grant at the lesser of—

(1) \$200,000; or

(2) The amount requested by the applicant.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65792, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.24 What is the review process for unsuccessful applicants?

(a) *Technical or administrative error for applications not reviewed.* (1) An applicant whose grant application was not evaluated during the competition may request that the Secretary review the application if—

(i) The applicant has met all of the application submission requirements included in the Federal Register notice inviting applications and the other published application materials for the competition; and

(ii) The applicant provides evidence demonstrating that the Department or an agent of the Department made a technical or administrative error in the processing of the submitted application.

(2) A technical or administrative error in the processing of an application includes—

(i) A problem with the system for the electronic submission of applications that was not addressed in accordance with the procedures included in the Federal Register notice inviting applications for the competition;

(ii) An error in determining an applicant's eligibility for funding consideration, which may include, but is not limited to—

(A) An incorrect conclusion that the application was submitted by an ineligible applicant;

(B) An incorrect conclusion that the application exceeded the published page limit;

(C) An incorrect conclusion that the applicant requested funding greater than the published maximum award; or

(D) An incorrect conclusion that the application was missing critical sections of the application; and

(iii) Any other mishandling of the application that resulted in an otherwise eligible application not being reviewed during the competition.

(3)(i) If the Secretary determines that the Department or the Department's agent made a technical or administrative error, the Secretary has the application evaluated and scored.

(ii) If the total score assigned the application would have resulted in funding of the application during the competition and the program has funds available, the Secretary funds the application prior to the re-ranking of applications based on the second peer review of applications described in paragraph (c) of this section.

(b) *Administrative or scoring error for applications that were reviewed.* (1) An applicant that was not selected for funding during a competition may request that the Secretary conduct a second review of the application if—

(i) The applicant provides evidence demonstrating that the Department, an agent of the Department, or a peer reviewer made an administrative or scoring error in the review of its application; and

(ii) The final score assigned to the application is within the funding band described in paragraph (d) of this section.

(2) An administrative error relates to either the PE points or the scores assigned to the application by the peer reviewers.

(i) For PE points, an administrative error includes mathematical errors made by the Department or the Department's agent in the calculation of the PE points or a failure to correctly add the earned PE points to the peer reviewer score.

(ii) For the peer review score, an administrative error is applying the wrong peer reviewer scores to an application.

(3)(i) A scoring error relates only to the peer review process and includes errors caused by a reviewer who, in assigning points—

(A) Uses criteria not required by the applicable law or program regulations, the Federal Register notice inviting applications, the other published application materials for the competition, or guidance provided to the peer reviewers by the Secretary; or

(B) Does not consider relevant information included in the appropriate section of the application.

(ii) The term “scoring error” does not include—

(A) A peer reviewer's appropriate use of his or her professional judgment in evaluating and scoring an application;

(B) Any situation in which the applicant did not include information needed to evaluate its response to a specific selection criterion in the appropriate section of the application as stipulated in the Federal Register notice inviting applications or the other published application materials for the competition; or

(C) Any error by the applicant.

(c) *Procedures for the second review.* (1) To ensure the timely awarding of grants under the competition, the Secretary sets aside a percentage of the funds allotted for the competition to be awarded after the second review is completed.

(2) After the competition, the Secretary makes new awards in rank order as described in §646.20 based on the available funds for the competition minus the funds set aside for the second review.

(3) After the Secretary issues a notification of grant award to successful applicants, the Secretary notifies each unsuccessful applicant in writing as to the status of its application and the funding band for the second review and provides copies of the peer reviewers' evaluations of the applicant's application and the applicant's PE score, if applicable.

(4) An applicant that was not selected for funding following the competition as described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section and whose application received a score within the funding band as described in paragraph (d) of this section, may request a second review if the applicant demonstrates that the Department, the Department's agent, or a peer reviewer made an administrative or scoring error as provided in paragraph (b) of this section.

(5) An applicant whose application was not funded after the first review as described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section and whose application received a score within the funding band as described in paragraph (d) of this section has at least 15 calendar days after receiving notification that its application was not funded in which to submit a written request for a second review in accordance with the instructions and due date provided in the Secretary's written notification.

(6) An applicant's written request for a second review must be received by the Department or submitted electronically to the designated e-mail or Web address by the due date and time established by the Secretary.

(7) If the Secretary determines that the Department or the Department's agent made an administrative error that relates to the PE points awarded, as described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section, the Secretary adjusts the applicant's PE score to reflect the correct number of PE points. If the adjusted score assigned to the application would have resulted in funding of the application during the competition and the program has funds available, the Secretary funds the application prior to the re-ranking of applications based on the second peer review of applications described in paragraph (c)(9) of this section.

(8) If the Secretary determines that the Department, the Department's agent or the peer reviewer made an administrative error that relates to the peer reviewers' score(s), as described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, the Secretary adjusts the applicant's peer reviewers' score(s)

to correct the error. If the adjusted score assigned to the application would have resulted in funding of the application during the competition and the program has funds available, the Secretary funds the application prior to the re-ranking of applications based on the second peer review of applications described in paragraph (c)(9) of this section.

(9) If the Secretary determines that a peer reviewer made a scoring error, as described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, the Secretary convenes a second panel of peer reviewers in accordance with the requirements in section 402A(c)(8)(C)(iv)(III) of the HEA.

(10) The average of the peer reviewers' scores from the second peer review are used in the second ranking of applications. The average score obtained from the second peer review panel is the final peer reviewer score for the application and will be used even if the second review results in a lower score for the application than that obtained in the initial review.

(11) For applications in the funding band, the Secretary funds these applications in rank order based on adjusted scores and the available funds that have been set aside for the second review of applications.

(d) *Process for establishing a funding band.* (1) For each competition, the Secretary establishes a funding band for the second review of applications.

(2) The Secretary establishes the funding band for each competition based on the amount of funds the Secretary has set aside for the second review of applications.

(3) The funding band is composed of those applications—

(i) With a rank-order score before the second review that is below the lowest score of applications funded after the first review; and

(ii) That would be funded if the Secretary had 150 percent of the funds that were set aside for the second review of applications for the competition.

(e) *Final decision.* (1) The Secretary's determination of whether the applicant has met the requirements for a second review and the Secretary's decision on re-scoring of an application are final and not subject to further appeal or challenge.

(2) An application that scored below the established funding band for the competition is not eligible for a second review.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1840-NEW5)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11)

[75 FR 65792, Oct. 26, 2010]

Subpart D—What Conditions Must Be Met by a Grantee?

§646.30 What are allowable costs?

The cost principles that apply to the Student Support Services Program are in 34 CFR 74.27, 75.530, and 80.22, as applicable. Allowable costs include the following if they are reasonably related to the objectives of the project:

(a) Cost of remedial and special classes if—

(1) These classes are not otherwise available at the grantee institution;

(2) Are limited to eligible project participants; and

(3) Project participants are not charged tuition for classes paid for by the project.

(b) Courses in English language instruction for students of limited English proficiency if these classes are limited to eligible project participants and not otherwise available at the grantee institution.

(c) In-service training of project staff.

(d) Activities of an academic or cultural nature, such as field trips, special lectures, and symposiums, that have as their purpose the improvement of the participants' academic progress and personal development.

(e) Transportation and, with the prior approval of the Secretary, meals and lodging for participants and staff during approved educational and cultural activities sponsored by the project.

(f) Purchase, lease, or rental of computer hardware, software, and other equipment, service agreements for such equipment, and supplies for participant development, project administration, or project recordkeeping.

(g) Professional development travel for staff if directly related to the project's overall purpose and activities, except that these costs may not exceed four percent of total project salaries. The Secretary may adjust this percentage if the applicant demonstrates to the Secretary's satisfaction that a higher percentage is necessary and reasonable.

(h) Project evaluation that is directly related to assessing the project's impact on student achievement and improving the delivery of services.

