

accountability

Postsecondary Success in Cuyahoga County

Education and training beyond high school for adults ages 25-64 are fundamental pathways to better jobs and family-sustaining incomes. At present, however, the postsecondary-education and adult-literacy systems in the U.S. are failing to effectively serve large numbers of potential and current postsecondary-education students. As a result, many people are abandoning their dreams of higher education.

the skills gap: national trends, local implications

According to a Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce report, 97 percent of the increase in total jobs between 2008 and 2018 will require some college education or better.¹

Yet 20 million adults (12 percent) in the U.S. do not have a high school diploma, and another 44 million (27 percent) possess a high school diploma but no college credential or degree.²

In 2010, about 569,000 (10 percent) Ohio adults did not have a high school diploma or equivalent, and over 2 million (33 percent) had no education beyond high school.³ These underprepared adults are more likely than their educated counterparts to be unemployed and to live in poverty.

In Cuyahoga County, nearly 400,000 adults have no college degree or postsecondary credential.⁵ Estimates indicate that nearly half of all adults in Cuyahoga County (47 percent) have literacy levels that do not qualify them to work above the minimum-wage level⁶ let alone enroll in postsecondary education to advance their skills. Bottom line: The number of unemployed adults who have no postsecondary education far exceeds the number of job openings at their educational level.

On the other hand, many jobs that require postsecondary credentials go unfilled. In fact, a recent study by the Brookings Institution ranks Greater Cleveland 77th out of 100 metropolitan cities in a comparison of the educational requirements in job vacancy postings relative to the average level of education attained by working-age people.⁷

It is vital that more Cuyahoga County adults successfully complete some level of education beyond high school. Yet for many residents, the path to postsecondary education is fraught with obstacles.

enrollment rarely leads to completion

In Cuyahoga County, community colleges and state-funded Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) providers are on the frontlines of preparing residents for jobs and further education. These systems work independently, investing heavily in creating opportunities for individuals to gain basic skills and advance in education. Currently, however, adult postsecondary-education programming falls far short in transitioning adults to postsecondary education. Furthermore, current state directives to these institutions for accountability and funding incentives are too weak to drive postsecondary completions that lead to successful placement in family-sustaining jobs.

Case in point: Cuyahoga Community College serves nearly 32,000 students per year, but according to the Ohio Board of Regents, only **2 percent** of full-time students complete an associate's degree within three years of initial enrollment.⁸

Fast Facts:

DURING THE RECESSION⁴:

- Those with Bachelor's degrees or better gained 187,000 jobs
- Those with Associate's degrees or some college lost 1.75 million jobs
- Those with high school diplomas or less lost 5.6 million jobs

IN THE RECOVERY⁴:

- People with Bachelor's degrees or better gained 2 million jobs
- People with Associate's degrees or some college gained 1.6 million jobs
- People with high school diplomas or less lost 230,000 jobs

1) Anthony P. Carnevale et al. "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018." Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (June 2010). <http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018>.

2) The Lumina Foundation. "A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education: How and why Americans must achieve a Big Goal for college attainment." The Lumina Foundation. March 2012. http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_Stronger_Nation-2012.pdf.

3) The Lumina Foundation. "A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education: How and why Americans must achieve a Big Goal for college attainment." The Lumina Foundation. March 2012. http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_Stronger_Nation-2012.pdf.

4) Anthony P. Carnevale et al. "The College Advantage: Weathering the Economic Storm." Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (August 2012). <http://cew.georgetown.edu/collgeadvantage/>.

5) Office of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning. "Ohio County Profile for Cuyahoga County." OhioBiz. 2010. Accessed November 13, 2012. <http://www.ohiobiz.com/census/Cuyahoga.pdf>.

6) Claudia Coulton, Ph.D. et al. "Assessing Literacy Needs in Cuyahoga County - Preliminary Analysis." Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change, Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University (September 28, 2004). www.seedsofliteracy.org/uploads/files/Poverty_Center.pdf.

7) Rothwell, Jonathan. "Education, Job Openings, and Unemployment in Metropolitan Areas." Brookings Institution (August 2012). <http://www.brookings.edu/research/topics/u-s-higher-education>.

