

POLICY RESEARCH BRIEF



research • communication • advocacy • support

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ENLACE FLORIDA is a state-wide network promoting college-readiness, access, and success for underrepresented students in Florida.

The BIG GOAL in Florida

Lumina Foundation for Education, one of the most influential private education foundations in the country, has set a BIG GOAL for the United States, to increase “the percentage of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials from the longstanding rate of 39 percent to 60 percent by the year 2025.”¹ This goal, or variants of it, has been embraced by policy makers and educational organizations around the country, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), the American Council on Education, the College Board, and the White House. While the percentage of Americans with a postsecondary credential or degree has remained at about 39% for the last forty years, other countries have increased their higher education attainment rates, causing the United States to fall from 1st to 10th in international rankings. On February 24, 2009, President Barack Obama added his support for boosting higher education attainment rates, asserting that “America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world” by 2020.²

ENLACE Florida embraces and endorses this emerging national consensus in support of boosting the percentage of Americans with post-secondary degrees. Florida, unfortunately, lags behind other states in educational attainment rates. In 2008, only 37% (3,500,454) of Floridians aged 25 to 64 held an associate’s degree or higher, 5 points higher than it was in 2000.³ Despite a significant increase in educational attainment, Florida still ranks 29th in the country in this important measure of academic achievement. To reach the BIG GOAL in Florida, the state will have to produce—or attract—**2.3 million more** working adults (aged 25 to 64) with an as-

¹ Lumina Foundation’s Strategic Plan, *GOAL 2025*, p. 1; http://www.luminafoundation.org/goal_2025/Lumina_Strategic_Plan.pdf

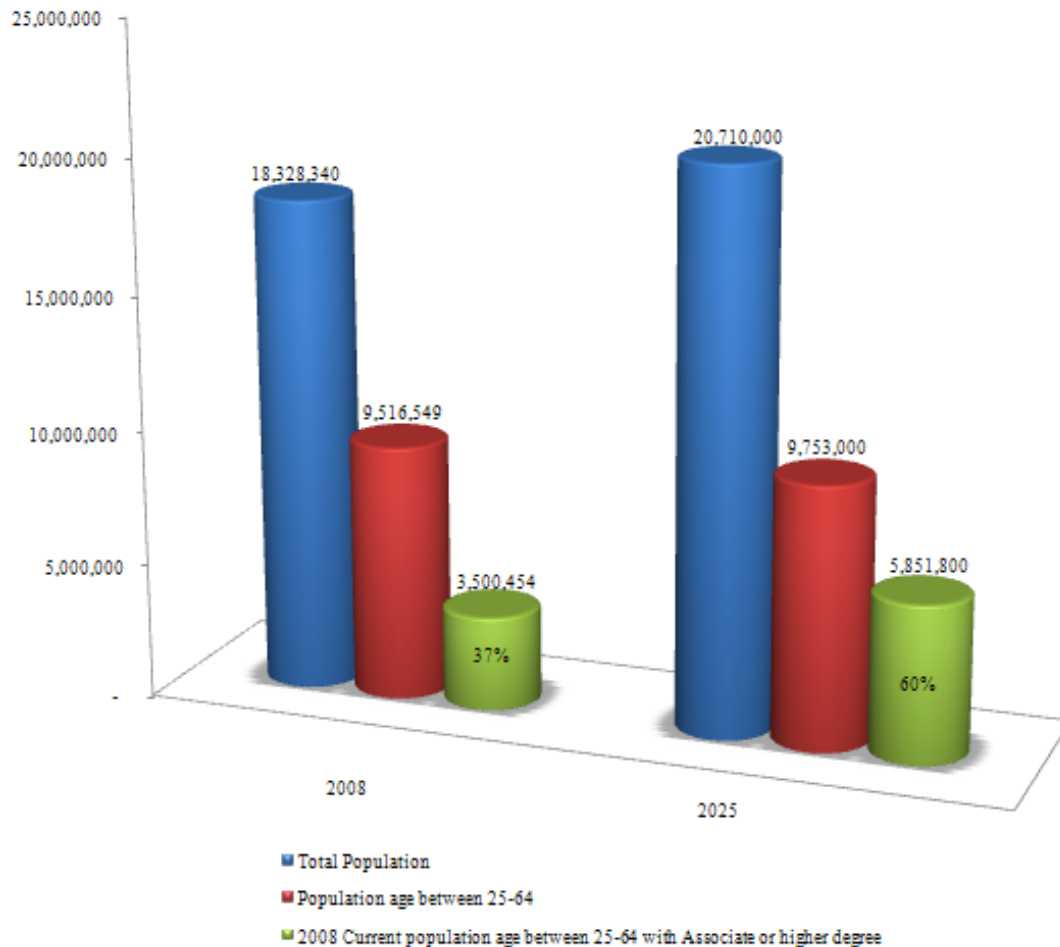
² “The View From the States,” *Inside Higher Education*, July 20, 2009, www.insidehighered.com; “The 44th President State of the Nation,” February 24, 2009, CNN Politics.com: <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/24/sotn.obama.transcript/>

³ NCHEMS Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis, Educational Attainment by Degree-Level and Age-Group, American Community Survey; Lumina Foundation for Education, “A Stronger Nation through Higher Education—Starting Right Here in Florida,”

sociate's degree or higher by 2025 (see Figure 1). At current rates, Florida will likely produce or attract only *1.9 million more*, leaving the state 391,000 post-secondary degrees short of the 2025 goal.

