

A stronger nation through higher education — and North Dakota's role in that effort

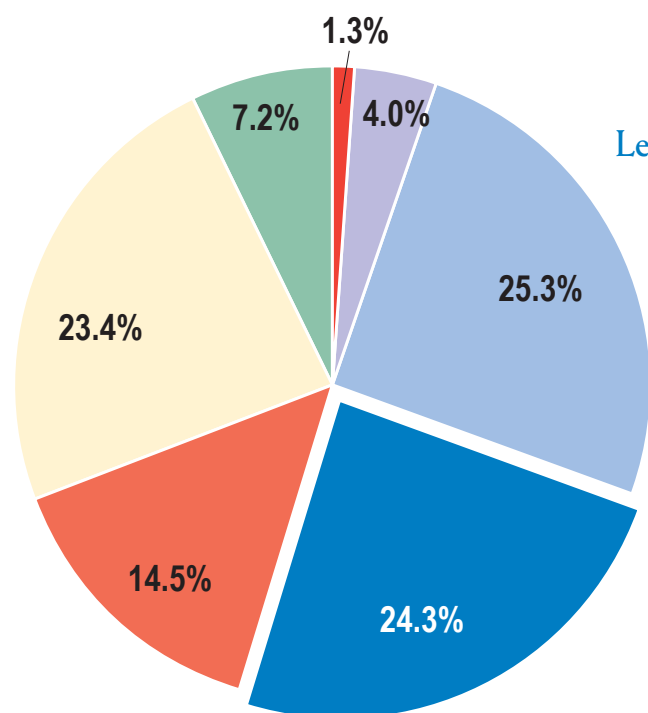
In North Dakota, 45 percent of the state's nearly 325,000 working-age adults (25-64 years old) hold at least a two-year degree, according to 2008 Census data. This compares to a national average of around 38 percent. Attainment rates in North Dakota are increasing modestly, even though the proportion of degree-holding young adults — those 25-34 years old — mirrors that of the overall adult population. If North Dakota continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 62 percent in 2025 — which will exceed the Big Goal of 60 percent.

However, given the economic realities facing North Dakota, Lumina believes it essential not merely to maintain the current rate of increase in degree production — admittedly, a challenge in this economic climate — but to *increase* it. In a competitive environment, North Dakota's economy increasingly depends on the skills and knowledge of its residents. There is no surer way to build a prosperous future for the state than to increase the number of North Dakotans who are college graduates..

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of North Dakota residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, 79,000 North Dakota residents fit into this category — representing more than 24 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 North Dakota increase its overall rate of college 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 North Dakota'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, 70



Levels of education for North Dakota residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	4,193	1.3%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	12,987	4.0%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	82,141	25.3%
Some college, no degree	79,040	24.3%
Associate degree	47,255	14.5%
Bachelor's degree	76,176	23.4%
Graduate or professional degree	23,397	7.2%
TOTAL	325,189	100%

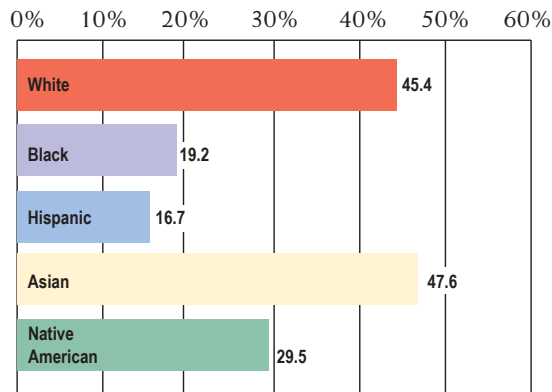
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

percent of North Dakota's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, North Dakota will need to fill about 120,000 vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these job vacancies, 80,000 will require postsecondary credentials, while only 40,000 are expected to be filled by high school graduates or dropouts.

As the state works to improve its college-attainment rate, it is important to focus on 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 North Dakota, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in North Dakota 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.

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



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

It will require concerted and strategic efforts over many 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 North Dakota's degree-attainment rates at www.luminafoundation.org/state_

[data/](http://www.luminafoundation.org/state_data/). From there, you can find links to degree-attainment 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 North Dakota adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Burleigh	51.1	Grand Forks	49.8	Stark	39.4	Ward	42.2
Cass	52.4	Morton	36.8	Stutsman	35.3	Other counties	37.4*

*This percentage is an average for the 46 North Dakota 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.

