



A STRONGER NATION

In Colorado, postsecondary learning builds the talent that helps us rise

A policy brief from Lumina Foundation

Colorado

The need to increase postsecondary attainment — the number of Americans who hold degrees and other high-quality credentials — has never been clearer. State leaders are responding to the growing global demand for talent by setting goals and enacting policies to increase attainment. Like Lumina Foundation, states have come to understand the scope of the effort required. Much is left to be done, but real progress is being made through the efforts of those who are committed to assuring that millions more Americans benefit from postsecondary education.

Lumina began reporting the attainment rate (associate degree and higher) in 2008. That year, the rate in Colorado stood at 45.3 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 48.2 percent.

However, the degree attainment rate doesn't tell the whole story. Lumina has always said that other postsecondary credentials — including certificates and certifications — should count toward national and state goals for attainment, with one important caveat. To count, non-degree credentials should be of high quality, which we define as having clear and transparent learning outcomes leading to further education and employment.

This year, for the first time, we have nationally representative data on the number of Americans who hold high-quality postsecondary certificates; we now feel confident we can count these credentials toward attainment goals. In states, we are able to use estimates from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce on the number of residents who hold high-quality certificates as their highest earned credential. In Colorado, 6 percent of residents between the ages of 25 and 64 hold a high-quality certificate. This brings the state's overall postsecondary attainment rate to 54.2 percent.

As the data in this report make clear, increasing overall attainment is not the only challenge Colorado faces. There are also significant gaps in attainment that must be closed. While current systems work very well for many students, more postsecondary credentials must be earned by Americans who, by definition, are *post-traditional* learners. Compared with current students, they will be older; more will be African-American, Hispanic and Native American; and they will have lower incomes. Most will be first-generation students. The data in this report show the extent of the attainment gaps in Colorado by race and ethnicity.

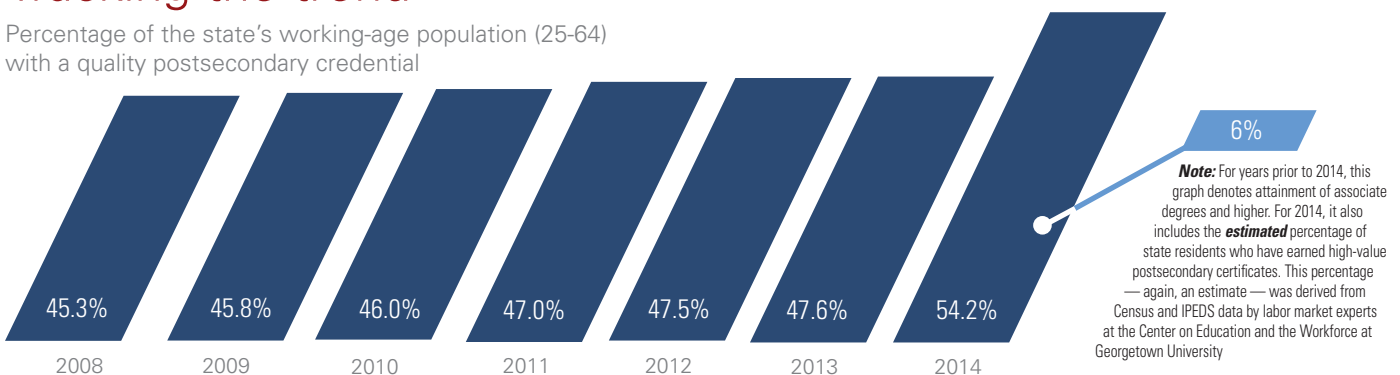
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Colorado is one of those 26 states.

There is much more that states can do to increase attainment. It begins with assuring that all prospective students, including working adults, have access to affordable programs that lead to quality credentials. State policies such as outcomes-based funding can encourage colleges and universities to direct resources to approaches that increase student success. States can also help assure that students get full recognition for *all* of their learning — whether it was obtained in an institution, in the military or on the job — and can apply it to further education and credentials.

