

# A stronger nation through higher education — and Georgia's role in that effort

In Georgia, 36 percent of the state's 5.2 million working-age adults (25-64 years old) hold at least a two-year degree, according to 2008 Census data. This compares to a national average of around 38 percent. Attainment rates in Georgia are increasing modestly, even though the proportion of degree-holding young adults — those 25-34 years old — mirrors that of the overall adult population. If Georgia continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 45 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

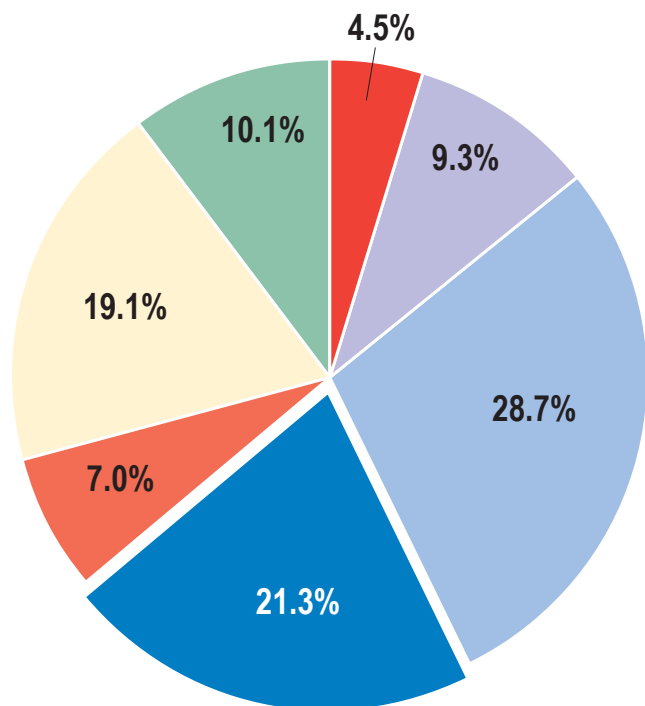
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 9,901 associate or bachelor's degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 7.8 percent — Georgia will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Georgia residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, 1.1 million Georgia residents fit into this category

— representing more than 21 percent of the state's adult population. If only a small portion of this group could be enticed to return to college to complete either a two- or four-year degree, it would go a long way to helping Georgia reach the goal of 60 percent higher education attainment.

Also, by looking at the geographic distribution of college graduates within the state (see chart on reverse), policymakers and other stakeholders can begin to work strategically and systematically to close achievement gaps. They can target counties and regions that show the greatest need and focus their efforts on those specific areas.

How do we know that Georgia's economy will demand more college graduates? A recent analysis by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce provides the answer. According to the center's analysis of occupation data and workforce trends, 58 percent of Georgia's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Georgia will need to fill about 1.4 million vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for Georgia residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	231,920	4.5%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	485,252	9.3%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	1,495,408	28.7%
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	<b>1,111,807</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
Associate degree	367,106	7.0%
Bachelor's degree	992,802	19.1%
Graduate or professional degree	524,615	10.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,208,910</b>	<b>100%</b>

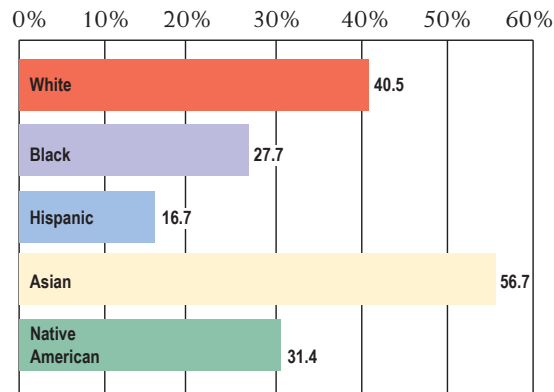
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 820,000 will require postsecondary credentials, while only 595,000 are expected to be filled by high school graduates or dropouts.

It will be impossible to reach the Big Goal without significantly increasing college success among the groups that can accurately be called 21st century students, including working adults, low-income and first-generation students and students of color. Closing attainment gaps among racial and ethnic groups is a particular challenge in Georgia, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Georgia are displayed in the accompanying bar graph.

These gaps have persisted for decades, and closing them is obviously a big challenge. Still, it can and *must* be done. It will require concerted and strategic efforts over many years — efforts based on solid evidence about what works to

### Degree-attainment rates among Georgia adults (ages 25-64), by population group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

increase attainment. Information about successful strategies to increase the number of students who complete higher education is available on Lumina Foundation's Web site. The site also provides specific information about Georgia's degree-attainment rates at [www.luminafoundation.org/state\\_data/](http://www.luminafoundation.org/state_data/). From there, you can find links to data from all 50 states.

Still more information is available at a Web-based resource created by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). The NCHEMS Information Center provides detailed comparative data for all states and counties, as well as other contextual information that can help higher education policymakers and analysts make sound policy decisions. We urge you to visit the site ([www.higheredinfo.org](http://www.higheredinfo.org)).

### Percentage of Georgia adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Baldwin	22.1	Colquitt	17.3	Fulton	53.5	Lowndes	32.4	Spalding	18.9
Barrow	22.0	Columbia	45.5	Gilmer	13.2	Lumpkin	25.4	Stephens	20.4
Bartow	23.0	Coweta	33.0	Glynn	33.4	McDuffie	17.1	Sumter	26.3
Bibb	33.0	Crisp	20.1	Gordon	16.3	Madison	18.9	Tattnall	14.7
Bryan	35.6	Dawson	21.5	Grady	20.6	Meriwether	11.2	Thomas	28.3
Bulloch	29.9	Decatur	20.6	Gwinnett	46.3	Mitchell	15.1	Tift	26.0
Burke	14.6	DeKalb	45.9	Habersham	27.4	Monroe	25.0	Toombs	22.8
Butts	16.0	Dodge	19.0	Hall	25.7	Murray	9.6	Troup	28.6
Camden	28.2	Dougherty	29.7	Haralson	17.1	Muscogee	31.9	Union	27.1
Carroll	24.9	Douglas	33.1	Harris	38.9	Newton	27.7	Upson	16.3
Catoosa	26.0	Effingham	20.2	Hart	19.7	Oconee	50.2	Walker	20.5
Chatham	39.8	Elbert	18.8	Henry	33.6	Paulding	26.5	Walton	23.5
Chattooga	14.4	Emanuel	15.7	Houston	35.6	Peach	26.2	Ware	18.1
Cherokee	43.2	Fannin	22.4	Jackson	20.9	Pickens	24.8	Washington	15.6
Clarke	48.5	Fayette	54.2	Jones	29.4	Polk	15.2	Wayne	19.9
Clayton	25.5	Floyd	24.9	Laurens	23.7	Putnam	26.6	White	28.4
Cobb	51.3	Forsyth	53.6	Lee	26.5	Richmond	27.9	Whitfield	21.7
Coffee	19.6	Franklin	20.3	Liberty	27.4	Rockdale	33.2	Other	18.2*

\*This percentage is an average for the 70 Georgia counties with fewer than 20,000 residents.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

Lumina Foundation for Education is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college — especially low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Our goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025.

Lumina pursues this goal in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change. For more details on the Foundation, visit our Web site at [www.luminafoundation.org](http://www.luminafoundation.org).

