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Discover Financial Services
Form 10-K
February 20, 2019
UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 10-K

(Mark One)

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the year ended December 31, 2018

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____

Commission File Number 001-33378

DISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware

36-2517428

(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization) (I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)

2500 Lake Cook Road, Riverwoods, Illinois 60015 (224) 405-0900

(Address of principal executive offices, including zip code) (Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of each class Name of each exchange on which registered

Common Stock, par value \$0.01 per share New York Stock Exchange

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act.

Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90

days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically every Interactive Data File required to be submitted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit such files). Yes No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§229.405 of this chapter) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer" and "smaller reporting company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer

Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company

If an emerging growth company, indicate by check mark if the registrant has elected not to use the extended transition period for complying with any new or revised financial accounting standards provided pursuant to Section 13(a) of the Exchange Act.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act). Yes No

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The aggregate market value of the common equity held by non-affiliates of the registrant on the last business day of the registrant's most recently completed second fiscal quarter was approximately \$24,123,706,276.

As of February 15, 2019, there were 328,386,672 shares of the registrant's Common Stock, par value \$0.01 per share, outstanding.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Portions of the registrant's definitive proxy statement for its annual stockholders' meeting to be held on May 16, 2019 are incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K.

DISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES

Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2018

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Except as otherwise indicated or unless the context otherwise requires, “Discover Financial Services,” “Discover,” “DFS,” “we,” “us,” “our,” and “the Company” refer to Discover Financial Services and its subsidiaries. See Item 8 — Financial Statements and Supplementary Data — Glossary of Acronyms for terms and abbreviations used throughout the annual report.

We own or have rights to use the trademarks, trade names and service marks that we use in conjunction with the operation of our business, including, but not limited to: Discover[®], PULSE[®], Cashback Bonus[®], Discover Cashback Checking[®], Discover it[®], Freeze it[®] College Covered[®], and Diners Club International[®]. All other trademarks, trade names and service marks included in this annual report on Form 10-K are the property of their respective owners.

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Part I.

Part I | Item 1. Business

Introduction

Discover Financial Services (the “Company”) is a direct banking and payment services company. We were incorporated in Delaware in 1960. We are a bank holding company under the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 as well as a financial holding company under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and therefore are subject to oversight, regulation and examination by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the “Federal Reserve”). We provide direct banking products and services and payment services through our subsidiaries. We offer our customers credit card loans, private student loans, personal loans, home equity loans and deposit products. We had \$90.5 billion in loan receivables and \$44.7 billion in deposits issued through direct-to-consumer channels and affinity relationships at December 31, 2018. We also operate the Discover Network, the PULSE network (“PULSE”) and Diners Club International (“Diners Club”). The Discover Network processes transactions for Discover-branded credit and debit cards and provides payment transaction processing and settlement services. PULSE operates an electronic funds transfer network, providing financial institutions issuing debit cards on the PULSE network with access to ATMs domestically and internationally, as well as point-of-sale (“POS”) terminals at retail locations throughout the U.S. for debit card transactions. Diners Club is a global payments network of licensees, which are generally financial institutions, that issue Diners Club branded charge cards and/or provide card acceptance services.

Available Information

We make available, free of charge through the investor relations page of our internet site www.discover.com, our annual reports on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K, proxy statements, Forms 3, 4 and 5 filed by or on behalf of our directors and executive officers, and any amendments to those documents filed with or furnished to the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”) pursuant to the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. These filings are available as soon as reasonably practicable after they are filed with or furnished to the SEC. In addition, the following information is available on the investor relations page of our internet site: (i) our Corporate Governance Policies; (ii) our Code of Ethics and Business Conduct; and (iii) the charters of the Audit, Compensation and Leadership Development, Nominating and Governance, and Risk Oversight Committees of our Board of Directors. These documents are also available in print without charge to any person who requests them by writing or telephoning our principal executive offices: Discover Financial Services, Office of the Corporate Secretary, 2500 Lake Cook Road, Riverwoods, Illinois 60015, U.S.A., telephone number (224) 405-0900.

Operating Model

We manage our business activities in two segments: Direct Banking and Payment Services. Our Direct Banking segment includes consumer banking and lending products, specifically Discover-branded credit cards issued to individuals on the Discover Network and other consumer banking products and services, including student loans, personal loans, home equity loans and deposit products. Our Payment Services segment includes PULSE, Diners Club and our Network Partners business, which provides payment transaction processing and settlement services on the Discover Network.

We are principally engaged in providing products and services to customers in the United States, although the royalty and licensee revenue we receive from Diners Club licensees is mainly derived from sources outside of the United States. For quantitative information concerning our geographic distribution, see Note 4: Loan Receivables to our consolidated financial statements.

Below are descriptions of the principal products and services of each of our reportable segments. For additional financial information relating to our business and our operating segments, see Note 22: Segment Disclosures to our consolidated financial statements.

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Direct Banking

Set forth below are descriptions of the credit cards, student loans, personal loans, home equity loans and deposit products issued by Discover Bank.

Credit Cards

We currently offer and issue credit cards to consumers. Our credit card customers are permitted to “revolve” their balances and repay their obligations over a period of time and at an interest rate set forth in their cardmember agreements, which may be either fixed or variable. The interest that we earn on revolving credit card balances makes up approximately 81% of our total interest income. We also charge customers other fees as specified in the cardmember agreements. These fees may include fees for late payments, returned checks, balance transfer transactions and cash advance transactions.

Our credit card customers’ transactions in the U.S. are processed over the Discover Network. Where we have a direct relationship with a merchant, which is the case with respect to our large merchants representing a majority of Discover card sales volume, we receive discount and fee revenue from merchants. Discount and fee revenue is based on pricing that is set forth in contractual agreements with each such merchant and is based on a number of factors including industry practices, special marketing arrangements, competitive pricing levels and merchant size. Where we do not have a direct relationship with a merchant, we receive acquirer interchange and assessment fees from the merchant acquirer that settles transactions with the merchant. The amount of this fee is based on a standardized schedule and can vary based on the type of merchant.

All of our cards offer rewards programs, the costs of which are generally recorded as a reduction of discount and interchange revenue. See “— Marketing — Rewards/Cashback Bonus” for further discussion of our programs offered. The following chart* shows the Discover card transaction cycle as processed on the Discover Network:

For information on how we market our credit card loans, see “— Credit Risk Management — Account Acquisition (New Customers)” and “— Marketing.”

Student Loans

Our private student loans are primarily available to students attending eligible non-profit undergraduate and graduate schools. We also offer certain post-graduate loans, including consolidation, bar study and residency loans. All of our private student loans are unsecured and have terms and conditions that vary by product. We encourage students to borrow responsibly and maximize grants, scholarships and other free financial aid before taking student loans.

Our student loans feature fixed or variable interest rates with zero origination fees, and customers can elect to make extra payments to pay their loans off earlier than contractually scheduled without penalty. The loans can feature potential rewards, such as for good grades, and we also offer optional in-school payment products where students make

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monthly payments while in school. The standard repayment period is 15 to 20 years, depending on the type of student loan. Student loans may include a deferment period, during which customers are not required to make payments while enrolled in school at least half time as determined by the school. This period begins on the date the loan is first disbursed and ends six to nine months (depending on loan type) after the customer ceases to be enrolled in school at least half time. As part of the loan approval process, all of our student loans, except for bar study, residency and private consolidation loans, are certified by and disbursed through the school to ensure students do not borrow more than the cost of attendance less other financial aid.

We market our student loans through digital channels, direct mail, email, radio and television. We also work with schools to create awareness of our products with students and their families. Students can apply for our student loans online, by telephone or by mail, and we have dedicated staff within our call centers to service student loans. We invite applicants who qualify to apply with a creditworthy cosigner, which may improve the likelihood of loan approval and a lower interest rate.

Personal Loans

Our personal loans are primarily intended to help customers consolidate existing debt, although they can be used for other reasons. These loans are unsecured with fixed interest rates, terms and payments, and have zero origination fees. The repayment period for personal loans is three to seven years and there is no prepayment penalty for repaying any portion of a personal loan balance prior to the scheduled maturity date. Customers may be subject to other charges, including late fees when a customer has not made a minimum payment by the contractual due date.

We generally market personal loans through direct mail, digital channels and email. Prospective applicants can obtain information regarding Discover Personal Loans online or by telephone and have the ability to apply online, by telephone or through the mail.

Home Equity Loans

Our home equity loans are intended for multiple purposes, including mortgage refinance, debt consolidation, home improvement and other major expenses. These loans are closed-end, secured loans with fixed interest rates, terms and payments. These loans are secured by a first or second lien on a customer's home and require monthly payment over a 10 to 30 year term. Customers may elect to make larger than minimum payments without being subject to a prepayment penalty, although certain third-party costs may be required to be reimbursed by the customer if the loan is repaid in full within three years. Customers may also be subject to additional charges, including late fees and returned payment charges.

We market home equity loans through a mix of direct mail, digital channels and email. Prospective applicants can obtain information and apply online or by telephone.

Deposits

We obtain deposits from consumers directly or through affinity relationships ("direct-to-consumer deposits"). Additionally, we obtain deposits through third-party securities brokerage firms that offer our deposits to their customers ("brokered deposits"). Our direct-to-consumer deposit products include online savings accounts, certificates of deposit, money market accounts, Individual Retirement Arrangement certificates of deposit and checking accounts, while our brokered deposit products include certificates of deposit and sweep accounts. All of our deposits are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (the "FDIC") to the maximum permitted by law. We do not pay interest on checking account balances and instead offer cashback rewards for certain debit card purchases. Certificates of deposit are offered on a range of tenors from three months through ten years with interest rates that are fixed for the full period. There are minimum balance requirements to open certificates of deposit and penalties for early withdrawals. Money market accounts are transactional accounts with minimum balance requirements. Money market accounts and savings accounts have limitations on withdrawal frequency, as required by law, and interest rates on these accounts are subject to change at any time. Fees apply to some transactions and availability of funds varies based on product and method of funding.

We market our direct-to-consumer deposit products through the use of radio, print materials, direct mail, affinity arrangements with third parties and digital channels. Customers can generally apply for deposit accounts online or by telephone. Checking account applications can only be initiated online. For more information regarding our deposit products, see "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Liquidity and

Capital Resources — Funding Sources — Deposits.”

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Payment Services

Set forth below are descriptions of PULSE, Diners Club and our Network Partners business, which provides, among other services, payment transaction processing and settlement services.

PULSE

Our PULSE network is one of the nation's leading debit/ATM networks. PULSE links cardholders served by approximately 4,100 financial institutions to ATMs and POS terminals located throughout the United States, including cardholders at financial institutions with which PULSE has direct relationships and through agreements PULSE has with other debit networks. PULSE also provides cash access at approximately 2.1 million ATMs in 134 countries. PULSE's primary source of revenue is transaction fees charged for switching and settling ATM and debit transactions initiated through the use of debit cards issued by participating financial institutions. In addition, PULSE offers a variety of optional products and services that produce income for the network, including signature debit transaction processing, debit card fraud detection and risk mitigation services, and connections to other regional and national electronic funds transfer networks.

When a financial institution joins the PULSE network, debit cards issued by that institution are eligible to be used at all of the ATMs and POS debit terminals that participate in the PULSE network, and the PULSE mark can be used on that institution's debit cards and ATMs. In addition, financial institution participants may sponsor merchants, direct processors and independent sales organizations to participate in the PULSE POS and ATM debit service. A participating financial institution assumes liability for transactions initiated through the use of debit cards issued by that institution, as well as for ensuring compliance with PULSE's operating rules and policies applicable to that institution's debit cards, ATMs and, if applicable, sponsored merchants, direct processors and independent sales organizations.

When PULSE enters into a network-to-network agreement with another debit network, the other network's participating financial institutions' debit cards can be used at terminals in the PULSE network. PULSE does not have a direct relationship with these financial institutions and the other network bears the financial responsibility for transactions of those financial institutions' cardholders and for ensuring compliance with PULSE's operating rules.

Diners Club

Our Diners Club business maintains an acceptance network in more than 190 countries and territories through its relationships with over 120 licensees, which are generally financial institutions. We do not directly issue Diners Club cards to consumers, but grant our licensees the right to issue Diners Club branded cards and/or provide card acceptance services. Our licensees pay us royalties for the right to use the Diners Club brand, which is our primary source of Diners Club revenues. We also earn revenue from providing various support services to our Diners Club licensees, including processing and settlement of cross-border transactions. We also provide a centralized service center and internet services to our licensees.

When Diners Club cardholders use their cards outside the host country or territory of the issuing licensee, transactions are routed and settled over the Diners Club network through its centralized service center. In order to increase merchant acceptance in certain targeted countries and territories, we work with merchant acquirers to offer Diners Club and Discover acceptance to their merchants. These acquirers are granted licenses to market the Diners Club brands to existing and new merchants. As we continue to work toward achieving full card acceptance across our networks, Discover customers are using their cards at an increasing number of merchant and ATM locations that accept Diners Club cards around the world. Diners Club cardholders with cards issued by licensees outside of North America continue to use their cards on the Discover Network in North America and on the PULSE and Diners Club networks domestically and internationally, respectively.

Network Partners Business

We have agreements with a number of financial institutions, networks and commercial service providers for issuance of products or processing of payments on Discover networks. We refer to these financial institutions, networks and commercial service providers as "Network Partners." We may earn merchant discount and acquirer assessments net of issuer fees paid, in addition to other fees, for processing transactions for Network Partners. We also leverage our payments infrastructure in other ways, such as business-to-business payment processing.

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The following chart* shows an example of a Network Partners transaction cycle:

* * *

The discussion below provides additional detail concerning the supporting functions of our two segments. The credit card, student loan, personal loan, home equity loan and deposit products issued through our Direct Banking segment require significant investments in consumer portfolio risk management, marketing, customer service and related technology, whereas the operation of our Payment Services business requires that we invest in the technology to manage risk and service network partners, merchants and merchant acquirer relationships.

Credit Risk Management

Credit risk management is a critical component of our management and growth strategy. Credit risk refers to the risk of loss arising from borrower default when borrowers are unable or unwilling to meet their financial obligations to us. Our credit risk arising from consumer lending products is generally highly diversified across millions of accounts without significant individual exposures. We manage credit risk primarily based on customer segments and product types. See “— Risk Management” for more information regarding how we define and manage our credit and other risks.

Account Acquisition (New Customers)

We acquire new credit card customers through direct mail, internet, media advertising, merchant or partner relationships, or through unsolicited individual applications. We also acquire new student loan, personal loan and home equity loan customers through similar channels. In all cases we have a rigorous process for screening applicants. To identify credit-worthy prospective customers, our credit risk management and marketing teams use proprietary analytical tools to match our product offerings with customer needs. We consider the prospective customer’s financial stability, as well as ability and willingness to pay.

We assess the creditworthiness of each consumer loan applicant through evaluating an applicant’s credit information provided by credit bureaus and information from other sources. The assessment is performed using our credit scoring systems, both externally developed and proprietary. For our unsecured lending products, we also use experienced credit underwriters to supplement our automated decision-making processes. For our home equity products, experienced credit underwriters must review and approve each application.

Upon approval of a customer’s application for one of our lending products, we assign a specific annual percentage rate using an analytically driven pricing framework that simultaneously provides competitive pricing for customers and seeks to maximize revenue on a risk-adjusted basis. For our credit card loans, we also assign a credit line based on risk level and expected return.

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Portfolio Management (Existing Customers)

The revolving nature of our credit card loans requires that we regularly assess the credit risk exposure of such accounts. This assessment uses the individual's Discover account performance information as well as information from credit bureaus. We utilize statistical evaluation models to support the measurement and management of credit risk. At the individual customer level, we use custom risk models together with generic industry models as an integral part of the credit decision-making process. Depending on the duration of the customer's account, risk profile and other performance metrics, the account may be subject to a range of account management treatments, including transaction authorization limits and increases or decreases on credit limits.

Customer Assistance

We provide our customers with a variety of tools to proactively manage their accounts, including email, text message and push reminders and a website dedicated to customer education, as further discussed under the heading "— Customer Service." These tools are designed to limit a customer's risk of becoming delinquent. When a customer's account becomes delinquent or is at risk of becoming delinquent, we employ a variety of strategies to assist customers in returning to current status on their accounts.

All monthly billing statements of accounts with past due amounts include a request for payment of such amounts. Customer assistance personnel generally initiate contact with customers within 30 days after any portion of their balance becomes past due. The nature and the timing of the initial contact are determined by a review of the customer's prior account activity and payment habits.

We reevaluate our collection efforts, and consider the implementation of other techniques, as a customer becomes increasingly delinquent. We limit our exposure to delinquencies through controls within our process for authorizing transactions and credit limits and criteria-based account suspension and revocation. In situations involving customers with financial difficulties, we may enter into arrangements to extend or otherwise change payment schedules, lower interest rates and/or waive fees to aid customers in returning to current status on their obligations to us. For more information see Note 4: Loan Receivables to our consolidated financial statements.

Marketing

In addition to working with our credit risk management personnel on account acquisition and portfolio management, our marketing group provides other key functions, including product development, management of our Cashback Bonus and other rewards programs, protection product management, and brand and advertising management.

Product Development

In order to attract and retain customers and merchants, we continue to develop new programs, features and benefits and market them through a variety of channels, including television, radio, mail, telephone and digital. Marketing efforts may promote no annual fee, Cashback Bonus, FICO Credit Score for free, Freeze it, Social Security Number Alerts, New Account Alerts, balance transfer offers and other rewards programs. Through the development of a large prospect database, use of credit bureau data and use of a customer contact strategy and management system, we continuously develop our modeling and customer engagement capabilities, which helps optimize product, pricing and channel selection.

Rewards / Cashback Bonus

Our cardmembers use several card products, all with no annual fee, that allow them to earn their rewards based on how they want to use credit, which can be redeemed in any amount at any time, in general as set forth below.

Discover it card offers 5% Cashback Bonus in categories that change each quarter up to a quarterly maximum (signing up is required) and 1% Cashback Bonus on all other purchases.

Discover it Chrome card offers 2% Cashback Bonus at gas stations and restaurants on up to \$1,000 in combined purchases each quarter and 1% Cashback Bonus on all other purchases.

Discover it Miles card offers 1.5 miles for every dollar spent on purchases.

Discover it Secured card offers the same reward features as the Discover it Chrome card. Customers provide a security deposit as collateral for the credit card account. Starting at eight months after the account opening,

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Discover reviews the account to determine if the security deposit can be refunded to the customer and they graduate to an unsecured line of credit.

Discover More card offers 5% Cashback Bonus in categories that change each quarter up to a quarterly maximum (signing up is required). Customers earn .25% Cashback Bonus on their first \$3,000 on all other annual purchases and on all warehouse purchases, and 1% Cashback Bonus on purchases over \$3,000.

Discover it Business card offers 1.5% Cashback Bonus on all purchases.

Protection Products

We currently sell an identity theft protection product, and we service and maintain existing enrollments of the payment and wallet protection products detailed below for our credit card customers.

Identity Theft Protection. The most comprehensive identity theft monitoring product includes an initial credit report, credit bureau report monitoring at the three major credit bureaus, prompt alerts to key changes to credit bureau files that help customers spot possible identity theft quickly, internet surveillance to monitor multiple credit and debit card numbers and social security numbers on suspicious websites, identity theft insurance of \$1,000,000 to cover certain out-of-pocket expenses due to identity theft, and access to knowledgeable professionals who can help resolve issues.

Payment Protection. This product allows customers to suspend their minimum payments due for up to two years, depending on the qualifying event and product level, when certain qualifying life events occur. While on benefit, customers have no minimum monthly payment, and are not charged interest, late fees or the fees for the product. This product covers a variety of different events, such as unemployment, disability, natural disasters or other life events, such as marriage or birth of a child. Depending on the product level and availability under state laws, outstanding balances up to \$10,000 or \$25,000, are cancelled in the event of death.

Wallet Protection. This product offers one-call convenience if a customer's wallet is lost or stolen, including requesting cancellation and replacement of the customer's credit and debit cards, monitoring the customer's credit bureau reports at the three major credit bureaus for 180 days and alerting them to key changes to their credit files, and providing up to \$100 to replace the customer's wallet or purse.

Brand and Advertising Management

We maintain a full-service marketing department charged with delivering integrated mass and direct communications to foster customer engagement with our products and services. We also leverage strategic partnerships with sponsorship properties such as the NHL and the Big Ten Conference to help drive loan growth. Our brand team utilizes consumer insights and market intelligence to define our mass communication strategy, create multi-channel advertising messages and develop marketing partnerships with sponsorship properties. This work is performed in house as well as with a variety of external agencies and vendors.

Customer Service

Our credit card customers have the option to manage their accounts online via Discover.com, through Discover Mobile applications and by calling our U.S.-based customer service personnel. Our digital solutions offer a range of benefits, which may include:

• Access to overall credit health tools such as Credit Scorecard, Freeze it, Social Security Number Alerts and New Account Alerts;

• Customer service via multiple communication channels, including messaging, chat and 24/7 customer service by telephone; and

• Proactive notifications via email, text messaging and in-app messaging for monitoring transaction activity and account security.

Our student loan, personal loan, home equity loan and deposit product customers can utilize our online account services to manage their accounts and to use interactive tools and calculators.

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Processing Services

Our processing services cover four functional areas: card personalization, print/mail, remittance processing and document processing. Card personalization is responsible for the mailing of credit and debit cards for new accounts, replacements and reissues. Print/mail specializes in statement and letter printing and mailing. Remittance processing handles account payments and check processing. Document processing handles hard-copy forms, including new account applications.

Fraud Prevention

We monitor our customers' accounts to help prevent, detect, investigate and resolve fraud. Our fraud prevention processes are designed to protect the security of cards, applications and accounts in a manner consistent with our customers' needs to easily acquire and use our products. Prevention systems monitor the authorization of application information, verification of customer identity, sales, processing of convenience and balance transfer checks, and electronic transactions.

Each credit and debit card transaction is subject to screening, authorization and approval through externally developed and proprietary POS decision systems and each transaction for a deposit account is subject to screening and approval through a dynamic transaction evaluation and scoring methodology. We use a variety of techniques that help identify and halt fraudulent transactions, including adaptive models, rules-based decision-making logic, report analysis, data integrity checks and manual account reviews. We manage accounts identified by the fraud detection system through technology that integrates fraud prevention and customer service. Strategies are subject to regular review and enhancement to enable us to respond quickly to changing conditions as well as to protect our customers and our business from emerging fraud activity.

Discover Network Operations

We support our merchants through a merchant acquiring model that includes direct relationships with large merchants in the United States and arrangements with merchant acquirers generally for small- and mid-size merchants. In addition to our U.S.-based merchant acceptance locations, Discover Network cards also are accepted at many locations in Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, China, Japan and a growing number of countries around the world on the Diners Club network, or through reciprocal acceptance arrangements made with international payment networks (i.e., network-to-network).

We maintain direct relationships with most of our large merchant accounts, which enables us to benefit from joint marketing programs and opportunities and to retain the entire discount revenue from the merchants. The terms of our direct merchant relationships are governed by merchant services agreements. These agreements are also accompanied by additional program documents that further define our network functionality and requirements, including operating regulations, technical specifications and dispute rules. To enable ongoing improvements in our network's functionality and in accordance with industry convention, we publish updates to our program documents on a semi-annual basis. Discover Network services the majority of its small- and mid-size merchant portfolios through third-party merchant acquirers to allow such acquirers to offer a comprehensive payments processing package to such merchants. Merchants also can apply to our merchant acquirer partners directly to accept Discover Network cards through the acquirers' integrated payments solutions. Merchant acquirers provide merchants with consolidated servicing for Discover, Visa and MasterCard transactions, resulting in streamlined statements and customer service for merchants, and reduced costs for us. These acquirer partners also perform credit evaluations and screen applications against unacceptable business types and the Office of Foreign Asset Control Specifically Designated Nationals list. Discover Network operates systems and processes that seek to ensure data integrity, prevent fraud and ensure compliance with our operating regulations. Our systems evaluate incoming transaction activity to identify abnormalities that require investigation and fraud mitigation. Designated Discover Network personnel are responsible for validating compliance with our operating regulations and law, including enforcing our data security standards and prohibitions against illegal or otherwise unacceptable activities. Discover Network is a founding and current member of the Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council, LLC (the "Council") and is working to expand the adoption of the Council's security standards globally for merchants and service providers that store, transmit or process cardholder data.

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Technology

We provide technology systems processing through a combination of owned and hosted data centers and the use of third-party vendors. These data centers support our payment networks, provide customers with access to their accounts and manage transaction authorizations, among other functions. Discover Network works with a number of vendors to maintain our connectivity in support of POS authorizations. This connectivity also enables merchants to receive timely payment for their Discover Network card transactions.

Our approach to technology development and management involves both third-party and in-house resources. We use third-party vendors for basic technology services (e.g., telecommunications, hardware and operating systems) as well as for processing and other services for our direct banking and payment services businesses. We subject each vendor to a formal approval process, which includes among other things a security assessment, to ensure that the vendor can assist us in maintaining a cost-effective and reliable technology platform. We use our in-house resources to build, maintain and oversee some of our technology systems. We believe this approach enhances our operations and improves cost efficiencies.

Seasonality

In our credit card business, we experience fluctuations in transaction volumes and the level of loan receivables as a result of higher seasonal consumer spending and payment patterns around the winter holidays, summer vacations and back-to-school periods. In our student loan business, our loan disbursements peak at the beginning of a school's academic semester or quarter. Although there is a seasonal impact to transaction volumes and the levels of credit card and student loan receivables, seasonal trends have not caused significant fluctuations in our results of operations or credit quality metrics between quarterly and annual periods.

Revenues in our Diners Club business are generally higher in the first half of the year as a result of Diners Club's tiered pricing system where licensees qualify for lower royalty rate tiers as cumulative volume grows during the course of the year.

Competition

We compete with other consumer financial services providers, including non-traditional providers such as financial technology firms and payment networks on the basis of a number of factors, including brand, reputation, customer service, product and service offerings, incentives, pricing and other terms. Our credit card business also competes on the basis of reward programs and merchant acceptance. We compete for accounts and utilization with cards issued by other financial institutions (including American Express, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Capital One and Citi) and, to a lesser extent, businesses that issue their own private label cards or otherwise extend credit to their customers. In comparison to our largest credit card competitors, our strengths include cash rewards, conservative portfolio management and strong customer service. Competition based on rewards and other card features and benefits continues to be strong. Our student loan product competes for customers with Sallie Mae and Wells Fargo, as well as other lenders that offer private student loans. Our personal loan product competes for customers primarily with Wells Fargo, Citi and non-traditional lenders, including financial technology firms and peer to peer lenders. Our home equity loan product faces competition primarily from traditional branch lending institutions, credit unions and other home equity installment lenders, as well as providers of cash-out refinance loans and home equity lines of credit.

Although our student and personal loan receivables have increased, our credit card receivables continue to represent a majority of our receivables. The credit card business is highly competitive. Some of our competitors offer a wider variety of financial products than we do, which may currently position them better among customers who prefer to use a single financial institution to meet all of their financial needs. Some of our competitors enjoy greater financial resources, diversification and scale than we do, and are therefore able to invest more in initiatives and technology to attract and retain customers, such as advertising, targeted marketing, account acquisitions and pricing offerings in interest rates, annual fees, reward programs and low-priced balance transfer programs. In addition, some of our competitors have assets such as branch locations and co-brand relationships that may help them compete more effectively. Another competitive factor in the credit card business is the increasing use of debit cards as an alternative to credit cards for purchases.

Because most domestically-issued credit cards, other than those issued on the American Express network, are issued on the Visa and MasterCard networks, most other card issuers benefit from the dominant market share of Visa and

MasterCard. The former exclusionary rules of Visa and MasterCard limited our ability to attract merchants and credit and debit card issuers, contributing to Discover not being as widely accepted in the U.S. as Visa and

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MasterCard. Merchant acceptance of the Discover card has increased in the past several years, both in the number of merchants enabled for acceptance and the number of merchants actively accepting Discover. We continue to make investments in expanding Discover and Diners Club acceptance in key international markets where an acceptance gap exists.

In our payment services business, we compete with other networks for volume and to attract network partners to issue credit, debit and prepaid cards on the Discover, PULSE and Diners Club networks. We generally compete on the basis of customization of services and various pricing strategies, including incentives and rebates. We also compete on the basis of issuer fees, fees paid to networks (including switch fees), merchant acceptance, network functionality, customer perception of service quality, brand image, reputation and market share. The Diners Club and Discover networks' primary competitors are Visa, MasterCard and American Express, and PULSE's network competitors include Visa's Interlink, MasterCard's Maestro and First Data's STAR. American Express is a particularly strong competitor to Diners Club as both cards target international business travelers. As the payments industry continues to evolve, we are also facing increasing competition from financial technology firms and alternative payment solutions, which leverage new technologies and a customer's existing deposit and credit card accounts and bank relationships to create payment or other fee-based solutions.

In our direct-to-consumer deposits business, we have acquisition and servicing capabilities similar to other large direct banks, including Ally, American Express, Barclays, Capital One (360), Goldman Sachs, Synchrony and USAA. We compete with traditional banks and credit unions that source deposits through branch locations and direct channels. We seek to differentiate our deposit product offerings on the basis of brand reputation, digital experience, customer service and value.

For more information regarding the nature of and the risks we face in connection with the competitive environment for our products and services, see "Risk Factors — Strategic Business Risk."

Intellectual Property

We use a variety of methods, such as trademarks, patents, copyrights and trade secrets, to protect our intellectual property. We also place appropriate restrictions on our proprietary information to control access and prevent unauthorized disclosures. Our Discover, PULSE and Diners Club brands are important assets, and we take steps to protect the value of these assets and our reputation.

Employees

As of December 31, 2018, we employed approximately 16,600 individuals.

Risk Management

Our business exposes us to strategic (including reputational), credit, market, liquidity, operational, compliance and legal risks. We use an enterprise-wide risk management framework to identify, measure, monitor, manage and report risks that affect or could affect the achievement of our strategic, financial and other objectives.

Enterprise Risk Management Principles

Our enterprise risk management philosophy is expressed through five key principles that guide our approach to risk management: Comprehensiveness, Accountability, Independence, Defined Risk Appetite and Transparency.

Comprehensiveness

We seek to maintain a comprehensive risk management framework for managing risk enterprise-wide, including policies, risk management processes, monitoring and testing, and reporting. Our framework is designed to be comprehensive with respect to our business units and their control and support functions, and across all risk types.

Accountability

We structure accountability across three lines of defense along the principles of risk management execution, oversight and independent validation. As the first line of defense, our business units seek to manage the risks to which they are exposed as a result of their activities, including those risks arising from activities that have been outsourced to third parties. The principles apply across all businesses and risk types and guide the definition of specific roles and responsibilities.

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Independence

Our second and third lines of defense, which are comprised of risk and control functions, operate independent of the business units. The second line of defense includes our corporate risk management (“CRM”) department, which is led by our Chief Risk Officer (“CRO”), who is appointed by our Board of Directors. The CRM department sets risk management standards and policies that are consistent with the size and complexity of our business, industry practices and applicable legal and regulatory requirements. The CRO is accountable for providing our Board of Directors and executive management with an independent perspective on: the risks to which we are exposed; how well management is identifying, assessing and managing risk; and the capabilities we have in place to manage risks across the enterprise. Our internal audit department, as the third line of defense, performs periodic, independent reviews and tests compliance with risk management policies, procedures and standards across the Company. It also periodically reviews the design and operating effectiveness of our risk management program and processes, including the independence and effectiveness of our CRM function, and reports the results to our Audit Committee of the Board of the Directors (“Audit Committee”) and, where appropriate, the Risk Oversight Committee of the Board of Directors (“Risk Oversight Committee”).

Defined Risk Appetite

We operate within a risk appetite framework approved by our Board of Directors, which guides an acceptable level of risk-taking, considering desired financial returns and other objectives. To that end, limits and escalation thresholds are set consistent with the risk appetite approved by our Board of Directors.

Transparency

We seek to provide transparency of exposures and outcomes, which is core to our risk culture. We provide this risk transparency through our risk committee structure and standardized processes for escalating issues and reporting. This is accomplished at several levels within the organization, including quarterly meetings held by our Risk Committee and quarterly reports to the Risk Oversight Committee and Audit Committee, as well as regular reporting to our Risk subcommittees commensurate with the needs of our businesses. Further, our CRO is a member of the Company’s Executive Committee.

Enterprise Risk Management Governance Structure

Our governance structure is based on the principle that each line of business is responsible for managing risks inherent in its business with appropriate oversight from our senior management and Board of Directors. Various committees are in place to oversee the management of risks across our Company. We seek to apply operating principles consistently to each committee. These operating principles are detailed in committee charters, which are approved by the Risk Committee. Our banking subsidiaries have their own risk governance, compliance, auditing and other requirements. Our risk governance framework is implemented such that bank-level risk governance requirements are satisfied as well.

Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors (i) approves certain risk management policies, (ii) approves our capital targets and goals, (iii) approves our risk appetite framework, (iv) monitors our strategic plan, (v) appoints our CRO and other risk governance function leaders, as appropriate, (vi) receives reports on any exceptions to the Enterprise Risk Management policy and (vii) receives and reviews regulatory examination reports. The Board of Directors receives reports from the Audit Committee and Risk Oversight Committee on risk management matters and from the Compensation and Leadership Development Committee on risks associated with compensation and leadership development.

Risk Oversight Committee of our Board of Directors

Our Risk Oversight Committee is responsible for overseeing our risk management policies and the operations of our enterprise-wide risk management framework and our capital planning, liquidity risk management and resolution planning activities. The Committee is responsible for (i) approving and periodically reviewing our risk management policies, (ii) overseeing the operation of our policies and procedures for establishing our risk management governance, risk management procedures and risk-control infrastructure, (iii) overseeing the operation of processes and systems for implementing and monitoring compliance with such policies and procedures, (iv) reviewing and making recommendations to the Board of Directors, as appropriate, regarding the Company’s risk management framework, key

risk management policies and the Company's risk appetite and tolerance, (v) receiving and reviewing regular reports

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from our CRO on risk management deficiencies and emerging risks, the status of and changes to risk exposures, policies, procedures and practices, and the steps management has taken to monitor and control risk exposures, (vi) receiving reports on compliance with our risk appetite and limit structure and risk management policies, procedures and controls, (vii) overseeing capital planning, liquidity risk management and resolution planning related activities, and (viii) sharing information, liaising and meeting in joint session with the Audit Committee (which it may do through the Chairs of the Committees) as necessary or desirable to help ensure that the committees have received the information necessary to permit them to fulfill their duties and responsibilities with respect to oversight of risk management matters.

Audit Committee of our Board of Directors

With respect to the enterprise risk management framework, our Audit Committee is responsible for the following: (i) discussing policies with respect to risk assessment and management, (ii) receiving and reviewing reports from our CRO and other members of management as the Committee deems appropriate on the guidelines and policies for assessing and managing our exposure to risks, the corporation's major financial risk exposures and the steps management has taken to monitor and control such exposures, and (iii) sharing information and liaising with the Risk Oversight Committee as necessary or desirable to help ensure that the committees have received the information necessary to permit them to fulfill their duties and responsibilities with respect to oversight of risk management matters.

Compensation and Leadership Development Committee of our Board of Directors

Our Compensation and Leadership Development Committee is responsible for overseeing risk management associated with the Company's compensation and leadership development practices. The Committee receives reporting regarding the Company's compensation practices and evaluates whether these practices encourage excessive risk-taking. As a part of its reviews, the Committee considers input from our CRO and takes into account risk outcomes. The Compensation and Leadership Development Committee receives reporting regarding talent management practices and evaluates risks associated with leadership development and succession planning.

Risk Committee

Our Risk Committee is an executive management-level committee that establishes a comprehensive enterprise risk management program, which includes (i) providing a regular forum for representatives of our different functional groups to identify and discuss key risk issues and to recommend to senior management actions that should be taken to manage the level of risk taken by the business lines, (ii) establishing and overseeing an enterprise-wide approach to risk management through the development of our Enterprise Risk Management Policy and the associated oversight framework for the identification, measurement, monitoring, management and reporting of enterprise risk, (iii) communicating our risk appetite and philosophy, including establishing limits and thresholds for managing enterprise-wide risks, and (iv) reviewing, on a periodic basis, our aggregate enterprise-wide risk exposures and the effectiveness of risk identification, measurement, monitoring, management and reporting policies and procedures, and related controls within the lines of business.

Our Risk Committee has formed and designated a number of committees to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities. These committees, made up of representatives from senior levels of management, escalate issues to our Risk Committee as guided by escalation thresholds. These risk management committees include the Discover Bank Credit Committee, Asset/Liability Management Committees (Discover Financial Services and Discover Bank), the Counterparty Credit Committee, the New Initiatives Committee, the Operational Risk Committee, the Capital Planning Committee, the Compliance Committee, the Information Security Executive Committee and the Human Resources Committee.

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") is ultimately responsible for risk management within our Company. In that capacity, the CEO establishes a risk management culture throughout the Company and ensures that businesses operate in accordance with this risk culture.

Business Unit Heads

Our business unit heads are responsible for managing risk associated with pursuit of their strategic, financial and other business objectives. Business unit heads are responsible for (i) complying with all risk limits and risk policies, (ii)

identifying risks and implementing appropriate controls, (iii) explicitly considering risk when developing strategic plans, budgets and new products, (iv) implementing appropriate controls when pursuing business strategies and objectives, (v) ensuring business units implement business unit processes, controls and monitoring to support corporate model risk

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management standards such as documentation standards and reporting standards, (vi) coordinating with CRM to produce relevant, sufficient, accurate and timely risk reporting that is consistent with the processes and methodology established by CRM, (vii) ensuring sufficient financial resources and qualified personnel are deployed to control the risks inherent in the business activities, and (viii) designating, in consultation with the CRO, a Business Risk Officer to assist with the above and to perform the specific duties described below.

