

**Findings and Recommendations
of the
Graduation Rate Task Force**

December 16, 2009

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GRADUATION RATE TASK FORCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Legislation

The Graduation Rate Task Force (GRTF) was established by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2009 regular session. Governor Barbour signed House Bill 488 into law on April 6, 2009. Section 2 of the law describes the work of the Task Force:

“It is the expectation of each institution of higher learning and community and junior college in the state that all students in such institutions receive a quality education and graduate for such institutions. The Legislature recognizes that annual performance reports show a significant number underperform and fail to meet their goal of graduation. To assist the Legislature in shaping public policy to improve student outcomes and educational opportunities for all students in such institutions, there is established a Task Force to study and report on the graduation rates in the state institutions of higher learning and junior and community colleges”.

Membership

The initial membership of the GRTF included the Chairmen of House and Senate Universities and Colleges Committees, the Chairmen of House and Senate Education Committees, the State Superintendent of Education or his designee, the Commissioner of Higher Education or his designee, the Executive Director of State Board of Community and Junior Colleges or his designee, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Chairman of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and the Chairman of the State Board of Education, a Representative of the Governor’s Office appointed by the Governor, and Presidents of two IHL institutions; one comprehensive and one HBU. The Task Force added additional representatives to include the presidents of two CJC institutions, a representative from the business community, and a representative for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

Responsibilities

The Graduation Rate Task Force shall compile data, study and report on measures that may be taken to improve graduation rates in the universities, community and junior colleges. The Commissioner of Higher Education shall provide appropriate staff to assist the Task Force with carrying out its duties. Before December 31, 2009, the Task Force shall submit to the Legislature and the Governor a written report of its findings and recommendations on measures to improve graduation rates in universities, community and junior colleges. Upon presentation of its report, the Task Force shall be dissolved.

Organization

The Graduation Rate Task Force met six times from July to December, 2009, and additionally, held eleven subcommittee meetings. The GRTF organized its work into three subcommittees:

- Articulation and Transfer
- Graduation and Retention Strategies
- Student and Mental Health Services

These three subcommittees were asked to investigate specific issues affecting retention and graduation rates and numbers and then report their findings to the full GRTF.

Data, Studies, and Reports

The GRTF engaged the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to conduct two separate analyses. The first was to establish Mississippi's standing in the United States and the best performing countries in the world regarding the educational attainment. This analysis was intended to provide a factual basis for GRTF decision making. The second analysis was a formal policy audit to identify barriers preventing improved graduation rates and numbers. NCHEMS presented the first findings at the August 26, 2009, meeting, while the policy audit findings were presented to the GRTF on December 2, 2009.

A second focus of the GRTF was the improvement of student retention and success as strategies to increase graduation rates and numbers. Noel-Levitz, a recognized leader in higher education consulting committed to helping institutions meet their goals for enrollment and student success, was retained to conduct research on retention and student success practices. Noel-Levitz replicated its national retention practices survey in Mississippi and reported its findings at the October 1, 2009, meeting. That same day, Noel-Levitz conducted a workshop for enrollment management professionals from all twenty-three public postsecondary institutions.

The final focus of the GRTF was the availability of student services, specifically mental health services, on the public postsecondary campuses. A survey was conducted to begin the process of understanding these issues, as well as the availability of these services, in Mississippi.

Membership of the Graduation Rate Task Force

Chairman Cecil Brown, House of Representatives Education Committee

Chairman Kelvin Buck, House of Representatives Universities & Colleges Committee

Chairman Videt Carmichael, Senate Education Committee

Chairman Doug Davis, Senate Universities & Colleges Committee

Mr. Mike Mulvihill, Designee for State Superintendent of Education

Dr. Hank Bounds, Commissioner of Higher Education

Dr. Eric Clark, Executive Director of State Board of Community & Junior Colleges

Mr. C. D. Smith, Designee for Board of Trustees, MS Institutions of Higher Learning

Ms. Patricia Dickens, Designee for State Board for Community & Junior Colleges

Ms. Kami Bumgarner, Designee for State Board of Education

Mr. Johnny Franklin, Representative of the Governor's Office

Dr. George Ross, President of Alcorn State University

Dr. Martha Saunders, President of the University of Southern Mississippi

Dr. Willis Lott, President of Gulf Coast Community College

Dr. Scott Elliott, President of Meridian Community College

Mr. Blake Wilson, President and CEO of Mississippi Economic Council

Ms. Kris Jones, Representative for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher education has the potential to dramatically improve the lives of all Mississippians, since educational attainment is strongly linked to higher income levels, better health, decreased incarceration rates and other quality of life issues. However, Mississippi lags far behind the nation and many countries in the education attainment level of its citizens, and the state has not formally established any long-term goals to increase college completion. Improvement will take years of commitment, an attitude of accountability, and coordination between all education systems to implement the changes needed to achieve this goal.

Mississippi has the lowest level of per capita income in the nation, and the second lowest percentage of its working-age population with a bachelor's degree or higher. Mississippi's position nationally has remained stagnant over the past 30 years, even as the link between educational attainment and personal income has strengthened.

Mississippi should focus on moving to the national average, which requires producing an additional 147,144 associate and bachelor's degrees by 2025, or an additional 962 degrees each year. To do this, the state needs to substantially increase the progress of students through every stage of the education system.

Serious challenges face the state in this endeavor. Mississippi ranks 45th among all states in the percentage of high school graduates. Educational attainment gaps are more severe for African Americans than white students. Recent budget cuts, combined with expectations of future cuts and the drop-off of federal stimulus funds, could hinder progress.

A policy audit prepared for this Task Force found several factors that require consideration in a plan for improvement:

- **Long-term goals for raising educational attainment.** Mississippi has not formally established goals to raise the educational attainment of its population, and there are no measurements and public reporting methods for monitoring performance and progress toward goals.
- **Alignment of K-12 and higher education expectations for college-level learning.** While Mississippi has taken important first steps toward this by

making changes in K-12 curriculum, successful implementation will depend on how well teachers are prepared to teach the curriculum and on the quality of leadership at the school and district levels.

- **Teacher preparation.** Professional development of current teachers and the preparation of new ones to teach curricula in line with new expectations are key factors to reform. Budget cuts have led to the elimination of some programs that provide professional development, but there are also other challenges. For example, there appears to be no explicit Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) mandate that colleges/schools of education commit to deeply engage in professional development of K-12 faculty.
- **Admissions requirements and developmental education.** Variations among CJC's and IHLs contribute to a lack of coordination between the entities. As a result, students may not have a seamless transition toward obtaining a college degree.
- **Transfer and articulation.** While formal policies and agreements are in place, they appear to have little impact. Arrangements are often negotiated on an institution-by-institution basis.
- **Gaps in data for longitudinal analysis.** Consistent information across all CJC's could provide basic data such as percentages of students referred to developmental education, the success of such students in getting into courses in which they earn credits toward degrees, the percentage of students who intend to transfer and end up doing so, or the number of students who transfer without earning a degree, etc.
- **Finance policy.** Funding of CJC's and IHLs is not allocated in a manner that clearly provides financial incentives for these institutions to improve retention and graduation rates, or to increase overall degree production.

- **Policy leadership.** A divided system of governance, historic lack of communication and coordination between the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJS) and the IHL Board of Trustees, lack of data to support monitoring and accountability, and other factors contribute to low graduation rates.

Mississippi's educational attainment gap is the consequence of years of neglect. It will take time to reach regional or national, let alone global, competitiveness. Progress will only come through sustained, coordinated reform and step-by-step progress measured against national benchmarks, with monitoring, accountability, and public reporting on progress.

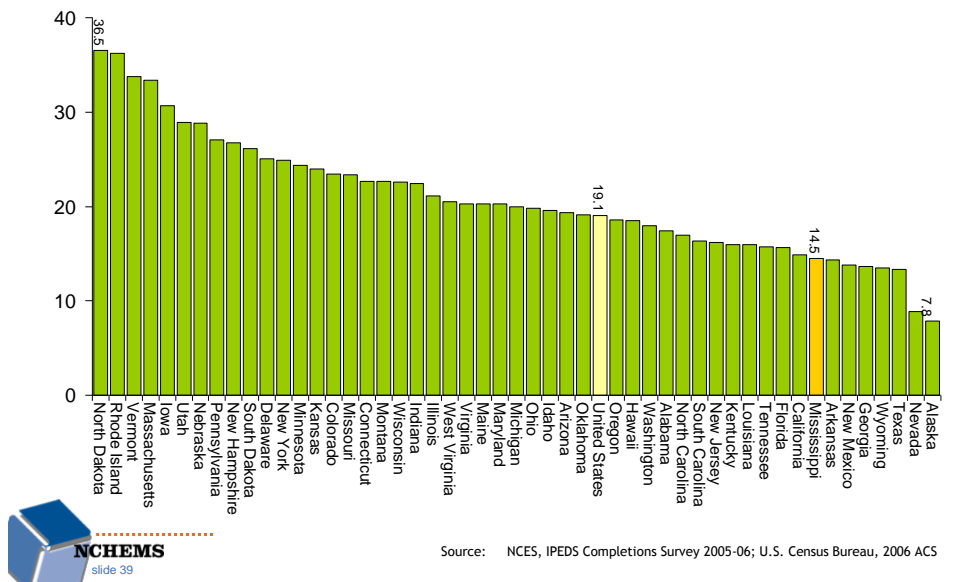
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

NCHEMS Policy Audit Findings

Establish a Mississippi Goal to Reach the National Average by 2025

- Increase the educational attainment and skill levels of the state’s working-age population benchmarked to the national average by 2025 to prepare a globally competitive workforce, enhance the state’s future economy, and improve quality of life for the state’s citizens.
- Overcome legacy of past neglect, which includes focusing on closing achievement gaps (Pell eligible students, transfer students, and white to non-white) for CJC and IHL. (August 26, 2009 NCHEMS presentation; slides 17 & 18; 39)

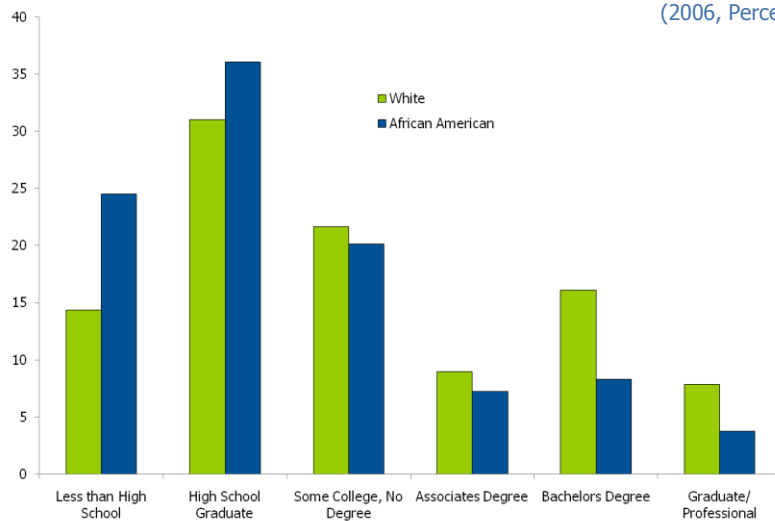
Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded at All Colleges per 1,000 Adults Age 18-44 with No College Degree, 2006



Source: NCES, IPEDS Completions Survey 2005-06; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 ACS

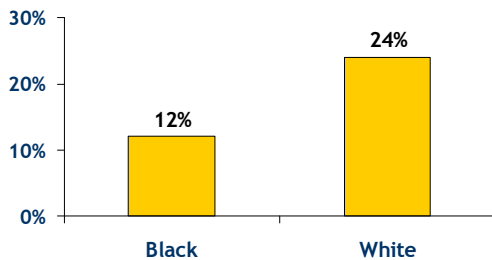
Difference in Education Attainment Between Whites and African Americans

(2006, Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File.

If all racial/ethnic groups had same educational attainment, annual personal income in Mississippi would be \$7 BILLION higher!



Mississippi Population with Bachelor's Degree



Source: Measuring Up 2008: The National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education

- Increase production of associate and bachelor degrees and certificates with workplace value with attention to adults as well as recent high school graduates
- Propose performance metric for degree production as degrees awarded per 100 FTE students (CJC and IHL).
- Propose performance metrics for closing achievement gaps for CJC and IHL are degrees awarded per 100 FTE students for first-time in college full-time freshmen; Pell eligible students; transfer students (IHL only); and white to non-white students.

National Average by 2025

Mississippi would need to produce an additional 147,144 additional degrees by 2025 or an average of an additional 962 degrees per year.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Projected 25-64 Year Olds in 2025 | 1,500,207 |
| • 46.5% with College Degrees (Associate and Higher) | 697,596 |
| • 25-47 Year Olds with College Degrees
(Who will Still be in the Cohort in 2025) | 261,282 |
| • Maintaining Recent (2005-2007) Annual Net Migration
of College Degree Holders | (62,305) |
| • Degrees Produced at Current Annual Rate by 2025 (20,675 per Year) | 351,475 |
| • Additional Degrees (Associate and Bachelor's) Needed by 2025 | 147,144 |

Establish the state level Education Achievement Council to monitor and report on progress toward long-term goals

- Sustain attention to agenda
- Maintain the current membership of Graduation Rate Task Force, provide a method to replace members, and consider increasing business/civic representation
- Focus on leading agenda, not on displacing the governing and coordinating responsibilities of the IHL and SBCJC boards
- Establish long-term goals and benchmarks
- Monitor and report on progress toward goals in an annual report card

Implement expectations for “college ready”

- Place high priority on implementation of the recently developed College Readiness Standards. Make clear that these apply to all secondary school students seeking some postsecondary education whether at a CJC or an IHL institution.
- Implement common placement assessments across the system, including CJCs and IHLs. Ensure alignment of these assessments with K-12 assessments.
- Align a “general education core” available at all CJCs for transfer students. These should build on the College Readiness Standards. Ensure that all students who transfer have mastered the College Readiness Standards before they transfer.

