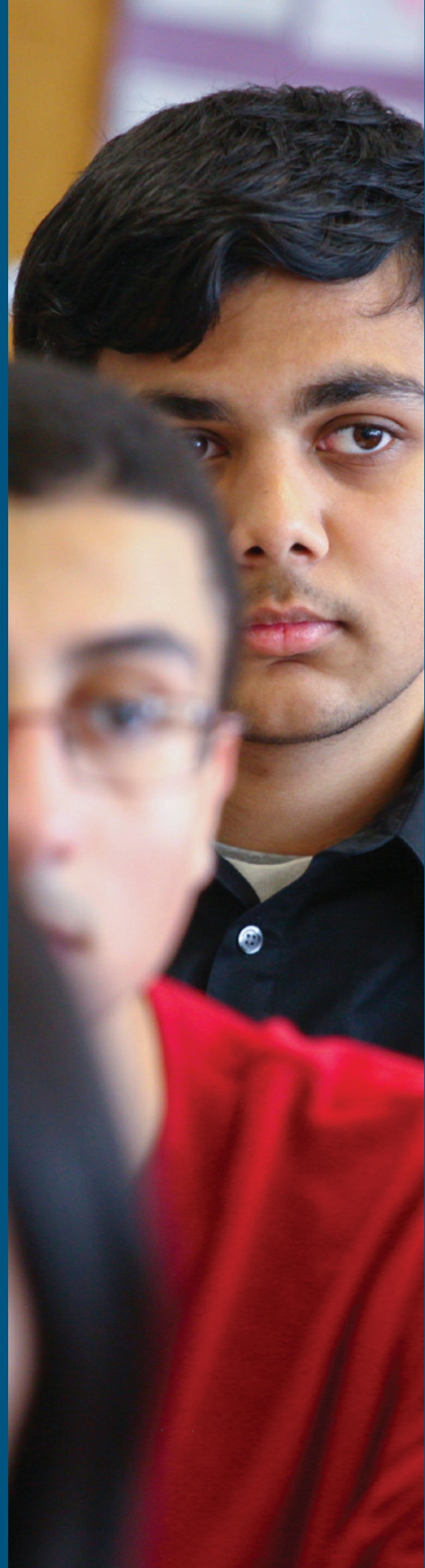


The College Completion Agenda 2011 Progress Report

Executive Summary



Acknowledgments

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The College Completion Agenda

2011

Progress Report

Executive Summary

John Michael Lee Jr.
Kelcey Edwards
Roxanna Menson
Anita Rawls

Continuing the Conversation

In 2009, the College Board's Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education issued a call for 55 percent of the nation's young adults to earn a college degree by 2025. Achieving this goal would put the United States on the path to once again become the world's leader in educational attainment, a position it held for many years. The commission issued 10 broad recommendations on improvements to the education pipeline that would move the nation toward achieving this goal. In 2010, the College Board's Advocacy & Policy Center identified and reported data "indicators" for each of the recommendations to track progress toward the goal of "55 by 25." These robust indicators were published in *The College Completion Agenda 2010 Progress Report*. *The College Completion Agenda 2011 Progress Report* goes a step further, adding several new indicators, which include more data that are disaggregated by race and ethnicity and that measure progress from the previous year.

While the nation struggles to strengthen the economy, the educational capacity of our country continues to decline. The most recent figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that the United States does not rank first in the attainment of “tertiary” or postsecondary degrees among adults in developed countries. As we continue to decline in global competitiveness, our economic strength also continues to weaken. In order to increase our economic position in the world, it is important that we turn around this important trend.

According to the OECD, in 2008 our nation ranked fifth (see Figure B) in postsecondary attainment in the world among 25- to 64-year-olds. Figure C shows that the United States ranked third in postsecondary attainment for citizens ages 55 to 64 in 2008. The United States trails both the Russian Federation and Israel in this age group. As America’s aging and highly educated workforce moves into retirement, the nation will rely on young Americans to increase our standing in the world. Figure A illustrates that among citizens between the ages of 25 and 34 in developed countries, America ranks 12th, essentially unchanged from the previous year. In this key demographic group, Republic of Korea, Canada, the Russian Federation, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Ireland, Denmark, Israel, Belgium and Australia are ahead of the United States. Also, Sweden and France are close to parity with the United States. If the United States is to regain its status as the leader in educational attainment and increase its economic competitiveness, the nation must make an investment in higher education access, admission and success for all students.