Business Risk Officers work in conjunction with the business unit head to implement a business risk management program that satisfies business unit needs and adheres to corporate policy, standards and risk architecture.

Chief Risk Officer

As a member of the Company's senior management team, the CRO chairs our Risk Committee. In addition, the CRO has oversight responsibility to establish the CRM function with capabilities to exercise its mandate across all risk categories. Our CRO reports directly to our Risk Oversight Committee and administratively to the CEO. Our CRO provides an independent view on the key risks to which our Company is exposed to our Risk Committee, our Audit Committee, our Risk Oversight Committee and our Board of Directors.

Corporate Risk Management

The CRM department is led by the CRO and supports business units by providing objective oversight of our risk profile to help ensure that risks are managed, aggregated and reported to our Risk Committee, our Risk Oversight Committee and our Audit Committee. The CRM department participates in our Risk Committee and sub-committee meetings to provide an enterprise-wide perspective on risk, governance matters, policies and risk thresholds. The CRM department is comprised of operational, consumer credit, counterparty credit, and market and liquidity risk oversight functions. In addition, the CRM department has enterprise risk management, corporate compliance, third-party risk management, model risk management, information security and risk and insurance management frameworks to manage potential risk that might arise within these respective areas.

Credit Risk Management

Credit Risk Management is responsible for (i) developing, validating and implementing credit policy criteria and predictive loan origination and servicing models in order to optimize the profitability of Company lending activities, (ii) ensuring adherence to our credit risk policies and approval limits, and that departmental policies, procedures, and internal controls are consistent with the standards defined by the Company, (iii) ensuring that we manage credit risk within approved limits, and (iv) monitoring performance for both new and existing consumer loan products and portfolios.

Law Department

The CRM department collaborates and coordinates closely with other risk and control functions in exercising its oversight responsibilities, in particular with the law department. This department plays a significant role in managing our legal risk by, among other things, identifying, interpreting and advising on legal and regulatory risks. Our law department participates in meetings of the Risk Committee and the sub-committees of the Risk Committee in order to advise on legal risks and to inform the committees of any relevant legislative and regulatory developments.

Internal Audit Department

Our internal audit department performs periodic, independent reviews and testing of compliance with risk management policies and standards across the Company, as well as assessments of the design and operating effectiveness of these policies and standards. The internal audit department also validates that risk management controls are functioning as intended by reviewing and evaluating the design and operating effectiveness of the CRM program and processes, including the independence and effectiveness of the CRM function. The results of such reviews are reported to our Audit Committee.

Risk Categories

We are exposed to a broad set of risks in the course of our business activities due to both internal and external factors, which we segment into six major risk categories. The first five are defined to be broadly consistent with guidance published by the Federal Reserve and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision ("BCBS"): credit, market, liquidity, operational, compliance and legal risk. We recognize the sixth, strategic risk, as a separate risk category. We

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evaluate the potential impact of a risk event on the Company by assessing the financial impact, the impact to our reputation, the legal and regulatory impact, and the client/customer impact. In addition, we have established various policies to help govern these risks.

Credit Risk

Our credit risk arises from the potential that a borrower or counterparty will fail to perform on an obligation. Our credit risk includes consumer credit risk and counterparty credit risk. Consumer credit risk is primarily incurred by Discover Bank through the issuance of (i) unsecured credit including credit cards, student loans and personal loans and (ii) secured credit including secured credit cards, deposit secured loans and home equity loans. Counterparty credit risk is incurred through a number of activities including settlement, certain marketing programs, treasury and asset/liability management, network incentive programs, guarantors, vendor relationships and insurers.

Market Risk

Market risk is the risk to our financial condition resulting from adverse movements in market rates or prices, such as interest rates, foreign exchange rates, credit spreads or equity prices. Given the nature of our business activities, we are exposed to various types of market risk; in particular interest rate risk, foreign exchange risk and other risks that arise through the management of our investment portfolio. Interest rate risk is more significant relative to other market risk exposures and results from potential mismatches in the repricing term of assets and liabilities (yield curve risk) and volatility in reference rates used to reprice floating-rate structures (basis risk). Foreign exchange risk is primarily incurred through exposure to currency movements across a variety of business activities and is derived, specifically, from the timing differences between transaction authorizations and settlement.

Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that we will be unable to meet our obligations as they become due because of an inability to liquidate assets or obtain adequate funding, or an inability to easily unwind or offset specific exposures without significantly lowering market prices because of inadequate market depth or market disruptions.

Operational Risk

Operational risk is defined as the risk of loss resulting from inadequate or failed internal processes, people and systems or from external events. Operational risk is inherent in all our businesses. Operational risk categories incorporate all of the operational loss event-type categories set forth by the BCBS, which include the following: (i) internal fraud, (ii) external fraud, (iii) employment practices and workplace safety, (iv) clients, products and business practices, (v) damage to physical assets, (vi) business disruption and system failures, and (vii) execution, delivery and process management.

Compliance Risk

Compliance risk is the operational risk of legal or regulatory sanctions, financial loss or damage to reputation resulting from failure to comply with laws, regulations, rules, other regulatory requirements, or codes of conduct and other standards of self-regulatory organizations applicable to us. Compliance risk exposures are actively and primarily managed by our business units in conjunction with our compliance department. Our compliance program governs the management of compliance risk. Our Risk Committee and Compliance Committee oversee our compliance program.

Legal Risk

Legal risk arises from the potential that unenforceable contracts, lawsuits or adverse judgments can disrupt or otherwise negatively affect our operations or condition. These risks are inherent in all of our businesses. Legal risk exposures are actively and primarily managed by our business units in conjunction with our law department. Our Risk Committee and Compliance Committee oversee our legal risk management. Specifically, the law department is responsible for providing advice, interpreting and identifying developments regarding laws, regulations, regulatory guidance and litigation, and setting standards for communicating relevant changes to corporate compliance, the business and internal audit. The law department also identifies and communicates legal risk associated with new products and business practices.

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Strategic Risk

Strategic risk is the risk that our strategies and the execution of those strategies do not produce the desired outcome, resulting in a negative impact on our enterprise value. This risk can be driven by internal and external factors, including (i) our business model, market position, selection of strategies and execution of those strategies and (ii) competitor strategies, emergence of new competitors, emergence of new technologies, changing consumer preferences or other market factors.

Our Risk Committee actively manages strategic risk through the development, implementation and oversight of our business strategies, including the development of budgets and business plans. Our business units take on and are accountable for managing strategic risk in pursuit of their objectives.

Enterprise Risk Management Framework

Our enterprise risk management principles are executed through a risk management framework that is based upon industry standards for managing risk and controls. While the detailed activities vary by risk type, there are common process elements that apply across risk types. We seek to apply these elements consistently in the interest of effective and efficient risk management. This framework seeks to link risk processes and infrastructure with the appropriate risk oversight to create a risk management structure that raises risk awareness, reduces impact of potential risk events, improves business decision-making and increases operational efficiency.

Risk Identification

We seek to identify potential exposures that could adversely affect our ability to successfully implement strategies and achieve objectives. To ensure that the full scale and scope of risk exposures from firm-wide activities are identified, we seek to identify risk exposures based on (i) significant enterprise-level risks that are strategic, systemic, or emerging in nature, (ii) granular risk exposures from on-balance sheet and off-balance sheet positions, including concentrations, and (iii) risk exposures from initiatives focused on new, expanded, customized, or modified products, services, and processes.

Risk exposures identified through these three approaches are consolidated to create a comprehensive risk inventory. This inventory is leveraged by a number of processes within the Company including stress scenario design and stress testing, capital planning, risk appetite setting and risk modeling. The risk inventory is reviewed and approved at least annually by the Risk Committee while the sub-committees review the risks mapped to the relevant risk categories for transparency and comprehensive coverage of risk exposures.

Risk Measurement

Our risk measurement process seeks to ensure that the identified risk exposures are appropriately assessed. Risk measurement techniques appropriate to the risk category, including econometric modeling, statistical analysis, peer benchmarking and qualitative assessments, are employed to measure our material risk exposures.

Risk Monitoring

Our risks are monitored through an integrated monitoring framework consisting of risk appetite metrics and key risk indicators (“KRIs”). These metrics are established to monitor changes in our risk exposures and external environment. Risk appetite metrics are used to monitor the overall risk profile of the Company by setting risk boundaries and expectations through quantitative limits and qualitative expressions. We use KRIs to monitor our risk profile through direct or indirect alignment with the risk appetite limits.

These metrics enable monitoring of risk by business management and by measuring risk and performance data against risk appetite and KRI escalation thresholds that are updated periodically. Escalation procedures are in place to notify the appropriate governance committees in the event of any actual risk limit breaches or potential upcoming breaches.

Risk Management

We have policies and a defined governance structure in place to manage risks. In the event of a risk exposure exceeding established thresholds, management determines appropriate response actions. Responses, which may be taken by the Board of Directors, the Risk Oversight Committee, the Audit Committee, the Risk Committee, sub-committees or the CRO, or business units, may include (i) actions to directly mitigate or resolve risk, (ii) actions to

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terminate any activities resulting in an undesired or unintended risk position, or (iii) actions to prevent, avoid, modify, share or accept a risk position (or activity prior to its occurrence).

Risk Reporting

As the constituents primarily responsible for proactively managing the risks to which they are exposed, our business units and risk and control functions periodically report to the governance committees. The CRM function is responsible for independent reporting on risk matters to various constituencies across the Company on a periodic basis. The CRM department periodically provides risk management reporting to the Risk Committee, the Audit Committee, the Risk Oversight Committee and the Board of Directors.

Stress Testing

We use stress testing to better understand the range of potential risks and their impacts to which the Company is exposed. A stress testing framework is employed to provide a comprehensive, integrated and forward-looking assessment of material risks and vulnerabilities. Stress test results inform on business strategy, risk appetite setting, and decisions related to capital actions, contingency capital plans, liquidity buffer, contingency funding plans and balance sheet positioning. Our stress testing framework utilizes a risk inventory, which covers our risk exposures across our defined risk categories. The risk inventory provides a comprehensive view of our vulnerabilities capturing current and emerging risks from management's view, granular risks relevant to business units and emerging risks associated with new initiatives.

Risk Management Review of Compensation

We believe in a pay for performance philosophy, which considers performance across the Company, business segments and individual performance, as appropriate, as well as the long-term interests of our shareholders and the safety and soundness of the Company. We design compensation to be competitive relative to our peers to attract, retain and motivate our employees. In addition to being competitive in the markets in which we compete for talent and encouraging employees to achieve objectives set out by our management, our compensation programs are designed to balance an appropriate mix of compensation components to align the interests of employees with the long-term interests of shareholders and the safety and soundness of the Company.

The design and administration of our compensation programs provide incentives that seek to appropriately balance risk and financial results in a manner that does not incentivize employees to take imprudent risks, is compatible with effective controls and enterprise-wide risk management, and is supported by strong corporate governance, including oversight by our Board of Directors and the Compensation and Leadership Development Committee of our Board of Directors.

Risk Appetite and Strategic Limit Structure

Risk appetite is defined as the aggregate level and the type of risks we are willing to accept or avoid in order to achieve our strategic objectives. Risk appetite expressions are consistent with the Company's aspirations, mission statement and core values, and also serve as tools to preclude business activities that could have a negative impact on our reputation.

Our risk appetite statement consists of both quantitative limits and qualitative expressions to recognize a range of possible outcomes and set boundaries for proactive management of risks. Limits focus on achieving business performance and earnings objectives, and on maintaining capital and franchise resiliency under stress conditions featuring combined impacts of macroeconomic and idiosyncratic shocks. These limits and expressions are revised at least annually or as warranted by changes in business strategy, risk profile and external environment.

Management and our CRM department monitor approved limits and escalation triggers to ensure that the business is operating within the approved risk appetite. Risk limits are monitored and reported on to various risk sub-committees, the Risk Committee and our Board of Directors, as appropriate. Through ongoing monitoring of risk exposures, management seeks to be able to identify appropriate risk response and mitigation strategies in order to react dynamically to changing conditions.

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Capital Planning

Risk exposures identified through the risk identification process across risk categories and risk types are consolidated to create a comprehensive risk inventory. This inventory is leveraged by a number of processes within the Company including stress scenario design, capital planning, risk appetite setting and risk modeling. The risk inventory is reviewed and approved at least annually by the Capital Planning Committee along with the Risk Committee and sub-committees to ensure transparency and comprehensive coverage of risk exposures. Our capital planning and management framework encompasses forecasting capital levels, establishing capital targets, monitoring capital adequacy against targets, maintaining appropriate contingency capital plans and identifying strategic options to deploy excess capital.

Supervision and Regulation

General

Our operations are subject to extensive regulation, supervision and examination under U.S. federal, state and foreign laws and regulations. As a bank holding company under the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 and a financial holding company under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, we are subject to the supervision, examination and regulation of the Federal Reserve. As a large provider of consumer financial services, we are subject to the supervision, examination and regulation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (the “CFPB”).

We operate two banking subsidiaries, each of which is in the United States. Discover Bank, our main banking subsidiary, offers credit card loans, student loans, personal loans and home equity loans as well as certificates of deposit, savings and checking accounts and other types of deposit accounts. Discover Bank is chartered and regulated by the Office of the Delaware State Bank Commissioner (the “Delaware Commissioner”), and is also regulated by the FDIC, which insures its deposits up to applicable limits and serves as the bank’s primary federal banking regulator.

Our other bank, Bank of New Castle, is also chartered and regulated by the Delaware Commissioner and insured and regulated by the FDIC.

Bank Holding Company Regulation

Permissible activities for a bank holding company include owning a bank as well as those activities that are so closely related to banking as to be a proper incident thereto, such as consumer lending and other activities that have been approved by the Federal Reserve by regulation or order. Certain servicing activities are also permissible for a bank holding company if conducted for or on behalf of the bank holding company or any of its affiliates. Impermissible activities for bank holding companies include activities that are related to commerce such as retail sales of nonfinancial products.

A financial holding company and the non-bank companies under its control are permitted to engage in activities considered financial in nature, incidental to financial activities, or complementary to financial activities, if the Federal Reserve determines that such activities pose no risk to the safety or soundness of depository institutions or the financial system in general. Being a financial holding company under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act requires that the depository institutions that we control meet certain criteria, including capital, management and Community Reinvestment Act requirements. In addition, under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the “Dodd-Frank Act”) we are required to meet certain capital and management criteria to maintain our status as a financial holding company. Failure to meet the criteria for financial holding company status results in restrictions on new financial activities or acquisitions and could require discontinuance of existing activities that are not generally permissible for bank holding companies.

Federal Reserve regulations and the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (the “FDIA”), as amended by the Dodd-Frank Act, require that bank holding companies serve as a source of strength to each subsidiary bank and commit resources to support each subsidiary bank. This support may be required at times when a bank holding company may not be able to provide such support without adversely affecting its ability to meet other obligations.

The Dodd-Frank Act addresses risks to the economy and the payments system, especially those posed by large systemically significant financial firms. The Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act (“EGRRCPA”) amended the Dodd-Frank Act by raising the asset size thresholds for certain enhanced prudential standards. Under the amended statute, the Federal Reserve is authorized to impose certain enhanced prudential standards on bank holding companies with total assets of at least \$100 billion, including Discover, only after issuing a

new regulation or order based on a risk-based determination. The Federal Reserve and other federal banking agencies issued proposals on October 31, 2018, to tailor existing regulations in accordance with the EGRRCPA. The proposals

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were open for public comment until January 22, 2019. The timing and substance of any final rules is currently unknown.

On February 5, 2019, the Federal Reserve announced that certain less complex firms subject to Comprehensive Capital Analysis and Review (“CCAR”), generally those with total consolidated assets between \$100 billion and \$250 billion, have been provided relief from certain components of the Federal Reserve’s capital planning and stress testing framework for the 2019 stress test cycle. The Federal Reserve issued a temporary order granting Discover relief from the regulatory requirements related to supervisory stress testing and company-run stress testing for the 2019 stress test cycle and provided Discover a one-year extension of the requirement to submit a capital plan to the Federal Reserve until April 5, 2020. Additionally, Discover is not required to participate in the 2019 CCAR process. Notwithstanding this relief, Discover is still required to prepare a capital plan to be approved by its Board of Directors, containing planned capital distributions for the period from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Under the terms of the Federal Reserve’s order, Discover’s capital distributions during this period will be limited based on a formula that is largely based on results from the Federal Reserve’s 2018 supervisory stress test. The Federal Reserve will continue to review Discover’s capital planning and risk management practices through the regular supervisory process and has stated that it will propose a final rule to address these matters for the 2020 stress test cycle and beyond. It is currently anticipated based on the Federal Reserve’s public statements and its proposed rule issued on October 31, 2018, as discussed above, that Discover will be required to submit a capital plan to the Federal Reserve and participate in supervisory stress tests as part of the 2020 stress test cycle.

Regulatory developments, findings and ratings could negatively impact our business strategies or require us to: limit or change our business practices, restructure our products in ways that we may not currently anticipate, limit our product offerings, invest more management time and resources in compliance efforts, limit the fees we can charge for services or limit our ability to pursue certain business opportunities and obtain related required regulatory approvals. For additional information regarding bank regulatory limitations on acquisitions and investments, see “— Acquisitions and Investments.” See Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements for more information on recent matters affecting Discover. Regulatory developments could also influence our strategies, impact the value of our assets, or otherwise adversely affect our businesses. For more information regarding the regulatory environment and developments under the Dodd-Frank Act, see “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments” and “Risk Factors.”

Capital, Dividends and Share Repurchases

We, Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle are subject to capital adequacy guidelines adopted by federal banking regulators, which include maintaining minimum capital and leverage ratios for capital adequacy and higher ratios to be deemed “well-capitalized” for other regulatory purposes. We and our subsidiary banks are each required to maintain Tier 1 and total capital equal to at least 6% and 8% of our total risk-weighted assets, respectively. We and our subsidiary banks are also required to maintain a minimum “leverage ratio” (Tier 1 capital to adjusted total assets) of 4% and a common equity Tier 1 capital ratio (common equity Tier 1 capital to total risk-weighted assets) of 4.5%. Further, under the Federal Reserve’s annual capital plan requirements, Discover Financial Services is required to demonstrate that under stress scenarios we will maintain each of the minimum capital ratios on a pro-forma basis throughout the nine-quarter planning horizon.

In addition to the supervisory minimum levels of capital described above, Federal Reserve rules applicable to Discover Financial Services require maintenance of the following minimum capital ratios to be considered “well-capitalized” for certain purposes under Regulation Y (12 CFR 225): (i) a Tier 1 risk-based capital ratio of 6% and (ii) a total risk-based capital ratio of 10%. Our banking subsidiaries are required by the FDIC’s Prompt Corrective Action rules to maintain the following minimum capital ratios to be considered “well-capitalized”: (i) a common equity Tier 1 capital ratio of 6.5%; (ii) a Tier 1 risk-based capital ratio of 8%; (iii) a total risk-based capital ratio of 10%; and (iv) a Tier 1 leverage ratio of 5%. At December 31, 2018, Discover Financial Services met all requirements to be deemed “well-capitalized” pursuant to the applicable regulations. For related information regarding our bank subsidiaries see “— FDIA” below.

There are various federal and state law limitations on the extent to which our banking subsidiaries can provide funds to us through dividends, loans or otherwise. These limitations include minimum regulatory capital requirements,

federal and state banking law requirements concerning the payment of dividends out of net profits or surplus, affiliate transaction limits and general federal and state regulatory oversight to prevent unsafe or unsound practices. In general, federal and applicable state banking laws prohibit, without first obtaining regulatory approval, insured depository institutions, such as our banking subsidiaries, from making dividend distributions if such distributions are not paid out of

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available earnings or would cause the institution to fail to meet applicable capital adequacy standards. For more information, see “— FDIA” below.

Additionally, we are subject to regulatory requirements imposed by the Federal Reserve as part of its stress testing framework and its CCAR program. In 2018, Discover was required to submit a capital plan to the Federal Reserve that included an assessment of our expected uses and sources of capital over a nine-quarter planning horizon. We submitted our capital plan to the Federal Reserve in April 2018 for the 2018 CCAR cycle and received notice in June 2018 that the Federal Reserve does not object to our proposed capital plan, including share repurchases and planned quarterly capital distributions through June 30, 2019. As described above, Discover has been notified that it is not required to participate in CCAR or submit to supervisory stress tests for the 2019 stress test cycle. However, Discover’s capital distributions for the period between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020 will be limited based on a formula that is largely based on results from the Federal Reserve’s 2018 supervisory stress test. The Federal Reserve has issued a proposed rule, and indicated that it will propose additional rule changes, that will substantially change the stress testing and capital planning requirements applicable to Discover for 2020 and beyond.

For more information, including additional conditions and limits on our ability to pay dividends and repurchase our stock, see “— Bank Holding Company Regulation,” “Risk Factors — Credit, Market and Liquidity Risk — We may be limited in our ability to pay dividends on and repurchase our stock” and “— We are a holding company and depend on payments from our subsidiaries,” “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Liquidity and Capital Resources — Capital” and Note 17: Capital Adequacy to our consolidated financial statements.

FDIA

The FDIA imposes various requirements on insured depository institutions. For example, the FDIA requires, among other things, the federal banking agencies to take “prompt corrective action” in respect of depository institutions that do not meet minimum capital requirements. The FDIA sets forth the following five capital tiers: “well-capitalized,” “adequately capitalized,” “undercapitalized,” “significantly undercapitalized” and “critically undercapitalized.” A depository institution’s capital tier will depend upon how its capital levels compare with various relevant capital measures and certain other factors that are established by regulation. At December 31, 2018, Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle met all applicable requirements to be deemed “well-capitalized.”

The FDIA also prohibits any depository institution from making any capital distributions (including payment of a dividend) or paying any management fee to its parent holding company if the depository institution would thereafter be “undercapitalized.” “Undercapitalized” institutions are subject to growth limitations and are required to submit a capital restoration plan. For a capital restoration plan to be acceptable, among other things, the depository institution’s parent holding company must guarantee that the institution will comply with the capital restoration plan.

If a depository institution fails to submit an acceptable capital restoration plan, it is treated as if it is “significantly undercapitalized.” “Significantly undercapitalized” depository institutions may be subject to a number of requirements and restrictions, including orders to sell sufficient voting stock to become “adequately capitalized,” requirements to reduce total assets, and cessation of receipt of deposits from correspondent banks. “Critically undercapitalized” institutions are subject to the appointment of a receiver or conservator.

Each of our banking subsidiaries may also be held liable by the FDIC for any loss incurred, or reasonably expected to be incurred, due to the default of the other U.S. banking subsidiary and for any assistance provided by the FDIC to the other U.S. banking subsidiary that is in danger of default.

The FDIA prohibits insured banks from accepting brokered deposits or offering interest rates on any deposits significantly higher than the prevailing rate in the bank’s normal market area or nationally (depending upon where the deposits are solicited), unless it is “well-capitalized,” or it is “adequately capitalized” and receives a waiver from the FDIC. A bank that is less than “well-capitalized” is generally prohibited from paying an interest rate on deposits in excess of 75 basis points over the national market average. There are no such restrictions under the FDIA on a bank that is “well-capitalized.” As of December 31, 2018, Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle each met the FDIC’s definition of a “well-capitalized” institution for purposes of accepting brokered deposits. An inability to accept brokered deposits in the future could materially adversely impact our funding costs and liquidity. For more information, see “Risk Factors — Credit, Market and Liquidity Risk — An inability to accept or maintain deposits in the future could materially adversely affect our liquidity position and our ability to fund our business.”

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The FDIA also affords FDIC insured depository institutions, such as Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle, the ability to “export” interest rates permitted under the laws of the state where the bank is located. Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle are both located in Delaware and, therefore, charge interest on loans to out-of-state borrowers at rates permitted under Delaware law, regardless of the usury limitations imposed by the state laws of the borrower’s residence. Delaware law does not limit the amount of interest that may be charged on loans of the type offered by Discover Bank or Bank of New Castle. This flexibility facilitates the current nationwide lending activities of Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle.

The FDIA subjects Discover Bank to deposit insurance assessments. Under the Dodd-Frank Act, in order to bolster the reserves of the Deposit Insurance Fund, the minimum reserve ratio set by the FDIC was increased to 1.35% and subsequently the FDIC set a reserve ratio of 2%. The Dodd-Frank Act removed the statutory cap for the reserve ratio, leaving the FDIC free to set a cap in the future. The FDIC also previously amended its deposit insurance regulations in ways that have raised Discover Bank’s cost of deposit insurance. Further increases may occur in the future.

Acquisitions and Investments

Since we are a bank holding company, and Discover Bank and Bank of New Castle are insured depository institutions, we are subject to banking laws and regulations that limit the types of acquisitions and investments that we can make. In addition, certain permitted acquisitions and investments that we seek to make are subject to the prior review and approval of our banking regulators, including the Federal Reserve and FDIC. Our banking regulators have broad discretion on whether to approve proposed acquisitions and investments. In deciding whether to approve a proposed acquisition, federal bank regulators will consider, among other factors, the effect of the acquisition on competition, our financial condition, and our future prospects, including current and projected capital ratios and levels; the competence, experience, and integrity of our management and our record of compliance with laws and regulations; the convenience and needs of the communities to be served, including our record of compliance under the Community Reinvestment Act; and our effectiveness in combating money laundering. Therefore, results of supervisory activities of the banking regulators, including examination results and ratings, can impact whether regulators approve proposed acquisitions and investments. Supervisory action related to anti-money laundering and related laws and regulations will limit for a period of time our ability to enter into certain types of acquisitions and make certain types of investments. For more information on recent matters affecting Discover, see Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements. For information on the challenging regulatory environment, see “Risk Factors.”

In addition, certain acquisitions of our voting stock may be subject to regulatory approval or notice under U.S. federal or Delaware state law. Investors are responsible for ensuring that they do not, directly or indirectly, acquire shares of our stock in excess of the amount that can be acquired without regulatory approval under the Change in Bank Control Act, the Bank Holding Company Act and the Delaware Change in Bank Control provisions, which prohibit any person or company from acquiring control of us without, in most cases, the prior written approval of each of the FDIC, the Federal Reserve and the Delaware Commissioner.

Consumer Financial Services

The relationship between us and our U.S. customers is regulated extensively under federal and state consumer protection laws. Federal laws include the Truth in Lending Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, the CARD Act, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, the Military Lending Act and the Dodd-Frank Act. These and other federal laws, among other things, prohibit unfair, deceptive and abusive trade practices, require disclosures of the cost of credit, provide substantive consumer rights, prohibit discrimination in credit transactions, regulate the use of credit report information, provide privacy protections, require safe and sound banking operations, restrict our ability to raise interest rates, protect customers serving in the military and their dependents and subject us to substantial regulatory oversight. The CFPB has rulemaking and interpretive authority under the Dodd-Frank Act and other federal consumer financial services laws, as well as broad supervisory, examination and enforcement authority over large providers of consumer financial products and services, such as Discover. For more information, see “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments — Consumer Financial Services.” State and, in some cases, local laws also may regulate in these areas, as well as in the areas of collection practices, and may provide other additional

consumer protections.

Violations of applicable consumer protection laws can result in significant potential liability in litigation by customers, including civil monetary penalties, actual damages, restitution and attorneys' fees. Federal banking regulators, as well as state attorneys general and other state and local consumer protection agencies, also may seek to

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enforce consumer protection requirements and obtain these and other remedies. Further violations may cause federal banking regulators to deny, or delay approval of, potential acquisitions and investments. See “— Acquisitions and Investments.”

We are subject to additional laws and regulations affecting mortgage lenders. Federal, state and, in some instances, local laws apply to mortgage lending activities. These laws generally regulate the manner in which mortgage lending and lending-related activities are conducted, including advertising and other consumer disclosures, payments for services and recordkeeping requirements. These laws include the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Truth in Lending Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Fair Housing Act, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act and various state laws. For more information, see “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments — Consumer Financial Services.”

Payment Networks

We operate the Discover and PULSE networks, which deliver switching and settlement services to financial institutions and other program participants for a variety of ATM, POS and other electronic banking transactions. These operations are regulated by certain federal and state banking, privacy and data security laws. Moreover, the Discover and PULSE networks are subject to examination under the oversight of the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, an interagency body composed of the federal bank regulators and the National Credit Union Administration. In addition, as our payments business has expanded globally through Diners Club, we are subject to government regulation in countries in which our networks operate or our cards are used, either directly or indirectly through regulation affecting Diners Club network licensees. Changes in existing federal, state or international regulation could increase the cost or risk of providing network services, change the competitive environment, or otherwise materially adversely affect our operations. The legal environment regarding privacy and data security is particularly dynamic, and any unpermitted disclosure of confidential customer information could have a material adverse impact on our business, including loss of consumer confidence.

The Dodd-Frank Act contains several provisions that are relevant to the business practices, network transaction volume, revenue and prospects for future growth of PULSE, our debit card network business. The Dodd-Frank Act requires that merchants control the routing of debit transactions, and that interchange fees received by certain payment card issuers on debit card transactions be “reasonable and proportional” to the issuer’s cost in connection with such transactions, as determined by the Federal Reserve. The Dodd-Frank Act also requires the Federal Reserve to restrict debit card networks and issuers from requiring debit card transactions to be processed solely on a single payment network or two or more affiliated networks, or from requiring that transactions be routed over certain networks. For information regarding related impacts on our debit card business, see “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments — Payment Networks.”

Money Laundering & Terrorist Financing Prevention Program

We maintain an enterprise-wide program designed to comply with all applicable anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism laws and regulations, including the Bank Secrecy Act and the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. This program includes policies, procedures, training and other internal controls designed to mitigate the risk of money laundering or terrorist financing posed by our products, services, customers and geographic locale. These controls include procedures and processes to detect and report suspicious transactions, perform customer due diligence, and meet all recordkeeping and reporting requirements related to particular transactions involving currency or monetary instruments. The program is coordinated by our anti-money laundering compliance and sanctions officer and undergoes an annual independent audit to assess its effectiveness. Our program is typically reviewed on an annual basis by federal banking regulators. In May 2015, Discover Financial Services entered into a written agreement with the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago to resolve matters related to the Federal Reserve’s examination of Discover Financial Services’ anti-money laundering and related compliance programs. Discover Financial Services agreed to, among other things, enhance its anti-money laundering and related compliance programs. See Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements for more information. For additional information regarding bank regulatory limitations on acquisitions and investments, see “— Acquisitions and Investments.”

Sanctions Programs

We have a program designed to comply with applicable economic and trade sanctions programs, including those administered and enforced by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. These

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sanctions are usually targeted against foreign countries, terrorists, international narcotics traffickers and those believed to be involved in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These regulations generally require either the blocking of accounts or other property of specified entities or individuals, but they may also require the rejection of certain transactions involving specified entities or individuals. We maintain policies, procedures and other internal controls designed to comply with these sanctions programs.

Executive Officers of the Registrant

Set forth below is information concerning our executive officers, each of whom is a member of our Executive Committee.

Name	Age	Position
Roger C. Hochschild	54	Chief Executive Officer and President
R. Mark Graf	54	Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer
Brian D. Hughes	51	Executive Vice President, Chief Risk Officer
Daniel P. Capozzi	47	Executive Vice President, President - Credit Operations and Decision Management
R. Andrew Eichfeld	49	Executive Vice President, Chief Human Resources and Administrative Officer
Julie A. Loeger	55	Executive Vice President, President - U.S. Cards
Carlos M. Minetti	56	Executive Vice President, President - Consumer Banking
Diane E. Offereins	61	Executive Vice President, President - Payment Services
Glenn P. Schneider	57	Executive Vice President, Chief Information Officer
David W. Nelms	58	Executive Officer
Kathryn McNamara Corley	59	Executive Vice President

Roger C. Hochschild is our Chief Executive Officer and President, a position he has held since October 2018. Mr. Hochschild was also elected to the Discover Board of Directors in August 2018. From 2004 to 2018, Mr. Hochschild served as President and Chief Operating Officer. Prior to that, he was Executive Vice President, Chief Administrative and Strategic Officer (2001 to 2004) and Executive Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer - Discover (1998 to 2001) of our former parent company Morgan Stanley. Mr. Hochschild holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Georgetown University and an M.B.A. from the Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth College.

R. Mark Graf is our Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer. He has held this role since April 2011. In his role, he is also responsible for the Comprehensive Capital Analysis and Review and Resolution Planning program offices. He was also Chief Accounting Officer until December 2012. Prior to joining us, Mr. Graf was an investment advisor with Aquiline Capital Partners, a private equity firm specializing in investments in the financial services industry. From 2006 to 2008, Mr. Graf was a partner at Barrett Ellman Stoddard Capital. Mr. Graf was Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for Fifth Third Bank from 2004 to 2006, after having served as its Treasurer from 2001 to 2004. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Brian D. Hughes is our Executive Vice President, Chief Risk Officer. He has held this role since December 2016 and been Chief Risk Officer since May 2016. Mr. Hughes is responsible for Corporate Risk Management, Model Risk Management, Information Security and Compliance, including the AML/BSA compliance program. Mr. Hughes

joined Discover in 2012 as Senior Vice President and held leadership positions in Credit Risk Management, Deposit Products and Cardmember Marketing. Prior to joining us, Mr. Hughes held leadership roles at HSBC North America (2004-2012) and Booz & Co. (1993-2004). He holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Illinois and an M.B.A. from the Booth School of Business at The University of Chicago.

Daniel P. Capozzi is our Executive Vice President, President - Credit Operations and Decision Management. He has held this role since October 2018 and previously served as Senior Vice President, Credit and Decision Management beginning in June 2017. Mr. Capozzi is responsible for Credit Risk Management, Loss Forecasting, Analytics, Decision Science and related functions. Since joining Discover in 2007, Mr. Capozzi has held leadership positions in the Deposits business and Corporate Finance. Prior to joining Discover, he held various leadership positions

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in Finance at Citi and Bank of America. Mr. Capozzi holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Northeastern University.

R. Andrew Eichfeld is our Executive Vice President, Chief Human Resources and Administrative Officer. He has held this role since September 2018. Prior to joining Discover, Mr. Eichfeld was an independent advisor from 2017 to 2018 and held various positions at McKinsey & Company from 1995 to 2017, where he was elected a senior partner in 2009. Mr. Eichfeld holds a Bachelor's degree in Government from Oberlin College, as well as a Master's degree in Middle Eastern studies and an M.B.A. in Marketing, both from the University of Chicago.

Julie A. Loeger is our Executive Vice President, President - U.S. Cards. She has held this role since October 2018. She served as Executive Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer from December 2015 to October 2018 and was Senior Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer from April to December 2015. Ms. Loeger joined Discover in 1991 and has held leadership positions in many areas, including Rewards, Portfolio Marketing, Acquisition, Brand Management and Product Development. Prior to joining Discover, she held various marketing positions at Anheuser Busch, Inc. She holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration degree in Finance from The University of Texas at San Antonio, an M.B.A. from Loyola University Chicago and attended the executive program at The Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth College.

Carlos M. Minetti is our Executive Vice President, President - Consumer Banking. He has held this role since February 2014. Previously, he served as Executive Vice President, President - Consumer Banking and Operations (2010 to 2014), Executive Vice President, Cardmember Services and Consumer Banking (2007 to 2010), and Executive Vice President for Cardmember Services, and Chief Risk Officer (2001 to 2007). Prior to joining us, Mr. Minetti worked in card operations and risk management for American Express from 1987 to 2000, most recently as Senior Vice President. Mr. Minetti holds a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from Texas A & M University and an M.B.A. from the Booth School of Business at The University of Chicago.

Diane E. Offereins is our Executive Vice President, President - Payment Services. She has held this role since April 2010. Previously, she served as Executive Vice President, Payment Services (2008 to 2010) and Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer (1998 to 2008). In 2006, she assumed leadership of the PULSE network. Prior to joining us, Ms. Offereins worked at MBNA America Bank from 1993 to 1998, most recently as Senior Executive Vice President. Ms. Offereins holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Loyola University New Orleans.

Glenn P. Schneider is our Executive Vice President, Chief Information Officer. He has held this role since January 2015. Previously, he served as Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer (2008 to 2015), Senior Vice President, Application Development (2003 to 2008), and Vice President, Marketing Applications (1998 to 2003). Prior to joining us in 1993, Mr. Schneider worked for Kemper Financial Services as a Programmer. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics/Computer Science with a minor in Statistics from Northern Illinois University.

David W. Nelms is an Executive Officer of the Company (formerly Chief Executive Officer from February 2004 to October 2018). Mr. Nelms also assumed the role of Chairman in January 2009, a position that he held until stepping down as Executive Chairman in December 2018. He served as President and Chief Operating Officer from 1998 to 2004. Prior to joining us, Mr. Nelms worked at MBNA America Bank from 1991 to 1998, most recently as Vice Chairman. Mr. Nelms holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Florida and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. Mr. Nelms is expected to retire from the Company in March 2019.

Kathryn McNamara Corley is an Executive Vice President of the Company (formerly Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary from February 2008 to January 2019). Previously, she served as Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary (1999 to 2008). Prior to becoming General Counsel, Ms. Corley was Managing Director for our former parent company Morgan Stanley's global government and regulatory relations. Ms. Corley holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Southern California and a J.D. and Honorary Doctors of Law degree from George Mason University. Ms. Corley is expected to retire from the Company in March 2019.

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Item 1A. Risk Factors

You should carefully consider each of the following risks described below and all of the other information in this annual report on Form 10-K in evaluating us. Our business, financial condition, cash flows and/or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks. The trading price of our common stock could decline due to any of these risks. This annual report on Form 10-K also contains forward-looking statements that involve risks and uncertainties. Our actual results could differ materially from those anticipated in these forward-looking statements as a result of certain factors, including the risks faced by us described below and elsewhere in this annual report on Form 10-K. See “Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements,” which immediately follows the risks below.

