

Problem: Illinois needs more degree-holders to meet economic demands.

Illinois has historically relied on a significant in-migration of educated individuals to meet its economic needs.

Baccalaureate completion opportunities exist between community colleges and public and private four-year institutions, but expansion of opportunities, particularly for place-bound students, is needed. In a 2007 IBHE-ICCB survey, 17 colleges reported the need for additional baccalaureate completion programs, particularly in high-demand fields such as nursing, special and early childhood education, and math and science.

“Middle skill jobs,” which require more than a high school education but less than a four-year degree, make up the largest segment of jobs in Illinois. According to Skills2Compete-Illinois, demand for employees in middle skill jobs, which include many occupations in construction, healthcare, public safety, and mechanical fields, is expected to account for almost half of all job openings in Illinois between 2004-2014.

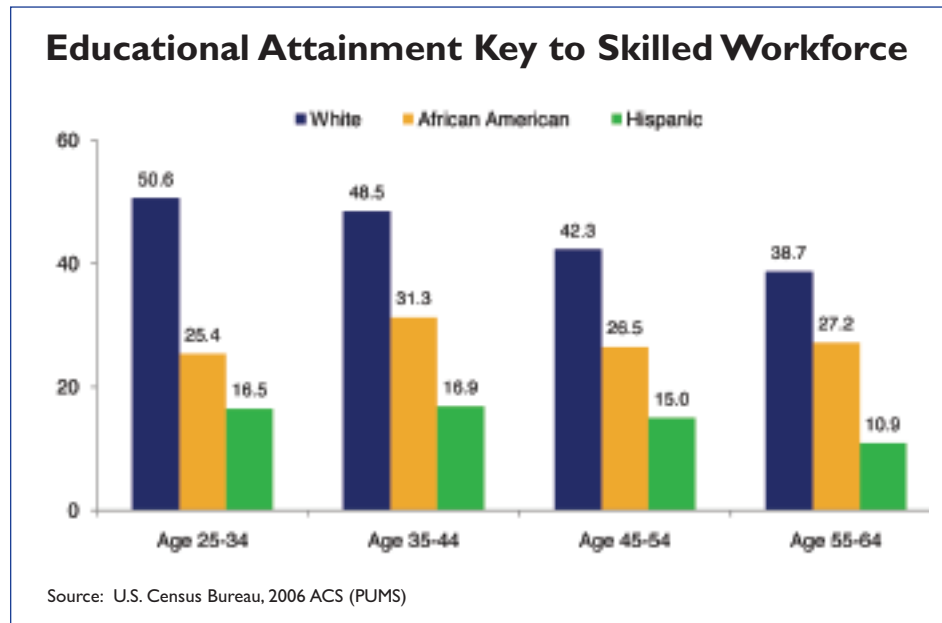


Figure 11. Percent of adults with associate's degree or higher, by age and race/ethnicity, 2006. Increasing college degrees among minorities will be crucial for Illinois to meet the workforce needs of the future.

Regional Gaps in College Attainment Hamper Economic Growth

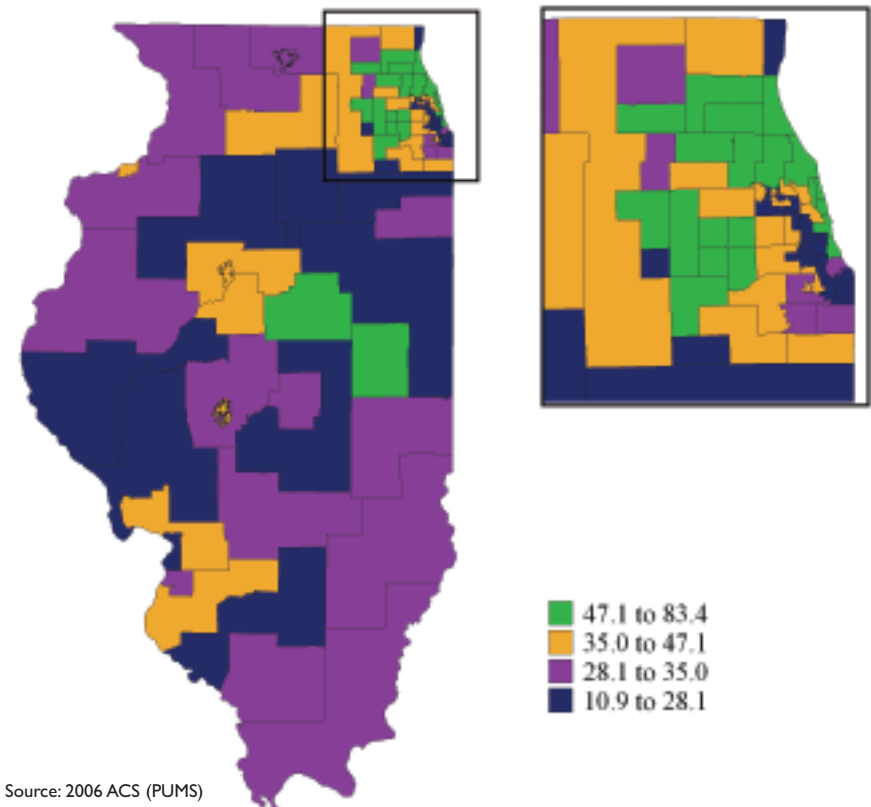


Figure 12. Percent of population, 25-64, with associate's degree or higher. Regional variations in college credentials show large gaps — and opportunities — in raising the level of educational attainment in Illinois.



