THE COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS: EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

JUNE 2016
The White House Council on Women and Girls

Since the day he took office, President Obama has fought for policies that are important for women and will expand opportunity for all Americans. He’s signed major legislation like the Affordable Care Act and Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. He’s dramatically expanded fair pay and paid leave protections. And his administration has systematically encouraged cities and states to embrace policies like higher minimum wage and paid leave.

Underpinning these actions, President Obama and Vice President Biden have spoken out and driven a conversation about treating women fairly in America. They have pushed for cultural change that gives women the respect they deserve in schools and in workplaces, and joined advocates in dramatically changing our country’s approach to sexual assault on campus and elsewhere. That conversation has spurred changes in cities and states, businesses big and small, schools from pre-K to college.

Across the Obama-Biden Administration, this work has been driven by the White House Council on Women and Girls (CWG), which the President created in March of 2009 to help develop and implement these policy priorities. The CWG is comprised of representatives from each Federal agency, as well as the White House offices, and coordinates efforts across Federal agencies and departments to ensure that the needs of women and girls are taken into account in all programs, policies, and legislation.

Below, we will explore some of the ways the Obama Administration has worked tirelessly to increase educational opportunity for women and girls.

**Increasing Educational Opportunity**

President Obama believes we need to provide every child with an education that will enable him or her to succeed in a global economy based on knowledge and innovation. That’s why shortly after he took office, the President worked to provide every child access to an affordable, high-quality educational opportunity. Through the White House Council on Women and Girls, emphasis has been placed on addressing the disparities that exist for women and girls in education, both domestically and globally. Among the many policies, programs, and commitments put in place over the past seven years, the Obama Administration has worked to advance educational opportunity by:

1. **Improving the quality of and expanding access to high-quality early childhood education**, and garnering support for early learning from public and private partners;
2. **Fostering school success and reducing unnecessary exclusionary school discipline** by implementing supportive school discipline strategies and policies, including through increasing public awareness of the specific impact on girls of color;
3. **Enforcing Title IX and combatting sexual assault at educational institutions**, such as through the “It’s On Us” campaign;
4. **Increasing access to and support for those who want to enter into STEM and computer science fields**, which are typically higher-paying, are projected to grow at faster rates than other job sectors, and are vital to our nation’s global competitiveness;
5. **Expanding college opportunity through doubled investments in Pell Grants and tax credits and through America’s College Promise**, which works to achieve two years of
The Council on Women and Girls: Educational Opportunity Accomplishments

free community college for responsible students, as well as creating and scaling apprenticeship programs, including funds for working families’ issues;

6. **Fostering tech skills through the launch of the TechHire initiative**, with a focus on inclusion for women and underrepresented minorities, to help Americans receive training to access the hundreds of thousands of high-paying jobs in tech fields;

7. **Launching the Let Girls Learn initiative** to address adolescent girls’ secondary education globally; and

8. **Addressing other obstacles faced by girls across the globe** by combatting global HIV/AIDS, issuing the U.S. Strategy on Preventing and Responding to Gender-based Violence Globally, launching a U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls, and working to increase access to education for vulnerable children in conflicts and crises.

### Improving the Quality of and Expanding Access to Early Childhood Education

“In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let’s do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind.”

President Barack Obama, February 12, 2013

**Overview**

Access to high-quality child care and early education not only promotes a child’s development and learning, but also gives parents the stability to be productive employees. However, in 2014, child care costs for an infant exceeded $10,000 per year in 21 states, and in a majority of states the annual cost of care for a young child exceeded in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. Families below the Federal Poverty Level pay an average of 30 percent of their income in child-care costs. There is a huge unmet need for preschool. Across the publicly available programs of Head Start, state preschool and special education, only 41 percent of 4-year-olds and 16 percent of 3-year-olds were served. That is why [President Obama has outlined a bold plan](http://www.whitehouse.gov/obama-whitehouseLOOD) early childhood development plan that includes expanding access to high-quality, affordable child care to all eligible working families with infants and toddlers, growing and improving Head Start, launching a new voluntary home visiting program for new parents, ensuring young children with disabilities have the supports they need to thrive, and making high-quality preschool available to all four-year-olds in low- and moderate income households. High-quality early childhood education helps young girls, and all young children, enter kindergarten ready to learn, and helps working mothers and fathers balance the demands of jobs and family.

**Improving and Expanding Head Start and Launching the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships**

For over 50 years, Head Start has been at the heart of America’s communities. From our urban and rural neighborhoods, to our farmworker communities and tribal nations, it has played an important role in the lives of more than 32 million children and their families. The Obama Administration has invested an additional $4 billion in the program, and implemented important reforms to raise Head Start’s standards, focus on school readiness results, and promote accountability. The Head Start program has expanded access to an additional 40,000 children in the years since President Obama took office.
The Council on Women and Girls: Educational Opportunity Accomplishments

The President also launched the new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, informed by research that indicates that gaps in development begin to form as early as the first year of life. Through this signature program, the Administration has expanded access to high-quality early learning opportunities to more than 30,000 additional infants and toddlers in 275 communities across the country. In addition to expanding access, these Partnerships are building early learning capacity and infrastructure in the neighborhoods across our country that need it most—and for our children who need it most. To date, these grants are working to enhance the quality of 1,200 child care centers and more than 600 family child care homes across the country.

Launched the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program
In 2009, President Obama launched the MIECHV program to support pregnant women and families and help parents with young children tap the resources and hone the skills they need to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready for school. To date, the MIECHV program has provided 2.3 million home visits, reaching nearly 150,000 families across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories.

Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool
In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama proposed a landmark plan that would ensure that all 4-year-olds from moderate- and low-income families have access to high-quality preschool and issued a call to action for the public and private sector to expand high-quality early childhood education. Since his call to action, 38 states and the District of Columbia have increased funding in their public preschool programs, investing an additional $1.5 billion and totaling almost $7 billion in investments this year alone. Beyond these state investments, the President has dedicated $750 million through his signature Preschool Development Grants program so that 230 high-need communities can provide more than 100,000 additional children with access to high-quality preschool.

Expanding Access to High-Quality, Affordable Child Care for Working Families
In 2014, President Obama signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant reauthorization into law, marking a significant step forward in improving our child care system. The new law makes important reforms, including shoring up standards that help ensure our children are safe and healthy while they are in child care and ensuring continuity of services for families. It also increases the amount of funding states must use to increase the quality of their child care systems, including reserving funds specifically to increase the quality of care for infants and toddlers. A few months later, during his State of the Union address, the President put forth a landmark child care proposal that would ensure that all low- and moderate-income working families with young children have access to affordable, high-quality child care. The proposal would also ensure that child care workers have greater access to training and higher education—and, commensurate with new competencies, higher and more fair compensation.

