

USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice  
*What Matters Now: College Access and Success in the Age of Obama*  
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**The Unfinished Agenda of the Spellings Commission:  
A Report Card for the Obama Administration**

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# Spellings Commission recommendations - I

1. "...**expand higher education access and success** by improving student preparation and persistence, addressing nonacademic barriers and providing **significant increases in aid** to low-income students."
2. "...the entire student **financial aid system be restructured** and new incentives put in place to improve the measurement and **management of costs** and institutional **productivity**."
3. "...change from a system based on reputation to one based on performance. We urge the creation of a robust culture of **accountability and transparency** throughout higher education."

## Spellings Commission recommendations - II

4. "...embrace a culture of **continuous innovation and quality improvement** by developing new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning..."
5. "...development of a national **strategy for lifelong learning** that helps all citizens understand the importance of...higher education throughout their lives."
6. "...increased federal investment in areas critical to our nation's **global competitiveness** [STEM] and...attract the best and brightest minds from across the nation and around the world..."

# What's happened since 2006?

## 1. Expand access

1. Increase Pell from \$4,731 last year to \$5,350 this year and \$5,550 next year
2. Link Pell to CPI+1%
3. Obama educational attainment goal of 2020
4. **Grade: C-**

## 2. Restructure financial aid

1. Simplified FAFSA; institutional aid forecasters
2. Eliminate FFEL and fold into DL
3. Focus campus-based aid on completion and inst. need aid
4. **Grade: B-**

# What's happened since 2006?

## 2. Management of costs and institutional productivity

1. The Great Recession
2. Stimulus funding
3. **Grade: A-**

## 3. Accountability and transparency

1. State and federal attempts at student record data systems
2. Many discussions about accreditation and performance assessment
3. **Grade: Incomplete**

# What's happened since 2006?

## 4. Continuous innovation and quality improvement

1. FIPSE – still largely earmarked
2. Expand sharing of curricula and distance learning opportunities – little evidence
3. **Grade: D**

## 5. Strategy for lifelong learning

1. Obama focus on community colleges
2. **Grade: B**

## 6. Global competitiveness

1. 2020 goal
2. Educate to Innovate, Race to the Top
3. **Grade: Incomplete**