Current Economic and Regulatory Environment

Economic conditions could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

As a provider of consumer financial services, our business, results of operations and financial condition are subject to the United States and global economic environment. While the economy appears to be stable, we are experiencing the normalization of delinquency and charge-off rates and entering a period during which these rates increase to long-run levels as the supply of consumer credit grows. A customer’s ability and willingness to repay us can be negatively impacted by not only economic conditions but also a customer’s other payment obligations.

Economic conditions also can reduce the usage of credit cards in general and the average purchase amount of transactions industry-wide, including our cards, which reduces interest income and transaction fees. We rely heavily on interest income from our credit card business to generate earnings. Our interest income from credit card loans was \$8.8 billion for the year ended December 31, 2018, which was 83% of net revenues (defined as net interest income plus other income), compared to \$7.9 billion for the year ended December 31, 2017, which was 80% of net revenues. Economic conditions combined with a competitive marketplace could result in slow loan growth, resulting in reduced revenue growth from our core direct banking business.

Financial regulatory developments have and will continue to significantly impact the environment for the financial services industry, which could adversely impact our business, results of operations and financial condition.

The EGRRCPA was signed into law on May 24, 2018. The act generally redefined a Systemically Important Financial Institution (“SIFI”) as one with assets above \$250 billion. As a result, Discover anticipates being released from the SIFI designation as the act is implemented, since our assets are below the statutory threshold. However, the applicability of various prudential standards, such as those related to capital, on Discover will be determined by how our prudential banking regulators implement the act.

Meanwhile, the portions of the Dodd-Frank Act unchanged by the EGRRCPA remain law, including provisions governing the practices and oversight of financial institutions and other firms that participate in financial markets. The Senate and regulatory agency leadership are expected to continue to support tailoring of the regulatory burden on large financial institutions, including Discover. Success in making further legislative changes to the Dodd-Frank Act remains uncertain due to the potentially divergent agendas of the House and Senate. Further, the outcome of supervisory and regulatory reform efforts at the federal banking agencies remains uncertain. Also, it is possible that regulatory reform measures may disproportionately benefit our competitors or not benefit Discover at all due to our size, structure or product offerings, among other things.

The impact of the evolving regulatory environment on our business and operations depends upon a number of factors including the supervisory priorities and actions of the Federal Reserve, the FDIC and the CFPB, the actions of our competitors and other marketplace participants, as well as the behavior of consumers. Regulatory developments, findings and actions have, and could continue to, negatively impact our business strategies or require us to: limit, exit or change our business practices, restructure our products in ways that we may not currently anticipate, limit our product offerings, invest more management time and resources in compliance efforts, limit the fees we can charge for services, or limit our ability to pursue certain business opportunities and obtain related required regulatory approvals. For example, the Federal Reserve and the FDIC enforcement actions related to our anti-money laundering program have caused us to change our processes and incur significant expenses. For additional information regarding bank regulatory limitations on acquisitions and investments, see “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Acquisitions and Investments.” See also Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements for more

information on recent matters affecting Discover. Regulatory developments could also influence our strategies, impact the value of our assets, or otherwise adversely affect our businesses.

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Compliance expectations and expenditures have increased significantly for Discover and other financial services firms, and could continue to increase as regulators remain focused on controls and operational processes and we introduce new products or features or enter into new business arrangements. We may face additional compliance and regulatory risk to the extent that we enter into new business arrangements with third-party service providers, alternative payment providers, or other industry participants. The additional expense, time and resources needed to comply with ongoing or additional regulatory requirements may adversely impact our business and results of operations.

For more information regarding the regulatory environment and developments potentially impacting Discover, see “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments.”

Strategic Business Risk

We face competition in the credit card market from other consumer financial services providers, and we may not be able to compete effectively, which could result in fewer customers and lower account balances and could materially adversely affect our financial condition, cash flows and results of operations.

The consumer financial services business is highly competitive. We compete with other consumer financial services providers, including non-traditional providers such as financial technology firms, on the basis of a number of factors, including brand, reputation, customer service, product offerings, incentives, pricing, e-wallet participation and other terms. Competition in credit cards is also based on merchant acceptance and the value provided to the customer by rewards programs. Many credit card issuers have instituted rewards programs that are similar to ours, and, in some cases, could be viewed as more attractive to customers than our programs. These competitive factors affect our ability to attract and retain customers, increase usage of our products and maximize the revenue generated by our products. In addition, because most domestically-issued credit cards, other than those issued by American Express, are issued on the Visa and MasterCard networks, most other card issuers benefit from the dominant position and marketing and pricing power of Visa and MasterCard. The competitive marketplace could result in slower loan growth, resulting in reduced revenue growth from our core direct banking business. If we are unable to compete successfully, or if competing successfully requires us to take aggressive actions in response to competitors’ actions, our financial condition, cash flows and results of operations could be materially adversely affected.

We incur considerable cost in competing with other consumer financial services providers, and many of our competitors have greater financial resources than we do, which may place us at a competitive disadvantage and negatively affect our financial results.

We incur considerable cost in competing with other consumer financial services providers to attract and retain customers and increase usage of our products. A substantial portion of this cost relates to marketing expenditures and rewards programs. Since 2013 our rewards rate, which represents rewards cost divided by Discover Card sales volume, has increased from less than 1% to 1.30% in 2018. We expect the competitive intensity in the rewards space to continue, which could result in a continued increase in the rewards rate. Our consumer financial services products compete primarily on the basis of pricing, terms and service. Because of the highly competitive nature of the credit card-issuing business, a primary method of competition among credit card issuers, including us, has been to offer rewards programs, low introductory interest rates, attractive standard purchase rates and balance transfer programs that offer a favorable annual percentage rate or other financial incentives for a specified length of time on account balances transferred from another credit card.

Competition is intense in the credit card industry, and customers may frequently switch credit cards or transfer their balances to another card. We expect to continue to invest in initiatives to remain competitive in the consumer financial services industry, including the launch of new cards and features, brand awareness initiatives, targeted marketing, online and mobile enhancements, e-wallet participation, customer service improvements, credit risk management and operations enhancements, and infrastructure efficiencies. There can be no assurance that any of the cost we incur or incentives we offer to attempt to acquire and maintain accounts and increase usage of our products will be effective. In addition, to the extent that we offer new products, features or services to remain competitive, we may be subject to increased operational or other risks.

Furthermore, many of our competitors are larger than we are, have greater financial resources than we do, have more breadth in consumer banking products, have lower funding costs than we have and expect to have, and have assets, such as branch locations and co-brand relationships, that may be appealing to certain customers. For example, larger credit card issuers, which have greater resources than we do, may be better positioned to fund appealing

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rewards, marketing and advertising programs. We may be at a competitive disadvantage as a result of the greater financial resources, diversification and scale of many of our competitors.

Our costs directly affect our earnings results. Many factors can influence the amount of our costs, as well as how quickly it may increase. Our ongoing investments in infrastructure, which may be necessary to maintain a competitive business, integrate newly-acquired businesses and establish scalable operations, increase our cost. In addition, as our business develops, changes or expands, additional cost can arise as a result of a reevaluation of business strategies, management of outsourced services, asset purchases, structural reorganization, compliance with new laws or regulations or the acquisition of new businesses. If we are unable to successfully manage our cost, our financial results will be negatively affected.

We face competition from other operators of payment networks and alternative payment providers, and we may not be able to compete effectively, which could result in reduced transaction volume, limited merchant acceptance of our cards, limited issuance of cards on our networks by third parties and materially reduced earnings from our payment services business.

We face substantial and increasingly intense competition in the payments industry, both from traditional players and new, emerging alternative payment providers. For example, we compete with other payment networks to attract network partners to issue credit and debit cards and other card products on the Discover, PULSE and Diners Club networks. Competition with other operators of payment networks is generally based on issuer fees, fees paid to networks (including switch fees), merchant acceptance, network functionality and other economic terms. Competition is also based on customer perception of service quality, brand image, reputation and market share. Further, we are facing increased competition from alternative payment providers, who may create innovative network or other arrangements with our primary competitors or other industry participants, which could adversely impact our costs, transaction volume and ability to grow our business.

Many of our competitors are well established, larger than we are and/or have greater financial resources or scale than we do. These competitors have provided financial incentives to card issuers, such as large cash signing bonuses for new programs, funding for and sponsorship of marketing programs and other bonuses. Visa and MasterCard each enjoy greater merchant acceptance and broader global brand recognition than we do. Although we have made progress in merchant acceptance, we have not achieved global market parity with Visa and MasterCard. In addition, Visa and MasterCard have entered into long-term arrangements with many financial institutions that may have the effect of discouraging those institutions from issuing cards on the Discover Network or issuing debit cards on the PULSE network. Some of these arrangements are exclusive, or nearly exclusive, which further limits our ability to conduct material amounts of business with these institutions. If we are unable to remain competitive on issuer fees and other incentives, we may be unable to offer adequate pricing to network partners while maintaining sufficient net revenues. We also face competition as merchants put pressure on transaction fees. Increasing merchant fees or acquirer fees could adversely affect our effort to increase merchant acceptance of credit cards issued on the Discover Network and may cause merchant acceptance to decrease. This, in turn, could adversely affect our ability to attract network partners and our ability to maintain or grow revenues from our proprietary network. In addition, competitors' settlements with merchants and related actions, including pricing pressures and/or surcharging, could negatively impact our business practices. Competitor actions related to the structure of merchant and acquirer fees and merchant and acquirer transaction routing strategies have adversely affected and are expected to continue to adversely affect our PULSE network's business practices, network transaction volume, revenue and prospects for future growth, and entry into new product markets. Visa has entered into arrangements with some merchants and acquirers that have, and are expected to continue to have, the effect of discouraging those merchants and acquirers from routing debit transactions to PULSE. In addition, the Dodd-Frank Act's network participation requirements and competitor actions negatively impact PULSE's ability to enter into exclusivity arrangements, which affects PULSE's business practices and may materially adversely affect its network transaction volume and revenue. PULSE has a pending lawsuit against Visa with respect to these competitive concerns. PULSE's transaction processing revenue was \$178 million and \$167 million for the years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

American Express is also a strong competitor, with international acceptance, high transaction fees and an upscale brand image. Internationally, American Express competes in the same market segments as Diners Club. We may face

challenges in increasing international acceptance on our networks, particularly if third parties that we rely on to issue Diners Club cards, increase card acceptance and market our brands do not perform to our expectations.

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In addition, if we are unable to maintain sufficient network functionality to be competitive with other networks, or if our competitors develop better data security solutions or more innovative products and services than we do, our ability to retain and attract network partners and maintain or increase the revenues generated by our proprietary card-issuing business or our PULSE business may be materially adversely affected. Additionally, competitors may develop data security solutions, which as a consequence of the competitors' market power, we may be forced to use. In which case, our business may be adversely affected as they may be better positioned to absorb the costs over higher volumes or a larger customer base.

Our business depends upon relationships with issuers, merchant acquirers and licensees, which are generally financial institutions. The economic and regulatory environment and increased consolidation in the financial services industry decrease our opportunities for new business and may result in the termination of existing business relationships if a business partner is acquired or goes out of business. In addition, as a result of this environment, financial institutions may have decreased interest in engaging in new card issuance opportunities or expanding existing card issuance relationships, which would inhibit our ability to grow our payment services business. We continue to face substantial and intense competition in the payments industry, which impacts our revenue margins, transaction volume and business strategies.

If we are unsuccessful in maintaining our international network business and achieving meaningful global card acceptance, we may be unable to grow our international network business.

We continue to make progress toward, but have not completed, achieving global card acceptance across the Diners Club network, the Discover Network and PULSE since we acquired the Diners Club network and related assets in 2008. This would allow Discover customers to use their cards at merchant and ATM locations that accept Diners Club cards around the world and would allow Diners Club customers to use their cards on the Discover Network in North America and on the PULSE network both domestically and internationally.

Our international network business depends upon the cooperation, support and continuous operation of the network licensees that issue Diners Club cards and that maintain a merchant acceptance network. As is the case for other card payment networks, our Diners Club network does not issue cards or determine the terms and conditions of cards issued by the network licensees. If we are unable to continue our relationships with network licensees or if the network licensees are unable to continue their relationships with merchants, our ability to maintain or increase revenues and to remain competitive would be adversely affected due to the potential deterioration in customer relationships and related demand that could result. If one or more licensees were to experience a significant impairment of their business or were to cease doing business for economic, regulatory or other reasons, we would face the adverse effects of business interruption in a particular market, including loss of volume, acceptance and revenue, and exposure to potential reputational risk. If such conditions arise in the future, we may deploy resources and incur expenses in order to sustain network acceptance. Additionally, interruption of network licensee relationships could have an adverse effect on the acceptance of Discover cards when they are used on the Diners Club network outside of North America.

Also, as we have non-amortizable intangible assets that resulted from the purchase of Diners Club, if we are unable to maintain or increase revenues due to the reasons described above, we may be exposed to an impairment loss on the Diners Club acquisition that, when recognized, could have a material adverse impact on our consolidated financial condition and results of operations. The long-term success of our international network business depends upon achieving meaningful global card acceptance, which has included and may continue to include higher overall costs or longer timeframes than anticipated.

The success of our student loan strategy depends upon our ability to manage the risks of our student loan portfolio and the student lending environment. If we fail to do so, we may be unable to sustain and grow our student loan portfolio. The long-term success of our student loan strategy depends upon our ability to manage the credit risk, pricing, funding, operations and expenses of our student loan portfolio, as well as grow student loan originations. Our student loan strategy is also impacted by external factors such as the overall economic environment, a competitive marketplace and a challenging regulatory environment for private student loans and student loans generally. For more information on the regulatory environment, see "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments — Consumer Financial Services" and Note 19:

Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements. Economic weakness, government and regulatory focus on higher education costs, student lending and student loan servicing, as well as competitive factors, such as competition from non-traditional lenders such as financial technology firms, may present challenges to managing and growing our

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private student loan business in the future, and could cause us to restructure our private student loan products in ways that we may not currently anticipate. In addition, changes that adversely affect the private student loan market generally may negatively impact the profitability and growth of our student loan portfolio.

Acquisitions or strategic investments that we pursue may not be successful and could disrupt our business, harm our financial condition or reduce our earnings.

We may consider or undertake strategic acquisitions of, or material investments in, businesses, products, portfolios of loans or technologies in the future. We may not be able to identify suitable acquisition or investment candidates, or even if we do identify suitable candidates, they may be difficult to finance, expensive to fund and there is no guarantee that we can obtain any necessary regulatory approvals or complete the transactions on terms that are favorable to us. We generally must receive federal regulatory approvals before we can acquire a bank, bank holding company, deposits or certain assets or businesses. For additional information regarding bank regulatory limitations on acquisitions and investments, see “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Acquisitions and Investments.”

To the extent we pay the purchase price of any strategic acquisition or investment in cash, it may have an adverse effect on our financial condition; similarly, if the purchase price is paid with our stock, it may be dilutive to our stockholders. In addition, we may assume liabilities associated with a business acquisition or investment, including unrecorded liabilities that are not discovered at the time of the transaction, and the repayment or settlement of those liabilities may have an adverse effect on our financial condition.

We may not be able to successfully integrate the personnel, operations, businesses, products, or technologies of an acquisition or investment. Integration may be particularly challenging if we enter into a line of business in which we have limited experience and the business operates in a difficult legal, regulatory or competitive environment. We may find that we do not have adequate operations or expertise to manage the new business. The integration of any acquisition or investment may divert management’s time and resources from our core business, which could impair our relationships with our current employees, customers and strategic partners and disrupt our operations. Acquisitions and investments also may not perform to our expectations for various reasons, including the loss of key personnel, customers or vendors. If we fail to integrate acquisitions or investments or realize the expected benefits, we may lose the return on these acquisitions or investments or incur additional transaction costs, and our business, reputation and financial condition may be harmed as a result.

Credit, Market and Liquidity Risk

Our business depends on our ability to manage our credit risk, and failing to manage this risk successfully may result in high charge-off rates, which would materially adversely affect our business, profitability and financial condition.

We seek to grow our loan receivables while maintaining quality credit performance. Our success depends on our ability to manage our credit risk while attracting new customers with profitable usage patterns. We select our customers, manage their accounts and establish terms and credit limits using externally developed and proprietary scoring models and other analytical techniques that are designed to set terms and credit limits to appropriately compensate us for the credit risk we accept, while encouraging customers to use their available credit. The models and approaches we use may not accurately predict future charge-offs due to, among other things, inaccurate assumptions. While we continually seek to improve our assumptions and models, we may make modifications that unintentionally cause them to be less predictive or we may incorrectly interpret the data produced by these models in setting our credit policies.

Our ability to manage credit risk and avoid high charge-off rates may be adversely affected by economic conditions that may be difficult to predict. At December 31, 2018 and 2017, \$1.2 billion, or 1.27%, and \$987 million, or 1.17%, of our loan receivables were non-performing (defined as loans over 90 days delinquent and accruing interest plus loans not accruing interest). While the U.S. economy appears to be stable, we are experiencing the normalization of delinquency and charge-off rates and entering a period during which these rates increase to long-run levels as the supply of consumer credit grows. There can be no assurance that our underwriting and portfolio management strategies will permit us to avoid high charge-off levels, or that our allowance for loan losses will be sufficient to cover actual losses.

A customer’s ability and willingness to repay us can be negatively impacted by increases in their payment obligations to other lenders and by restricted availability of credit to consumers generally. Our collection operations may not

compete effectively to secure more of customers' diminished cash flow than our competitors. In addition, we

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may fail to quickly identify customers who are likely to default on their payment obligations and reduce our exposure by closing credit lines and restricting authorizations, which could adversely impact our financial condition and results of operations. Our ability to manage credit risk also may be adversely affected by legal or regulatory changes (such as restrictions on collections, bankruptcy laws, minimum payment regulations and re-age guidance), competitors' actions and consumer behavior, as well as inadequate collections staffing, resources, techniques and models.

We continue to expand our marketing of our non-credit card consumer lending products. A customer's ability and willingness to repay personal loans, private student loans and home equity loans may be more significantly impacted than other consumer loans by other debts or increases in their payment obligations to other lenders. Additionally, a customer's ability to repay personal loans, private student loans and home equity loans may be significantly impaired by the unavailability of consumer credit generally. There can be no assurance that we will be able to grow these products in accordance with our strategies, manage our credit and other risks associated with these products, or generate sufficient revenue to cover our expenses in these markets. Our failure to manage our credit and other risks may materially adversely affect our profitability and our ability to grow these products, limiting our ability to further diversify our business.

Adverse market conditions or an inability to effectively manage our liquidity risk could negatively impact our ability to meet our liquidity and funding needs, which could materially adversely impact our business operations and overall financial condition.

We must effectively manage the liquidity risk to which we are exposed. We require liquidity in order to meet cash requirements such as day-to-day operating expenses, extensions of credit on our consumer loans and required payments of principal and interest on our borrowings. Our primary sources of liquidity and funding are payments on our loan receivables, deposits, and proceeds from securitization transactions and securities offerings. We may maintain too much liquidity, which can be costly and limit financial flexibility, or we may be too illiquid, which could result in financial distress during a liquidity stress event. Our liquidity portfolio had a balance of approximately \$15.9 billion as of December 31, 2018, compared to \$13.6 billion as of December 31, 2017. Our total contingent liquidity sources amounted to \$52.9 billion as of December 31, 2018, compared to \$48.7 billion as of December 31, 2017. As of December 31, 2018, our total contingent liquidity sources consisted of \$15.9 billion in our liquidity portfolio, \$31.5 billion in incremental Federal Reserve discount window capacity, and \$5.5 billion of undrawn capacity in private securitizations.

In the event that our current sources of liquidity do not satisfy our needs, we would be required to seek additional financing. The availability of additional financing will depend on a variety of factors such as market conditions, the general availability of credit to the financial services industry, new regulatory restrictions and requirements, and our credit ratings. Disruptions, uncertainty or volatility in the capital, credit or deposit markets, such as the volatility experienced in the capital and credit markets during the financial crisis of 2007, may limit our ability to repay or replace maturing liabilities in a timely manner. As such, we may be forced to delay the acquisition of additional funding or be forced to issue or raise funding at undesirable terms and/or costs, which could decrease profitability and significantly reduce financial flexibility. Regulations such as the liquidity coverage ratio, which requires firms to hold a minimum level of high-quality assets, may increase the cost of funding and impact funding availability and are described more fully in "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments." Further, in disorderly financial markets or for other reasons, it may be difficult or impossible to liquidate some of our investments to meet our liquidity needs.

There can be no assurance that significant disruption and volatility in the financial markets will not occur in the future. Likewise, adverse developments with respect to financial institutions and other third parties with whom we maintain important financial relationships could negatively impact our funding and liquidity. If we are unable to continue to fund our assets through deposits or access capital markets on favorable terms, or if we experience an increase in our borrowing costs or otherwise fail to manage our liquidity effectively, our liquidity, operating results, financial results and condition may be materially adversely affected.

An inability to accept or maintain deposits in the future could materially adversely affect our liquidity position and our ability to fund our business.

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We obtain deposits from consumers either directly or through affinity relationships and through third-party securities brokerage firms that offer our deposits to their customers. We had \$44.7 billion in deposits acquired directly or through affinity relationships and \$23.1 billion in deposits originated through securities brokerage firms as of December 31, 2018, compared to \$39.4 billion and \$19.4 billion, respectively, as of December 31, 2017. Competition

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from other financial services firms that use deposit funding, the rates and services we offer on our deposit products, and our ability to maintain a high level of customer experience may affect deposit renewal rates, costs or availability. Changes we make to the rates offered on our deposit products may affect our profitability (through funding costs) and our liquidity (through volumes raised). In addition, our ability to maintain existing or obtain additional deposits may be impacted by factors, including factors beyond our control, such as: perceptions about our financial strength or quality of deposit servicing or online banking generally, which could reduce the number of consumers choosing to place deposits with us; third parties continuing or entering into affinity relationships with us; disruptions in technology services or the internet, generally; or third-party securities brokerage firms continuing to offer our deposit products. Our ability to obtain deposit funding and offer competitive interest rates on deposits is also dependent on capital levels of our bank subsidiaries. The FDIA in certain circumstances prohibits insured banks, such as our subsidiary Discover Bank, from accepting brokered deposits (as defined in the FDIA) and applies other restrictions, such as a cap on interest rates we may pay. See “Business — Supervision and Regulation” and Note 17: Capital Adequacy to our consolidated financial statements for more information. While Discover Bank met the FDIC’s definition of “well-capitalized” as of December 31, 2018, and has no restrictions regarding acceptance of brokered deposits or setting of interest rates, there can be no assurance that it will continue to meet this definition. Additionally, our regulators can adjust the requirements to be “well-capitalized” at any time and have authority to place limitations on our deposit businesses, including the interest rate we pay on deposits.

If we are unable to securitize our receivables, it may have a material adverse effect on our liquidity, cost of funds and overall financial condition.

We use the securitization of credit card receivables, which involves the transfer of receivables to a trust and the issuance by the trust of beneficial interests to third-party investors, as a significant source of funding as well as for contingent liquidity. Our average level of credit card securitized borrowings from third parties was \$16.0 billion and \$16.1 billion for the years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. There can be no assurance that there will not be future disruptions in the credit card securitization market similar to those experienced during the financial crisis. Our ability to raise funding through the securitization market also depends, in part, on the credit ratings of the securities we issue from our securitization trusts. If we are not able to satisfy rating agency requirements to confirm the ratings of asset-backed securities issued by our trusts at the time of a new issuance of securities, it could limit our ability to access the securitization markets. Additional factors affecting the extent to which we may securitize our credit card receivables in the future include the overall credit quality of our receivables, the costs of securitizing our receivables, the demand for credit card asset-backed securities, and the legal, regulatory, accounting and tax requirements governing securitization transactions and asset-backed securities, generally. For example, the implementation of the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision’s revised securitization framework for banks by the member countries by the beginning of 2019 could negatively impact the pricing and/or volume of our asset-backed securities issuances. A prolonged inability to securitize our credit card receivables, or an increase in the costs of such issuances, may have a material adverse effect on our liquidity, cost of funds and overall financial condition.

The occurrence of events that result in the early amortization of our existing credit card securitization transactions or an inability to delay the accumulation of principal collections in our credit card securitization trusts would materially adversely affect our liquidity.

Our liquidity would be materially adversely affected by the occurrence of events that could result in the early amortization of our existing credit card securitization transactions. Our credit card securitizations are structured as “revolving transactions” that do not distribute to securitization investors their share of monthly principal payments received on the underlying receivables during the revolving period, and instead use those principal payments to fund the purchase of new receivables. The occurrence of an “early amortization event” may result in termination of the revolving periods of our securitization transactions, which would require us to repay the affected outstanding securitized borrowings out of principal collections without regard to the original payment schedule. Early amortization events include, for example, insufficient cash flows in the securitized pool of receivables to meet contractual requirements (i.e. excess spread less than zero) and certain breaches of representations, warranties or covenants in the agreements relating to the securitization. For more information on excess spread, see Note 5: Credit Card and Student Loan Securitization Activities to our consolidated financial statements. An early amortization event would negatively

impact our liquidity, and require us to rely on alternative funding sources, which may or may not be available at the time. An early amortization event also could impact our ability to access the undrawn conduit facilities that we maintain for contingent liquidity purposes.

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Our credit card securitization structure includes a requirement that we accumulate principal collections into a restricted account in the amount of scheduled maturities on a pro rata basis over the 12 months prior to a security's maturity date. We have the option under our credit card securitization documents to shorten this accumulation period, subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions. Historically, we have exercised this option to shorten the accumulation period to one month prior to maturity. If we were to determine that the payment rate on the underlying receivables would not support a one-month accumulation period, we would need to begin accumulating principal cash flows earlier than we have historically. A lengthening of the accumulation period would negatively impact our liquidity, requiring management to implement mitigating measures. During periods of significant maturity levels, absent management actions, the lengthening of the accumulation period could materially adversely affect our financial condition.

A downgrade in the credit ratings of our securities could materially adversely affect our business and financial condition.

We, along with Discover Bank, are regularly evaluated by the ratings agencies, and their ratings for our long-term debt and other securities, including asset-backed securities issued by our securitization trusts, are based on a number of factors that may change from time to time, including our financial strength as well as factors that may not be within our control. Factors that affect our unsecured credit ratings include, but are not limited to, the macroeconomic environment in which we operate and the credit ratings of the U.S. government, the credit quality and performance of our assets, the amount and quality of our capital, the level and stability of our earnings, and the structure and amount of our liquidity. In addition to these factors, the ratings of our asset-backed securities are also based on the quality of the underlying receivables and the credit enhancement structure of the trusts. Downgrades in our ratings or those of Discover Bank or our trusts could materially adversely affect our cost of funds, access to capital and funding, and overall financial condition. There can be no assurance that we will be able to maintain our current credit ratings or that our credit ratings will not be lowered or withdrawn.

We may not be successful in managing the investments in our liquidity investment portfolio and investment performance may deteriorate due to market fluctuations, which would adversely affect our business and financial condition.

We must effectively manage the risks of the investments in our liquidity investment portfolio, which is comprised of cash and cash equivalents and high-quality liquid investments. The value of our investments may be adversely affected by market fluctuations including changes in interest rates, prices, prepayment rates, credit risk premiums and overall market liquidity. Also, investments backed by collateral could be adversely impacted by changes in the value of the underlying collateral. In addition, economic conditions may cause certain of the obligors, counterparties and underlying collateral on our investments to incur losses of their own or default on their obligations to us due to bankruptcy, lack of liquidity, operational failure or other reasons, thereby increasing our credit risk exposure to these investments. These risks could result in a decrease in the value of our investments, which could negatively impact our financial condition. These risks could also restrict our access to funding. While the securities in our investment portfolio are currently limited to obligations of high-quality sovereign and government-sponsored issuers, we may choose to expand the range of our investments over time, which may result in greater fluctuations in market value. While we expect these investments to be readily convertible into cash and do not believe they present a material increase to our risk profile or will have a material impact on our risk-based capital ratios, they are subject to certain market fluctuations that may reduce the ability to fully convert them into cash.

Changes in the level of interest rates could materially adversely affect our earnings.

Changes in interest rates cause our net interest income to increase or decrease, as some of our assets and liabilities carry interest rates that fluctuate with market benchmarks. External factors may cause interest rates to increase.

Tighter Federal Reserve monetary policy and rising interest rates would increase the cost of borrowing for consumers, businesses and governments. Higher interest rates could negatively impact Discover's customers as total debt service payments would increase, impede Discover's ability to grow its consumer lending businesses, and increase the cost of our funding, which would put Discover at a disadvantage as compared to competitors that have less expensive funding sources.

Some of our consumer loan receivables bear interest at a fixed rate or do not earn interest, and we are not able to increase the rate on those loans to offset any higher cost of funds, which could materially reduce earnings. At the same time, our variable rate loan receivables, most of which are based on the prime rate, may not change at the same rate as our floating-rate borrowings or may be subject to a cap, subjecting us to basis risk. The majority of our floating-rate borrowings and interest rate derivatives are generally based on the one-month London Interbank Offered Rate

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(“LIBOR”). If the one-month LIBOR rate were to increase without a corresponding increase in the prime rate, our earnings would be negatively impacted. While the majority of our existing certificates of deposit bear interest at fixed rates that do not fluctuate with market benchmarks, we may use derivative instruments to hedge the fixed rates associated with some of these certificates of deposit. However, the costs of new deposits fluctuate with interest rates. Moreover, although certificates of deposit we issue directly to consumers are subject to early withdrawal penalties, these penalties may not fully mitigate early withdrawal behavior in a rising interest rate environment. Additionally, on July 27, 2017, the UK Financial Conduct Authority announced that it would no longer encourage or compel banks to continue to contribute quotes and maintain LIBOR after 2021. Potential replacements for LIBOR are emerging; however, the transition process is still ongoing and the outcome is still uncertain.

Interest rates may also adversely impact our delinquency and charge-off rates. Many consumer lending products bear interest rates that fluctuate with certain base lending rates published in the market, such as the prime rate and LIBOR. As a result, higher interest rates often lead to higher payment requirements by consumers under obligations to us and other lenders, most of which may reduce their ability to remain current on their obligations to us and thereby lead to loan delinquencies and additions to our loan loss provision, which could materially adversely affect our earnings. We continually monitor interest rates and have a number of tools, including the composition of our investments, liability terms and interest rate derivatives, to manage our interest rate risk exposure. Changes in market assumptions regarding future interest rates could significantly impact our interest rate risk strategy, our financial position and results of operations. If our interest rate risk management strategies are not appropriately monitored or executed, these activities may not effectively mitigate our interest rate sensitivity or have the desired impact on our results of operations or financial condition. For information related to interest rate risk sensitivities, see “Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk.”

We may be limited in our ability to pay dividends on and repurchase our stock.

In the year ended December 31, 2018, we increased our quarterly common stock dividend to \$0.40 per share and repurchased approximately 8% of our outstanding common stock under our share repurchase program. The declaration and payment of future dividends, as well as the amount thereof, are subject to the discretion of our Board of Directors. The amount and size of any future dividends and share repurchases will depend upon regulatory limitations imposed by the Federal Reserve, and our results of operations, financial condition, capital levels, cash requirements, future prospects, regulatory review and other factors as further described in “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Capital, Dividends and Share Repurchases.” Holders of our shares of common stock are subject to the prior dividend rights of holders of our preferred stock or the depositary shares representing such preferred stock outstanding, and if full dividends have not been declared and paid on all outstanding shares of our preferred stock in any dividend period, no dividend may be declared or paid on or set aside for payment on our common stock. Banking laws and regulations and our banking regulators may limit or prohibit our payment of dividends on or our repurchase of our stock at any time. There can be no assurance that we will declare and pay any dividends on or repurchase our stock in the future.

We are a holding company and depend on payments from our subsidiaries.

Discover Financial Services, our parent holding company, depends on dividends, distributions and other payments from its subsidiaries, particularly Discover Bank, to fund dividend payments, share repurchases, payments on its obligations, including debt obligations, and to provide funding and capital as needed to its operating subsidiaries. Banking laws and regulations and our banking regulators may limit or prohibit our transfer of funds freely, either to or from our subsidiaries, at any time. These laws, regulations and rules may hinder our ability to access funds that we may need to make payments on our obligations or otherwise achieve strategic objectives. For more information, see “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Capital, Dividends and Share Repurchases.”

Operational and Other Risk

Our risk management framework and models for managing risks may not be effective in mitigating our risk of loss. Our risk management framework seeks to identify and mitigate risk and appropriately balance risk and return. We have established processes and procedures intended to identify, measure, manage, monitor and report the types of risk to which we are subject, including credit risk, market risk, liquidity risk, operational risk, compliance and legal risk, and strategic risk. We seek to monitor and control our risk exposure through a framework of policies, procedures,

limits and reporting requirements.

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Management of our risks in some cases depends upon the use of analytical and/or forecasting models. We use a variety of models to manage and inform decision-making with respect to customers, and for the measurement of risk including credit, market and operational risks and for our finance and treasury functions. Models used by Discover can vary in their complexity and are designed to identify, measure and mitigate risks at various levels such as loan-level, portfolio segments, entire portfolios and products. These models use a set of computational rules to generate numerical estimates of uncertain values to be used for assessment of price, financial forecasts, and estimates of credit, interest rate, market and operational risk. All models carry some level of uncertainty that introduces risks in the estimates.

If the models that we use to mitigate risks are inadequate, we may incur increased losses. In addition, there may be risks that exist, or that develop in the future, that we have not appropriately anticipated, identified or mitigated. If our risk management framework and models do not effectively identify or mitigate our risks, we could suffer unexpected losses and our financial condition and results of operations could be materially adversely affected.

If our security systems, or those of third parties, containing information about us, our customers or third parties with which we do business, are compromised, our business could be disrupted and we may be subject to significant financial exposure, liability and damage to our reputation.

Our direct banking and network operations rely heavily on the secure processing, storage and transmission of confidential or sensitive information about us, our customers and third parties with which we do business. Information security risks for financial institutions have increased and continue to increase in part because of the proliferation of new technologies, the use of the internet, mobile and telecommunications technologies to conduct financial transactions, and the increased sophistication and activities of organized crime, activists, hackers, terrorist organizations, nation state actors and other external parties. Those parties may also attempt to fraudulently induce employees, customers or other users of our systems (including third parties) to disclose confidential or sensitive information in order to gain access to our data or that of our customers.

Our technologies, systems, networks and software, those of other financial institutions and other firms that handle or maintain confidential or sensitive information (including customer information), have been, and are likely to continue to be, the target of increasingly frequent cyber-attacks, malicious code, computer viruses, denial of service attacks, phishing and social engineering, other remote access attacks, and physical attacks that could result in unauthorized access, misuse, loss, unavailability or destruction of data (including confidential customer information), account takeovers, identity theft and fraud, unavailability of service or other events. These types of threats may derive from human error, fraud or malice on the part of external or internal parties, or may result from technological failure or otherwise.

Despite our efforts to ensure the integrity of our systems through our information security and business continuity programs, we may not be able to anticipate or to implement effective preventive measures against all known and unknown security threats, attacks or breaches or events of these types, especially because the techniques used change frequently and are becoming increasingly more sophisticated or are not recognized until launched or vulnerabilities in software or hardware are unknown or are unable to be entirely addressed even after becoming known, and because: Security attacks can originate from a wide variety of sources and geographic locations and may be undetected for a period of time.

We rely on many third-party service providers and network participants, including merchants, and, as such, a security breach or cyber-attack affecting one of these third parties could impact us. For example, the financial services industry continues to see attacks against the environments where personal and identifiable information is handled. For additional information see the risk factor “— We rely on third parties to deliver services. If we face difficulties managing our relationships with third-party service providers, our revenue or results of operations could be materially adversely affected.”

To access our products and services, our customers may use computers and mobile devices that are beyond our security control systems.

We are subject to increasing risk related to information and data security as we increase acceptance of the Discover card internationally, expand our suite of online direct banking products, enhance our mobile payment technologies, acquire new or outsource some of our business operations, expand our internal usage of web-based products and

applications, and otherwise attempt to keep pace with rapid technological changes in the financial services industry. Our efforts to mitigate this risk increase our expenses. While we continue to invest in our information security defenses (including cybersecurity defenses), if our security systems or those of third parties are penetrated or

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circumvented such that the confidentiality, integrity or availability of information about us, our customers, transactions processed on our networks or on third-party networks on our behalf or third parties with which we do business is compromised, we could be subject to significant liability that may not be covered by insurance, including significant legal and financial exposure, actions by our regulators, damage to our reputation, or a loss of confidence in the security of our systems, products and services that could materially adversely affect our business. For additional information on risks in this area, see the risk factors below regarding fraudulent activity, the introduction of new products and services, the use of third parties for outsourcing, technology generally, and laws and regulations addressing consumer privacy and data use and security.

If we cannot remain organizationally effective, we will be unable to address the opportunities and challenges presented by our strategy and the increasingly dynamic and competitive economic and regulatory environment. To remain organizationally effective, we must effectively empower, integrate and deploy our management and operational resources and incorporate global and local business, regulatory and consumer perspectives into our decisions and processes. In order to execute on our objective to be the leading consumer bank and payments partner, we must develop and implement innovative and efficient technology solutions and marketing initiatives while effectively managing legal, regulatory, compliance, security, operational and other risks as well as expenses. Examples include the implementation of a broader rollout of our checking product and a structure for a more competitive global network business. If we fail to develop and implement these solutions, we may be unable to expand quickly and the results of our expansion may be unsatisfactory. In addition, if we are unable to make decisions quickly, assess our opportunities and risks, execute our strategy, and implement new governance, managerial and organizational processes as needed in this increasingly dynamic and competitive economic and regulatory environment, our financial condition, results of operations, relationships with our business partners, banking regulators, customers and shareholders, and ultimately our prospects for achieving our long-term strategies, may be negatively impacted.

We may be unable to increase or sustain Discover card usage, which could impair growth in, or lead to diminishing, average balances and total revenue.