(i) Grant aid to eligible students who—

(1) Are in their first two years of postsecondary education and who are receiving Federal Pell Grants under subpart 1 of part A of title IV of the Act; or

(2) Have completed their first two years of postsecondary education and who are receiving Federal Pell Grants under subpart 1 of part A of title IV of the Act if the institution demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary that—

(i) These students are at high risk of dropping out; and

(ii) It will first meet the needs of all its eligible first- and second-year students for services under this paragraph.

(j) Temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for—

(1) Students who are homeless children and youths or were formerly homeless children and youths; and

(2) Students who are foster care youth.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, 75 FR 65793, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.31 What are unallowable costs?

Costs that may not be charged against a grant under the Student Support Services Program include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Costs involved in recruiting students for enrollment at the institution.

(b) Tuition, fees, stipends, and other forms of direct financial support, except for Grant aid under §646.30(i) for staff or participants.

(c) Research not directly related to the evaluation or improvement of the project.

(d) Construction, renovation, or remodeling of any facilities.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65794, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.32 What other requirements must a grantee meet?

(a) *Number of Participants.* For each year of the project period, a grantee must serve at least the number of participants that the Secretary identifies in the Federal Register notice inviting applications for a competition. Through this notice, the Secretary also provides the minimum and maximum grant award amounts for the competition.

(b) *Eligibility of participants.* (1) A grantee shall determine the eligibility of each participant in the project when the individual is selected to participate. The grantee does not have to revalidate a participant's eligibility after the participant's initial selection.

(2) A grantee shall determine the low-income status of an individual on the basis of the documentation described in section 402A(e) of the Act.

(c) *Recordkeeping.* A grantee must maintain participant records that show—

(1) The basis for the grantee's determination that each participant is eligible to participate in the project under §646.3;

(2) The grantee's basis for determining the academic need for each participant;

(3) The services that are provided to each participant;

(4) The performance and progress of each participant by cohort for the duration of the participant's attendance at the grantee institution; and

(5) To the extent practicable, any services the participant receives during the project year from another Federal TRIO program or another federally funded program that serves populations similar to those served under the SSS program.

(d) *Project director.* (1) A grantee must employ a full-time project director unless—

(i) The director is also administering one or two additional programs for disadvantaged students operated by the sponsoring institution or agency; or

(ii) The Secretary grants a waiver of this requirement.

(2) The grantee must give the project director sufficient authority to administer the project effectively.

(3) The Secretary waives the requirements in paragraph (d)(1) of this section if the applicant demonstrates that the project director will be able to effectively administer more than three programs and that this arrangement would promote effective coordination between the program and other Federal TRIO programs (sections 402B through 402F of the HEA) or similar programs funded through other sources.

(e) *Project coordination.* (1) The Secretary encourages grantees to coordinate project services with other programs for disadvantaged students operated by the grantee institution provided the Student Support Services grant funds are not used to support activities reasonably available to the general student population.

(2) To the extent practical, the grantee may share staff with programs serving similar populations provided the grantee maintains appropriate records of staff time and effort and does not commingle grant funds.

(3) Costs for special classes and events that would benefit Student Support Services students and participants in other programs for disadvantaged students must be proportionately divided among the benefiting projects.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1840-NEW5)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a)

[61 FR 38537, July 24, 1996, as amended at 75 FR 65794, Oct. 26, 2010]

§646.33 What are the matching requirements for a grantee that uses Student Support Services program funds for student grant aid?

(a) Except for grantees described in paragraph (b) of this section, a grantee that uses Student Support Services program funds for grant aid to eligible students described in §646.30(i) must—

(1) Match the Federal funds used for grant aid, in cash, from non-Federal funds, in an amount that is not less than 33 percent of the total amount of Federal grant funds used for Grant aid; and

(2) Use no more than 20 percent of the Federal program funds awarded the grantee each year for grant aid.

(b) A grant recipient that is an institution of higher education eligible to receive funds under part A or B of title III or title V of the HEA, as amended, is not required to match the Federal funds used for grant aid.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1840-NEW10)

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11)

[75 FR 65794, Oct. 26, 2010]

Current Year Low-Income Levels

Federal TRIO Programs

(Effective **January 28, 2014** until further notice)

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States, D.C., and Outlying Jurisdictions	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$17,505	\$21,870	\$20,130
2	\$23,595	\$29,490	\$27,135

3	\$29,685	\$37,110	\$34,140
4	\$35,775	\$44,730	\$41,145
5	\$41,865	\$52,350	\$48,150
6	\$47,955	\$59,970	\$55,155
7	\$54,045	\$67,590	\$62,160
8	\$60,135	\$75,210	\$69,165

For family units with more than eight members, add the following amount for each additional family member: \$6,090 for the 48 contiguous states, the District of Columbia and outlying jurisdictions; \$7,620 for Alaska; and \$7,005 for Hawaii.

The term "low-income individual" means an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount.

The figures shown under family income represent amounts equal to 150 percent of the family income levels established by the Census Bureau for determining poverty status. The poverty guidelines were published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the [Federal Register](#) on January 22, 2014.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS
EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372**

This program falls under the rubric of Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs) and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. One of the objectives of the Executive order is to strengthen federalism--or the distribution of responsibility between localities, States, and the Federal government--by fostering intergovernmental partnerships. This idea includes supporting processes that State or local governments have devised for coordinating and reviewing proposed Federal financial grant applications.

The process for doing this requires grant applicants to contact State Single Points of Contact for information on how this works. Multi-state applicants should follow procedures specific to each state.

Further information about the State Single Point of Contact process and a list of names by State can be found at:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc

Absent specific State review programs, applicants may submit comments directly to the Department. All recommendations and comments must be mailed or hand-delivered by the date indicated in the actual application Notice to the following address: The Secretary, EO 12372--CFDA# 84.042A, U.S. Department of Education, room 7E200, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20202.

Proof of mailing will be determined on the same basis as applications (see 34 CFR §75.102). Recommendations or comments may be hand-delivered until 4:30 p.m. (Eastern Time) on the closing date indicated in this Notice.

Important note: The above address is not the same address as the one to which the applicant submits its completed applications. **Do not send applications to the above address.**

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The following supplements the information provided in the “Dear Applicant” letter and the Notice.

1. Estimated Funding

- Estimated Available Funds for New FY 2015 Awards: \$265,706,546
- Estimated Range of Awards: \$220,000 - \$360,000 per year
- Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$282,000
- Estimated Number of New Awards: 1,026

The Department is not bound by these estimates.

2. Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs

Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs was issued to foster an intergovernmental partnership and to strengthen federalism by relying on state and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

Applicants must contact the appropriate State Single Point of Contact to find out about, and to comply with, the State’s process under Executive Order 12372. A listing of the Single Point of Contact for each State may be viewed at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/grants/spoc.html>.

3. Length of New Award

Applicants for new awards may apply for five years (60 months) of funding.

4. SSS Program Assurances

All applications must comply with the SSS Program statutory and regulatory requirements. The assurances are included in the application package. By submitting a SSS Program application, an applicant certifies that it has read the assurances and will fully comply with the requirements.

5. SSS Program Profile

All applicants must provide the information requested on this form. The SSS Program Profile form contains the standardized objectives. Applicants are required to propose the percentage at which each of the standardized objectives will be attained. On the SSS Profile form, you must fill in the blanks indicating the percentage level of achievement for each of the objectives. An applicant should complete either standardized objective three or four, whichever applies to the sector designation of its respective institution. **You may not modify, amend or delete any of these objectives.**

Applicants must copy and paste the SSS Program Profile form into a separate document, or otherwise recreate the page exactly as it appears. Complete the form, save it to your computer and attach it to the *Other Attachments Form* as a .pdf document. Do not modify or amend the language on the form in any way.

6. Evaluation of Applications for Awards

A panel of three non-federal reviewers will evaluate each application in accordance with the selection criteria. Each reviewer will prepare a written evaluation of the information presented in the project narrative section of the application and assign points for each selection criterion.

All applications for grants under the SSS Program will be evaluated as new submissions according to the selection criteria listed in the program regulations (34 CFR 646.21).