- Mandate that the schools/colleges of education play an active role in professional development of teachers. Hold the schools/colleges of education accountable for demonstrating their contributions to improved teacher performance in their immediate regions and especially in the schools used for clinical training of teachers.
- Increase teacher production to meet state demand by 2020.
- Eliminate teacher shortage in critical areas such as math, science, foreign languages, and special education by 2020.

Clarify institutional missions

- Make a clear distinction in the missions of IHLs:
 - Research universities
 - Regional universities/regional stewardship
- Maintain current placement and screening process for IHLs, but increase communication to students, counselors and others about the different levels of preparation required for success for each of the universities.
- Strengthen the links between IHLs and CJC's concerning the referral to CJC's of students who are not college-ready to the level required for success at the universities. Provide these students with an opportunity to transfer to a university if their academic preparation and performance improves, and they can demonstrate readiness for transfer.

Ensure developmental education is a statewide priority

- Implement developmental education redesign pilots initially supported by Lumina Foundation.
- Consideration the implementation of a new statewide effort jointly developed by SBCJC and IHL Board to design and deliver developmental education within CJC's and IHLs.

Strengthen transfer and articulation processes

- Create a seamless transfer and articulation process since most students enter community colleges with expectation of transfer but a relatively small percentage actually transfers, leaving many students with accumulated course work that is not recognized by employers.
- Implement a simple, straight-forward system: accepting Associate of Arts (AA) degrees for full credit toward Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Sciences (BA/BS) degrees.
- Concentrate on a selected number of critical majors (dual admission) – a transfer core with additional courses guaranteed for acceptance in most popular majors.
- Create a website for information on transfer and articulation (requires funding for set-up, implementation, and maintenance).

Revised articulation and transfer policies

- Transfers from Community/Junior Colleges to Universities:
 - Associate of Arts (A.A.) degrees from Mississippi community/junior colleges transfer to Mississippi public universities as a “block” of completed credit that fulfills university freshman and sophomore requirements.
 - All public universities and community/junior colleges adhere to a common core to ensure minimum competencies in key areas
 - Freshman and sophomore degree requirements for native university students to be waived for transfer students who have an Associate of Arts degree from a Mississippi community or junior college
 - Transfer students who have not graduated with an Associate of Arts degree, but who wish to transfer CJC credits to a Mississippi university, can transfer those credits according to the current Articulation Agreement at the time of transfer.
 - For students transferring course-by-course credit under the Articulation Agreement, all course grades that are acceptable for university native credits shall be considered acceptable for transfer credits.
- Transfers among Community/Junior Colleges:
 - All non-developmental, for-credit courses in which a passing grade was received are transferrable among Mississippi community/junior colleges. If a particular non-developmental, for-credit course being transferred to a community/junior college is not taught by that receiving college, then that course is to be accepted as a general elective.
 - Students transferring credits to a Mississippi community/junior college must complete the graduation requirements of the receiving community/junior college in order to graduate from that college.

Implement a longitudinal data system

- Link the critical gap between CJC and IHL.
- Include K-12, adult education, and, if possible, the independent sector higher education institution (on voluntary basis).
- Consider jointly staffed unit between CJC and IHL Systems.
- Connect to workforce data with a broader emphasis on the entire education pipeline.

Create incentives for regional collaboration to ensure more students get through the system to higher levels of achievement by more effectively using resources

- Build on existing successes.
- Emphasize links with K-12/adult education.
- Share accountability between all education entities for moving students through pipeline.

Redesign student financial aid

- Redesign the Higher Education Legislative Plan (HELP) program to target 7th graders with significant financial need and provide incentives for these students to stay in school, take the prescribed curriculum, and pursue postsecondary education.

Institutional finance

- Establish policy of aligning financing policy with long-term goals.
- IHL: Acknowledge political and fiscal realities limiting ability to changing funding allocations *among* IHL institutions, but point out that the IHL Board could take actions to use finance policy to leverage change *within* each university: IHL Board agreement with each university to reserve “X”% of general revenue (state appropriations and tuition) for strategic change initiatives consistent with the IHL strategic plan (emphasizing retention/graduation, degree production).
- SBCJC: Recommend that the funding formula be modified to allocate a percent of funding based on “momentum points” based on achieving intermediate points of success.
- Develop a funding formula having an incentive share for those institutions achieving their goals. Funds for increasing faculty salaries should be tied to the incentives piece.

Clarify and strengthen system leadership

IHL Board

- Clarify responsibilities
 - Policy leadership for system to achieve goals established by the Education Achievement Council
 - Support effective leadership/governance of each four year institution
 - Mission differentiation – Research versus regional
 - Student financial aid, statewide and need based, for students attending all institutions
- Implement a strategic plan for system emphasizing contribution of IHL institutions to strategic goals of the state
- Require every institution to develop a plan for achieving specific completion goals. Must be submitted to this Task Force by March 31, 2010.
- Link performance agreements with each institution to:
 - System priorities and state public agenda
 - Presidential evaluation and institutional leadership/budgeting

- Faculty and staff should have some responsibility and be held accountable for improving retention and completion rates.
- Use the board’s time to focus on high level policy issues.
- Require a commitment from CJC and IHL Boards and presidents of individual institutions making improving retention and completion rates a major priority.

State Board for Community and Junior Colleges

- Clarify responsibility for strategic leadership within its coordinating authority
- Develop a strategic plan for CJC system emphasizing contribution of these institutions to the strategic goals of the state
- Implement the following leading statewide initiatives that improve education achievement:
 - Alignment of curriculum and learning outcomes with both college readiness expectations and “transfer ready”
 - Common college placement assessments
 - Regional collaborative with K-12 districts and IHL institutions
 - Faculty and staff should have some responsibility and be held accountable for improving retention and completion rates.
 - Require every institution to develop a plan for achieving specific completion goals. Must be submitted to this Task Force by March 31, 2010.
 - Secure commitment from CJC and IHL Board and Presidents of individual institutions to improve retention and completion rates.

Collect data necessary to calculate the following performance indicators for all degree- and certificate-seeking students

Performance Measures

- 1st to 2nd year *retention* for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen
- *Completion* within 150% of standard time for first-time, full-time, degree- and certificate-seeking freshmen
- Percentage of students who either *transfer* directly to another college or university, or *complete* community/junior college program requirements within 150% standard time for first-time, full-time, degree- and certificate-seeking freshmen.
- Percentage of students who declare themselves as degree- or certificate-seeking
- Percentage of community/junior college *students* who transfer to four-year schools each year

Noel Levitz Retention and Student Success Recommendations

Collect additional data on retention and graduation rate trends in the state including the following items.

- Compile 3-5 years of data on full-time transfer student persistence and graduation rates in the four-year sector (not available for the two-year sector). This should be done at the institutional level and then compiled according to admissions selectivity (i.e., open/liberal admission schools versus traditional and selective admission schools).
- Compile 3-5 years of data on part-time students and those that entered via other means in the four-year sector (not available for the two-year sector). This should be done at the institutional level and then compiled according to admissions selectivity (i.e., open/liberal admission schools versus traditional and selective admission schools).
- Build a peer data set for each institution using data from collegeresults.org.
- Build a data set on the movement of students between two-year and four-year schools and their eventual success rates (i.e., How many students transfer from two year to four-year schools each year and what percentage eventually graduate after four additional years of study or sooner?).

Establish persistence and completion goals for each institution and sector

Establish a process wherein each institution is asked to submit goals (based on the data) and the Task Force would then negotiate with each institution if they feel their goals are either too modest or too aggressive (unrealistic). Ultimately, the objective would be to establish statewide goals by institution and sector.

Noel-Levitz recommends goals should be established in the following categories:

- 1st to 2nd year retention for first-time, full-time students (all sectors)
- Completion within a 150% time for first-time, full-time students (all sectors)
- 1st to 2nd year retention for transfer students (IHL only)
- Transfer student completion within three years in the two-year sector and six years in the four-year sector
- 1st to 2nd year retention of part-time students (all sectors)

- Part-time student completion within four years in the two-year sector and eight year in the four-year sector
- Percentage of students that two-year schools send to four-year schools each year
- Percentage of students that four-year schools attract from two-year schools each year
- Graduation percentage of students who transfer from a two-year to a four-year school within four years of transferring

This goal-setting process should be complete in the first quarter of 2010.

Identifying Statewide Strategies to Increase Completion Rates

In addition to the institutional planning process outlined above, Noel-Levitz recommends a statewide plan that addresses issues that impact students at all schools. This might include further analysis and strategy development in the following areas:

- Developing strategies to monitor institutional performance and report on progress towards statewide goals;
- The role and impact of college costs and financial aid on completion rates in Mississippi;
- The ease with which students can move between institutions and its impact on persistence and completion rates (e.g., articulation policies particularly within specific academic programs);
- Ways that K-12 and higher education can cooperate to achieve improved persistence and completion rates;
- Strategies for improving developmental education success rates;
- Ways that the higher education system can improve cooperation in support of improved persistence and completion rates;
- Developing incentives for improved institutional performance; and
- Identifying statewide training programs to support the institutional change process.

This plan could be completed within the same timeframe as the institutional plans (by August 2010).

Implement state-wide a retention, progression, and completion program based on the ten key elements recommended by Noel-Levitz (Noel-Levitz presentation October 1, 2009; slides 49-50)

Ten critical elements of successful retention, progression and completion programs

1. Collect, compile, and analyze pertinent retention/completion-related data, information, and research to aid and abet planning and strategy development
2. Implement an early identification/alert system and appropriate student intervention strategies
3. Commit to both a “front-loading” and “progressive responsibility” philosophy in prioritizing action plans and determining degree of proactiveness
4. Focus on the importance of the teaching/learning process
5. Emphasize a deliberate strategy of student engagement and involvement

Ten critical elements of successful retention, progression and completion programs

6. Enhance the organization and delivery of academic advising services
7. Create programs and services based on meeting students’ individual needs and differences
8. Design institutional systems, policies, and processes to be more student-centered
9. Monitor, on a systematic basis, student expectations, levels of satisfaction, and educational outcomes
10. Establish a permanent organizational structure to pursue quality of student life and learning initiatives and an institutional change process

**Implement state-wide student success practices recommended by Noel-Levitz
(Noel-Levitz presentation October 1, 2009; slides 59-61 and 75-77)**

What do these data points suggest about opportunities for improvement in the two-year sector?

- Explore implementation of programs specifically for first-year students
- Collect student engagement data (e.g. CCSSE) to augment student satisfaction data
- Improve intervention programs for at-risk students (early-alert)

What do these data points suggest about opportunities for improvement in the two-year sector?

- Expansion of learning communities
- Second-year programs designed to encourage completion and transition to a four-year institution (where appropriate)
- Implement stronger recruit-back programs
- Strengthen academic advising
- Improved on-line student services

What do these data points suggest about opportunities for improvement in the two-year sector?

- Look at transfer orientation in response to increased student swirl (and orientation programs generally)
- Undertake a complete review of developmental education trends and delivery models and develop strategies in response to the findings (e.g. K-12 cooperation, summer bridge programs, supplemental instruction programs)

What do these data points suggest about opportunities for improvement in the four-year sector?

- Improved use of data and information to make changes (satisfaction/engagement)
- Improved use of learning communities
- Enhanced communications for currently enrolled students
- Improved on-line student services

What do these data points suggest about opportunities for improvement in the four-year sector?

- Improved programming in the second year (major selection and transition, support for the deciding student)
- Enhanced support for adult/non-traditional learners (e.g. orientation programs)
- Enhanced support for online learners (special programs, early alert)

Campus Representative Recommendations

What did the campus representatives say is most important?

- Database to track non FTFT
- Data on 2-year to 4-year transition
- Regional planning councils to improve 2-year/4-year transitions
- Improved institutional data tracking
 - We track persistence and progression patterns of all students who matriculate
 - We set measurable goals to improve the retention rate for each term, semester, or year

What did the campus representatives say is most important?

- Early alert programs for at-risk students
- Improved academic advising
- Implement/enhance recruit-back programs
- Implement/enhance learning communities
- Implement/enhance 2nd year programs
- Undertake a complete review of developmental education trends and delivery models and develop strategies in response to the findings

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

The Student Services Questionnaire was administered to gain information from the 23 post secondary public institutions as to the types of support services available to students. The questionnaire was divided into two major sections: Section A included items related to student services. Topics such as student orientation, academic skills training, the availability of specialized learning environments, and the identification of academically at-risk students were included in Section A. Section B included items related to the availability and provision of mental health services. Topics such as identification of students with mental health related disorders, the availability of mental health services on and off campuses, how students and parents are informed of mental health service options, policies and procedures related to responding to the mental health needs of students, and the availability of Behavioral Intervention Teams. Information contained in this summary was gathered from the responses to the questionnaire.

There appears to be significant variation from institution to institution in the types of supports that are being provided in both areas of student services and mental health. Examples of this variation include:

- Fifty percent of the respondents reported that they provided academic skills training during the beginning of the first semester for new students. The other fifty percent reported that they did not provide academic skills training during the beginning of the first semester for new students.
- The types of campus specialized learning environments varied from institution to institution.
- Twenty-five percent of the identified academically at-risk students who have been identified for early intervention are not being tracked through a formal program.
- The types of mental health services that are available on and off campuses. Available services vary from mental health counseling to medication consultation.
- Of the respondents that have primary care settings on their campuses, twenty-five percent do not integrate mental health services as a routine part of primary care services.
- The methods by which students and parents are informed of mental health service options.

