

# Strategies for Improving Academic Readiness for College



Presentation for the *Leading the Way* Compact Forum  
West Virginia Higher Education Commission

**Laura W. Perna**

[lperna@gse.upenn.edu](mailto:lperna@gse.upenn.edu)

**@lauraperna1**

**March 31, 2014**



# What is Academic Readiness For College and Career Readiness?

*Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Jobs*

(Perna, 2012):

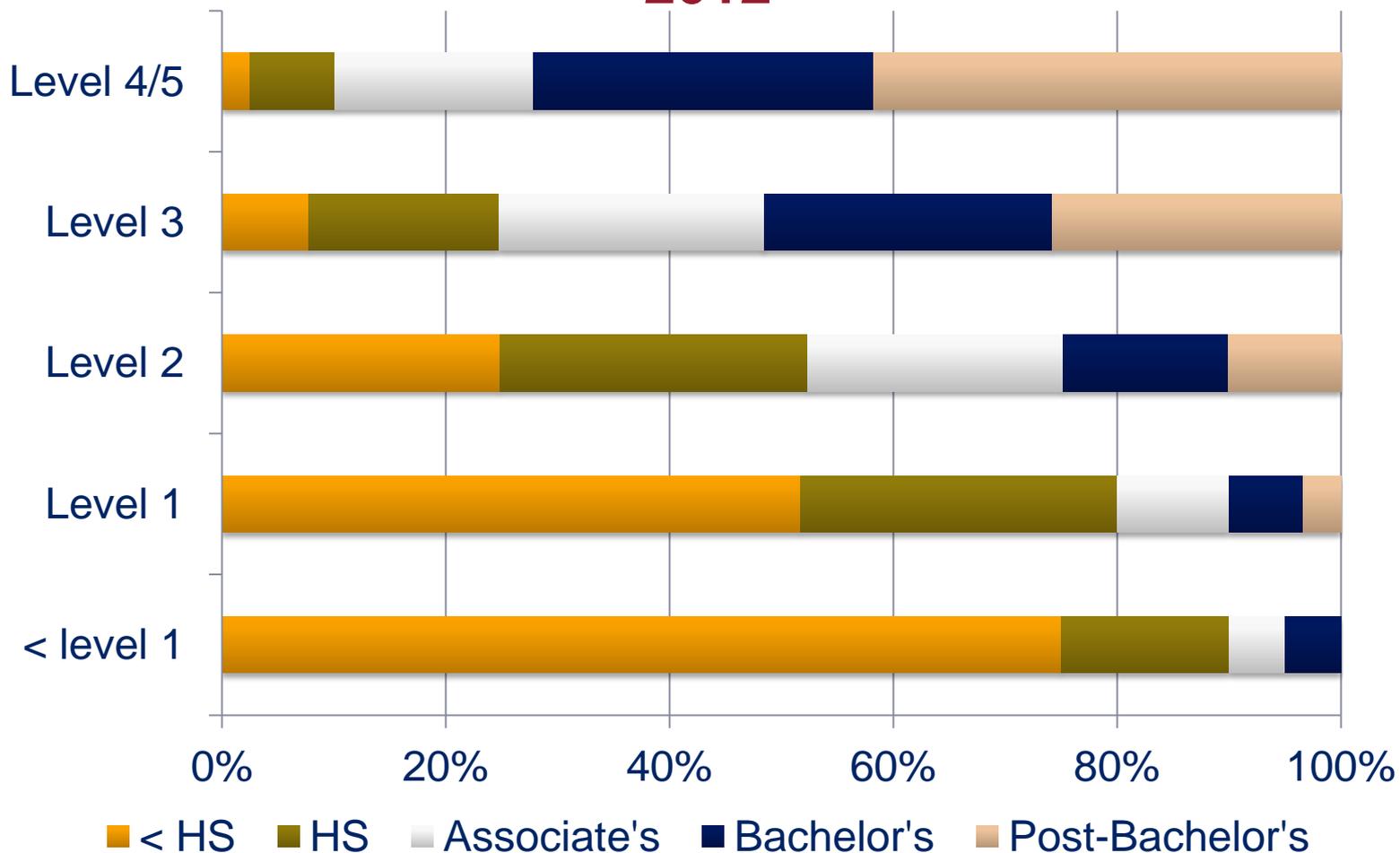
- **No consistent definition**
- **Diversity of educational options and approaches**
  - **Multiple pathways**
- **Many policies and programs to improve workforce readiness but limited research or evidence of effectiveness**

