



# A STRONGER NATION

In South Carolina, postsecondary learning builds the talent that helps us rise

A policy brief from Lumina Foundation



# South Carolina

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 South Carolina stood at 34.4 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 36.7 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 South Carolina, 4 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 40.7 percent.

As the data in this report make clear, increasing overall attainment is not the only challenge South Carolina 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 South Carolina by race and ethnicity.

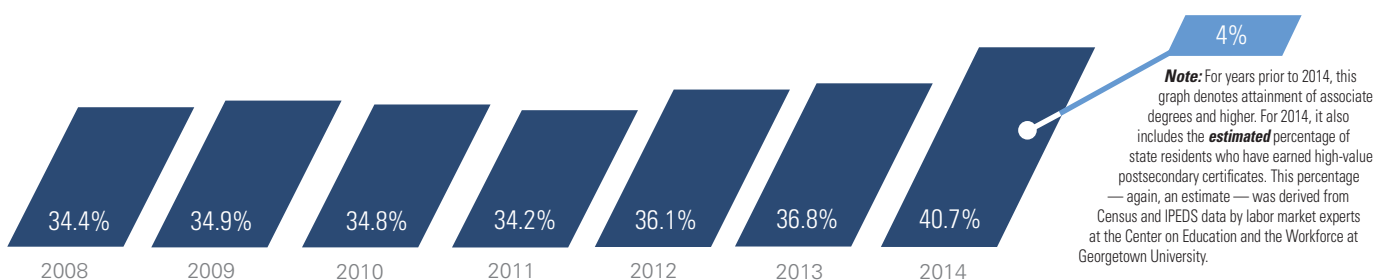
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). South Carolina is one of those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

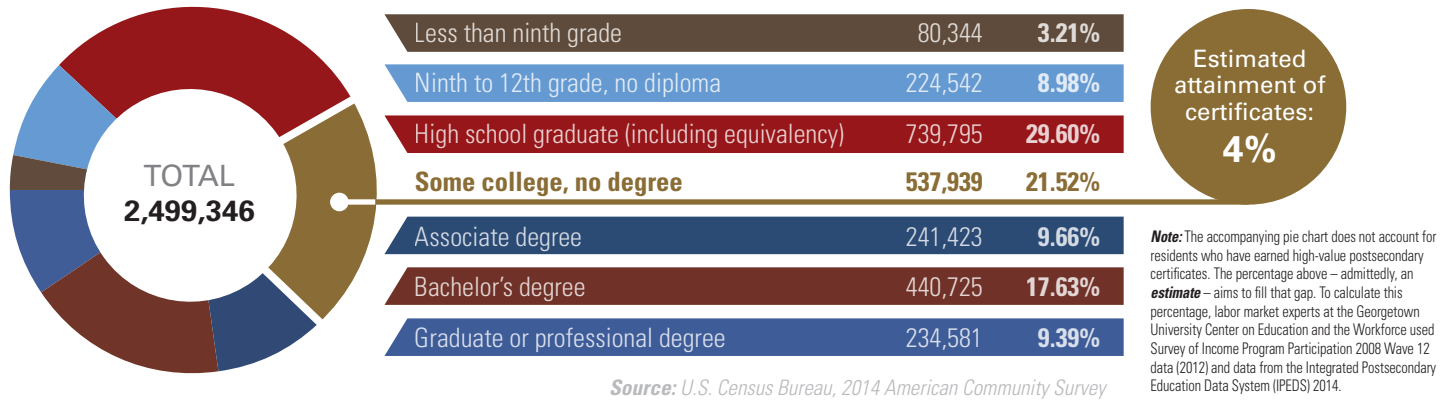
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

## Tracking the trend

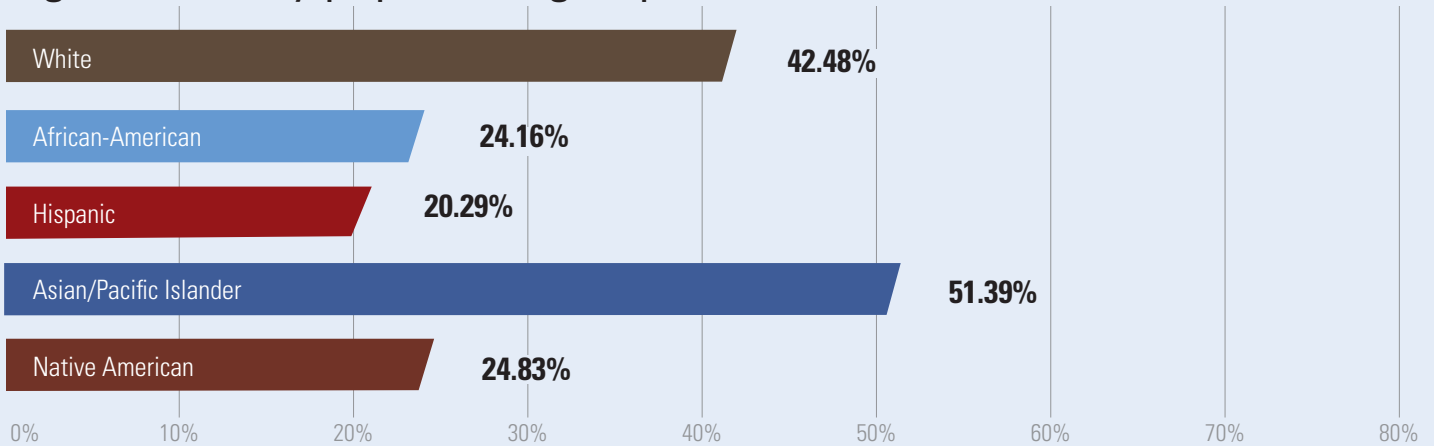
Percentage of the state's working-age population (25-64) with a quality postsecondary credential