- The availability of Behavioral Intervention Teams. Forty-four percent of the respondents do not have Behavioral Intervention Teams available.

In addition to various types of supports being offered to students, the questionnaire identified areas for further study. Examples of these areas include:

- The uniformity of content that is included in academic skills training.
- The feasibility of specialized orientation and advising services to non-traditional students.
- The training that advisors receive in order to identify students with mental health needs on campuses.
- The training that campus-based law enforcement staff receive in order to respond to crises, particular mental health-related crises that might arise.
- The expansion of the Behavioral Intervention Teams from the “core membership” of representatives of student services, law enforcement, housing and counseling center staff to include faculty members, academic affairs, and student health services.
- The feasibility of networking between the Behavioral Intervention Teams to promote information sharing and the development of resources.

The need for the development and implementation of formal policies and procedures for identifying and responding to the mental health needs of students was identified. Seven of the respondents reported that they had only informal policies and procedures established or no policies and procedures in place for identifying and responding to the mental health needs of students. The Behavioral Intervention Teams, a recognized best practice for responding to the mental health needs of students, could be expanded through policy development.

In summary, there appears to be numerous positive steps being taken to support students in Mississippi’s public institutions. The support, and at times levels of service, that Mississippi’s students need in order to achieve their educational goals and increase Mississippi’s graduation rates should not be discounted.

- **After acceptance to the CJC/IHL, improve identification of students with mental health needs and/or students who are at-risk to harm themselves and/or others.**
 - Universal screening of students
 - Through professional development opportunities, increase faculty/staff's capacity to identify students who may have mental health needs or be at-risk. This should include education on types of mental health needs, known warning signs and risk factors.
- **Increase availability and access to mental health services.**
 - Partnerships with local mental health providers, both public and private, to make services available and accessible to students.
 - On-campus mental health services, provided by a mental health professional(s). These services should include, at a minimum, counseling services and medication consultation and management.
 - For settings that have primary care/student health centers, incorporate mental health screening, assessment and subsequent services into existing systems.
 - Increase access to mental health-related educational resources and referral information for students and their families. Methods to communicate with students should include those modalities most utilized by students, such as the internet.
- **Initiation and implementation of mental health promotion (anti-stigma) and suicide prevention activities on all campuses.**
 - Participation in *Think Again Network* and *Shatter the Silence* activities to engage faculty, staff and students in activities to support mental health education and eliminate stigma associated with seeking help and support.
 - Development of positive peer support/ mentoring networks for students.
- **Workforce Development**
 - Increased professional development opportunities for existing faculty and staff (inclusive of law enforcement) related to mental health, suicide prevention and responding to mental health crises.

- Include mental health education as a part of comprehensive clinical training for all teachers (K-16).
- **Policy Development**
 - Develop formal policies and procedures to respond to the needs of students identified with mental health needs and/or students who are at-risk to harm themselves and/or others.
 - Develop formal policies to support the use of Behavioral Intervention Teams on all campuses

APPENDICES

Mississippi Policy Audit

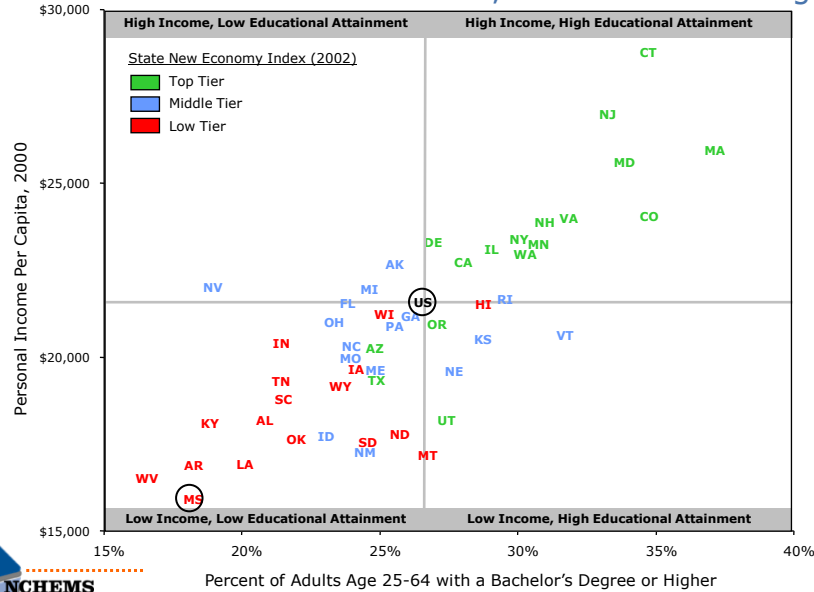
Mississippi Policy Audit

Observations and findings from data analysis

Graduation rates need to be seen in broader context of the educational attainment of the state's population.

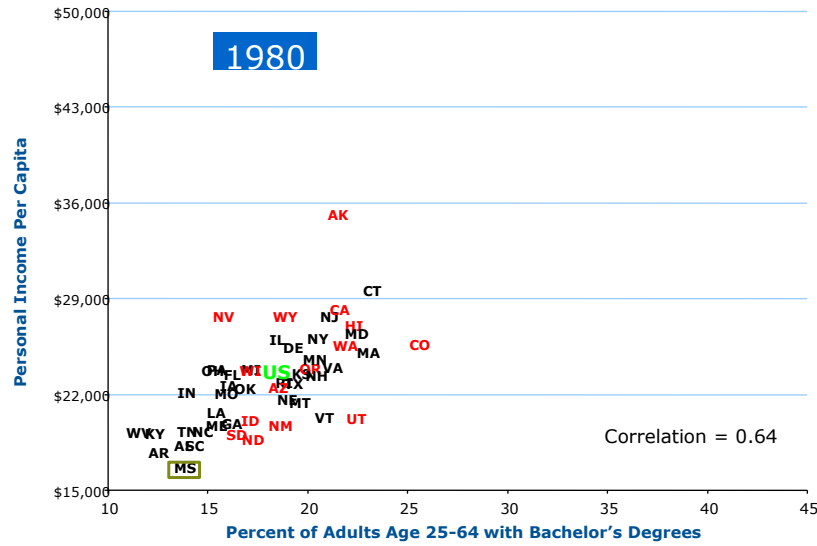
- Educational attainment is highly correlated with the strength of a state's economy, personal income, and other indicators of quality of life for all Mississippians:
 - Increased workforce participation
 - Decreased rates of incarceration
 - Improved health outcomes
 - Reduced participation in Medicaid and other social service programs
 - Greater participation in artistic, cultural, and civic pursuits
 - Higher levels of volunteerism and social engagement
- Mississippi has the lowest level of per capita income in the nation and the second lowest percentage of its working-age population with a bachelor's degree or higher. (Appendix, Figure 1)

Relationship Between Educational Attainment, Personal Income, and Economic Strength



- As the relationship between educational attainment and personal income has become stronger over the past 30 years (correlation increased from .64 in 1980 to .83 in 2005), Mississippi's position in relationship to other states remained essentially the same. While Mississippi has made some improvement, most other states have improved substantially. (Appendix, Figure 2)

Educational Attainment and Income

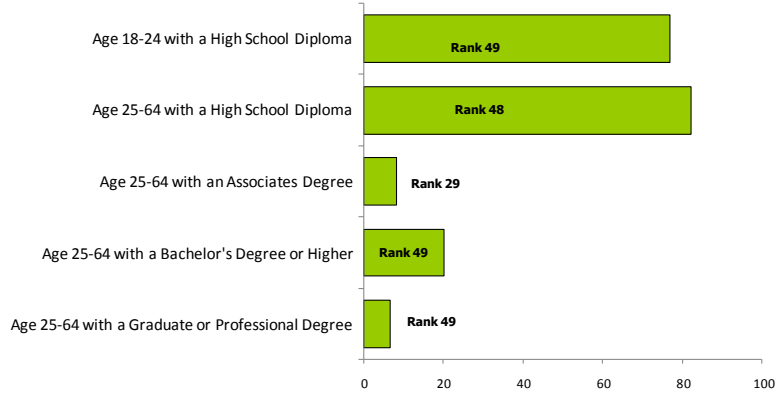


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census' and American Community Survey



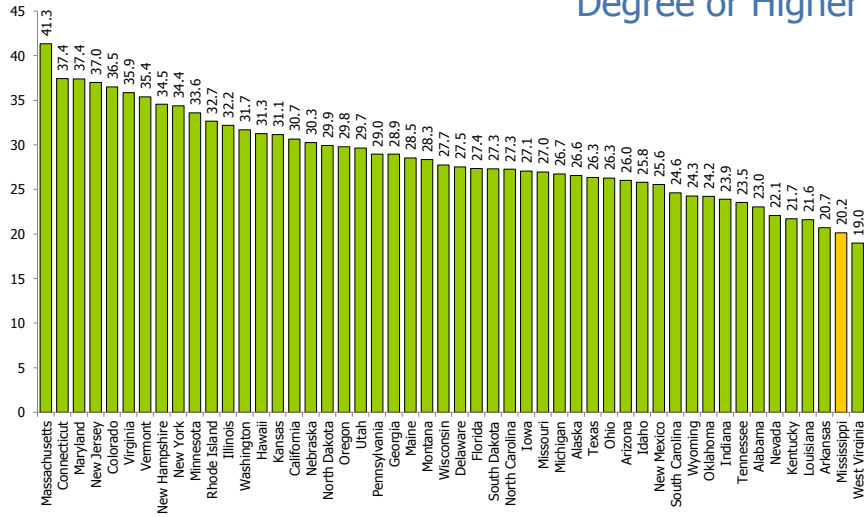
- Mississippi ranks 49th among the states in the percentage of the population ages 25-64 with a bachelor's degree or higher. At the same time, however, Mississippi has done much better than many states in getting its students through to at least an associate degree (29th among the states). (Appendix, Figures 3, 4, and 5)

Educational Attainment & Rank Among States Mississippi 2007 (percent)



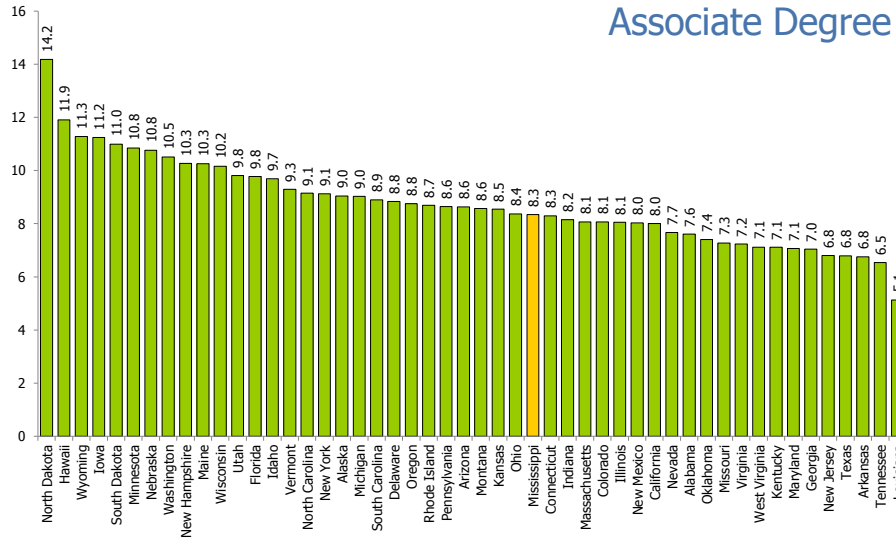
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey.

Percent of Population Ages 25-64 with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey.

Percent of Population Ages 25-64 with an Associate Degree



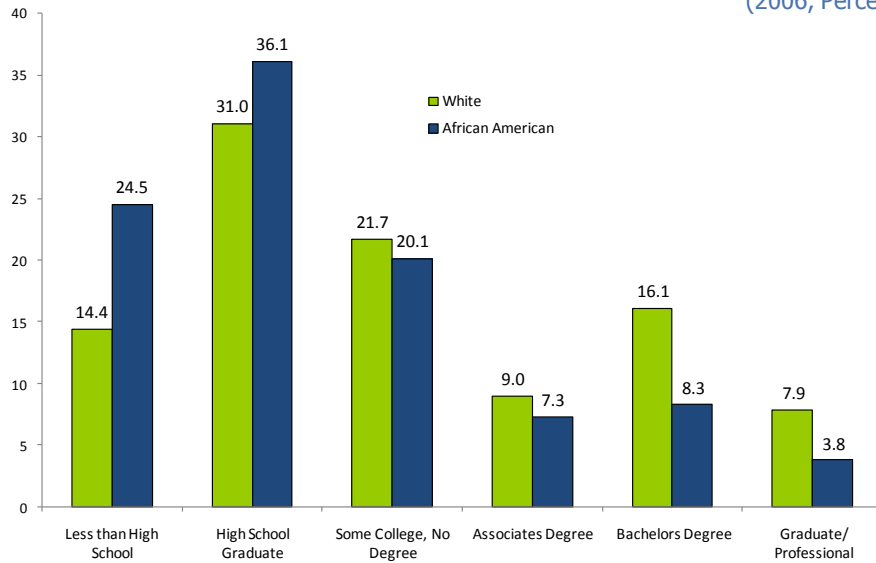
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey.