8) Ohio Board of Regents. "Three-Year Graduation and Continued Enrollment Outcomes at Two-Year Institutions in the University System of Ohio." Ohio Higher Ed University System of Ohio. May 2010. <https://www.ohiobighered.org/data-reports/graduation-retention>.

the Literacy cooperative

The requirement that students complete (and pay for) remedial coursework prior to taking credit courses toward a degree contributes to the low completion percentage. Developmental education provides remedial preparation for students who do not obtain a minimum required score in math or English on entrance exams, indicating that they are not ready to take on the rigors of college-level coursework. Unfortunately, instead of catching up, many students in developmental-education programs drop out. Only about a third of students complete their developmental-education requirements¹², and students who require developmental education complete postsecondary programs at lower rates than students who do not require it.¹³ Furthermore, these programs are costly in terms of time and money to both the student and the institution.

ABLE is another option for individuals who lack the math or reading aptitude to be successful in a postsecondary program. ABLE programs are offered at no (or very low) cost to students. Annually, ABLE providers in Cuyahoga County serve 3,729¹⁴ new students who seek help in obtaining General Educational Development diplomas (GEDs), improving basic skills in order to pursue postsecondary education, or becoming more proficient at job or household tasks. However, ABLE's FY2011 data reports only about 17 percent of individuals in ABLE programs obtained GEDs¹⁵. The transition rate of ABLE completers into postsecondary education for FY2011 was only 8 percent.¹⁶

current state mandates are only the beginning

Closing the gap between educational-attainment levels and the skills necessary to compete in the job market requires: (1) providing ways for adults to return to school to earn their degrees or credentials and (2) implementing measures to increase postsecondary access and success. It demands that postsecondary institutions are held accountable and are rewarded for achieving the outcomes that really matter: student progression and completion, not simply enrollment.

Recently, the Ohio Board of Regents developed performance measures that incentivize colleges and hold accountable ABLE programs to increase the number of individuals who enroll in and complete postsecondary education. Furthermore, a state funding structure implemented in 2010-11 for community colleges is tied to student outcomes, reducing the emphasis on enrollment head counts. Under this structure, a percentage of state funding to community colleges is linked to student success points (e.g., credit accumulation, completion in and advancement from developmental education, and earning an Associate's degree). The current plan incrementally increases the portion of state general revenue, known as the state share of instruction, annually until it reaches 20 percent in 2015. A proposed plan to be submitted to the General Assembly by Governor Kasich as part of the biennial budget bill seeks to aggressively increase the portion to 50 percent beginning with the 2014 fiscal year. The plan was a result of a report presented to Governor Kasich by an appointed commission of Ohio public university presidents. ABLE is also adopting a new performance measure aimed at increasing the number of students transitioning to postsecondary education. For FY 2013, one of ABLE's core indicators of performance is that at least 18 percent of ABLE students transition to postsecondary education or training, including adult career-technical education. (The actual total for FY2011 was 8 percent.)

New incentives and performance measures, while steps in the right direction, are not a coordinated mandate.

The intent of the state's current and proposed college-funding structure is to create incentives for colleges to adopt innovative programs that lead to improved advancement and completion. Just as important, it encourages colleges to rethink which students are most likely to benefit from immediate postsecondary enrollment and which might be better served by other systems, such as adult education. An unintended consequence

9) Ohio Board of Regents. "Total Headcount Enrollment by Institution and by Campus - Fall Term 2002 to 2011." Ohio Higher Ed University System of Ohio. August 2012. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/enrollment>.

10) Ohio Board of Regents. "Three-Year Graduation and Continued Enrollment Outcomes at Two-Year Institutions in the University System of Ohio." Ohio Higher Ed University System of Ohio. May 2010. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/graduation-retention>.

11) Ohio Board of Regents. "Percent of First-Year Students Taking Remedial Coursework FY 2010." Ohio Higher Ed University System of Ohio. July 2011. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/college-readiness>.

12) Thomas Bailey, Dong Wook Jeong & Sung-Woo Cho. "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges." Community College Research Center, no. 15 (Revised November 2009): 9-10.

13) Complete College America. "Ohio." Member Alliance of States, Complete College America. 2011. Accessed December 4, 2012. <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Ohio.pdf>.