# Average Wages of US Employed Adults By Literacy Proficiency Level



Source: Analyses of OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills*, as presented in Soares & Perna (2014). *Readiness for the learning economy*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

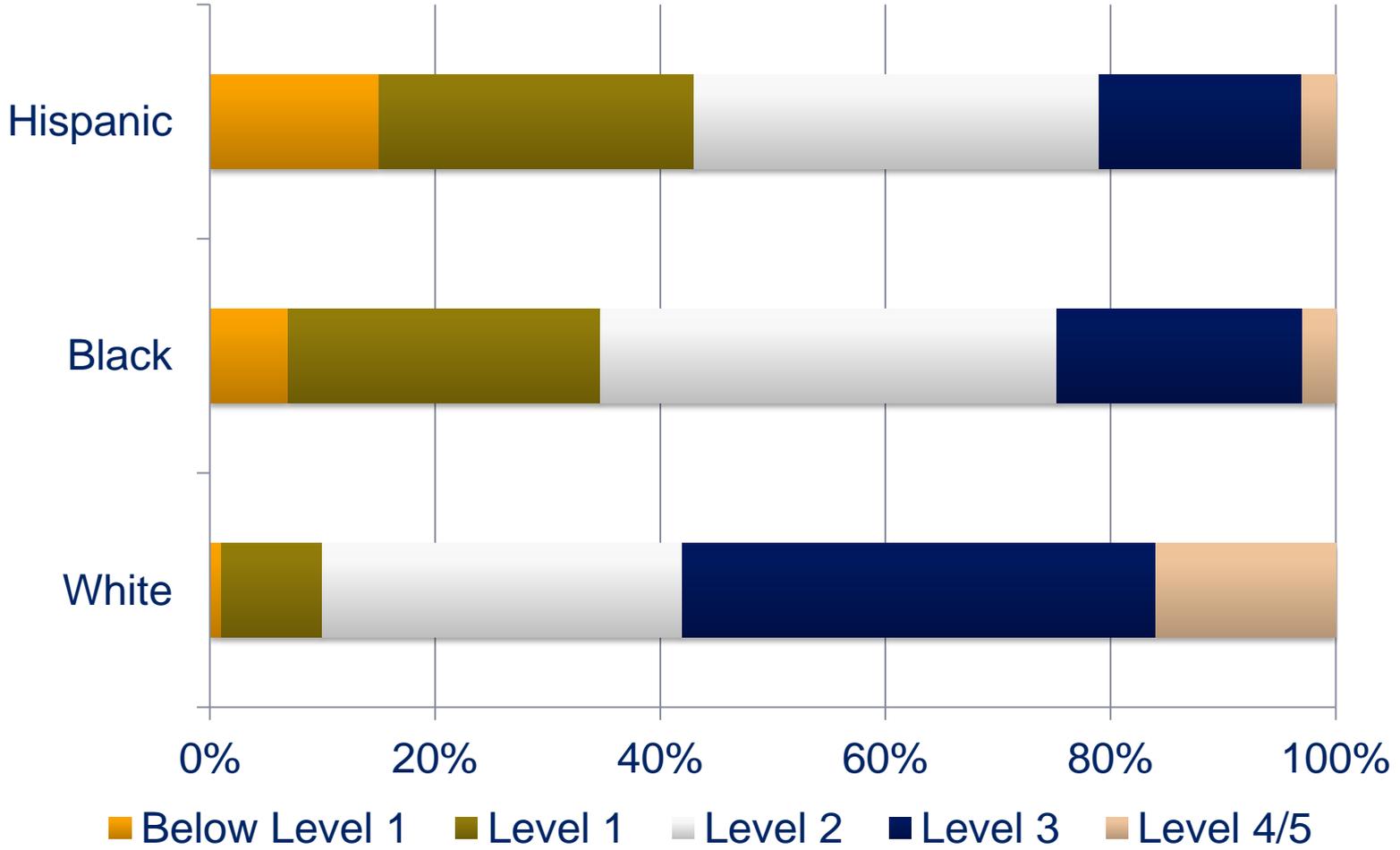
# Percentage of Adults Age 16-65 By Level of Literacy Proficiency and Educational Attainment 2012