Figure 1

Reaching the Big Goal in Florida



Source: Series A (the Preferred Series) as reported in Campbell, Paul R., 1996, "Population Projections for States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1995 to 2025," Report PPL-47, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division.

We harbor no illusions that the BIG GOAL will be easily attained. However, the economic recovery of Florida and the United States hinges on our ability to restore our competitive edge in the global marketplace, a goal that can only be achieved by raising the attainment rates of high quality post-secondary degrees. Our analysis demonstrates that Florida can reach the BIG GOAL with relatively modest increases in the production of associate's and bachelor's degrees. The BIG GOAL campaign in Florida, however, will require extraordinary efforts to bring education leaders and policy makers together, draft a coordinated strategic plan, and amass the resources required to expand the capacity and productivity of higher education in the state.

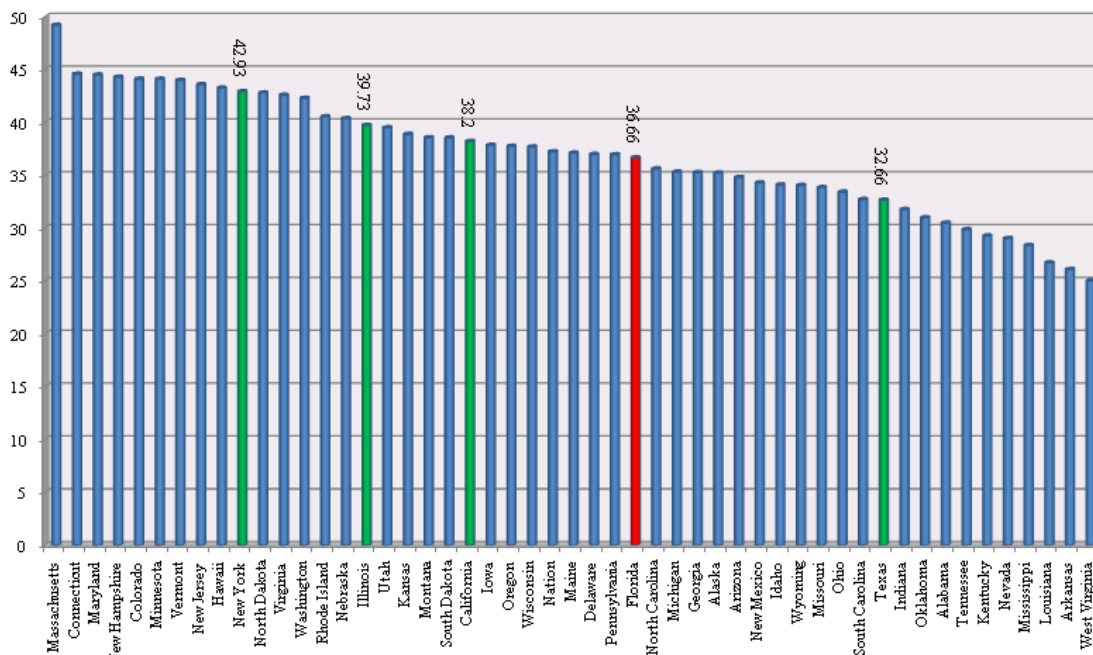
THE RATIONALE FOR THE BIG GOAL

Educational attainment rates are increasing in almost every industrialized country in the world. The U.S. once ranked first in the world, but because our attainment rates have remained stagnant for nearly 40 years, it has slipped to 10th place.⁴ Three years ago, the National Center on Education and the Economy warned about the consequences of being outperformed by many other countries in higher education: “If we continue on our current course, and the number of nations outpacing us in the education race continues to grow at its current rate, the American standard of living will steadily fall relative to those nations, rich and poor, that are doing a better job.”⁵

Unfortunately, Florida still ranks 29th in the country in higher education attainment, as shown in Figure 2. Not coincidentally, Florida ranks 33rd in the country in Per Capita Gross Domestic Product, according to official estimates by the U.S. Department of Commerce.⁶ There is a direct correlation between higher education and economic productivity, and Florida, despite its robust growth in recent years, has not joined the ranks of the most productive states.

Figure 2

Higher Education Attainment Rates, Age-Groups 25 to 64, by State, 2006



Source: NCHEMS Information Center, Educational Attainment by Degree-Level and Age-Group (American Community Survey), <http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/?year=2006&level=nation&mode=data&state=0&submeasure=244>

⁴ NCHEMS Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis, <http://www.higheredinfo.org/internationalcomparisons.php>

⁵ National Center on Education and the Economy, “Tough Choices, Tough Times; The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce,” 2007, http://www.skillscommission.org/pdf/exec_sum/ToughChoices_EXECSUM.pdf