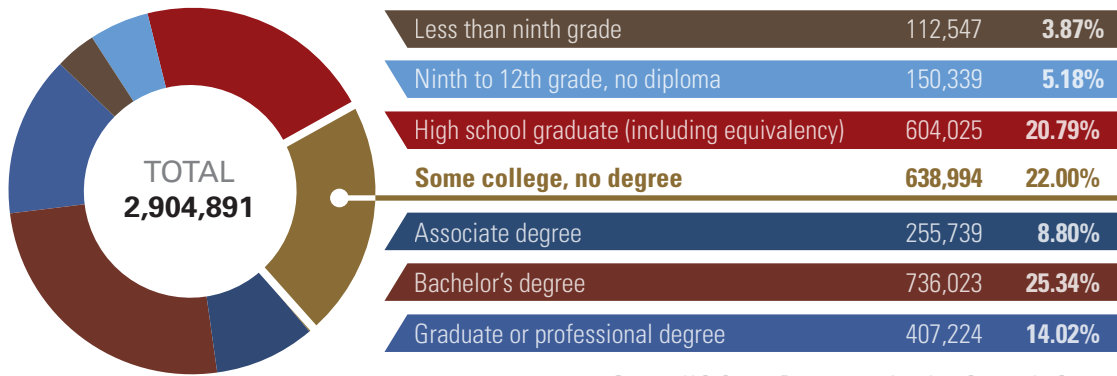
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

Tracking the trend

Percentage of the state's working-age population (25-64) with a quality postsecondary credential



Levels of education for Colorado residents, ages 25-64

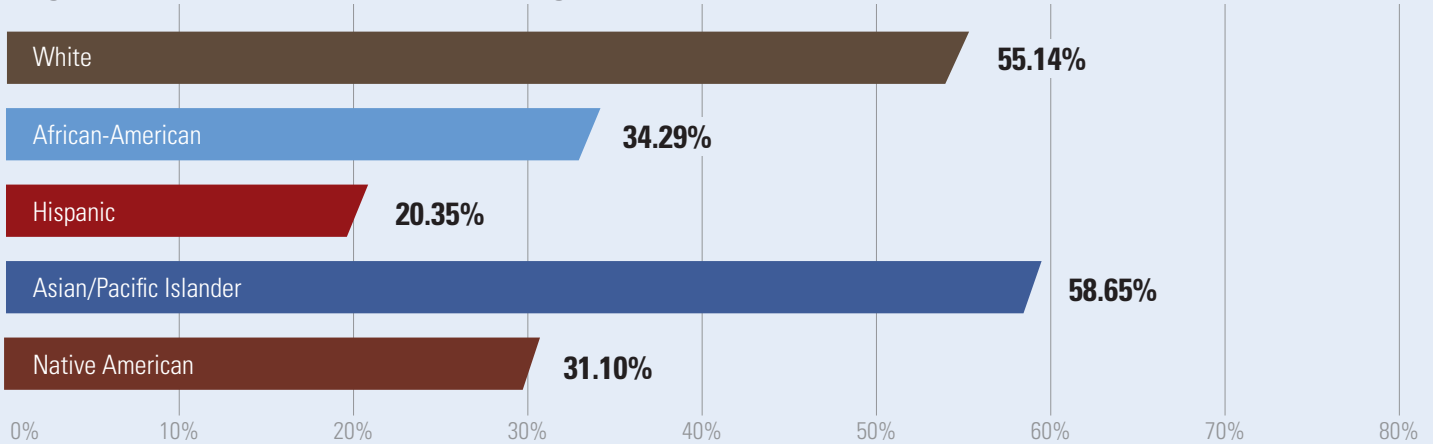


Estimated attainment of certificates: **6%**

Note: The accompanying pie chart does not account for residents who have earned high-value postsecondary certificates. The percentage above – admittedly, an *estimate* – aims to fill that gap. To calculate this percentage, labor market experts at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce used Survey of Income Program Participation 2008 Wave 12 data (2012) and data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2014.