7. Selection Criteria

The selection criteria in 34 CFR Part 646 are used to evaluate applications. The selection criteria and maximum possible points are included in the application package.

8. Applicant Funding

Applicants should pay close attention to the “Maximum Award” section of the Notice. The Department will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding the maximum amount specified for the specific project type as indicated in the Notice.

9. Prior Experience

In accordance with 34 CFR 646.22, the Secretary will award prior experience points to applicants that have conducted a TRIO SSS Program project during these fiscal years: 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14. Based on the applicant’s documented experience set forth in the annual performance reports, up to 15 prior experience points will be added to the application’s averaged reader score to determine the total score for each application and the total score will be used in funding decisions as described in the Notice.

10.

Selection of Grantees

The Secretary will select an application for funding in rank order, based on the application’s total score for the selection criteria plus any prior experience points earned, pursuant to 34 CFR sections 646.20 through 646.22. If there are insufficient funds for all applications with the same total scores, the Secretary will choose among the tied applications so as to serve geographical areas that have been underserved by the SSS Program.

The Department’s Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs will inform the Congress regarding applications approved for new SSS Program grants. Successful applicants will receive award notices by mail shortly after the Congress is notified. No funding information will be released before the Congress is notified.

11.

Expectations of Successful Grantees

Currently funded projects with remaining outyears on an expiring grant are required to start implementing their new objectives upon receipt of the grant.

The Department reserves the right to request modified measurement objectives for those projects that serve “different populations” to measure the progress of the specific subgroup designated in the project application after the grant award has been made.

12.

Notice to Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing following the notice to successful applicants.

13. **Second Review Process**

To implement the statutory requirements for a second review of unsuccessful applications, the Department has adopted a two-slate process. After the peer review of applications and the awarding of PE points, as applicable, the Department will rank all the applications. The Department then will establish a funding band to determine the percentage of the total funds allotted for the competition that will be set aside for the second review. The determination of the percentage of funds to be reserved for the second review and the applications to be included in the funding band will be based on the distribution of application scores. The funding band will include all of the applications with a rank-order score that is 1) below the lowest score of applications funded after the first review and 2) that would be funded if the Secretary had 150 percent of the funds that were set aside for the second review.

Only applicants whose applications scored within the funding band will be eligible for the second review. In addition, those applicants deemed eligible for the second review will have to provide evidence demonstrating that the Department, an agent of the Department, or a peer reviewer made an administrative or scoring error (as defined in the regulations) in the review of its application. The guidelines and criteria for the second review process are included in the SSS Regulations (646.24).

14. **Annual Performance Report Requirements**

If you receive a FY 2015 new grant award, you will be required to submit annual performance reports during the five-year funding cycle using the Department’s on-line function. This on-line system collects data about funded projects to enable program specialists to determine if a grantee is making substantial progress toward meeting

approved project objectives.

15.

Contact Information

For SSS Program-related questions and assistance, please contact:

Program Specialist: ReShone Moore, Ph.D.

Address: Student Service, Federal TRIO Programs
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, N.W., Room 7000
Washington, D.C. 20006-8510
Telephone: (202) 502-7893
Fax: (202) 502-7857
E-mail Address: reshone.moore@ed.gov

and/or

Program Specialist: Lavelle Wright
Address: Student Service, Federal TRIO Programs
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, N.W., Room 7000
Washington, D.C. 20006-8510
Telephone: (202) 502-7674
Fax: (202) 502-7857
E-mail Address: lavelle.wright@ed.gov

Division Director: Eileen S. Bland
Address: Student Service, Federal TRIO Programs
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, N.W., Room 7000
Washington, D.C. 20006-8510
Telephone: (202) 502-7730
Fax: (202) 502-7857
E-mail Address: eileen.bland@ed.gov

For Grants.gov-related questions and assistance, please contact:

Support Desk: Grants.gov Support Desk
Telephone: (800) 518-4726
Hours: 24 hours, 7 days a week, except Federal holidays
Email: support@grants.gov

SSS Program Profile Form

Instructions: All applicants must complete this form. The completed form must be attached to the Other Attachments Form in the application package in Grants.gov (as a .pdf document). **DO NOT MODIFY OR AMEND THE CONTENTS OR LANGUAGE CONTAINED ON THIS FORM.**

1. Applicants currently funded under the Student Support Services Program (FY 2010-2015) must provide their current grant award number. This can be found in Block 5 of the Grant Award Notification.

New applicants should leave this item blank.

PR/Award Number (Current Grantees Only): P042A (10) (11) (12) _____

2. Institution (Legal Name): _____
(If this application is from an institution with multiple campuses, the name of the specific applying campus must be provided on the line above.)

3. All applicants must indicate the address where this project will be physically located.

Project Address: _____

Street Address, City, State, Zip Code

4. Applicants that propose to serve multiple campuses under a single grant award must provide the names and locations of all campuses/locations that will be involved in this project. Please list each service area site:

Campuses/Locations:

#1
Name _____

City, County, State and Zip Code +4

#2
Name _____

City, County, State and Zip Code +4

#3

Name _____

City, County, State and Zip Code +4

5. All applicants must indicate the type of project they are proposing to conduct. Check only one. There can be no combinations of project types.

_____ Regular

_____ Disabled Only

_____ English as a Second Language (ESL)

_____ Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), including Health Science

_____ Teacher Preparation K-12

_____ Veterans

(See below for a description of the types of projects that may be applied for under the SSS Program.)

SSS Project Types

These project types are provided to inform the needs of eligible applicants serving regular, disabled and “different populations”²² under a separate and distinct application for specialized services. The types of specialized services may include: (1) English as a Second Language (ESL), (2) Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), including Health Sciences (3) Teacher Preparation K-12, and (4) Veterans. As noted above, you may only check one line for a single project type to be served for each grant application.

Regular SSS Program: projects provide services to low-income, first-generation and/or disabled students, which may include students from the different populations of students specified below.

²² *Different population* means a group of individuals that an eligible entity desires to serve through an application for a grant under the Student Support Services program and that—
(1) Is separate and distinct from any other population that the entity has applied for a grant to serve; or
(2) While sharing some of the same needs as another population that the eligible entity has applied for a grant to serve, has distinct needs for specialized services.

Disabled Only SSS Program: projects provide services only to students with disabilities, one third of whom must also be low-income students.

English as a Second Language “ESL” SSS Program: projects provide services only to low-income, first-generation students or individuals with disabilities for whom English is a second language and/or who are of limited English proficiency.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and Health Science SSS Program: projects provide services only to low-income, first-generation students or individuals with disabilities pursuing disciplines in the following areas as well as other related fields including: physical sciences, engineering, life sciences, math (e.g., number properties and operations, measurement, geometry, data analysis and probability, and algebra), and technology, including technology literacy, hands on workshops, technological innovations, scientific research, biotechnology, electronics, health sciences, communications and health research.

Teacher Preparation K-12 SSS Program: projects provide services only to low-income, first-generation students or individuals with disabilities pursuing disciplines in the following areas as well as other related fields:

Test preparation to meet the teaching credential for certification and license; internships to learn effective teaching practices; mentoring to experience on-the-job training; technology to enable integration of technology into classroom instruction; diversity training to meet the needs of students (e.g. students who lack proficiency in English and culturally diverse students); methodology to increase the level of implementation of student performance assessment techniques and implementing state and district curriculum and performance standards; and teaching practices to affect special behavior problems.

Veterans Program: projects provide services to low-income, first-generation and disabled veterans/students only.

6. Grant Aid to Students. There is no separate funding for grant aid to students. Providing grant aid to students is not a program requirement for submitting an application under the SSS Program competition. However, successful applicants may use up to 20% of the total budget to cover the cost of grant aid. Applicants that plan to offer grant aid must provide the amount of funds they propose to use for grant aid to students (consistent with the information provided on the proposed grant aid funding and methods for its distribution as discussed in the selection criteria under the Plan of Operation).