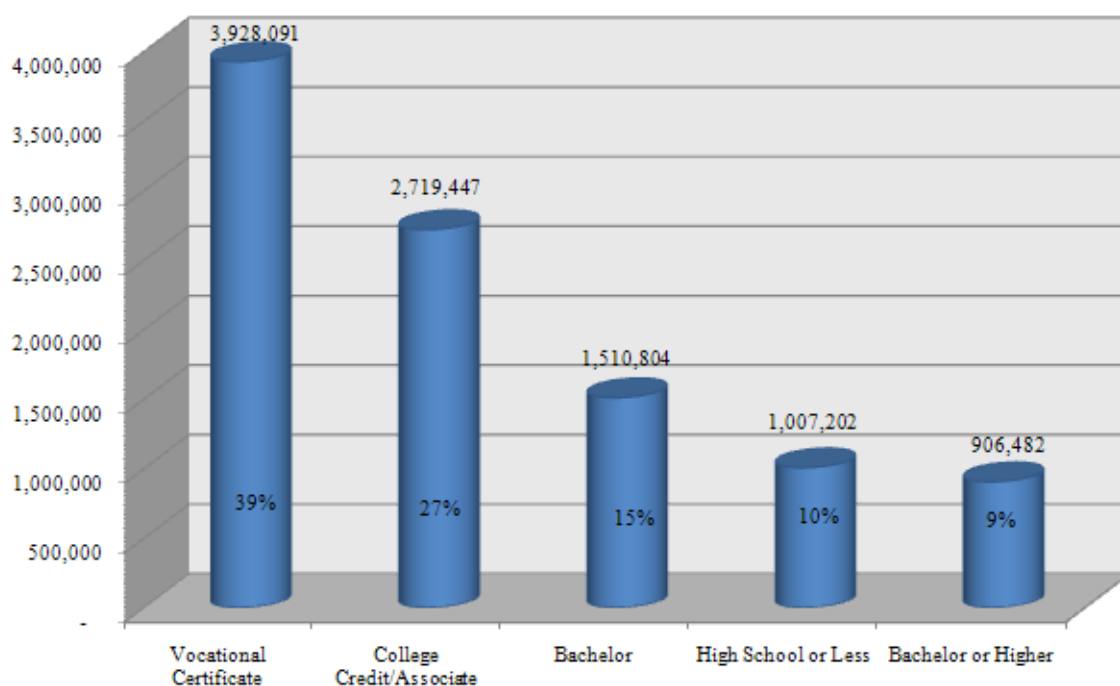
⁶ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp_state/gsp_newsrelease.htm

Today's highly competitive global economy demands more and more workers with postsecondary credentials or degrees. A high school degree is no longer sufficient to guarantee entry into the middle class. Unskilled jobs are disappearing due largely to automation, technological advances, and the high costs of labor. The recent CBS News Series, *Putting America Back to Work*, highlighted the fact that employment in America's once mighty manufacturing sector dropped from 17 million in 2000 to less than 12 million 2009. In some industries the job loss is staggering. Employment in the automobile industry, for example, fell from 1.3 million in 2000 to 674,000 in 2009.⁷

These jobs, many of them out-sourced to other countries, may never return, even when the United States recovers from the Great Recession. Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation projects that 51 of the 100 fastest growing jobs in the state will require at least an associate's degree by 2016, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Minimum Education Requirements for 100 Fastest Growing Occupations in 2016



Source: Jay Pfeiffer, Deputy Commissioner, Accountability, Research and Measurement, Florida Department of Education, "The Demand for Bachelor's Degrees in Florida, Presentation Made to The Florida College System Task Force On September 4, 2008, http://www.flbog.org/pressroom/meeting_items.php?id=10&agenda=162

The jobs of the future require workers with the knowledge and the ability to innovate, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the so-called STEM fields. According to labor economist Anthony Carnevale, by 2018 about two-thirds of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education. Carnevale explains:

⁷ <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/02/16/eveningnews/main6214037.shtml?tag=cbsContent;cbsCarousel>

“For most of the twentieth century, high school was enough for a shot at middle-class status and wages. Today no one goes anywhere in the American job market without some postsecondary education or training.”⁸

The Florida Council of 100 and the Florida Chamber of Commerce recently called attention to an emerging shortage of highly-skilled, highly-educated workers in a report entitled *Closing the Talent Gap*. They predicted: “Florida faces an emerging Talent Gap — an urgent shortage of a resource as basic as food, more valuable than gold, and in higher global demand than oil. This crisis in human capital represents a large and growing unmet need for a highly skilled and educated workforce — our state’s most important resource for developing a strong, diversified economy and spurring sustainable economic development.”⁹

The New Florida initiative, announced by State University System Chancellor Frank Brogan in January 2010, is designed to provide economic stability for a state that has traditionally relied on a wobbly three-legged stool of agriculture, tourism, and growth. By adding a fourth leg, knowledge and innovation, the Chancellor proposes to provide a more stable foundation for Florida’s economic development. This new sector of the economy will be built on talent, and only our higher education institutions can produce that talent. As Chancellor Brogan explained it, “The global driver of economic prosperity centers around the knowledge, innovation, and talent that is produced by strong public universities from this point forward.”¹⁰

Our public institutions alone do not have the capacity to provide the education and training that our economy demands. All institutions of higher education—the State University System (SUS), the Florida College System (FCS), private universities, and for-profit institutions like the University of Phoenix—can and must also provide the postsecondary education and training that are increasingly demanded by the global economy. Therefore, by investing in higher education, the state will promote our economic recovery. According to an estimate prepared for ENLACE Florida by economist Tony Villamil, a \$1 billion increase in public funding for higher education would yield a social return on investment of 220 percent, measured by increases in high-wage employment, labor earnings, fiscal revenues, and economic output.¹¹

⁸ Jamie P. Merisotis, President, Lumina Foundation for Education, “Embracing the Big Goal as a National imperative,” Keynote Address, “What Matters Now: College Access and Success in the Age of Obama,” USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, Los Angeles, CA, January 14, 2010; Anthony P. Carnevale, Jeff Strohl, Nicole Smith, “Help Wanted: Postsecondary Education and Training Required,” *New Directions for Community Colleges*, Volume 2009, Issue 146, P. 21.