- Substantial differences exist in the educational levels of Whites and African Americans at every level. Only 12% of African Americans have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 24% of Whites. If all minority groups had the same educational attainment as Whites, the annual personal income in Mississippi would be \$7 billion higher. (Appendix, Figures 6 and 7)

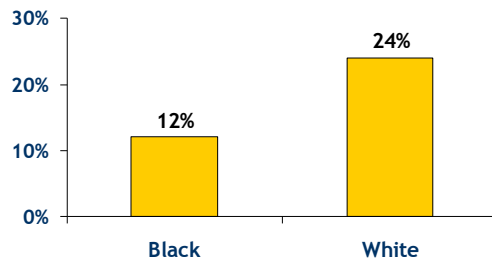
Difference in Education Attainment Between Whites and African Americans

(2006, Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File.

If all racial/ethnic groups had same educational attainment, annual personal income in Mississippi would be \$7 BILLION higher!



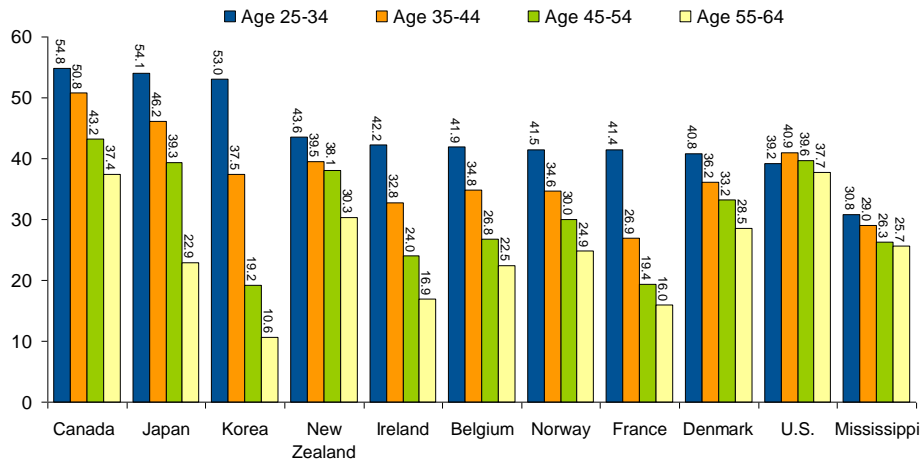
Mississippi Population with Bachelor's Degree



Source: Measuring Up 2008: The National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education

- Mississippi lags far behind the U.S. as well as many countries in the education levels of its population. (Appendix, Figure 8)

Percent of Adults with an Associate Degree or Higher by Age Group – Mississippi, U.S. & Leading OECD Countries



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance 2008*

- Many other states* are establishing goals for achieving a level of educational attainment of their population comparable to the best performing countries (55% of the population with an associate degree or higher). Setting a goal linked to best performing countries may not be realistic for Mississippi. (Appendix, Figures 9 and 10)

*Kentucky – “Double the Numbers” – United States (U.S.) Average
 Tennessee – Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Average
 Colorado and Arizona – 55% Numbers
 Oregon – 40% Bachelor Degrees /40% Associate Degrees/20% High School Diplomas
 Texas – Closing the Gap – 55% numbers by 2030
 Minnesota and Virginia – Best Performing – 55%



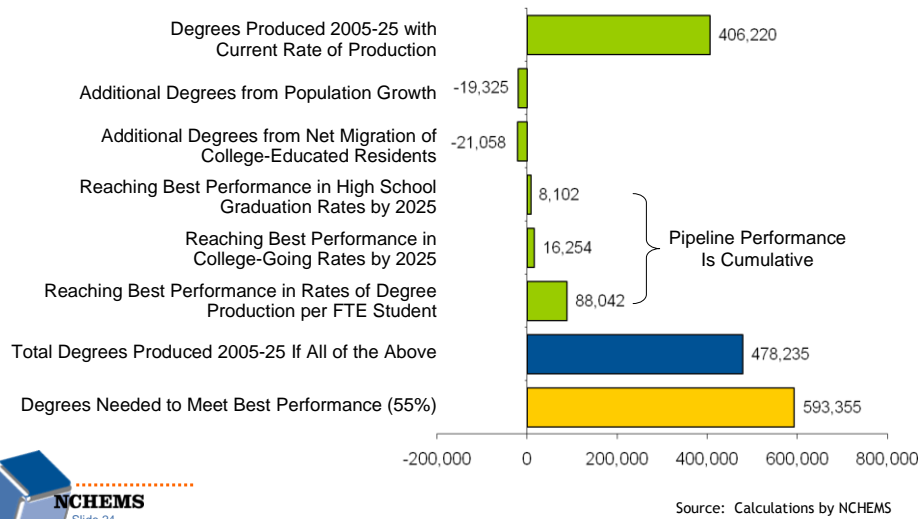
Reaching Goal by 2025 (55%) – Mississippi

825,114	Number of Individuals to Attain 55% Goal
231,759	Number of Individuals (Age 25-44) Who Already Have Degrees
593,355	Additional Degree Production Needed (2005 to 2025)
406,220	Degrees Produced at Current Annual Rate of Production
-21,058	Additional Residents with College Degrees from Net Migration
208,193	Additional Degrees Needed
10,410	Additional Degrees Needed per Year (currently produce 20,311 in all Sectors)
57.5%	Increase in Annual Associate and Bachelor's Degree Production Needed (in Public Sector Only)



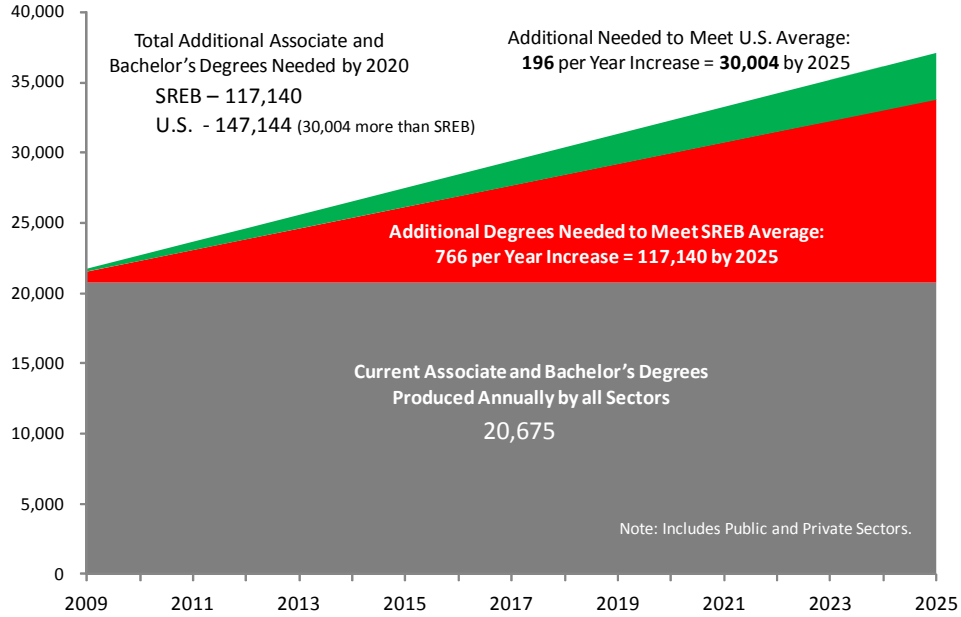
How Can Mississippi Reach International Competitiveness?

Current Degree Production Combined with Population Growth and Migration and Improved Performance on the Student Pipeline Measures



Other states, for example, are setting goals related to the United States (U.S.) or Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) averages; however, it is important to establish an explicit goal and related benchmarks. The following illustrates the challenges for meeting the SREB and U.S. averages from the current level of 21,008 degrees per year, accounting for loss of college educated residents through out-migration: (Appendix, Figure 11)

Additional Degree Production Needed for Mississippi to Match SREB and U.S. Averages in Educational Attainment by 2025



Sources: NCES, IPEDS Completions Survey; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey and Population Projections; Calculations by NCHEMS

SREB Average by 2025

Mississippi would need to produce an additional 117,140 additional degrees per year by 2025 or an average incremental increase of 766 additional degrees per year.

- Projected 25-64 Year Olds in 2025 1,500,207
- 44.5% with College Degrees (Associate and Higher) 667,592
- 25-47 Year Olds w/College Degrees (who will still be in the cohort in 2025) 261,282
- Maintaining Recent (2005-2007) Annual Net Migration of College Degree Holders (62,305)
- Degrees Produced at Current Annual Rate by 2025 (20,675 per Year) 351,475
- **Gap: Additional Degrees (Associate and Bachelor's) Needed by 2025** **117,140**

US Average by 2025

Mississippi would need to produce an additional 147,144 additional degrees by 2025 or an average of an additional 962 degrees per year.

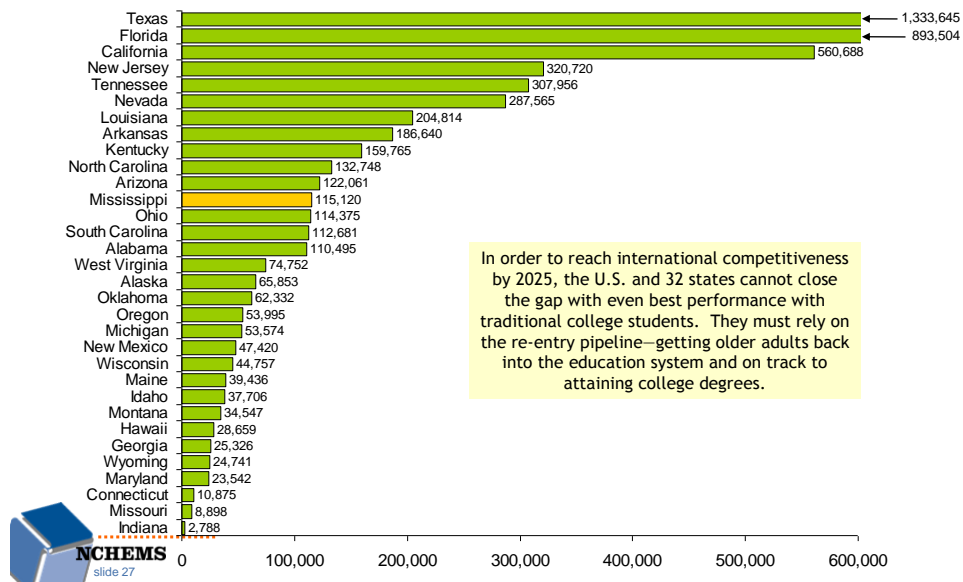
- Projected 25-64 Year Olds in 2025 1,500,207
- 46.5% with College Degrees (Associate and Higher) 697,596

- 25-47 Year Olds with College Degrees (Who will Still be in the Cohort in 2025) 261,282
- Maintaining Recent (2005-2007) Annual Net Migration of College Degree Holders (62,305)
- Degrees Produced at Current Annual Rate by 2025 (20,675 per Year) 351,475
- **Gap: Additional Degrees (Associate and Bachelor's) Needed by 2025 147,144**

To reach this higher level of production of associate and bachelor degrees, Mississippi would need to increase substantially the progress of students through every stage of the education pipeline by:

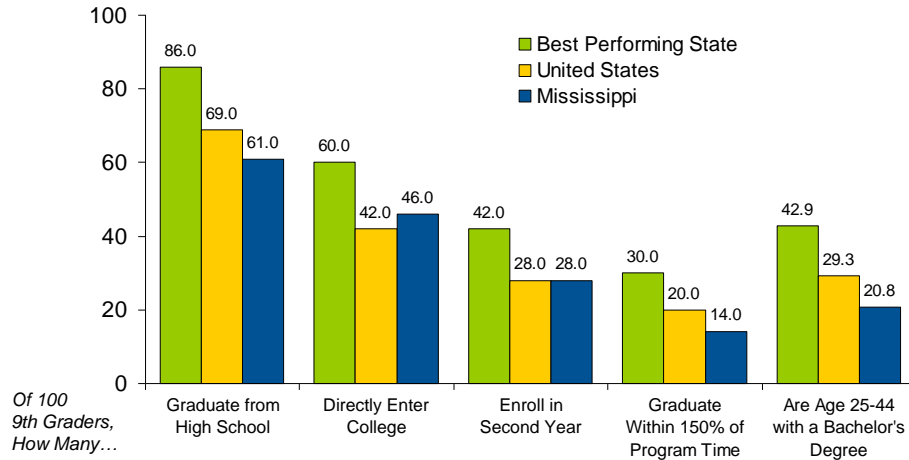
- Increasing high school graduation rates
- Maintaining college-going rates even as high school graduation rates increase
- Increasing the number of degrees granted per students enrolled in college, including increasing the number of students who transfer successfully from community colleges
- Increasing the number of degrees granted to adults with a high school diploma but no college-level education. This will also require increasing the number of adults with a high school diploma who earn a General Education Development (GED) or similar high school equivalent credential. (Appendix, Figure 12)

Even Best Performance with Traditional College-Age Students at Each Stage of the Educational Pipeline Will Leave Gaps in More than 30 States



- Mississippi faces serious challenges at every level of the education pipeline for both African American and White students, but the attainment gaps are more severe for African Americans. (Appendix, Figure 13)