Note: Once an applicant has elected to participate in grant aid to students, the Department will expect continued participation for the duration of the grant award cycle at the rate established at the time of initial funding.

Grant Aid to Students: \$ _____

Institutional Match (33% - if required): \$ _____

Not Applicable

If you are not required to match the grant aid to students, please indicate the reason:

Eligible, at the time of the submission date of this application, to receive funds under --

Title III-Part A--Strengthening Institutions Program

Title III-Part B--Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Title V--Strengthening Hispanic-serving Institutions

7. All applicants must provide the number of students they propose to serve each year.

Total number of proposed student participants to be served per year: / /

Breakdown of the number of students to be served in each category out of the proposed total number of participants:

A. ___ Low-Income and First-Generation

B. ___ Low-Income

C. ___ First-Generation

D. ___ Disabled

E. ___ Low-Income and Disabled

(Note: Two-thirds of the participants served in a special focus SSS project must also be low-income, first-generation or disabled students, of whom 1/3 must also be low-income.)

8. Program Objectives:

Please fill in the proposed percent for each objective.

Each applicant must enter targets for each of the standard project objectives listed below based on the institution's sector. Please note that the standard program objectives for the SSS program are different for two-year and four-year institutions. Therefore, please review the guidance below regarding how you should designate the sector of your institution for the SSS grant and then complete the appropriate section.

These same objectives should be referenced in the Part III Project Narrative section of your application and should not be revised in your narrative discussion of the proposed objectives or proposed evaluation. In addition, the Department reserves the right to request modified measurement objectives for those projects that serve "different populations" to measure the progress of the specific subgroup designated in the project application after the grant award.

Sector of Grantee Institution: (Check applicable option)

Please note that the applicant's sector designation for the purposes of completing the SSS Program Profile sheet may differ from the designation contained in the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). If you do not know your institution's designation, please see "**How to determine your institution's sector**" below.

2-year public 2-year private 4-year public 4-year private

How to Determine Your Institution's Sector

Even though IPEDS may have your institution designated as a 4-year institution, your institution may be 2-year if the institution predominantly awards associate's degrees or certificates. To determine your institution's sector do the following:

- Click on the link <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>.
- Under "**Name of School**" enter your institution's name and click on the button "Show Results."
- On the right hand side, click on your institution's name.
- If in the **General Information** section under "**Type**" the words "*primarily associate's*" appear, your institution predominantly awards associate's degrees or certificates; therefore, your institution primarily enrolls students in 2-year programs or less.
- If you are still not certain how to designate your institution's sector, follow steps 1, 2, and 3 above.
- Scroll down and select "**Programs/Majors.**"
- If the **Bachelor's Degree** column (if applicable) represents less than 10 percent of all undergraduate awards including certificates, your institution predominantly awards associate's degrees or certificates.

Please be advised that your sector designation on this profile sheet will be used to calculate your Prior Experience (PE) points for the persistence and graduation/transfer objectives for the FY 2015 funding cycle; therefore, you need to choose between 2-year and 4-year based upon the types of academic programs (e.g., 2-year versus 4-year) students at your institution are pursuing.

Project Objectives for applicants designated as 2-year institutions

A. **Persistence Rate** (2-year institution): ___% of all participants served²³ in the reporting year by the SSS project will persist from one academic year²⁴ to the beginning of the next academic

²³ For the persistence and good academic standing objectives, the Department defines participants served as those students that received project services during the reporting year.

²⁴ **Academic year means** the 12-month academic year of the grantee institution; it is not the budget period. For example, the 2013-14 academic year is roughly August/September 2013 through August 2014 while the budget/project year for most SSS grants is September 1, 2013, through August 31, 2014.

year or earn an associate's degree or certificate at the grantee institution and/or transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year institution by the fall term of the next academic year.

B. Good Academic Standing Rate (2-year institution): ___% of all enrolled²⁵ SSS participants served will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution.

C. Graduation and Transfer Rates (2-year institutions only):

1. ___% of new participants²⁶ served each year will graduate from the grantee institution with an associate's degree or certificate within three (3) years;

AND

2. ___% of new participants served each year will receive an associate's degree or certificate from the grantee institution and transfer to a four-year institution within three (3) years.

Note: In setting the achievement rates for the graduation and transfer objectives, it is important to understand which SSS participants are counted and the three-year point of measurement. For example, new participants (e.g., those first served by SSS during the 2010-11 academic year) constitute the denominator for the graduation and transfer objectives. The numerator for the graduation only objective (i.e., number "1" above) includes those new participants in 2010-11 that received an associate's degree or certificate from the grantee institutions within three years (by the end of the 2012-13 academic year). The numerator for the graduation and transfer objective (i.e., number "2" above) includes those new participants that received an associate's degree or certificate from the grantee institutions by the end of the 2012-13 academic year and transferred to a four-year institution by the fall term of 2013.

Project Objectives for applicants designated as 4-year institutions

A. Persistence Rate (4-year institution): ___% of all participants served²⁷ by the SSS project will persist from one academic year²⁸ to the beginning of the next academic year or will have earned a bachelor's degree at the grantee institution during the academic year.

²⁵ **Enrolled** means a student who has met the minimum standards to matriculate at an institution on either a full-time or part-time basis. However, it does not include new summer participants served during the summer preceding the participant's first academic year who did not earn college credits during the period (i.e., summer session) in which they were served.

²⁶ A **new participant** is an individual who was served by the SSS project for the **first time** in the project year under consideration and who meets the definition of a participant as specified in 34 CFR 646.7(c) of the SSS program regulations.

²⁷ For the persistence and good academic standing objectives, the Department defines participants served as those students that received project services during the reporting year.

²⁸ **Academic year means** the 12-month academic year of the grantee institution; it is not the budget period. For example, the 2013-14 academic year is roughly August/September 2013 through August 2014.

B. **Good Academic Standing Rate** (4-year institution): ___% of all enrolled²⁹ SSS participants being served will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution.

C. **Graduation Rate** (4-year institutions only): ___ % of new participants³⁰ served each year will graduate from the grantee institution with a bachelor's degree or equivalent within five (5) years.

Note: Please indicate if you will address the competitive preference priorities. Be advised, as stated in the Notice, the maximum competitive preference points an application can receive under this competition is 13.

____Competitive Preference Priority 1: Increasing Postsecondary Success (up to 10 additional points). The Department is using this Competitive Preference Priority to focus on postsecondary persistence and completion rates among students from high-need backgrounds.

____Competitive Preference Priority 2(a): Providing Individualized Counseling for Personal, Career, and Academic Matters (1 additional point) The Department is using this competitive preference priority to focus on improved individualized counseling to students. The Department believes that SSS projects can play a strong role in improving postsecondary outcomes by placing a greater emphasis on proactive coaching strategies designed to increase student success.

____Competitive Preference Priority 2(b): Individual Counseling Activities Based on Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness (2 additional points) In recent years, the Department has placed an increasing emphasis on promoting evidence-based practices through our grant competitions. We believe that encouraging applicants to focus on proven strategies can only enhance the quality of our competitions. Accordingly, within the competitive priority for individualized counseling (competitive preference priority 2(a)), we give additional competitive preference to applications that submit moderate evidence of effectiveness that supports their proposed strategies for providing individualized counseling.

²⁹ **Enrolled** means a student who has met the minimum standards to matriculate at an institution on either a full-time or part-time basis. However, it does not include new summer participants served during the summer preceding the participant's first academic year who did not earn college credits during the period (i.e., summer session) in which they were served.

³⁰ A **new participant** is an individual who was served by the SSS project for the **first time** in the project year under consideration and who meets the definition of a participant as specified in 34 CFR 646.7(c) of the SSS program regulations.