⁹ Florida Council of 100 and the Florida Chamber of Commerce, *Closing the Talent Gap; A Business Perspective*, p. 21. <http://www.fc100.org/documents/Florida%20Council%20of%20100%20--%20Closing%20the%20Talent%20Gap.%20January%202010%281%29.pdf>, p. 1.

¹⁰ State University System of Florida, “New Florida: Building Florida’s Knowledge Economy,” p. 3.

¹¹ Tony Villamil, Washington Economics Group, “The Critical Role of Enhanced Educational Investment and Outcomes on the Economic Development of Florida: The Social Return on Investment (ROI) of Increased Public Funding of Higher Education.” <http://enlacefl.usf.edu/media/>

Economic analyses have shown that a higher education degree can be worth \$1 million or more over the course of a career. Higher education is a ticket to a higher paying job. As reported in the New Florida initiative, “the average income is \$46,277 for people with a bachelor’s degree and \$61,014 for those with an advanced degree.”¹² Given that people with higher incomes buy more goods and services and pay more taxes, the state has a compelling interest in promoting access and success in higher education. Florida will reap significant economic, social, and political benefits by increasing the percentage of citizens with a postsecondary degree. Higher education is associated not only with higher levels of income (and therefore tax revenues), but also greater civic engagement, a healthier citizenry, and social stability. We can expect significant reductions in crime, poverty, and health care costs while voting, charitable donations, and volunteerism increases.¹³

ATTAINING THE BIG GOAL IN FLORIDA

The BIG GOAL is undoubtedly ambitious. Is it attainable?

ENLACE Florida analyzed census data, demographic trends, post-secondary degree production, as well as estimates made by other organizations, to determine what it would require for Florida to reach the goal of having 60% of its working adult population (aged 25 to 64) with an associate’s degree or higher by 2025. We estimate that Florida must generate or attract **2.3 million more** working age adults (age 25 to 64) with an associate’s degree or higher by 2025. At current rates, Florida will produce or attract only **1.9 million more** working age adults with a post-secondary degree, leaving a gap of about **391,000**, as shown in Table 1.

In preparing our estimates, we made several important assumptions. First, we assumed that the number of people migrating to the state with an associate’s degree or higher will hold steady over time (See Table 1, Row 6). Although the number of people migrating to Florida from other states declined in 2008 and 2009, most likely due to the recession, we assumed that migratory patterns will stabilize over time. Second, we also held steady the number of 25 to 47 year olds with an associate’s degree or higher, assuming that there would be no significant increase in mortality rates or out-migration for people in this age group (Table 1, Row 7).

Based on these assumptions, we then developed three degree attainment scenarios based on different rates of growth. ***Scenario 1*** is based on an assumption that the state will not increase its degree attainment in any sector of higher education, an unlikely prospect given recent growth trends in degrees produced by the FCS and for-profit institutions. If Florida somehow registered 0% growth in degree attainment over the next 15 years, Florida’s attainment rate would reach 44%, but we would still fall nearly 1.6 million degrees short of the 60% goal (See Table 1, Row 9).

¹² State University System of Florida, “New Florida: Building Florida’s Knowledge Economy,” p. 3.

¹³ Lumina Foundation’s Strategic Plan, GOAL 2025, p. 3; http://www.luminafoundation.org/goal_2025/Lumina_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Table 1

Estimates of Degrees Required to Reach 60% Adult Higher Education Attainment by 2025

	Category	2008	2025		
			Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
			With 0% Growth over 2007-2008 Level	At Growth Rate of 1999-2009	At Growth Rate of 5.7%)
1	Total Population Projected	18,328,340	20,710,000	20,710,000	20,710,000
2	Population age 25 to 64	9,516,549	9,753,000	9,753,000	9,753,000
3	Current Population Age 25 to 64 with Associates' Degree or higher	3,500,454			
4	Percentage of Population Age 25 to 64 with Associate Degrees or Higher	36.8%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%
5	Number of People Age 25 to 64 who must have Associate or Higher Degree by 2025 in order to Meet the Goal of 60%		5,851,800	5,851,800	5,851,800
6	Maintaining recent(2005-2007) annual net migration of People with Associates' Degree or Higher		(124,606)	(124,606)	(124,606)
7	25 to 47 year olds with Associate Degree or Higher (who will still be in the cohort in 2025)		(1,745,624)	(1,745,624)	(1,745,624)
8	Cumulative Number of Degrees that will be Produced by 2025		(2,401,684)	(3,590,675)	(3,981,656)
9	GAP: Number of Degrees Short of 60% Goal		1,579,886	390,895	GOAL MET

If, however, Florida's degree production continues to increase at the rate registered by the SUS and the FCS during the period 1998 to 2008 (4.3%), as outlined in Scenario 2, Florida's attainment rate would reach 56%, but we would fall about 391,000 degrees short of the 60% goal. To reach the BIG GOAL (Scenario 3), Florida's degree production would have to increase to 5.7% per year, slightly higher than the annual rates of growth in some sectors of higher education, but substantially lower than in the fastest growing sectors of the higher education system, as shown in Table 2 below. Growth trends in each sector of higher education point upward, suggesting that the state *can* promote sufficient growth in degree attainment to meet the BIG GOAL by 2025.