Investing in the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Garnering Support from the Public and Private Sector
The Obama Administration invested over $1 billion in 20 states through the Early Learning Challenge, a competitive fund that is enabling states to increase the quality of their early education programs, to establish higher standards across programs, and to provide critical links with health, nutrition, mental health, and family support for our most vulnerable children. These grants are also supporting the early care and education workforce, which is overwhelmingly made up of women. By December 2014, more than 200,000 children with high needs were enrolled in the highest quality state-funded preschool programs, and nearly 230,000 children with high needs were enrolled in the highest quality child care programs. This effort has also contributed to almost doubling the number of early childhood programs participating in initiatives to improve their quality in those 20 states. 40 states applied for these Federal-state partnerships, and the 20 states that did not receive funding continued to work with their
The Council on Women and Girls: Educational Opportunity Accomplishments

legislatures and the philanthropy community to implement their ambitious early learning reform agendas.

In December 2014, the White House held the Summit on Early Childhood Education where President Obama announced over $1 billion in new public and private investments for early education, more than $330 million in new actions from corporate and philanthropic leaders and $750 million in new Federal grants. The President also released a playbook to offer strategies for local leaders to develop and expand early education in their communities.

Over the last two years, the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education have also developed several policy statements that set a vision for a variety of issues that affect the experiences of young children and their families in early childhood settings. Each statement includes a set of recommendations for states and early learning programs to align and improve the quality of services that young children receive. The statements address expulsion and suspension in early childhood settings; inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood settings; family engagement from the early years to the early grades; and supporting dual language learners in early childhood settings.

Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes in Toys
In light of the fact that research shows that children’s interests, ambitions and skills can be shaped early on by the media they consume and the toys with which they play, the Administration announced a series of new actions being taken by toy manufacturers, media, retailers, and youth-serving organizations to break down gender stereotypes in toys and media to help children to explore, learn, and dream without limits.

Fostering School Success and Reducing Unnecessary Exclusionary School Discipline

“We need every single one of you to develop your talents and your skills and your intellect so you can help us old folks solve our most difficult problems.”

President Barack Obama, September 8, 2009

Girls of color experience disproportionately high rates of school suspensions. Black girls are suspended at higher rates (10%) than girls of any other race or ethnicity and at higher rates than white boys (5%) and white girls (2%). By adopting supportive school discipline practices, schools foster success for all students and increase the likelihood that students will stay engaged and stay in school. The Administration has taken a number of steps to facilitate supportive school discipline policies.

In 2014, the Department of Education (ED), in collaboration with the Department of Justice (DOJ), released a school discipline guidance package to assist states, districts, and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and to ensure those policies and practices comply with Federal law. In follow-up to the guidance package, ED released new resources to assist school leaders in reducing rates of exclusionary discipline, including: Addressing the Root Causes of Disciplinary Disparities: An Educator’s Action Planning Guide
and Rethink School Discipline: Resource Guide for Superintendent Action. Included in the guide are links to Federal guidance and resources, as well as postcard templates that districts may use to support parent and family engagement in school discipline reform efforts. These resources provide accessible tools and best practices to facilitate implementation, including some in Spanish language versions. Later that year, ED and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released the first Federal policy statement addressing expulsion and suspension practices in early education settings, which included recommendations to states and early childhood programs on preventing and eventually eliminating these harmful practices. The statement was followed by a host of resources, including a document profiling state and local action to address expulsion and suspension in early education settings and a webinar series highlighting strategies to move local practice and policy forward.

To ensure that all communities have access to information about supportive school discipline, ED translated the FAQs from the Dear Colleague letter in the 2014 school discipline guidance package into Vietnamese, Khmer, and Lao, in addition to the Spanish translation that was done for the entire package. These languages were selected in response to feedback that Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian girls may face increased difficulty with exclusionary discipline in school.

In July 2015, the White House hosted a summit on school discipline called “Rethink Discipline,” a convening of representatives from over 40 school districts and a digital day of action, sparking a national dialogue around punitive school discipline policies and practices that exclude students from classroom instruction and targeted supports. At the convening, ED released new resources for schools and communities, along with analytics and research that underscore the need for further action. The event included the release of story maps on The Hidden Cost of Suspension. These maps disaggregated school discipline data by race, gender, and disability status and permitted users to explore out-of-school suspension rates in individual school districts across the United States. All school districts in attendance made commitments to further action and shared best practices to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline by fostering safe, supportive, and productive learning environments. During the same month, DOJ launched the National Resource Center for School Justice Partnerships. This training and technical assistance portal is designed to assist juvenile courts, schools, law enforcement agencies and others to support school discipline reform efforts at the local level and address disparities in discipline among students.

In February 2016, ED hosted a follow-up “Regional Rethink Discipline” convening to provide in-depth technical assistance to 13 district teams from across the southeastern region facing some of the highest rates and widest disparities in punitive discipline practices. The regional convening included expert-led working sessions on topics such as revising district codes of conduct, improving classroom management, and building effective partnerships with local law enforcement. ED plans to hold a second regional convening in the summer of 2016 focused on states in the Gulf region.

The Administration has been committed to making information generated by the Federal government, including information about school discipline, accessible to the public. In the past year, ED has designed new data portals that make it easier for communities to learn about school discipline rates. Public awareness of disproportionate rates of school discipline combined with access to data – especially data that is disaggregated by race, gender, and other demographic variables – enables communities to identify challenges and engage collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to identify root causes and implement solutions.

Enforcing Title IX and Combatting Sexual Assault at Educational Institutions
Overview
President Obama and Vice President Biden have made it a national priority to root out sexual violence and domestic violence wherever they exist. Soon after taking office, the President not only created the White House Council on Women and Girls to focus on this issue, but also named the first-ever White House Advisor on Violence against Women. Over the last six years, the President and Vice President have led the way in tackling the problem everywhere, from college and university campuses to the military to tribal lands and beyond.

Enforcing Title IX
In April 2011, the Department of Education (ED) announced new guidance to help schools, colleges, and universities respond to sexual assault on campus. The guidance clarified the legal obligations under Title IX for schools receiving Federal funds to respond promptly and effectively to sexual violence, and provided examples of remedies and enforcement strategies that schools and ED’s Office for Civil Rights may use to respond to sexual violence.

In July 2015, the Department of Education’s final regulations implementing the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013’s changes to the Clery Act went into effect, requiring institutions of higher education to collect and report information regarding incidents of sexual assault (as well as incidents of dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking), as well as describe their processes for fair disciplinary proceedings, possible sanctions that the institution may impose, and the range of protective measures offered to victims. Additionally, the regulations require institutions to provide ongoing prevention and awareness campaigns for students and employees.