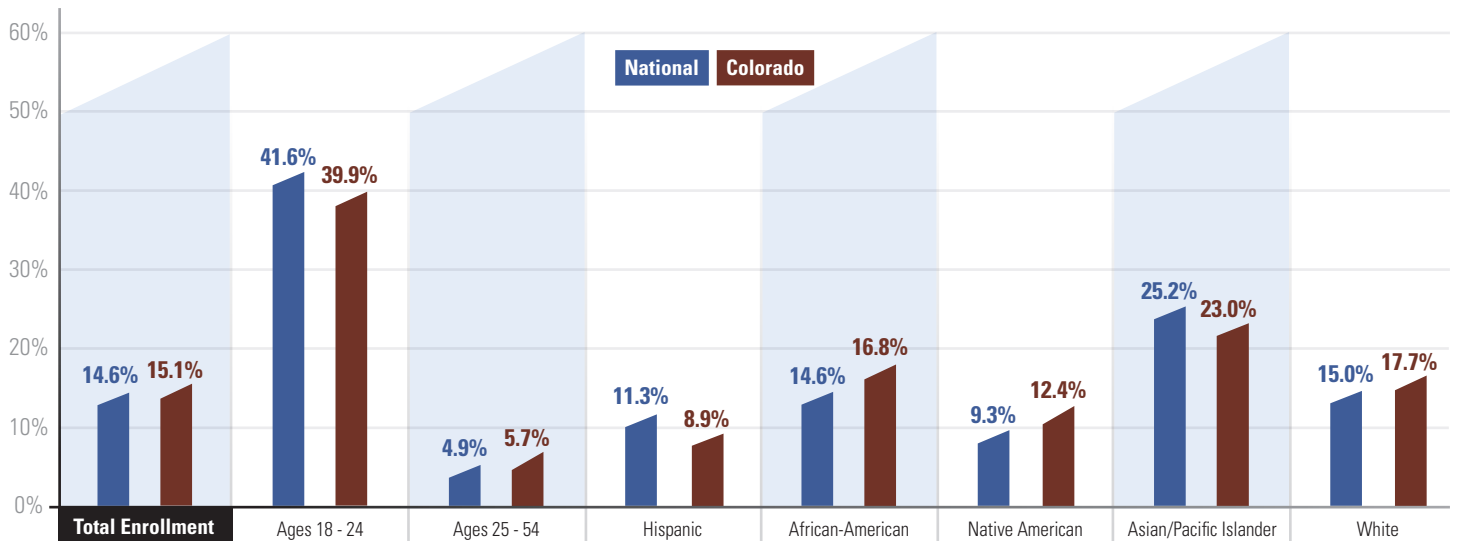
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey

Degree-attainment rates among Colorado residents (ages 25-64), by population group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, 2013, and 2014 American Community Survey One-Year PUMS Files

College enrollment among Colorado residents, ages 18-54



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey One-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Note: These percentages reflect the enrollment of non-degree-holding students, ages 18-54, at public and private, two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions

Percentage of Colorado residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Adams	31.20	Conejos	28.06	Fremont	21.55	Lake	42.73	Morgan	24.55	Saguache	31.96
Alamosa	30.29	Costilla	23.02	Garfield	36.44	La Plata	50.97	Otero	31.68	San Juan	33.33
Arapahoe	48.94	Crowley	19.33	Gilpin	40.26	Larimer	55.48	Ouray	52.67	San Miguel	58.77
Archuleta	40.43	Custer	40.70	Grand	45.94	Las Animas	31.68	Park	41.31	Sedgwick	33.39
Baca	30.77	Delta	27.16	Gunnison	61.21	Lincoln	22.90	Phillips	29.69	Summit	54.70
Bent	17.44	Denver	50.91	Hinsdale	43.47	Logan	32.39	Pitkin	63.45	Teller	41.04
Boulder	66.04	Dolores	32.42	Huerfano	34.01	Mesa	35.83	Prowers	27.34	Washington	33.82
Broomfield	61.09	Douglas	65.56	Jackson	21.96	Mineral	50.53	Pueblo	34.54	Weld	36.22
Chaffee	40.55	Eagle	54.53	Jefferson	51.51	Moffat	23.13	Rio Blanco	31.92	Yuma	28.75
Cheyenne	38.16	Elbert	42.59	Kiowa	40.50	Montezuma	32.91	Rio Grande	29.36		
Clear Creek	47.70	El Paso	47.55	Kit Carson	26.72	Montrose	31.13	Routt	57.75		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-14 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an equitable, accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.