14) Analysis of Ohio Board of Regents FY2009 Scorecard data

Total Enrollment 2011 ⁹	
Cuyahoga Community College	31,301
Lakeland Community College	9,683
Lorain County Community College	12,933

is that colleges might refer the lowest-performing students into ABLE instruction in order to maximize the performance metrics of the new funding formula. Consequently, beyond the new performance measures, the state must be prepared to provide ABLE programs with adequate resources to handle an influx of students and to devise effective mechanisms and incentives for quickly readying referred individuals to return to postsecondary programs.

Institutions in Greater Cleveland participate in a variety of initiatives designed to improve postsecondary completion rates. These include the Achieving the Dream/ Developmental Education Initiative, which seeks to improve academic success for students who require developmental education; the Talent Dividend, which strives to increase the overall number of college graduates in Northeast Ohio; and Completion By Design, which aims to enhance community-college student-support systems to increase student completion.

The empirical impact of these initiatives on postsecondary completion rates is mixed, marginal, or undetermined. Whatever the results might be, small gains will not overcome the deep challenges that many individuals face. In addition, none of these initiatives includes ABLE programs to a substantial degree. In order to deliver effective remediation, new partnerships are sorely needed between ABLE providers and postsecondary institutions. According to the Working Poor Families Project's Summer 2012 Policy Brief, "strengthening state adult basic education systems to emphasize transitions to postsecondary education is not an easy task. It requires an intentional strategy to expand and sometimes refocus the work of numerous providers and an overall system."

recommended *next steps*

Without significant increases in basic skills, postsecondary success rates in Cuyahoga County will remain unsatisfactory. Ohio will increasingly suffer economic consequences due to a lack of skilled workers, and unemployment rates for undereducated adults will remain high.

Closing the skills gap requires a systemic response, mandated by the state, that holds postsecondary institutions and ABLE programs accountable for coordinating services and promoting student transitions. The focus must be helping more students complete a postsecondary credential that leads to family-sustaining employment.

Recommended next steps include:

- A collective, seamless approach from ABLE providers and community colleges to transition students into postsecondary education
- Increased state funding directed to ABLE providers to support students' successful transitions
- Community colleges identify adequate resources to connect students with the wrap-around services that they need to successfully transition and complete their educations
- Adoption of state policies and practices that ensure the systems of education work together and are measured equally for student success

These are fundamental hurdles for Cuyahoga County and Ohio as our region seeks to reinvent its economy.

Full-Time Students Earning a Two-Year Degree Within Three Years (Fall 2006 Cohort)¹⁰

School	Number	Percentage
Cuyahoga Community College	2,091	2%
Lakeland Community College	822	10%
Lorain County Community College	957	8%

Percentage of First Year Students in Remediation Fall 2010¹¹

Cuyahoga Community College	44%
Lakeland Community College	48%
Lorain County Community College	60%

15) Ohio Board of Regents, Ohio Adult Basic and Literacy Education. "ABLE FastFacts 2011." Ohio Higher Ed University System of Ohio. 2011. Accessed January 18, 2013. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/able/reference>.

16) Ohio Board of Regents, Ohio Adult Basic and Literacy Education. "ABLE FastFacts 2011." Ohio Higher Ed University System of Ohio. 2011. Accessed January 18, 2013. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/able/reference>.

17) Ohio Board of Regents, Ohio Adult Basic and Literacy Education. "FY 2013 Ohio ABLE OVAE Approved Minimum CIP Levels of Performance ". October 2012. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/able/reference>.

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Fostering learning to build a thriving community

Literacy Cooperative issue papers are intended to express a point of view, challenge public thinking and -- we hope -- change institutional practices. They are released as part of **Literacy Cooperative's** Public Education and Advocacy Initiative, which seeks to bring broad attention to issues of learner access, transitions, progression and program quality; spur policy and institutional innovations and collaboration; and promote actions to sustain effective practices. Current advocacy efforts focus on addressing systemic and institutional barriers that impact secondary-school credential holders who have earned a high school diploma or a GED -- but are not prepared for postsecondary education or workforce success -- and are unemployed or underemployed. Accountability is one in a series of briefs **Literacy Cooperative** releases periodically. **Literacy Cooperative** is a nonprofit intermediary organization working to improve literacy levels in Cuyahoga County.