

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

In Pennsylvania, about 38 percent of the state’s nearly 6.6 million working-age adults (25-64 years old) hold at least a two-year degree, according to 2008 Census data. This essentially matches the national average. Attainment rates in Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 49 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

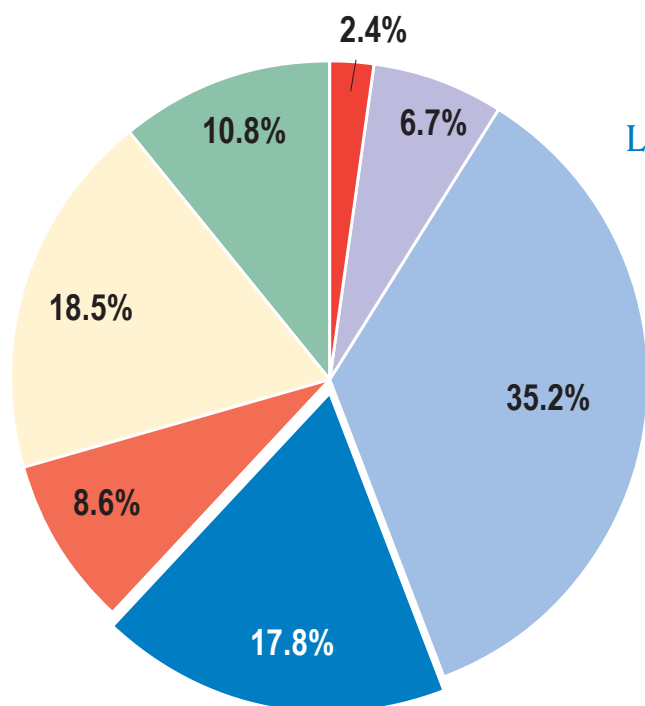
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 10,252 associate or bachelor’s degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 5.5 percent — Pennsylvania will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Pennsylvania residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, close to 1.2 million Pennsylvania residents fit into

this category — representing nearly 18 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 Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania’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, 57 percent of Pennsylvania’s jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Pennsylvania will need to fill about 1.8 million vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for Pennsylvania residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	156,208	2.4%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	438,361	6.7%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	2,315,521	35.2%
Some college, no degree	1,166,236	17.8%
Associate degree	568,691	8.6%
Bachelor's degree	1,214,759	18.5%
Graduate or professional degree	707,356	10.5%
TOTAL	6,567,132	100%

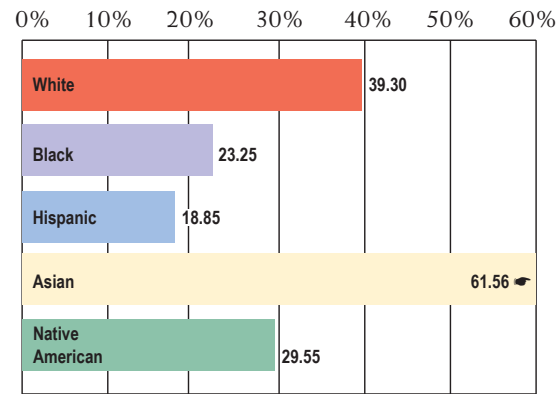
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 1 million will require postsecondary credentials, while only 815,000 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 Pennsylvania, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania’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 Pennsylvania adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Adams	27.8	Clinton	28.6	Lancaster	31.5	Schuylkill	26.1
Allegheny	48.7	Columbia	27.3	Lawrence	31.3	Snyder	26.0
Armstrong	26.0	Crawford	25.5	Lebanon	26.8	Somerset	25.1
Beaver	33.5	Cumberland	43.1	Lehigh	39.7	Susquehanna	26.2
Bedford	23.6	Dauphin	37.6	Luzerne	33.1	Tioga	30.3
Berks	32.3	Delaware	45.9	Lycoming	33.1	Union	30.2
Blair	29.8	Elk	30.4	McKean	26.1	Venango	26.8
Bradford	24.7	Erie	33.3	Mercer	28.5	Warren	27.0
Bucks	46.1	Fayette	24.4	Mifflin	19.3	Washington	41.0
Butler	44.3	Franklin	26.5	Monroe	32.9	Wayne	29.7
Cambria	30.6	Greene	26.7	Montgomery	54.6	Westmoreland	39.7
Carbon	25.1	Huntingdon	23.3	Northampton	39.0	Wyoming	26.8
Centre	51.4	Indiana	30.4	Northumberland	23.7	York	32.7
Chester	57.4	Jefferson	22.1	Perry	22.3	Other counties	25.3*
Clarion	26.2	Juniata	19.6	Philadelphia	29.7		
Clearfield	23.2	Lackawanna	36.7	Pike	32.4		

*This percentage is an average for the six Pennsylvania 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.