Much progress has also been documented within the past year. There has been a continued movement by states to adopt common core standards in language arts and mathematics. To date, 45 states have adopted these standards to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce. The goal is to make sure that these students are college and career ready and have access to a multitude of postsecondary options. Many states are also trying new ways to increase accountability and teacher quality. While some states like Colorado have developed evaluation systems that tie student outcomes to teacher evaluations, other states have focused on teacher professional development to ensure that all educators are ready to prepare a new generation of students. Reform in relation to educator quality has become even more prevalent due to the economic crisis. States are facing serious decisions about teacher layoffs, which have further invigorated the discussion about performance pay. There has also been a robust movement around the nation toward college completion at every level (e.g., federal, state and local). The Obama administration, Lumina Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the College Board, National Governors Association, states, school systems, and colleges and universities around the country are trying to find ways to increase college completion despite the harsh economic climate that has made further investments in education very scarce.

A

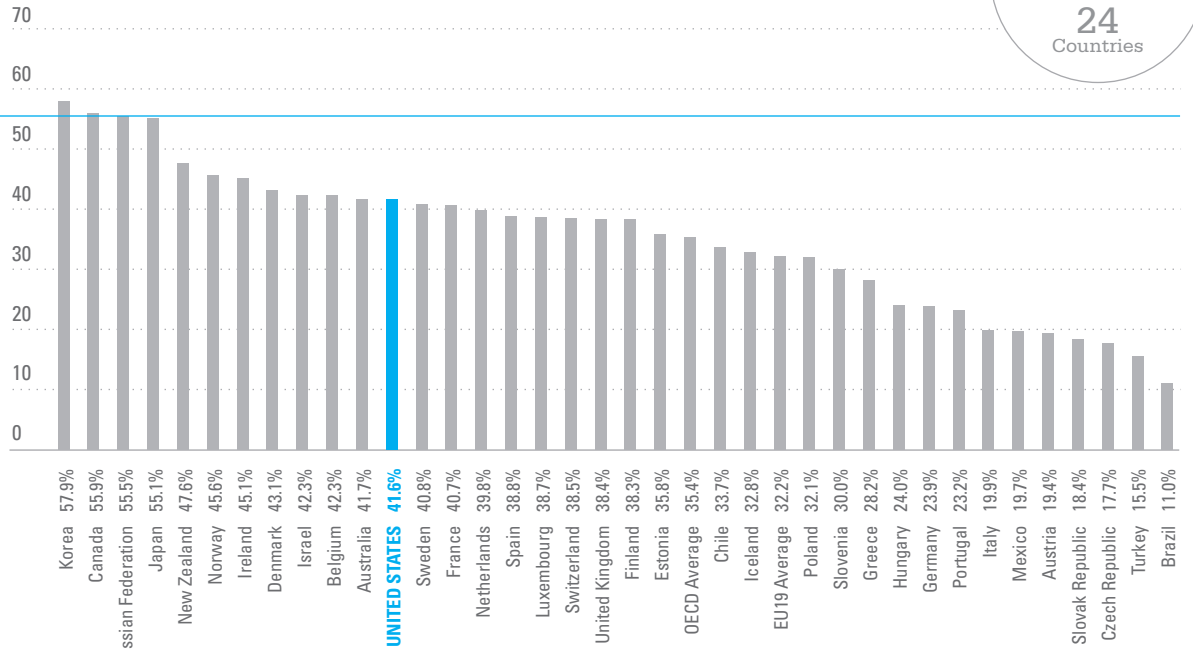
Percentage of 25- to 34-Year-Olds with an Associate Degree or Higher, 2008

