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

Policy Brief

A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education

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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey.
Find more information at LuminaFoundation.org.
### FLORIDA Attainment Data

#### LEVELS OF EDUCATION
% of Adults (25-64)

- Less than Ninth Grade: 9.7% (400,630, 4.2%)
- Ninth to 12th Grade, No Diploma: 18.2% (778,036, 8.2%)
- High School Graduate (including equivalency): 29.0% (2,761,499)
- Some College, No Degree: 4.2% (919,194, 9.7%)
- Associate Degree: 1.2% (1,728,759, 18.2%)
- Bachelor's Degree: 8.2% (852,501, 9.3%)
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 10.0% (951,649, 10.0%)
- Total: 100% (9,516,549)

#### 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%

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