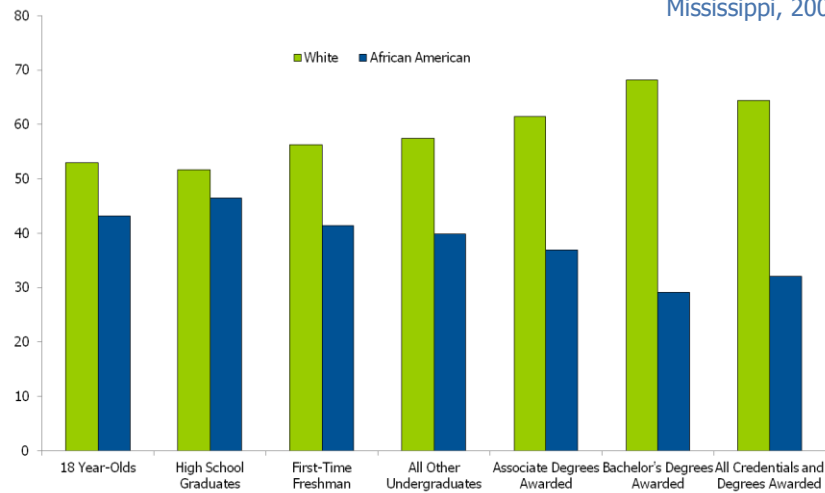
Student Pipeline, 2006



Sources: (1) Tom Mortenson, Postsecondary Opportunity; Chance for College by Age 19. (2) NCES, IPEDS 2006 Retention Rate File and 2006 Graduation Rate File. (3) U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

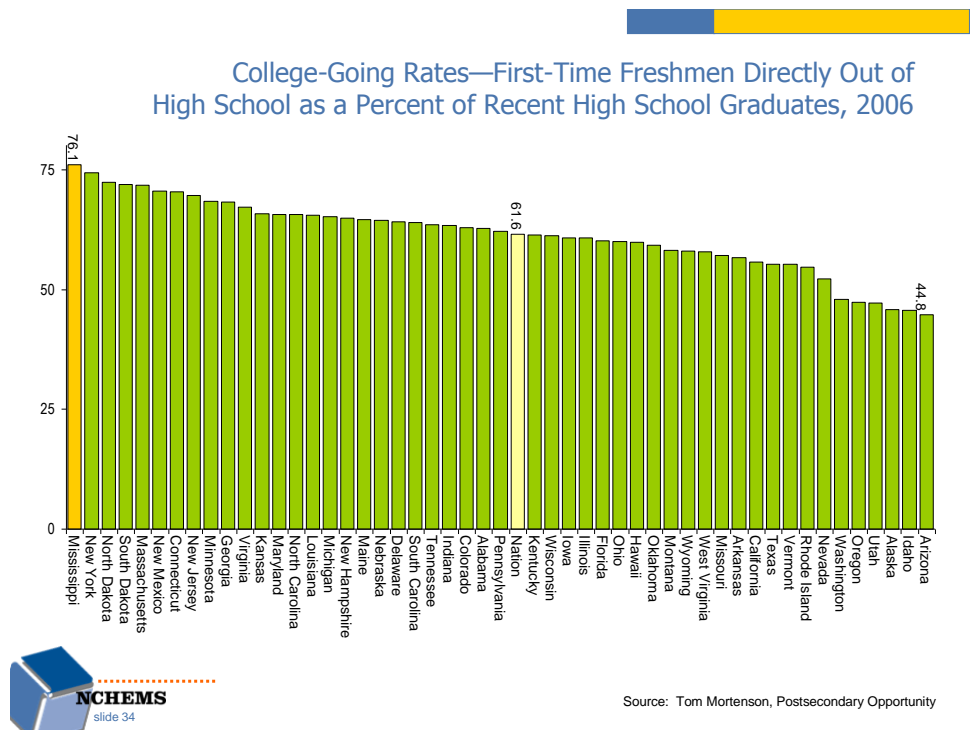
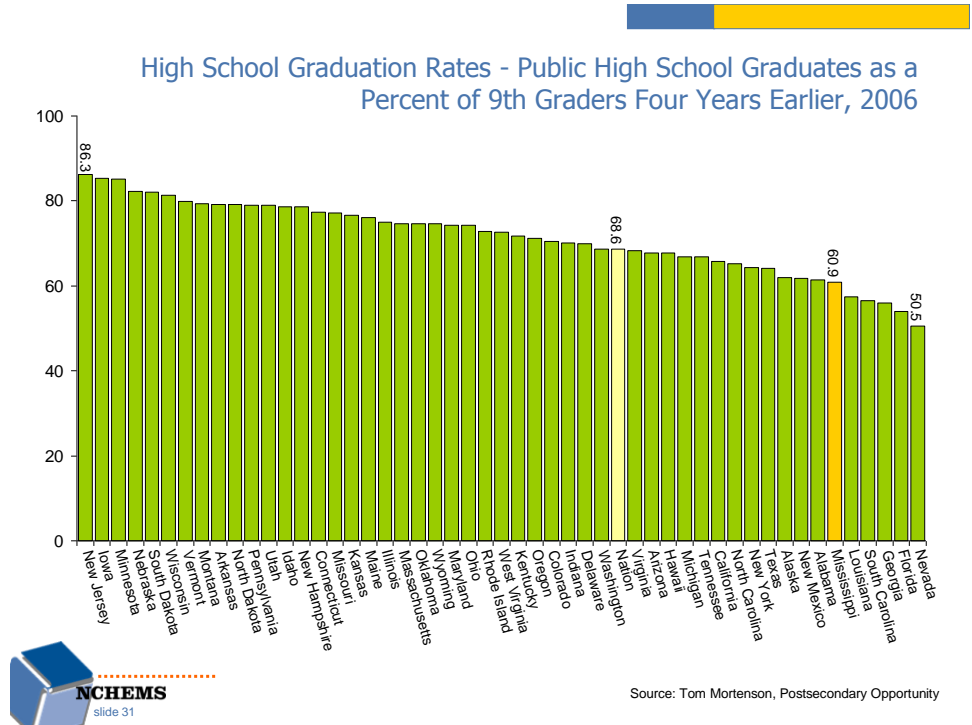
- Mississippi ranks 45th among the states in the percentage of high school graduates. (Appendix, Figure 14)

Percent of Whites & African Americans at Each Stage of the Education Pipeline Mississippi, 2005



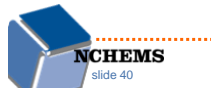
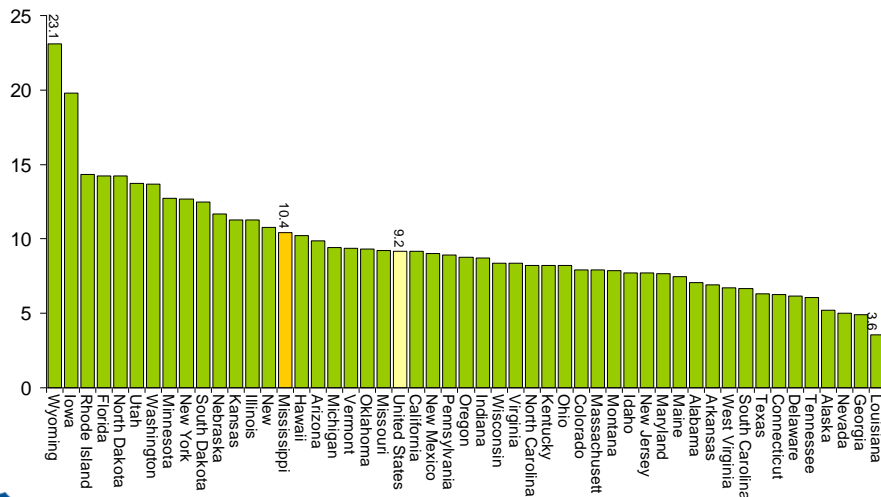
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2005 Population Estimates. NCES Common Core of Data 2004-05 High School Diploma Recipients. NCES, IPEDS Fall 2005 Enrollments File, 2004-05 Completions File.

- Mississippi has the highest college-going rate for students directly out of high school, but this rate is high primarily because so few students complete high school. As the percentage of students completing high school increases, Mississippi will face a challenge in maintaining the current high college going rate. (Appendix, Figures 15,16)



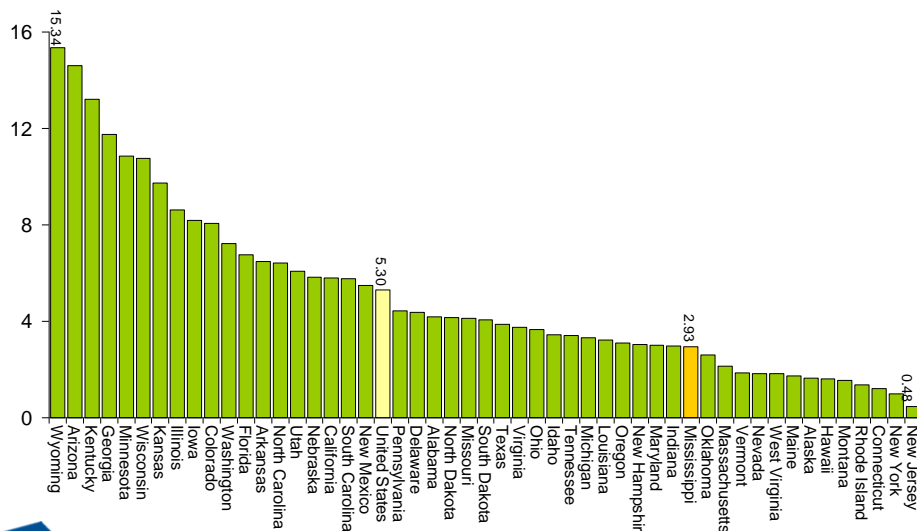
- Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges (CJCs) award more associate degrees per 1,000 adults age 18-44 with no college degree than the national average, but awards substantially fewer postsecondary certificates and diplomas than the national average. This reflects the historic emphasis of CJCs on college transfer associate degrees as opposed to short term workforce certification. (Appendix, Figures 17 and 18)

Associate Degrees Awarded at All Colleges per 1,000 Adults Age 18-44 with No College Degree, 2006



Source: NCES, IPEDS Completions Survey 2005-06; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 ACS

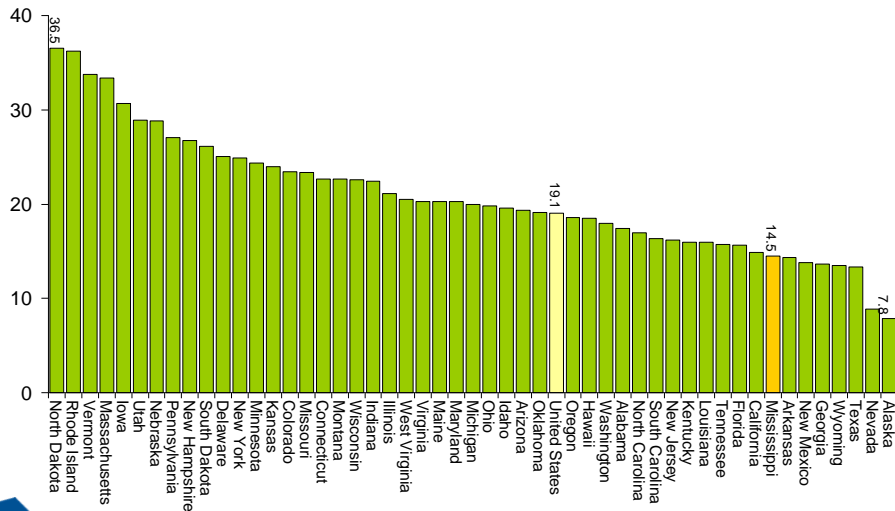
Certificates & Diplomas Awarded at All Colleges per 1,000 Adults Age 18-44 with No College Degree, 2006



Source: NCES, IPEDS Completions Survey 2005-06; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 ACS

- Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs), both public and independent, award substantially fewer bachelor's degrees per 1000 adults age 18-44 with no college degree than most states. (Appendix, Figure 19)

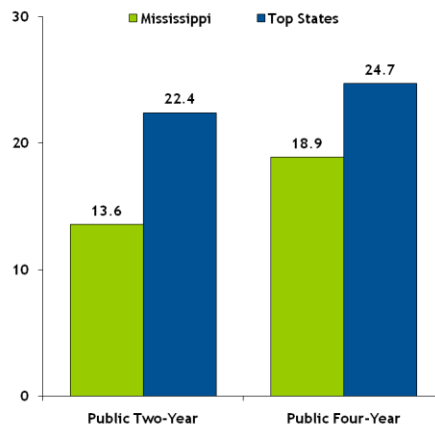
Bachelor's Degrees Awarded at All Colleges per 1,000 Adults Age 18-44 with No College Degree, 2006



Source: NCES, IPEDS Completions Survey 2005-06; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 ACS

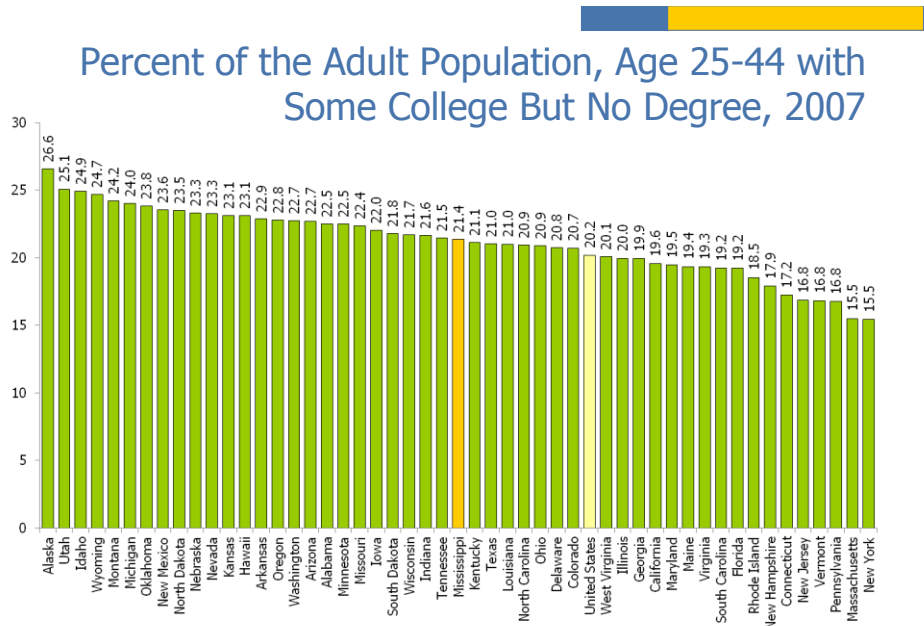
- The overall system of higher education (CJCs, IHLs, and independent colleges and universities) awards substantially fewer degrees per 100 full-time equivalent students than the best performing states. (Appendix, Figure 20)

