

A stronger nation through higher education — and New Mexico’s role in that effort

In New Mexico, 33 percent of the state’s 1 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 New Mexico 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 New Mexico continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 37.9 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

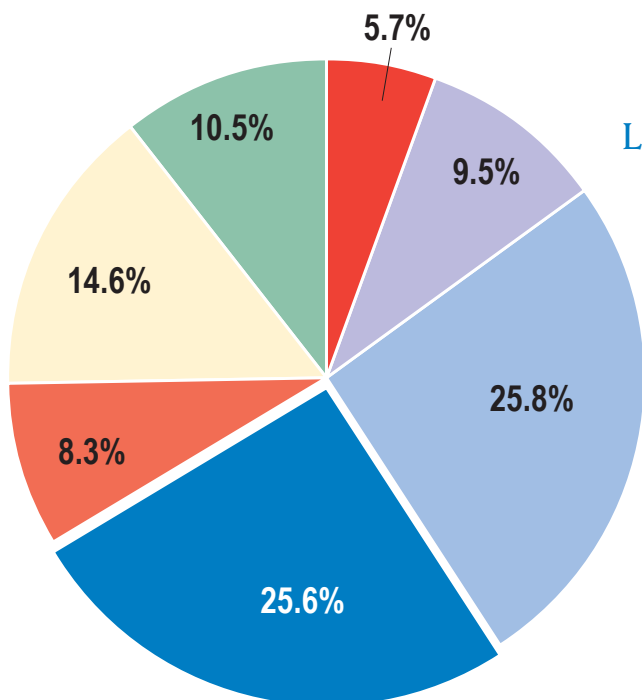
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 1,897 associate or bachelor’s degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 7 percent — New Mexico will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of New Mexico residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, about 260,000 New Mexico residents fit into this

category — representing nearly 26 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 New Mexico 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 New Mexico’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 New Mexico’s jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, New Mexico will need to fill about 292,000 vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for New Mexico residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	58,025	5.7%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	96,547	9.5%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	262,400	25.8%
Some college, no degree	259,765	25.6%
Associate degree	84,764	8.3%
Bachelor's degree	148,077	14.6%
Graduate or professional degree	106,680	10.5%
TOTAL	1,016,258	100%

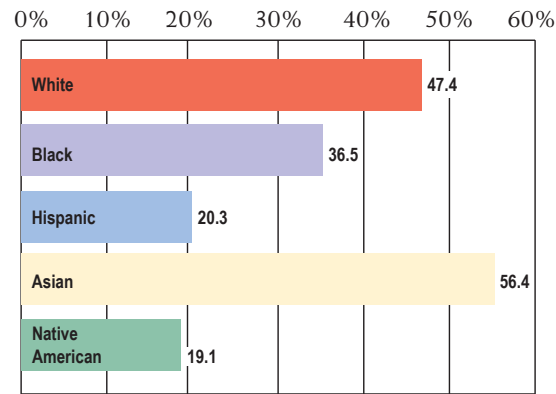
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 166,000 will require postsecondary credentials, while only about 125,000 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 New Mexico, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in New Mexico 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 New Mexico 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 New Mexico’s 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 New Mexico adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Bernalillo	39.9	Eddy	23.6	McKinley	21.1	San Miguel	32.3
Chaves	24.1	Grant	34.8	Otero	29.2	Santa Fe	44.2
Cibola	21.0	Leay	20.9	Rio Arriba	25.5	Taos	32.9
Curry	27.7	Lincoln	33.0	Sandoval	38.0	Valencia	23.5
Dona Ana	32.1	Luna	14.0	San Juan	25.3	Other counties	34.4*

*This percentage is an average for the 14 New Mexico 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.