Table 2

Annual Growth Rates in Degrees Conferred

Sector	Average Annual Growth Rate	
	Bachelor's Degrees	Associate's Degrees
State University System (1998-2008)	4.4%	n.a.
Florida College System (1998-2008)	38.3%*	4.2%
Private Colleges & Universities (2003-08)	3.8%	6.5%
Proprietary (for-profit) Institutions (2003-08)	16.0%	-0.05%

*The growth rate for bachelor's degrees conferred by the FCS covers the period 2005 to 2009

The Florida College System (formerly Community Colleges), began conferring bachelor's degrees in selected fields (primarily nursing and education) in 2005. That year, only 4 institutions offered bachelor's degree programs. The legislature has since authorized the colleges to offer bachelor's degrees in certain areas. Today, 14 state colleges offer bachelor's degrees (Broward College; Chipola College; Daytona State College; Edison State College; Florida State College at Jacksonville; Indian River State College; State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota; Miami Dade College; Northwest Florida State College; Palm Beach Community College; Polk State College; Santa Fe College; Seminole State College of Florida; and St. Petersburg College). With at least three more FCS institutions proposing to offer bachelor's degree programs, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred by the FCS will definitely increase substantially over the next fifteen years.¹⁴

The number of degrees conferred by proprietary institutions has increased even more dramatically. According to industry analysts, "enrollment in the country's nearly 3,000 career colleges has grown far faster than in the rest of higher education—by an average of 9 percent per year over the past 30 years, compared with only 1.5 percent per year for all institutions."¹⁵ Although the growth in the degrees conferred by for-profit institutions has been somewhat erratic, the trend is definitely upward. The total number of bachelor's degrees awarded by proprietary institutions in Florida increased at an annual average rate of 16%, from 3,291 in 2003-04 to 5,926 in 2007-08. If these growth trends continue, proprietary institutions will confer over 11,963 bachelor's degrees in 2024-2025. By that time, this sector of higher education may well have contributed nearly 150,000 bachelor's degrees toward the BIG GOAL.

Nevertheless, the largest producer of bachelor's degrees is the State University System and the largest producer of associate's degrees is the Florida College System. These two systems are not likely to be displaced by the growth of private or proprietary institutions. The growth of private colleges and universities is likely to slow down, given that their recent growth occurred during an era of relative prosperity. The state will bear the primary burden to raise higher educational attainment rates statewide. It can do so by increasing public institution per-student funding, expanding capacity, and adding accountability measures and incentives to encourage public higher education institutions to increase their graduation and retention rates.

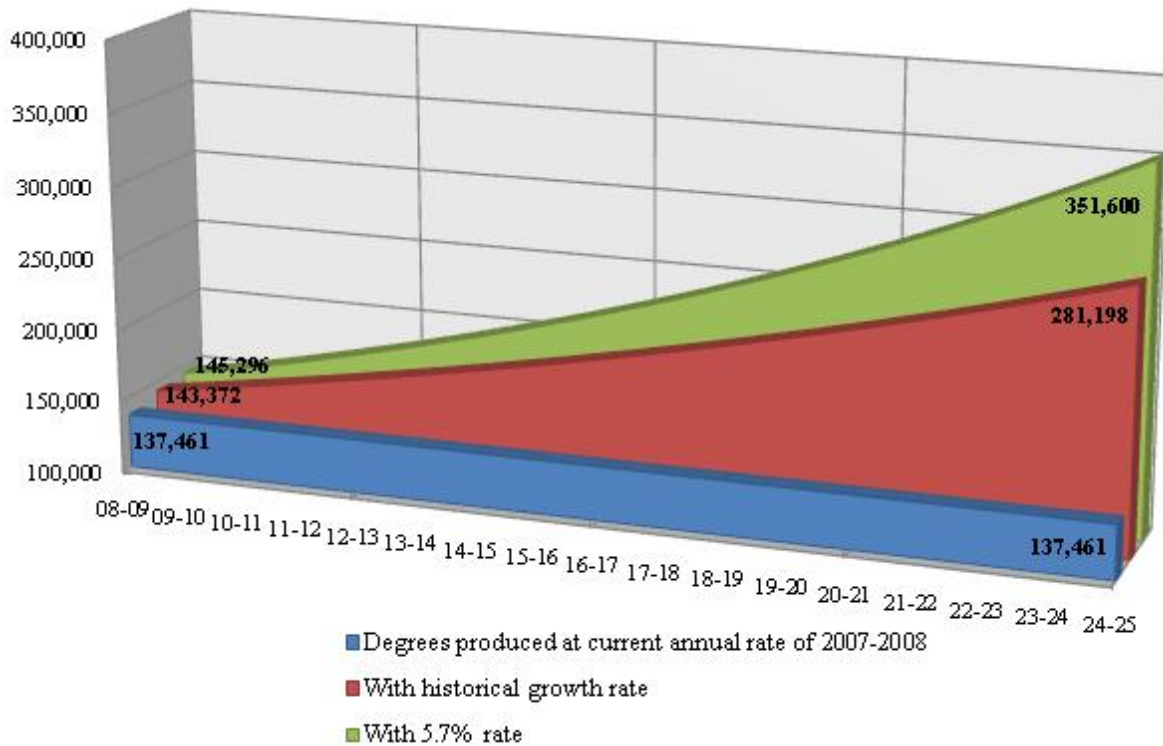
If all four sectors of higher education continued to grow at the pace set by the SUS and FCS from 1998 to 2008 (4.3%), the total number of associate's and bachelor's degrees conferred will increase from 143,372 in 2008-09 to 281,198 in 2025 (see Figure 4). If all four sectors of higher education grew at an average annual rate of 5.7%, the total number of degrees conferred will increase to 351,600 by 2025, enough to reach the BIG GOAL by 2025.

