In West Virginia, postsecondary learning builds the talent that helps us rise

A policy brief from Lumina Foundation

West Virginia

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 West Virginia stood at 25.6 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 28.6 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 West Virginia, 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 32.6 percent.

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

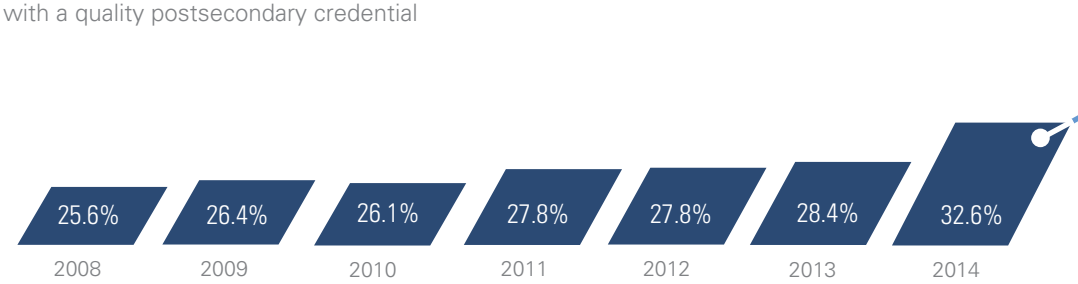
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Our analysis shows that West Virginia has not set a goal that meets Lumina's criteria; we urge state leaders to do so.

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/).

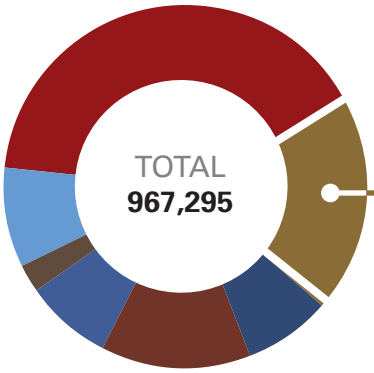
Tracking the trend

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



Note: For years prior to 2014, this graph denotes attainment of associate degrees and higher. For 2014, it also includes the ***estimated*** percentage of state residents who have earned high-value postsecondary certificates. This percentage — again, an estimate — was derived from Census and IPEDS data by labor market experts at the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University.

Levels of education for West Virginia residents, ages 25-64



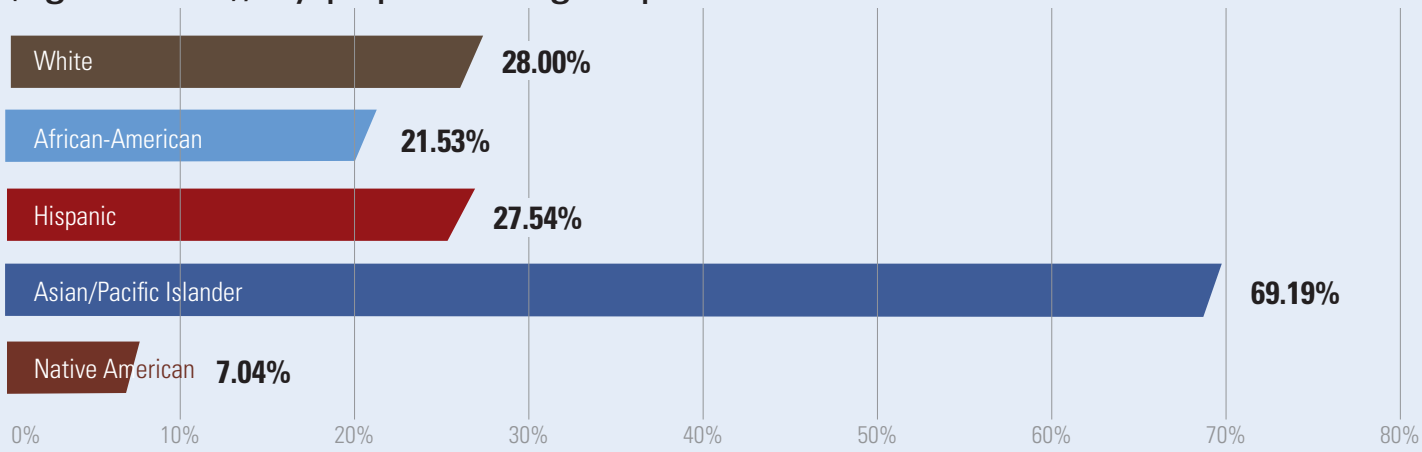
Less than ninth grade	26,383	2.73%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	84,906	8.78%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	392,169	40.54%
Some college, no degree	**187,019**	**19.33%**
Associate degree	73,703	7.62%
Bachelor's degree	128,962	13.33%
Graduate or professional degree	74,153	7.67%

Estimated attainment of certificates: **4%**

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.