Updated data source



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010

11 Countries
 United States
 24 Countries



B

Percentage of 25- to 64-Year-Olds with an Associate Degree or Higher, 2008

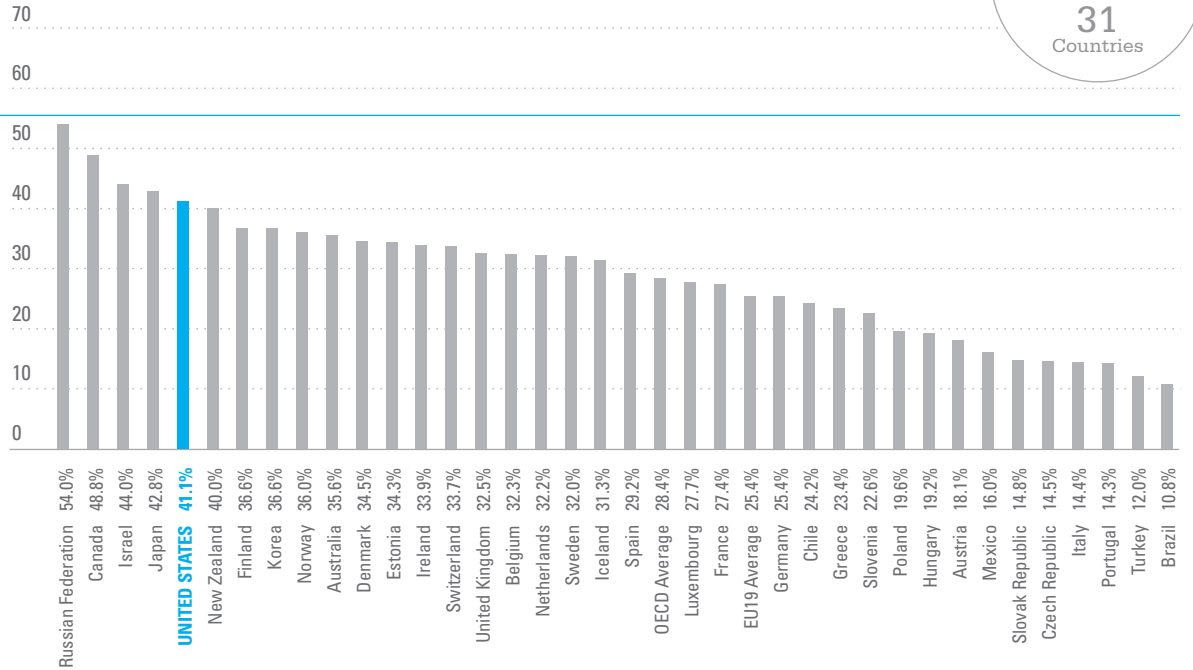
Updated data source



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010



4 Countries
 United States
 31 Countries



C