A key element of our business strategy is to increase the usage of the Discover card by our customers, including making it their primary card, and thereby increase our revenue from transaction and service fees and interest income. However, our customers' use and payment patterns may change because of social, legal and economic factors, and customers may decide to use debit cards or other payment products instead of credit cards, not increase card usage, or pay their balances within the grace period to avoid finance charges. We face challenges from competing card products in our attempts to increase credit card usage by our existing customers. Our ability to increase card usage also is dependent on customer satisfaction, which may be adversely affected by factors outside of our control, including competitors' actions and legislative/regulatory changes. Existing legal and regulatory restrictions limit pricing changes that may impact an account throughout its lifecycle, which may reduce our capability to offer lower price promotions to drive account usage and customer engagement. As part of our strategy to increase usage, we have been increasing the number of merchants who accept cards issued on the Discover Network. If we are unable to continue increasing merchant acceptance or fail to improve awareness of existing merchant acceptance of our cards, our ability to grow usage of Discover cards may be hampered. As a result of these factors, we may be unable to increase or sustain credit card usage, which could impair growth in or lead to diminishing average balances and total revenue.

Our transaction volume is concentrated among large merchants, and a reduction in the number of large merchants that accept cards on the Discover Network or PULSE network or the rates they pay could materially adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows.

Discover card transaction dollar volume was concentrated among our top 100 merchants in 2018, with our largest merchant accounting for approximately 5% of that transaction volume. Transaction volume on the PULSE network was also concentrated among the top 100 merchants in 2018, with our largest merchant accounting for approximately 20% of PULSE transaction volume. These merchants could seek to negotiate better pricing or other financial incentives by conditioning their continued participation in the Discover Network and/or PULSE network on a change in the terms of their economic participation. Loss of acceptance at our largest merchants would decrease transaction volume, negatively impact our brand, and could cause customer attrition. In addition, some of our merchants,

primarily our remaining small- and mid-size merchants, are not contractually committed to us for any period of time and may cease to participate in the Discover Network at any time on short notice. Actual or perceived limitations on acceptance of credit cards issued on the Discover Network or debit cards issued on the PULSE network could adversely affect the use of Discover cards by existing customers and the

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attractiveness of the Discover card to prospective customers. Also, we may have difficulty attracting and retaining network partners if we are unable to add or retain acquirers or merchants who accept cards issued on the Discover or PULSE networks. As a result of these factors, a reduction in the number of our merchants or the rates they pay could materially adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows.

Our business, financial condition and results of operations may be adversely affected by merchants' increasing focus on the fees charged by credit card and debit card networks.

Merchant acceptance and fees are critical to the success of both our card-issuing and payment processing businesses. Merchants are concerned with the fees charged by credit card and debit card networks. They seek to negotiate better pricing or other financial incentives as a condition of continued participation in the Discover Network and PULSE network. During the past few years, merchants and their trade groups have filed numerous lawsuits against Visa, MasterCard, American Express and their card-issuing banks, claiming that their practices toward merchants, including issuer fees, violate federal antitrust laws. There can be no assurance that they will not in the future bring legal proceedings against other credit card and debit card issuers and networks, including us. Merchants also may promote forms of payment with lower fees, such as ACH-based payments, or seek to impose surcharges at the point of sale for use of credit or debit cards. Merchant groups have also promoted federal and state legislation that would restrict issuer practices or enhance the ability of merchants, individually or collectively, to negotiate more favorable fees. The heightened focus by merchants on the fees charged by credit card and debit card networks, together with the Dodd-Frank Act and recent industry litigation, which would allow merchants to encourage customers to use other payment methods or cards and may increase merchant surcharging, could lead to reduced transactions on, or merchant acceptance of, Discover Network or PULSE network cards or reduced fees, any of which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Political, economic or other instability in a country or geographic region, or other unforeseen or catastrophic events, could adversely affect our international business activities and reduce our revenue.

Natural disasters or other catastrophic events, including terrorist attacks, may have a negative effect on our business and infrastructure, including our information technology systems. Our Diners Club network, concentrated primarily on serving the global travel industry, could be adversely affected by international conditions that may result in a decline in consumer or business travel activity. Armed conflict, public health emergencies, natural disasters, political instability or terrorism may have a significant negative effect on travel activity and related revenue. Although a regionalized event or condition may primarily affect one of our network participants, it may also affect our overall network and card activity and our resulting revenue. Overall network and card transaction activity may decline as a result of concerns about safety or disease or may be limited because of economic conditions that result in spending on travel to decline. The impact of such events and other catastrophes on the overall economy may also adversely affect our financial condition or results of operations.

Fraudulent activity associated with our products or our networks could cause our brands to suffer reputational damage, the use of our products to decrease and our fraud losses to be materially adversely affected.

We are subject to the risk of fraudulent activity associated with merchants, customers and other third parties handling customer information. The risk of fraud continues to increase for the financial services industry in general. We incurred fraud losses and other charges of \$83 million and \$89 million for the years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. Credit and debit card fraud, identity theft and related crimes are prevalent and perpetrators are growing ever more sophisticated. Our resources, customer authentication methods and fraud prevention tools may be insufficient to accurately predict or prevent fraud. Additionally, our risk of fraud continues to increase as third parties that handle confidential consumer information suffer security breaches, acceptance of the Discover card grows internationally and we expand our direct banking business and introduce new products and features. Our financial condition, the level of our fraud charge-offs and other results of operations could be materially adversely affected if fraudulent activity were to significantly increase. High-profile fraudulent activity could negatively impact our brand and reputation. In addition, significant increases in fraudulent activity could lead to regulatory intervention (such as mandatory card reissuance) and reputational and financial damage to our brands, which could negatively impact the use of our deposit accounts, cards and networks and thereby have a material adverse effect on our business. Further, fraudulent activity may result in lower license fee revenue from our Diners Club licensees.

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The financial services and payment services industries are rapidly evolving, and we may be unsuccessful in introducing new products or services on a large scale in response to these changes.

Technological changes continue to significantly impact the financial services and payment services industries, such as continuing development of technologies in the areas of smart cards, radio frequency and proximity payment devices, electronic wallets, mobile commerce, data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, among others. For example, we may be unsuccessful in deploying new technologies to strengthen our credit underwriting capabilities, marketing efforts, enhance customer service, drive efficiencies in back-office functions or reduce fraud. The increasingly competitive mobile, e-wallet and tokenization spaces are expected to continue to bring risks and opportunities to both our card-issuing and payments businesses.

The effect of technological changes on our business is unpredictable. We depend, in part, on third parties for the development of and access to new technologies. We expect that new services and technologies relating to the payments business will continue to appear in the market, and these new services and technologies may be superior to, or render obsolete, the technologies that we currently use in our products and services. Rapidly evolving technologies and new entrants in mobile and emerging payments pose a risk to Discover both as a card issuer and to the payments business. As a result, our future success may be dependent on our ability to identify and adapt to technological changes and evolving industry standards and to provide payment solutions for our customers, merchants and financial institution customers.

Difficulties or delays in the development, production, testing and marketing of new products or services may be caused by a number of factors including, among other things, operational, capital and regulatory constraints. The occurrence of such difficulties may affect the success of our products or services, and developing unsuccessful products and services could result in financial losses as well as decreased capital availability. In addition, the new products and services offered may not be attractive to consumers, merchants or financial institution customers. Also, success of a new product or service may depend upon our ability to deliver it on a large scale, which may require a significant capital investment that we may not be in a position to make. If we are unable to successfully introduce and maintain new income-generating products and services while also managing our expenses, it may impact our ability to compete effectively and materially adversely affect our business and earnings.

We rely on third parties to deliver services. If we face difficulties managing our relationships with third-party service providers, our revenue or results of operations could be materially adversely affected.

We depend on third-party service providers for many aspects of the operation of our business. For example, we depend on third parties for software and systems development, the timely transmission of information across our data transportation network, and for other telecommunications, processing, remittance, technology-related and other services in connection with our direct banking and payment services businesses. If a service provider fails to provide the services that we require or expect, or fails to meet contractual requirements, such as service levels, security requirements or compliance with applicable laws, the failure could negatively impact our business by adversely affecting our ability to process customers' transactions in a timely and accurate manner, otherwise hampering our ability to serve our customers, or subjecting us to litigation and regulatory risk for poor vendor oversight. Such a failure could adversely affect the perception of the reliability of our networks and services, and the quality of our brands, and could have a materially adverse effect on our reputation, revenues and/or our results of operations.

We rely on technology to deliver services. If key technology platforms become obsolete, or if we experience disruptions, including difficulties in our ability to process transactions, our revenue or results of operations could be materially adversely affected.

Our ability to deliver services to our customers and run our business in compliance with applicable laws and regulations may be affected by the functionality of our technology systems. The implementation of technology changes as well as patches and upgrades to maintain current and integrated systems may result in compliance issues and may, at least temporarily, cause disruptions to our business, including, but not limited to, systems interruptions, transaction processing errors and system conversion delays, all of which could have a negative impact on us. In addition, our transaction processing systems and other operational systems may encounter service interruptions at any time due to system or software failure, natural disaster or other reasons. Such services could be disrupted at any of our primary or back-up facilities or our other owned or leased facilities. Third parties to whom we outsource the

maintenance and development of certain technological functionality may experience errors or disruptions that could adversely impact us and over which we may have limited control. In addition, there is no assurance that we will be able to sustain our investment in new technology to avoid obsolescence of critical systems and applications. A failure to maintain current

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technology, systems and facilities or to control third-party risk, could cause disruptions in the operation of our business, which could materially adversely affect our transaction volumes, revenues, reputation and/or our results of operations.

Our success is dependent, in part, upon our executive officers and other key employees. If we are unable to recruit, retain and motivate key officers and employees to drive our business, our business could be materially adversely affected.

Our success depends, in large part, on our ability to recruit, retain and motivate key officers and employees to manage and grow our business. Our senior management team has significant industry experience and would be difficult to replace. We believe we are in a critical period of competition in the financial services and payments industry. The market for qualified individuals is highly competitive, and we may not be able to attract and retain qualified personnel or candidates to replace or succeed members of our senior management team or other key personnel or it may be expensive to do so. We may be subject to restrictions under future legislation or regulation limiting executive compensation. For example, the federal banking agencies have previously issued proposed rulemaking on incentive compensation practices for certain employees at banking organizations, including executives, and may issue additional rules relating to such activities in the future. These requirements could negatively impact our ability to compete with other companies in attracting, hiring and retaining key personnel and offer incentives that motivate our key personnel to perform and may require us to extensively restructure certain of our existing incentive compensation practices. Additionally, the market for individuals with skills in fields such as technology, analytics and payments is increasingly competitive and we may not be able to attract and retain persons with the desired skill set or experience. If we are unable to recruit, retain and motivate key personnel to manage and grow our business well, our business could be materially adversely affected.

Merchant defaults may adversely affect our business, financial condition, cash flows and results of operations.

As an issuer and merchant acquirer in the United States on the Discover Network, and as a holder of certain merchant agreements internationally for the Diners Club network, we may be contingently liable for certain disputed credit card sales transactions that arise between customers and merchants. If a dispute is resolved in the customer's favor, we will cause a credit or refund of the amount to be issued to the customer and charge back the transaction to the merchant or merchant acquirer. If we are unable to collect this amount from the merchant or merchant acquirer, we will bear the loss for the amount credited or refunded to the customer. Where the purchased product or service is not provided until some later date following the purchase, such as an airline ticket, the likelihood of potential liability increases. For the years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017 losses related to merchant chargebacks were not material.

Damage to our reputation could damage our business.

In recent years, financial services companies have experienced increased reputational risk as consumers protest and regulators scrutinize business and compliance practices of such companies. Maintaining a positive reputation is critical to attracting and retaining customers, investors and employees. Damage to our reputation can therefore cause significant harm to our business and prospects. Harm to our reputation can arise from numerous sources, including, among others, employee misconduct, a breach of our or our service providers' cybersecurity defenses, litigation or regulatory outcomes, failing to deliver minimum standards of service and quality, compliance failures, and the activities of customers, business partners and counterparties. Social media also can cause harm to our reputation. By its very nature, social media can reach a wide audience in a very short amount of time, which presents unique corporate communications challenges. Negative or 'wrong' type of publicity generated through unexpected social media coverage can damage Discover's reputation and brand. Negative publicity regarding us, whether or not true, may result in customer attrition and other harm to our business prospects.

We may be unsuccessful in promoting and protecting our brands or protecting our other intellectual property, or third parties may allege that we are infringing their intellectual property rights.

The Discover, PULSE and Diners Club brands have substantial economic and goodwill value. Our success is dependent on our ability to promote and protect these brands and our other intellectual property. Our ability to attract and retain customers is highly dependent upon the external perception of our company and brands. Our brands are licensed for use to business partners and network participants, some of whom have contractual obligations to promote and develop our brands. For example, the Discover card brand is now being issued by certain Diners Club licensees in

their local markets. If our business partners do not adhere to contractual standards, engage in improper business practices, or otherwise misappropriate, use or diminish the value of our brands or our other intellectual property, we

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may suffer reputational and financial damage. If we will not be able to adequately protect our brands, our proprietary information and other intellectual property, our business success may be adversely affected. In addition, third parties may allege that our marketing, processes or systems may infringe their intellectual property rights. Given the potential risks and uncertainties of such claims, our business could be adversely affected by having to pay significant monetary damages, technology development expenses or licensing fees, and we may have to alter our business practices or be prevented from competing effectively.

Laws, regulations, and supervisory guidance and practices, or the application thereof, may adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We must comply with an array of banking, consumer lending, and payment services laws and regulations in all of the jurisdictions in which we operate as described more fully in “Business — Supervision and Regulation” and “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments.” Regulatory developments, findings and ratings could negatively impact our business strategies or require us to: limit or change our business practices, restructure our products in ways that we may not currently anticipate, limit our product offerings, invest more management time and resources in compliance efforts, limit the fees we can charge for services, or limit our ability to pursue certain business opportunities and obtain related required regulatory approvals. For additional information regarding bank regulatory limitations on acquisitions and investments, see “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Acquisitions and Investments.” See Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements for more information on recent matters affecting Discover and the second risk factor in this section regarding the regulatory environment for the businesses in which we engage. In addition, we are subject to inquiries and enforcement actions from states’ attorney general offices and regulation by the Federal Trade Commission, state banking regulators and the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as the SEC and New York Stock Exchange in our capacity as a public company. We also are subject to the requirements of entities that set and interpret the accounting standards (such as the FASB, the SEC, banking regulators and our independent registered public accounting firm), which may add new requirements or change their interpretations on how standards should be applied. In June 2016, the FASB issued new guidance that will require lenders to adopt the current expected credit loss (“CECL”) approach to evaluate impairment of loans and financial instruments. The CECL approach requires evaluation of credit impairment based on an estimate of life of loan losses whereas rules currently in effect require utilization of incurred losses. We are required to put the CECL standard in place for the 2020 fiscal year. See Note 1: Background and Basis of Presentation — Recently Issued Accounting Pronouncements to our consolidated financial statements for more information on the new standard and its potential impact on our financial condition and results of operations. This and other guidance not yet issued could potentially have a material impact on business lines, as well as how we record and report our financial condition and results of operations, and could have an impact on regulatory capital.

Failure to comply with laws, regulations and standards could lead to adverse consequences such as financial, structural, reputational and operational penalties, including receivership, litigation exposure and fines, (as described further below). Failure to comply with anti-corruption and other laws can expose us and/or individual employees to potentially severe criminal and civil penalties. Specifically, we are subject to anti-corruption laws and regulations, including the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and other laws, that prohibit the making or offering of improper payments.

Legislative, regulatory and tax code changes could impact the profitability of our business activities, alter consumer behavior in ways we did not anticipate, require us to limit or change our business practices or our product offerings, or expose us to additional costs (including increased compliance costs). Significant changes in laws and regulations may have a more adverse effect on our results of operations than on the results of our competitors or may disproportionately benefit our competitors.

Current and proposed laws and regulations addressing consumer privacy and data use and security could affect the competitiveness of our products and increase our costs.

Legal or regulatory pronouncements relating to consumer privacy, data use and security affect our business. We are subject to a number of laws concerning consumer privacy and data use and security such as the European Union’s General Data Privacy Regulation and the California Consumer Privacy Act. Due to recent consumer data compromise

events in the United States, which resulted in unauthorized access to millions of customers' data, these areas continue to be a focus of the executive administration, Congress, state legislators and attorneys general and other regulators. Developments in this area, such as new laws, regulations, regulatory guidance, litigation or enforcement actions, could

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result in new or different requirements on Discover and other card issuers or networks that could increase costs or adversely affect the competitiveness of our credit card or debit card products. See the discussion on recent security developments in “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations — Regulatory Environment and Developments” for more information. In addition, failure to comply with the privacy and data use and security laws and regulations to which we are subject, including by reason of inadvertent disclosure of confidential information or the failure to provide timely notification of a disclosure, could result in litigation, fines, sanctions, penalties or other adverse consequences and loss of consumer confidence, which could materially adversely affect our results of operations, overall business and reputation.

Litigation and regulatory actions could subject us to significant fines, penalties and/or requirements resulting in increased expenses.

Businesses in the consumer banking and payment services industries have historically been subject to significant legal actions, including class action lawsuits and commercial, shareholder and patent litigation. Many of these actions have included claims for substantial compensatory, statutory or punitive damages. We have historically offered customers an arbitration clause in agreements to quickly and economically resolve disputes. The arbitration clause has, in some cases, also limited our exposure to consumer class action litigation, however, there can be no assurance that we will be able to continue to offer arbitration clauses in the future or that we will be successful in enforcing the arbitration clause. Legal challenges to the enforceability of these clauses have led most card issuers, and may cause us, to discontinue their use. There have previously been bills pending in Congress to directly or indirectly prohibit the use of pre-dispute arbitration clauses in some or all consumer banking products. Further, from time to time, we are involved in legal actions challenging the use of our arbitration clause. In addition, we have been and may again be involved in various actions or proceedings brought by governmental regulatory and enforcement agencies, which could harm our reputation, require us to change our business activities and product offerings, or subject us to significant fines, penalties, customer restitution or other requirements, resulting in increased expenses. For example, complying with our agreements with the Federal Reserve and the FDIC consent order related to our anti-money laundering program have caused us to incur significant expenses. See Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements for more information on current matters affecting Discover.

Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

This annual report on Form 10-K and materials we have filed or will file with the SEC (as well as information included in our other written or oral statements) contain or will contain certain statements that are forward-looking within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are not guarantees of future performance and involve certain risks, uncertainties and assumptions that are difficult to predict. Actual outcomes and results may differ materially from those expressed in, or implied by, our forward-looking statements. Words such as “expects,” “anticipates,” “believes,” “estimates” and other similar expressions or future or conditional verbs such as “will,” “should,” “would” and “could” are intended to identify such forward-looking statements. You should not rely solely on the forward-looking statements and should consider all uncertainties and risks throughout this annual report on Form 10-K, including those described under “Risk Factors.” The statements are only as of the date they are made, and we undertake no obligation to update any forward-looking statement.

Possible events or factors that could cause results or performance to differ materially from those expressed in our forward-looking statements include the following:

changes in economic variables, such as the availability of consumer credit, the housing market, energy costs, the number and size of personal bankruptcy filings, the rate of unemployment, the levels of consumer confidence and consumer debt, and investor sentiment;

the impact of current, pending and future legislation, regulation, supervisory guidance, and regulatory and legal actions, including, but not limited to, those related to tax reform, financial regulatory reform, consumer financial services practices, anti-corruption and funding, capital and liquidity;

the actions and initiatives of current and potential competitors;

our ability to manage our expenses;

our ability to successfully achieve card acceptance across our networks and maintain relationships with network participants and merchants;

our ability to sustain and grow our card, private student loan and personal loan products;

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our ability to increase or sustain Discover card usage or attract new customers;
difficulty obtaining regulatory approval for, financing, closing, transitioning, integrating or managing the expenses of acquisitions of or investments in new businesses, products or technologies;
our ability to manage our credit risk, market risk, liquidity risk, operational risk, compliance and legal risk, and strategic risk;
the availability and cost of funding and capital;
access to deposit, securitization, equity, debt and credit markets;
the impact of rating agency actions;
the level and volatility of equity prices, commodity prices and interest rates, currency values, investments, other market fluctuations and other market indices;
losses in our investment portfolio;
limits on our ability to pay dividends and repurchase our common stock;
limits on our ability to receive payments from our subsidiaries;
fraudulent activities or material security breaches of our or others' key systems;
• our ability to remain organizationally effective;
the effect of political, economic and market conditions, geopolitical events and unforeseen or catastrophic events;
our ability to introduce new products or services;
our ability to manage our relationships with third-party vendors;
our ability to maintain current technology and integrate new and acquired systems and technology;
our ability to collect amounts for disputed transactions from merchants and merchant acquirers;
our ability to attract and retain employees;
our ability to protect our reputation and our intellectual property; and
new lawsuits, investigations or similar matters or unanticipated developments related to current matters.
We routinely evaluate and may pursue acquisitions of or investments in businesses, products, technologies, loan portfolios or deposits, which may involve payment in cash or our debt or equity securities.
The foregoing review of important factors should not be construed as exclusive and should be read in conjunction with the other cautionary statements that are included in this annual report on Form 10-K. These factors expressly qualify all subsequent oral and written forward-looking statements attributable to us or persons acting on our behalf. Except for any ongoing obligations to disclose material information as required under U.S. federal securities laws, we do not have any intention or obligation to update forward-looking statements after we distribute this annual report on Form 10-K, whether as a result of new information, future developments or otherwise.

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Item 1B. Unresolved Staff Comments

None.

Item 2. Properties

We have eight principal properties located in seven states in the United States. We own four principal properties, which include our corporate headquarters, two call centers and a processing center, and we lease four principal properties, which include two call centers, our PULSE headquarters and an office supporting our student loan business. The call centers, processing center and student loan office largely support our Direct Banking segment; the PULSE headquarters is used by our Payment Services segment; and our corporate headquarters is used by both our Direct Banking and Payment Services segments. Each of our call centers and our processing center are operating at and being utilized to a reasonable capacity. We believe our principal facilities are both suitable and adequate to meet our current and projected needs. We also have eleven leased offices located outside the United States, which include eight offices that support our Payment Services segment, two offices that support our Direct Banking segment and one office that supports business activities in both segments.

Item 3. Legal Proceedings

For a description of legal proceedings, see Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements.

Item 4. Mine Safety Disclosures

None.

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Part II.

Part II | Item 5. Market for Registrant's Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange (ticker symbol DFS). The approximate number of record holders of our common stock as of February 15, 2019 was 46,343.

Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

The following table sets forth information regarding purchases of our common stock related to our share repurchase program and employee transactions that were made by us or on our behalf during the most recent quarter:

Period	Total Number of Shares Purchased	Average Price Paid Per Share	Total Number of Shares Purchased as Part of Publicly Announced Plan or Program ⁽¹⁾	Maximum Dollar Value of Shares that may yet be purchased under the Plans or Programs ⁽¹⁾
October 1-31, 2018				
Repurchase program ⁽¹⁾	2,272,952	\$ 75.07	2,272,952	\$2,429,638,265
Employee transactions ⁽²⁾	752	\$ 76.53	N/A	N/A
November 1-30, 2018				
Repurchase program ⁽¹⁾	2,152,488	\$ 69.89	2,152,488	\$2,279,209,552
Employee transactions ⁽²⁾	2,443	\$ 69.93	N/A	N/A
December 1-31, 2018				
Repurchase program ⁽¹⁾	2,192,483	\$ 63.37	2,192,483	\$2,140,279,796
Employee transactions ⁽²⁾	90,738	\$ 59.08	N/A	N/A
Total				
Repurchase program ⁽¹⁾	6,617,923	\$ 69.51	6,617,923	\$2,140,279,796
Employee transactions ⁽²⁾	93,933	\$ 59.50	N/A	N/A

On July 19, 2018, our Board of Directors approved a share repurchase program authorizing the purchase of up to (1)\$3.0 billion of our outstanding shares of common stock. This share repurchase program expires on January 31, 2020 and may be terminated at any time.

Reflects shares withheld (under the terms of grants under employee stock compensation plans) to offset tax (2)withholding obligations that occur upon the delivery of outstanding shares underlying restricted stock units or upon the exercise of stock options.

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Stock Performance Graph

The following graph compares the cumulative total stockholder return of our common stock, the S&P 500 Financials Index and the S&P 500 Index for the period from December 31, 2013 through December 31, 2018. The graph assumes an initial investment of \$100 on December 31, 2013. The cumulative returns include stock price appreciation and assume full reinvestment of dividends. This graph does not forecast future performance of our common stock.

	December 31,					
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Discover Financial Services	\$100.00	\$118.92	\$99.24	\$136.39	\$148.54	\$116.18
S&P 500 Financials Index	\$100.00	\$115.18	\$113.38	\$139.17	\$169.98	\$147.82
S&P 500 Index	\$100.00	\$113.68	\$115.24	\$129.02	\$157.17	\$150.27

Item 6. Selected Financial Data

The following table presents our selected financial data and operating statistics. The statement of income data for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, and the statement of financial condition data as of December 31, 2018 and 2017 have been derived from our audited consolidated financial statements included elsewhere in this annual report on Form 10-K. The statement of income data for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014, and the statement of financial condition data as of December 31, 2016, 2015, and 2014 have been derived from audited consolidated financial statements not included elsewhere in this annual report on Form 10-K.

Table of ContentsDiscover Financial Services
Selected Financial Data

	For the Years Ended December 31,					
	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	
	(in millions, except per share amounts)					
Statement of Income Data						
Interest income	\$10,893	\$9,648	\$8,616	\$7,945	\$7,596	
Interest expense	2,139	1,648	1,398	1,263	1,134	
Net interest income	8,754	8,000	7,218	6,682	6,462	
Other income	1,955	1,897	1,881	2,057	2,015	
Revenue net of interest expense	10,709	9,897	9,099	8,739	8,477	
Provision for loan losses	3,035	2,579	1,859	1,512	1,443	
Other expense	4,077	3,781	3,584	3,615	3,340	
Income before income tax expense	3,597	3,537	3,656	3,612	3,694	
Income tax expense	855	1,438	1,263	1,315	1,371	
Net income	\$2,742	\$2,099	\$2,393	\$2,297	\$2,323	
Net income allocated to common stockholders	\$2,689	\$2,031	\$2,339	\$2,246	\$2,270	
Statement of Financial Condition Data (as of)						
Loan receivables	\$90,512	\$84,248	\$77,254	\$72,385	\$69,969	
Total assets	\$109,553	\$100,087	\$92,308	\$86,799	\$82,998	
Total stockholders' equity	\$11,130	\$10,892	\$11,323	\$11,275	\$11,134	
Allowance for loan losses	\$3,041	\$2,621	\$2,167	\$1,869	\$1,746	
Long-term borrowings	\$27,228	\$26,326	\$25,443	\$24,650	\$22,477	
Per Share of Common Stock						
Basic EPS from continuing operations	\$7.81	\$5.43	\$5.77	\$5.14	\$4.91	
Diluted EPS from continuing operations	\$7.79	\$5.42	\$5.77	\$5.13	\$4.90	
Weighted-average shares outstanding	344	374	405	437	462	
Weighted-average shares outstanding (fully diluted)	345	374	406	437	463	
Dividends declared per share of common stock	\$1.50	\$1.30	\$1.16	\$1.08	\$0.92	
Common stock dividend payout ratio	19.21	% 23.94	% 20.10	% 21.01	% 18.73	%
Ratios						
Return on average total equity	25	% 19	% 21	% 21	% 21	%
Return on average assets	3	% 2	% 3	% 3	% 3	%
Average stockholders' equity to average total assets	11	% 12	% 13	% 14	% 14	%

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Selected Financial Data (continued)

	For the Years Ended December 31,					
	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	
	(dollars in millions)					
Selected Statistics						
Total Loan Receivables						
Loan receivables	\$90,512	\$84,248	\$77,254	\$72,385	\$69,969	
Average loan receivables	\$85,256	\$78,525	\$72,280	\$69,061	\$65,853	
Interest yield	12.39	% 12.06	% 11.78	% 11.40	% 11.40	%
Net principal charge-off rate	3.06	% 2.70	% 2.16	% 2.01	% 2.04	%
Delinquency rate (over 30 days)	2.31	% 2.20	% 1.97	% 1.67	% 1.66	%
Delinquency rate (over 90 days)	1.08	% 0.99	% 0.87	% 0.76	% 0.78	%
Credit Card Loans						
Credit card loan receivables	\$72,876	\$67,291	\$61,522	\$57,896	\$56,128	
Average credit card loan receivables	\$67,953	\$62,079	\$57,238	\$54,846	\$52,600	
Interest yield	13.00	% 12.74	% 12.50	% 12.08	% 12.09	%
Net principal charge-off rate	3.26	% 2.91	% 2.34	% 2.22	% 2.27	%
Delinquency rate (over 30 days)	2.43	% 2.28	% 2.04	% 1.72	% 1.73	%
Delinquency rate (over 90 days)	1.22	% 1.12	% 0.97	% 0.85	% 0.85	%
Personal Loans						
Personal loan receivables	\$7,454	\$7,374	\$6,481	\$5,490	\$5,007	
Average personal loan receivables	\$7,423	\$7,020	\$5,895	\$5,245	\$4,592	
Interest yield	12.60	% 12.25	% 12.19	% 12.04	% 12.36	%
Net principal charge-off rate	4.15	% 3.30	% 2.55	% 2.15	% 2.04	%
Delinquency rate (over 30 days)	1.60	% 1.40	% 1.12	% 0.89	% 0.79	%
Delinquency rate (over 90 days)	0.47	% 0.41	% 0.29	% 0.27	% 0.22	%
Private Student Loans (excluding PCI)						
Private student loan receivables	\$7,728	\$7,076	\$6,393	\$5,647	\$4,850	
Average private student loan receivables	\$7,441	\$6,764	\$6,042	\$5,272	\$4,450	
Interest yield	8.25	% 7.72	% 7.35	% 7.16	% 7.02	%
Net principal charge-off rate	1.14	% 1.21	% 1.10	% 1.07	% 1.29	%
Delinquency rate (over 30 days)	2.00	% 2.35	% 2.22	% 1.91	% 1.80	%
Delinquency rate (over 90 days)	0.49	% 0.47	% 0.55	% 0.43	% 0.52	%

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Item 7. Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations

The following discussion and analysis of our financial condition and results of operations should be read in conjunction with our audited consolidated financial statements and related notes included elsewhere in this annual report on Form 10-K. Some of the information contained in this discussion and analysis constitutes forward-looking statements that involve risks and uncertainties. Actual results could differ materially from those discussed in these forward-looking statements. Factors that could cause or contribute to these differences include, but are not limited to, those discussed below and elsewhere in this annual report on Form 10-K particularly under “Risk Factors” and “Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements,” which immediately follows “Risk Factors.” Unless otherwise specified, references to Notes to our consolidated financial statements are to the Notes to our audited consolidated financial statements as of December 31, 2018 and 2017 and for years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

Introduction and Overview

Discover Financial Services (“DFS”) is a direct banking and payment services company. We provide direct banking products and services and payment services through our subsidiaries. We offer our customers credit card loans, private student loans, personal loans, home equity loans and deposit products. We also operate the Discover Network, the PULSE network (“PULSE”) and Diners Club International (“Diners Club”). The Discover Network processes transactions for Discover-branded credit and debit cards and provides payment transaction processing and settlement services. PULSE operates an electronic funds transfer network, providing financial institutions issuing debit cards on the PULSE network with access to ATMs domestically and internationally, as well as point-of-sale (“POS”) terminals at retail locations throughout the U.S. for debit card transactions. Diners Club is a global payments network of licensees, which are generally financial institutions, that issue Diners Club branded charge cards and/or provide card acceptance services.

Our primary revenues consist of interest income earned on loan receivables and fees earned from customers, financial institutions, merchants and issuers. The primary expenses required to operate our business include funding costs (interest expense), loan loss provisions, customer rewards and expenses incurred to grow, manage and service our loan receivables and networks. Our business activities are funded primarily through consumer deposits, securitization of loan receivables and the issuance of unsecured debt.

2018 Highlights

• Net income was \$2.7 billion, or \$7.79 per diluted share, compared to \$2.1 billion, or \$5.42 per diluted share, in the prior year.

• Total loans grew \$6.3 billion, or 7%, from the prior year to \$90.5 billion.

• Credit card loans grew \$5.6 billion, or 8%, from the prior year to \$72.9 billion.

• The total net charge-off rate increased 36 basis points from the prior year to 3.06%.

• The net charge-off rate for credit card loans increased 35 basis points from the prior year to 3.26% and the delinquency rate for credit card loans over 30 days past due increased 15 basis points to 2.43%.

• Direct-to-consumer deposits grew \$5.3 billion, or 13%, from the prior year to \$44.7 billion.

• Payment Services transaction volume for the segment was \$232.6 billion, up 15% from the prior year.

Prior Year Highlights

• Net income was \$2.1 billion and \$2.4 billion, or \$5.42 and \$5.77 per diluted share in 2017 and 2016, respectively.

• Total loans grew \$7.0 billion in 2017, or 9%, from 2016 to \$84.2 billion.

• Credit card loans grew \$5.8 billion in 2017, or 9%, from 2016 to \$67.3 billion.

• The total net charge-off rate increased 54 basis points in 2017 from 2016 to 2.70%.

• The net charge-off rate for credit card loans increased 57 basis points in 2017 from 2016 to 2.91% and the delinquency rate for credit card loans over 30 days past due increased 24 basis points to 2.28%.

• Direct-to-consumer deposits grew \$3.4 billion in 2017, or 9%, from 2016 to \$39.4 billion.

• Payment Services transaction volume for the segment was \$202.9 billion in 2017, up 12% from 2016.

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During 2017, the effective tax rate increased 6.2 percentage points, primarily driven by a one-time adjustment of \$179 million as a result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (“TCJA”).

Outlook

We continue to focus on disciplined capital deployment through profitable organic loan growth and execution of our capital plan. Our marketing strategy remains focused on expanding wallet share with existing customers and adding new accounts to achieve continued loan growth in 2019.

Total expenses are expected to increase in 2019 as we continue to invest in business growth and technology, including the deployment of advanced analytics and automation. We expect the rewards rate to modestly increase in 2019 largely resulting from the ongoing shift in product mix to the Discover it platform.

The total net charge-off rate in 2019 is expected to increase in comparison to the prior year and we expect to add to the loan loss reserve due to the seasoning of continued loan growth and supply-driven credit normalization. We expect net interest margin in 2019 to remain relatively flat.

In our payments segment, we will continue to pursue new ways to drive volume growth in a competitive environment. We continue to leverage our network to support our card-issuing business.

Regulatory Environment and Developments

Federal banking regulators continue to propose and implement new regulations and supervisory guidance, including under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the “Dodd-Frank Act”), and modify their examination and enforcement priorities. The Dodd-Frank Act created a framework for regulation of large systemically significant financial firms, including Discover, through a variety of measures, including increased capital and liquidity requirements and limits on leverage and enhanced supervisory authority. The impact of the evolving regulatory environment on our business and operations depends upon a number of factors, including supervisory priorities and actions, our actions, those of our competitors and other marketplace participants, and the behavior of consumers.

On May 24, 2018, the President signed into law a package of legislative reforms titled the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act (“EGRRCPA”), which are intended to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief for smaller and less complex financial institutions, and enhance consumer protections. Among other provisions, the new law raises the asset threshold for automatically designating a bank holding company as “systemically important” from \$50 billion to \$250 billion. The new law became effective immediately for bank holding companies with assets less than \$100 billion and will become effective 18 months from its enactment for banks with assets of \$100 billion or more. Upon effectiveness of the new law, bank holding companies with assets less than \$250 billion will no longer automatically be subject to regulatory requirements that establish enhanced prudential standards pursuant to the Dodd-Frank Act. However, the extent of relief afforded to Discover under the law will depend on how it is implemented. On October 31, 2018, the Federal Reserve and other federal banking regulators issued proposals to tailor the existing regulatory requirements related to capital, liquidity and enhanced prudential standards to an institution’s risk and complexity profile for banking institutions with total assets of \$100 billion or more. The timing and substance of any final rules are currently unknown. On February 5, 2019, the Federal Reserve announced that certain less complex firms subject to Comprehensive Capital Analysis and Review (“CCAR”), generally those with total consolidated assets between \$100 billion and \$250 billion, have been provided relief from certain components of the Federal Reserve’s capital planning and stress testing framework for the 2019 stress test cycle. The Federal Reserve issued a temporary order granting Discover relief from the regulatory requirements related to supervisory stress testing and company-run stress testing for the 2019 stress test cycle and provided Discover a one-year extension of the requirement to submit a capital plan to the Federal Reserve until April 5, 2020. Additionally, Discover is not required to participate in the 2019 CCAR process. For more information, see “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Bank Holding Company Regulation.”

Another provision contained in the EGRRCPA authorizes the Social Security Administration to modernize the process in which it verifies information to help financial institutions detect and prevent the unauthorized use of Social Security numbers to open fraudulent accounts. While improvements to processes and procedures are underway, the timing and impact is uncertain.

Policymakers at the federal and state levels are increasingly focused on measures to enhance data security and data breach incident response requirements as a result of growing cybersecurity threats and the number of incidents

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involving unauthorized access to consumer information. Furthermore, regulations and legislation at various levels of government have been proposed to create data privacy standards. For example, the California Consumer Privacy Act (“CCPA”) creates a broad set of privacy rights and remedies modeled in part on the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation. The CCPA goes into effect on January 1, 2020. While it is too early to know their full impact, these developments could ultimately result in the imposition of requirements on Discover and other providers of consumer financial services or networks that could increase costs or otherwise adversely affect our businesses.