Performance: Undergraduate Degrees Awarded Per 100 Full-Time Equivalent Students



Source: NCES, IPEDS Completions, Enrollment and Finance Surveys

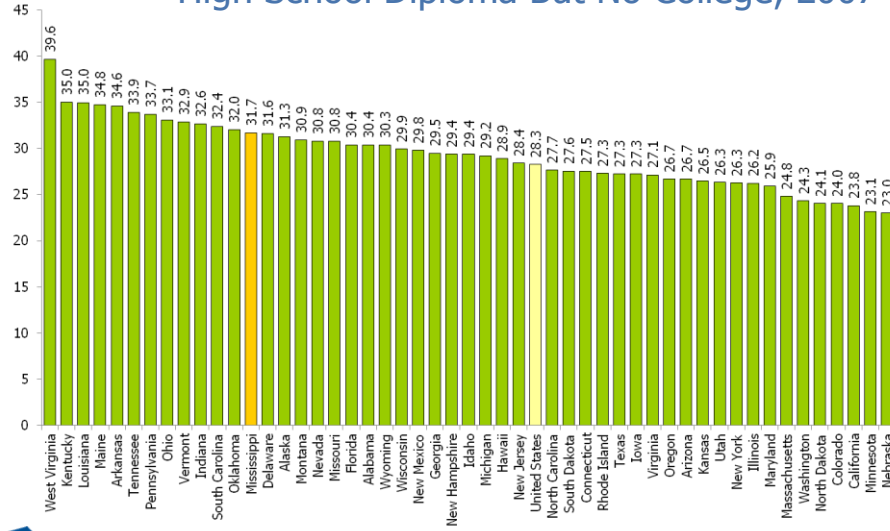
- As indicated above, Mississippi must increase the college participation and success rates for adults without a postsecondary education credential in order to raise their level of educational attainment.
 - 21.4% of the population age 25-44 has some college but no degree, a percentage higher than the U.S. average. This is a promising target group to get more adults through to a postsecondary certificate or degree. (Appendix, Figure 21)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey; Tables B15001 and C15001

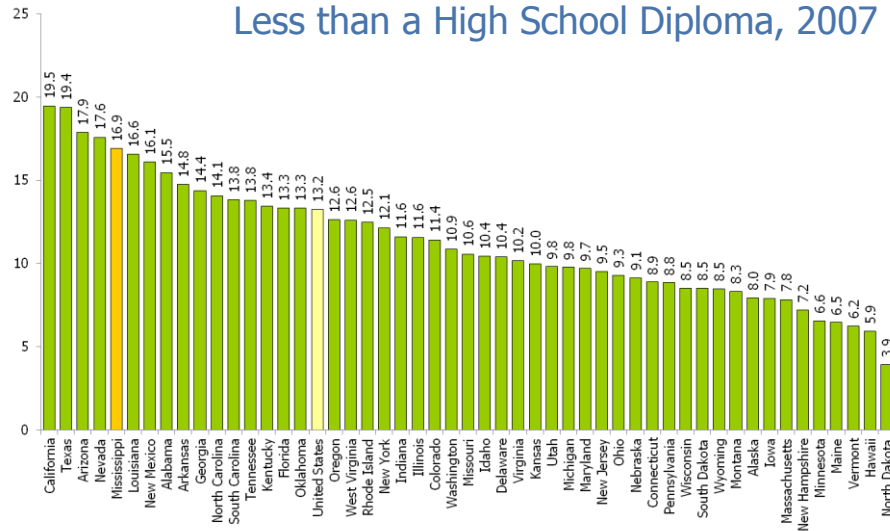
- 37% of the population age 25-44 has a high school education but no college and another 16% of that population has less than a high school diploma. Mississippi is not making a substantial effort to get adults back into the education system compared to other states. The state enrolls fewer adults in postsecondary education than all but eleven states, and awards fewer GEDs to adults age 25-44 than the national average. (Appendix, Figure 22 to 27)

Percent of the Adult Population, Age 25-44 with a High School Diploma But No College, 2007



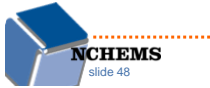
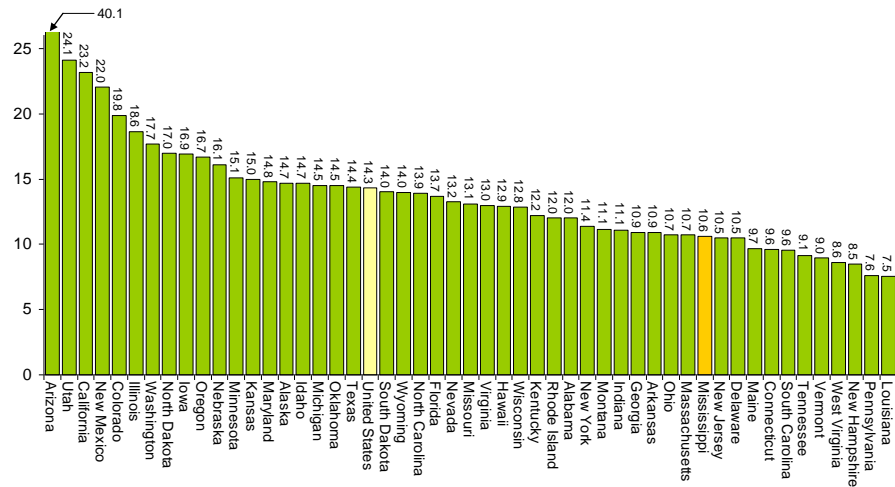
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey; Tables B15001 and C15001

Percent of the Adult Population, Age 25-44 with Less than a High School Diploma, 2007



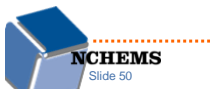
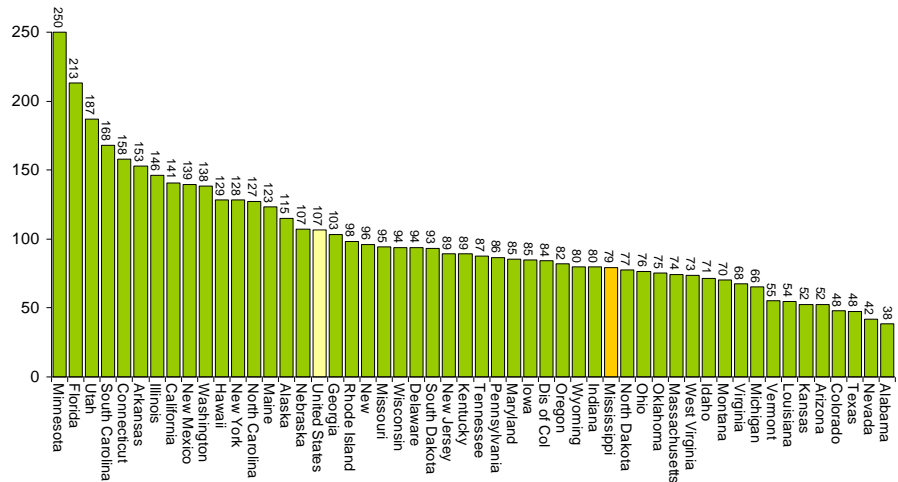
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey; Tables B15001 and C15001

Enrollment of Residents Age 25-49 as a Percentage of those Residents with a High School Diploma but No College, 2005



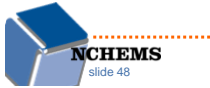
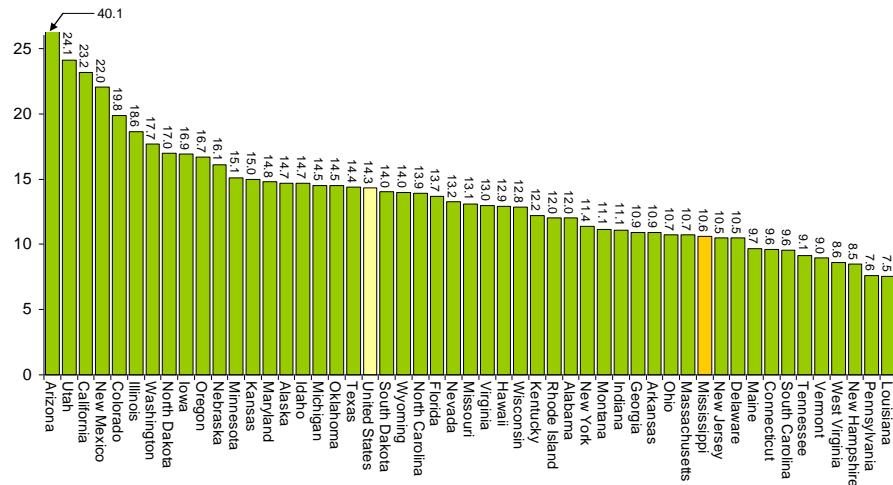
Source: NCES, IPEDS Enrollment Survey; U.S. Census Bureau 2005 ACS

Enrollment of Residents Age 25-44 in State-Administered Adult Education Programs per 1,000 Residents Age 25-44 with Less than a High School Diploma, 2005



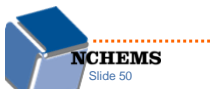
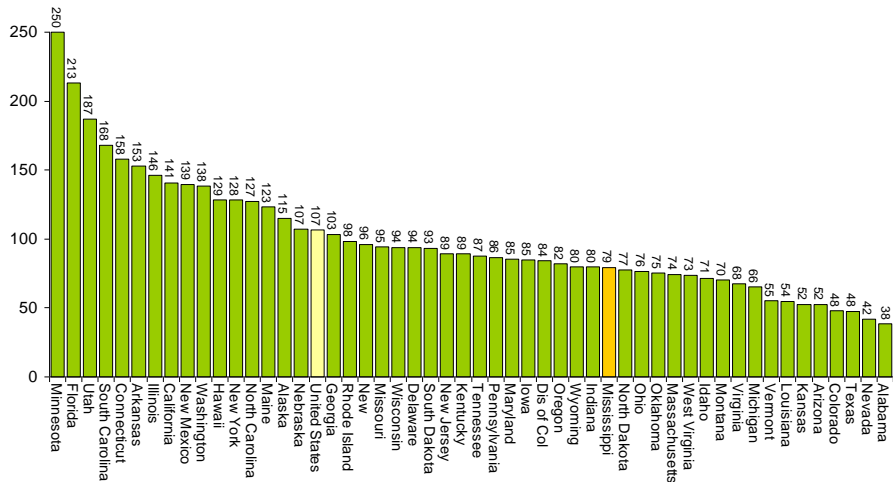
Source: U.S. Department of Education

Enrollment of Residents Age 25-49 as a Percentage of those Residents with a High School Diploma but No College, 2005



Source: NCES, IPEDS Enrollment Survey; U.S. Census Bureau 2005 ACS

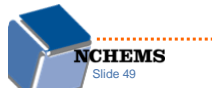
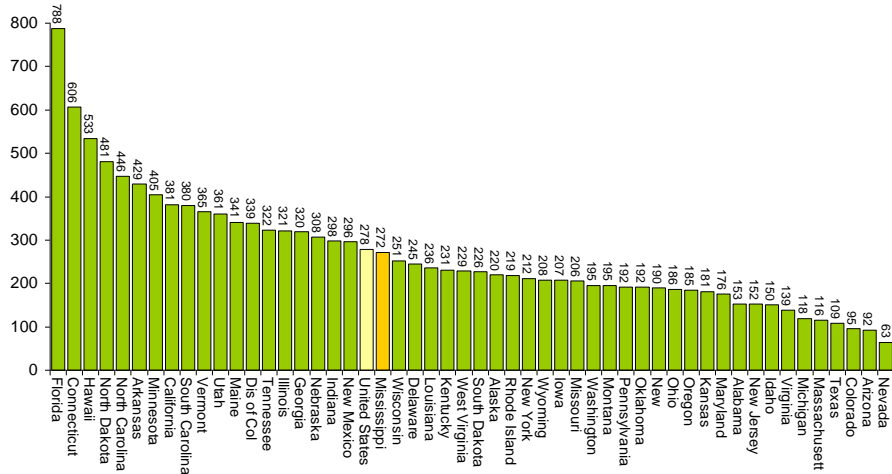
Enrollment of Residents Age 25-44 in State-Administered Adult Education Programs per 1,000 Residents Age 25-44 with Less than a High School Diploma, 2005



Source: U.S. Department of Education

- Mississippi awards more GEDs to adults ages 16-24 per 1,000 adults in this age group than the national average. The reasons for this higher rate may be the number of students that are home-schooled who obtain a GED and the number of non-public school students who obtain a GED. It is also an indication that the adult education system is playing a substantial role in serving youth who dropped out of high school. (Appendix, Figure 28)