Percentage of 55- to 64-Year-Olds with an Associate Degree or Higher, 2008

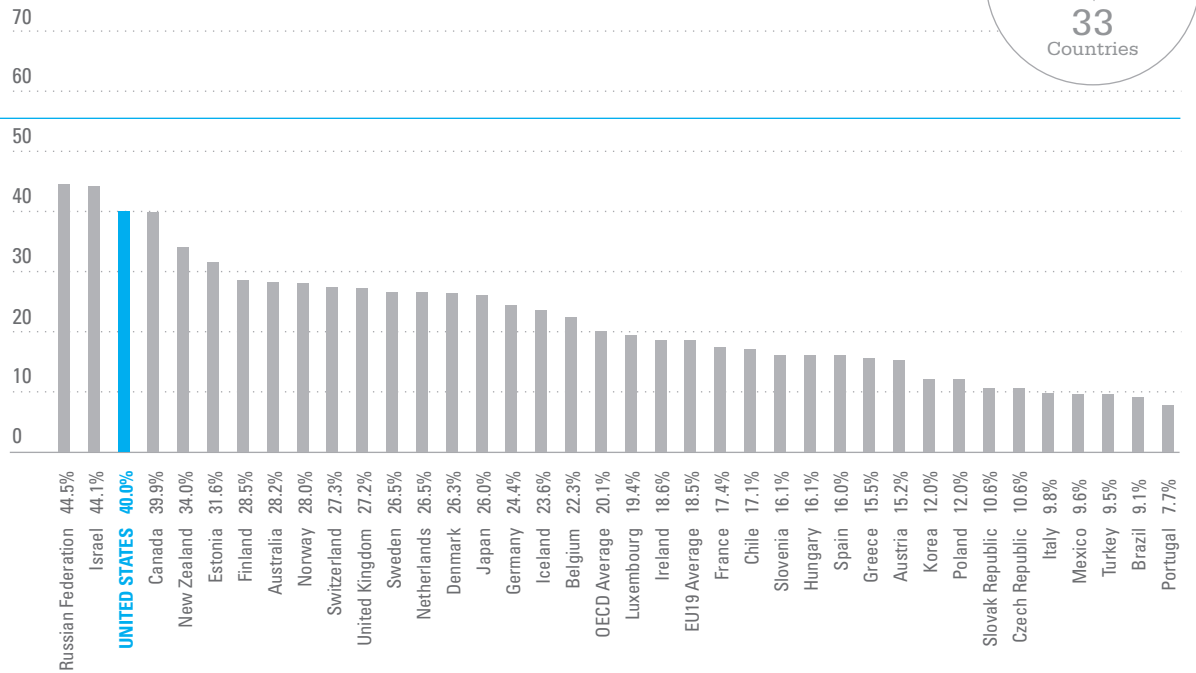
Updated data source



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010



2 Countries
United States
33 Countries



41.1%

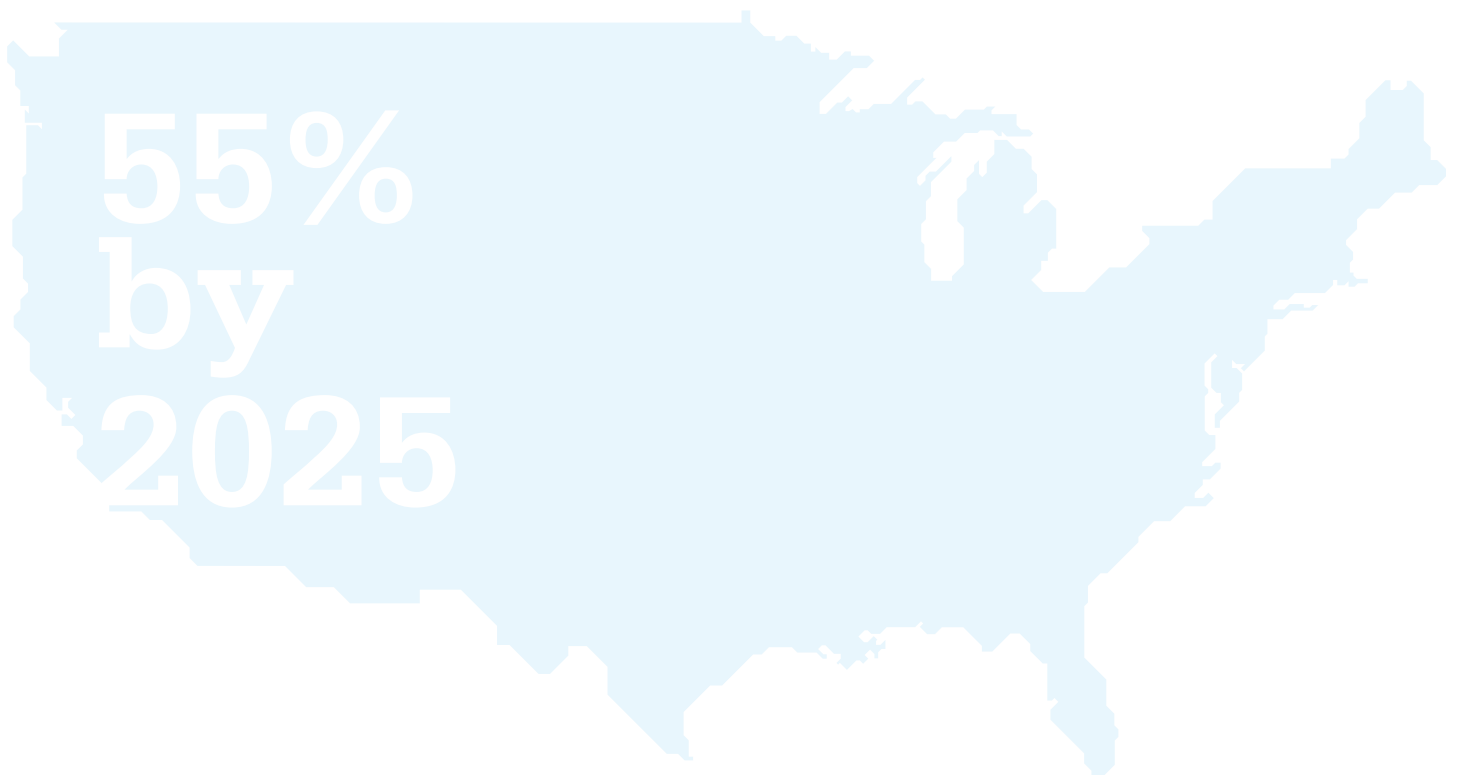
As of 2009, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States with an associate degree or higher was 41.1%.