Part IV – Student Support Services Program Assurances

Attach this Assurance form to the “Other Attachments Form” in the Grants.gov system. Applicants must copy and paste this page into a separate document or recreate the page exactly as it appears. Then complete the page, save it to your computer and attach it to the “Other Attachments Form” as a .pdf document. **Do not modify or amend the language of this form in any way.**

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I certify that the applicant will comply with the following statutory requirements:

1. The applicant assures that at least two-thirds (2/3) of the students who will participate in the project will be individuals with disabilities and/or low-income individuals who are also first-generation college students; and that at least one-third (1/3) of the student participants who are individuals with disabilities also will be low-income individuals.
2. The applicant assures that the remaining students participating in the project will be either low-income individuals, first-generation college students, or individuals with disabilities.
3. The applicant assures that students served under the Student Support Services project at this institution shall receive or be offered all of the mandated required SSS services either directly from the SSS project or from other institutional-based resources.
4. The applicant must describe in the application its efforts, and where applicable, past history, in—
 - o Providing sufficient financial assistance to meet the full financial need of each student in the project; and
 - o Maintaining the loan burden of each student in the project at a manageable level.
5. The applicant assures that students will not be served by more than one SSS project at any one time and that the SSS project will collaborate with other SSS and McNair projects and other State and institutional programs at the grantee-institution so that more students can be served; and
6. The applicant assures that the institution's financial aid office will consult with the SSS project with respect to which SSS participants should receive grant aid and the amount of the grant aid awards should the project choose to offer grant aid.

The person whose signature appears below is authorized to sign this application and to commit the applicant to the above provisions.

Signature of Authorized Certifying Official

Printed Name and Title of Authorized Certifying Official

Applicant Organization

Date Signed

Part V – Prior Experience

Prior Experience Objectives and Calculations for SSS Projects Operating in Project Years 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14

Prior experience is based on the criteria contained in 34 CFR Part 646.22 Prior Experience (PE). PE points will be awarded under the FY 2015 competition to SSS projects that operated during the 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 program years. All information will be taken from the annual performance report (APR) submission for each project year under consideration.

The SSS PE criteria and point allocations are as follows for each year under consideration:

1. Persistence (maximum of 4 points)
2. Good academic standing (maximum of 4 points)
3. Graduation/transfer (maximum of 4 points)
4. Administrative requirements (maximum of 3 points)

Total (maximum of 15 points)

Note: SSS grantees may earn up to a maximum of 15 points for each year assessed. The final PE score is the average of the scores for the three years assessed.

1. Persistence (maximum 4 points) - The extent to which project participants persisted toward completion of the academic program in which they were enrolled at the grantee institution.

Calculation:

- The denominator is the greater of the actual number served or funded number to be served.
- The numerator is the number enrolled at the grantee institution in the Fall of the next academic year or graduated and/or transferred from a 2-year to a 4-year institution at the end of the reporting period.

2. Good academic standing (maximum 4 points) - The extent to which project participants met academic performance levels required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution.

Calculation:

- The denominator is the greater of the actual number served or funded number to be served.

- The numerator is the number in good academic standing, which is based on the responses in the Academic Standing field.

NOTE: Two rates will be calculated based on whether: (1) the grantee served new summer only participants and (2) the grantee tracked and provided information on academic standing. The greater of the two rates is used to determine prior experience.

3. Graduation/transfer completion at grantee institution (maximum 4 points).

For two-year institutions only: the extent to which project participants graduated from the grantee institution and/or transferred to a four-year institution (within three years of first entering the SSS program).

Calculation for Graduation Completion:

The denominator is the number of new participants ONLY. The numerator is the number of participants who graduated from the grantee institution with an associate's degree and/or certificate within three years of first entry into the SSS project.

Calculation for Transfer:

For 2-year institutions ONLY. The denominator is the number of new participants ONLY. The numerator is the number of participants who graduated with an associate's degree and/or certificate from the grantee institution and transferred from a 2-year to a 4-year institution or transferred from a 2-year to a 4-year institution without an associate's degree or certificate within three years of first entry into the SSS project.

NOTES: PE calculations for all years under the previous competition have been completed. No changes/modifications or appeals will be accepted at this time.

Because grantees often provided conflicting information in the degree code, multiple fields were used depending on the APR year.

In addition to using the degree code and Transfer field (for 2010-11 and beyond), to ascertain degree completion and/or transfer, fields containing information related to degree completion and transfer status such as Current Grade Level, End of Year Enrollment, etc., will also be used.

OR

For four-year institutions only: the extent to which project participants graduated (within five-years of first entering the SSS project).

Calculation for Graduation Completion:

For 4-year institutions the denominator is the number of new participants ONLY. The numerator is the number of participants who graduated with a bachelor's degree or equivalent, from the grantee institution, within five years of first entering the SSS project.

NOTE: Because grantees often provided conflicting information in the degree code, multiple fields were used depending on the APR year.

In addition to using the degree code to ascertain degree completion, fields containing information related to degree completion such as Current Grade Level, End of Year Enrollment, etc., will also be used.

4. Administrative requirements (maximum 3 points) - The extent to which the project has met the administrative requirements at the grantee institution. The conditions for the administrative requirements are as follows:

- The project served the approved funded number of participants (i.e., actual number served must be greater than or equal to the number to be served),
- At least two-thirds of project participants served were low-income and first-generation students, students with disabilities, and/or students with disabilities who are also low-income, and
- At least one-third of project participants with disabilities were also low-income individuals.

Calculation:

- If the grantee did not serve any disabled students, then the grantee must meet the first two criteria.
- If the grantee served at least one disabled student, then the grantee must meet all three criteria.
- Fields used: Participant Status and Eligibility.

The due date for submitting performance reports for these years has passed. No changes or modifications to the information on file with the Department will be accepted.

Prior Experience for Successful Applicants Under the FY 2015 Competition

Please note that the prior experience assessment for applicants successful under the FY 2015 competition will be based on the outcome criteria outlined in section 402A(f)(3)(c) of the HEA. The new outcome criteria for the SSS Program are captured in the standardized objectives included on the SSS Program Profile.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

The SSS application consists of the following four parts. These parts are organized in the same manner that the submitted application should be organized. The parts are as follows:

Part I: SF-424 Form

Application for Federal Assistance - (SF-424)
Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF-424

***Notes:**

- Applicants must complete the Standard Form (SF-424) form first because some of the information you provide here is automatically inserted into other sections of the Grants.gov application package.
- Please do not attach any narratives, supporting files, or application components to the SF-424. Although the form accepts attachments, the Department of Education will only review materials/files attached to the forms listed below.

Part II: ED Form 524

Department of Education Budget Summary Form - (ED Form 524)
Sections A & B

(NOTE: Section C – Budget Narrative must be included as part of the Project Narrative Attachment Form, located in Part III.)

Part III: Attachments

ED Abstract Form
Project Narrative Attachment Form – includes a Table of Contents
Other Attachments Form – includes the Program Assurances page, the SSS Program Profile form, and the competitive preference priorities narrative

The ED Abstract Form is where you attach the one-page SSS project abstract.

The Project Narrative Attachment Form is where you attach the responses addressing the program selection criteria that will be used to evaluate applications submitted for this competition. **The total page limit for the project narrative portion of the application for the FY 2015 SSS competition is 65 pages, excluding the competitive priorities. However, any applicant addressing the competitive preference priorities may include up to 4 additional pages for each, uploaded under the Other Attachments Form in the application submission, to discuss how the application meets the competitive preference priorities.** The 12 additional pages allotted to address priorities cannot be used for or transferred to the project narrative or any section of the application.

Please see the Notice for detailed information on page limits and formatting requirements. You should include a Table of Contents for your application as the first page of this section. The Table of Contents will not count against the 65 pages you are allowed for your responses to the selection criteria. **You must also include your budget narrative in this section as part of the selection criteria, which is counted as part of the 65-page limit.** The budget should demonstrate and justify that all costs are reasonable and necessary to accomplish the proposed project activities.

