

**Education Achievement Council Meeting
Thursday, April 25, 2019**

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Education Achievement Council met in the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Board Room in Jackson, Mississippi, at 10:00 a.m. on April 25, 2019.

Council Members Present:

Dr. Jay Allen, President, Itawamba Community College
Dr. Jerryl Briggs, President, Mississippi Valley State University via teleconference
Mr. Lee Bush, Board Member, Mississippi Community College Board
Dr. Jason Dean, Chair, Mississippi Board of Education
Dr. Jim Haffey, President, Holmes Community College
The Honorable Josh Harkins, Chairman, Mississippi Senate Universities and Colleges Committee
Mr. Shane Hooper, Trustee, Institutions of Higher Learning via teleconference
Dr. Shawn Mackey representing Dr. Andrea Mayfield, Executive Director, Mississippi Community College Board
Mr. Adam Moore, Mississippi Department of Mental Health
Dr. Alfred Rankins, Jr., Commissioner of Higher Education, Institutions of Higher Learning
The Honorable John Read, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Appropriations Committee
Ms. Cheryl Thurmond, Board Member, Mississippi Community College Board
Ms. Vickie Powell representing Mr. Scott Waller, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi Economic Council
Dr. Nathan Oakley representing Dr. Carey Wright, State Superintendent, Mississippi Department of Education

Council Members Absent:

The Honorable Richard Bennett, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Education Committee
Mr. Lee Bush, Board Member, Mississippi Community College Board
Dr. William Bynum, President, Jackson State University
The Honorable Eugene Clarke, Chairman, Mississippi Senate Appropriations Committee
Mr. Tom Duff, Trustee, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. E. Harold Fisher, Executive Director, Mississippi Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Mr. William LaForge, President, Delta State University
The Honorable Nolan Mettetal, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Universities and Colleges Committee
Dr. Larry Nabors, President, Mississippi Delta Community College
The Honorable John Read, Chairman, Mississippi House of Representatives Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Gray Tollison, Chairman, Mississippi Senate Education Committee

Others Present:

Ms. Caron Blanton, Director of Communication, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Ms. Stephanie Bullock, Complete 2 Compete Project Coordinator

Mr. Jason Carter, Deputy Executive Director of Finance and Administration, Mississippi Community College Board

Dr. Jimmy Clarke, HCM Strategists

Ms. Menia Dykes, Director of Accreditation, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Ms. Kim Gallaspy, Director of Governmental Relations, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Ms. Ann Hendrick, Woodward Hines Education Foundation

Mr. Matt Holleman, Trustee, Robert M. Herrin Foundation

Ms. Audra Love Kimble, Associate Executive Director of Academic and Student Affairs, Mississippi Community College Board

Ms. Courtney Lange, Woodward Hines Education Foundation

Dr. Susan Lee, Associate Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

Dr. Shawn Mackey, Deputy Executive Director for Programs and Accountability, Mississippi Community College Board

Mr. Jim McHale, President, Woodward Hines Education Foundation

Ms. Lisa Potts, Woodward Hines Education Foundation

Mr. Kell Smith, Director of Communication and Legislative Services, Mississippi Community College Board

Ms. Shanell Watson, Woodward Hines Education Foundation

Ms. Kim Verneuille, Director of Proprietary Schools, Mississippi Community College Board

I. Welcome

Dr. Jim Haffey called the meeting to order and invited Council members and guests to introduce themselves.

Dr. Haffey welcomed Dr. Jason Dean and Mr. Chris Burgio to the Council.

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Haffey asked the Council to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2018 meeting. Dr. Jason Dean moved to approve the minutes as presented. Dr. Allen seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. Introduction of Attainment Goal Study

Dr. Haffey commended the Woodward Hines Education Foundation for bringing forward research on attainment goals. There are several national foundations who are interested in helping in Mississippi, but they want to see specific goals that the state is working to attain.

Dr. Haffey invited Mr. Jim McHale, President of the Woodward Hines Education Foundation, to introduce the presentation on the study prepared by MDC Inc. The Woodward Hines Education Foundation is interested in assisting state leaders in establishing a state attainment goal and creating a strategic plan for achieving the goal.

Mr. McHale introduced Mr. David Dodson, President of MDC Inc., to present the study, "Setting a postsecondary attainment goal for Mississippi." Mr. Dodson introduced the study and the case for establishing a state attainment goal and called on Ms. Mala Thakur, Senior Program Director for MDC Inc., to discuss the talent development system in Mississippi and considerations in setting a state attainment goal. The PowerPoint presentation and the full report are attached to these minutes.

Dr. Haffey opened the floor for questions and discussion about the attainment goal.

Dr. Jimmy Clarke observed that EAC is one of the best examples in the country of bringing together the stakeholders to work on issues of education. He encouraged a renewed effort to establish a statewide goal and to develop a strategy to achieve the goal. Lumina Foundation and HCM Strategies would like to participate in future discussions and provide resources to support the effort.

Mr. McHale reiterated his support for helping the Council establish the goal and planning implementation to achieve the goal.

