To increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025.
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Policy Brief

A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education

FLORIDA

In Florida, nearly 37 percent of the state's 9.5 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 Florida 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 Florida continues to increase attainment at the rate it did over the last decade (2000-2008), the state will have a college-attainment rate of 46 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 20,911 associate or bachelor's degrees each year between now and 2025—an annual increase of 7 percent—Florida will reach the Big Goal.

One excellent place to begin looking for these additional graduates is in the ranks of Florida residents who have completed some college without earning a degree. In 2008, 2 million Florida residents fit into this category—representing nearly 22 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 Florida 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 the following page), 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 Florida'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, 59 percent of Florida's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018. Between now and 2018, Florida will need to fill about 2.8 million vacancies resulting from job creation, worker retirements and other factors. Of these job vacancies, more than 1.6 million will require postsecondary credentials, while only about 1.1 million 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.
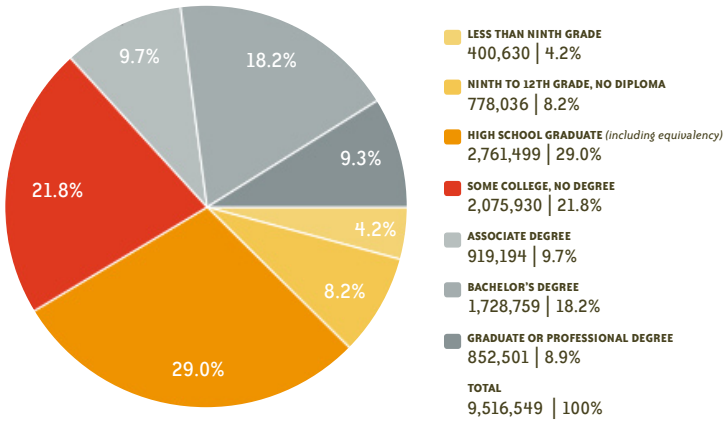
Attainment gaps among racial and ethnic groups have persisted in Florida for decades, and the most recent degree-attainment rates for the state continue to reflect such gaps (see bar graph at left). Closing these attainment gaps is clearly a challenge, but it is one that can and must be met.

ENLACE FLORIDA
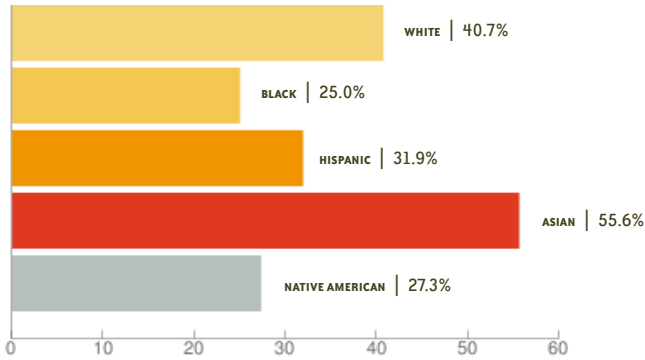research • communication • advocacy • support

FLORIDA Attainment Data

% of Adults (25-64) with a two- or four-year degree.

Alachua	55.9	Marion	27.1
Baker	15.3	Martin	41.2
Bay	33.6	Miami-Dade	38.3
Bradford	17.9	Monroe	39.4
Brevard	40.3	Nassau	28.7
Broward	41.5	Okaloosa	40.1
Charlotte	30.8	Okeechobee	16.1
Citrus	25.1	Orange	42.8
Clay	33.6	Osceola	30.7
Collier	34.8	Palm Beach	42.1
Columbia	23.6	Pasco	31.5
DeSoto	14.6	Pinellas	38.9
Duval	34.7	Polk	27.0
Escambia	35.1	Putnam	19.5
Flagler	31.9	St. Johns	47.4
Gadsden	15.1	St. Lucie	26.6
Hardee	14.8	Santa Rosa	35.4
Hendry	10.4	Sarasota	37.7
Hernando	25.9	Seminole	44.4
Highlands	21.5	Sumter	16.6
Hillsborough	41.4	Suwannee	15.0
Indian River	34.7	Taylor	19.3
Jackson	19.6	Volusia	33.0
Lake	30.8	Wakulla	23.3
Lee	33.6	Walton	31.7
Leon	51.2	Washington	16.6
Levy	19.8	Other	18.5*
Manatee	36.5		

*this percentage is an average for the 13 Florida counties with less than 20,000 residents

» LEVELS OF EDUCATION

% of Adults (25-64)

- **LESS THAN NINTH GRADE** 400,630 | 4.2%
- **NINTH TO 12TH GRADE, NO DIPLOMA** 778,036 | 8.2%
- **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE** (including equivalency) 2,761,499 | 29.0%
- **SOME COLLEGE, NO DEGREE** 2,075,930 | 21.8%
- **ASSOCIATE DEGREE** 919,194 | 9.7%
- **BACHELOR'S DEGREE** 1,728,759 | 18.2%
- **GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE** 852,501 | 8.9%
- **TOTAL** 9,516,549 | 100%

» BY POPULATION GROUP

Degree attainment rates among adults (25-64)

- WHITE | 40.7%
- BLACK | 25.0%
- HISPANIC | 31.9%
- ASIAN | 55.6%
- NATIVE AMERICAN | 27.3%

ENLACE Florida promotes college-readiness, access, and success for limited-income, first generation, and underrepresented students through research, communication, advocacy, and community support.

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