



Equity-focused accountability has the potential to refocus our higher education system on its most important purpose: successful outcomes for all groups of students. Congress must build upon current policy to create an accountability system that pushes institutions to serve students — especially low-income students and students of color — well. In order to do this, Congress should prioritize **three areas**:

Maintain and Strengthen Current Accountability Provisions

Accountability provisions currently in place, including the 90/10 rule and gainful employment regulation — which aim to cap federal funding of for-profit colleges and hold career training programs accountable for providing labor market return on investments among graduates — represent important safeguards against the proliferation of unscrupulous institutions of higher education and low-quality postsecondary credentials.¹ History has shown that, given the chance, many institutions will take advantage of the availability of federal grants and loans, leaving students worse off than when they started, i.e., with debt but no degree, or with a credential that has no market value. Congress cannot walk away from these protections.

Create Pressure and Provide Support to Improve Equitable Access and Success

In addition to maintaining and strengthening the accountability provisions currently in place, a reauthorized HEA must create pressure and provide support for the entire higher education system to improve, especially for the low-income students and students of color who are most likely to be underserved by today's system.

A higher education accountability framework that promotes equitable access and success must:

- Establish minimum standards for institutions on enrolling historically underserved students (i.e. low-income students and students of color);
- Establish minimum standards for institutions on student performance, experiences, and outcomes using measures such as retention, transfer, graduation and job placement, especially for historically underserved students (i.e. low-income students and students of color);
- Provide rewards for institutions making continual growth toward reaching ambitious access and success goals within a reasonable timeline;
- Sustain and increase investments in historically under-resourced institutions to support the implementation of evidence-based strategies that improve completion especially for historically underserved students; and
- Enforce meaningful consequences for underperforming institutions that, after getting needed resources, time, and support, fail to meet minimum enrollment and performance standards.

Improve Higher Education Data

In order to construct effective accountability and oversight systems, Congress must act to improve higher education data systems so they may provide reliable, consistent, and usable information. A reauthorized HEA should:

- Overturn the ban on creating a student unit record system
- Create a student level data network that disaggregated data by race and income
- Ensure privacy and security for sensitive student information such as citizenship status, discipline records, and criminal history
- Improve IPEDS and NSLDS so that data on critical measures of student success are disaggregated by race and income

1: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/01/11/how-much-do-for-profit-colleges-rely-on-federal-funds/>; comparison of for profits and community college repayment and outcomes <https://ticas.org/blog/three-ways-scorecard-data-show-difference-between-profit-and-community-colleges>; For profits students earn less than they did prior to enrolling (negative return on investment) <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22287>; Loan repayment rates by sector https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/2017-trends-student-aid_0.pdf