

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

In Wisconsin, 38 percent of the state's 3 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 47 percent in 2025 — far short of the Big Goal of 60 percent.

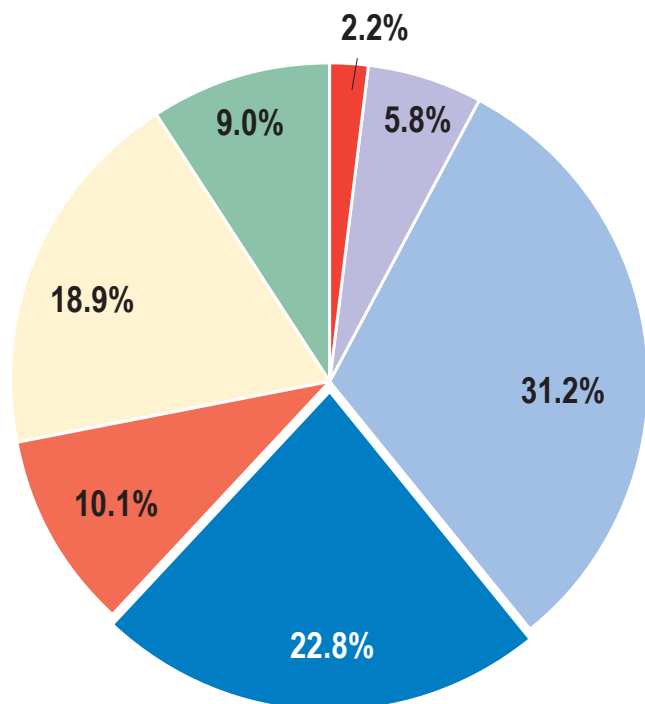
However, this gap *can* be closed. The key is to begin increasing degree production, and to continue to increase it each year until 2025. By increasing production by 4,918 associate or bachelor's degrees each year between now and 2025 — an annual increase of 6 percent — Wisconsin will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Wisconsin residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, almost 690,000 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin'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, 61 percent of Wisconsin's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Wisconsin will need to fill about 925,000 vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these



Levels of education for Wisconsin residents, ages 25-64

● Less than ninth grade	66,089	2.2%
● Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	173,523	5.8%
● High school graduate (including equivalency)	939,780	31.2%
● Some college, no degree	687,611	22.8%
● Associate degree	303,488	10.1%
● Bachelor's degree	569,281	18.9%
● Graduate or professional degree	271,252	9.0%
TOTAL	3,011,024	100%

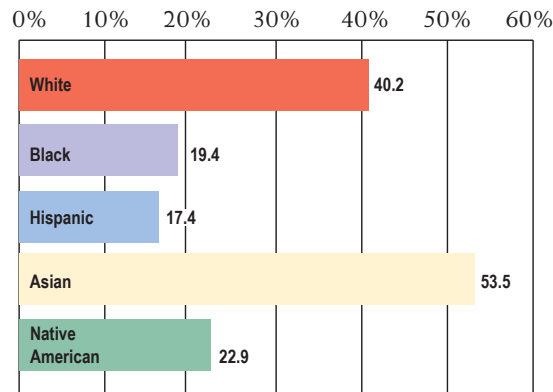
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey

job vacancies, 558,000 will require postsecondary credentials, while only 367,000 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 Wisconsin, as in other states. The current higher education attainment rates in Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin'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 Wisconsin adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree, by county:

Adams	20.2	Fond du Lac	30.7	Marinette	28.6	Sauk	31.1
Barron	30.8	Grant	33.6	Milwaukee	35.8	Shawano	23.9
Brown	39.4	Green	33.2	Monroe	29.9	Sheboygan	34.3
Calumet	38.7	Iowa	36.8	Oconto	25.7	Trempealeau	30.7
Chippewa	35.9	Jefferson	31.8	Oneida	35.7	Vernon	30.7
Clark	21.8	Juneau	22.4	Outagamie	38.9	Vilas	34.3
Columbia	32.9	Kenosha	35.1	Ozaukee	54.9	Walworth	35.2
Dane	57.5	Kewaunee	25.6	Pierce	40.1	Washington	39.6
Dodge	25.8	La Crosse	47.2	Polk	29.7	Waukesha	51.6
Door	32.7	Langlade	20.9	Portage	39.0	Waupaca	25.9
Douglas	35.4	Lincoln	27.8	Racine	33.0	Waushara	22.2
Dunn	36.4	Manitowoc	30.3	Rock	31.0	Winnebago	36.3
Eau Claire	46.1	Marathon	35.3	St. Croix	44.2	Wood	34.8
						Other counties	27.7*

*This percentage is an average for the 20 Wisconsin 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.