Also in 2015, ED issued a comprehensive Title IX Resource Guide, including detailed information for Title IX coordinators. In addition, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has offered technical assistance on more than 120 occasions to recipients, stakeholders, parents, and students.

Combatting Sexual Assault
In September 2011, the Vice President released a video on Twitter and YouTube asking students how to make colleges campuses safer. The overwhelming response was “get men involved.” As a result, 11 regional forums were held around the country focusing on getting men involved in ending violence against women. The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services and Housing, and Housing and Urban Development collaborated with local communities to host these events.

In January 2014, President Obama and Vice President Biden created the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, to be co-chaired by the Vice President’s office and the White House Council on Women and Girls. After 27 listening sessions with stakeholders across the country, the Task Force released its first report – “Not Alone” – with new recommendations for schools to prevent and respond to sexual assault and new steps by Federal agencies to improve enforcement of Federal laws. The work of the Task Force is
ongoing. Later that year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued “Preventing Sexual Violence on College Campuses: Lessons from Research and Practice” as part of the “Not Alone” report to share information on what works to prevent sexual violence, as well as successes and challenges in implementing primary prevention efforts for this population.

On September 19, 2014, President Obama and Vice President Biden unveiled It’s On Us, in partnership with Generation Progress at the Center for American Progress. “It’s On Us” recognizes that the solution to sexual assault begins with all of us. It seeks to reframe the conversation surrounding sexual assault in a way that inspires everyone to see it as his or her responsibility to do something, big or small, to prevent it.

In April 2014, the Administration released a new PSA on sexual assault featuring the President, Vice President, and celebrity actors. The message of the PSA was simple: if they don’t consent or if they can’t consent, then it’s a crime. And if you see it happening, help them, don’t blame them, speak up. On that same day, the Administration released the first report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. Highlights include urging schools to conduct climate surveys; recommending schools have confidential advocates to support victims and provide information about reporting; providing schools with best practices for preventing sexual assault; and developing training for school officials and campus health centers.

Increasing Access to and Support for Those Want to Enter STEM and Computer Science Fields

“One of the things that I really strongly believe in is that we need to have more girls interested in math, science, and engineering. We’ve got half the population that is way underrepresented in those fields and that means that we’ve got a whole bunch of talent … that is not being encouraged.”

President Barack Obama, February 21, 2013

Overview
The Obama Administration has placed an emphasis on helping to increase access to and support for those who want to enter into STEM fields, which are typically higher-paying, are projected to grow at faster rates than other job sectors, and are vital to our nation’s global competitiveness. Like other areas, STEM fields are only at their best when we tap the best possible talent, including women. Despite making significant progress in some areas, women still occupy only 28 percent of STEM jobs and make up just 37 percent of STEM college graduates. Additionally, the percentage of women earning computer science and engineering degrees has decreased over the last few decades. Girls account for 49% of students nationwide and account for 49% of students enrolled in calculus, but only 46% of students enrolled in physics. To close that participation gap, more than 91,000 additional girls would need to participate in physics classes nationwide. Alarmingly, in 3 states last year, not a single girl took the AP computer science exam and only 450 African-American girls took it in the entire nation. The President and this Administration have been committed to changing the STEM landscape to be more inclusive and diverse in several ways detailed below.

Broadening Participation of Women and Girls in STEM
The Administration’s $4.35 billion Race to the Top competition focused not only on encouraging states to develop comprehensive strategies to improve achievement and provide rigorous curricula in STEM subjects, but also to broaden the participation of all students, including
women and girls. On June 20, 2012, the Administration announced new commitments to help institutions better understand their obligations under Title IX and remove barriers to women’s participation within STEM fields. In October 2012, the Department of Education released a technical assistance presentation on Title IX and access to courses and programs in STEM. The presentation provided information and practical examples of how the requirements of Title IX relate to STEM and offered recommendations to assist schools in ensuring that their STEM courses and programs do not discriminate on the basis of sex. The presentation is aimed at principal investigators, faculty, and administrators in postsecondary institutions.

The Administration has secured more than $1 billion in private investment for improving K-12 STEM education as part of the President’s November 2009 Educate to Innovate campaign, which includes specific commitments to expand opportunities for girls and underrepresented youth in STEM.

Supporting and retaining America’s female scientists and engineers was a focus of the June 2014 White House Summit on Working Families, where the National Science Foundation announced implementation – nearly a year ahead of schedule – of cost allowance policies for childcare at professional conferences that will lessen the challenges for working families.

The National Science Foundation continues to fund foundational research on how to improve the participation and success of young women in STEM through the Gender in Science and Engineering program strand in its core research program. And, in FY 2016, the National Science Foundation announced an agency-wide program, NSF INCLUDES, to fund alliances to use collective impact-style approaches to find solutions that will engage women and girls, and those in all groups that have been underrepresented in STEM, in pathways to STEM careers. NSF is planning to invest $16 million in NSF INCLUDES in FY 2016.

In April 2016, the Department of Education released a Dear Colleague Letter to states, school districts, schools, and education partners on how to maximize Federal funds to support and enhance innovative STEM education for all students. The letter serves as a resource for decreasing the equity and opportunity gaps for historically underserved students in STEM, including girls, and gives examples of how Federal funds through formula grant programs in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act can support efforts to improve instruction and student outcomes in STEM fields.

Emphasizing the Need for Mentorship and Inclusive STEM Programs
Along the way, the Administration has emphasized the importance of mentorship in STEM, and Federal agencies have made efforts to show their commitment to this both domestically and internationally. Each year, the President recognizes extraordinary individuals outside the Federal government who have demonstrated remarkable abilities as mentors in the fields of science, engineering, and math. Among the chief qualifications of the roughly 15 annual recipients of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Math, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM), administered by the National Science Foundation, is demonstrated success in engaging underrepresented groups, including girls, in these technical fields.

The NASA Summer of Innovation (SoI) project – a five-year pilot launched in 2010 in response to the President’s “Educate to Innovate” campaign – provides STEM education opportunities to underserved and underrepresented students across the country. Through SoI, NASA partnered with summer school and community-based organizations to increase STEM education capabilities, strengthen summer programming, and create tailored content. And in April 2012, NASA initiated an online mentoring program entitled “NASA G.I.R.L.S.” (Giving Initiative and
Relevance to Learning Science) that connects women engineers and scientists from NASA to girls across the country, from grades 5-8, each summer.