Enrollment of Residents Age 16-24 in State-Administered Adult Education Programs per 1,000 Residents Age 16-24 with Less than a High School Diploma, 2005



*Age 16-24 with no high school diploma or equivalent, not enrolled
Source: U.S. Department of Education

Observations and findings from policy audit

Long-term goals for educational attainment of Mississippi's population

- No long-term goals formally established to raise the educational attainment of the state's population linked to the state's future economy and quality of life for every Mississippian
- No metrics and public reporting method for monitoring performance and progress toward goals
- No setting responsible for establishing and gaining consensus around long-term goals and for monitoring and reporting on performance

Alignment of K-12 and higher education expectations for college-level learning

- The Mississippi State Board of Education has recently adopted new curriculum frameworks and state assessments and is implementing a new accountability model for schools and school districts. The overall goal is to increase Mississippi performance to the national average. The changes were prompted by data showing substantial gaps in the performance of Mississippi 4th and 8th grade students on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in language arts and mathematics, and in the ACT assessments of college readiness. The previous assessment, the Mississippi Curriculum Test, found high percentages of Mississippi students proficient in language arts and mathematics, these results contrasted sharply with low percentages on NAEP. The new Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT2) was first administered in 2008 with schools receiving accountability ratings in fall of

2009. Successful implementation of the changes will depend to a substantial degree on the preparation of teachers to teach the new curriculum and on the quality of leadership at the school and district levels.
- Mississippi has taken important first steps to align postsecondary and K-12 standards, curricula, and assessments:
 - The State Board of Education made an effort to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the changes but not to the extent of engaging higher education in a major effort to align curriculum and assessments between the two levels.
 - College Readiness Standards have been developed in four subject areas (Language Arts, Mathematics, Biology and U.S. History) through a collaborative effort involving K-12 curriculum specialists and higher education representatives). These are aligned with the new curriculum being implemented by the State Board of Education.
 - The IHL is examining the adequacy of the college placement instruments currently being used (predominantly *Acuplacer*, a College Board product) in terms of alignment with the new K-12 assessments, alignment with ACT (which is the dominant college entrance assessment), and adequacy for placement purposes.
 - The Department of Education makes a major effort to communicate to schools and counselors the level of academic preparation required for college level study, using the ACT definitions of college ready.
 - P-16 councils are in place in most regions of the state, but are in the early stages of development. Gaps remain in fully understanding the role and functions of these councils. The lack of adequate funding limits their capacity to carry out these functions except out of the good will and dedication of key higher education and K-12 leaders. The quality and effectiveness of these entities therefore varies significantly across the state.
 - A state P-16 Council is in place but is only in the early stages of defining an agenda. Leadership changes in the key entities may have hindered full implementation.
 - The Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJC) recently revised its statewide curriculum (linked to the uniform course numbering system) with specified learning outcomes which are used by all CJC's in the state. It is not clear the extent to which these revisions took place in collaboration with K-12 or IHL, to ensure alignment of curricula and assessments for students moving through the education pipeline from high school, to an associate degree, and transfer to a university.
 - The federally funded Gear Up Program serves as an important means to communicate with students and parents beginning at the 7th grade the requirements for being college ready and for providing necessary student support services. This program reaches only a fraction of the state's 7th and 8th grade students.

Teacher preparation

- The new K-12 curriculum will not result in significant improvements in student learning unless teachers have the competence in subject matter and pedagogy to deliver the intended curriculum in the classroom. In spite of the promising direction of the reforms, Mississippi faces an extraordinary challenge in professional development of existing teachers and preparing new teachers (either graduates of schools/colleges of education or alternatively certified teachers) to teach curricula in line with the new expectations.
- Many of the candidates for the teaching profession begin at CJs with exceptionally low ACT scores (e.g., 14). These students then represent a significant percentage of the students seeking to transfer to universities to earn a bachelor's degree. The challenge of getting these students up to the level of competence in subject matter and pedagogy needed for teaching in line with the new K-12 curriculum is daunting.
- IHL is implementing the recommendations of the *Blue Ribbon Committee for the Redesign of Teacher Preparation* which should have an impact over time.
- Mississippi schools hire only a few new teachers each year so a major focus must be on professional development. In spite of this reality, budget cuts have led to elimination of summer institutes and other means to address this need at anywhere near the needed scale.
- Colleges/Schools of Education appear to play a varying role in professional development for teachers in their regions. Some clearly are very active; others are not. There appears to be no explicit IHL mandate that this must be a fundamental commitment of all colleges/schools of education—for the faculty to be deeply engaged in professional development in the field, especially in the schools where their students have their clinical training.
- An overall assessment of the K-12/higher education connections in Mississippi is that the state has many of the right “pieces” in place or in some stage of development. The key ingredients that are lacking are:
 - A comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable strategy to pull the pieces together and hold key players accountable for performance
 - Alignment of financing and policy leadership to move from small initiatives to system-wide implementation
 - A venue for setting goals and measuring and reporting on progress across the whole system: K-12, adult education, CJs and IHL institutions (see Policy Leadership)
 - A sense of urgency that unless the state acts immediately in a coordinated manner it will continue to lag other states in the region and nation in the competitiveness of its workforce and other measures of quality of life.

Admissions requirements and developmental education

- CJs do not require the ACT and are open-access institutions. Students are placed in developmental education using high school grade point average, results of a placement test (mainly using *Acuplacer*, although there is some use of COMPASS, an ACT product, and in some cases, a “home-grown” placement assessment).
- Because CJs receive funding per credit hour for students in developmental education, there is no explicit financial incentive for the colleges to move students as quickly as possible to courses in which students can earn credit toward a degree.
- By Board policy, all IHL institutions have common admissions requirements. The institutions use a comprehensive process to assess a student’s readiness for college-level study, including ACT scores, high school grade point averages, and other available evidence. Based on this evidence, students are (1) placed in regular courses in the fall semester, (2) placed in regular courses with needed support services, or (3) referred to a summer developmental education program. If students successfully complete the summer developmental education program, and perform satisfactorily on *Acuplacer*, they are permitted to enroll in regular courses in the following fall semester. About 97% [participants enrolled summer of 2009=343] of those completing the summer program succeed in being placed in regular courses but they reportedly take longer to complete a degree (only 25% complete a bachelor’s degree in six years).
- Discussions are underway concerning the feasibility of administering a college placement assessment at the 10th grade level to give students an early indication of their level of preparation. No decision has been made as to whether this should be a College Board or ACT assessment.
- IHL recently developed a high school feedback report but it is too early to assess the impact of this report on high school actions.
- It was not clear how the admissions process for IHL institutions is coordinated with CJs. For example, some students may be referred to CJs if they fail to meet the initial screening requirements or students who fail to meet requirements after the summer program may be referred to CJs and given an opportunity to transfer at a later time if their academic performance improves. This may occur in some regions of Mississippi but not on a consistent basis across the state.
- Because the cost of attending a CJ is only a fraction of the cost of attending an IHL institution, there are strong financial incentives for students to attend CJs even though they would be qualified for university-level study. The result is that CJs and IHL institutions compete for many of the same students.
- Redesign of developmental education courses is being undertaken on a small scale under the IHL course redesign initiative. No strategy or funding is available to bring these efforts to scale in a manner that would have a significant impact across the system.

Transfer and articulation

- Formal policies and agreements are in place, but in practice arrangements are negotiated on an institution-by-institution basis. System-wide policies appear to have little impact.

Gaps in data for longitudinal analysis

- The SBCJC has limited authority over locally governed CJs. As a result there is limited data capacity at the system level. This leads to gaps in consistent information across all CJs in basic information such as percentage of students referred to developmental education, the success of students who complete developmental education in getting into courses in which they earn credits toward degree, the percentage of students who intend to transfer and end up doing so, the number of students who transfer without earning a degree, etc.
- Limited staff capacity in IHL and SBCJC for maintaining longitudinal data systems due to budget limitations and staff turnover
- A history of lack of communication and coordination between SBCJC and IHL
- Focus of recent federally-assisted development of a longitudinal student information system on Workforce Investment Act (WIA), not on the pipeline of getting more people through to a postsecondary certificate or degree

Finance policy

- The funding of neither CJC nor IHL institutions is allocated in a manner to clearly provide incentives for institutions to improve retention and graduation rates or to increase overall degree production.
 - CJs: funding allocations provide no incentives for completion. (e.g., for achieving "momentum points" from developmental education to credit bearing courses, to certified credentials, to an associate degree, to transfer, or to achieve other student goals). The SBCJC as a limited authority, coordinating entity serves primarily as an advocate for the budget request as developed by the presidents to the Governor and State Legislature. The Board plays no significant role in strategic planning for the system as a whole and even less of a role in linking funding policy to incentives for performance and change.
 - IHL: history of across-the-board increases in both state appropriations and tuition with no changes in percentages allocated to each institution based on performance or other indicators. There is no link between funding policy and strategic planning. Any proposals to alter the funding methodology in a way that would potentially shift state funding among institutions have been suspended.
 - The IHL Board focuses primarily on institutional budget requests and the allocation of state appropriations. It does not function as a governing board that holds each President accountable, through the Commissioner, for the effective use of *all* institutional revenues (tuition and fees, non-state funding, etc.) to achieve an institution's mission and strategic plan and, in particular, to accomplish IHL priorities. In other words, there is no board requirement or

practice to link strategic planning and strategic budgeting at either the system or institutional levels.

- Student aid
 - Mississippi’s limited student financial aid programs are not aligned with the goal of getting more students through the education pipeline to degrees
 - Only one program that is somewhat related to this goal is the Higher Education Legislative Plan (HELP) program, but this program is basically a merit program with a need component. It is targeted at students who have high grade point average (GPA) and ACT scores who have completed a specified core curriculum. Students must maintain good academic performance in college to maintain the grants.

Policy leadership

- A divided system of governance:
 - IHL Board and Commissioner for a statewide governing board
 - SBCJC: statewide coordinating board with limited authority for system leadership of locally governed institutions
 - Boards of Trustees for fifteen CJC districts
- A history of lack of communication and coordination between SBCJC and IHL (and to a degree, with the State Board of Education)—although new leadership is making important strides in bridging this gap
- No strategic plan for IHL—although a set of priorities
- No link between planning and budgeting
- No venue for formulating and monitoring progress toward achieving a state-wide, long-term public agenda
- Lack of data to support monitoring/accountability

Assumptions/Realities

- Severe fiscal constraints
 - Structural state budget deficits projected into the future
 - Phase out of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds
 - Limitation of in-state tuition as a revenue source because of low income levels and lack of a comprehensive state need-based student financial aid program
- Mississippi’s educational attainment gap is the consequence of years of neglect; it will take time to reach regional or national, let alone global competitiveness.

Progress will only come through sustained, coordinated reform and step-by-step progress measured against national benchmarks, with monitoring, accountability, and public reporting on progress

- Obligation to abide by the intent and spirit of the Ayers Settlement

Recommendations/Alternatives

Establish Overall Goal

- Increase the educational attainment and skill levels of the state’s working-age population benchmarked to the national average by 2025
- Rationale:
 - Globally competitive workforce, enhance the state’s future economy, improve quality of life for the state’s citizens
 - Need to overcome legacy of past neglect
- Focus:
 - Increased production of associate and bachelor degrees and certificates with workplace value
 - Adults as well as recent high school graduates

Establish the state level Education Achievement Council to monitor and report on progress toward long-term goals and for accountability by:

- Sustaining attention to agenda
- Maintaining the current membership of Graduation Rate Task Force
 - Providing for replacement of members
 - Perhaps increasing business/civic representation
- Focusing on leading agenda, not on displacing the governing and coordinating responsibilities of the IHL and SBCJC boards
- Establishing long-term goals and benchmarks
- Monitoring and reporting on progress toward goals in an annual report card

Implement expectations for “college ready”

- Place high priority on implementation of the recently developed College Readiness Standards. Make clear that these apply to all secondary school students seeking some postsecondary education whether at a CJC or an IHL institution
- Implement common placement assessments across the system, including CJCs and IHLs. Ensure alignment of these assessments with K-12 assessments

- Align a “general education core” available at all CJC’s for transfer students. These should build on the College Readiness Standards. Ensure that all students who transfer have mastered the College Readiness Standards before they transfer.
- Mandate that the schools/colleges of education play an active role in professional development of teachers. Hold the colleges of education accountable for demonstrating their contributions to improved teacher performance in their immediate regions and especially in the schools used for clinical training of teachers.

Clarify institutional missions

- Make a clear distinction in the missions of IHLs:
 - Research universities
 - Regional universities/regional stewardship
- Maintain current placement and screening process for IHLs, but increase communication to students, counselors and others about the different levels of preparation required for success for each of the universities.
- Strengthen the links between IHLs and CJC’s concerning the referral to CJC’s of students who are not college-ready to the level required for success at the universities. Provide these students with an opportunity to transfer to a university if their academic preparation and performance improves and they can demonstrate readiness for transfer.

Make developmental education a statewide priority

- Developmental education redesign pilots initially supported by Lumina Foundation Funds
- Consideration of a new statewide jointly developed by IHLs and CJC’s to design and deliver developmental education

Transfer and articulation

- Most students enter community colleges with expectation of transfer but a relatively small percentage actually transfers, leaving many students with accumulated course work that is not recognized by employers
- Need for simple, straight-forward system: accepting Associate of Arts (AA) degrees for full credit toward Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Sciences (BA/BS) degrees
- But, also need to concentrate on selected number of critical majors (dual admission)
 - a transfer core with additional courses guaranteed for acceptance in most popular majors.
- Website for information on transfer and articulation

Longitudinal data system

- Critical gap: community colleges link to IHL

- Include K-12, adult education, and, if possible, the independent sector higher education institution (on voluntary basis)
- Consider jointly staffed unit between CJC and IHL System
- A connection to workforce data with a broader emphasis on the entire education pipeline

Incentives for regional collaboration to get more students through the system to higher levels of achievement with more effective use of resources

- Build on existing successes
- Emphasize links with K-12/adult education
- Shared accountability for moving students through pipeline

Student financial aid

- Redesign the HELP program to target 7th graders with significant financial need and provide incentives for these students to stay in school, take the right curriculum, and pursue postsecondary education.

