# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# UnderSecretary, 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 undersecretary of education oversees the department’s postsecondary and vocational education functions and plans for the implementation of strategic goals in these areas. |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Education |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | The undersecretary directly oversees the Office of Postsecondary Education, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and Federal Student Aid. Under the Obama administration, the undersecretary also oversaw six White House initiatives: the Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; White House Initiatives on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; Educational Excellence for African Americans; Educational Excellence for Hispanics; and Historically Black Colleges and Universities).[[2]](#endnote-2)In fiscal 2016, the Office of the Undersecretary of Education had 15 nonseasonal, full-time permanent employees.[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Oversees policies, programs and activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education, and federal student aid, including the president’s financial reforms for the Pell Grant program
* Plays large role in the implementation of the secretary’s Action Plan for Higher Education, which calls for expanding the accessibility, affordability and accountability of higher education for more Americans[[4]](#endnote-4)
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Higher education or student loan experience, for example as governor, state higher education system leader or higher education institution leader
* Management experience
* Business and technology background
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| Competencies | * Ability to communicate effectively with state and higher education leaders
* Consensus builder
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Theodore Reed Mitchell (2014 to 2017) – CEO of the NewSchools Venture Fund; President of the California State Board of Education; President of Occidental College |
| Martha J. Kanter (2009 to 2013) – Chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District; President of De Anza College; Vice Chancellor for Policy and Research for the California Community Chancellor’s Office |
| Sara Alicia Tucker (2006 to 2008) – President and CEO of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund; Regional Vice President for AT&T Global Business Communications Systems; Vice President for Consumer Operations at AT&T |

1. 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-1)
2. https://sites.ed.gov/ous/ [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Partnership for Public Service analysis of FedScope data [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-4)