The impact of the evolving regulatory environment on our business and operations depends upon a number of factors, including supervisory priorities and actions, our actions, actions of our competitors and other marketplace participants, and the behavior of consumers. For more information on how the regulatory environment, enforcement actions, findings and ratings could also have an impact on our strategies, the value of our assets, or otherwise adversely affect our business see “Risk Factors — Current Economic and Regulatory Environment”. For more information on recent matters affecting us, see Note 19: Litigation and Regulatory Matters to our consolidated financial statements.

Consumer Financial Services

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (the “CFPB”) regulates consumer financial products and services, as well as certain financial services providers, including Discover. The CFPB has rulemaking and interpretive authority under the Dodd-Frank Act and other federal consumer financial services laws, as well as broad supervisory, examination and enforcement authority over designated financial services providers, including Discover. The CFPB’s regulatory authority includes the exercise of rulemaking, supervision and enforcement powers with respect to “unfair, deceptive or abusive acts or practices” and consumer access to fair, transparent and competitive financial products and services. Historically, the CFPB’s policy priorities focused on several financial products of the type we offer (e.g. credit cards and student loans).

On December 6, 2018, a new director of the CFPB was confirmed. The new director has indicated that her initial priorities include ensuring that the CFPB is fair and transparent in taking actions to empower consumers and provides certainty for market participants, including through the use of cost-benefit analysis and rulemaking processes. Previously, the CFPB issued formal requests for information on various topics, which are expected to continue. Despite the changes in the CFPB’s leadership, the CFPB is required by statute to undertake certain actions such as its bi-annual review of the consumer credit card market.

There continues to be legislative and regulatory focus on the private student loan market, including by some state legislatures and state attorneys general. Recent areas of focus have included servicing, payments and collection practices, which have resulted in an increase in supervisory examinations of Discover related to private student loans. Legislative focus on student loans has resulted in the enactment of student loan servicing laws in several states, and consideration of new licensing, servicing, reporting and regulatory oversight requirements for student loan servicers. Such legislation, regulation or guidance may increase the complexity and expense of servicing student loans and impact the entire student loan market, which could cause us to change our private student loan products or servicing practices in ways that we may not currently anticipate.

Payment Networks

The Dodd-Frank Act contains several provisions impacting the debit card market, including network participation requirements and interchange fee limitations. The changing debit card environment, including competitor actions related to merchant and acquirer pricing and transaction routing strategies, has adversely affected, and is expected to continue to adversely affect, our PULSE network's business practices, network transaction volume, revenue and prospects for future growth. We continue to closely monitor competitor pricing and technology development strategies in order to assess their impact on our business and on competition in the marketplace. Following an inquiry by the U.S. Department of Justice into some of these competitor pricing strategies, PULSE filed a lawsuit against Visa in late 2014 with respect to these competitive concerns. The Court granted summary judgment in favor of Visa on August 31, 2018. PULSE filed an appeal on January 17, 2019. Visa also faces ongoing merchant litigation as it relates to the underlying anticompetitive behavior that is the subject of PULSE’s case against Visa. In addition, the Dodd-Frank Act's network participation requirements impact PULSE's ability to enter into exclusivity arrangements, which affects PULSE's current business practices and may materially adversely affect its network transaction volume and revenue.

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Banking

Capital

Discover Financial Services and Discover Bank are subject to regulatory capital requirements that became effective January 1, 2015 under final rules issued by the Federal Reserve and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (“FDIC”) to implement the provisions under the Basel Committee’s December 2010 framework (referred to as “Basel III”). The final capital rules (“Basel III rules”) require minimum risk-based capital and leverage ratios and define what constitutes capital for purposes of calculating those ratios. In addition, the Basel III rules establish a capital conservation buffer (“CCB”) above the regulatory minimum capital requirements, which must consist entirely of Common Equity Tier 1 (“CET1”) capital and result in higher required minimum ratios by at least 2.5%. The new CCB requirement became effective January 2016; however, the buffer threshold amounts have been subject to a gradual phase-in period. The full 2.5% buffer requirement is fully phased-in as of January 2019. A banking organization is subject to limitations on paying dividends, engaging in share repurchases and paying discretionary bonuses if its capital level falls below any of the minimum capital requirements, taking into account the applicable CCB thresholds. Based on our current capital composition and levels and business plans, we are and expect to continue to be in compliance with the requirements for the foreseeable future. For additional information, see “— Liquidity and Capital Resources — Capital.”

On April 10, 2018, the Federal Reserve issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that would significantly revise the regulatory capital and stress testing frameworks for mid-sized bank holding companies such as Discover Financial Services by, among other things, imposing new “stress buffer” requirements and revising certain assumptions used in supervisory stress tests. The proposal is intended to make regulatory capital requirements more forward-looking, risk-sensitive and firm-specific by linking them to the annual CCAR stress testing and capital plan review process. The timing and substance of any final rulemaking is uncertain at this time.

On December 21, 2018, federal banking agencies adopted a joint final rule that will, among other things, give bank holding companies and banks, including Discover and its bank subsidiaries, the option to phase in the regulatory capital impacts of implementing the current expected credit loss (“CECL”) approach over a three-year transition period. Recognition would be on a straight-line basis (i.e., 25% in year one, 50% in year two, 75% in year three and 100% thereafter). The final rule will become effective on April 1, 2019, although public companies such as Discover are not required to implement CECL until 2020. Separately on December 21, 2018, the Federal Reserve announced that it will not incorporate CECL into its supervisory stress tests until at least 2022 to reduce uncertainty, allow for better capital planning at affected firms and allow the Federal Reserve to gather additional information on the impact of CECL. The Federal Reserve will still require banking institutions subject to Dodd-Frank Act company-run stress test requirements to incorporate CECL into their internal stress testing processes beginning in 2020. For more information on CECL and how it may affect Discover, see Note 1: Background and Basis of Presentation to our consolidated financial statements.

Liquidity

We are currently subject to the U.S. liquidity coverage ratio rule issued by federal banking regulators. This quantitative requirement is designed to promote the short-term resilience of the liquidity risk profile of large and internationally active banking organizations in the United States. The rule requires covered banks to maintain an amount of high-quality liquid assets sufficient to cover projected net cash outflows during a prospective 30-day calendar period under an acute, hypothetical liquidity stress scenario. Given our current asset size, we are subject to a modified liquidity coverage ratio requirement, which requires a lower level of high-quality liquid assets to meet the minimum ratio requirement due to adjustments to the net cash outflow amount. The Federal Reserve issued a proposal on October 31, 2018 that would exempt bank holding companies with less than \$250 billion in assets and less than \$75 billion in certain other exposures from the liquidity coverage ratio rule. The timing and substance of any final rulemaking is unknown.

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Results of Operations

The discussion below provides a summary of our results of operations for the year ended December 31, 2018 compared to our results of operations for the year ended December 31, 2017 and year ended December 31, 2016. The discussion also provides information about our loan receivables as of December 31, 2018 compared to December 31, 2017 and December 31, 2016.

Segments

We manage our business activities in two segments, Direct Banking and Payment Services, based on the products and services provided. For a detailed description of the operations of each segment, as well as the allocation conventions used in our business segment reporting, see Note 22: Segment Disclosures to our consolidated financial statements.

The following table presents segment data (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended		
	December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
Direct Banking			
Interest income			
Credit card	\$8,835	\$7,907	\$7,155
Private student loans	614	523	444
PCI student loans	139	159	185
Personal loans	935	860	719
Other	369	199	113
Total interest income	10,892	9,648	8,616
Interest expense	2,139	1,648	1,398
Net interest income	8,753	8,000	7,218
Provision for loan losses	3,035	2,586	1,858
Other income	1,645	1,607	1,611
Other expense	3,918	3,629	3,422
Income before income tax expense	3,445	3,392	3,549
Payment Services			
Net interest income	1	—	—
Provision for loan losses	—	(7) 1
Other income	310	290	270
Other expense	159	152	162
Income before income tax expense	152	145	107
Total income before income tax expense	\$3,597	\$3,537	\$3,656

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The following table presents information on transaction volume (in millions):

	For the Years Ended		
	December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
Network Transaction Volume			
PULSE Network	\$ 179,792	\$ 157,128	\$ 138,003
Network Partners	18,948	14,213	13,833
Diners Club ⁽¹⁾	33,877	31,544	28,601
Total Payment Services	232,617	202,885	180,437
Discover Network—Proprietary ⁽²⁾	143,865	133,044	126,144
Total Volume	\$376,482	\$335,929	\$306,581
Transactions Processed on Networks			
Discover Network	2,469	2,240	2,125
PULSE Network	4,364	3,856	3,456
Total	6,833	6,096	5,581
Credit Card Volume			
Discover Card Volume ⁽³⁾	\$ 152,826	\$ 141,858	\$ 132,324
Discover Card Sales Volume ⁽⁴⁾	\$ 139,031	\$ 128,806	\$ 121,423

(1) Diners Club volume is derived from data provided by licensees for Diners Club branded cards issued outside North America and is subject to subsequent revision or amendment.

(2) Represents gross proprietary sales volume on the Discover Network.

(3) Represents Discover card activity related to net sales, balance transfers, cash advances and other activity.

(4) Represents Discover card activity related to net sales.

Direct Banking

For the Year Ended December 31, 2018 compared to the Year Ended December 31, 2017

Our Direct Banking segment reported pretax income of \$3.4 billion for the years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017. Net interest income increased for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 primarily driven by loan growth and higher yields on credit card loans, partially offset by higher funding costs. Interest income increased over the prior year due to continued loan growth and yield expansion resulting from prime rate increases. Interest expense increased during the year primarily due to higher market rates and a larger funding base.

For the year ended December 31, 2018, the provision for loan loss dollars increased as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 primarily due to higher levels of net charge-offs, partially offset by a lower reserve build. For a detailed discussion on provision for loan losses, see “— Loan Quality — Provision and Allowance for Loan Losses.” Total other income increased for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 primarily due to higher discount and interchange revenue and loan fee income. The increase in discount and interchange revenue is partially offset by higher rewards, both of which were primarily the result of higher sales volume. Loan fee income increased primarily as the result of an increase in late fees due to a higher number of delinquent accounts.

Total other expense increased for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 primarily due to higher employee compensation and benefits, marketing and business development costs, other expenses and information processing and communications. Employee compensation and benefits increased due to additional headcount for business growth and technological capabilities, as well as higher average salaries. The increase in marketing and business development costs was primarily due to higher acquisition costs and brand advertising targeting loan and deposit growth. The increase in other expense was largely driven by an increase in incentives supporting global merchant acceptance. Information processing and communications increased as the result of higher investments in infrastructure and analytic capabilities.

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Discover card sales volume was \$139.0 billion for the year ended December 31, 2018, which was an increase of 7.9% as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017. This volume growth was driven primarily by growth in active cardmembers.

For the Year Ended December 31, 2017 compared to the Year Ended December 31, 2016

Our Direct Banking segment reported pretax income of \$3.4 billion for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to \$3.5 billion for the year ended December 31, 2016.

Net interest income increased for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 primarily driven by loan growth and higher yields on credit card loans, partially offset by higher funding costs. The increase in credit card yields was primarily due to prime rate increases and a higher portion of revolving card receivables, partially offset by the portfolio mix and higher interest charge-offs. Interest income increased during the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 due to loan growth and higher yields. Interest expense increased during the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 primarily due to increased borrowings to fund asset growth, higher market rates and a change in funding mix.

For the year ended December 31, 2017, the provision for loan loss dollars increased as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 due to higher levels of net charge-offs combined with a larger build of the allowance for loan losses as compared to 2016. For a detailed discussion on provision for loan losses, see “— Loan Quality — Provision and Allowance for Loan Losses.”

Total other income remained relatively flat for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016. Discount and interchange revenue remained flat for the year ended December 31, 2017 in comparison to the year ended December 31, 2016 with offsetting increases in gross discount and interchange revenue and rewards, both of which were primarily the result of higher sales volume. Loan fee income increased for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the previous year primarily due to an increase in late fees.

Total other expense increased for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 primarily due to an increase in employee compensation and benefits, professional fees, marketing and business development costs, offset by a decrease in information processing and communications. The increase in employee compensation and benefits was driven by the impact of additional headcount for regulatory and compliance needs and business growth, higher average salaries and a one-time special bonus for eligible employees in response to the TCJA in 2017. The increase in professional fees was driven primarily by investments in technology and infrastructure, offset by the completion of a look back project related to anti-money laundering remediation in 2016. The increase in marketing and business development was primarily the result of higher brand advertising and loan acquisition costs that contributed to loan growth. The decrease in information processing and communications was primarily the result of infrastructure efficiencies.

Discover card sales volume was \$128.8 billion for the year ended December 31, 2017, which was an increase of 6.1% as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016. This volume growth was driven primarily by an increase in active cardmembers.

Payment Services

For the Year Ended December 31, 2018 compared to the Year Ended December 31, 2017

Our Payment Services segment reported pretax income of \$152 million for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to pretax income of \$145 million for the year ended December 31, 2017. The increase in segment pretax income was primarily due to higher other income driven by higher transaction volume across multiple channels.

Downturns in the global economy or negative impacts in foreign currency may adversely affect our financial condition or results of operations in our Payment Services segment. We continue to work with our Diners Club licensees with regard to their ability to maintain financing sufficient to support business operations. We may continue to provide additional support in the future, including loans, facilitating transfer of ownership, or acquiring assets or licensees, which may cause us to incur losses. The licensees that we currently consider to be of concern accounted for approximately 4% of Diners Club revenue for the years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017.

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For the Year Ended December 31, 2017 compared to the Year Ended December 31, 2016

Our Payment Services segment reported pretax income of \$145 million for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to pretax income of \$107 million the year ended December 31, 2016. The increase in segment pretax income was primarily driven by an increase in transaction processing revenue due to higher POS transactions and lower expense.

Critical Accounting Estimates

In preparing our consolidated financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States (“GAAP”), management must make judgments and use estimates and assumptions about the effects of matters that are uncertain. For estimates that involve a high degree of judgment and subjectivity, it is possible that different estimates could reasonably be derived for the same period. For estimates that are particularly sensitive to changes in economic or market conditions, significant changes to the estimated amount from period to period are also possible. Management believes the current assumptions and other considerations used to estimate amounts reflected in our consolidated financial statements are appropriate. However, if actual experience differs from the assumptions and other considerations used in estimating amounts in our consolidated financial statements, the resulting changes could have a material effect on our consolidated results of operations and, in certain cases, could have a material effect on our consolidated financial condition. Management has identified the estimates related to our allowance for loan losses, the evaluation of goodwill for potential impairment and the accrual of income taxes as critical accounting estimates.

Allowance for Loan Losses

We base our allowance for loan losses on several analyses that help us estimate incurred losses as of the balance sheet date. In deriving this estimate, we consider the collectibility of principal, interest and fees associated with our loan receivables. While our estimation process includes historical data and analysis, there is a significant amount of judgment applied in selecting inputs and analyzing the results produced to determine the allowance. We use a migration analysis to estimate the likelihood that a loan will progress through the various stages of delinquency. Management also estimates loss emergence by using other analyses to estimate losses incurred from non-delinquent accounts. The considerations in these analyses include past and current loan performance, loan seasoning and growth, current risk management practices, account collection strategies, economic conditions, bankruptcy filings, policy changes and forecasting uncertainties. Given the same information, others may reach different reasonable estimates. If management used different assumptions in estimating incurred net loan losses, the impact to the allowance for loan losses could have a material effect on our consolidated financial condition and results of operations. For example, a 10% change in management’s estimate of incurred net loan losses could have resulted in a change of approximately \$304 million in the allowance for loan losses at December 31, 2018, with a corresponding change in the provision for loan losses. See “— Loan Quality” and Note 2: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies to our consolidated financial statements for further details about our allowance for loan losses.

Goodwill

We recognize goodwill when the purchase price of an acquired business exceeds the total of the fair values of the acquired net assets. As required by GAAP, we test goodwill for impairment annually, or more often if indicators of impairment exist. In evaluating goodwill for impairment, management must estimate the fair value of the reporting unit(s) to which the goodwill relates. Because market data concerning acquisitions of comparable businesses typically are not readily obtainable, other valuation techniques such as earnings multiples and cash flow models are used in estimating the fair values of these reporting units. In applying these techniques, management considers historical results, business forecasts, market and industry conditions and other factors. We may also consult independent valuation experts where needed in applying these valuation techniques. The valuation methodologies we use involve assumptions about business performance, revenue and expense growth, capital expenditures, discount rates and other assumptions that are judgmental in nature.

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At December 31, 2018, we reported goodwill of \$255 million associated with our PULSE network. The estimated fair value of the PULSE reporting unit was more than four times its carrying value as of October 1, 2018, and there are no present conditions that we believe would cause the fair value of this reporting unit to fall below its carrying value. However, competitive pressures leading to significant declines in revenue, significant increases in the cost of equity, deteriorating economic conditions, or other events adversely impacting the assumptions used by management in the valuation, could cause the fair value of the reporting unit or the associated goodwill to decline in the future, which could result in an impairment loss. At December 31, 2018, based on the annual impairment testing performed, there was no impairment identified. See Note 7: Goodwill and Intangible Assets to our consolidated financial statements for further details about goodwill and the related impairment testing.

Income Taxes

We are subject to the income tax laws of the jurisdictions where we have business operations, primarily the United States, its states and municipalities. We must make judgments and interpretations about the application of these inherently complex tax laws when determining the provision for income taxes and must also make estimates about when in the future certain items will affect taxable income in the various taxing jurisdictions. Disputes over interpretations of the tax laws may be settled with the taxing authority upon examination or audit. We regularly evaluate the likelihood of assessments in each of the taxing jurisdictions resulting from current and subsequent years' examinations, and tax reserves are established as appropriate.

Changes in the estimate of income taxes can occur due to tax rate changes, interpretations of tax laws, the status and resolution of examinations by the taxing authorities, and newly enacted laws and regulations that impact the relative merits of tax positions taken. When such changes occur, such as the recent rate change enacted with the TCJA, the effect on our consolidated financial condition and results of operations can be significant. See Note 15: Income Taxes to our consolidated financial statements for additional information about income taxes.

Earnings Summary

The following table outlines changes in our consolidated statements of income (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended			2018 vs. 2017		2017 vs. 2016	
	December 31,			Increase		Increase	
	2018	2017	2016	(Decrease)		(Decrease)	
				\$	%	\$	%
Interest income	\$10,893	\$9,648	\$8,616	\$1,245	13 %	\$1,032	12 %
Interest expense	2,139	1,648	1,398	491	30 %	250	18 %
Net interest income	8,754	8,000	7,218	754	9 %	782	11 %
Provision for loan losses	3,035	2,579	1,859	456	18 %	720	39 %
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	5,719	5,421	5,359	298	5 %	62	1 %
Other income	1,955	1,897	1,881	58	3 %	16	1 %
Other expense	4,077	3,781	3,584	296	8 %	197	5 %
Income before income tax expense	3,597	3,537	3,656	60	2 %	(119)	(3)%
Income tax expense	855	1,438	1,263	(583)	(41)%	175	14 %
Net income	\$2,742	\$2,099	\$2,393	\$643	31 %	\$(294)	(12)%

Net Interest Income

The tables that follow this section have been provided to supplement the discussion below and provide further analysis of net interest income, net interest margin and the impact of rate and volume changes on net interest income. Net interest income represents the difference between interest income earned on our interest-earning assets and the interest expense incurred to finance those assets. We analyze net interest income in total by calculating net interest margin (net interest income as a percentage of average total loan receivables) and net yield on interest-earning assets (net interest income as a percentage of average total interest-earning assets). We also separately consider the impact of the level of loan receivables and the related interest yield and the impact of the cost of funds related to each of our funding sources, along with the income generated by our liquidity portfolio, on net interest income.

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Our interest-earning assets consist of: (i) cash and cash equivalents primarily related to amounts on deposit with the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, (ii) restricted cash, (iii) other short-term investments, (iv) investment securities and (v) loan receivables. Our interest-bearing liabilities consist primarily of deposits, both direct-to-consumer and brokered, and long-term borrowings, including amounts owed to securitization investors. Net interest income is influenced by the following:

- The level and composition of loan receivables, including the proportion of credit card loans to other loans, as well as the proportion of loan receivables bearing interest at promotional rates as compared to standard rates;

- The credit performance of our loans, particularly with regard to charge-offs of finance charges, which reduce interest income;

- The terms of long-term borrowings and certificates of deposit upon initial offering, including maturity and interest rate;

- The interest rates necessary to attract and maintain direct-to-consumer deposits;

- The level and composition of other interest-earning assets, including our liquidity portfolio and interest-bearing liabilities;

Changes in the interest rate environment, including the levels of interest rates and the relationships among interest rate indices, such as the prime rate, the Federal Funds rate, interest rate on excess reserves and London Interbank Offered Rate;

- The effectiveness of interest rate swaps in our interest rate risk management program; and

- The difference between the carrying amount and future cash flows expected to be collected on purchased credit-impaired (“PCI”) loans.

For the Year Ended December 31, 2018 compared to the Year Ended December 31, 2017

Net interest income increased for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 primarily driven by loan growth and higher yields on credit card loans, partially offset by higher funding costs. Interest income increased over the prior year due to continued loan growth and yield expansion resulting from prime rate increases. Interest expense increased during the year primarily due to higher market rates and a larger funding base.

For the Year Ended December 31, 2017 compared to the Year Ended December 31, 2016

Net interest income increased for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 primarily driven by loan growth and higher yields on credit card loans, partially offset by higher funding costs. The increase in credit card yields was primarily due to prime rate increases and a higher portion of revolving card receivables, partially offset by the portfolio mix and higher interest charge-offs. Interest income increased during the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 due to loan growth and higher yields. Interest expense increased during the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 primarily due to increased borrowings to fund asset growth, higher market rates and a change in funding mix.

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Average Balance Sheet Analysis

(dollars in millions)

	For the Years Ended December 31,									
	2018			2017			2016			
	Average Balance	Rate	Interest	Average Balance	Rate	Interest	Average Balance	Rate	Interest	
Assets										
Interest-earning assets										
Cash and cash equivalents	\$14,494	1.93 %	\$ 280	\$13,300	1.11 %	\$ 148	\$10,806	0.52 %	\$ 56	
Restricted cash	633	1.85 %	12	625	0.97 %	6	540	0.37 %	2	
Other short-term investments	—	— %	—	—	— %	—	518	0.86 %	4	
Investment securities	1,910	2.08 %	40	1,667	1.60 %	27	2,445	1.55 %	38	
Loan receivables ⁽¹⁾										
Credit card ⁽²⁾	67,953	13.00 %	8,835	62,079	12.74 %	7,907	57,238	12.50 %	7,155	
Personal loans	7,423	12.60 %	936	7,020	12.25 %	860	5,895	12.19 %	719	
Private student loans	7,441	8.25 %	614	6,764	7.72 %	522	6,042	7.35 %	444	
PCI student loans	1,846	7.54 %	139	2,326	6.84 %	159	2,841	6.51 %	185	
Other	593	6.28 %	37	336	5.56 %	19	264	5.01 %	13	
Total loan receivables	85,256	12.39 %	10,561	78,525	12.06 %	9,467	72,280	11.78 %	8,516	
Total interest-earning assets	102,293	10.65 %	10,893	94,117	10.25 %	9,648	86,589	9.95 %	8,616	
Allowance for loan losses	(2,776)			(2,335)			(1,938)			
Other assets	4,324			4,189			4,349			
Total assets	\$103,841			\$95,971			\$89,000			
Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity										
Interest-bearing liabilities										
Interest-bearing deposits										
Time deposits ⁽³⁾	\$31,236	2.22 %	695	\$27,123	1.91 %	519	\$24,833	1.77 %	439	
Money market deposits ⁽⁴⁾	6,798	1.81 %	123	6,799	1.29 %	88	6,939	1.08 %	75	
Other interest-bearing savings deposits	23,886	1.76 %	420	20,155	1.18 %	239	16,725	1.04 %	173	
Total interest-bearing deposits ⁽⁵⁾	61,920	2.00 %	1,238	54,077	1.56 %	846	48,497	1.42 %	687	
Borrowings										
Short-term borrowings	2	2.07 %	—	2	1.10 %	—	2	0.63 %	—	
Securitized borrowings ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾	16,218	2.67 %	433	16,746	2.26 %	379	16,784	2.06 %	346	
Other long-term borrowings ⁽³⁾	10,231	4.57 %	468	9,767	4.33 %	423	8,430	4.32 %	365	
Total borrowings	26,451	3.41 %	901	26,515	3.02 %	802	25,216	2.82 %	711	
Total interest-bearing liabilities	88,371	2.42 %	2,139	80,592	2.04 %	1,648	73,713	1.90 %	1,398	
Other liabilities and stockholders' equity	15,470			15,379			15,287			
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$103,841			\$95,971			\$89,000			
Net interest income			\$8,754			\$8,000			\$7,218	
Net interest margin ⁽⁶⁾		10.27 %			10.19 %			9.99 %		
Net yield on interest-earning assets ⁽⁷⁾		8.56 %			8.50 %			8.34 %		
Interest rate spread ⁽⁸⁾		8.23 %			8.21 %			8.05 %		

(1)

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Average balances of loan receivables include non-accruing loans, which are included in the yield calculations. If the non-accruing loan balances were excluded, there would not be a material impact on the amounts reported above.

- (2) Interest income on credit card loans includes \$241 million, \$218 million and \$193 million of amortization of balance transfer fees for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, respectively.
- (3) Includes the impact of interest rate swap agreements used to change a portion of fixed-rate funding to floating-rate funding.
- (4) Includes the impact of interest rate swap agreements used to change a portion of floating-rate funding to fixed-rate funding.
- (5) Includes the impact of FDIC insurance premiums and Large Institution Surcharge. As of October 2018, the FDIC no longer assesses a Large Institution Surcharge.
- (6) Net interest margin represents net interest income as a percentage of average total loan receivables.
- (7) Net yield on interest-earning assets represents net interest income as a percentage of average total interest-earning assets.
- (8) Interest rate spread represents the difference between the rate on total interest-earning assets and the rate on total interest-bearing liabilities.

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(dollars in millions)

	Year Ended December 31, 2018 vs. Year Ended December 31, 2017			Year Ended December 31, 2017 vs. Year Ended December 31, 2016		
	Volum	Rate	Total	Volum	Rate	Total
Increase/(decrease) in net interest income due to changes in						
Interest-earning assets						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 15	\$ 117	\$ 132	\$ 16	\$ 76	\$ 92
Restricted cash	—	6	6	—	4	4
Other short-term investments	—	—	—	(2)	(2)	(4)
Investment securities	4	9	13	(12)	1	(11)
Loan receivables						
Credit card	763	165	928	613	139	752
Personal loans	51	25	76	138	3	141
Private student loans	54	38	92	55	23	78
PCI student loans	(35)	15	(20)	(35)	9	(26)
Other	15	3	18	4	2	6
Total loan receivables	848	246	1,094	775	176	951
Total interest income	867	378	1,245	777	255	1,032
Interest-bearing liabilities						
Interest-bearing deposits						
Time deposits	85	91	176	43	37	80
Money market deposits	—	35	35	(1)	14	13
Other interest-bearing savings deposits	49	132	181	40	26	66
Total interest-bearing deposits	134	258	392	82	77	159
Borrowings						
Securitized borrowings	(13)	67	54	—	33	33
Other long-term borrowings	21	24	45	58	—	58
Total borrowings	8	91	99	58	33	91
Total interest expense	142	349	491	140	110	250
Net interest income	\$ 725	\$ 29	\$ 754	\$ 637	\$ 145	\$ 782

The rate/volume variance for each category has been allocated on a consistent basis between rate and volume (1) variances between the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016 based on the percentage of the rate or volume variance to the sum of the two absolute variances.

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Loan Quality

Loan receivables consist of the following (dollars in millions):

	December 31,				
	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Credit card loans	\$72,876	\$67,291	\$61,522	\$57,896	\$56,128
Other loans					
Personal loans	7,454	7,374	6,481	5,490	5,007
Private student loans	7,728	7,076	6,393	5,647	4,850
Mortgage loans held for sale ⁽¹⁾	—	—	—	—	122
Other	817	423	274	236	202
Total other loans	15,999	14,873	13,148	11,373	10,181
PCI loans ⁽²⁾	1,637	2,084	2,584	3,116	3,660
Total loan receivables	90,512	84,248	77,254	72,385	69,969
Allowance for loan losses	(3,041)	(2,621)	(2,167)	(1,869)	(1,746)
Net loan receivables	\$87,471	\$81,627	\$75,087	\$70,516	\$68,223

(1) On June 16, 2015, we announced the closing of our mortgage origination business. Pursuant to that announcement, we sold all mortgage loans held for sale in our portfolio and ceased originating new mortgages.

(2) Represents PCI private student loans. See Note 4: Loan Receivables to our consolidated financial statements for more information regarding PCI loans.

Provision and Allowance for Loan Losses

Provision for loan losses is the expense related to maintaining the allowance for loan losses at an appropriate level to absorb the estimated probable losses in the loan portfolio at each period end date. While establishing the estimate for probable losses requires significant management judgment, the factors that influence the provision for loan losses include:

- The impact of general economic conditions on the consumer, including national and regional conditions, unemployment levels, bankruptcy trends and interest rate movements;
- Changes in consumer spending, payment and credit utilization behaviors;
- Changes in our loan portfolio, including the overall mix of accounts, products and loan balances within the portfolio and maturation of the loan portfolio;
- The level and direction of historical and anticipated loan delinquencies and charge-offs;
- The credit quality of the loan portfolio, which reflects, among other factors, our credit granting practices and effectiveness of collection efforts; and
- Regulatory changes or new regulatory guidance.

In determining the allowance for loan losses, we estimate probable losses separately for segments of the loan portfolio that have similar risk characteristics. We use a migration analysis to estimate the likelihood that a loan will progress through the various stages of delinquency. We use other analyses to estimate losses incurred from non-delinquent accounts, which adds to the identification of loss emergence. We use these analyses together as a basis for determining our allowance for loan losses.

The provision for loan losses is the amount of expense realized after considering the level of net charge-offs in the period and the required amount of allowance for loan losses at the balance sheet date. For the year ended December 31, 2018, the provision for loan losses increased by \$456 million, or 18%, as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 primarily due to higher levels of net charge-offs, partially offset by a lower reserve build. For the year ended December 31, 2017, the provision for loan losses increased by \$720 million, or 39%, as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 primarily due to higher levels of net charge-offs combined with a larger build of the allowance for loan losses.

The allowance for loan losses was \$3.0 billion at December 31, 2018, which reflects a \$420 million reserve build over the amount of the allowance for loan losses at December 31, 2017. The reserve build, which related

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primarily to credit card loans, was because of seasoning of continued loan growth and supply-driven credit normalization, due to increasing consumer leverage.

The allowance for loan losses was \$2.6 billion at December 31, 2017, which reflected a \$454 million reserve build over the amount of the allowance for loan losses at December 31, 2016. The reserve build, which related primarily to credit card loans along with builds in personal and student loan reserves, was due to was due to seasoning of continued loan growth and increasing consumer leverage.

The following tables provide changes in our allowance for loan losses (dollars in millions):

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2018				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$2,147	\$ 301	\$ 162	\$ 11	\$2,621
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	2,594	345	95	1	3,035
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(2,734)	(345)	(97)	(6)	(3,182)
Recoveries	521	37	12	—	570
Net charge-offs	(2,213)	(308)	(85)	(6)	(2,612)
Other ⁽²⁾	—	—	(3)	—	(3)
Balance at end of period	\$2,528	\$ 338	\$ 169	\$ 6	\$3,041

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2017				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$1,790	\$ 200	\$ 158	\$ 19	\$2,167
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	2,159	332	93	(5)	2,579
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(2,263)	(258)	(94)	(3)	(2,618)
Recoveries	461	27	11	—	499
Net charge-offs	(1,802)	(231)	(83)	(3)	(2,119)
Other ⁽²⁾	—	—	(6)	—	(6)
Balance at end of period	\$2,147	\$ 301	\$ 162	\$ 11	\$2,621

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2016				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$1,554	\$ 155	\$ 143	\$ 17	\$1,869
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	1,579	196	82	2	1,859
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(1,786)	(172)	(76)	—	(2,034)
Recoveries	443	21	9	—	473
Net charge-offs	(1,343)	(151)	(67)	—	(1,561)
Balance at end of period	\$1,790	\$ 200	\$ 158	\$ 19	\$2,167

(1) Includes both PCI and non-PCI private student loans.

(2) Net change in reserves on PCI pools having no remaining non-accretable difference.

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The following tables provide changes in our allowance for loan losses (dollars in millions):

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2015				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$ 1,474	\$ 120	\$ 135	\$ 17	\$ 1,746
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	1,300	147	64	1	1,512
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(1,660)	(129)	(65)	(1)	(1,855)
Recoveries	440	17	9	—	466
Net charge-offs	(1,220)	(112)	(56)	(1)	(1,389)
Balance at end of period	\$ 1,554	\$ 155	\$ 143	\$ 17	\$ 1,869

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2014				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$ 1,406	\$ 112	\$ 113	\$ 17	\$ 1,648
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	1,259	102	79	3	1,443
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(1,636)	(105)	(62)	(3)	(1,806)
Recoveries	445	11	5	—	461
Net charge-offs	(1,191)	(94)	(57)	(3)	(1,345)
Balance at end of period	\$ 1,474	\$ 120	\$ 135	\$ 17	\$ 1,746

(1) Includes both PCI and non-PCI private student loans.

Net Charge-offs

Our net charge-offs include the principal amount of losses charged off less principal recoveries and exclude charged-off and recovered interest and fees and fraud losses. Charged-off and recovered interest and fees are recorded in interest income and loan fee income, respectively, which is effectively a reclassification of the provision for loan losses, while fraud losses are recorded in other expense. Credit card loan receivables are charged off at the end of the month during which an account becomes 180 days contractually past due. Personal loans and private student loans, which are closed-end consumer loan receivables, are generally charged off at the end of the month during which an account becomes 120 days contractually past due. Generally, customer bankruptcies and probate accounts are charged off at the end of the month 60 days following the receipt of notification of the bankruptcy or death but not later than the 180-day or 120-day contractual time frame.

The following table presents amounts and rates of net charge-offs of key loan products (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,									
	2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Credit card loans	\$2,213	3.26%	\$1,802	2.91%	\$1,343	2.34%	\$1,220	2.22%	\$1,191	2.27%
Personal loans	\$308	4.15%	\$231	3.30%	\$151	2.55%	\$112	2.15%	\$94	2.04%
Private student loans (excluding PCI ⁽¹⁾)	\$85	1.14%	\$83	1.21%	\$67	1.10%	\$56	1.07%	\$57	1.29%

(1) See Note 4: Loan Receivables to our consolidated financial statements for information regarding the accounting for charge-offs on PCI loans.

The net charge-off rates on our credit card and personal loans increased by 35 and 85 basis points, respectively, for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017 as a result of seasoning of

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continued loan growth and supply-driven credit normalization. Net charge-offs on our private student loans remained relatively flat for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017.

The net charge-off rates on our credit card, personal and private student loans increased by 57, 75 and 11 basis points, respectively, for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016 as a result of seasoning of continued loan growth and increasing consumer leverage.

Delinquencies

Delinquencies are an indicator of credit quality at a point in time. A loan balance is considered delinquent when contractual payments on the loan become 30 days past due.

The following table presents the amounts and delinquency rates of key loan products that are 30 and 90 days or more delinquent, loan receivables that are not accruing interest, regardless of delinquency and restructured loans (dollars in millions):

	Years Ended December 31,									
	2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Loans 30 or more days delinquent										
Credit card loans	\$ 1,772	2.43%	\$ 1,532	2.28%	\$ 1,252	2.04%	\$ 995	1.72%	\$ 971	1.73%
Personal loans	\$ 119	1.60%	\$ 103	1.40%	\$ 74	1.12%	\$ 49	0.89%	\$ 40	0.79%
Private student loans (excluding PCI loans ⁽¹⁾)	\$ 155	2.00%	\$ 167	2.35%	\$ 141	2.22%	\$ 108	1.91%	\$ 87	1.80%
Loans 90 or more days delinquent										
Credit card loans	\$ 887	1.22%	\$ 751	1.12%	\$ 597	0.97%	\$ 490	0.85%	\$ 480	0.85%
Personal loans	\$ 35	0.47%	\$ 30	0.41%	\$ 19	0.29%	\$ 15	0.27%	\$ 11	0.22%
Private student loans (excluding PCI loans ⁽¹⁾)	\$ 38	0.49%	\$ 33	0.47%	\$ 35	0.55%	\$ 24	0.43%	\$ 25	0.52%
Loans not accruing interest	\$ 302	0.34%	\$ 233	0.28%	\$ 216	0.29%	\$ 224	0.32%	\$ 183	0.28%
Restructured loans										
Credit card loans ⁽²⁾	\$ 2,248	3.08%	\$ 1,316	1.96%	\$ 1,085	1.76%	\$ 1,019	1.76%	\$ 1,037	1.85%
Personal loans ⁽³⁾	\$ 152	2.04%	\$ 111	1.51%	\$ 81	1.25%	\$ 68	1.24%	\$ 55	1.10%
Private student loans (excluding PCI loans ⁽¹⁾) ⁽⁴⁾	\$ 182	2.36%	\$ 137	1.94%	\$ 86	1.35%	\$ 48	0.85%	\$ 38	0.78%

(1) Excludes PCI loans, which are accounted for on a pooled basis. Since a pool is accounted for as a single asset with a single composite interest rate and aggregate expectation of cash flows, the past-due status of a pool, or that of the individual loans within a pool, is not meaningful. Because we are recognizing interest income on a pool of loans, it is all considered to be performing.

(2) Restructured credit card loans include \$124 million, \$74 million, \$60 million, \$44 million and \$44 million at December 31, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014, respectively, which are also included in loans 90 or more days delinquent.

(3) Restructured personal loans include \$6 million, \$5 million, \$2 million, \$4 million and \$3 million at December 31, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014, respectively, which are also included in loans 90 or more days delinquent.