The Other Attachments Form is where you attach the SSS Program Profile form and the SSS Program Assurances page. **No other appendices or attachments should be included as they will be counted as part of the 65-page limit.**

***All attachments must be in .PDF format only. Other types of files will not be accepted.**

Part IV: Assurances, Certifications, and Survey Forms

ED-GEPA Section 427 Requirement
Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B)
Grants.gov Lobbying Form (formerly ED Form 80-0013)
Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROJECT NARRATIVE – SELECTION CRITERIA

The following information supplements the information provided in the “Dear Applicant” letter, “Competition Highlights,” and the Notice.

The Part III -- Project Narrative is to be attached to the Project Narrative Attachment form.

Before preparing the Part III -- Project Narrative, applicants should review the “Dear Applicant” letter, Competition Highlights, Notice, program statute, and program regulations for specific guidance and requirements. Note that applications will be evaluated according to the specific selection criteria specified in the Notice and this package.

The Secretary evaluates an application on the basis of the broad selection criteria in 34 CFR 646.21 of the SSS Program regulations as identified in this application (see the Authorizing Legislation and Regulations). The Part III -- Project Narrative should provide, in detail, the information that addresses the selection criteria. The maximum possible score for each category of the selection criteria is indicated in parenthesis below.

You must limit the Part III -- Project Narrative to 65 pages, double-spaced in 12-point font, and number the pages consecutively. The narrative should be written concisely. Only the required information should be submitted. If appendices or other supplemental materials are included, they will count as part of the 65-page limit. Please refer to the Notice (see Content and Form of Application Submission) for additional application submission requirements.

To facilitate the review of the application, we suggest that you provide responses to each of the following selection criteria in the following order:

1. PROJECT DESIGN
 - A. Need (34 CFR 646.21(a)) (24 points)
 - B. Objectives (34 CFR 646.21(b)) (8 points)
 - C. Plan of Operation (34 CFR 646.21(c)) (30 points)
 - D. Institutional Commitment (34 CFR 646.21(d)) (16 points)
 - E. Quality of Personnel (34 CFR 646.21(e)) (9 points)
 - F. Budget (34 CFR 646.21(f)) (5 points)
 - G. Evaluation Plan (34 CFR 646.21(g)) (8 points)
- Total Maximum Score for Selection Criteria 100 points

Formatting

Double-space all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions; however, you may single space all text in charts, tables, figures and graphs. Applicants may use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New or Arial, only. Applications submitted in any other font (including Times

Roman and Arial Narrow) will not be accepted. Applicants must use a size 12 font or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch.

Include a Table of Contents: It will not be counted against the 65-page limit. Appendices and attachments should not be included, as these items will be counted as part of the 65-page limit.

Applicants are encouraged to include an identifying header or footer that contains the applicant's name and the page numbers. Applicants may use the one-inch (1") margin at either the top or bottom of each page for this header or footer. The pages must be numbered in consecutive order.

The Project Narrative Attachment is limited to 65 pages. This section will include the discussion of the selection criteria. The page limit does not apply to the:

- Application Face Sheet (Application for Federal Assistance Form – SF 424)
- Table of Contents
- Project Abstract
- Budget Summary Form (ED Form 524) SSS Program Profile
- SSS Program Assurances and Certifications ED GEPA 427

The Notice contains specific instructions on page limits.

In the Part III -- Project Narrative, the applicant should address the selection criteria in the above order (A-G) because this is the order in which the Technical Review Form is organized. The Technical Review Form is used by the peer reviewers to evaluate applications.

The following guidance may assist you in addressing each of the selection criteria:

(A) **Need:** In responding to this criterion, you must provide data to define the target population in terms of the academic, financial and other problems encountered by eligible project participants which prevent their completing undergraduate programs. Also, you must provide data to demonstrate that the proposed target population has an academic need for project services and is first-generation and low-income or individuals with disabilities.

(B) **Objectives:** All applicants must include the three appropriate standardized objectives as listed on the SSS Program Profile form. On the Profile form, you must fill in the blanks indicating the percentage level of achievement for each of these objectives. An applicant should complete the standardized objectives as appropriate to the sector designation of its respective institution. **These objectives may not be rewritten, restated or reworded.**

In the Project Narrative, you must address each of the appropriate objectives, and explain how these objectives are ambitious and attainable. Applicants should use comparative data to show why the proposed percentages are ambitious based on information provided in the Need section of the Project Narrative and attainable based on information provided in the Plan of Operation and the resources available to the project. Applicants may add additional objectives, but are not required to do so. Applicants will not receive additional points or penalties for proposing additional objectives.

(C) **Plan of Operation:** This criterion contains five sub-criteria, and applicants must address all five sub-criteria. The application should provide information on who, what, when and how the project will provide services to meet its goals and objectives. In addition, if you are planning grant aid to students, you should include information on the planned coordination between the project office and the Financial Aid Office or Business Office at your institution to assure correctness in the distribution of monies to eligible project participants.

(D) **Institutional Commitment:** Applicants must address all four sub-criteria. In addressing this criterion, the applicant must provide information on its administrative and academic policies, the commitment of facilities, equipment, personnel and other resources; and the planned cooperation and support of key departments such as Admissions, Registrar, data collection and Student Financial Aid. The applicant must also address the financial plan for carrying out the project, including the applicant's proposed commitment of institutional resources to the SSS participants to minimize the dependence on student loans in developing financial aid packages for project participants by committing institutional resources.

(E) **Quality of Personnel:** Applicants must address all three of the sub-criteria under this criterion. Applicants must identify key personnel and must provide the minimum qualifications for all these key positions. The minimum educational qualifications must include the type of degree required and the acceptable field(s) of study. The type and minimum amount of work-related experience should also be described for each position. In addressing this criterion, you must not provide the qualifications of current staff; you must detail the qualifications required for each position. Please note that if you choose to submit resumes or job descriptions in the application, they will count against the 65 page limit. The "plan to employ personnel who have succeeded in overcoming barriers similar to the target population to be served" must be specific. The inclusion of an equal employment opportunity statement and/or a non-discriminatory employment practices policy alone is not an adequate response to this sub-criterion.

(F) **Budget:** In responding to this criterion, applicants must provide a detailed, itemized budget (Form 524) and a detailed budget narrative for the first-year (2015-2016) budget period only. The budget narrative is a part of the Project Narrative (Part III) to be attached under the budget selection criterion (F). Additional budget instructions are cited in the instructions entitled "First Year Budget and Budget Summary Form (ED Form 524) Instructions" on the following pages. (Note: The budget narrative is counted as part of the 65-page limit for Part III.) If the applicant includes a non-Federal financial contribution, please know that the Department expects the non-Federal financial contribution at least the level indicated for the first year for the entire length of the grant award. This section should provide information that shows that the proposed budget will provide the resources necessary to successfully carry out the proposed project. Applicants should demonstrate here how the proposed resources would enable them to carry out the proposed project in the most cost-effective manner possible.

(G) **Evaluation Plan:** A strong evaluation plan should be included and should be used, as appropriate, to shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The evaluation plan should include benchmarks to monitor progress toward meeting specific project objectives based on the program's performance indicators. The plan should describe the

evaluation design, indicating: (1) what types of data will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) what methods will be used; (4) what instruments will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports and outcomes will be available; and (7) how the applicant will use the information collected through evaluation to monitor the progress of the funded project and to provide accountability information about the success of the project. The use of an outside evaluator is not required.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITIES FOR FY 2015

The President has set a clear goal for our education system: by 2020, the United States will once again lead the world in college completion. The Department views the Student Support Services (SSS) Program as a critical component in the effort to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants. In order to more strategically align SSS with overarching reform strategies for postsecondary completion, the Department is announcing two competitive preference priorities for this competition.

Competitive Preference Priority 1 is from the Department's Notice of Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the Federal Register on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637). In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(iv), Competitive Preference Priority 2(a) is from Section 402D(c)(1) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). Competitive Preference Priority 2(b) is from 34 CFR 75.266.

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Increasing Postsecondary Success (up to 10 additional points)

The Department is using this Competitive Preference Priority to focus on postsecondary persistence and completion rates among students from high-need backgrounds.

