

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

In Tennessee, 31 percent of the state’s 3.3 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 40 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

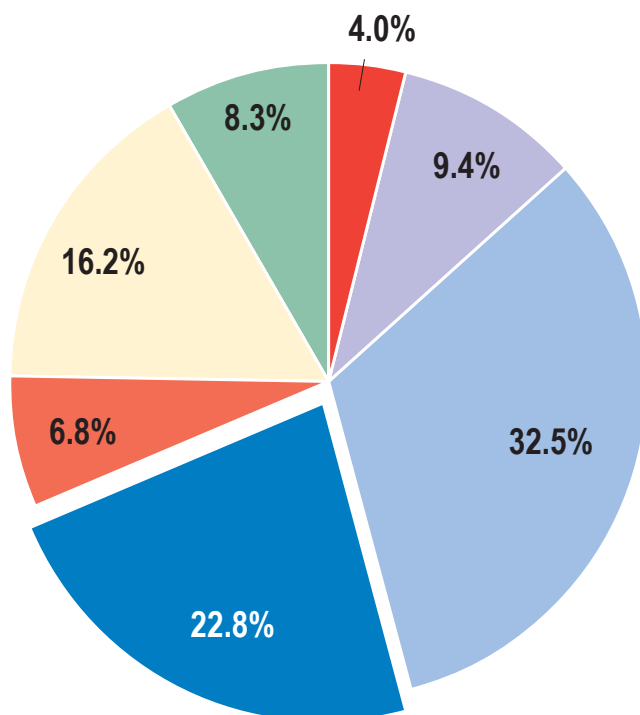
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 7,291 associate or bachelor’s degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 7.9 percent — Tennessee will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Tennessee residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, more than 760,000 Tennessee 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee’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 Tennessee’s jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Tennessee will need to fill about 967,000 vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for Tennessee residents, ages 25-64

Less than ninth grade	136,397	4.0%
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	316,694	9.4%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	1,091,079	32.5%
Some college, no degree	765,533	22.8%
Associate degree	228,707	6.8%
Bachelor's degree	544,001	16.2%
Graduate or professional degree	277,996	8.3%
TOTAL	3,360,407	100%

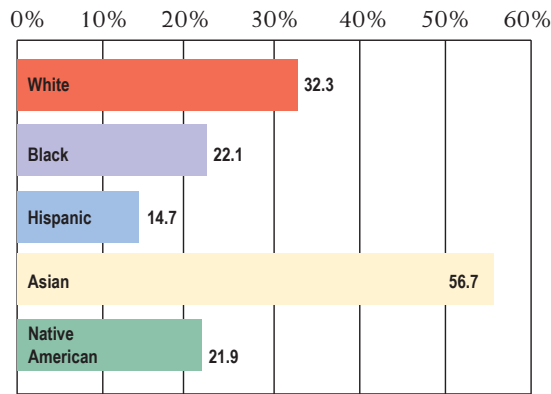
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 516,000 will require postsecondary credentials, while only 451,000 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 Tennessee, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Tennessee 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee'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 Tennessee adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Anderson	29.6	Gibson	20.8	Loudon	28.4	Rutherford	34.4
Bedford	20.0	Giles	21.1	McMinn	21.6	Scott	15.3
Blount	29.5	Grainger	13.9	McNairy	18.8	Sevier	21.6
Bradley	28.1	Greene	17.3	Macon	13.4	Shelby	35.4
Campbell	13.2	Hamblen	19.8	Madison	34.5	Sullivan	30.9
Carroll	19.6	Hamilton	35.6	Marion	19.9	Sumner	31.5
Carter	22.4	Hardeman	14.8	Marshall	18.1	Tipton	21.0
Cheatham	25.8	Hardin	13.5	Maury	26.3	Warren	18.2
Claiborne	18.1	Hawkins	19.2	Monroe	16.8	Washington	36.1
Cocke	14.3	Henderson	21.8	Montgomery	32.5	Weakley	24.6
Coffee	27.6	Henry County	20.0	Morgan	10.5	White	14.4
Cumberland	20.7	Hickman	13.6	Obion	16.5	Williamson	58.6
Davidson	41.3	Jefferson	24.5	Overton	14.9	Wilson	34.2
Dickson	19.3	Knox	44.1	Putnam	29.4	Other counties	15.5*
Dyer	21.4	Lauderdale	12.2	Rhea	17.5		
Fayette	24.8	Lawrence	19.3	Roane	24.7		
Franklin	23.3	Lincoln	21.7	Robertson	19.7		

*This percentage is an average for the 31 Tennessee 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.