First announced in 2011, the TechGirls program is an international summer exchange program designed to empower and inspire young girls from the Middle East and North Africa to pursue careers in science and technology. The centerpiece of the program is a weeklong technology camp that provides participants with an in-depth examination of technology-related topics, such as Java C++ programming, and engages them in 45+ hours of hands-on instruction. The camp is complemented by additional activities such as site visits to technology companies, leadership clinics, community service opportunities, job shadowing, and cultural events. As part of program follow-on, the TechGirls implement at least one peer training program or service project within their schools or communities. Its sister program, TechWomen, was founded in the same year, and focuses on economic advancement for women in STEM fields. As part of the program, women from Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East come to the U.S. for a five-week exchange program, and are matched with American mentors in companies in Silicon Valley and throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. The program also sponsors annual outreach activities for young women and girls in participating countries to encourage them in science- and tech-based careers. Since its launch, 332 women have participated in the program.

The Department of Energy’s STEM Mentoring Café program, launched in 2014, has now held 12 speed mentoring sessions for middle school girls, their educators, and Federal STEM professionals at science museums across the country. This program is run in partnership with the Department of Education, the National Girls Collaborative Project, and the Association of Science Technology Centers. The participating STEM professionals are encouraged to commit to an additional 20 hours of STEM mentoring over the next year.

The Department of State’s Women in Science (WiSci) STEAM Camp for Girls camp in Rwanda in 2015 brought 120 secondary and high school female students from across Africa and the United States together for three weeks of cultural experience and hands-on learning in the fields of science, technology, engineering, art & design, and mathematics (STEAM). As a public-private partnership, the camp offered industry-led curriculum, leadership skills training, and mentorship to encourage the girls to pursue careers in the STEAM fields, in which women are underrepresented.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office’s (USPTO) All in STEM Initiative, launched in 2015, encourages entrepreneurial women and girls to pursue STEM degrees and work in STEM careers for the benefit of our economy and society. The initiative kicked off in 2015 and is led by Michelle K. Lee, Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, and first woman director in the agency’s 225+ year history. As part of this outreach, USPTO is developing a “Universal Intellectual Property Patch” open to all students regardless of gender or youth organization affiliation. The original IP Patch was an earned patch offered at the Brownie, Junior, Cadette, and Senior levels of Girl Scouts and, to date, over 1,000 Girl Scouts in as many as 10 states across the country have completed activities to earn the Intellectual Property patch. What’s more, this spring, USPTO was proud to announce the second installment of the Science of Innovation video series, in collaboration with the National Science Foundation and NBC Learn. While highlighting women in STEM and their contributions in advanced manufacturing, this program provides short videos and corresponding lesson plans used by teachers for middle and high school curricula.

**Highlighting Commitments in the Public and Private Sector**
Federal agencies have deployed their STEM workforce and have partnered with the private sector to increase mentorship of girls and women in STEM: for example, to inspire the next
The Council on Women and Girls: Educational Opportunity Accomplishments

generation of energy scientists and engineers, the Department of Energy has formed new partnerships with "100kin10" and "US2020" to reach classrooms and mentors, respectively, with their Women @ Energy series, which profiles women in STEM careers.

The Administration has announced commitments made by leaders across the country, representing state and local entities, foundations, non-profits, universities, media organizations, technology companies, research institutions, and museums to bring new active STEM content for our youngest children in millions of households across the country.

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, more of our students will need to be prepared with strong STEM skills in order to succeed. But there are large disparities in student access and engagement in STEM courses, with less than half of high schools nationwide offering calculus and only 60 percent offering physics. More than 20% of our high schools do not offer Algebra II or Chemistry. In high schools with high black and Latino enrollment, only 33% of high schools offer calculus compared to 56% of high schools with low black and Latino student enrollment. To address these challenges, President Obama issued a call to action in his 2011 State of the Union address to put 100,000 new STEM teachers in the classroom in ten years to equip a new generation of problem-solvers with the STEM skills they need to revitalize our economy, lead our nation, and solve the globe’s most pressing challenges. In response to that call to action, 100Kin10, a network of 280 organizations, including school districts, universities, foundations, corporations, museums, nonprofits, and government agencies, was formed to mobilize commitments to achieve the ambitious 100,000 STEM teacher goal by 2021. In May 2016, 100Kin10 announced that its network has already trained more than 30,000 teachers, and that its partners had made commitments to recruit and train an additional 70,000 by 2021—meaning they will meet the President’s goal and yield more than 100,000 STEM teachers by the ten-year mark. These projections have been verified by the American Institutes for Research, which has concluded that 100Kin10’s estimates are reasonable.

Supported STEM and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

In January 2015, at a White House convening on bringing marginalized girls into STEM and CTE (Career and Technology Education), the National Girls Collaborative announced a new STEM/CTE portal that centralizes resources on expanding girls’ access to STEM and CTE, including curriculum and research practices. The portal includes EmpowerHer—a new interactive map that makes it easier to locate STEM enrichment activities in underserved areas. Additionally, Time Warner Cable and local partners have committed $100,000 towards an independent small grants competition.

The Department of Education has also launched the CTE Makeover Challenge to encourage the creation of more makerspaces in American high schools. Secretary of Education John King has also called on Congress to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, emphasizing the Administration’s ongoing commitment to ensure that we are incentivizing high-quality programs, encouraging innovation, and aligning CTE programs with postsecondary and career opportunities, while simultaneously expanding internships and other employment opportunities to groups that have not been typically represented in those fields, such as women.

In September 2015, the Center for Gender Equity in Science and Technology (CGEST) at Arizona State University announced the National Academic STEM Collaborative at a White House roundtable. This collaborative is a network of 10 academic partners and nine organizational partners who are identifying and scaling effective, evidence-based strategies to improve STEM diversity in the nation’s colleges and universities, with a focus on women and girls from underrepresented communities. Building on the finding that women are more likely to enter into STEM careers if exposed to entrepreneurial activity, the Collaborative will co-host
a “Women of Color and STEM Entrepreneurship Conference” in the spring of 2016 in partnership with Arizona State University and the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University.

The STEM for All initiative emphasizes active learning, a teaching method that has been shown to enhance learning and participation particularly for girls and students of color, with an Active Learning Day planned for this fall. In addition, in February 2016, the White House launched a STEM and entrepreneurship track of the “My Brother’s Keeper Initiative” to augment the work of the Council on Women and Girls to strengthen pathways to enable more young people, particularly those facing persistent opportunity gaps, to tap into the power of Federal and non-government STEM and entrepreneurship initiatives. To foster this initiative across the country, the White House organized the first-ever National Week at the Labs, during which more than fifty world-class Federal labs in twenty cities opened their doors to boys and girls.