We are using Competitive Preference Priority 1--Increasing Postsecondary Success because the Department believes that the TRIO programs can play an important role in improving the postsecondary outcomes of their participants by placing greater emphasis on using innovative techniques to address developmental education as well as non-cognitive factors.

Developmental education is a field of research, policy, and practice focused on student success at the postsecondary level. Attuned especially to those students who struggle, due to a variety of factors, in their first year (and beyond) at a 2- or 4-year college, the field seeks to understand the reasons for those struggles, support those students who struggle, and define the role of higher education as a place where all learners can succeed. Traditional areas of the field have included course-based aspects of support, such as developmental reading, basic writing, developmental math, study skills, and learning frameworks courses, as well as non-course-based aspects of support like tutoring, supplemental instruction, and mentoring. Developmental education has a multi-dimensional focus and is concerned with student issues of cognition, affect, identity, and other aspects of the college context. In short, developmental education is about student success for college students, especially those underprepared for postsecondary education.

The Department encourages projects that provide targeted strategies to assist with developmental education to subsequently assist students with college completion. For example, applicants could describe the extent to which their projects will utilize various models for accelerating students' progress through developmental education.

In addition, non-cognitive factors have increasingly become an effective tool for impacting college completion. Research demonstrates that projects that are designed to significantly influence a participant’s academic mindset to support retention and postsecondary completion rates by addressing innovative strategies to improve academic performance have become more widely used and accepted. Academic mindsets are “the psycho-social attitudes or beliefs one has about oneself in relation to academic work,” and these attitudes and beliefs are often what compel students to engage in learning – or not. As psychology researchers Carol Dweck, Gregory Walton, and Geoffrey Cohen put it, “Students need to think of themselves and school in certain ways in order to want to learn and in order to learn successfully.” The research evidence suggests that one of the best levers for increasing students’ perseverance and improving their academic behaviors is by supporting the development of academic mindsets. Students with positive academic mindsets work harder, engage in more productive academic behaviors, and persevere to overcome obstacles to success. This new component will complement the important work SSS projects are already doing to improve retention and completion rates among SSS participants.

This area of focus represents an excellent opportunity for changing the lives of the participants of the SSS Program. The Department continues to emphasize the importance of non-cognitive factors for meeting the needs of SSS participants. The evidence clearly demonstrates that academic mindsets contribute to better academic performance. When students feel a sense of belonging in an academic community, believe that their effort will increase their ability and competence, believe that success is possible and within their control, and see work as interesting or relevant to their lives, students are much more likely to persist at academic tasks despite setbacks and to exhibit the kinds of academic behaviors that lead to school success.

Competitive Preference Priority 2(a): Providing Individualized Counseling for Personal, Career, and Academic Matters (1 point)

The Department is using this Competitive Preference Priority to focus on improved individualized counseling to students. The Department believes that SSS projects can play a strong role in improving postsecondary outcomes by placing a greater emphasis on proactive coaching strategies designed to increase student success. The inclusion of this competitive preference priority directly supports the overall mission and objectives of the SSS Program, as well as the Administration’s college completion and affordability agenda.

The Department is interested in receiving applications with strong plans designed to implement new and innovative coaching strategies. Applicants addressing this priority should propose new, additional, or modified activities rather than activities in which they are already engaged. Further, applicants should demonstrate how their proposal will improve student outcomes.

Competitive Preference Priority 2(b): Individual Counseling Activities Based on Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness (2 additional points)

In recent years, the Department has placed an increasing emphasis on promoting evidence-based practices through our grant competitions. We believe that encouraging applicants to focus on proven strategies can only enhance the quality of our competitions. Accordingly, within the

competitive priority for individualized counseling (Competitive Preference Priority 2(a)), we give additional competitive preference to applications that submit moderate evidence of effectiveness (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1) that supports their proposed strategies for providing individualized counseling.

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award up to an additional 13 points to an application that addresses Competitive Preference Priorities 1, 2a and 2b. Points will be awarded depending on how comprehensively the application addresses information for the priorities.

LIST OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR STANDARD FORMS

- **Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)**
- **Department of Education Supplemental Form for the SF-424**
- **Definitions for Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF-424**
- **Department of Education Budget Summary Form (ED-524) and Itemized Budget**
- **Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)**
- **Survey Instructions on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants**
- **General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)**
- **Government Performance And Results Act (GPRA)**

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**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BUDGET SUMMARY
AND ITEMIZED LINE ITEM BUDGET (ED FORM 524)**

NOTE: Applicants must submit: (1) budget information that categorizes the requested funds (ED Form 524), **AND** (2) a detailed budget narrative for the first 12-month budget period.

The budget summary is to be included on the Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED Form 524).

The budget narrative, for the first 12-month budget period only, is to be included in the *Program Narrative* (limited to 65 pages and attached to the Program Narrative Attachment Form) as part of the Budget selection criterion.

This section requests information on the applicant’s financial plan for carrying out the project.

The federal and any non-federal shares are to be included on the Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED Form 524), and in the Budget selection criterion discussion in the *Program Narrative*.

The Department is requesting that you complete the Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED Form 524) for ONLY the 2015-2016 year. Please provide **a comprehensive and detailed budget narrative for the first 12-month budget period, only**. **Applicants should place an asterisk next to all budget items that relate to the costs associated with the announced Competitive Preference Priority for FY 2015.**

It is not necessary to provide a budget summary for the total grant period requested. The funding level for the first year is stipulated based on the Maximum Award Section of the Notice, and the Department will determine the funding levels for the subsequent years of the grant award.

The Budget Information-Section A – Budget Summary – Non-Construction Programs (ED Form 524) and the Budget Narrative must include all costs that are allowable, reasonable and necessary for carrying out the objectives of the Student Support Services Program. Among the costs that may be supported with grant funds are:

1. **Personnel:** On line 1 (ED Form 524), enter only the project personnel salaries and wages. [Fees and expenses for consultants should be included on line 8.] The budget should include the total commitment of time and the total salary to be charged to the project for each key staff member. You should provide a breakdown of project personnel that includes: the position titles; the percent of time and number of months committed to the project for each key staff member; the salary for each key staff member; and the total salary costs to be charged to the grant.
2. **Fringe Benefits:** On line 2 (ED Form 524), enter the amount of fringe benefits. The institution or agency’s normal fringe benefit contribution may be charged to the program. Leave this blank if fringe benefits applicable to direct salaries and wages

are treated as part of the indirect costs. In the budget, include an explanation and appropriate justification if the institution or agency's normal fringe benefit contribution exceeds 20 percent of salaries.

3. Travel: On line 3 (ED Form 524), provide the costs for project personnel. [Consultants' travel should be included on line 8.] In the budget, you should detail the proposed travel costs -- for each trip explain the purpose and objective of the travel and provide the number of persons traveling. Transportation costs should not exceed tourist class airfare. For automobile mileage, the established institution or agency rate should be used. Reimbursement is allowed for taxicab, bus, train, or limousine transportation. Per diem at the established institution or agency rate is permitted when an individual is away from home overnight on official project business (see OMB Circular A-21, J.48.c - Commercial Air Travel). No foreign travel will be authorized under the grant.

The Federal TRIO Programs have developed the following guidelines for recommending approval of travel. All travel must be related to the project's overall purpose and proposed activities.

Project Director's Travel – Per Year

One National Conference;

One Regional Meeting;

One State Meeting; **and**

Travel for participation in **one** professional staff development training opportunity under the TRIO Training Program.

Full-time Professional Staff Travel – Per Year

One National, Regional, **or** State Meeting; **and**

Travel for participation in **one** professional staff development training opportunity under the TRIO Training Program.

4. Equipment: On line 4 (ED Form 524), indicate the cost of equipment -- non-expendable personal property, which has a usefulness of greater than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. [Consistent with an applicant's policy, a lower dollar amount may be used to define equipment.] In the budget, explain why the requested equipment is necessary to carry out project activities, and include a list of all equipment in the following format: item, quantity, cost per unit, and total cost.
5. Supplies: On line 5 (ED Form 524), include the costs of all tangible personal property that was not included as "equipment" on line 4. In the budget, provide an itemized list of the supplies.
6. Contractual: Not applicable. Leave blank.