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education, http://www.fldoe.org/CC/Students/bach_degree.asp; Lindsay Peterson, "More Community Colleges Offering 4-year Degrees," *Tampa Tribune*, November 20, 2009.

¹⁵ Robin Wilson, "For-Profit Colleges Change Higher Education's Landscape," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 7, 2010.

Figure 4

Projected Growth Rates to Reach the BIG GOAL in 2025



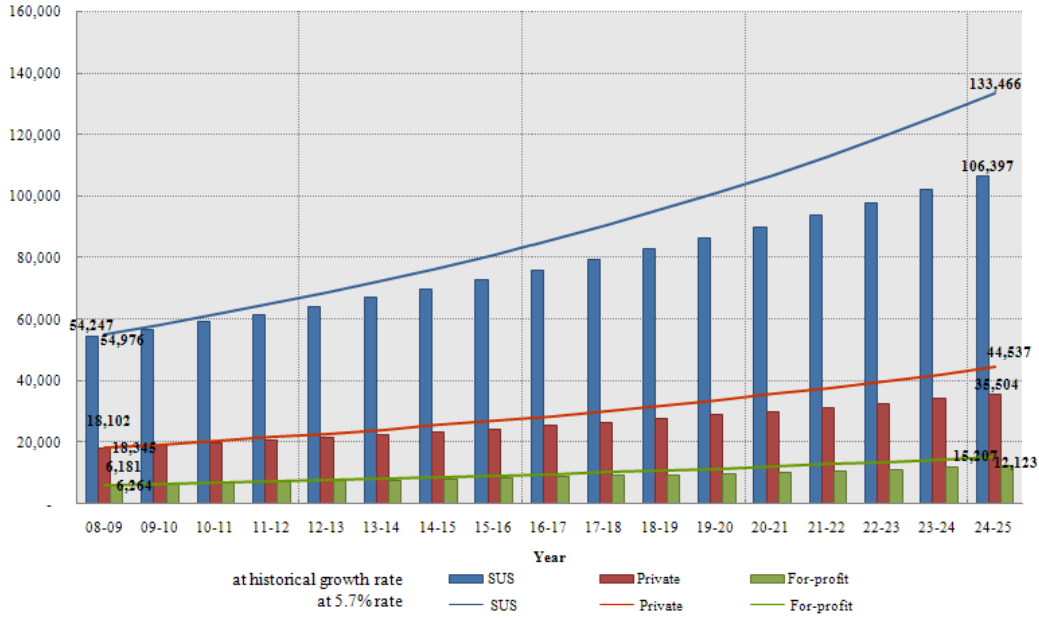
Sources for Figures 4, 5, and 6: Florida, Board of Governors; http://www.flbog.edu/resources/iud/degrees_results.php
 Florida Department of Education, Fact Books, <http://www.fldoehub.org/CCTCMIS/c/Pages/default.aspx>; Independent
 Colleges and Universities of Florida, <http://www.icuf.org/publications>; National Data Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS),
<http://nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/>

However, the increases required to attain the BIG GOAL will strain the capacity and productivity of our higher education institutions in the SUS and FCS. With several institutions at or near capacity (University of Florida, Florida State, University of South Florida, and the University of Central Florida), there is limited room for growth. Thus, it is difficult for the SUS to maintain its historical growth rate of 4.4% indefinitely, without adding capacity or increasing productivity (by raising graduation and retention rates) somewhere in the system. So while it may be easy to call for the SUS to increase its degree production by only 1.3% per year, it is *not* so easily accomplished. The New Florida Initiative calls for the SUS to increase the production of degrees by 25,000 in 2015 and by 50,000 by 2030.¹⁶ However, a 5.7% increase in degree production in the SUS will mean that the total degrees produced by the SUS will increase from 52,011 in 2007-2008 to 131,728 in 2025 (see Figure 5).

¹⁶ State University System of Florida, “New Florida: Building Florida’s Knowledge Economy,” p. 4.