(4) Restructured private student loans include \$7 million, \$5 million, \$3 million, \$3 million and \$5 million at December 31, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014, respectively, which are also included in loans 90 or more days delinquent.

The 30-day and 90-day delinquency rates for credit card and personal loans at December 31, 2018 increased as compared to December 31, 2017. For private student loans, the 30-day delinquency rate decreased and the 90-day delinquency rate was relatively flat at December 31, 2018 as compared to December 31, 2017. Delinquency rates were

generally higher due to seasoning of continued loan growth and supply-driven credit normalization. The 30-day delinquency rates for credit card, personal and private student loans along with the 90-day delinquency rates for credit card and personal loans at December 31, 2017 increased as compared to December 31, 2016 primarily due to seasoning of continued loan growth and increasing consumer leverage. The amount of private student loans that were 90 or more days delinquent was relatively flat in December 31, 2017 as compared to December 31, 2016.

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The restructured credit card, personal and private student loan balances increased at December 31, 2018 as compared to December 31, 2017 due to seasoning of continued loan growth and greater utilization of programs available to assist borrowers having difficulties meeting payment obligations.

The restructured credit card and personal loan balances increased at December 31, 2017 as compared to December 31, 2016 due to loan growth and seasoning. The restructured private student loan balance increased at December 31, 2017 as compared to December 31, 2016 as a result of greater utilization of programs available as more loans have entered into repayment.

Maturities and Sensitivities of Loan Receivables to Changes in Interest Rates

Our loan portfolio had the following maturity distribution⁽¹⁾ (dollars in millions):

At December 31, 2018	Due One Year or Less	Due After One Year Through Five Years	Due After Five Years	Total
Credit card loans	\$21,696	\$38,728	\$12,452	\$72,876
Personal loans	2,077	5,082	295	7,454
Private student loans (excluding PCI)	187	1,770	5,771	7,728
PCI loans	178	558	901	1,637
Other loans	367	94	356	817
Total loan portfolio	\$24,505	\$46,232	\$19,775	\$90,512

Because of the uncertainty regarding loan repayment patterns, the above amounts have been calculated using contractually required minimum payments. Historically, actual loan repayments have been higher than such minimum payments and, therefore, the above amounts may not necessarily be indicative of our actual loan repayments.

(1) At December 31, 2018, approximately \$42.7 billion of our loan portfolio due after one year had interest rates tied to an index and approximately \$23.3 billion were fixed-rate loans.

Modified and Restructured Loans

For information regarding modified and restructured loans, see Note 4: Loan Receivables to our consolidated financial statements.

Other Income

The following table presents the components of other income (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,			2018 vs.		2017 vs.	
				2017		2016	
	2018	2017	2016	Increase (Decrease)		(Decrease) Increase	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	%	\$	%
Discount and interchange revenue ⁽¹⁾	\$1,074	\$1,052	\$1,055	\$22	2 %	\$(3)	— %
Protection products	204	223	239	(19)	(9) %	(16)	(7) %
Loan fee income	402	363	343	39	11 %	20	6 %
Transaction processing revenue	178	167	155	11	7 %	12	8 %
Other income	97	92	89	5	5 %	3	3 %
Total other income	\$1,955	\$1,897	\$1,881	\$58	3 %	\$16	1 %

(1) Net of rewards, including Cashback Bonus rewards, of \$1.8 billion, \$1.6 billion and \$1.4 billion for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, respectively.

For a detailed description of our revenue recognition accounting policies for other income, see Note 2: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies to our consolidated financial statements.

Total other income increased \$58 million for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017, which was primarily driven by higher discount and interchange revenue and loan fee income. The increase in discount and interchange revenue is partially offset by higher rewards, both of which were primarily the

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result of higher sales volume. Loan fee income increased primarily as the result of an increase in late fees due to a higher number of delinquent accounts.

Total other income stayed relatively flat for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016. Discount and interchange revenue remained flat for the year ended December 31, 2017 in comparison to the year ended December 31, 2016 with offsetting increases in gross discount and interchange revenue and rewards, both of which were primarily the result of higher sales volume. Loan fee income increased for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the previous year primarily due to an increase in late fees.

Other Expense

The following table represents the components of other expense (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended			2018 vs.		2017 vs.	
	December 31,			2017		2016	
	2018	2017	2016	Increase		(Decrease)	
				\$	%	\$	%
Employee compensation and benefits	\$1,627	\$1,512	\$1,379	\$115	8 %	\$133	10 %
Marketing and business development	857	776	731	81	10 %	45	6 %
Information processing and communications	350	315	339	35	11 %	(24)	(7)%
Professional fees	672	655	605	17	3 %	50	8 %
Premises and equipment	102	99	95	3	3 %	4	4 %
Other expense	469	424	435	45	11 %	(11)	(3)%
Total other expense	\$4,077	\$3,781	\$3,584	\$296	8 %	\$197	5 %

Total other expense increased \$296 million for the year ended December 31, 2018 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017. The increase was primarily driven by higher employee compensation and benefits, marketing and business development costs, other expenses and information processing and communications. Employee compensation and benefits increased due to additional headcount for business growth and technological capabilities, as well as higher average salaries. The increase in marketing and business development costs was primarily due to higher acquisition costs and brand advertising targeting loan and deposit growth. The increase in other expense was largely driven by an increase in incentives supporting global merchant acceptance. Information processing and communications increased as the result of higher investments in infrastructure and analytic capabilities.

Total other expense increased \$197 million for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016. The increase was primarily driven by an increase in employee compensation and benefits, professional fees, marketing and business development costs, offset by a decrease in information processing and communications. The increase in employee compensation and benefits was driven by the impact of additional headcount for regulatory and compliance needs and business growth, higher average salaries and a one-time special bonus for eligible employees in response to the TCJA in 2017. The increase in professional fees was driven primarily by investments in technology and infrastructure, offset by the completion of a look back project related to anti-money laundering remediation in 2016. The increase in marketing and business development was primarily the result of higher brand advertising and loan acquisition costs that contributed to loan growth. The decrease in information processing and communications was primarily the result of infrastructure efficiencies.

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Income Tax Expense

The following table reconciles our effective tax rate to the U.S. federal statutory income tax rate:

	For the Years Ended			
	December 31,		2016	
	2018	2017	2016	
U.S. federal statutory income tax rate	21.0 %	35.0 %	35.0 %	
U.S. state, local and other income taxes, net of U.S. federal income tax benefits	3.6	3.1	2.7	
Revaluation of net deferred tax assets and other investments due to tax reform ⁽¹⁾	—	5.1	—	
Tax credits	(1.3)	(1.3)	(1.8)	
Other	0.5	(1.2)	(1.4)	
Effective income tax rate	23.8 %	40.7 %	34.5 %	
Income tax expense	\$855	\$1,438	\$1,263	

(1) See Note 3: Investments — Other Investments to our consolidated financial statements for a description of these investments.

For the year ended December 31, 2018, income tax expense decreased \$583 million, or 40.5%, and the effective income tax rate decreased 16.9 percentage points as compared to the year ended December 31, 2017. The decrease in both the effective tax rate and income tax expense is primarily due to a reduction in the U.S. federal statutory income tax rate from 35% to 21% and other impacts of TCJA.

Income tax expense increased \$175 million, or 13.9%, and the effective income tax rate increased 6.2 percentage points for the year ended December 31, 2017 as compared to the year ended December 31, 2016. The increase in both the effective tax rate and income tax expense is primarily due to the revaluation of net deferred tax assets and certain investments as a result of a reduction in the U.S. federal statutory income tax rate from 35% to 21% under the TCJA.

Liquidity and Capital Resources

Funding and Liquidity

We seek to maintain stable, diversified and cost-effective funding sources and a strong liquidity profile in order to fund our business and repay or refinance our maturing obligations under both normal operating conditions and periods of economic or financial stress. In managing our liquidity risk, we seek to maintain a prudent liability maturity profile and ready access to an ample store of primary and contingent liquidity sources. Our primary funding sources include direct-to-consumer and brokered deposits, public term asset-backed securitizations and other short-term and long-term borrowings. Our primary liquidity sources include a liquidity portfolio comprised of highly liquid, unencumbered assets, including cash and cash equivalents and investment securities, and borrowing capacity through private term asset-backed securitizations. In addition, we have unused borrowing capacity with the Federal Reserve discount window, which provides another source of contingent liquidity.

Funding Sources

Deposits

We offer deposit products to customers through two channels: (i) through direct marketing, internet origination and affinity relationships (“direct-to-consumer deposits”); and (ii) indirectly through contractual arrangements with securities brokerage firms (“brokered deposits”). Direct-to-consumer deposits include online savings accounts, certificates of deposit, money market accounts, IRA certificates of deposit and checking accounts, while brokered deposits include certificates of deposit and sweep accounts. At December 31, 2018, we had \$44.7 billion of direct-to-consumer deposits and \$23.1 billion of brokered and other deposits.

Credit Card Securitization Financing

We securitize credit card receivables as a source of funding. We access the asset-backed securitization market using the Discover Card Master Trust I (“DCMT”) and the Discover Card Execution Note Trust (“DCENT”), through which we issue DCENT DiscoverSeries notes in both public and private transactions. From time to time, we may add credit card receivables to these trusts to create sufficient funding capacity for future securitizations while managing

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seller's interest. We retain significant exposure to the performance of trust assets through holdings of the seller's interest and subordinated security classes of DCENT.

The securitization structures include certain features designed to protect investors. The primary feature relates to the availability and adequacy of cash flows in the securitized pool of receivables to meet contractual requirements, the insufficiency of which triggers early repayment of the securities. We refer to this as "economic early amortization", which is based on excess spread levels. Excess spread is the amount by which income received by a trust during a collection period, including interest collections, fees and interchange, exceeds the fees and expenses of the trust during such collection period, including interest expense, servicing fees and charged-off receivables. In the event of an economic early amortization, which would occur if the excess spread fell below 0% on a three-month rolling average basis, we would be required to repay the affected outstanding securitized borrowings using available collections received by the trust; the period of ultimate repayment would be determined by the amount and timing of collections received. An early amortization event would impair our liquidity, and may require us to utilize our available non-securitization related contingent liquidity or rely on alternative funding sources, which may or may not be available at the time. As of December 31, 2018, the DiscoverSeries three-month rolling average excess spread was 13.49%.

We may elect to add receivables to the restricted pool of receivables, subject to certain requirements. Through our wholly-owned indirect subsidiary, Discover Funding LLC, we are required to maintain a contractual minimum level of receivables in the trust in excess of the face value of outstanding investors' interests. This excess is referred to as the minimum seller's interest. The required minimum seller's interest in the pool of trust receivables, which is included in credit card loan receivables restricted for securitization investors, is set at approximately 7% in excess of the total investors' interests (which includes interests held by third parties as well as those interests held by us). If the level of receivables in the trust were to fall below the required minimum, we would be required to add receivables from the unrestricted pool of receivables, which would increase the amount of credit card loan receivables restricted for securitization investors. A decline in the amount of the excess seller's interest could occur if balance repayments and charge-offs exceeded new lending on the securitized accounts or as a result of changes in total outstanding investors' interests. Seller's interest is impacted by seasonality as higher balance repayments tend to occur in the first calendar year quarter. If we could not add enough receivables to satisfy the minimum seller's interest requirement, an early amortization (or repayment) of investors' interests would be triggered. During 2018, we elected to add \$3.0 billion of credit card loan receivables to the securitization trust, which increased seller's interest. The addition increases capacity to issue notes to investors, including draws on commitments through privately placed securitizations, and results in a decrease in receivables pledged at the Federal Reserve discount window.

At December 31, 2018, we had \$16.8 billion of outstanding public asset-backed securities and \$5.2 billion of outstanding subordinated asset-backed securities that had been issued to our wholly-owned subsidiaries.

The following table summarizes expected contractual maturities of the investors' interests in credit card securitizations, excluding those that have been issued to our wholly-owned subsidiaries (dollars in millions):

At December 31, 2018	Total	Less Than One Year	One Year Through Three Years	Four Years Through Five Years	After Five Years
Scheduled maturities of long-term borrowings - owed to credit card securitization investors	\$16,720	\$6,233	\$5,588	\$3,578	\$1,321

The triple-A rating of DCENT Class A Notes issued to date has been based, in part, on an FDIC rule, which created a safe harbor that provides that the FDIC, as conservator or receiver, will not, using its power to disaffirm or repudiate contracts, seek to reclaim or recover assets transferred in connection with a securitization, or recharacterize them as assets of the insured depository institution, provided such transfer satisfies the conditions for sale accounting treatment under previous GAAP. Although the implementation of the Financial Accounting Standards Board Accounting Standards Codification Topic 860, Transfers and Servicing, no longer qualified certain transfers of assets

for sale accounting treatment, the FDIC approved a final rule that preserved the safe-harbor treatment applicable to revolving trusts and master trusts, including DCMT, so long as those trusts would have satisfied the original FDIC safe harbor if evaluated under GAAP pertaining to transfers of financial assets in effect prior to December 1, 2009. Other legislative and regulatory developments may, however, impact our ability and/or desire to issue asset-backed securities in the future.

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Other Long-Term Borrowings—Student Loans

At December 31, 2018, \$198 million of remaining principal balance was outstanding on securitized debt assumed as part of our acquisition of The Student Loan Corporation. Principal and interest payments on the underlying student loans will reduce the balance of these secured borrowings over time.

Other Long-Term Borrowings—Corporate and Bank Debt

The following table provides a summary of Discover Financial Services (Parent Company) and Discover Bank outstanding fixed-rate debt (dollars in millions):

At December 31, 2018	Principal Amount Outstanding
Discover Financial Services (Parent Company) fixed-rate senior notes, maturing 2019-2027	\$ 2,900
Discover Financial Services (Parent Company) fixed-rate retail notes, maturing 2019-2031	\$ 351
Discover Bank fixed-rate senior bank notes, maturing 2020-2028	\$ 6,100
Discover Bank fixed-rate subordinated bank notes, maturing 2019-2028	\$ 1,200

Certain Discover Financial Services senior notes require us to offer to repurchase the notes at a price equal to 101% of their aggregate principal amount plus accrued and unpaid interest in the event of a change of control involving us and a corresponding ratings downgrade to below investment grade.

Short-Term Borrowings

As part of our regular funding strategy, we may from time to time borrow short-term funds in the federal funds market or the repurchase (“repo”) market through repurchase agreements. Federal funds are short-term, unsecured loans between banks or other financial entities with a Federal Reserve account. Funds borrowed in the repo market are short-term, collateralized loans, usually secured with highly-rated investment securities such as U.S. Treasury bills or notes, or federal agency mortgage bonds or debentures. At December 31, 2018, there were no outstanding balances in the federal funds market or repurchase agreements.

Additional Funding Sources

Private Asset-Backed Securitizations

We have access to committed borrowing capacity through privately placed asset-backed securitizations. At December 31, 2018, we had total committed capacity of \$6.0 billion, \$500 million of which was drawn. While we may utilize funding from these private securitizations from time to time for normal business operations, their committed nature also makes them a reliable contingency funding source. Therefore, we reserve some undrawn capacity, informed by our liquidity stress testing results, for potential contingency funding needs. We also seek to ensure the stability and reliability of these securitizations by staggering their maturity dates, renewing them approximately one year prior to their scheduled maturity dates and periodically drawing them for operational testing purposes and seasonal funding needs.

Federal Reserve

Discover Bank has access to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s discount window. As of December 31, 2018, Discover Bank had \$31.5 billion of available borrowing capacity through the discount window based on the amount and type of assets pledged, primarily consumer loans. We have no borrowings outstanding under the discount window and reserve this capacity as a source of contingent liquidity.

Funding Uses

Our primary uses of funds include the extensions of loans and credit, primarily through Discover Bank, the purchase of investment securities for our liquidity portfolio, working capital, and debt and capital service. We assess funding uses and liquidity needs under stressed and normal operating conditions, considering primary uses of funding, such as on-balance sheet loans, and contingent uses of funding, such as the need to post additional collateral for derivatives positions. In order to anticipate funding needs under stress, we conduct liquidity stress testing to assess the

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impact of idiosyncratic, systemic and hybrid (idiosyncratic and systemic) scenarios with varying levels of liquidity risk reflecting a range of stress severity.

Credit Ratings

Our borrowing costs and capacity in certain funding markets, including those for securitizations and unsecured senior and subordinated debt, may be affected by the credit ratings of DFS, Discover Bank and the securitization trusts. Downgrades in these credit ratings could result in higher interest expense on our unsecured debt and asset securitizations, as well as higher collateral enhancement requirements for both our public and private asset securitizations. In addition to increased funding costs, deterioration in credit ratings could reduce our borrowing capacity in the unsecured debt and asset securitization capital markets.

We also maintain agreements with certain of our derivative counterparties that contain provisions that require DFS and Discover Bank to maintain an investment grade credit rating from specified major credit rating agencies. At December 31, 2018, Discover Bank's credit rating met specified thresholds set by its counterparties. However, if its credit ratings were to fall below investment grade, Discover Bank would be required to post additional collateral, which, as of December 31, 2018, would have been \$20 million. DFS (Parent Company) had no outstanding derivatives as of December 31, 2018, and therefore, no collateral was required.

On October 30, 2018, Moody's upgraded the credit ratings of DFS and Discover Bank by one notch; our senior unsecured debt ratings are now Baa3 for DFS and Baa2 for Discover Bank. The table below reflects our current credit ratings and outlooks, including the upgrade from Moody's:

	Moody's Investors Service	Standard & Poor's	Fitch Ratings
Discover Financial Services			
Senior unsecured debt	Baa3	BBB-	BBB+
Outlook for Discover Financial Services senior unsecured debt	Stable	Stable	Stable
Discover Bank			
Senior unsecured debt	Baa2	BBB	BBB+
Outlook for Discover Bank senior unsecured debt	Stable	Stable	Stable
Subordinated debt	Baa3	BBB-	BBB
Discover Card Execution Note Trust Class A ⁽¹⁾	Aaa(sf)	AAA(sf)	AAA(sf)

(1) An "sf" in the rating denotes rating agency identification for structured finance product ratings.

A credit rating is not a recommendation to buy, sell or hold securities, may be subject to revision or withdrawal at any time by the assigning rating organization, and each rating should be evaluated independently of any other rating.

Liquidity

We seek to ensure that we have adequate liquidity to sustain business operations, fund asset growth and satisfy debt obligations under stressed and normal operating conditions. In addition to the funding sources discussed in the previous section, we also maintain highly liquid, unencumbered assets in our liquidity portfolio that we expect to be able to convert to cash quickly and with little loss of value using either the repo market or outright sales.

We maintain a liquidity risk and funding management policy, which outlines the overall framework and general principles we follow in managing liquidity risk across our business. The policy is approved by the Board of Directors with implementation responsibilities delegated to the Asset and Liability Management Committee (the "ALCO"). Additionally, we maintain a liquidity management framework document, which outlines the general strategies, objectives and principles we utilize to manage our liquidity position and the various liquidity risks inherent in our business model. We seek to balance the trade-offs between maintaining too much liquidity, which may be costly, with having too little liquidity, which could cause financial distress. Liquidity risk is centrally managed by the ALCO, which is chaired by our Treasurer and has cross-functional membership. The ALCO monitors the liquidity risk profiles of DFS and Discover Bank and oversees any actions Corporate Treasury may take to ensure that we maintain ready access to our

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funding sources and sufficient liquidity to meet current and projected needs. In addition, the ALCO and our Board of Directors regularly review our compliance with our liquidity limits at DFS and Discover Bank, which are established in accordance with the liquidity risk appetite set by our Board of Directors.

We employ a variety of metrics to monitor and manage liquidity. We utilize early warning indicators (“EWIs”) to detect the initial phases of liquidity stress events and a reporting and escalation process that is designed to be consistent with regulatory guidance. The EWIs include both idiosyncratic and systemic measures, and are monitored on a daily basis and reported to the ALCO regularly. A warning from one or more of these indicators triggers prompt review and decision-making by our senior management team, and in certain instances may lead to the convening of a senior-level response team and activation of our contingency funding plan.

In addition, we conduct liquidity stress testing regularly and ensure contingency funding is in place to address potential liquidity shortfalls. We evaluate a range of stress scenarios that are designed in accordance with regulatory requirements, including idiosyncratic, systemic and a combination of such events that could impact funding sources and our ability to meet liquidity needs. These scenarios measure the projected liquidity position at DFS and Discover Bank across a range of time horizons by comparing estimated contingency funding needs to available contingent liquidity.

Our primary contingent liquidity sources include our liquidity portfolio and private securitizations with unused borrowing capacity. In addition, we have unused borrowing capacity with the Federal Reserve discount window, which provides an additional source of contingent liquidity. We seek to maintain sufficient liquidity to be able to satisfy all maturing obligations and fund business operations for at least 12 months in a severe stress environment. In such an environment, we may also take actions to curtail the size of our balance sheet, which would reduce the need for funding and liquidity.

At December 31, 2018, our liquidity portfolio is comprised of highly liquid, unencumbered assets, including cash and cash equivalents and investment securities. Cash and cash equivalents were primarily in the form of deposits with the Federal Reserve. Investment securities primarily included debt obligations of the U.S. Treasury and residential mortgage-backed securities issued by U.S. government housing agencies or government-sponsored enterprises. These investments are considered highly liquid, and we expect to have the ability to raise cash by selling them, utilizing repurchase agreements or pledging certain of these investments to access secured funding. The size and composition of our liquidity portfolio may fluctuate based upon the size of our balance sheet as well as operational requirements and market conditions.

At December 31, 2018, our liquidity portfolio and undrawn credit facilities were \$52.9 billion, which was \$4.2 billion higher than the balance at December 31, 2017. During the year ended December 31, 2018, the average balance of our liquidity portfolio was \$16.6 billion.

	December 31,	
	2018	2017
	(dollars in millions)	
Liquidity portfolio		
Cash and cash equivalents ⁽¹⁾	\$ 12,832	\$ 12,213
Investment securities ⁽²⁾	3,091	1,347
Total liquidity portfolio	15,923	13,560
Private asset-backed securitizations ⁽³⁾	5,500	6,000
Primary liquidity sources	21,423	19,560
Federal Reserve discount window ⁽³⁾	31,486	29,153
Total liquidity portfolio and undrawn credit facilities	\$ 52,909	\$ 48,713

(1) Cash in the process of settlement and restricted cash are excluded from cash and cash equivalents for liquidity purposes.

(2) Excludes \$42 million and \$48 million of U.S. Treasury securities that have been pledged as swap collateral in lieu of cash as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

(3) See “— Additional Funding Sources” for additional information.

Bank Holding Company Liquidity

The primary uses of funds at the unconsolidated DFS level include debt service obligations (interest payments and return of principal) and capital service and management activities, which include dividend payments on capital

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instruments and the periodic repurchase of shares of our common stock. Our primary sources of funds at the bank holding company level include the proceeds from the issuance of unsecured debt and capital securities, as well as dividends from our subsidiaries, particularly Discover Bank. Under periods of idiosyncratic or systemic stress, the bank holding company could lose or experience impaired access to the capital markets. In addition, our regulators have the discretion to restrict dividend payments from Discover Bank to the bank holding company.

We utilize a measure referred to as Number of Months of Pre-Funding to determine the length of time Discover Financial Services can meet upcoming funding obligations including common and preferred stock dividend payments and debt service obligations using existing cash resources. At December 31, 2018, Discover Financial Services had sufficient cash resources to fund the dividend and debt service payments for more than 18 months.

We structure our debt maturity schedule to minimize the amount of debt maturing within a short period of time. See Note 9: Long-Term Borrowings to our consolidated financial statements for further information regarding our debt.

Capital

Our primary sources of capital are the earnings generated by our businesses and the proceeds from issuances of capital securities. We seek to manage capital to a level and composition sufficient to support the growth and risks of our businesses and to meet regulatory requirements, rating agency targets and debt investor expectations. Within these constraints, we are focused on deploying capital in a manner that provides attractive returns to our stockholders. The level, composition and utilization of capital are influenced by changes in the economic environment, strategic initiatives, and legislative and regulatory developments.

Under regulatory capital requirements adopted by the Federal Reserve and the FDIC, DFS, along with Discover Bank, must maintain minimum levels of capital. Failure to meet minimum capital requirements can result in the initiation of certain mandatory and possibly additional discretionary actions by regulators that, if undertaken, could limit our business activities and have a direct material effect on our financial position and results. We must meet specific capital requirements that involve quantitative measures of assets, liabilities and certain off-balance sheet items, as calculated under regulatory guidance and regulations. Current or future legislative or regulatory initiatives may require us to hold more capital in the future, such as future implementation of the CECL methodology for loan loss reserves.

In 2013, the Federal Reserve, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, and the FDIC issued the Basel III rules applicable to DFS and Discover Bank. Under those rules, DFS and Discover Bank are classified as “Standardized Approach” entities, defined as U.S. banking organizations with consolidated total assets over \$50 billion but not exceeding \$250 billion and consolidated total on-balance sheet foreign exposures less than \$10 billion. Additional phase-in requirements related to components of the final capital rules will become effective through 2019. The Basel III rules revised minimum and “well-capitalized” risk-based capital and leverage ratios, effective January 1, 2015, and refined the definition of what constitutes “capital” for purposes of calculating those ratios of which certain requirements are subject to phase-in periods through the end of 2018 (the “transition period”). During the transition period, the effects of the changes to capital (i.e., certain deductions and adjustments) were recognized in 20% increments from 2015 through 2018. For example, one of the deductions from CET1 capital, intangibles, was subject to a 40% of total deduction in 2015 that increased to 60% in 2016 and so on, until reaching 100% deduction of total in 2018. For additional information regarding the risk-based capital and leverage ratios, see Note 17: Capital Adequacy to our consolidated financial statements.

The Basel III rules also introduced a CCB on top of the minimum risk-weighted asset ratios. The buffer is designed to absorb losses during periods of economic stress. The calculation of the buffer started to phase in beginning on January 1, 2016 at the rate of 0.625% and increases by 0.625% on each subsequent January 1 until it reaches the maximum 2.5% on January 1, 2019. When the CCB is fully phased-in on January 1, 2019, this will effectively result in minimum ratios (including the CCB) of (i) CET1 to risk-weighted assets of at least 7.0%, (ii) Tier 1 capital to risk-weighted assets of at least 8.5% and (iii) Total capital to risk-weighted assets of at least 10.5%. Banking institutions with a capital ratio below the required amount will face constraints on dividends, equity repurchases and compensation based on the amount of the shortfall. There is a proposal under regulatory review that is expected to replace the CCB with a Stress Capital Buffer (“SCB”).

Another main component of the Basel III rules is a prescribed “Standardized Approach” for calculating risk-weighted assets that expands the risk-weight range from 0% to 1,250%. The new range is intended to be more risk-sensitive and

the risk weight assigned depends on the nature of the asset in question.

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The Basel III rules provide for certain threshold based deductions from and adjustments to CET1, to the extent that any one such category exceeds 10% of CET1 or all such categories in the aggregate exceed 15%. In September 2017, federal banking regulators issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that would, among other things, revise certain capital requirements for Standardized Approach banks by raising the 10% of CET1 deduction threshold for certain items to 25% and eliminating the 15% combined deduction threshold applying to these items. These proposed changes are open for public comment and have not yet been implemented.

Basel III also requires disclosures relating to market discipline. This series of disclosures is commonly referred to as “Pillar 3.” The objective is to increase transparency of capital requirements for banking organizations. We are required to make prescribed regulatory disclosures on a quarterly basis regarding our capital structure, capital adequacy, risk exposures and risk-weighted assets. The Pillar 3 disclosures are made publicly available on our website in a report called “Basel III Regulatory Capital Disclosures.”

At December 31, 2018, DFS and Discover Bank met the requirements for “well-capitalized” status under Regulation Y and the prompt corrective action rules, respectively, exceeding the regulatory minimums to which they were subject under the applicable rules.

We disclose tangible common equity, which represents common equity less goodwill and intangibles. Management believes that common stockholders’ equity excluding goodwill and intangibles is a more meaningful measure to investors of our true net asset value. As of December 31, 2018, tangible common equity is not formally defined by U.S. GAAP or codified in the federal banking regulations and, as such, is considered to be a non-GAAP financial measure. Other financial services companies may also disclose this metric and definitions may vary, so we advise users of this information to exercise caution in comparing this metric for different companies.

The following table provides a reconciliation of total common stockholders’ equity (a U.S. GAAP financial measure) to tangible common equity (dollars in millions):

	December 31,	
	2018	2017
Total common stockholders’ equity ⁽¹⁾	\$10,567	\$10,329
Less: goodwill	(255)	(255)
Less: intangible assets, net	(161)	(163)
Tangible common equity	\$10,151	\$9,911

(1) Total common stockholders’ equity is calculated as total stockholders’ equity less preferred stock.

Additionally, we are subject to regulatory requirements imposed by the Federal Reserve as part of its stress testing framework and its CCAR program. In 2018, we were required to submit a capital plan to the Federal Reserve that included an assessment of our expected uses and sources of capital over a nine-quarter planning horizon. We submitted our capital plan to the Federal Reserve in April 2018 for the 2018 CCAR cycle and received notice in June 2018 that the Federal Reserve does not object to our proposed capital plan, including planned quarterly capital distributions through June 30, 2019. Our ability to make capital distributions, including our ability to pay dividends on or repurchase shares of our common stock, will continue to be subject to regulatory limitations imposed by the Federal Reserve. We have been notified that we are not required to participate in CCAR or submit to supervisory stress tests for the 2019 stress test cycle. However, our capital distributions for the period between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020 will be limited based on a formula that is largely based on results from the Federal Reserve’s 2018 supervisory stress test.

In June 2018, the Federal Reserve published the results of its annual supervisory stress tests for bank holding companies with \$50 billion or more in total consolidated assets, including DFS. At that same time, we published company-run stress test results for DFS and Discover Bank. Under rules in effect in 2018, DFS was required to publish company-run stress tests results twice each year and Discover Bank was required to publish bank-run stress tests annually. Certain statutory changes under the EGRRCPA and proposed changes to regulatory rules, if adopted, would substantially change the stress testing and capital planning requirements applicable to us for 2020 and beyond.

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We recently declared a quarterly cash dividend on our common stock of \$0.40 per share, payable on March 7, 2019 to holders of record on February 21, 2019, which is consistent with the amount paid in the third and fourth quarters of 2018. We also recently declared a semi-annual cash dividend on our preferred stock of \$2,750 per share, equal to \$27.50 per depositary share, payable on April 30, 2019 to holders of record on April 15, 2019, which is

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consistent with the amount paid in the second and fourth quarters of 2018.

On July 19, 2018, our Board of Directors approved a share repurchase program authorizing the repurchase of up to \$3.0 billion of our outstanding shares of common stock. The program expires on January 31, 2020 and may be terminated at any time. This program replaced the prior \$2.8 billion share repurchase program, which had \$611 million of remaining authorization. During the year ended December 31, 2018, we repurchased approximately 27 million shares, or 8%, of our outstanding common stock for \$2.0 billion. We expect to continue to repurchase shares under our program from time to time based on market conditions and other factors, subject to legal and regulatory requirements and restrictions, including non-objection from the Federal Reserve as described above. Share repurchases under the program may be made through a variety of methods, including open market purchases, privately negotiated transactions or other purchases, including block trades, accelerated share repurchase transactions, or any combination of such methods.

The amount and size of any future dividends and share repurchases will depend upon our results of operations, financial condition, capital levels, cash requirements, future prospects and other factors. The declaration and payment of future dividends, as well as the amount thereof, are subject to the discretion of our Board of Directors. Holders of our shares of common stock are subject to the prior dividend rights of holders of our preferred stock or the depository shares representing such preferred stock outstanding, and if full dividends have not been declared and paid on all outstanding shares of preferred stock in any dividend period, no dividend may be declared or paid or set aside for payment on our common stock. In addition, as noted above, banking laws and regulations and our banking regulators may limit our ability to pay dividends and make share repurchases, including limitations on the extent to which our banking subsidiaries can provide funds to us through dividends, loans or otherwise. Further, current or future regulatory initiatives may require us to hold more capital in the future. There can be no assurance that we will declare and pay any dividends or repurchase any shares of our common stock in the future. For more information, including conditions and limits on our ability to pay dividends and repurchase our stock, see “Business — Supervision and Regulation — Capital, Dividends and Share Repurchases,” “Risk Factors — Credit, Market and Liquidity Risk — We may be limited in our ability to pay dividends on and repurchase our stock” and “— We are a holding company and depend on payments from our subsidiaries” and Note 17: Capital Adequacy to our consolidated financial statements.

Certain Off-Balance Sheet Arrangements

Guarantees

Guarantees are contracts or indemnification agreements that contingently require us to make payments to a guaranteed party based on changes in an underlying asset, liability, or equity security of a guaranteed party, rate or index. Also included in guarantees are contracts that contingently require the guarantor to make payments to a guaranteed party based on another entity’s failure to perform under an agreement. Our guarantees relate to transactions processed on the Discover Network and certain transactions processed by PULSE and Diners Club. See Note 18: Commitments, Contingencies and Guarantees to our consolidated financial statements for further discussion regarding our guarantees.

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Contractual Obligations and Contingent Liabilities and Commitments

In the normal course of business, we enter into various contractual obligations that may require future cash payments. Contractual obligations include deposits, long-term borrowings, operating and capital lease obligations, interest payments on fixed-rate debt, purchase obligations and other liabilities. Our future cash payments associated with our contractual obligations are summarized below (dollars in millions):

At December 31, 2018	Total	Payments Due By Period			
		Less Than One Year	One Year Through Three Years	Four Years Through Five Years	More Than Five Years
Deposits ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	\$67,759	\$48,273	\$ 12,418	\$ 4,717	\$2,351
Borrowings ⁽³⁾	27,228	6,511	8,090	6,134	6,493
Operating leases	83	13	21	16	33
Interest payments on fixed-rate debt	2,881	631	933	612	705
Purchase obligations ⁽⁴⁾	961	538	398	24	1
Other liabilities ⁽⁵⁾	260	51	46	39	124
Total contractual obligations	\$99,172	\$56,017	\$ 21,906	\$ 11,542	\$9,707

(1) Deposits do not include interest payments because payment amounts and timing cannot be reasonably estimated as certain deposit accounts have early withdrawal rights and the option to roll interest payments into the balance.

(2) Deposits due in less than one year include deposits with indeterminate maturities.

See Note 9: Long-Term Borrowings to our consolidated financial statements for further discussion. Total future

(3) payment of interest charges for the floating-rate notes is estimated to be \$636 million as of December 31, 2018, utilizing the current interest rates as of that date.

Purchase obligations for goods and services include payments under, among other things, consulting, outsourcing, data, advertising, sponsorship, software license, telecommunications agreements and global acceptance contracts.

(4) Purchase obligations also include payments under rewards program agreements with merchants. Purchase obligations at December 31, 2018 reflect the minimum purchase obligation under legally binding contracts with contract terms that are both fixed and determinable. These amounts exclude obligations for goods and services that already have been incurred and are reflected on our consolidated statement of financial condition.

(5) Other liabilities include our expected future contributions to our pension plan, the contingent liability associated with our other investments accounted for under the equity method and a commitment to purchase certain when-issued mortgage-backed securities under an agreement with the Delaware State Housing Authority as part of our community reinvestment initiatives.

As of December 31, 2018 our consolidated statement of financial condition reflects a liability for unrecognized tax benefits of \$83 million and approximately \$18 million of accrued interest and penalties. Since the ultimate amount and timing of any future cash settlements cannot be predicted with reasonable certainty, the estimated income tax obligations about which there is uncertainty have been excluded from the contractual obligations table. See Note 15: Income Taxes to our consolidated financial statements for further information concerning our tax obligations.

We extend credit for consumer loans, primarily arising from agreements with customers for unused lines of credit on certain credit cards and certain other loan products, provided there is no violation of conditions established in the related agreement. At December 31, 2018, our unused credit arrangements were approximately \$196.4 billion. These arrangements, substantially all of which we can terminate at any time and which do not necessarily represent future cash requirements, are periodically reviewed based on account usage, customer creditworthiness and loan qualification. In addition, in the ordinary course of business, we guarantee payment on behalf of subsidiaries relating to contractual obligations with external parties. The activities of the subsidiaries covered by any such guarantees are included in our consolidated financial statements.

Item 7A. Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk

Market risk refers to the risk that a change in the level of one or more market prices, rates, indices, correlations or other market factors will result in losses for a position or portfolio. We are exposed to market risk primarily from changes in interest rates.

Interest Rate Risk

We borrow money from a variety of depositors and institutions in order to provide loans to our customers, as well as invest in other assets and our business. These loans and other assets earn interest, which we use to pay interest on the money borrowed. Our net interest income and, therefore, earnings, will be reduced if the interest rate earned on assets increases at a slower pace than the interest rate on our borrowings. Changes in interest rates and our

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competitors' responses to those changes may influence customer payment rates, loan balances or deposit account activity. As a result, we may incur higher funding costs, which has the potential to decrease earnings.

Our interest rate risk management policies are designed to measure and manage the potential volatility of earnings that may arise from changes in interest rates by having a financing portfolio that reflects our mix of variable- and fixed-rate assets. To the extent that the repricing characteristics of the assets and liabilities in a particular portfolio are not sufficiently matched, we may utilize interest rate derivative contracts, such as swap agreements, to achieve our objectives. Interest rate swap agreements effectively convert the underlying asset or liability from fixed- to floating-rate or from floating- to fixed-rate. See Note 21: Derivatives and Hedging Activities to our consolidated financial statements for information on our derivatives activity.

We use an interest rate sensitivity simulation to assess our interest rate risk exposure. For purposes of presenting the possible earnings effect of a hypothetical, adverse change in interest rates over the 12-month period from our reporting date, we assume that all interest rate sensitive assets and liabilities will be impacted by a hypothetical, immediate 100 basis point change in interest rates relative to market consensus expectations as of the beginning of the period. The sensitivity is based upon the hypothetical assumption that all relevant types of interest rates would change instantaneously, simultaneously and to the same degree.