Institutional finance

- Establish policy of aligning financing policy with long-term goals
- IHL: Acknowledge political and fiscal realities limiting ability to changing funding allocations *among* IHL institutions, but point out that the IHL Board could take actions to use finance policy to leverage change *within* each university: IHL Board agreement with each university to reserve “X”% of general revenue (state appropriations and tuition) for strategic change initiatives consistent with IHL strategic plan (emphasizing retention/graduation, degree production)
- SBCJC: Recommend that the funding formula be modified to allocate a percent of funding based on “momentum points” based on intermediate points of success

System leadership

IHL Board

- Clarify responsibilities
 - Policy leadership for system to achieve goals established by Education Achievement Council
 - Support effective leadership/governance of each four year institution
 - Mission differentiation – Research versus regional
 - Student financial aid, statewide and need based, for students attending all institutions
- Strategic plan for system emphasizing contribution of IHL institutions to strategic goals of state (Education Achievement Council)

- Performance agreements with each institution linked to:
 - System priorities and state public agenda
 - Presidential evaluation and institutional leadership/budgeting
- Board’s use of time to focus on high level policy issues

State Board for Community and Junior Colleges

- Clarify responsibility for strategic leadership within its coordinating authority
- Strategic plan for CJC system emphasizing contribution of these institutions to the strategic goals of state (Education Achievement Council)
- Leading statewide initiatives that improve education achievement:
 - Alignment of curriculum and learning outcomes with both college readiness expectations and “transfer ready”
 - Common college placement assessments
 - Regional collaborative with K-12 and IHL institutions

Student Services Survey

**Graduation Rate Task Force
Results of Student Services Questionnaire**

A. Student Services

1. Students must participate in (check all responses that apply):

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------|-----|
| a. | A structured campus orientation program | Responses: 16 | 94% |
| b. | A face to face meeting with an academic advisor | Responses: 15 | 88% |
| c. | A First Year Experience Program | Responses: 4 | 24% |
| d. | A Transfer Experience Program | Responses: 1 | 6% |
| e. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 3 | 18% |
| | 1). Limited orientation class. | | |
| | 2). Optional First Year Experience | | |
| | 3). Welcome Week – a transition week program | | |

2. Do new students receive academic skills training during the beginning of their first semester?

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|--------------|-----|
| a. | Yes | Responses: 8 | 50% |
| b. | No, not at this time | Responses: 8 | 50% |

3. Academic skills training includes, but is not limited to (check all responses that apply):

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------|-----|
| a. | Time management skills | Responses: 12 | 71% |
| b. | Study skills | Responses: 13 | 76% |
| c. | Students do not receive academic skills training | Responses: 5 | 29% |
| d. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 7 | 41% |
| | 1). Academic skills training is offered, not required | | |
| | 2). Not a specific program, offered in classes/program | | |
| | 3). Curriculum, code of conduct, test taking strategies | | |
| | 4). Career/major exploration, learning styles, wellness | | |
| | 5). Students do take orientation which contains these | | |
| | 6). In limited orientation class | | |
| | 7). A range of issues covered in FYE course | | |

4. Does your campus provide separate/specialized orientation and advising services to non-traditional students (students over the age of 25) during their first semester?

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|---------------|-----|
| a. | Yes | Responses: 4 | 24% |
| b. | No, not at this time | Responses: 13 | 76% |

5. Does your campus provide opportunities for specialized learning environments?

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|---------------|-----|
| a. | Yes | Responses: 14 | 82% |
| b. | No, not at this time | Responses: 3 | 18% |

- 6. Campus specialized learning environments include, but are not limited to:**
- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------|
| a. | Honors College | Responses: 9 53% |
| b. | Learning Communities | Responses: 5 29% |
| c. | Formalized Study Groups, i.e., by major, in dorms, etc. | Responses: 12 71% |
| d. | Informal Study Groups | Responses: 12 71% |
| e. | We do not provide these opportunities | Responses: 2 12% |
| f. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 6 35% |
| | 1). College Center of Learning, peer tutoring, etc. | |
| | 2). Men’s College | |
| | 3). Leadership, FYE seminars, residential colleges | |
| | 4). Honors Classes | |
| | 5). Student Success Center | |
| | 6). Leadership programming | |
- 7. Are academically at-risk students that have been identified for early intervention tracked through a formal program?**
- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-------------------|
| a. | Yes | Responses: 12 75% |
| b. | No, not at this time. | Responses: 4 25% |
- 8. Does your campus provide job placement and employment counseling services?**
- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-------------------|
| a. | Yes | Responses: 15 88% |
| b. | No, not at this time. | Responses: 2 12% |
- 9. Do newly arriving students receive academic skills training during the beginning of the semester?**
- | | | |
|----|----------------------|------------------|
| a. | Yes | Responses: 8 50% |
| b. | No, not at this time | Responses: 8 50% |

B. Mental Health Services

- 1. How are students with mental health related disorders identified on your campus?**
- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| a. | Through self identification | Responses: 16 100% |
| b. | Through advisement and/or other referral | Responses: 15 94% |
| c. | Through medical records that accompany applications | Responses: 2 12% |
| d. | No policy or strategy exists to identify these students | Responses: 1 6% |
| e. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 1 6% |
| | 1). Campus Care Network and counseling | |
- 2. What are the recommendations on how to best manage these incidents to the benefit of the student and/or university?**
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | A complete and comprehensive First Year Experience program |
| b. | Colleges need personnel specifically designated to assist students that have mental issues |
| c. | Faculty and staff should be knowledgeable and familiar with the policy and procedures of the university regarding each situation. |

- d. Student Intervention Team – early identification of students with behavioral issues and early intervention
- e. Through identification of admissions application
- f. For student success being able to involve all incoming freshmen in a success class would be beneficial. A variety of information from possible services to transfer requirements could be covered. They actually need assistance with transition at both ends of their stay at the college. The transition classes would be beneficial. It takes resources to incorporate the programs to help all students with the individual issues on their path to graduation.
- g. Rely on professional intervention and recommendation

3. What mental health services are available on your campus?

- a. Mental health counseling Responses: 9 64%
- b. Psychological services Responses: 3 21%
- c. Psychiatric services Responses: 1 7%
- d. Medication consultation Responses: 6 43%
- e. Other – Please describe in the textbox below. Responses: 7 50%
 - 1). Contract with off campus provider
 - 2). Initial assessment with LPC
 - 3). Counselors provide initial consultation and referral
 - 4). Personal counseling
 - 5). Short term counseling
 - 6). Formal partner relationship with Willowbrook
 - 7). None

4. Are mental health services integrated into primary care service settings on your campus?

- a. Yes Responses: 5 31%
- b. No, not at this time. Responses: 4 25%
- c. We do not provide primary care services on our campus Responses: 8 50%

5. What mental health services are made available through partnerships, interagency agreements, etc. with providers off campus?

- a. Mental health counseling Responses: 11 73%
- b. Psychological services Responses: 7 47%
- c. Psychiatric services Responses: 4 27%
- d. Medication consultation Responses: 7 47%
- e. Other – Please describe in the textbox below. Responses: 4 27%
 - 1). We do not have formal agreements at this time
 - 2). In-patient treatment, hospitalization, rape crisis
 - 3). Students may be referred to off campus providers
 - 4). In patient care

- 6. What legal or ethical restrictions impact providing this care, responsibility, or response?**
- a. If referral is made as a result of a disciplinary event the student may have to sign a release of medical information to remain in school.
 - b. Ferpa, ADA
 - c. Counselors are not necessarily trained and teachers, even with appropriate degrees, are instructors and cannot provide these type of services due to conflicts of interest.
 - d. There are no ethical or legal restrictions
 - e. HIPAA, professional ethics, confidentiality
 - f. I do not think we have an issue with the legal aspect. Our approach is purely ethical in that we are absorbing the counseling with a current faculty member. The factor with the largest impact is resources.
 - g. I don't know
 - h. I do not think we have an issue with the legal aspect. Our approach is purely ethical in that we are absorbing the counseling with a current faculty member. The factor with the largest impact is resources.
 - i. Student is responsible for cost of some services
- 7. How are parents and students informed on mental health service options on your campus?**
- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| a. Included with application | Responses: 1 6% |
| b. Separate mailings | Responses: 4 25% |
| c. On a need to know basis | Responses: 6 38% |
| d. As part of Recruitment information | Responses: 6 38% |
| e. Through advisement | Responses: 12 75% |
| f. No information to inform parent and students | Responses: 2 12% |
| g. Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 6 38% |
| 1). Described in college catalog | |
| 2). Student privacy laws prohibit discussion | |
| 3). Freshmen Orientation, Early Registration, Handbook | |
| 4). Orientation sessions, websites, parent newsletters | |
| 5). Parent and student orientation | |
| 6). Through orientation | |
- 8. Do you have formal or informal policies/procedures for responding to the needs of students who have been identified as at-risk to hurt themselves or others?**
- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| a. Yes, we have formal polices and procedure in place. | Responses: 10 62% |
| b. Yes, we have informal polices and procedure in place. | Responses: 6 38% |
| c. No, we do not have formal polices and procedure in place. | Responses: 0 0% |
| d. No, we do not have informal polices and procedure in place. | Responses: 1 6% |

9. How are students who may be at-risk to hurt themselves or others identified? Check all responses that apply.

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------|------|
| a. | Self identification | Responses: 16 | 100% |
| b. | Faculty referral | Responses: 15 | 94% |
| c. | Advisor referral | Responses: 15 | 94% |
| d. | Residence Hall Staff referral | Responses: 14 | 88% |
| e. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 4 | 25% |
| | 1). Our House, Inc., Life Helps Mental Health Center, etc. | | |
| | 2). Family rape Crisis Center | | |
| | 3). Students are referred to VP of Student Services | | |
| | 4). C.A.R.E. team, Faculty/Staff Referral Guide | | |
| | 5). Reports from students, parents, and police | | |
| | 6). Campus Care Network | | |

10. Crisis response services available on our campus include, but not limited to (Check all responses that apply):

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------|-----|
| a. | Police station/other law enforcement location | Responses: 15 | 94% |
| b. | Hospital | Responses: 1 | 6% |
| c. | Physician’s office | Responses: 3 | 19% |
| d. | Mental health facility | Responses: 3 | 19% |
| e. | Health Department | Responses: 1 | 9% |
| g. | Crisis response services are not available on our campus | Responses: 0 | 0% |
| f. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 6 | 38% |
| | 1). Health and Counseling Center | | |
| | 2). Vice President of student Services Office | | |
| | 3). SIT, Dean of Students, Violence Prevention Office | | |
| | 4). EMCC Team | | |
| | 5). Dean of Students meets with identified students | | |
| | 6). Counseling, health center and Willowbrook referral | | |

11. Are crisis response services available outside your campus location? If the answer is yes, please check all locations that apply.

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------|-----|
| a. | Police station/other law enforcement location | Responses: 12 | 75% |
| b. | Hospital | Responses: 15 | 94% |
| c. | Physician’s office | Responses: 11 | 69% |
| d. | Mental health facility | Responses: 14 | 88% |
| e. | Health Department | Responses: 12 | 75% |
| g. | Crisis response services are not available outside our campus | Responses: 0 | 0% |
| f. | Other – Please describe in the textbox below. | Responses: 2 | 12% |
| | 1). Our House Inc., Life Help Mental Health Center, etc. | | |
| | 2). Family Rape Crisis Center | | |

- 12. Does your campus have a Behavioral Intervention Team consisting of trained representatives of faculty, staff, and students to identify emerging mental health issues.**
- a. Yes Responses: 9 56%
 - b. No, not at this time. Responses: 7 44%
- 13. On our campus, faculty and staff are trained to identify at-risk students.**
- a. Yes Responses: 12 75%
 - b. No, not at this time Responses: 4 25%
- 14. If you have a campus Behavioral Intervention Team to identify emerging mental health issues, who composes the team?**
- a. Student Services Staff including law enforcement, school nurse and head residents in residence halls.
 - b. Faculty and Staff
 - c. Faculty, administrators, staff
 - d. The MVSU Care Team is comprised of various departments from the university, who work together in a collaborative manner to facilitate appropriate intervention for students in emotional distress.
 - e. Representatives from Dean of Students Office; Provost Office; Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; University Attorney; Police Chief; Director of Housing; Director of Counseling Center; and Registrar.
 - f. Counselors, Dean of Students, First responder faculty
 - g. Campus Safety Committee and Counseling Center
 - h. Campus Police, Housing Director, Director of Student Affairs, Faculty member, Counselor, VP of Student Services
 - i. Campus Police, Housing Director, Director of Student Affairs, Faculty member, Counselor, VP of Student Services
 - j. There are representatives from major administrative divisions: dean of students, academic affairs, counseling services, police dept, student health center, learning center, university relations
- 15. How often does the Behavioral Intervention Team meet?**
- a. As needed
 - b. Monthly, or as needed
 - c. Once per semester
 - d. Bimonthly unless an emergency arises
 - e. Occurring every two weeks
 - f. Every week during the fall and spring and infrequently over the summer