Dr. Haffey said the Subcommittee members will meet again to put together specific recommendations for the Council to consider related to the goal. Subcommittee members include Dr. Nathan Oakley, Ms. Heather Morrison and Ms. Deborah Donovan for MDE; Dr. Jim Haffey, Ms. Audra Love-Kimble and Mr. Raul Fletes for MCCB; and Dr. Casey Prestwood, Dr. Jim Hood and Ms. Kim Gallaspy for IHL; Mr. Jim McHale with Woodward Hines Education Foundation; and Mr. Scott Waller, President of the Mississippi Economic Council.

V. Next Meeting – October 24, 2019, 10:00 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Education Achievement Council will be held on October 24, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. in the IHL Board Room.

VI. Adjourn

There being no further business, the Dr. Al Rankins moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Jay Allen seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.



Establishing a postsecondary attainment goal in Mississippi

Mississippi Achievement Council

David Dodson, President

Mala Thakur, Senior Program Director

April 24, 2019

Laying the groundwork for an attainment goal

- Rationale
- Current landscape
 - Who is succeeding? Who is falling behind?*
- Attainment Goal Options
- Considerations

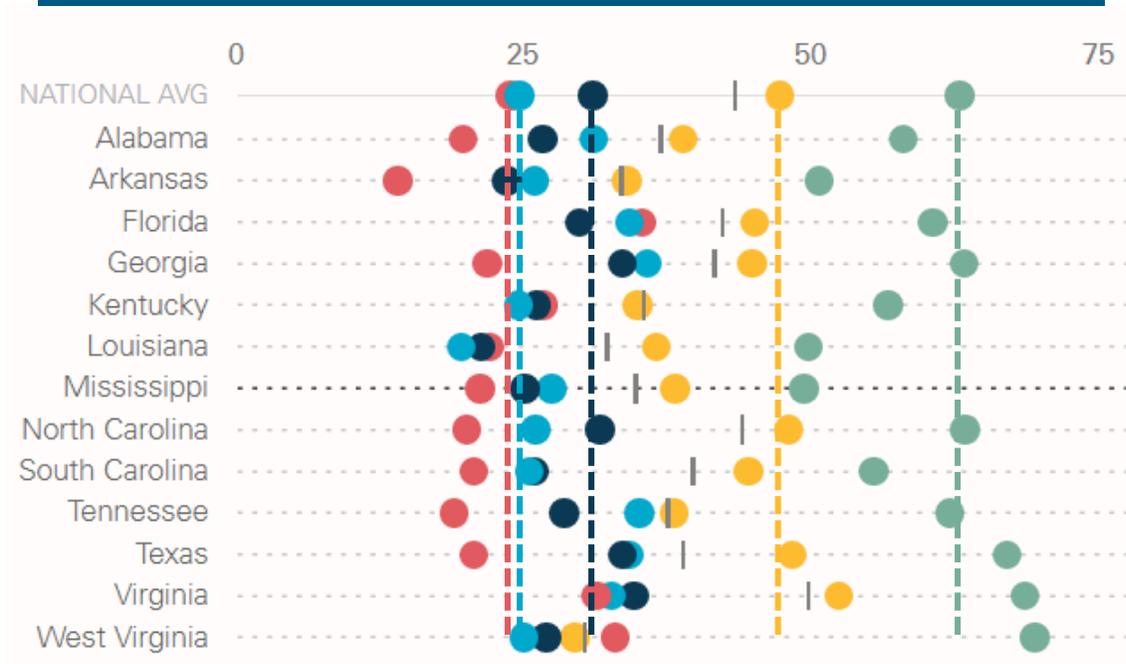
Rationale

- Current workforce estimates show that Mississippi's adult workforce will *lack the knowledge, skills, and educational requirements* for the jobs of the future
- Despite a low unemployment rate, the state's labor-force participation rate reveals *widespread disconnection* from opportunity
- Even for the full-time employed, the state's wage-structure leaves large segments of the state's families *disconnected from a living-wage*
- An attainment goal, is only one ingredient to the *structural and cultural changes necessary* for the state and it's workforce to become economically competitive in a global market