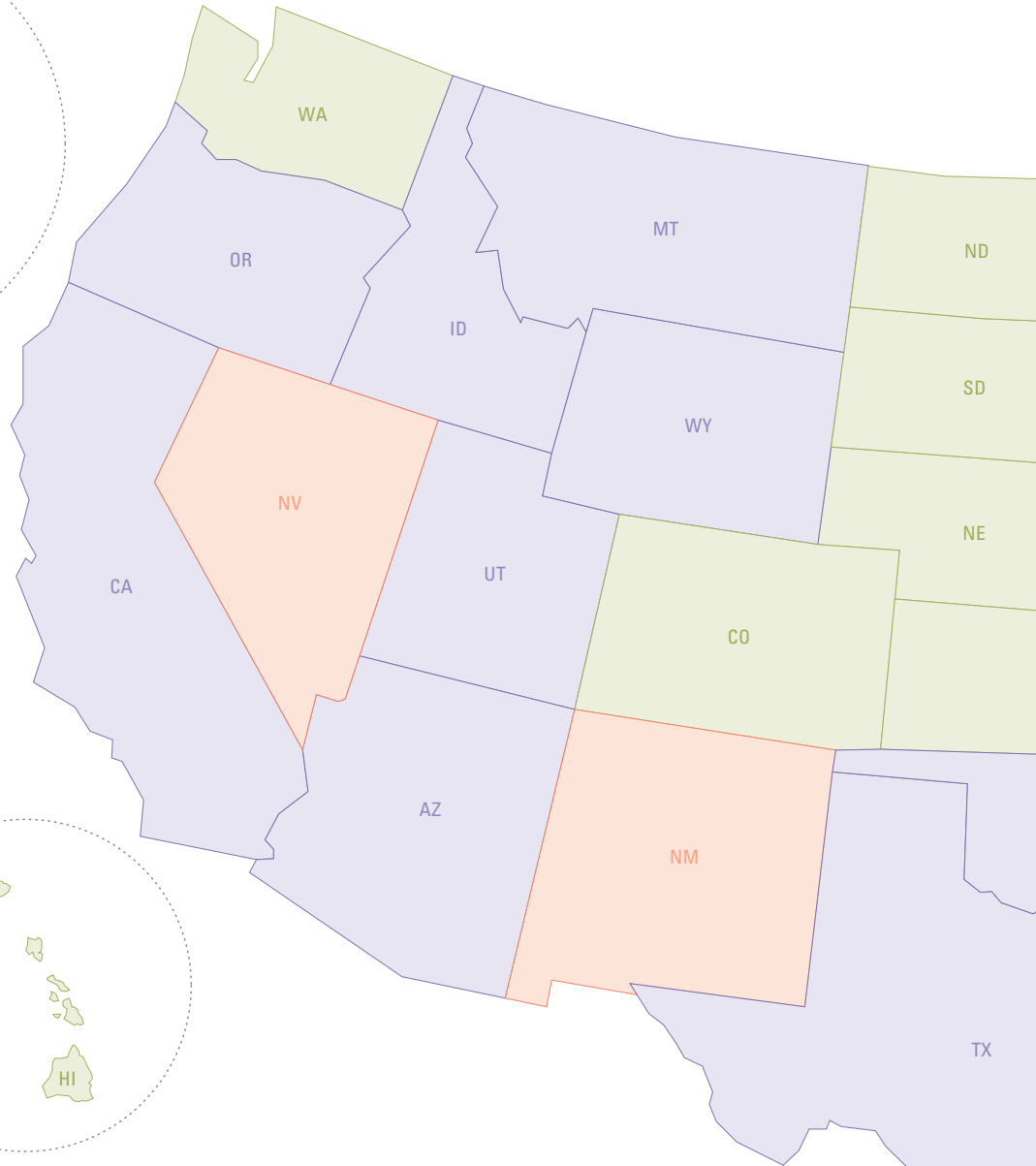
▼ **0.5 ppts** 2008–2009

The College Completion Agenda 2011 Progress Report notes progress in several of the indicators. For example, there has been an increase in the number of 3- and 4-year-olds who are accessing preschool and kindergarten programs, and the student-to-counselor ratio has declined slightly, giving children access to more counselors. The report shows that high school graduation rates are increasing while fewer students are dropping out of school; this is a positive trend for the nation. Thirty-one states now have alignment between high school standards and college and workplace expectations (up 15.8 ppts), and colleges and universities are increasingly using technology to simplify the admission process for students seeking to access college. Most important, persistence rates are up for full-time students, and there has been an increase in the three-year graduation rates of associate degree-seeking students across the country.

Currently, only the District of Columbia has achieved the 55 percent goal, with 64 percent of its young adults holding a postsecondary degree; Massachusetts is the leading state at 53.9 percent. Although the national college completion rate for 25- to 34-year-olds is 41.1 percent, disaggregating the data by race/ethnicity shows a different picture. Although 69.1 percent of Asians in that age range have earned an associate degree or higher, only 19.2 percent of Hispanics, 29.4 percent of African Americans and 48.7 percent of white students have done so.

The full report has many more detailed charts and graphs and provides disaggregations by state, gender and/or race/ethnicity. State reports are also available and can be downloaded along with the full report at completionagenda.collegeboard.org.