Our interest rate sensitive assets include our variable rate loan receivables and the assets that make up our liquidity portfolio. We have limitations on our ability to mitigate interest rate risk by adjusting rates on existing balances and competitive actions may limit our ability to increase the rates that we charge to customers for new loans. At December 31, 2018, the majority of our credit card and student loans charge variable rates. Assets with rates that are fixed at period end but will mature, or otherwise contractually reset to a market-based indexed rate or other fixed rate prior to the end of the 12-month period, are considered to be rate sensitive. The latter category includes certain revolving credit card loans that may be offered at below-market rates for an introductory period, such as balance transfers and special promotional programs, after which the loans will contractually reprice in accordance with our normal market-based pricing structure. For purposes of measuring rate sensitivity for such loans, only the effect of the hypothetical 100 basis point increase in the underlying market-based indexed rate has been considered. For assets that have a fixed interest rate but contractually will, or are assumed to, reset to a market-based indexed rate or other fixed rate during the next 12 months, earnings sensitivity is measured from the expected repricing date. In addition, for all interest rate sensitive assets, earnings sensitivity is calculated net of expected loan losses, which for purposes of this analysis, are assumed to remain unchanged relative to our baseline expectations over the analysis horizon.

Interest rate sensitive liabilities are assumed to be those for which the stated interest rate is not contractually fixed for the next 12-month period. Thus, liabilities that vary with changes in a market-based index, such as the federal funds rate or London Interbank Offered Rate, which will reset before the end of the 12-month period, or liabilities whose rates are fixed at the fiscal period end but will mature and are assumed to be replaced with a market-based indexed rate prior to the end of the 12-month period, are also considered to be rate sensitive. For these fixed-rate liabilities, earnings sensitivity is measured from the expected maturity date.

Net interest income sensitivity requires assumptions to be made regarding market conditions, consumer behavior, and the overall growth and composition of the balance sheet. These assumptions are inherently uncertain and, as a result, actual earnings may differ from the simulated earnings presented above. Our actual earnings depend on multiple factors including, but not limited to, the direction and timing of changes in interest rates, the movement of short-term versus long-term rates, balance sheet composition, competitor actions affecting pricing decisions in our loans and deposits, and strategic actions undertaken by management.

The following table shows the impacts to net interest income over the following 12-month period that we estimate would result from an immediate and parallel change in interest rates affecting all interest rate sensitive assets and liabilities (dollars in millions).

	At December		At December	
	31, 2018		31, 2017	
Basis point change \$	%	\$	%	

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+100	\$192	2.01 %	\$179	2.03 %
-100	\$(194)	(2.03)%	\$(190)	(2.15)%

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Item 8. Financial Statements and Supplementary Data

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

To the Board of Directors and Stockholders of

Discover Financial Services

Riverwoods, IL

Opinion on Internal Control over Financial Reporting

We have audited the internal control over financial reporting of Discover Financial Services (the “Company”) as of December 31, 2018, based on the criteria established in Internal Control — Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (“COSO”). In our opinion, the Company maintained, in all material respects, effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2018, based on criteria established in Internal Control - Integrated Framework (2013) issued by COSO.

We have also audited, in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (“PCAOB”), the consolidated statement of financial condition, and the related consolidated statements of income, comprehensive income, changes in stockholders’ equity, and cash flows as of and for the year ended December 31, 2018 of the Company and our report dated February 20, 2019 expressed an unqualified opinion on those financial statements.

Basis for Opinion

The Company’s management is responsible for maintaining effective internal control over financial reporting and for its assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, included in the accompanying Management’s Annual Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Company’s internal control over financial reporting based on our audit. We are a public accounting firm registered with the PCAOB and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB.

We conducted our audit in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether effective internal control over financial reporting was maintained in all material respects. Our audit included obtaining an understanding of internal control over financial reporting, assessing the risk that a material weakness exists, testing and evaluating the design and operating effectiveness of internal control based on the assessed risk, and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

Definition and Limitations of Internal Control over Financial Reporting

A company’s internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A company’s internal control over financial reporting includes those policies and procedures that (1) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of the company; (2) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and that receipts and expenditures of the company are being made only in accordance with authorizations of management and directors of the company; and (3) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of unauthorized acquisition, use, or disposition of the company’s assets that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

/s/ DELOITTE & TOUCHE LLP

Chicago, Illinois

February 20, 2019

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REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

To the Board of Directors and Stockholders of
Discover Financial Services
Riverwoods, IL

Opinion on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of financial condition of Discover Financial Services (the “Company”) as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, the related consolidated statements of income, comprehensive income, stockholders’ equity, and cash flows, for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2018, and the related notes (collectively referred to as the “financial statements”). In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for each of the three years in the period ended December 31, 2018, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

We have also audited, in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (“PCAOB”), the Company’s internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2018, based on the criteria established in Internal Control — Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission and our report dated February 20, 2019 expressed an unqualified opinion on the Company’s internal control over financial reporting.

Basis for Opinion

These financial statements are the responsibility of the Company’s management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Company’s financial statements based on our audits. We are a public accounting firm registered with the PCAOB and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB. We conducted our audits in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether due to error or fraud. Our audits included performing procedures to assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to error or fraud, and performing procedures that respond to those risks. Such procedures included examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. Our audits also included evaluating the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

/s/ DELOITTE & TOUCHE LLP

Chicago, Illinois

February 20, 2019

We have served as the Company’s auditor since the spin-off from its former parent company in 2007 and as Discover Bank’s (a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Company) auditor since 1985.

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DISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES

Consolidated Statements of Financial Condition

	December 31,	
	2018	2017
	(dollars in millions, except share amounts)	
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 13,299	\$ 13,306
Restricted cash	1,846	81
Investment securities (includes \$3,133 and \$1,395 at fair value at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively)	3,370	1,568
Loan receivables		
Loan receivables	90,512	84,248
Allowance for loan losses	(3,041)	(2,621)
Net loan receivables	87,471	81,627
Premises and equipment, net	936	825
Goodwill	255	255
Intangible assets, net	161	163
Other assets	2,215	2,262
Total assets	\$ 109,553	\$ 100,087
Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity		
Liabilities		
Deposits		
Interest-bearing deposit accounts	\$ 67,084	\$ 58,165
Non-interest bearing deposit accounts	675	599
Total deposits	67,759	58,764
Long-term borrowings	27,228	26,326
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	3,436	4,105
Total liabilities	98,423	89,195
Commitments, contingencies and guarantees (Notes 15, 18 and 19)		
Stockholders' Equity		
Common stock, par value \$0.01 per share; 2,000,000,000 shares authorized; 564,851,848 and 563,497,702 shares issued at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively	6	6
Preferred stock, par value \$0.01 per share; 200,000,000 shares authorized; 5,700 shares issued and outstanding and aggregate liquidation preference of \$570 at December 31, 2018 and 2017	563	563
Additional paid-in capital	4,130	4,042
Retained earnings	18,906	16,687
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(156)	(152)
Treasury stock, at cost; 233,406,005 and 205,577,507 shares at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively	(12,319)	(10,254)
Total stockholders' equity	11,130	10,892
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 109,553	\$ 100,087

The table below presents the carrying amounts of certain assets and liabilities of Discover Financial Services' consolidated variable interest entities ("VIEs"), which are included in the consolidated statements of financial condition above. The assets in the table below include those assets that can only be used to settle obligations of the consolidated VIEs. The liabilities in the table below include third-party liabilities of consolidated VIEs only and exclude intercompany balances that eliminate in consolidation. The liabilities also exclude amounts for which creditors have

recourse to the general credit of Discover Financial Services.

	December 31,	
	2018	2017
	(dollars in millions)	
Assets		
Restricted cash	\$1,846	\$81
Loan receivables	\$33,424	\$31,781
Allowance for loan losses allocated to securitized loan receivables	\$(1,150)	\$(998)
Other assets	\$7	\$5
Liabilities		
Long-term borrowings	\$16,917	\$16,536
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	\$18	\$16

See Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

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DISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES

Consolidated Statements of Income

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
	(dollars in millions, except per share amounts)		
Interest income			
Credit card loans	\$8,835	\$7,907	\$7,155
Other loans	1,726	1,560	1,361
Investment securities	40	27	38
Other interest income	292	154	62
Total interest income	10,893	9,648	8,616
Interest expense			
Deposits	1,238	846	687
Long-term borrowings	901	802	711
Total interest expense	2,139	1,648	1,398
Net interest income	8,754	8,000	7,218
Provision for loan losses	3,035	2,579	1,859
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	5,719	5,421	5,359
Other income			
Discount and interchange revenue, net	1,074	1,052	1,055
Protection products revenue	204	223	239
Loan fee income	402	363	343
Transaction processing revenue	178	167	155
Other income	97	92	89
Total other income	1,955	1,897	1,881
Other expense			
Employee compensation and benefits	1,627	1,512	1,379
Marketing and business development	857	776	731
Information processing and communications	350	315	339
Professional fees	672	655	605
Premises and equipment	102	99	95
Other expense	469	424	435
Total other expense	4,077	3,781	3,584
Income before income tax expense	3,597	3,537	3,656
Income tax expense	855	1,438	1,263
Net income	\$2,742	\$2,099	\$2,393
Net income allocated to common stockholders	\$2,689	\$2,031	\$2,339
Basic earnings per common share	\$7.81	\$5.43	\$5.77
Diluted earnings per common share	\$7.79	\$5.42	\$5.77

See Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

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DISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES

Consolidated Statements of Comprehensive Income

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
	(dollars in millions)		
Net income	\$2,742	\$2,099	\$2,393
Other comprehensive income (loss), net of taxes			
Unrealized gains (losses) on available-for-sale investment securities, net of tax	16	(2)	(3)
Unrealized gains on cash flow hedges, net of tax	9	23	7
Unrealized pension and post-retirement plan gains (losses), net of tax	—	(12)	(5)
Other comprehensive income (loss)	25	9	(1)
Comprehensive income	\$2,767	\$2,108	\$2,392

See Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

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DISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES

Consolidated Statements of Changes in Stockholders' Equity

	Preferred Stock	Common Stock	Additional Paid-in Capital	Retained Earnings	Accumulated Other Comprehensive Loss	Treasury Stock	Total Stockholders' Equity		
	Shares	Amount	Shares	Amount					
(dollars in millions, shares in thousands)									
Balance at December 31, 2015	575	\$ 560	560,679	\$ 5	\$ 3,885	\$ 13,250	\$ (160)	\$ (6,265)	\$ 11,275
Net income	—	—	—	—	—	2,393	—	—	2,393
Other comprehensive loss	—	—	—	—	—	—	(1)	—	(1)
Purchases of treasury stock	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	(1,908)	(1,908)
Common stock issued under employee benefit plans	—	—	81	—	4	—	—	—	4
Common stock issued and stock-based compensation expense	—	—	1,654	—	73	—	—	—	73
Dividends — common stock (\$1.16 per share)	—	—	—	—	—	(476)	—	—	(476)
Dividends — Series B preferred stock (\$65.00 per share)	—	—	—	—	—	(37)	—	—	(37)
Balance at December 31, 2016	575	560	562,414	5	3,962	15,130	(161)	(8,173)	11,323
Net income	—	—	—	—	—	2,099	—	—	2,099
Other comprehensive income	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	—	9
Purchases of treasury stock	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	(2,081)	(2,081)
Common stock issued under employee benefit plans	—	—	79	—	5	—	—	—	5
Common stock issued and stock-based compensation expense	—	—	1,005	1	75	—	—	—	76
Dividends — common stock (\$1.30 per share)	—	—	—	—	—	(490)	—	—	(490)
Dividends — Series B preferred stock (\$65.00 per share)	—	—	—	—	—	(37)	—	—	(37)
Redemption of Series B preferred stock	(575)	(560)	—	—	—	(15)	—	—	(575)
Issuance of Series C preferred stock, net of issuance costs	6	563	—	—	—	—	—	—	563
Balance at December 31, 2017	6	563	563,498	6	4,042	16,687	(152)	(10,254)	10,892
Cumulative effect of ASU No. 2018-02 adoption	—	—	—	—	—	29	(29)	—	—
Net income	—	—	—	—	—	2,742	—	—	2,742
Other comprehensive income	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	—	25
Purchases of treasury stock	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	(2,065)	(2,065)
Common stock issued under employee benefit plans	—	—	96	—	6	—	—	—	6
Common stock issued and stock-based compensation expense	—	—	1,258	—	82	—	—	—	82
Dividends — common stock	—	—	—	—	—	(521)	—	—	(521)

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(\$1.50 per share)

Dividends — Series C preferred stock (\$5,500 per share)	—	—	—	—	—	(31)	—	—	(31)
Balance at December 31, 2018	6	\$ 563	564,852	\$ 6	\$ 4,130	\$ 18,906	\$ (156)	\$(12,319)	\$ 11,130

See Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

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Table of ContentsDISCOVER FINANCIAL SERVICES
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
	(dollars in millions)		
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net income	\$2,742	\$2,099	\$2,393
Adjustments to reconcile net income to net cash provided by operating activities			
Provision for loan losses	3,035	2,579	1,859
Depreciation and amortization	435	393	351
Amortization of deferred revenues and accretion of accretable yield on acquired loans	(403)	(399)	(395)
Net loss on investments and other assets	45	55	57
Other, net	(107)	361	113
Changes in assets and liabilities			
Increase in other assets	(7)	(502)	(187)
(Decrease) increase in accrued expenses and other liabilities	(549)	622	234
Net cash provided by operating activities	5,191	5,208	4,425
Cash flows from investing activities			
Maturities of available-for-sale investment securities	838	200	1,342
Purchases of available-for-sale investment securities	(2,554)	—	—
Maturities of held-to-maturity investment securities	18	16	24
Purchases of held-to-maturity investment securities	(82)	(40)	(56)
Net principal disbursed on loans originated for investment	(8,480)	(8,701)	(5,978)
Proceeds from returns of investment	—	17	—
Purchases of other investments	(65)	(65)	(51)
Purchases of premises and equipment	(254)	(218)	(179)
Net cash used for investing activities	(10,579)	(8,791)	(4,898)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Proceeds from issuance of securitized debt	4,766	5,059	3,070
Maturities and repayment of securitized debt	(4,447)	(4,959)	(3,419)
Proceeds from issuance of other long-term borrowings	2,233	1,127	1,122
Maturities and repayment of other long-term borrowings	(1,756)	(404)	—
Proceeds from issuance of common stock	6	5	7
Purchases of treasury stock	(2,065)	(2,081)	(1,908)
Net increase in deposits	8,961	6,753	4,453
Proceeds from issuance of preferred stock	—	563	—
Payments on redemption of preferred stock	—	(575)	—
Dividends paid on common and preferred stock	(552)	(527)	(514)
Net cash provided by financing activities	7,146	4,961	2,811
Net increase in cash, cash equivalents and restricted cash	1,758	1,378	2,338
Cash, cash equivalents and restricted cash, at beginning of period	13,387	12,009	9,671
Cash, cash equivalents and restricted cash, at end of period	\$15,145	\$13,387	\$12,009
Reconciliation of cash, cash equivalents and restricted cash			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$13,299	\$13,306	\$11,914
Restricted cash	1,846	81	95

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Cash, cash equivalents and restricted cash, at end of period	\$15,145	\$13,387	\$12,009
Supplemental disclosures of cash flow information			
Cash paid during the period for			
Interest expense	\$1,847	\$1,396	\$1,211
Income taxes, net of income tax refunds	\$650	\$1,424	\$1,300

See Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

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Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements

1. Background and Basis of Presentation

Description of Business

Discover Financial Services (“DFS” or the “Company”) is a direct banking and payment services company. The Company is a bank holding company under the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 as well as a financial holding company under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and therefore is subject to oversight, regulation and examination by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the “Federal Reserve”). The Company provides direct banking products and services and payment services through its subsidiaries. The Company offers its customers credit card loans, private student loans, personal loans, home equity loans and deposit products. The Company also operates the Discover Network, the PULSE network (“PULSE”) and Diners Club International (“Diners Club”). The Discover Network processes transactions for Discover-branded credit and debit cards and provides payment transaction processing and settlement services. PULSE operates an electronic funds transfer network, providing financial institutions issuing debit cards on the PULSE network with access to ATMs domestically and internationally, as well as point-of-sale (“POS”) terminals at retail locations throughout the U.S. for debit card transactions. Diners Club is a global payments network of licensees, which are generally financial institutions, that issue Diners Club branded charge cards and/or provide card acceptance services.

The Company’s business activities are managed in two segments, Direct Banking and Payment Services, based on the products and services provided. For a detailed description of the operations of each segment, as well as the allocation conventions used in business segment reporting, see Note 22: Segment Disclosures.

Basis of Presentation

The accompanying consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States (“GAAP”). The preparation of financial statements in conformity with GAAP requires the Company to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the consolidated financial statements and related disclosures. These estimates are based on information available as of the date of the consolidated financial statements. The Company believes that the estimates used in the preparation of the consolidated financial statements are reasonable. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

Principles of Consolidation

The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of the Company and its wholly-owned subsidiaries. The Company’s policy is to consolidate all entities in which it owns more than 50% of the outstanding voting stock unless it does not control the entity. However, the Company did not have a controlling voting interest in any entity other than its wholly-owned subsidiaries in the periods presented in the accompanying consolidated financial statements.

It is also the Company’s policy to consolidate any VIE for which the Company is the primary beneficiary, as defined by GAAP. On this basis, the Company consolidates the Discover Card Master Trust I (“DCMT”) and the Discover Card Execution Note Trust (“DCENT”) as well as two student loan securitization trusts. The Company is deemed to be the primary beneficiary of each of these trusts since it is, for each, the trust servicer and the holder of both the residual interest and the majority of the most subordinated interests. Because of those involvements, the Company has, for each trust, (i) the power to direct the activities that most significantly impact the economic performance of the trust, and (ii) the obligation (or right) to absorb losses (or receive benefits) of the trust that could potentially be significant. The Company has determined that it was not the primary beneficiary of any other VIE during the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

For investments in any entities in which the Company owns 50% or less of the outstanding voting stock but in which the Company has significant influence over operating and financial decisions, the Company applies the equity method of accounting. The Company also applies the equity method to its investments in qualified affordable housing projects and similar tax credit partnerships. In cases where the Company’s equity investment is less than 20% and significant influence does not exist, such investments are carried at cost, adjusted for any impairment in value.

Recently Issued Accounting Pronouncements

In February 2018, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (“FASB”) issued Accounting Standards Update (“ASU”) No. 2018-02, Reclassification of Certain Tax Effects from Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income. The ASU permits, but does not require, issuers to reclassify into retained earnings any tax effects that are stranded in

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accumulated other comprehensive income (“AOCI”) as a result of the change in the statutory federal tax rate enacted by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (“TCJA”). Tax effects that are stranded in AOCI for other reasons, such as prior changes in tax law or changes in a valuation allowance, may not be reclassified directly through retained earnings. The guidance is effective for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2018, with early adoption permitted. The Company early adopted the ASU as of April 1, 2018, resulting in a reclassification from AOCI to retained earnings that did not have a material impact to the Company's consolidated financial statements. See Note 13: Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income for additional details on adoption of this standard. The Company's policy is to adjust the tax effects of a component of AOCI in the same period in which the item is sold or otherwise derecognized, or when the carrying value of the item is remeasured.

In January 2017, the FASB issued ASU No. 2017-04, Intangibles—Goodwill and Other (Topic 350): Simplifying the Test for Goodwill Impairment. The purpose of this ASU is to simplify the test for goodwill impairment by eliminating Step 2 of the current impairment test. Under the current rules, if the reporting unit's carrying value exceeds its fair value (Step 1), goodwill impairment is measured as the difference between the carrying value of goodwill and its implied fair value. To compute the implied fair value of goodwill under Step 2, an entity has to perform procedures to determine the fair value at the impairment testing date of its assets and liabilities (including unrecognized assets and liabilities) following the procedure that would be required in determining the fair value of assets acquired and liabilities assumed in a business combination. Under the new standard, the Company will perform its annual goodwill impairment test by comparing the fair value of a reporting unit with its carrying amount. The Company should recognize an impairment charge, if any, for the amount by which the carrying amount exceeds the reporting unit's fair value; however, the loss recognized should not exceed the total amount of goodwill allocated to that reporting unit. The amendments in this ASU apply to the Company's annual or any interim goodwill impairment tests in fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2019. Early adoption is permitted for interim or annual goodwill impairment tests performed on testing dates after January 1, 2017. The amendments in this ASU apply on a prospective basis. All of the Company's recorded goodwill is associated with its PULSE debit business. The Company elected to early adopt this ASU effective with its goodwill impairment test as of October 1, 2018. This ASU has no impact on cash flows and its adoption did not have any impact on the Company's consolidated financial condition or results of operations because the estimated fair value of the PULSE reporting unit is well in excess of its carrying value.

In June 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-13, Financial Instruments-Credit Losses (Topic 326): Measurement of Credit Losses on Financial Instruments. This ASU replaces the incurred loss model with the current expected credit loss (“CECL”) approach. For loans carried at amortized cost, the allowance for loan losses will be based on management's current estimate of all expected credit losses over the remaining contractual term of the loans. Upon the origination of a loan, the Company will have to record its estimate of all expected credit losses on that loan through an immediate charge to earnings. Updates to that estimate each period will be recorded through provision expense. The CECL estimate is to be based on historical experience, current conditions and reasonable and supportable forecasts. The CECL approach is expected to increase the Company's allowance for loan losses as a result of: (1) encompassing expected losses, not simply those deemed to be already incurred, (2) extending the loss estimate period over the entire life of the loan and (3) reclassification of the credit loss component of the purchased credit-impaired (“PCI”) loan portfolio out of loan carrying value and into the allowance for loan losses. The allowance for loan losses on all loans carried at amortized cost, including PCI loans and loans modified in a troubled debt restructuring (“TDR”) will be measured under the CECL approach. Existing specialized measurement guidance for PCI loans, which the ASU refers to as purchased credit-deteriorated (“PCD”), and TDRs will be eliminated, although certain separate disclosure guidance will be retained. Measurement of credit impairment of available-for-sale debt securities will generally remain unchanged under the new rules, but any such impairment will be recorded through an allowance, rather than a direct write-down of the security.

The ASU is effective for the Company on January 1, 2020. A cross-functional governance structure is in place to oversee the implementation of the standard. The Company is finalizing the development of loss forecasting models, technological solutions and processes to satisfy the requirements of the new standard. Management is evaluating key accounting interpretations and the time period over which losses can be reasonably estimated. Upon adoption, the allowance for loan losses is expected to increase with an offsetting adjustment to retained earnings. Additionally, the

carrying value of PCD loans will be increased through an offsetting addition to the allowance for loan losses. Adoption of the standard has the potential to materially impact stockholders' equity and regulatory capital as well as the Company's consolidated financial condition and results of operations. The extent of the impact upon adoption will likely depend on the characteristics of the Company's loan portfolio and economic conditions at that date, as well as forecasted conditions thereafter.

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In March 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-08, Principal versus Agent Considerations (Reporting Revenue Gross versus Net). This guidance became effective for the Company on January 1, 2018, along with ASU 2014-09, Revenue from Contracts with Customers (Topic 606), discussed below. This ASU did not result in a change to the accounting or reporting of the Company's revenue arrangements that involve a principal-agent relationship. Therefore, its adoption has had no impact on the Company's consolidated financial condition, results of operations or cash flows. The guidance in this ASU provides clarification on the principal versus agent concept in relation to revenue recognition guidance issued as part of ASU 2014-09. Topic 606 requires a company to determine whether it is a principal or an agent in a transaction in which another party is involved in providing goods or services to a customer by evaluating the nature of its promise to the customer. ASU 2016-08 provides clarification for identifying the good, service or right being transferred in a revenue transaction and identifies the principal as the party that controls the good, service or right prior to its transfer to the customer. The ASU provides further clarity on how to evaluate control in this context.

In February 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-02, Leases (Topic 842). The guidance will require lessees to capitalize most leases on their balance sheet whereas under current GAAP only capital leases are recognized on the lessee's balance sheet. Leases which today are identified as capital leases will generally be identified as financing leases under the new guidance but otherwise their accounting treatment will remain relatively unchanged. Leases identified today as operating leases will generally remain in that category under the new standard, but both a right-of-use asset and a liability for remaining lease payments will now be required to be recognized on the balance sheet for this type of lease. The manner in which expenses associated with all leases are reported on the income statement will remain mostly unchanged. Lessor accounting also remains substantially unchanged by the new standard. The new guidance is effective on January 1, 2019 and the Company is prepared to implement the standard. The Company will recognize a cumulative-effect adjustment to the opening balance of retained earnings as of the effective date without adjusting comparative periods. Management has determined that the standard will not have a material impact on the Company's consolidated financial statements.

In May 2014, the FASB issued ASU No. 2014-09, Revenue from Contracts with Customers (Topic 606). The guidance in this ASU supersedes existing revenue recognition requirements in Topic 605, Revenue Recognition, including an assortment of transaction-specific and industry-specific rules. The new revenue recognition model became effective for the Company on January 1, 2018. The model generally results in the same revenue recognition patterns as have historically been applied to the Company's revenues that are subject to this guidance. The timing and measurement of fee revenues associated with the Company's credit card arrangements and costs associated with the Company's credit card reward programs have not been affected as a result of the adoption of Accounting Standards Codification ("ASC") Topic 606. Accounting and reporting for the Company's transaction processing services, including discount and interchange revenue and other transaction processing fees, remains substantially unchanged from treatments under GAAP in effect prior to 2018. As permitted by the ASU, management elected to adopt this standard using a modified retrospective approach, which means that the cumulative effect of initially applying the standard was recognized at the date of initial application through an adjustment to beginning retained earnings, but no restatement of prior periods was made. Based on its evaluations, management concluded that no adjustment to beginning retained earnings was required as of January 1, 2018, the date of adoption. See Note 23: Revenue from Contracts with Customers for additional information resulting from this standard.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents is defined by the Company as cash on deposit with banks, including time deposits and other highly liquid investments, with maturities of 90 days or less when purchased. Cash and cash equivalents included \$728 million and \$1.3 billion of cash and due from banks and \$12.6 billion and \$12.0 billion of interest-earning deposits at other banks at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

Restricted Cash

Restricted cash includes cash for which the Company's ability to withdraw funds at any time is contractually limited. Restricted cash is generally designated for specific purposes arising out of certain contractual or other obligations.

Investment Securities

At December 31, 2018, investment securities consisted of U.S. Treasury obligations and mortgage-backed securities issued by government agencies. Investment securities that the Company has the positive intent and ability to

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hold to maturity are classified as held-to-maturity and are reported at amortized cost. All other investment securities are classified as available-for-sale, as the Company does not hold investment securities for trading purposes. Available-for-sale investment securities are reported at fair value with unrealized gains and losses, net of tax, reported as a component of AOCI included in stockholders' equity. The Company estimates the fair value of available-for-sale investment securities as more fully discussed in Note 20: Fair Value Measurements. The amortized cost for each held-to-maturity and available-for-sale investment security is adjusted for amortization of premiums or accretion of discounts, as appropriate. Such amortization or accretion is included in interest income. The Company evaluates its unrealized loss positions for other-than-temporary impairment in accordance with GAAP applicable for investments in debt securities. Realized gains and losses and the credit loss portion of other-than-temporary impairments related to investment securities are determined at the individual security level and are reported in other income.

Loan Receivables

Loan receivables consist of credit card receivables, other loans and PCI loans. Loan receivables also include unamortized net deferred loan origination fees and costs (also see “— Significant Revenue Recognition Accounting Policies — Loan Interest and Fee Income”). Credit card loan receivables are reported at their principal amounts outstanding and include uncollected billed interest and fees and are reduced for unearned revenue related to balance transfer fees (also see “— Significant Revenue Recognition Accounting Policies — Loan Interest and Fee Income”). Other loans consist of student loans, personal loans and other loans and are reported at their principal amounts outstanding. For student loans, principal amounts outstanding also include accrued interest that has been capitalized. The Company's loan receivables are deemed to be held for investment at origination or acquisition because management has the intent and ability to hold them for the foreseeable future. Cash flows associated with loans originated or acquired for investment are classified as cash flows from investing activities, regardless of a subsequent change in intent.

Purchased Credit-Impaired Loans

PCI loans are loans acquired at prices that reflected a discount related to deterioration in individual loan credit quality since origination. The Company's PCI loans are comprised entirely of acquired private student loans.

The PCI student loans were aggregated into pools based on common risk characteristics at the time of their acquisition. Loans were grouped primarily on the basis of origination date as loans originated in a particular year generally reflect the application of common origination strategies and/or underwriting criteria. Each pool is accounted for as a single asset and each has a single composite interest rate, total contractual cash flows and total expected cash flows.

Interest income on PCI loans is recognized on the basis of expected cash flows rather than contractual cash flows. The total amount of interest income recognizable on a pool of PCI loans (i.e., its accretable yield) is the difference between the carrying amount of the loan pool and the future cash flows expected to be collected without regard to whether the expected cash flows represent principal or interest collections. Interest is recognized on an effective yield basis over the life of the loan pool.

The initial estimates of the fair value of the PCI student loans included the impact of expected credit losses, and therefore, no allowance for loan losses was recorded as of the purchase dates. The difference between contractually required cash flows and cash flows expected to be collected, as measured at the acquisition dates, is not permitted to be accreted. Charge-offs are absorbed by this non-accretable difference and do not result in a charge to earnings. However, as noted below, a charge to provision expense may be necessary to the extent that expected credit losses increase after the acquisition date.

The estimate of cash flows expected to be collected is evaluated each reporting period to ensure it reflects management's latest expectations of future credit losses and borrower prepayments, and interest rates in effect in the current period. To the extent expected credit losses increase after the acquisition dates, the Company will record an allowance for loan losses through the provision for loan losses, which will reduce net income. Changes in expected cash flows related to changes in prepayments or interest rate indices for variable rate loans generally are recorded prospectively as adjustments to interest income.

To the extent that a significant increase in cash flows due to lower expected losses is deemed probable, the Company will first reverse any previously established allowance for loan losses and then increase the amount of remaining

accretable yield. The increase to yield would be recognized prospectively over the remaining life of the loan pool. An increase in the accretable yield would reduce the remaining non-accretable difference available to absorb

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subsequent charge-offs. Disposals of loans, which may include sales of loans or receipt of payments in full from the borrower or charge-offs, result in removal of the loans from their respective pools.

Delinquent Loans and Charge-Offs

The entire balance of an account is contractually past due if the minimum payment is not received by the specified date on the customer's billing statement. Delinquency is reported on loans that are 30 days or more past due.

Credit card loans are charged off at the end of the month during which an account becomes 180 days past due.

Closed-end consumer loan receivables are charged off at the end of the month during which an account becomes 120 days contractually past due. Customer bankruptcies and probate accounts are charged off at the end of the month 60 days following the receipt of notification of the bankruptcy or death, but not later than the 180-day or 120-day time frame described above. Receivables associated with alleged or potential fraudulent transactions are adjusted to their net realizable value upon receipt of notification of such fraud through a charge to other expense and are subsequently written off at the end of the month 90 days following notification, but not later than the contractual 180-day or 120-day time frame described above. The Company's charge-off policies are designed to comply with guidelines established by the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council ("FFIEC").

The Company's net charge-offs include the principal amount of loans charged off less principal recoveries and exclude charged-off interest and fees, recoveries of interest and fees and fraud losses.

The practice of re-aging an account also may affect loan delinquencies and charge-offs. A re-age is intended to assist delinquent customers who have experienced financial difficulties but who demonstrate both an ability and willingness to repay. Accounts meeting specific criteria are re-aged when the Company and the customer agree on a temporary repayment schedule that may include concessionary terms. With re-aging, the outstanding balance of a delinquent account is returned to a current status. Customers may also qualify for a workout re-age when either a longer term or permanent hardship exists. The Company's re-age practices are designed to comply with FFIEC guidelines.

Allowance for Loan Losses

The Company maintains an allowance for loan losses at a level that is appropriate to absorb probable losses inherent in the loan portfolio. The estimate of probable incurred losses considers uncollectible principal, interest and fees associated with the Company's loan receivables. The allowance is evaluated quarterly for appropriateness and is maintained through an adjustment to the provision for loan losses. Charge-offs of principal amounts of loans outstanding are deducted from the allowance and subsequent recoveries of such amounts increase the allowance. Charge-offs of loan balances representing unpaid interest and fees result in a reversal of interest and fee income, respectively, which is effectively a reclassification of provision of loan losses (also see "— Significant Revenue Recognition Accounting Policies — Loan Interest and Fee Income").

The Company calculates its allowance for loan losses by estimating probable losses separately for classes of the loan portfolio with similar loan characteristics, which generally results in segmenting the portfolio by loan product type. The Company bases its allowance for loan losses on several analyses that help estimate incurred losses as of the balance sheet date. While the Company's estimation process includes historical data and analysis, there is a significant amount of judgment applied in selecting inputs and analyzing the results produced by the models to determine the allowance. For substantially all of its loan receivables, the Company uses a migration analysis to estimate the likelihood that a loan will progress through the various stages of delinquency. The Company uses other analyses to estimate losses incurred on non-delinquent and bankrupt accounts. The considerations in these analyses include past and current loan performance, loan growth and seasoning, current risk management practices, account collection strategies, economic conditions, bankruptcy filings, policy changes and forecasting uncertainties. Consideration of past and current loan performance includes the post-modification performance of loans modified in a troubled debt restructuring. For the majority of its portfolio, the Company estimates its allowance for loan losses on a pooled basis, which includes loans that are delinquent and/or no longer accruing interest and/or certain loans that have defaulted from a loan modification program.

As part of certain collection strategies, the Company may modify the terms of loans to customers experiencing financial hardship. Temporary and permanent modifications on credit card and personal loans, as well as temporary modifications on student loans and certain grants of student loan forbearance are accounted for as troubled debt

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restructurings. The Company considers a modified loan in which a concession has been granted to the borrower to be a troubled debt restructuring based on the cumulative length of the concession period and credit quality of the borrower.

Loan receivables, other than PCI loans, that have been modified under a troubled debt restructuring are evaluated separately from the pools of receivables that are subject to the collective analyses described above. Loan receivables modified in a troubled debt restructuring are recorded at their present values with impairment measured as the difference between the recorded investment in the loan and the discounted present value of cash flows expected to be collected. Consistent with the Company's measurement of impairment of modified loans on a pooled basis, the discount rate used for credit card loans in internal programs is the average current annual percentage rate applied to non-impaired credit card loans, which approximates what would have applied to the pool of modified loans prior to modification. The discount rate used for credit card loans in external programs reflects a rate that is consistent with rates offered to cardmembers not in a program that have similar risk characteristics. For student and personal loans, the discount rate used is the average contractual rate prior to modification. Changes in the present value are recorded in the provision for loan losses. All of the Company's troubled debt restructurings, which are evaluated collectively on an aggregated (by loan type) basis, have a related allowance for loan losses.

Premises and Equipment, net

Premises and equipment, net, are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and amortization, which is computed using the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of the assets. Buildings are depreciated over a period of 39 years. The costs of improvements are capitalized and depreciated either over the asset's estimated useful life, typically ten to fifteen years, or over the remaining term of the lease, when applicable. Furniture and fixtures are depreciated over a period of five to ten years. Equipment is depreciated over three to ten years. Maintenance and repairs are immediately expensed, while the costs of improvements are capitalized.

Purchased software and capitalized costs related to internally developed software are amortized over their useful lives of three to ten years. Costs incurred during the application development stage related to internally developed software are capitalized. Costs are expensed as incurred during the preliminary project stage and post implementation stage. Once the capitalization criteria as defined in GAAP have been met, external direct costs incurred for materials and services used in developing or obtaining internal-use computer software and payroll and payroll-related costs for employees who are directly associated with the internal-use computer software project (to the extent those employees devoted time directly to the project) are capitalized. Amortization of capitalized costs begins when the software is ready for its intended use. Capitalized software is included in premises and equipment, net in the Company's consolidated statements of financial condition. See Note 6: Premises and Equipment for further information about the Company's premises and equipment.

Cloud computing arrangements involving the licensing of software that meet certain criteria are recognized as the acquisition of software. Such assets are measured at the present value of the license obligation, if the license is to be paid over time, in addition to any capitalized upfront costs and amortized over the life of the arrangement. Cloud computing arrangements that do not meet the criteria to be recognized as acquired software are accounted for as service contracts. To date, none of the Company's cloud computing arrangements have met the criteria to be recognized as acquired software.

Premises and equipment are subject to impairment testing when events or conditions indicate that the carrying value of the asset may not be fully recoverable from future cash flows. See "— Intangible Assets" for additional details on impairment testing.

Goodwill

Goodwill is recorded as part of the Company's acquisitions of businesses when the purchase price exceeds the fair value of the net tangible and separately identifiable intangible assets acquired. The Company's goodwill is not amortized, but rather is subject to an impairment test at the reporting unit level annually as of October 1, or between annual tests if an event occurs or circumstances change that would more likely than not reduce the fair value of a reporting unit below its carrying amount. The Company's reported goodwill relates to PULSE, which it acquired in 2005. The Company's goodwill is tested for impairment by comparing the fair value of the reporting unit to its carrying value. If the fair value of the reporting unit exceeds its carrying value, goodwill is not impaired. If the

carrying value exceeds its fair value, an impairment loss must be recognized in an amount equal to that excess, limited to the total amount of goodwill allocated to that reporting unit. No impairment was identified during the impairment test conducted as of October 1, 2018.

