

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

In Kentucky, 29 percent of the state's 2.3 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 Kentucky 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 Kentucky continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 39 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

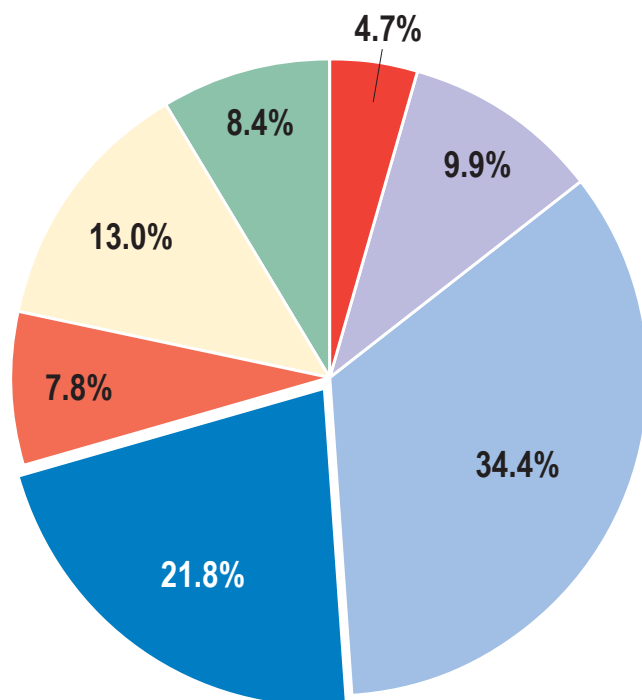
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 5,092 associate or bachelor's degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 7.5 percent — Kentucky will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Kentucky residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, more than 500,000 Kentucky residents fit into this

category — representing nearly 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 Kentucky 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 Kentucky'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, 54 percent of Kentucky's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Kentucky will need to fill about 617,000 vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for Kentucky residents, ages 25-64

● Less than ninth grade	109,090	4.7%
● Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	228,626	9.9%
● High school graduate (including equivalency)	794,723	34.4%
● <b>Some college, no degree</b>	<b>503,070</b>	<b>21.8%</b>
● Associate degree	179,954	7.8%
● Bachelor's degree	300,895	13.0%
● Graduate or professional degree	193,121	8.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,309,479</b>	<b>100%</b>

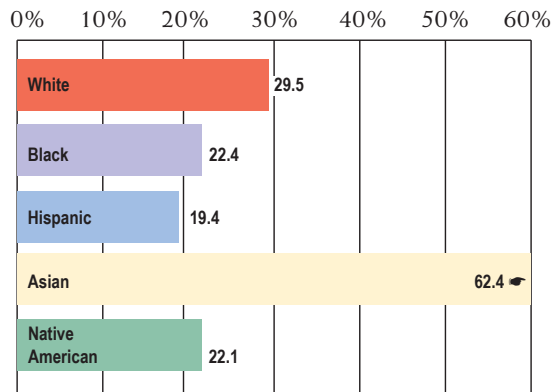
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 330,000 will require postsecondary credentials, while only 287,000 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 Kentucky, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Kentucky 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 Kentucky 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 Kentucky'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 Kentucky adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Anderson	23.1	Fayette	49.4	Kenton	38.3	Ohio	20.5
Barren	22.9	Floyd	18.1	Knox	10.8	Oldham	45.0
Bell	19.1	Franklin	33.5	Laurel	22.6	Perry	19.5
Boone	39.1	Grant	15.1	Letcher	18.4	Pike	21.5
Boyd	27.1	Graves	23.3	Lincoln	17.7	Pulaski	22.9
Boyle	31.1	Grayson	12.7	Logan	16.6	Rowan	32.9
Bullitt	23.7	Greenup	24.6	McCracken	33.9	Scott	33.9
Calloway	35.4	Hardin	30.7	Madison	37.5	Shelby	30.3
Campbell	36.5	Harlan	19.8	Marshall	23.4	Taylor	20.6
Carter	17.1	Henderson	29.4	Meade	22.8	Warren	35.4
Christian	23.5	Hopkins	24.9	Mercer	23.8	Wayne	17.3
Clark	27.3	Jefferson	37.7	Montgomery	20.6	Whitley	19.3
Clay	9.6	Jessamine	35.8	Muhlenberg	17.4	Woodford	45.7
Daviess	29.4	Johnson	14.4	Nelson	24.4	Other counties	18.6*

\*This percentage is an average for the 65 Kentucky 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).