Because STEM learning starts in the earliest years, in April 2016, the White House, together with ED and HHS, held the Early STEM Learning Symposium. At the Symposium, new early STEM-related research, resources, and tools were announced by ED and HHS. In addition, the White House received over 200 submissions of innovative STEM work from leaders across the country, representing state and local entities, foundations, non-profits, media organizations, technology companies, research institutions, and museums. Collectively, the commitments of these leaders have the potential to bring new active STEM content for our youngest children – including our youngest girls – to millions of households across the nation.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) continues to invest in STEM AmeriCorps, a multi-year initiative to place hundreds of AmeriCorps members in nonprofits across the country to inspire young people to excel in STEM education. The goals of STEM AmeriCorps are to improve academic performance and engagement in STEM coursework for K-12 students, increase the number of students on track to graduate ready for college and for careers in STEM fields, and spark the imagination and interest of students to pursue STEM careers. STEM AmeriCorps programs specifically target underrepresented populations includes girls, especially those from low-income backgrounds. STEM AmeriCorps is sparking greater interest in math and science and building ladders of opportunity these students might otherwise never have. Current projects include: US2020, Citizen Schools, STEM Ecosystems, and the Afterschool Alliance. CNCS is also working with Federal agencies to support one million hours of volunteering by Federal employees in STEM-related activities. This campaign, “FedServe: One Million Hours of STEM Volunteering,” builds upon the ongoing efforts to support STEM initiatives that are already happening within the Federal government, such as the Department of Energy’s STEM Mentoring Café series, Office of Naval Research’s Science and Engineering Apprenticeship Program, and CNCS’s STEM AmeriCorps. FedServe will engage Federal scientist and engineers to inspire the next generation of students, including girls.

Providing Girls with 21st Century Tech

Education today requires access to 21st century tools, and it is especially important for girls to have high-quality broadband, devices, and digital content. Through the ConnectED program, the Nation is on track to meet President Obama’s commitment to connect 99 percent of students to high-speed internet through schools and libraries by 2018. Over the last 3 years, an additional 20 million U.S. schoolkids have become connected to high-speed Internet, and the number of schools that lack high-speed connectivity has been cut in half. In addition, over 3 million students are utilizing $2 billion worth of hardware, software, and mobile broadband resources provided by community organizations and the private sector for ConnectED. This includes Open eBooks, which the Administration announced in April 2015—a new application providing a world-class library of eBooks to kids in need.
Launch of the Next Generation High School and Future Ready Initiatives to Redesign American Education to be More Engaging and Relevant

In November 2014, President Obama hosted one hundred school superintendents from around the Nation who signed on to the #FutureReady pledge as part of the ConnectED to the Future initiative. More than 1,200 superintendents, representing 16 million students, pledged to transform their practice using more personalized, hands-on, and engaging strategies. The Future Ready launch, and more than a dozen subsequent summits around the Nation, are all part of redesigning schools to better engage girls and eliminate gender gaps wherever they exist.

Following the success of Future Ready, in November 2015, the White House hosted the Next Generation High School Summit to further emphasize the need for change to the traditional high school model. At the Summit, $375 million of private commitments were announced to expand STEM opportunities for girls and underrepresented minorities. The event also announced research on “The Achievement Dividend,” which highlighted the decrease in the number of students who do not complete high school on time, a 27% drop in the preceding four years. This means that hundreds of thousands of girls will now complete high school on time and be better prepared for citizenship and the modern workforce.

Fostering Global Women’s Leadership and Girls’ Education

In 2010, the Department of State launched the Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI) for Student Leaders Women’s Leadership program to help emerging women leaders develop their leadership skills. The four institutes take place in the summer and bring 80 undergraduates per year from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East to U.S. campuses for five-week programs on women’s leadership, communication, and decision-making. SUSI programs further place these skills in the context of American women’s participation in politics, economics, culture, and society.

The Department of State also sponsors professional development programs for approximately 230 secondary school teachers each year from developing countries to augment their teaching and leadership skills and increase support for girls’ education. Teachers develop strategies to better serve adolescent girls in their classrooms and communities, including preventing early marriage, pregnancy, and gender-based violence. Alumni initiate gender empowerment clubs, mentoring for girls, special science and math classes, and outreach programs for parents and elder siblings. Alumni also worked with education consultants to write An Educator’s Guide to Creating Supportive Learning Environments for Girls and Boys, released in June 2016. This is a practical, free resource for teachers, administrators, and communities to make classrooms and schools more gender-inclusive.

Additionally, in May 2017, the leaders of G-7 countries reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to the belief that women and girls are equal and indispensable agents of change in our societies. They made specific commitments around empowering women and girls through education, promoting opportunities for women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, and advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

Increasing Girls’ Access to K-12 Computer Science Education

On January 30, 2016, President Obama announced Computer Science for All, a bold new initiative to empower all American students from preschool through high school to learn computer science and be equipped with the computational thinking skills they need to be creators in the digital economy, not just consumers, and to be active citizens in our technology-driven world. By some estimates, just one quarter of all the K-12 schools in the United States
The Council on Women and Girls: Educational Opportunity Accomplishments

offer high-quality computer science with programming and coding, and 20 states still do not allow it to count towards high school graduation, even as other advanced economies are making it available for all students. Wide disparities exist even for those who do have access to these courses. In addition to course access challenge, media portrayals, classroom curriculum materials, unconscious bias and widely-held stereotypes exacerbate the problem and discourage many of our students from taking these courses. For example, in 2015, only 22 percent of students taking the AP Computer Science exam were girls, and only 13 percent were underrepresented minorities. These statistics mirror the current makeup of some of America’s larger and more innovative tech firms in which women compose less than one-third of their technical employees, and African-Americans less than 3 percent. Computer Science for All has to date generated $250 million in public and private sector commitments.

Arts and Humanities
In March 2016, the National Endowment for the Humanities collaborated with the Smithsonian Affiliates to support a special edition of “Museum Day Live!,” which was held as part of Women’s History Month and focused on inspiring and engaging young women and girls of color, and their peers, through providing access to an enriching cultural experience to America’s museums, parks, and zoos. The National Endowment for the Humanities, in partnership with the Smithsonian and the White House Council on Women and Girls, provided 18 Smithsonian Affiliates the opportunity to offer free admission and programming on March 12, 2016 geared to women and girls of color.

Smithsonian Affiliates developed programming designed to inspire young women and girls so that they might feel more welcomed in museum spaces and more inquisitive about museum exhibitions. Many of the institutions that received funding invited leading female figures in history, literature, the arts, and STEM to speak during their Museum Day Live! programming. These female luminaries were encouraged to meet with the young visitors and explain their roles and describe their career paths. The result was that these cultural institutions have indicated a desire to repeat such programming so that they can reach more women and girls with a humanities experience.