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Intangible Assets

The Company's identifiable intangible assets consist of both amortizable and non-amortizable intangible assets. The Company's amortizable intangible assets consist primarily of acquired customer relationships and certain trade name intangibles. All of the Company's amortizable intangible assets are carried at net book value and are amortized over their estimated useful lives. The amortization periods approximate the periods over which the Company expects to generate future net cash inflows from the use of these assets. The Company's policy is to amortize intangibles in a manner that reflects the pattern in which the projected net cash inflows to the Company are expected to occur, where such pattern can be reasonably determined, as opposed to the straight-line basis. This method of amortization typically results in a greater portion of the intangible asset being amortized in the earlier years of its useful life.

All of the Company's amortizable intangible assets, as well as other amortizable or depreciable long-lived assets such as premises and equipment, are subject to impairment testing when events or conditions indicate that the carrying value of the asset may not be fully recoverable from future cash flows. A test for recoverability is done by comparing the asset's carrying value to the sum of the undiscounted future net cash inflows expected to be generated from the use of the asset over its remaining useful life. Impairment exists if the sum of the undiscounted expected future net cash inflows is less than the carrying amount of the asset. Impairment would result in a write-down of the asset to its estimated fair value. The estimated fair values of these assets are based on the discounted present value of the stream of future net cash inflows expected to be derived over the remaining useful lives of the assets. If an impairment write-down is recorded, the remaining useful life of the asset will be evaluated to determine whether revision of the remaining amortization or depreciation period is appropriate.

The Company's non-amortizable intangible assets consist primarily of the brand-related intangibles and international transaction processing rights included in the acquisition of Diners Club. These assets are deemed to have indefinite useful lives and are therefore not subject to amortization. All of the Company's non-amortizable intangible assets are subject to a test for impairment annually as of October 1, or more frequently if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the asset might be impaired. As required by GAAP, if the carrying value of a non-amortizable intangible asset is in excess of its fair value, the asset must be written down to its fair value through the recognition of an impairment charge to earnings. In contrast to amortizable intangibles, there is no test for recoverability associated with the impairment test for non-amortizable intangible assets. No impairment was identified during the impairment test conducted as of October 1, 2018.

Stock-based Compensation

The Company measures the cost of employee services received in exchange for an award of stock-based compensation based on the grant-date fair value of the award. The cost, net of estimated forfeitures, is recognized over the requisite service period. Awards to employees who are retirement-eligible at any point during the year are amortized over 12 months in accordance with the vesting terms that apply under those circumstances. No compensation cost is recognized for awards that are subsequently forfeited.

Advertising Costs

The Company expenses television and radio advertising costs in the period in which the advertising is first aired and all other advertising costs as incurred. Advertising costs are recorded in marketing and business development and were \$258 million, \$219 million and \$196 million for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, respectively.

Income Taxes

Income tax expense is provided for using the asset and liability method, under which deferred tax assets and liabilities are determined based on the temporary differences between the financial statement and income tax bases of assets and liabilities using currently enacted tax rates. Deferred tax assets are recognized when their realization is determined to be more likely than not. Uncertain tax positions are measured at the highest amount of tax benefit for which realization is judged to be more likely than not. Tax benefits that do not meet these criteria are unrecognized tax benefits. See Note 15: Income Taxes for more information about the Company's income taxes.

Financial Instruments Used for Asset and Liability Management

The Company utilizes derivative financial instruments to manage its various exposures to changes in fair value of certain assets and liabilities, variability in future cash flows arising from changes in interest rates or other types of

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forecasted transactions, and changes in foreign exchange rates. All derivatives are carried at their estimated fair values on the Company's consolidated statements of financial condition. Derivatives having gross positive fair values, inclusive of net accrued interest receipts or payments, are recorded in other assets. Derivatives with gross negative fair values, inclusive of net accrued interest payments or receipts, are recorded in accrued expenses and other liabilities. The methodologies used to estimate the fair values of these derivative financial instruments are described in Note 20: Fair Value Measurements. Collateral receivable or payable amounts associated with derivatives are not offset against the fair value of these derivatives, but are recorded separately in other assets or deposits, respectively. Variation margin payments associated with derivative positions that are cleared through an exchange are legally characterized as settlements of the derivative positions. Such settlement payments are reflected as offsets to the associated derivatives balances recorded in other assets or in accrued expenses and other liabilities, instead of as collateral in other assets or deposits. The impact of settlement payments on the consolidated statements of financial condition is discussed in more detail in Note 21: Derivatives and Hedging Activities.

Certain of these instruments are designated and qualify for hedge accounting. A hedge is deemed effective to the extent that the change in fair value, cash flow, or net investment of the hedged item is offset by changes in the hedging instrument. Under cash flow hedge accounting, changes in the fair values of the derivative instruments are recognized in other comprehensive income ("OCI") and subsequently reclassified to earnings in the period the hedged forecasted cash flows affect earnings. In a net investment hedge, amounts accumulated in OCI are reclassified into earnings when a hedged net investment is either sold or substantially liquidated. Under fair value hedge accounting, changes in both (i) the fair values of the derivative instruments and (ii) the fair values of the hedged items relating to the risks being hedged, including net differences, if any, are recorded in interest expense. Certain other derivatives are not designated as hedges or do not qualify for hedge accounting; changes in the fair value of these derivatives are recorded in other income. These transactions are discussed in more detail in Note 21: Derivatives and Hedging Activities.

Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income

The Company records unrealized gains and losses on available-for-sale securities, changes in the fair value of cash flow hedges, and certain pension and foreign currency translation adjustments in OCI on an after-tax basis where applicable. The Company's policy is to adjust the tax effects of a component of AOCI in the same period in which the item is sold or otherwise derecognized, or when the carrying value of the item is remeasured. Details of OCI, net of tax, are presented in the statement of comprehensive income, and a rollforward of AOCI is presented in the statement of changes in stockholders' equity and Note 13: Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income.

Significant Revenue Recognition Accounting Policies

Loan Interest and Fee Income

Interest on loans is comprised largely of interest on credit card loans and is recognized based on the amount of loans outstanding and their contractual interest rate. Interest on credit card loans is included in loan receivables when billed to the customer. The Company accrues unbilled interest revenue each month from a customer's billing cycle date to the end of the month. The Company applies an estimate of the percentage of loans that will revolve in the next cycle in the estimation of the accrued unbilled portion of interest revenue that is included in accrued interest receivable on the consolidated statements of financial condition. Interest on other loan receivables is accrued monthly in accordance with their contractual terms and recorded in accrued interest receivable, which is included in other assets, in the consolidated statements of financial condition. Interest related to PCI loans is discussed in Note 4: Loan Receivables. The Company recognizes fees (except balance transfer fees and certain product fees) on loan receivables in interest income or loan fee income as the fees are assessed. Balance transfer fees and certain product fees are recognized in interest income or loan fee income ratably over the periods to which they relate. Balance transfer fees are accreted to interest income over the life of the related balance. As of December 31, 2018 and 2017, deferred revenues related to balance transfer fees, recorded as a reduction of loan receivables, were \$52 million and \$47 million, respectively. Loan fee income consists of fees on credit card loans and includes late, cash advance, returned check and other miscellaneous fees and is reflected net of waivers and charge-offs.

Direct loan origination costs on credit card loans are deferred and amortized on a straight-line basis over a one year period and recorded in interest income from credit card loans. Direct loan origination costs on other loan receivables are deferred and amortized over the life of the loan using the interest method and are recorded in interest income from

other loans. As of December 31, 2018 and 2017, the remaining unamortized deferred costs related to loan origination were \$138 million and \$125 million, respectively, and were recorded in loan receivables.

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The Company accrues interest and fees on loan receivables until the loans are paid or charged off, except in instances of customer bankruptcy, death or fraud, where no further interest and fee accruals occur following notification. Credit card and closed-end consumer loan receivables are placed on non-accrual status upon receipt of notification of the bankruptcy or death of a customer or suspected fraudulent activity on an account. Upon completion of the fraud investigation, non-fraudulent credit card and closed-end consumer loan receivables may resume accruing interest. Payments received on non-accrual loans are allocated according to the same payment hierarchy methodology applied to loans that are accruing interest. When loan receivables are charged off, unpaid accrued interest and fees are reversed against the income line items in which they were originally recorded in the consolidated statements of income. Charge-offs and recoveries of amounts that relate to capitalized interest on student loans are treated as principal charge-offs and recoveries, affecting the provision for loan losses rather than interest income. The Company considers uncollectible interest and fee revenues in assessing the adequacy of the allowance for loan losses.

Interest income from loans individually evaluated for impairment, including loans accounted for as troubled debt restructurings, is accounted for in the same manner as other accruing loans. Cash collections on these loans are allocated according to the same payment hierarchy methodology applied to loans that are not in such programs.

Discount and Interchange Revenue

The Company earns discount revenue from fees charged to merchants with whom it has entered into card acceptance agreements for processing credit card purchase transactions. The Company earns acquirer interchange revenue primarily from merchant acquirers on all Discover Network, Diners Club and PULSE transactions made by credit and debit card customers at merchants with whom merchant acquirers have entered into card acceptance agreements for processing payment card transactions. These card acceptance arrangements generally renew automatically and do not have fixed durations. Under these agreements, the Company stands ready to process payment transactions as and when each is presented. The Company earns discount, interchange and similar fees only when transactions are processed. Contractually defined per-transaction fee amounts typically apply to each type of transaction processed and are recognized as revenue at the time each transaction is captured for settlement. These fees are typically collected by the Company as part of the process of settling transactions daily with merchants and acquirers and are fully earned at the time settlement is made.

The Company pays issuer interchange to card-issuing entities that have entered into contractual arrangements to issue cards on the Discover Network and on certain transactions on the Diners Club and PULSE networks. This cost is contractually established and is based on the card-issuing organization's transaction volume. The Company classifies this cost as a reduction of discount and interchange revenue. Costs of cardholder reward arrangements, including the Cashback Bonus reward program, are classified as reductions of discount and interchange revenue pursuant to guidance under ASC Topic 606 governing consideration payable to a customer. For both issuer interchange and cardholder rewards, the Company accrues the cost at the time each underlying card transaction is captured for settlement.

Customer Rewards

The Company offers its customers various reward programs, including the Cashback Bonus reward program, pursuant to which the Company pays certain customers a reward equal to a percentage of their credit card purchase amounts based on the type and volume of the customer's purchases. The liability for customer rewards, which is included in accrued expenses and other liabilities on the consolidated statements of financial condition, is recorded on an individual customer basis and is accumulated as qualified customers earn rewards through their ongoing credit card purchase activity or other defined actions. The Company recognizes customer rewards costs as a reduction of the related revenue, if any. In instances where a reward is not associated with a revenue-generating transaction, such as when a reward is given for opening an account, the reward cost is recorded as an operating expense. For the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, rewards costs amounted to \$1.8 billion, \$1.6 billion and \$1.4 billion, respectively. The liability for customer rewards was \$1.6 billion and \$1.5 billion at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively, and is included in accrued expenses and other liabilities on the consolidated statements of financial condition.

Protection Products Revenue

The Company earns revenue related to fees received for ancillary products and services, including payment protection and identity theft protection services, to its credit card customers. A portion of this revenue comprises amounts earned for arranging for the delivery of products offered by third-party service providers. The amount of

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revenue recorded is generally based on either a percentage of a customer's outstanding balance or a flat fee, in either case assessed monthly, and is recognized as earned. These contracts are month-to-month arrangements that are cancellable at any time. The Company recognizes each monthly fee in the period to which the service or coverage relates.

Transaction Processing Revenue

Transaction processing revenue represents switch fees charged to financial institutions and merchants under network participation agreements for processing ATM, debit and point-of-sale transactions over the PULSE network, as well as various participation and membership fees. Network participation agreements generally renew automatically and do not have fixed durations, although the Company does enter into fixed-term pricing or incentive arrangements with certain network participants. The impact of such incentives is not material to the Company's consolidated statements of income. Similar to discount and interchange fees, switch fees are contractually defined per-transaction fee amounts and are assessed and recognized as revenue at the time each transaction is captured for settlement. These fees are typically collected by the Company as part of the process of settling transactions with network participants.

Membership and other participation fees are recognized over the periods to which each fee relates.

Other Income

Other income includes sales-based royalty revenues earned by Diners Club, merchant fees, certain payments from merchants related to reward programs, revenues from network partners and other miscellaneous revenue items.

Sales-based royalty revenues are recognized as the related sales are reported by Diners franchisees. All remaining items of other income are recognized as the related performance obligations are satisfied.

Future Revenue Associated with Customer Contracts

For contracts under which the Company processes payment card transactions, the Company has the right to assess fees for services performed and to collect those fees through the settlement process. The Company generates essentially all of its discount and interchange revenue and transaction processing revenue, as well as some revenue reported as other income, through such contracts. There is no specified quantity of service promised in these contracts as the number of payment transactions is dependent upon cardholder behavior, which is outside the control of the Company and its network customers (i.e., merchants, acquirers, issuers and other network participants). As noted above, these contracts are typically without fixed durations and renew automatically. For these reasons, the Company does not make or disclose an estimate of revenue associated with performance obligations attributable to the remaining terms of these contracts. Future revenue associated with the Company's sales-based royalty revenues earned from Diners Club licensees is similarly variable and open-ended, and therefore the Company does not make or disclose an estimate of royalties associated with performance obligations attributable to the remaining terms of the licensing and royalty arrangements. Because of the nature of the services and the manner of collection associated with the majority of the Company's revenue from contracts with customers, material receivables or deferred revenues are not generated.

Incentive Payments

The Company makes certain incentive payments under contractual arrangements with financial institutions, Diners Club licensees, merchants, acquirers and certain other customers. These payments are generally classified as contra-revenue unless a specifically identifiable benefit is received by the Company in consideration for the payment and the fair value of such benefit can be reasonably estimated. If no such benefit is identified, then the entire payment is classified as contra-revenue and included in the consolidated statements of income in the line item where the related revenues are recorded. If the payment gives rise to an asset because it is expected to directly or indirectly contribute to future net cash inflows, it is deferred and recognized over the expected benefit period. The unamortized portion of the deferred incentive payments included in other assets on the consolidated statements of financial condition was \$23 million and \$32 million at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

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3. Investments

The Company's investment securities consist of the following
(dollars in millions):

	December 31,	
	2018	2017
U.S. Treasury securities ⁽¹⁾	\$2,586	\$672
States and political subdivisions of states	—	1
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽²⁾	784	895
Total investment securities	\$3,370	\$1,568

(1) Includes \$42 million and \$48 million of U.S. Treasury securities pledged as swap collateral as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

(2) Consists of residential mortgage-backed securities issued by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Ginnie Mae. The amortized cost, gross unrealized gains and losses, and fair value of available-for-sale and held-to-maturity investment securities are as follows (dollars in millions):

	Amortized Cost	Gross Unrealized Gains	Gross Unrealized Losses	Fair Value
At December 31, 2018				
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities ⁽¹⁾				
U.S. Treasury securities	\$ 2,559	\$ 27	\$ —	\$2,586
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	559	—	(12)	547
Total available-for-sale investment securities	\$ 3,118	\$ 27	\$ (12)	\$3,133
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities ⁽²⁾				
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽³⁾	\$ 237	\$ —	\$ (4)	\$233
Total held-to-maturity investment securities	\$ 237	\$ —	\$ (4)	\$233
At December 31, 2017				
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities ⁽¹⁾				
U.S. Treasury securities	\$ 675	\$ —	\$ (3)	\$672
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	728	1	(6)	723
Total available-for-sale investment securities	\$ 1,403	\$ 1	\$ (9)	\$1,395
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities ⁽²⁾				
States and political subdivisions of states	\$ 1	\$ —	\$ —	\$1
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽³⁾	172	1	(1)	172
Total held-to-maturity investment securities	\$ 173	\$ 1	\$ (1)	\$173

(1) Available-for-sale investment securities are reported at fair value.

(2) Held-to-maturity investment securities are reported at amortized cost.

(3) Amounts represent residential mortgage-backed securities that were classified as held-to-maturity as they were entered into as a part of the Company's community reinvestment initiatives.

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The following table provides information about investment securities with aggregate gross unrealized losses and the length of time that individual investment securities have been in a continuous unrealized loss position (dollars in millions):

	Number of Securities in a Loss Position	Less than 12 months Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	More than 12 months Fair Value	Unrealized Losses
At December 31, 2018					
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities					
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	31	\$ 110	\$ (1)	\$ 437	\$ (11)
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities					
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	90	\$ 101	\$ (1)	\$ 83	\$ (3)
At December 31, 2017					
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities					
U.S. Treasury securities	1	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 672	\$ (3)
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	27	\$ 457	\$ (3)	\$ 132	\$ (3)
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities					
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	45	\$ 56	\$ —	\$ 38	\$ (1)

There were no losses related to other-than-temporary impairments and no proceeds from sales or recognized gains and losses on available-for-sale securities during the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016. See Note 13: Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income for unrealized gains and losses on available-for-sale securities during the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

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Maturities and weighted-average yields of available-for-sale debt securities and held-to-maturity debt securities are provided in the tables below (dollars in millions):

At December 31, 2018	One Year or Less	After One Year Through Five Years	After Five Years Through Ten Years	After Ten Years	Total
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities—Amortized Cost					
U.S. Treasury securities	\$	—\$ 2,196	\$ 363	\$ —	\$2,559
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽¹⁾	—	90	469	—	559
Total available-for-sale investment securities	\$	—\$ 2,286	\$ 832	\$ —	\$3,118
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities—Amortized Cost					
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽¹⁾	\$	—\$ —	\$ —	\$ 237	\$237
Total held-to-maturity investment securities	\$	—\$ —	\$ —	\$ 237	\$237
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities—Fair Values					
U.S. Treasury securities	\$	—\$ 2,219	\$ 367	\$ —	\$2,586
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽¹⁾	—	89	458	—	547
Total available-for-sale investment securities	\$	—\$ 2,308	\$ 825	\$ —	\$3,133
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities—Fair Values					
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency ⁽¹⁾	\$	—\$ —	\$ —	\$ 233	\$233
Total held-to-maturity investment securities	\$	—\$ —	\$ —	\$ 233	\$233

(1) Maturities of residential mortgage-backed securities are reflective of the contractual maturities of the investment.

At December 31, 2018	One Year or Less	After One Year Through Five Years	After Five Years Through Ten Years	After Ten Years	Total
Available-for-Sale Investment Securities—Weighted-Average Yields ⁽¹⁾					
U.S Treasury securities	—%	2.82 %	2.77 %	— %	2.81 %
Residential mortgage-backed securities - Agency	—%	1.50 %	2.04 %	— %	1.95 %
Total available-for-sale investment securities	—%	2.76 %	2.36 %	— %	2.66 %
Held-to-Maturity Investment Securities—Weighted-Average Yields					
Residential mortgage-backed securities	—%	— %	— %	2.94 %	2.94 %
Total held-to-maturity investment securities	—%	— %	— %	2.94 %	2.94 %

(1) The weighted-average yield for available-for-sale investment securities is calculated based on the amortized cost. Taxable interest on investment securities was \$40 million, \$27 million and \$38 million for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, respectively. There was no tax exempt interest on investment securities for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

Other Investments

As a part of the Company's community reinvestment initiatives, the Company has made equity investments in certain limited partnerships and limited liability companies that finance the construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing, as well as stimulate economic development in low to moderate income communities. These investments are accounted for using the equity method of accounting and are recorded within other assets. The related commitment for future investments is recorded in accrued expenses and other liabilities within the consolidated statements of financial condition. The portion of each investment's operating results allocable to the Company reduces the carrying value of the investments and is recorded in other expense within the consolidated statements of income. The Company further reduces the carrying value of the investments by recognizing any amounts that are in excess of future net tax benefits in other expense. The Company earns a return primarily through the receipt of tax credits allocated to the affordable

housing projects and the community revitalization projects. These investments are not consolidated as the Company does not have a controlling financial interest in the entities. As of December 31, 2018 and 2017, the Company had outstanding investments in these entities of \$295 million and \$297 million, respectively, and related

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contingent liabilities of \$49 million and \$66 million, respectively. Of the above outstanding equity investments, the Company had \$271 million and \$288 million of investments related to affordable housing projects as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively, which had \$30 million and \$66 million related contingent liabilities, respectively.

4. Loan Receivables

The Company has three loan portfolio segments: credit card loans, other loans and PCI loans.

The Company's classes of receivables within

the three portfolio segments are depicted in

the following table (dollars in millions):

	December 31,	
	2018	2017
Credit card loans ⁽¹⁾	\$72,876	\$67,291
Other loans		
Personal loans	7,454	7,374
Private student loans	7,728	7,076
Other	817	423
Total other loans	15,999	14,873
PCI loans ⁽²⁾	1,637	2,084
Total loan receivables	90,512	84,248
Allowance for loan losses (3,041) (2,621)		
Net loan receivables	\$87,471	\$81,627

Amounts include carrying values of \$22.0 billion and \$21.2 billion in underlying investors' interest in trust debt at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively, and \$11.1 billion and \$9.9 billion in seller's interest at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. See Note 5: Credit Card and Student Loan Securitization Activities for additional information.

Amounts include carrying values of \$363 million and \$762 million in loans pledged as collateral against the notes issued from The Student Loan Corporation ("SLC") securitization trusts at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. See Note 5: Credit Card and Student Loan Securitization Activities for additional information.

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Credit Quality Indicators

The Company regularly reviews its collection experience (including delinquencies and net charge-offs) in determining its allowance for loan losses.

Information related to the delinquent and non-accruing loans in the Company's loan portfolio is shown below by each class of loan receivables except for PCI student loans, which is shown under the heading "— Purchased Credit-Impaired Loans" (dollars in millions):

	30-89 Days Delinquent	90 or More Days Delinquent	Total Past Due	90 or More Days Delinquent and Accruing	Total Non-accruing ⁽¹⁾
At December 31, 2018					
Credit card loans ⁽²⁾	\$ 885	\$ 887	\$1,772	\$ 781	\$ 266
Other loans					
Personal loans ⁽³⁾	84	35	119	33	11
Private student loans (excluding PCI) ⁽⁴⁾	117	38	155	37	8
Other	2	1	3	—	17
Total other loans (excluding PCI)	203	74	277	70	36
Total loan receivables (excluding PCI)	\$ 1,088	\$ 961	\$2,049	\$ 851	\$ 302
At December 31, 2017					
Credit card loans ⁽²⁾	\$ 781	\$ 751	\$1,532	\$ 693	\$ 203
Other loans					
Personal loans ⁽³⁾	73	30	103	28	10
Private student loans (excluding PCI) ⁽⁴⁾	134	33	167	33	2
Other	3	1	4	—	18
Total other loans (excluding PCI)	210	64	274	61	30
Total loan receivables (excluding PCI)	\$ 991	\$ 815	\$1,806	\$ 754	\$ 233

The Company estimates that the gross interest income that would have been recorded in accordance with the original terms of non-accruing credit card loans was \$41 million, \$35 million and \$31 million for the years ended (1) December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, respectively. The Company does not separately track the amount of gross interest income that would have been recorded in accordance with the original terms of loans. This amount was estimated based on customers' current balances and most recent interest rates.

(2) Credit card loans that are 90 or more days delinquent and accruing interest include \$116 million and \$72 million of loans accounted for as TDRs at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

(3) Personal loans that are 90 or more days delinquent and accruing interest include \$5 million of loans accounted for as TDRs at December 31, 2018 and 2017.

(4) Private student loans that are 90 or more days delinquent and accruing interest include \$7 million and \$5 million of loans accounted for as TDRs at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

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Information related to the net charge-offs in the Company's loan portfolio is shown below by each class of loan receivables except for PCI student loans, which is shown under the heading "— Purchased Credit-Impaired Loans" (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,								
	2018			2017			2016		
	Net Charge-offs	Net Charge-off Rate ⁽¹⁾	%	Net Charge-offs	Net Charge-off Rate ⁽¹⁾	%	Net Charge-offs	Net Charge-off Rate ⁽¹⁾	%
Credit card loans	\$2,213	3.26	%	\$1,802	2.91	%	\$1,343	2.34	%
Other loans									
Personal loans	308	4.15	%	231	3.30	%	151	2.55	%
Private student loans (excluding PCI)	85	1.14	%	83	1.21	%	67	1.10	%
Other	6	0.98	%	3	0.75	%	—	—	%
Total other loans	399	2.58	%	317	2.24	%	218	1.78	%
Net charge-offs (excluding PCI)	\$2,612	3.13	%	\$2,119	2.78	%	\$1,561	2.24	%
Net charge-offs (including PCI)	\$2,612	3.06	%	\$2,119	2.70	%	\$1,561	2.16	%

(1) Net charge-off rate represents net charge-off dollars (annualized) divided by average loans for the reporting period.

As part of credit risk management activities, on an ongoing basis the Company reviews information related to the performance of a customer's account with the Company as well as information from credit bureaus, such as FICO or other credit scores, relating to the customer's broader credit performance. FICO scores are generally obtained at origination of the account and are refreshed monthly or quarterly thereafter to assist in predicting customer behavior. Historically, the Company has noted that a significant portion of delinquent accounts have FICO scores below 660.

The following table provides the most recent FICO scores available for the Company's customers as a percentage of each class of loan receivables:

	Credit Risk Profile by FICO Score			
	660 and Above		Less than 660 or No Score	
At December 31, 2018				
Credit card loans	81	%	19	%
Personal loans	94	%	6	%
Private student loans (excluding PCI) ⁽¹⁾	94	%	6	%
At December 31, 2017				
Credit card loans	82	%	18	%
Personal loans	95	%	5	%
Private student loans (excluding PCI) ⁽¹⁾	95	%	5	%

(1) PCI loans are discussed under the heading "— Purchased Credit-Impaired Loans."

For private student loans, additional credit risk management activities include monitoring the amount of loans in forbearance. Forbearance allows borrowers experiencing temporary financial difficulties and willing to make payments the ability to temporarily suspend payments. Eligible borrowers have a lifetime cap on forbearance of 12 months. At December 31, 2018 and 2017, there were \$37 million and \$29 million, respectively, of private student loans, including those classified as PCI, in forbearance, representing 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively of total student

loans in repayment and forbearance.

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Allowance for Loan Losses

The following tables provide changes in the Company's allowance for loan losses (dollars in millions):

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2018				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$2,147	\$ 301	\$ 162	\$ 11	\$2,621
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	2,594	345	95	1	3,035
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(2,734)	(345)	(97)	(6)	(3,182)
Recoveries	521	37	12	—	570
Net charge-offs	(2,213)	(308)	(85)	(6)	(2,612)
Other ⁽²⁾	—	—	(3)	—	(3)
Balance at end of period	\$2,528	\$ 338	\$ 169	\$ 6	\$3,041

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2017				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$1,790	\$ 200	\$ 158	\$ 19	\$2,167
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	2,159	332	93	(5)	2,579
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(2,263)	(258)	(94)	(3)	(2,618)
Recoveries	461	27	11	—	499
Net charge-offs	(1,802)	(231)	(83)	(3)	(2,119)
Other ⁽²⁾	—	—	(6)	—	(6)
Balance at end of period	\$2,147	\$ 301	\$ 162	\$ 11	\$2,621

	For the Year Ended December 31, 2016				
	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other	Total
Balance at beginning of period	\$1,554	\$ 155	\$ 143	\$ 17	\$1,869
Additions					
Provision for loan losses	1,579	196	82	2	1,859
Deductions					
Charge-offs	(1,786)	(172)	(76)	—	(2,034)
Recoveries	443	21	9	—	473
Net charge-offs	(1,343)	(151)	(67)	—	(1,561)
Balance at end of period	\$1,790	\$ 200	\$ 158	\$ 19	\$2,167

(1) Includes both PCI and non-PCI private student loans.

(2) Net change in reserves on PCI pools having no remaining non-accretable difference.

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Net charge-offs of principal are recorded against the allowance for loan losses, as shown in the preceding table. Information regarding net charge-offs of interest and fee revenues on credit card and other loans is as follows (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
Interest and fees accrued subsequently charged off, net of recoveries (recorded as a reduction of interest income)	\$442	\$353	\$275
Fees accrued subsequently charged off, net of recoveries (recorded as a reduction to other income)	\$109	\$89	\$69

The following tables provide additional detail of the Company's allowance for loan losses and recorded investment in its loan portfolio by impairment methodology (dollars in millions):

	Credit Card	Personal Loans	Student Loans ⁽¹⁾	Other Loans	Total
At December 31, 2018					
Allowance for loans evaluated for impairment as					
Collectively evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 450-20	\$2,229	\$292	\$121	\$4	\$2,646
Evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 310-10-35 ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	299	46	23	2	370
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality, evaluated in accordance with ASC 310-30	—	—	25	—	25
Total allowance for loan losses	\$2,528	\$338	\$169	\$6	\$3,041
Recorded investment in loans evaluated for impairment as					
Collectively evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 450-20	\$70,628	\$7,302	\$7,546	\$761	\$86,237
Evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 310-10-35 ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	2,248	152	182	56	2,638
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality, evaluated in accordance with ASC 310-30	—	—	1,637	—	1,637
Total recorded investment	\$72,876	\$7,454	\$9,365	\$817	\$90,512
At December 31, 2017					
Allowance for loans evaluated for impairment as					
Collectively evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 450-20	\$1,921	\$269	\$112	\$4	\$2,306
Evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 310-10-35 ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	226	32	21	7	286
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality, evaluated in accordance with ASC 310-30	—	—	29	—	29
Total allowance for loan losses	\$2,147	\$301	\$162	\$11	\$2,621
Recorded investment in loans evaluated for impairment as					
Collectively evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 450-20	\$65,975	\$7,263	\$6,939	\$370	\$80,547
Evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 310-10-35 ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	1,316	111	137	53	1,617
Acquired with deteriorated credit quality, evaluated in accordance with ASC 310-30	—	—	2,084	—	2,084
Total recorded investment	\$67,291	\$7,374	\$9,160	\$423	\$84,248

(1) Includes both PCI and non-PCI private student loans.

Loan receivables evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC 310-10-35 include credit card loans, personal loans and student loans collectively evaluated for impairment in accordance with ASC Subtopic 310-40,

(2) Receivables, which consists of modified loans accounted for as TDRs. Other loans are individually evaluated for impairment and generally do not represent TDRs.

(3)

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The unpaid principal balance of credit card loans was \$2.0 billion and \$1.1 billion at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. The unpaid principal balance of personal loans was \$152 million and \$109 million at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. The unpaid principal balance of student loans was \$182 million and \$135 million at December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively. All loans accounted for as TDRs have a related allowance for loan losses.

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Troubled Debt Restructurings

The Company has internal loan modification programs that provide relief to credit card, personal loan and student loan borrowers who may be experiencing financial hardship. The Company continually evaluates new programs to determine which of them meet the definition of a TDR. The internal loan modification programs include both temporary and permanent programs, which vary by product. External loan modification programs are also available for credit card and personal loans. Temporary and permanent modifications on credit card and personal loans, as well as temporary modifications on student loans and certain grants of student loan forbearance, result in the loans being considered individually impaired. In addition, loans that defaulted or graduated from modification programs or forbearance are considered to be individually impaired.

For credit card customers, the Company offers temporary hardship programs consisting of an interest rate reduction and in some cases a reduced minimum payment, both lasting for a period no longer than 12 months. The permanent modification program involves changing the structure of the loan to a fixed payment loan with a maturity no longer than 60 months and reducing the interest rate on the loan. The permanent modification program does not normally provide for the forgiveness of unpaid principal, but may allow for the reversal of certain unpaid interest or fee assessments. The Company also makes permanent loan modifications for customers who request financial assistance through external sources, such as a consumer credit counseling agency program. These loans typically receive a reduced interest rate but continue to be subject to the original minimum payment terms and do not normally include waiver of unpaid principal, interest or fees. Modified credit card loans that are deemed to meet the definition of TDRs include loans in both temporary and permanent programs.

For personal loan customers, in certain situations the Company offers various payment programs, including temporary and permanent programs. The temporary programs normally consist of a reduction of the minimum payment for a period of no longer than 12 months with the option of a final balloon payment required at the end of the loan term or an extension of the maturity date with the total term not exceeding nine years. Further, in certain circumstances, the interest rate on the loan is reduced. The permanent programs involve changing the terms of the loan in order to pay off the outstanding balance over a longer term and also in certain circumstances reducing the interest rate on the loan. Similar to the temporary programs, the total term may not exceed nine years. The Company also allows permanent loan modifications for customers who request financial assistance through external sources, similar to the credit card customers discussed above. Payments are modified based on the new terms agreed upon with the credit counseling agency. Personal loans included in temporary and permanent programs are accounted for as TDRs.

At December 31, 2018, there was \$5.6 billion of private student loans in repayment, which includes both PCI and non-PCI loans. To assist student loan borrowers who are experiencing temporary financial difficulties but are willing to resume making payments, the Company may offer hardship forbearance or programs that include payment deferral, temporary payment reduction, temporary interest rate reduction or extended terms. A non-PCI modified loan typically meets the definition of a TDR based on the cumulative length of the concession period and an evaluation of the credit quality of the borrower based on FICO scores.

Borrower performance after using payment programs or forbearance is monitored and the Company believes the programs help to prevent defaults and are useful in assisting customers experiencing financial difficulties. The Company plans to continue to use payment programs and forbearance and, as a result, expects to have additional loans classified as TDRs in the future.

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Additional information about modified loans classified as TDRs is shown below (dollars in millions):

	Average recorded investment in loans	Interest income recognized during period loans were impaired ⁽¹⁾	Gross interest income that would have been recorded with original terms ⁽²⁾
For the Year Ended December 31, 2018			
Credit card loans ⁽³⁾	\$ 1,737	\$ 180	\$ 137
Personal loans	\$ 130	\$ 14	\$ 6
Private student loans	\$ 158	\$ 13	\$ —
For the Year Ended December 31, 2017			
Credit card loans ⁽³⁾	\$ 1,159	\$ 107	\$ 86
Personal loans	\$ 94	\$ 10	\$ 4
Private student loans	\$ 113	\$ 8	\$ —
For the Year Ended December 31, 2016			
Credit card loans ⁽³⁾	\$ 1,035	\$ 88	\$ 77
Personal loans	\$ 73	\$ 8	\$ 3
Private student loans	\$ 63	\$ 4	\$ —

(1) The Company does not separately track interest income on loans in modification programs. Amounts shown are estimated by applying an average interest rate to the average loans in the various modification programs.

The Company does not separately track the amount of additional gross interest income that would have been recorded if the loans in modification programs had not been restructured and interest had instead been recorded in accordance with the original terms. Amounts shown are estimated by applying the difference between the average interest rate earned on non-impaired loans and the average interest rate earned on loans in the modification programs to the average loans in the modification programs.

Includes credit card loans that were modified in TDRs, but are no longer enrolled in a TDR program due to noncompliance with the terms of the modification or due to successful completion of a program after which charging privileges may be reinstated based on customer-level evaluation. The average balance of credit card loans that were no longer enrolled in a TDR program was \$430 million, \$339 million and \$282 million, respectively, for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

In order to evaluate the primary financial effects that resulted from credit card loans entering into a loan modification program during the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, the Company quantified the amount by which interest and fees were reduced during the periods. During the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, the Company forgave approximately \$48 million, \$40 million and \$34 million, respectively, of interest and fees as a result of accounts entering into a credit card loan modification program.

The following table provides information on loans that entered a loan modification program during the period (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016

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	Number of Accounts	Balances	Number of Accounts	Balances	Number of Accounts	Balances
Accounts that entered a loan modification program during the period						
Credit card loans	268,817	\$ 1,713	133,139	\$ 776	95,881	\$ 565
Personal loans	8,260	\$ 111	6,567	\$ 82	4,606	\$ 52
Private student loans	4,057	\$ 74	3,942	\$ 69	2,792	\$ 49

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The following table presents the carrying value of loans that experienced a payment default during the period that had been modified in a TDR during the 15 months preceding the end of each period (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,					
	2018		2017		2016	
	Aggregated Number of Accounts	Aggregated Outstanding Balances upon Default	Aggregated Number of Accounts	Aggregated Outstanding Balances upon Default	Aggregated Number of Accounts	Aggregated Outstanding Balances upon Default
Troubled debt restructurings that subsequently defaulted						
Credit card loans ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	42,659	\$ 239	34,210	\$ 183	23,388	\$ 123
Personal loans ⁽²⁾	2,955	\$ 40	1,915	\$ 25	940	\$ 11
Private student loans ⁽³⁾	1,041	\$ 19	939	\$ 16	777	\$ 12

(1) Terms revert back to the pre-modification terms for customers who default from a temporary program and charging privileges remain revoked in most cases.

(2) For credit card loans and personal loans, a customer defaults from a modification program after two consecutive missed payments. The outstanding balance upon default is generally the loan balance at the end of the month prior to default.

(3) For student loans, defaults have been defined as loans that are 60 or more days delinquent. The outstanding balance upon default is generally the loan balance at the end of the month prior to default.

Of the account balances that defaulted as shown above for the years ended December 31, 2018, 2017 and 2016, approximately 36%, 37% and 37%, respectively, of the total balances were charged off at the end of the month in which they defaulted. For accounts that have defaulted from a loan modification program and have not been subsequently charged off, the balances are included in the allowance for loan loss analysis discussed above under “— Allowance for Loan Losses.”

Purchased Credit-Impaired Loans

Purchased loans with evidence of credit deterioration since origination for which it is probable that not all contractually required payments will be collected are considered impaired at acquisition and are reported as PCI loans. The private student loans acquired in the SLC transaction as well as the additional acquired private student loan portfolio comprise the Company’s only PCI loans at December 31, 2018 and 2017. Total PCI student loans had an outstanding balance of \$1.7 billion and \$2.2 billion, including accrued interest, and a related carrying amount of \$1.6 billion and \$2.1 billion, as of December 31, 2018 and 2017, respectively.

The following table provides changes in accretable yield for the acquired loans during each period (dollars in millions):

	For the Years Ended December 31,		
	2018	2017	2016
Balance at beginning of period	\$669	\$796	\$965
Accretion into interest income	(139)	(159)	(185)
Other changes in expected cash flows	18	32	16
Balance at end of period	\$548	\$669	\$796