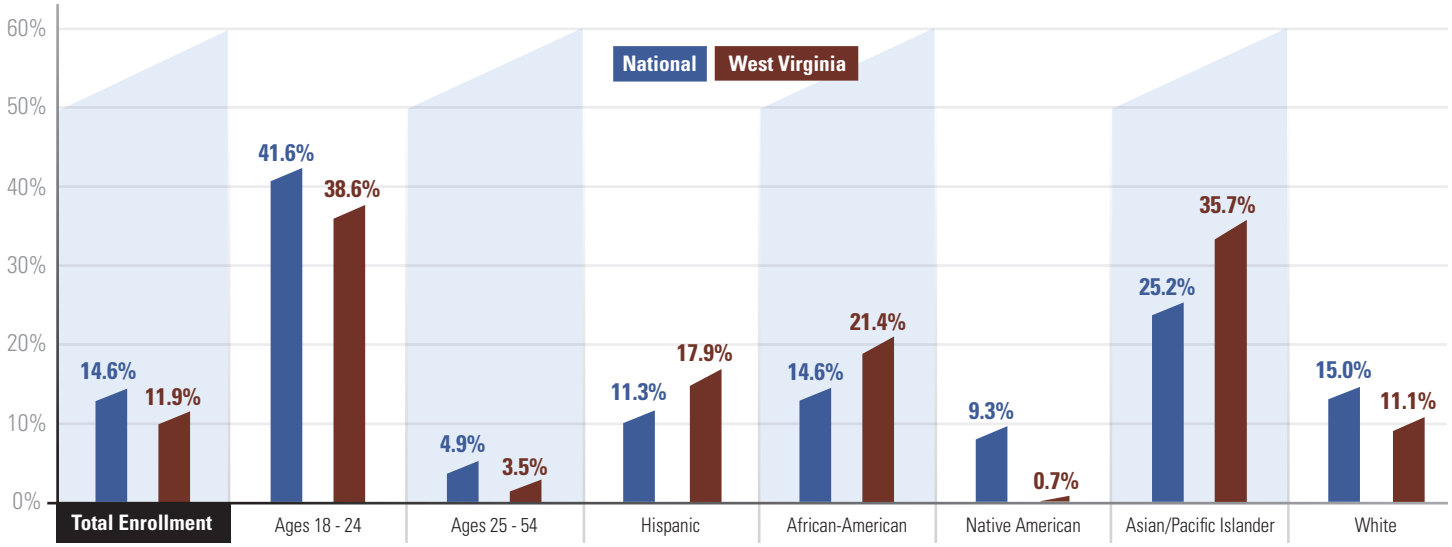
Source: *U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey*

Degree-attainment rates among West Virginia 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 West Virginia 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 West Virginia residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Barbour	20.32	Gilmer	24.18	Lewis	25.20	Monongalia	46.93	Raleigh	26.97	Webster	10.65
Berkeley	28.49	Grant	21.22	Lincoln	14.67	Monroe	19.87	Randolph	23.68	Wetzel	18.16
Boone	16.20	Greenbrier	25.64	Logan	18.03	Morgan	25.06	Ritchie	19.68	Wirt	22.19
Braxton	16.69	Hampshire	12.93	McDowell	9.71	Nicholas	23.10	Roane	17.99	Wood	31.39
Brooke	29.07	Hancock	30.26	Marion	32.11	Ohio	40.27	Summers	21.44	Wyoming	14.55
Cabell	37.57	Hardy	19.49	Marshall	26.61	Pendleton	22.28	Taylor	26.60		
Calhoun	16.76	Harrison	30.78	Mason	21.55	Pleasants	21.47	Tucker	22.15		
Clay	15.00	Jackson	27.20	Mercer	26.61	Pocahontas	22.00	Tyler	17.61		
Doddridge	18.26	Jefferson	37.16	Mineral	22.67	Preston	19.60	Upshur	24.46		
Fayette	21.32	Kanawha	34.05	Mingo	17.69	Putnam	36.30	Wayne	22.86		

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

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