Improving Educational Attainment Is One of the Most Pressing Issues of Our Time
Higher Education Is Increasingly Important To Individual AND Societal Well-Being

Salaries Increase with Educational Attainment

Wage premium by education. Compared to high school graduates, holders of Bachelor’s degrees and better have earned a substantial wage premium since the 1990s. (makes no control for full-time or full-year status of workers)

Source: Authors’ analysis of March CPS data, various years

Available Jobs Increasingly Require Higher Education

By 2018, about two-thirds of all employment will require some college education or better.

Source: Authors’ analysis of March CPS data, various years; Center on Education and the Workforce forecast of educational demand to 2018

Educational Attainment is the Result of A Longitudinal Process

Prepare  Apply  Enroll  Engage  Learn / Persist / Complete
College Enrollment Rates of Recent High School Graduates Are Declining in West Virginia

Attention Only to the Average Masks Differences Across Groups

"The poor are getting poorer. But with the rich getting richer, it all averages out in the long run."
College Enrollment Rates Are Higher for Women than Men

College Enrollment Rates Increase with Family Income

Among Those Who Enroll: Completion Rates Increase With Family Income

Outcomes by Family Income Five Years After First Enrolling, 2003-04

- Bachelor's
- Associate's
- Certificate
- Enrolled
- Not enrolled

Highest quartile
- 58% Bachelor's
- 20% Associate's
- 20% Certificate
- 20% Enrolled
- 20% Not enrolled

3rd quartile
- 44% Bachelor's
- 27% Associate's
- 27% Certificate
- 27% Enrolled
- 27% Not enrolled

2nd quartile
- 35% Bachelor's
- 31% Associate's
- 31% Certificate
- 31% Enrolled
- 31% Not enrolled

Lowest quartile
- 26% Bachelor's
- 38% Associate's
- 38% Certificate
- 38% Enrolled
- 38% Not enrolled

Independent
- 6% Bachelor's
- 52% Associate's
- 52% Certificate
- 52% Enrolled
- 52% Not enrolled

College Enrollment Rates Vary Based on Race/Ethnicity

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates of Recent High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1974 to 2011

Racial/Ethnic Diversity of the U.S. Population Is Increasing

What Do We Know About How to Improve College Access and Success?
Most of What We Know is Based on “Traditional” Students

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates of All 18- to 34-Year-Olds by Age, 1971 to 2011

The College Enrollment Decision: Students Weigh the Benefits and Costs
Multiple Forces Limit and Promote Higher Education Attainment

Improving Higher Education Attainment Requires Attention to Context

Worrisome Trends
Trend 1: Academic Readiness for College Is Often Inadequate

Percentage of First-Year Undergraduates Who Took At least one Remedial Course in 2007-08

- 2-year public: 24%
- 4-year public: 21%
- 4-year private: 15%
- Very selective: 13%
- Open admission: 26%

Stratification of Academic Resources

Family Enrichment Expenditures on Children: 1972 to 2002

Differential Access to Academic Resources In K-12 Education

Percentage of 2009 Public H.S. Graduates Who Earned Credits in Dual Credit, AP, or IB Courses

- Less than 25%: 49%
- 26% to 50%: 37%
- More than 50%: 34%

% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch

Potential Improvements in College Readiness?
Trend 2: Shifting Responsibility for Paying College Costs
Increasing Privatization of Higher Education

Figure 3
Public FTE Enrollment and Educational Appropriations per FTE, U.S., Fiscal 1987-2012

Note: Dollars adjusted by 2012 HECA, Cost of Living Adjustment, and Enrollment Mix Index. Source: State Higher Education Executive Officers. SHEF FY2012.
Growth in Tuition and Fees

Increasing Use of Loans To Pay College Costs

Percent of Undergraduates Borrowing: 1995-96 to 2007-08

Trend 3: Changing Higher Education Options

Distribution of Total Enrollment in Four-Year Degree-Granting Institutions by Institutional Type

![Chart showing enrollment trends from 1970 to 2010 for public 4-year, private NFP 4-year, and for-profit 4-year institutions.]

College Destinations Vary By Family Income

Family Income Distribution of Dependent Students Within Postsecondary Sectors (with Percentage of Students Enrolled in Each Sector), 2011-12

Trend 4: Minimal Changes In Availability of H.S. Counselors

Trend 5: Increasing Attention to Finding the “Silver Bullet”
Is Stratification of Higher Education Opportunity Inevitable?
What are Effective Strategies for Raising Attainment and Closing Gaps Across Groups?

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
The Role of State Policy in Improving Attainment

The Attainment Agenda

State Policy Leadership in Higher Education

Laura W. Perna & Joni E. Finney

Foreword by Patrick M. Callan
What We Did

States

• Georgia
• Illinois
• Maryland
• Texas
• Washington

Data Sources

• Documents
• Reports
• Existing data
• Interviews

Products

• Case study reports
• Cross-case analysis

Documents

Existing data

Interviews
Educational Attainment Varies Across States

Source: Kelly (2010)
Educational Attainment in West Virginia is Higher Among Younger than Older Adults

Percentage of Adults With at Least an Associate’s Degree, 2008

- 38% for the Nation and 28% for West Virginia in the 25 to 34 age group.
- 37% for the Nation and 24% for West Virginia in the 45 to 64 age group.

Source: Kelly (2010)
State-Specific Stories

- **Illinois**: A story of decline
- **Washington**: State leadership vacuum
- **Maryland**: Much accomplished, much at stake
- **Texas**: Hard choices ahead
- **Georgia**: Perpetuating disparity
Cross-State Conclusions

Strategic Use of Available Fiscal Resources
Academic Preparation and Smooth Movement of Students

K12 Education

Two-Year College

Four-Year Degree
Optimization of System Capacity
Policy Leadership and Steering
Make Equity a Priority
The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance.
– Benjamin Franklin
Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy
www.ahead-penn.org