Figure 5

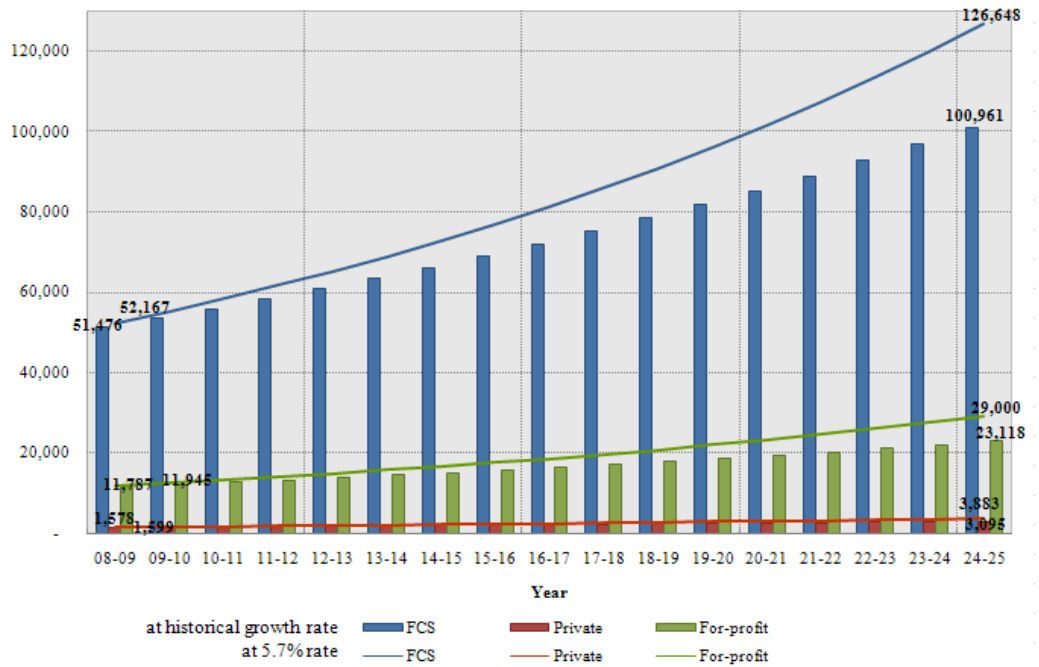
Projected Increases in Bachelor's Degree Production to Meet the BIG GOAL



Not included in Figure 3 was an estimate for the bachelor's degrees conferred by the FCS. With 14 colleges now offering bachelor's degrees in selected fields, and others proposing to develop bachelor's degree programs, the extent to which the FCS confers bachelor's degrees represents a wild card in these analyses of future productivity. Similarly, the projected growth of the FCS will also strain the capacity of the State Colleges, which have seen their enrollments increase dramatically at the same time state funding declined. It will not be an easy task to raise associate's degree production to 5.7% per year to meet the BIG GOAL. As illustrated in Figure 6, the number of degrees produced at that rate will increase from 52,167 in 2008 to 126,648 in 2025.

Figure 6

Projected Increases in Associate's Degrees to Meet the BIG GOAL



POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Mass-producing degrees will serve neither the state nor the students of Florida well if we ignore the importance of quality. The emphasis placed on the production of more degrees by the federal government and educational organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Ford Foundation, the College Board, and the American Council on Education should not diminish the value placed on the *quality* of higher education provided to the students. Fortunately, these national organizations refuse to sacrifice quality in their advocacy for the BIG GOAL. So the articulation of the BIG GOAL is worth repeating: “to increase the percentage of Americans with *high-quality* degrees and credentials from the longstanding rate of 39 percent to 60 percent by the year 2025.” (Emphasis added)¹⁷

There are no quick and easy pathways to the BIG GOAL. Education leaders and policy makers may be sorely tempted to invest heavily in the least expensive options to reach 60%. They will be encouraged to offer more incentives to increase the productivity of the private and proprietary colleges and universities so that they do not have to dig deeper into state financial resources. However, the reality is that these private and proprietary colleges and universities account for 26.3% of all higher education degrees produced in Florida in 2007-08. Although the private and proprietary institutions have grown at rates higher than the SUS and FCS, it is difficult to imagine a scenario, especially in these difficult economic times, in which these two sectors would overtake public institutions in conferring degrees. Moreover, given the much higher tuition at private institutions, limited-income students—a large and rapidly growing segment of our state population—will stay away from higher education altogether if they are not provided affordable options, such as the SUS and FCS.

We are not likely to approach the BIG GOAL if Florida does not increase the capacity of the SUS and the FCS to deliver high-quality associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. In practice, that will mean expanding the facilities of our public colleges and universities, as well as increasing the number of faculty who teach in them. Florida already ranks last or next to last in student/faculty ratios, one of the key indicators of access to quality higher education. If we do not invest sufficient funds to recruit and retain faculty to teach in our state colleges and universities, we stand **no** chance of producing high quality degrees, particularly in the STEM fields that are required to recover and maintain our competitive edge in the global marketplace.

While there are undoubtedly compelling reasons to encourage students to pursue degrees in the STEM fields, we should not neglect the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The New Florida initiative acknowledges that “liberal arts graduates are essential in an advanced society,” to explain why the additional funding will not be targeted exclusively to the STEM disciplines. If, in the long run, the liberal arts are not supported, our economy will suffer as well. Innovative *ideas* come from innovative *people*, and the STEM fields do not have a monopoly on training people to be creative and innovative.