To encourage ongoing engagement with museums throughout the Nation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services has partnered with the Association of Children’s Museums on the Museums for All initiative, which expands access to thousands of young girls in need. Under this initiative, participating museums offer free or a deeply discounted admission, not exceeding $3.00 per person.

International Girls’ Education
The Millennium Challenge Corporation recognizes that poverty reduction and economic growth are possible when countries invest in educating their people. MCC seeks to maximize girls’ and women’s educational opportunities and reduce missed potential by focusing on improving access, developing capacities, training teachers and community leaders, government reforms, and increasing community and private sector involvement. In Burkina Faso, MCC successfully implemented a Bright schools project that focused on girls’ primary and secondary education, constructed 132 primary schools for girls, and established local community ownership of the schools through Mother’s Associations to ensure sustainability of results. MCC invested $41.9 million to increase girls’ primary school attendance and transition to secondary school through a variety of school-based and community interventions aimed at reducing the burden of time-consuming household chores and preventing early marriage.

MCC invests in primary and secondary education projects in partner countries including Namibia, Burkina Faso, Georgia, and El Salvador, to ensure that students obtain the
foundational knowledge and skills needed to get better jobs and increase livelihoods for reducing poverty and increasing economic growth.

**Expanding College Opportunity through Doubled Investments in Pell Grants and Tax Credits and Through America’s College Promise**

“I’m only here because this country gave me a chance through education. We are here today because we believe that in America, no hardworking young person should be priced out of a higher education. This country has always made a commitment to put a good education within the reach of young people willing to work for it.”

President Barack Obama, June 9, 2014

**Improving College Choice and Helping More Americans Pay for College**

President Obama has made historic progress around college opportunity, affordability, and completion by doubling investments in Pell Grants and tax credits; making student loans more affordable by cutting interest rates and allowing borrowers to cap student loan payments at 10 percent of income; making access to financial aid and college information simpler and faster; and promoting innovation and competition to bring down costs and improve college quality.

Since the President took office, we have increased the maximum Pell award by over $1,000, and for the first time, tied aid to inflation to maintain its value through 2017. Pell Grants cut the cost of college by about $3,700 for over 8 million students last year, and the Administration’s efforts resulted in 2 million additional Pell Grants awarded to students each year since the President took office. This Administration also established the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), which provides a maximum credit of $2,500 per year—or up to $10,000 over four years—to expand and replace the Hope higher education credit. The bipartisan tax and budget agreement signed into law in December 2015 made the AOTC permanent. In 2016, the AOTC will cut taxes by over $1,800, on average, for nearly 10 million families.

This Administration has worked to open more doors to students, particularly for non-traditional, low-income, and underrepresented students. Since the President took office, over one million more black and Hispanic students enrolled in college. More independent students, older students, and parents are also enrolling in college for the first time. Meanwhile, more students are graduating college than ever before; there have already been well over 27 million college degrees and credentials awarded since the President took office.

Building on this record, the Administration proposed new Pell investments to help students accelerate progress towards their degrees and increase their likelihood of on-time completion. These proposed investments include “Pell for Accelerated Completion,” which would allow full-time students to take courses in a third semester, and “On-Track Pell Bonus,” which offers $300 for students to take 15-credits, which would accelerate progress towards a degree. To further decrease costs and increase completion rates, the Administration has encouraged greater innovation and a stronger evidence base around effective strategies to promote college success through 42 First in the World grants that fund and test interventions and 15 experimental sites that pilot reforms to existing higher education policies.

To help more students access over $180 billion available annually in Federal financial aid and millions more in state, institutional, and private scholarships, this Administration has
simplified the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and cut the time it takes to complete the form by two-thirds. This benefits women in particular, as many qualify for financial aid and over 60 percent of FAFSA applicants are women. To further streamline and simplify the financial aid process, the Administration has made the form available 3 months earlier – starting on October 1, 2016 – to ensure students can apply for aid earlier and have the most accurate financial aid eligibility information through the FAFSA and College Scorecard when it matters most—as they search for, apply to, and select a college.

For the first time, students and their families have access to comprehensive reliable data on college costs, graduation rates, loan repayment rates, and labor market outcomes in one easily accessible source. Students can use the College Scorecard to find a good-value school where they can pursue their educational and career goals while others in the public – policymakers, schools, parents, teachers, researchers – can use the data to help support colleges in improving their performance and serving students better. Using College Scorecard data, researchers and journalists have already identified earnings gaps at different institutions and schools that enroll high rates of women but do not serve them well, suggesting that the data and tools can help women in particular make more informed decisions about which institutions can help them pursue their educational and career goals.

First Lady Michelle Obama’s Reach Higher Initiative
In today’s economy, a high school diploma just isn’t enough. Students have to reach higher, which is why the First Lady is working to rally the country around the President’s "North Star" goal—that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. The Reach Higher initiative is the First Lady’s effort to inspire every student in America to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school, whether at a professional training program, a community college, or a four-year college or university.

As part of the White House College Opportunity Days of Action on January 16, 2014 and December 4, 2014, the President and First Lady announced over 700 commitments to expand opportunity for more students to enroll and succeed in college. Collectively, these efforts will substantially grow the number of college graduates; expand students’ college opportunities and support them to make strong college choices that fit their educational goals and career aspirations; and strengthen the pipeline to college and improve college remediation to ensure students from all backgrounds are prepared to succeed in college.

In October 2015, the First Lady launched Better Make Room, a public awareness campaign targeted at Generation Z, or young people ages 14 to 19, to celebrate education, change the national conversation, and give students the tools and resources they need – from the FAFSA to the College Scorecard – to continue their education past high school. The Better Make Room campaign engages actors, singers, and sports icons in celebrating students for pursuing their higher education. This past April and May, as part of Better Make Room, over 1,200 College Signing Day events happened in all 50 states to celebrate the importance of going to college. Since launching this campaign, the First Lady has won a Webby for rapping with Saturday Night Live’s Jay Pharaoh about going to college, and the Better Make Room campaign has garnered over 500 million social media impressions.

America’s College Promise
America’s more than 1,100 community colleges are the backbone of our nation’s postsecondary education and training system, and can play a significant role in helping students complete their degrees, transfer to a four-year degree, and advance in their careers. To make college more affordable and to expand college opportunities, President Obama has worked to make two years of community college free for responsible students, letting students earn the first half of a bachelor’s degree and learn skills needed in the workforce at no cost. This proposal would
require everyone to do their part: community colleges must strengthen their programs and increase the number of students who graduate; states must invest more in higher education and training; and students must take responsibility for their education, earn good grades, and stay on track to graduate.