GOAL 3

Increase the number of high-quality post-secondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy and an increasingly global society.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the number of people with high-quality postsecondary credentials to ensure the state has an educated workforce and an engaged citizenry.

Strategy: Provide incentives to complete degrees, focusing on compacts between working adults and employers and on individuals with substantial college credit but no degree.

Strategy: Use competency-based assessments, professional development, and employers as classroom mentors to improve skill levels and work readiness.

Strategy: Strengthen accountability through national assessments with publicly reported results.

RECOMMENDATION: Improve transitions all along the education pipeline.

Strategy: Strengthen articulation through stable funding and expansion of transfer tools such as u.select and the Illinois Articulation Initiative and through development of an objective measure of transfer and acceptance of credits.

Strategy: Expand baccalaureate completion opportunities through funding incentives for distance learning and degree-completion compacts, and enhanced use of creative relationships involving high schools, community colleges, and senior institutions.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the number of postsecondary degrees in fields of critical skills shortages.

Strategy: Expand capacity through grants, public/private partnerships, and financial inducements.

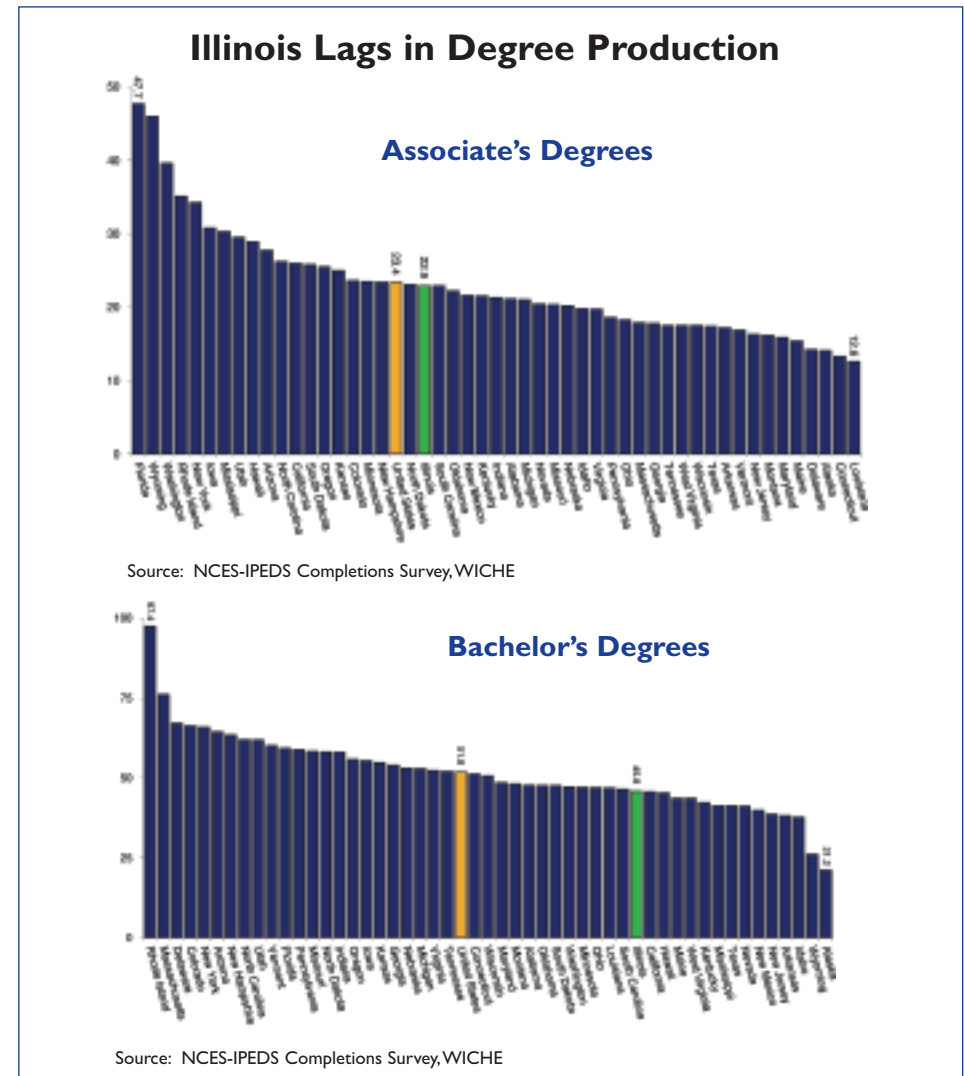


Figure 13. Illinois is slightly below the national average in the number of associate's degrees awarded and far below the U.S. average in the number of bachelor's degrees per 100 high school graduates three and six years earlier, 2004.