# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, Department of Education

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Health, Education, Labor and Pensions |
| Agency Mission | To promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for postsecondary education serves as the principal advisor to the secretary on departmental matters related to postsecondary education. The office directs, coordinates and recommends policies for programs designed to provide financial assistance to eligible students enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions.[[1]](#endnote-1) The office also awards $2 billion of discretionary grants to colleges and universities to increase institutional capacity and to help at-risk students prepare for and succeed in college. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Education |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | The assistant secretary for postsecondary education coordinates policy direction for the $185 billion student loan and grant programs, which comprise 80 percent of the department’s budget; works closely with Federal Student Aid, which manages $1 trillion in student loan assets; and administers and oversees the award of $2 billion of discretionary grants annually to colleges and universities. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Improves postsecondary educational facilities and programs through the provision of financial support to eligible institutions
* Recruits and prepares disadvantaged students to successfully complete postsecondary educational programs
* Promotes the domestic study of foreign languages and international affairs and supports international educational research and exchange activities[[3]](#endnote-3)
* Works to strengthen the capacity of colleges and universities to promote reform, innovation and improvement in postsecondary education
* Promotes and expands access to postsecondary education and increases college completion rates for America’s students
* Broadens global competencies that drive the economic success and competitiveness of our nation[[4]](#endnote-4)
* Administers such functions affecting postsecondary education, both public and private, as the secretary shall delegate, and serves as the principal adviser to the secretary on matters affecting postsecondary education
* Administers the secretary’s recognition process for accrediting agencies
* Appoints a deputy assistant secretary for international and foreign language education to perform such functions affecting postsecondary, international and foreign language education as the secretary may prescribe (20 U.S.C. § 3415)
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Must be a subject matter expert in areas relating to higher education and student financial aid
* Academic background, particularly background in serving at-risk students (a plus)
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| Competencies | * Strong communication and interpersonal skills
* Excellent leadership skills
* Ability to work under high pressure
* Ability to handle sensitive matters
* Ability to work across partisan lines
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Eduardo Ochoa (2010 to 2012) – Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Sonoma State University; Board of Directors Member of the Sonoma Mountain Business Center; Dean of the College of Business Administration at the California State Polytechnic University[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| Diane Auer Jones (2007 to 2008) – Deputy to the Associate Director for Science in the White House Office of Science and Technology; Director of the Princeton University Office of Governmental Affairs; Professional Staff Member for the House of Representatives Committee on Science[[6]](#endnote-6) |

1. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/index.html [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/eduardoochoa> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.linkedin.com/in/dianeauerjones [↑](#endnote-ref-6)