**55%
by
2025**

1 state

21 states

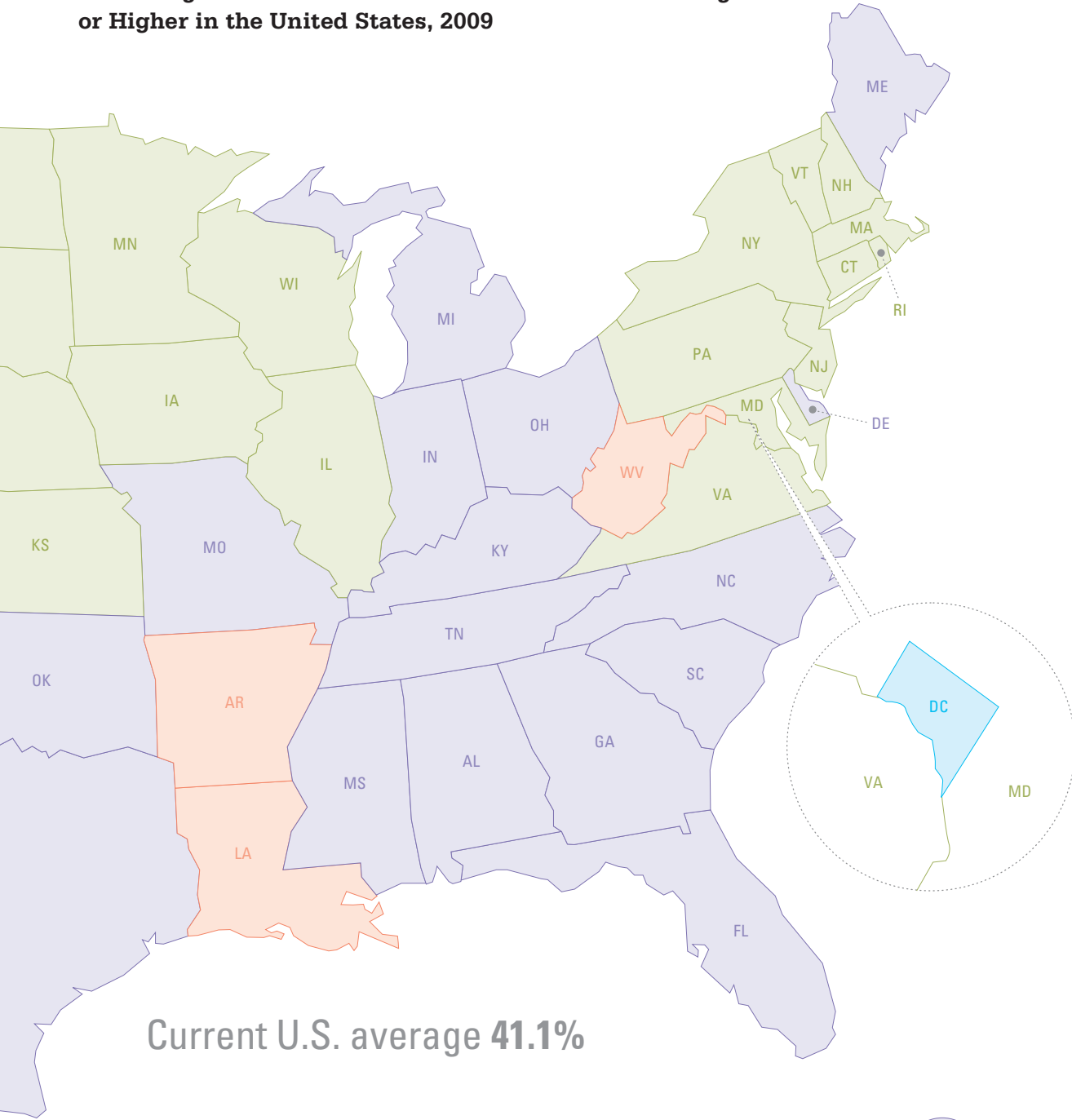
41.1%

40%



DC 1 MA 2 MN 3 NY 4 ND 5 NJ 6 NH 7 CT 8 MD 9 VT 10 IA 11 VA 12 NE 13 IL 14 PA 15 RI 16 CO 17 SD 18 WA 19 U.S. 20 HI 21 WI 22 KS 23 DE 24 MT 25 UT 26 NC 27 ME 27

Percentage of 25- to 34-Year-Olds with an Associate Degree or Higher in the United States, 2009



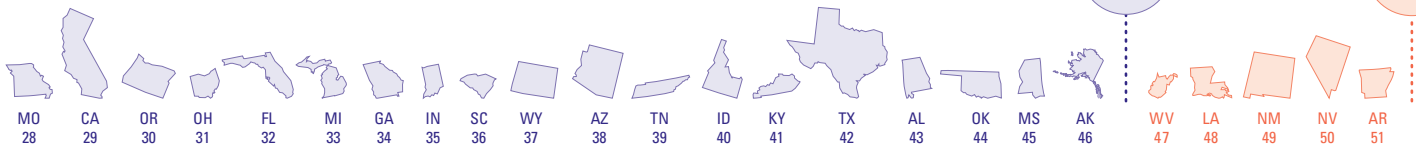
Current U.S. average **41.1%**

24 states

30%

5 states

20%



The 10 Recommendations

The commission believes that American education is the nation's greatest strength and the most powerful force for advancing the common good. To return America to its place as the global leader in educational attainment, the commission recommends a 10-part action agenda. Its goals are ambitious, but meeting them is vital if the United States is to maintain its economic competitiveness and remain a world leader in science, technology, engineering, medicine, literature and social policy. Progress is being made, particularly in simplifying the college application and the admission process, strengthening the alignment of K–12 expectations to college admission standards, and improving teacher quality. Other indicators, such as those showing progress in universal preschool and middle and high school counseling, are lagging.

Some of the key findings of the commission's 10-part action agenda are presented below.

One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families so that all children at or below 200 percent of the official poverty line have a chance to enter school ready to learn.

- As of 2008, 47.5 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in preschool or kindergarten.
▲ **1.5 ppts** 2007–2008
- As of 2009, 14.6 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded pre-K programs.
▲ **0.8 ppts** 2008–2009

Two

Improve middle and high school college counseling by meeting professional staffing standards for counselors and by involving colleges and universities in college planning.

