

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

In Louisiana, 27 percent of the state's nearly 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 Louisiana 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 Louisiana continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 33 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

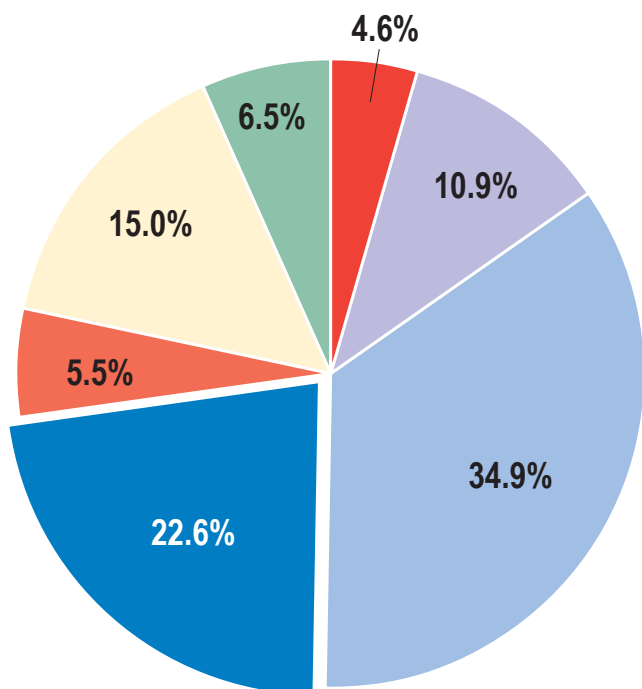
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 5,562 associate or bachelor's degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 8.2 percent — Louisiana will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Louisiana residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, 517,000 Louisiana residents fit into this category

— representing nearly 23 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 Louisiana 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 parishes and regions that show the greatest need and focus their efforts on those specific areas.

How do we know that Louisiana'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, 51 percent of Louisiana's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Louisiana will need to fill about 634,000 vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for Louisiana residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	106,566	4.6%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	250,587	10.9%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	799,095	34.9%
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	<b>517,252</b>	<b>22.6%</b>
Associate degree	125,889	5.5%
Bachelor's degree	343,742	15.0%
Graduate or professional degree	148,285	6.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,291,146</b>	<b>100%</b>

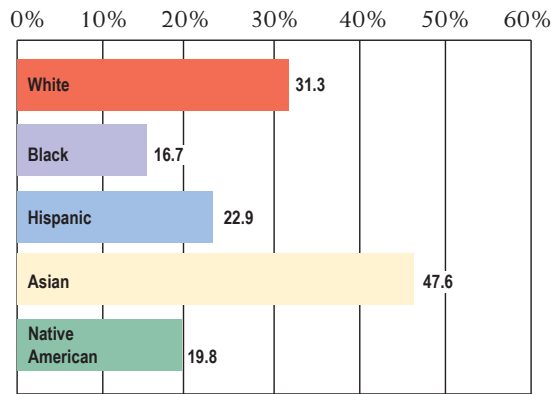
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 316,000 will require postsecondary credentials; 318,000 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 Louisiana, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Louisiana 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 Louisiana 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 Louisiana'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 Louisiana adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by parish:

Acadia	18.1	Franklin	13.4	Plaquemines	25.0	Tangipahoa	24.7
Allen	15.7	Iberia	18.8	Pointe Coupee	20.6	Terrebonne	17.8
Ascension	26.9	Iberville	14.7	Rapides	26.6	Union	20.5
Assumption	12.5	Jefferson	30.0	Richland	16.8	Vermilion	16.2
Avoyelles	15.0	Jefferson	19.9	Sabine	15.6	Vernon	22.6
Beauregard	21.1	Lafayette	33.8	St. Bernard	16.6	Washington	17.3
Bossier	32.5	Lafourche	18.6	St. Charles	28.0	Webster	18.9
Caddo	28.5	Lincoln	36.6	St. James	20.7	West Baton Rouge	21.0
Calcasieu	27.3	Livingston	20.7	St. John the Baptist	23.4	Other parishes	16.5*
De Soto	19.7	Morehouse	17.7	St. Landry	18.9		
East Baton Rouge	39.0	Natchitoches	25.4	St. Martin	15.0		
East Feliciana	18.0	Orleans	36.3	St. Mary	14.2		
Evangeline	18.8	Ouachita	30.4	St. Tammany	38.5		

\*This percentage is an average for the 17 Louisiana parishes 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).

