

A stronger nation through higher education — and Illinois' role in that effort

In Illinois, about 41 percent of the state's nearly 7 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 Illinois 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 Illinois continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 51 percent in 2025 — still short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

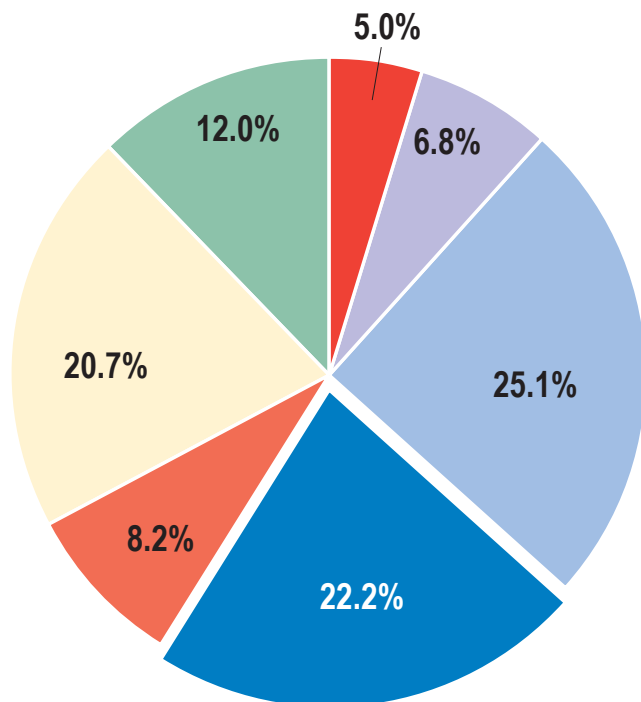
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 9,367 associate or bachelor's degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 5.4 percent — Illinois will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Illinois residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In

2008, 1.5 million Illinois residents fit into this category — representing more than 22 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 Illinois 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 Illinois' 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, 64 percent of Illinois' jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Illinois will need to fill about 2 million vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these job vacancies,



Levels of education for Illinois residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	341,962	5.0%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	465,668	6.8%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	1,715,637	25.1%
Some college, no degree	1,514,533	22.2%
Associate degree	559,536	8.2%
Bachelor's degree	1,407,451	20.7%
Graduate or professional degree	816,132	12.0%
TOTAL	6,820,919	100%

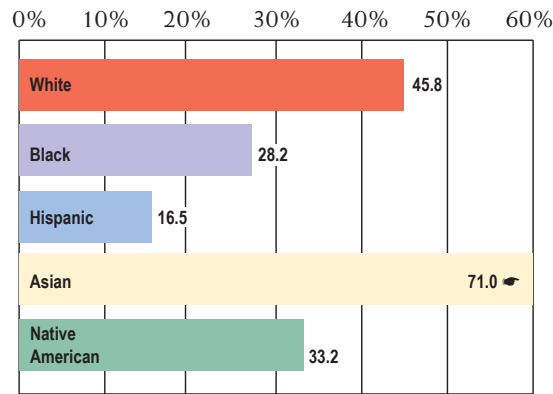
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

about 1.3 million will require postsecondary credentials, while only 733,000 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 Illinois, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Illinois 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

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



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

years — efforts based on solid evidence about what works to 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 Illinois' degree-attainment rates at 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).

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

Adams	33.7	Henry	33.1	McDonough	48.6	St. Clair	36.1
Boone	28.0	Iroquois	25.5	McHenry	41.5	Saline	28.5
Bureau	26.0	Jackson	48.0	McLean	50.6	Sangamon	41.4
Champaign	55.2	Jefferson	26.7	Macon	30.9	Shelby	30.2
Christian	22.2	Jersey	30.3	Macoupin	27.4	Stephenson	30.7
Clinton	34.1	Jo Daviess	31.4	Madison	35.3	Tazewell	38.6
Coles	34.6	Kane	41.1	Marion	25.9	Vermilion	25.3
Cook	41.4	Kankakee	29.3	Monroe	40.6	Whiteside	26.3
DeKalb	39.7	Kendall	41.8	Montgomery	24.8	Will	40.9
DuPage	55.5	Knox	28.5	Morgan	28.4	Williamson	32.6
Effingham	39.2	Lake	49.4	Ogle	28.2	Winnebago	30.8
Fayette	22.5	LaSalle	28.4	Peoria	39.7	Woodford	41.8
Franklin	27.7	Lee	27.1	Perry	26.8	Other counties	28.8*
Fulton	25.1	Livingston	23.1	Randolph	22.2		
Grundy	29.4	Logan	27.8	Rock Island	33.8		

*This percentage is an average for the 45 Illinois 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.