Fortunately, Governor Charlie Crist has proposed to support the New Florida initiative of Chancellor Brogan and the SUS by doubling state funding for higher education in five years.¹⁸ The fact that Florida’s private sector representatives, the Florida Council of 100 and the Florida Chamber of Commerce, first issued the call for the state to double funding for the SUS over the next five years demonstrates broadly-based support for increasing funding for higher education.¹⁹

Nevertheless, all parts of the educational pipeline, from pre-kindergarten through college, can and must contribute to 60%. The BIG GOAL is not just a higher education issue. We can raise degree attainment rates in public and private higher education institutions by increasing the number of students who enroll in them. That means we need to raise high school graduation rates as well as increase the college-going rates of these graduates. According to Lumina, the 60% Goal requires concentrated efforts in three areas:

- “Students are prepared academically, financially, and socially for success in education beyond high school.
- Higher education completion rates improve significantly.
- Higher education productivity increases to expand capacity and serve more students.”²⁰

Of these three areas, Florida has made the most significant progress in the first, college readiness. The Florida Department of Education and a number of school districts and private foundations have invested valuable time and resources to ensure that more high school graduates are prepared for success in post-secondary education. The on-going discussion and analysis of a college prep curriculum, end-of-course exams, and new accountability measures that include college preparedness are positive signs that the state acknowledges the need to prepare more students for success in higher education.

Florida has also made significant progress in the second area, increasing graduation and retention rates in higher education. The University of South Florida and Florida State University made the Education Trust’s list of the top 25 “gainers” in the country in boosting graduation rates for under-represented minorities. Florida Atlantic, Florida International and the University of South Florida received special recognition for graduation rates for under-represented minorities that *exceeded* the rates for White and Asian students. At Florida State, the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (C.A.R.E.) has been recognized as a model program, responsible for closing the achievement gap between minority students and their peers.²¹

¹⁸ Richard Danielson, “Crist’s University Funding Plan Met with Skepticism,” *Miami Herald*, January 29, 2010.

¹⁹ Florida Council of 100 and the Florida Chamber of Commerce, *Closing the Talent Gap; A Business Perspective*, p. 21.

²⁰ Lumina Foundation’s Strategic Plan, GOAL 2025, p. 13; http://www.luminafoundation.org/goal_2025/Lumina_Strategic_Plan.pdf

²¹ Jennifer Engle and Christina Theokas, “Top Gainers,” and “Top Closers,” www.edtrust.org;

As reported in a previous ENLACE Florida brief, the graduation rates recorded by the FCS are even more impressive. The FCS led all public 2-year colleges *in the country* with a 3-year graduation rate of 30%, exceeding the national average by 10 points. Seventeen FCS institutions recorded graduation rates above the state and national average, with Chipola College leading all FCS institutions with a 50.9% graduation rate.²² While there are significant disparities within the FCS and the SUS, the impressive gains recorded by both higher education systems reveal that institutional commitments of funds and resources have made a substantial difference in college completion rates. If the state and higher education institutions invested additional resources in student success initiatives, we could raise graduation and retention rates even further.

Sadly, there is little if any movement in the third critical area, expanding the capacity and productivity of higher education to serve more students. The New Florida plan of the SUS contains ambitious targets, including the goal of increasing annual degree production 50,000 by 2030. While this target is necessary and attainable, the time has come for Florida's education leaders and policy makers to engage in serious debate about where and how to add capacity in the SUS to reach this goal. The Pappas Consulting Group, hired by the Board of Governors to prepare "Proposing a Blueprint for Higher Education in Florida: Outlining the Way to a Long-Term Master Plan for Higher Education in Florida", concluded in 2007 that Florida would need "additional access points to undergraduate education over the next two decades." To meet that pressing state need, the Pappas Consulting Group recommended the development of a new system within the SUS with a sole focus on undergraduate education. This system would be comprised of any existing SUS campus that opted into the new subsystem, some existing branch campuses, some community colleges, any independent colleges that chose to become a public institution, and even some new campuses.²³

Without commenting on the merits of these recommendations, they represent the kind of provocative proposals that our state leaders should be discussing in an open public dialogue about how to expand the capacity of our higher education system. Since the Pappas Report, the Florida College System has emerged governed by the State Board of Education. With little strategic coordination between the Board of Governors and the Board of Education, the need for an open strategic planning process is greater than ever. Fortunately, the lines of communication between the BOG and the SBOE have opened. The two groups are scheduled to meet for a 2nd time on March 16, 2010 in Tallahassee. This is a significant step toward the focused, coordinated, purposeful planning and efforts that will be required to reach the BIG GOAL. Governor Crist and Chancellor Brogan have issued a bold new initiative, and other higher education leaders, including the State Board of Education, SUS and FCS presidents, trustees, key legislative leaders, representatives of the private sector, and other education stakeholders should embark on a strategic planning process to draft a plan to expand the capacity and productivity of higher education so that Florida develops a more stable and prosperous economy.

²² For more on the issue of student success see a previous ENLACE Florida Policy Brief, "Indicators of Student Success," Vol. III, Issue 4 (July 2009), go to www.enlaceflorida.org

²³ Pappas Consulting Group, "Proposing a Blueprint for Higher Education in Florida; Outlining the Way to a Long-term Master Plan for Higher Education in Florida." January 15, 2007, http://www.flbog.org/about/_doc/fbd/StructureReport.pdf

ENLACE FLORIDA is a statewide network promoting college readiness, access, and success for Latinos, African-Americans, and other underrepresented students in Florida through non-partisan research, communication, advocacy, and support. The views expressed in this Policy Brief were developed independently and do not reflect the opinions of the universities with which the Leadership Team and staff are affiliated. For more information, visit: www.enlaceflorida.org



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