7. Construction: Not applicable. Leave blank.
8. Other: On line 8 (ED Form 524), indicate all direct costs not covered on lines 1 through 5. The costs/fees for consultants and consultants' travel should be included here. Examples of "other" costs are: equipment rental, required fees, communication costs, rental of space, utilities, custodial services, and printing costs. In the budget, provide a breakdown of all direct costs not clearly covered by other budget categories.

Consultants: If the project proposes to use consultants, identify the consultants who will work on the project, the scope of work to be performed by each consultant, and justify why project personnel cannot perform this work. Also, provide a detailed breakdown of the costs (daily fees to be paid, estimated number of days of services, and all travel expenses, including per diem). Cost allowances for consultant fees, honoraria, per diem, and travel should not exceed amounts permitted by comparable institutional or agency policies.

9. Total Direct Costs: On line 9 (ED Form 524), provide the total direct costs requested – the sum of lines 1 through 8.
10. Indirect Costs: On line 10 (ED Form 524), provide the amount of indirect costs that you propose to charge against the grant.

All grants awarded under the Student Support Services Program (84.042A) are designated as training grants. The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) limits reimbursement to grantees for indirect costs they incur under training grants to the grantee's actual indirect costs as determined by the grantee's negotiated indirect cost agreement or a maximum of 8 percent of a modified total direct cost base, **whichever is less**. (NOTE: This limitation does not apply to State agencies, or local governments, or federally recognized Indian tribal governments. [§75.562(c) (2)])

A **modified total direct cost base** is defined as total direct costs, less stipends, tuition and related fees, and capital expenditures of \$5,000 or more per unit. Therefore, calculations of indirect costs may not include cost of equipment, stipends, tuition and related fees, room and board and summer non-residential meals associated with the Student Support Services Program.

Grantees charging indirect costs to a Department grant are required to have a negotiated rate with their *cognizant agency* (i.e., either the Federal agency from which it has received the most direct funding that is subject to indirect cost support, or a particular agency specifically assigned cognizance by the Office of Management and Budget). Although applicants are not required to submit with their application a copy of their indirect cost agreement to claim the 8 percent rate for funding received in this program, they are required to have documentation available for audit that shows that their negotiated indirect cost rate is at least 8 percent [§75.563(d)]. In the

event that they receive an award under this program, applicants without a negotiated indirect cost rate with its cognizant agency should seek to identify that agency and contact it to obtain an approved rate as soon as possible after award notification.

Applicants should be aware that amounts representing the difference between the 8 percent rate and a greater indirect cost rate negotiated with a cognizant agency may **not** be charged to direct cost categories, used to satisfy matching or cost-sharing requirements, or charged to another Federal award. [§75.563(c) (3)]

11. Training Stipends: On line 11, include any grant funds that you propose to use for Grant Aid to Students (subject to the limitation of 20% of the total grant) on both sections A and B (ED 524). This amount should also be specified in the budget narrative.
12. Total Costs: On line 12 (ED Form 524), provide the total amount that you are requesting – the sum of lines 9 and 10. Note: This amount should also be the same as that shown in 18g on the application face sheet (SF 424) and on the detailed budget narrative in Part III.

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GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT (GPRA)

What is GPRA?

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) is a straightforward statute that requires all federal agencies to manage their activities with attention to the consequences of those activities. Each agency is to clearly state what it intends to accomplish, identify the resources required, and periodically report their progress to the Congress. In so doing, it is expected that the GPRA will contribute to improvements in accountability for the expenditures of public funds, improve Congressional decision-making through more objective information on the effectiveness of federal programs, and promote a new government focus on results, service delivery, and customer satisfaction.

How has the Department of Education Responded to the GPRA Requirements?

As required by GPRA, the Department of Education has prepared a strategic plan for 2014-2018. This plan reflects the Department's priorities and integrates them with its mission and program authorities and describes how the Department will work to improve education for all children and adults in the U.S. The Department's goals, as listed in the plan, are:

Goal 1: Postsecondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education.

Increase college access, affordability, quality, and completion by improving postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults.

Goal 2: Elementary and Secondary Education.

Improve the elementary and secondary education system's ability to consistently deliver excellent instruction aligned with rigorous academic standards while providing effective support services to close achievement and opportunity gaps, and ensure all students graduate high school college- and career-ready.

Goal 3: Early Learning.

Improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through 3rd grade, so that all children, particularly those with high needs, are on track for graduating from high school college- and career-ready.

Goal 4: Equity.

Increase educational opportunities for and reduce discrimination against underserved students so that all students are well-positioned to succeed.

Goal 5: Continuous Improvement of the U.S. Education System.

Enhance the education system's ability to continuously improve through better and more widespread use of data, research and evaluation, evidence, transparency, innovation, and technology.

Goal 6: U.S Department of Education Capacity.

Improve the organizational capacities of the Department to implement this strategic plan.

What are the performance indicators for the SSS Program?

The performance indicators for the Student Support Services Program are part of the Department's plan for meeting Goal 1. The SSS Program is part of the Federal TRIO Programs. The overarching goal of the Federal TRIO Programs is "to increase the percentage of low-income and first-generation college students who successfully pursue postsecondary education opportunities."

The specific performance indicator for the Student Support Services Program is as follows:

The success of the Student Support Services Program will be measured by the postsecondary persistence and degree completion rates of SSS participants that remain at the grantee institution. All SSS grantees will be required to submit an annual performance report documenting the persistence and degree attainment of their participants. Since, on average, students take four years to complete an associate's degree and six years to complete a bachelor's degree, multiple years of performance report data are needed to determine the degree completion rates of SSS participants. The Department of Education will aggregate the data provided in the annual performance reports from all grantees to determine the accomplishment level.

How does the Department of Education determine whether performance goals have been met?

An applicant that receives a grant award will be required to submit annual performance reports as a condition of the award. The reports will document the extent to which project goals and objectives are met.

The most recent version of this program's annual performance report can be viewed at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Use This Checklist While Preparing Your Application Package: All items listed on this checklist are required.

Part I - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

Part I - Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF-424

Part II - Department of Education Budget Summary Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED Form 524) – Sections A & B

Part III - *Project Narrative* – The total page limit for the project narrative portion of the application for the FY 2015 SSS Program competition is 65 pages. However, those addressing the competitive preference priorities may include up to four additional pages for each of the competitive preference priorities (a total of 12 pages if all priorities are addressed), in a separate section of the application submission, to discuss how the application meets the priorities. Attach the *Project Narrative* document to the Project Narrative Attachment Form in the Grants.gov application.

Part III - Other Attachments – Attach the following documents to the Other Attachments Form in the Grants.gov application.

SSS Program Profile

SSS Program Assurances

Competitive Preference Priorities Narrative

Part III - ED Abstract - one-page limit – Attach this document to the ED Abstract Form in the Grants.gov application. This one-page abstract, which may be single-spaced, will not count against the 65 pages you are allowed for your response to the selection criteria.

Part IV - Assurances, Certifications, and Survey

GEPA Section 427 Requirement

Programs (SF 424B)

Assurances – Non-Construction

80-0013)

Lobbying Form (Formerly ED Form

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF LLL)

Applicants

Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for

NOTE: Please do not attach any narratives, supporting files, or application components to the Standard Form (SF 424). Although this form accepts attachments, the Department of Education will only review materials/files attached to the Grants.gov Attachment Forms listed above.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 34 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit (Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Section 402D of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) and 34 CFR part 646 SSS Program for Federal TRIO Programs). Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to regulations.gov during the public comment period for this collection of information. If you have specific questions about the form please contact Student Service, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW, Room 7000, Washington, DC 20006-8510. Telephone: (202) 502-7600 or by e-mail: TRIO@ed.gov.