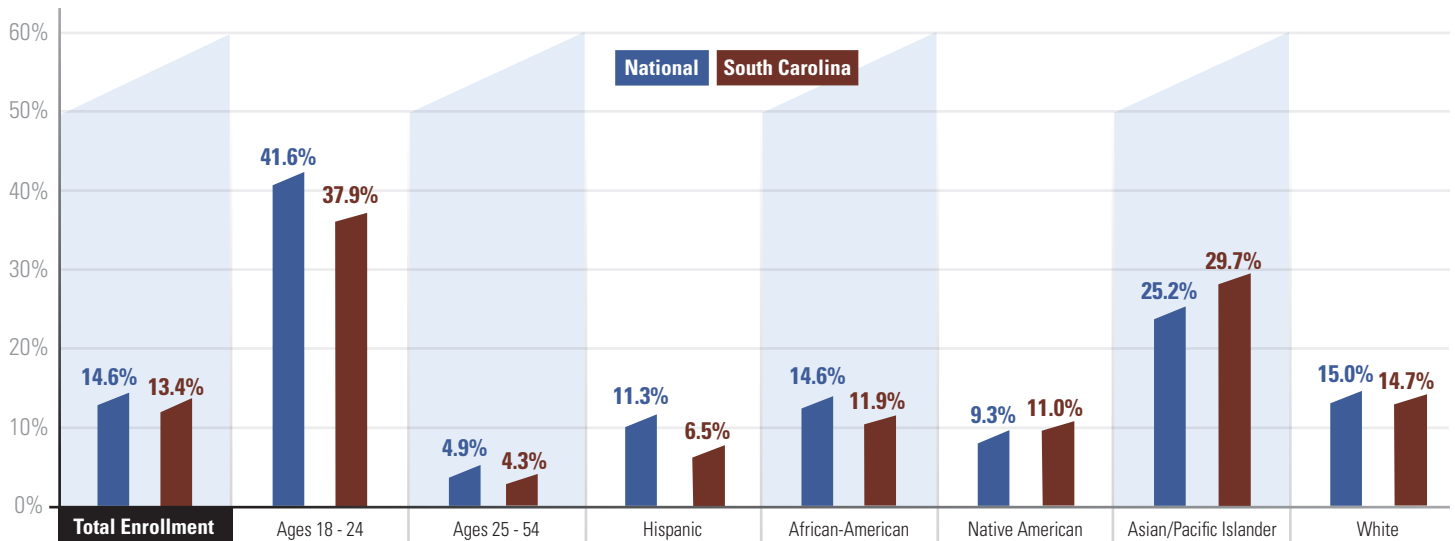
# Levels of education for South Carolina residents, ages 25-64



## Degree-attainment rates among South Carolina residents (ages 25-64), by population group



## College enrollment among South Carolina 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 South Carolina residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Abbeville	24.39	Charleston	49.95	Edgefield	26.86	Kershaw	29.74	Oconee	31.63	York	41.00
Aiken	32.83	Cherokee	24.10	Fairfield	26.09	Lancaster	29.53	Orangeburg	30.08		
Allendale	19.17	Chester	22.58	Florence	31.62	Laurens	23.25	Pickens	33.59		
Anderson	31.19	Chesterfield	21.16	Georgetown	32.64	Lee	16.02	Richland	46.43		
Bamberg	33.47	Clarendon	22.34	Greenville	42.64	Lexington	40.27	Saluda	23.33		
Barnwell	22.86	Colleton	23.56	Greenwood	33.09	McCormick	23.04	Spartanburg	34.23		
Beaufort	41.58	Darlington	25.33	Hampton	18.58	Marion	23.71	Sumter	29.66		
Berkeley	32.91	Dillon	15.92	Horry	34.03	Marlboro	14.27	Union	25.09		
Calhoun	27.34	Dorchester	36.88	Jasper	18.36	Newberry	29.47	Williamsburg	21.27		

*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.