Nearly a third of community college students are raising families, and the majority of community college students work while in school; community colleges offer students the flexibility to pursue their educational and career goals while also fulfilling other personal responsibilities. While the strengths of many community colleges, their strong academic programs, affordable tuition, and flexible course offerings can be beneficial to all students, the evidence shows that women in particular benefit from access to a community college education. More than half of community college students are women. And women pursuing a bachelor’s or master’s degree – especially in STEM fields – can benefit from starting at a community college.

Since the President announced America’s College Promise in January 2015, state and local elected officials, community college leaders, non-profits, business, and philanthropists have come together across the country to expand free community college programs. At least 28 new free community college programs have been launched, adding over $70 million in new public and private investments to serve nearly 40,000 students at community colleges.

In June 2016, the Administration will launch the $100 million America’s Promise Grants to create and expand innovative regional and sector partnerships between community colleges and other training providers, employers, and the public workforce system to create more dynamic, tuition-free education and training programs for in-demand middle and high-skilled jobs across the country. Built off the model of shared responsibility for educating this Nation’s students and workforce, America’s Promise Grants continue to build on the Administration’s investments to strengthen education, training, and employer engagement.

Helping More Americans Manage Student Debt
Over the past few years, the Administration has stepped up efforts to ensure that flexible repayment options are available to support Americans with Federal student debt. As detailed in a new post on student debt trends and state-by-state data being released by the Council of Economic Advisers, these efforts are paying off. More students are graduating college than ever before. More than four of five Direct Loan recipients with loans in repayment are current on their loans. Delinquencies, defaults, and hardship deferments are all trending downward, with nearly three million borrowers successfully accessing a pathway out of default through loan rehabilitation since 2010. And more students are taking action on their student debt when they need support, with nearly five million Direct Loan borrowers taking advantage of repayment options like the President’s PAYE plan, which caps monthly student loan payments at 10 percent of income, up from 700,000 enrolled in 2011. In particular, women, who tend to enter public service jobs at higher rates, stand to benefit from Public Service Loan Forgiveness, which allows borrowers to have their student loans forgiven in 10 years—half the time for other income-driven repayment plans.

To help borrowers easily navigate the complexity of student loan repayment options, the U.S. Digital Service and the Department of Education’s Office of Federal Student Aid have launched StudentLoans.gov/Repay to help drive students to their best repayment option in five steps or less. To help more borrowers better understand their options, and to take action to enroll those borrowers in PAYE and related plans so they can manage their monthly payments and avoid delinquency and default, the White House issued a call to action for colleges, universities, non-profits, businesses, state and local governments, and other employers. At least 40 organizations are working to inform their employees and members about PAYE and related
plans, train human resources staff on the importance of helping borrowers understand their student loan repayment options and the steps individuals must take to enroll, and use digital platforms to highlight PAYE and related plans.

**Apprenticeship Programs**
In April 2014, the President and Vice President announced new Federal investments using existing funds to support job-driven training, like apprenticeships, that will expand partnerships with industry, businesses, unions, community colleges, and training organizations to train workers in the skills they need. Employers, unions, and foundations joined these efforts with new commitments to support job-driven training. In September 2015, President Obama announced that the Department of Labor’s American Apprenticeship Grant Program awarded $175 million in grants to 46 awardees. The American Apprenticeship grants increase opportunity by investing in innovations and strategies to scale apprenticeships—including by marketing to women and other Americans who have been underrepresented. The winning grantees pledged to train and hire more than 34,000 new apprentices in industries as diverse as healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing over the next five years.

**Fostering Tech Skills Through the Launch of the TechHire Initiative**

“When these tech jobs go unfilled, it’s a missed opportunity for the workers, but it’s also a missed opportunity for your city, your community, your county, your state, and our nation.”

President Barack Obama, March 9, 2015

**Supporting Students with Skills Training for 21st Century Careers**
Today, there are over half a million unfilled jobs in information technology across all sectors of the economy. These IT jobs make up ~12 percent of the approximately 5 million job openings, making IT the largest occupational category for open jobs right now. Non-IT industries currently employ two-thirds of these private sector IT workers. IT jobs in fields like cybersecurity, network administration, coding, project management, UI design, and data analytics offer pathways to middle-class careers with average salaries more than one and a half times higher than the average private-sector American job.

These available jobs are not just in Silicon Valley, or in the high tech industry. Many are in industries we don’t think of as part of the technology sector—health care, retail, manufacturing, financial services, energy, transportation, or local government. Helping more American women train for and connect to these jobs is a key element of the President’s middle-class economics agenda.

With proper training, women are especially well-positioned to help fill the hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs across the country. The TechHire initiative, launched by the Administration in March 2015, is expanding pathways to quality tech jobs while also meeting urgent employer demand. TechHire is a bold, multi-sector initiative and call to action to empower Americans with the skills they need. Universities, community colleges, and nontraditional training providers – like “coding boot camps” and high-quality online courses – can rapidly train workers for well-paying, open jobs, often in just a few months.

Through the collaboration of employers, training providers, and workforce and economic development organizations, more than fifty TechHire communities have been using data and
innovative hiring practices to expand non-traditional hirings, to build accelerated training programs that prepare individuals in months instead of years, and to connect people to jobs with hiring on-ramp programs. Over the last year, these communities have trained and placed thousands of women into high-paying tech jobs.

The President also launched the Nation of Makers initiative in 2014 to give more Americans, including women and underrepresented minorities, access to new technologies to design and build just about anything. The White House will celebrate the 2016 National Week of Making from June 17 to 23.

**Launching the Let Girls Learn Initiative**

“I’ve met girls who walk for hours each day to get to school, risking kidnapping and assault, and the rejection of their families and communities. I’ve met girls who study at rickety desks in concrete classrooms, but they’re so eager to learn, they’re raising their hands so hard they’re almost falling out of their chairs.”

First Lady Michelle Obama, March 23, 2016

Sixty-two million girls around the world are not in school, and more than half of them are adolescents. These girls face an array of challenges including limited economic opportunities, an increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and the prospect of early or forced marriage. While a wealth of evidence demonstrates that investing in girls education can both improve a nation’s GDP and lower its rates of HIV/AIDS and unintended pregnancy, significant cultural, physical, and economic barriers prevent millions of girls from accessing the quality secondary education capable of transforming their lives. Every additional year of secondary education correlates to an 18 percent increase in a girl’s future earning power, making her more likely to raise a healthy, educated family and improve her community’s quality of life.

In March 2015, the President and First Lady launched Let Girls Learn, which brings together the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), as well as other agencies and programs like the U.S. President’s Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), to address the range of challenges preventing adolescent girls from attaining a quality education that empowers them to reach their full potential. Recognizing that adolescent girls face multiple challenges in pursuing an education, Let Girls Learn is employing a holistic approach to change the perception of the value of girls at the individual, community, and institutional levels; foster an enabling environment for adolescent girls’ education; and engage and equip girls to make life decisions and important contributions to society.