- As of 2008, the average student-to-counselor ratio in the United States was 457:1.
▲ **10:1** 2007–2008
- As of 2009, school counselors spent 26 percent of their time on postsecondary admission counseling.
▼ **2.8 ppts** 2008–2009

Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs;

establish an early identification system of those students who are at risk of dropping out, and subsequently provide a safety net for them.

- As of 2008, 74.9 percent of students who entered public high schools as freshmen graduated within four years.
▲ **1.5 ppts** 2007–2008
- As of 2008, the national event dropout rate was 4.1 percent for public high school students in grades 9–12.
◀▶ 2007–2008

Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and

college admission expectations so that all students are prepared for future opportunities in education, work and life.

- As of 2010, 33.7 percent of public schools in the United States offer AP® or IB courses in the four core subject areas of English, mathematics, natural sciences and the social sciences.
▼ **1.1 ppts** 2009–2010
- As of 2008, 37.6 percent of first- and second-year undergraduates in the United States required remedial courses after high school graduation.
▲ **9.6 ppts** 2007–2008

Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention;

an education system can only be as good as its teachers.

- As of 2008, 6.6 percent of bachelor's degrees were earned in education.
◀▶ 2007–2008
- As of 2008, 28.1 percent of master's degrees were earned in education.
▼ **1.1 ppts** 2007–2008
- As of 2008, 13.3 percent of doctoral degrees were earned in education.
◀▶ 2007–2008
- As of 2008, 8.0 percent of public school teachers and 15.9 percent of private school teachers did not return to the teaching profession the following year.
◀▶ 2007–2008

Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process; a transparent and less complex process will encourage more first-generation students to apply.

- As of 2009, 22.8 percent of four-year institutions participated in national application systems that streamlined the admission process.
▲ **2.4 pts** 2008–2009
- As of 2008, 68.6 percent of high school graduates enrolled in a two- or four-year college immediately after completing high school.
▲ **1.4 pts** 2007–2008

Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent; to minimize student debt and at least keep pace with inflation, make financial aid processes more transparent and predictable, and provide institutions with incentives to enroll and graduate more low-income and first-generation students.

- From 2004 to 2008, average grant aid had increased by 1.7 percent, or \$54 per year (after adjusting for inflation), for low-income dependent students at public two-year colleges.
- From 2004 to 2008, average grant aid had increased by 4.4 percent, or \$292 per year (after adjusting for inflation), for low-income dependent students at public four-year colleges.

Eight

Keep college affordable by controlling college costs, using available aid and resources wisely, and insisting that state governments meet their obligations for funding higher education.

- From 1980-81 to 2010-11, total public support for public higher education per FTE decreased from \$8,326 (in Constant 2010 Dollars) in 1980-81 to \$7,171 in 2010-11, or -13.9 percent.
- As of the 2011-12 academic year, the average estimated undergraduate budget for public two-year commuter students is \$15,286 including tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation and other expenses.

Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates by reducing dropouts, easing transfer processes, and using data-based approaches to improve completion rates at both two-and four-year institutions.

- As of 2008, 34.1 percent of full-time degree- or certificate-seeking students at two-year colleges graduated in four years or less.
- As of 2008, 57.7 percent of full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students at four-year colleges graduated in six years or less.
 - ◀▶ 2007–2008

Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs by supplementing current basic skills training with a new “honors GED” and with better coordination of existing adult education, veterans’ benefits, outreach programs and student aid.

- As of 2009, 61.4 percent of adults ages 25–34 did not have a college degree.
 - ▼ **1.0 pts** 2008–2009
- As of 2007, 6.9 percent of adults ages 25–34 were enrolled in undergraduate study at postsecondary institutions.
 - ◀▶ 2006–2007

The Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education

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Jerome Lucido (Vice Chairman), Executive Director and Professor of Research	University of Southern California
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About the College Board

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of more than 5,900 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT[®] and the Advanced Placement Program[®]. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

For further information, visit www.collegeboard.org.

The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center was established to help transform education in America. Guided by the College Board's principles of excellence and equity in education, we work to ensure that students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed in college and beyond. We make critical connections between policy, research and real-world practice to develop innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges in education today.

This report can be downloaded at completionagenda.collegeboard.org.
Hard copies may be ordered by contacting cbadvocacy@collegeboard.org.

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