Source: Analyses of OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills*, as presented in Soares & Perna (2014). *Readiness for the learning economy*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.



# Percentage of Adults Age 16-65 By Level of Literacy Proficiency and Race/Ethnicity



Source: Analyses of OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills*, as presented in Soares & Perna (2014). *Readiness for the learning economy*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.



# Academic Competencies for Bachelor's Degree Recipients

## West Virginia Higher Education Assessment Council (2013)

- Quantitative literacy
- Citizenship
- Critical thinking / analytic inquiry / problem solving
- Communications

# WV College and Career Readiness Definition

## Components:

- **College readiness**
  - Knowledge and skills
- **Career readiness**
  - Knowledge and skills
- **Dispositions**

**Implications of this definition for higher education institutions?**

# Recommendations

## *(The State of College Access and Completion)*

1. **Improve academic readiness for college.**
2. **Improve alignment across and within sectors and levels**
3. **Improve college affordability**
4. **Ensure early knowledge of college and aid**
5. **Adapt approaches to reflect diversity of students, institutions, and state and other contexts**
6. **Collect and use data to monitor college access and completion and refine policies and practices**

Perna, L.W., & Jones, A. (Eds., 2013). *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups*. New York, NY: Routledge

# WV Innovations in College Access (West Virginia 2013 Report Card)

- **Improve academic readiness**
  - Federal GEAR-UP grant
  - P-20 Student Success Summit
  - Definition of “college readiness” (Dept Ed and HEC collaboration)
  - 12<sup>th</sup> grade Transition Math and English 12 CR courses
  - Higher Education Smarter Balanced Advisory Committee
  - Redesign dev’l education (Complete College America grant)
- **Improve college-related knowledge**
  - College counseling via text (Kresge)
  - Web-based college advising (linked to BANNER system)
- **Increase college applications and awareness**
  - College Foundation of WV web portal (cfwv.com)
  - College Application and Exploration Week program; College Day
- **Improve college-going and completion of adult learners**
  - Lumina-funded DegreeNow
  - RBA Today program
  - WV Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge system (WVROCKS)
  - Veterans Initiatives Task Force

# WV Innovations in College Affordability (West Virginia 2013 Report Card)

## Increase applications for financial aid

- Financial aid and FAFSA workshops
- Collect & disseminate data on FAFSA applications

## Improve financial aid counseling

- Regional workshops for college financial aid staff

# Promising Institutional Access Strategies

## *Leading the Way: College Access in West Virginia*

- Early outreach
- Academic preparation
- Parental education and support
- Financial literacy
- Pathways to degree
- Admissions / Advising /Mentoring
- Adult student outreach
- Leveraging data to inform strategies

## Discussion

- How should we define academic readiness for college?
  - Reactions to the new definition?
- What strategies are working well to improve readiness of traditional students? Adult learners?
- What strategies are not working? Why not?
- What are the roles of different players in improving college readiness?
- Will Common Core State Standards improve readiness?
- How can higher education institutions work effectively with high schools to create a P-20 approach?
- How can we better use data to inform understandings of academic readiness and effective strategies for improving readiness?