Building on existing U.S. government efforts and expertise, Let Girls Learn elevates existing programs and invests in new ones to expand educational opportunities for girls—including in areas of conflict and crisis. It leverages public-private partnerships and challenges others to commit resources to improve the lives of adolescent girls worldwide. The initiative will also expand collaboration with experts and place particular emphasis on community-led solutions to help adolescent girls complete their education.

The recently released FY 2017 President’s Budget requested more than $100 million in new funds for the initiative, building on the $250 million in funds requested in the FY 2016 President’s Budget to launch the initiative. To date, the Peace Corps Let Girls Learn Fund has
The Council on Women and Girls: Educational Opportunity Accomplishments

raised nearly $2 million, and over 200 Let Girls Learn Peace Corps Partnership Grants have been awarded to Volunteers and communities in 33 countries to implement community solutions addressing barriers to girls’ education. In 2016, USAID launched the Let Girls Learn $25 million Challenge Fund to design new, holistic programs that advance girls’ education. With an initial focus on Malawi and Tanzania, the Challenge Fund helps girls thrive by utilizing a unique mechanism that allows USAID, the Department of State, and a vast array of external partners to co-create, co-fund, pilot, and implement innovative programs to ensure that adolescent girls enroll and succeed in school.

Since the launch, foreign governments, including Japan, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, have collectively pledged nearly $600 million towards global girls’ education programming. Specifically, USAID commitments under Let Girls Learn include a five-year, $180 million partnership with the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) to provide accelerated and alternative learning programs for out-of-school girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; $100 million to build 25 new schools, 70 percent of which will be schools for girls in Jordan to alleviate overcrowding due to the influx of Syrian refugees; and a $70 million commitment in coordination with the Government of Pakistan to advance girls’ education through new and ongoing USAID programs benefiting over 200,000 adolescent girls. Additionally, the governments of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland have all committed to work with the United States to support efforts to ensure that adolescent girls are provided opportunities to continue their education. The World Bank, for its part, has committed to institutionalizing its efforts on adolescent girls education. Bank President Jim Yong Kim announced in April 2016 that, over the coming five years, the World Bank would invest at least $2.5 billion in education programs specifically benefiting adolescent girls’ access to and retention in secondary school. The Administration’s support for open educational resources is already expanding opportunities throughout the world.

Domestically, the First Lady has galvanized students to become global citizens, from launching the #62MillionGirls social media campaign in September 2015, to releasing the Let Girls Learn toolkit at the summer 2015 Girl Up Summit, to launching the 62milliongirls.com campaign with Change.org at SXSW in Austin in March 2016. Another key approach to making Let Girls Learn a success is through public private partnerships. Companies and organizations including Johnson and Johnson, Procter & Gamble, Jet Blue, Lyft, Lands’ End, Alex and Ani, UPS Foundation, the Girls Scouts, and several others have made various commitments to Let Girls Learn in order to promote international girls’ education.

Addressing Other Obstacles Faced by Girls Across the Globe

“But we shouldn’t be satisfied. Because while the benefits of primary education are real and meaningful, we know that if we truly want to transform girls’ lives, if we truly want to give them the tools to shape their own destinies, then primary education often just isn’t enough.”

First Lady Michelle Obama, September 24, 2014

In 2014, at the United Nations Global Education First Initiative, the First Lady noted that we’ve made significant progress in achieving the goal of educating all young women, particularly in primary education. As of 2012, every developing region in the world has achieved, or was close to achieving, gender parity in primary education. To augment this accomplishment, the Administration has been working hard to further address the barriers that adolescent girls face.
Throughout the course of the Administration, the United States has continued to respond to global HIV/AIDS in an effort to save lives and change the very course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. PEPFAR and private sector partners are making significant investments in African countries through the Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS) partnership, which aims to reduce HIV infections in adolescent girls and young women in Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Additionally, Gender-based violence (GBV) is a worldwide problem that raises public health and human rights concerns. In the Peace Corps 2011 Status Reports, of the 66 posts that submitted data, nearly half reported that Volunteers worked with local partners to organize activities aimed at reducing the incidence of gender-based violence, especially in rural areas. School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is defined as violence that occurs in and around the school environment and often results in students not learning and, in some cases, not completing school. Contextualized and adapted from USAID’s Doorways program, the Student-Friendly Schools Training Package provides the skills and capacities needed by Education Volunteers and their counterparts to respond to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in their communities. Because schools replicate and reproduce gender attitudes, and teachers often reinforce negative gender norms unintentionally, this training targets members of the education community in a thoughtful and culturally appropriate way to engage participants in how to prevent and respond to SRGBV. To date, 33 country programs have sent staff and Volunteers to regional Student Friendly Schools training and have in turn replicated these capacity building trainings for Volunteers and their counterparts upon their return.

Under this Administration, the United States continued to prioritize education in crisis- and conflict-affected countries, recognizing that it is vital to focus on the right to education for the most vulnerable children affected by conflict and crises, whether in their own communities, displaced, or in new and longstanding refugee populations. Refugee and displaced children are five times less likely to attend school, and the situation is far worse for girls who are 2.5 times less likely than boys to attend school in crisis situations. The United States invests in girls’ education in emergencies through both the Department of State and USAID. In May 2016, the United States pledged $20 million to support a new platform, “Education Cannot Wait, A Fund for Education in Emergencies,” to bring coherence to development and relief efforts and address complex education needs of both girls and boys living in conflicts and protracted crises.

Additionally, in 2016, Secretary Kerry launched the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls to address challenges related to adolescent girls’ safety, health, and education. The United States is the first country in the world to develop a strategy solely focused on the protection and advancement of adolescent girls. Adolescence is a critical period in a girls’ life, when significant physical, emotional, and social changes shape her future. While adolescence is a time of great vulnerability for girls, it is also an ideal point to leverage development and diplomacy efforts. If resolved at this age, poverty can be disrupted from becoming a permanent condition that is passed from one generation to the next.

The goal of U.S. government efforts under the strategy is to ensure adolescent girls are educated, healthy, socially and economically empowered, and free from violence and discrimination, thereby promoting global development, security, and prosperity. Bringing together the efforts of the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Peace Corps, and Millennium Challenge Corporation, the strategy identifies how the United States will address the range of challenges facing adolescent girls, including through enhancing girls’ access to quality education in safe environments; providing economic opportunities and incentives for girls and their families; empowering girls with information, skills, services, and
support; mobilizing and educating communities to change harmful norms and practices; addressing the unique challenges for refugee and internally displaced girls due to crises and conflict; and strengthening policy and legal frameworks and accountability.