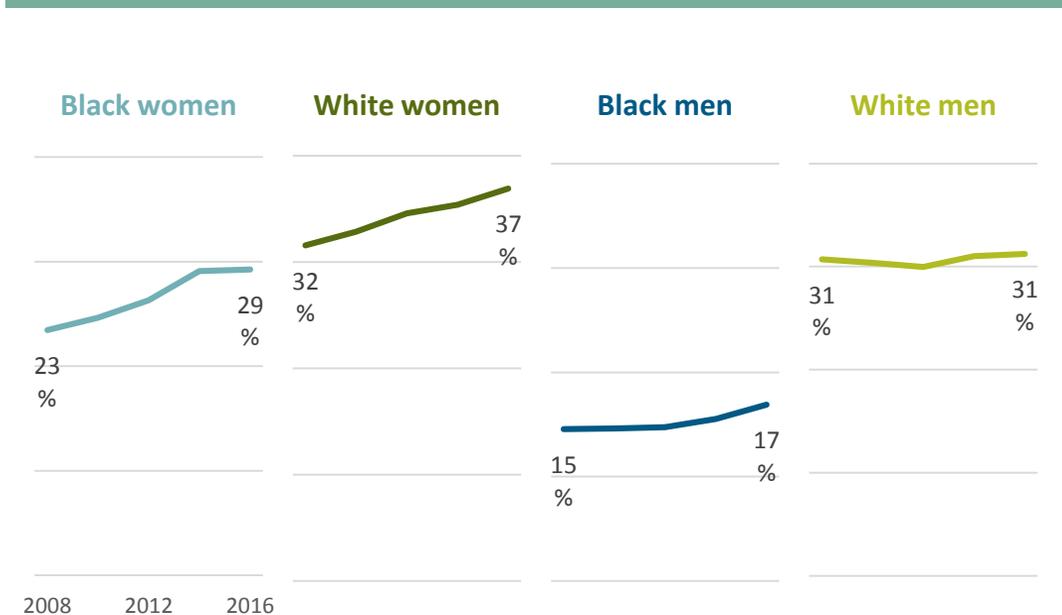
Postsecondary attainment in MS: Lagging the nation and the South

Leading with an equity lens: closing current gaps by race and gender, is estimated to raise the overall attainment rate 4 percentage points, and require approximately 73,000 new Associate's degrees*

Percent of adults (25-64), with an Associate's degree or higher



Percent of adults, by race and gender, with an Associate's degree or higher



RACE AND ETHNICITY

- Asian and Pacific Islander
- African-American
- American Indian
- Hispanic
- White

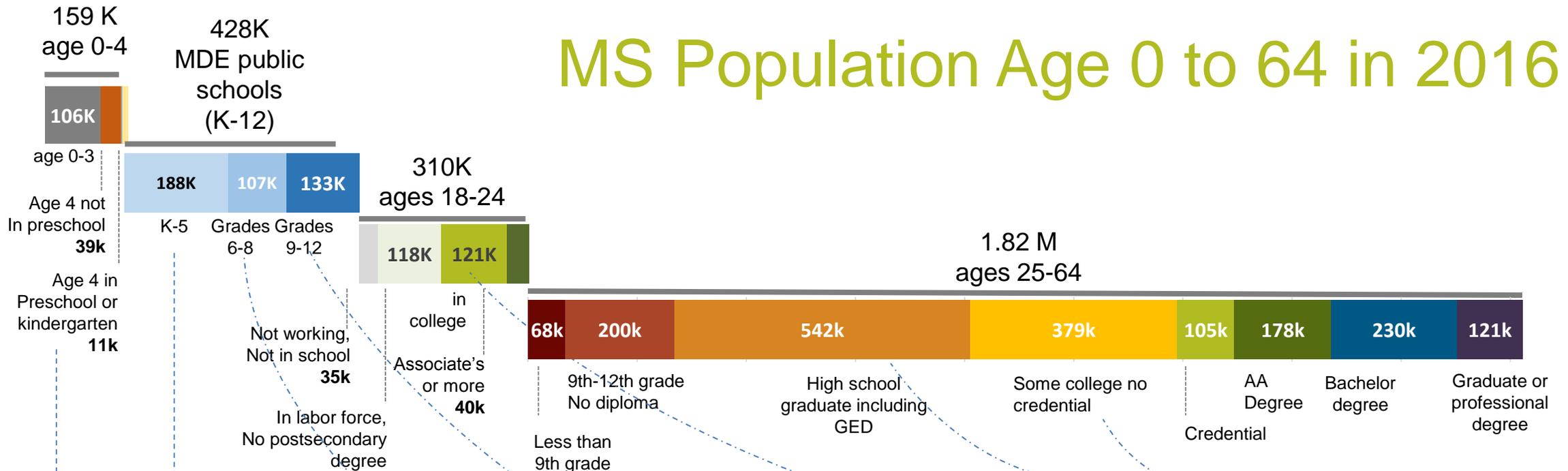
*Currently state-based estimates do not accurately capture high-quality certificate status by race and gender. However, according to data capture by MS LifeTracks, average annual certificate completion (2005-2015) is equally distributed between black and white students (47 percent). In contrast, 53 percent of certificates have been awarded to women, compared to 47% to men.

Source: American Community Survey and the Lumina Foundation and MS LifeTracks

<http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/MS&s-ecmps=LA-AR-TN-AL-NC-SC-GA-VA-FL-TX-KY-WV>

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MS Population Age 0 to 64 in 2016



36% of 4-year-olds not enrolled in any pre-K

>38,000 potentially eligible for state pre-K

27% of 4th graders scored at or above proficient in reading

31% of 4th graders scored at or above proficient in math

25% of 8th graders scored at or above proficient in reading

22% of 8th graders scored at or above proficient in math

MS is one of 10 states that showed significant increase in 8th grade reading in 2017

17% of 9th graders did not complete high school in 4 years

49% of ACT test-takers met zero college-readiness benchmarks

23% of MS public 4-year college students take remedial education classes

62% of MS community college students take remedial education classes

49% of MS public 4-year college students do not earn a degree within 6 years

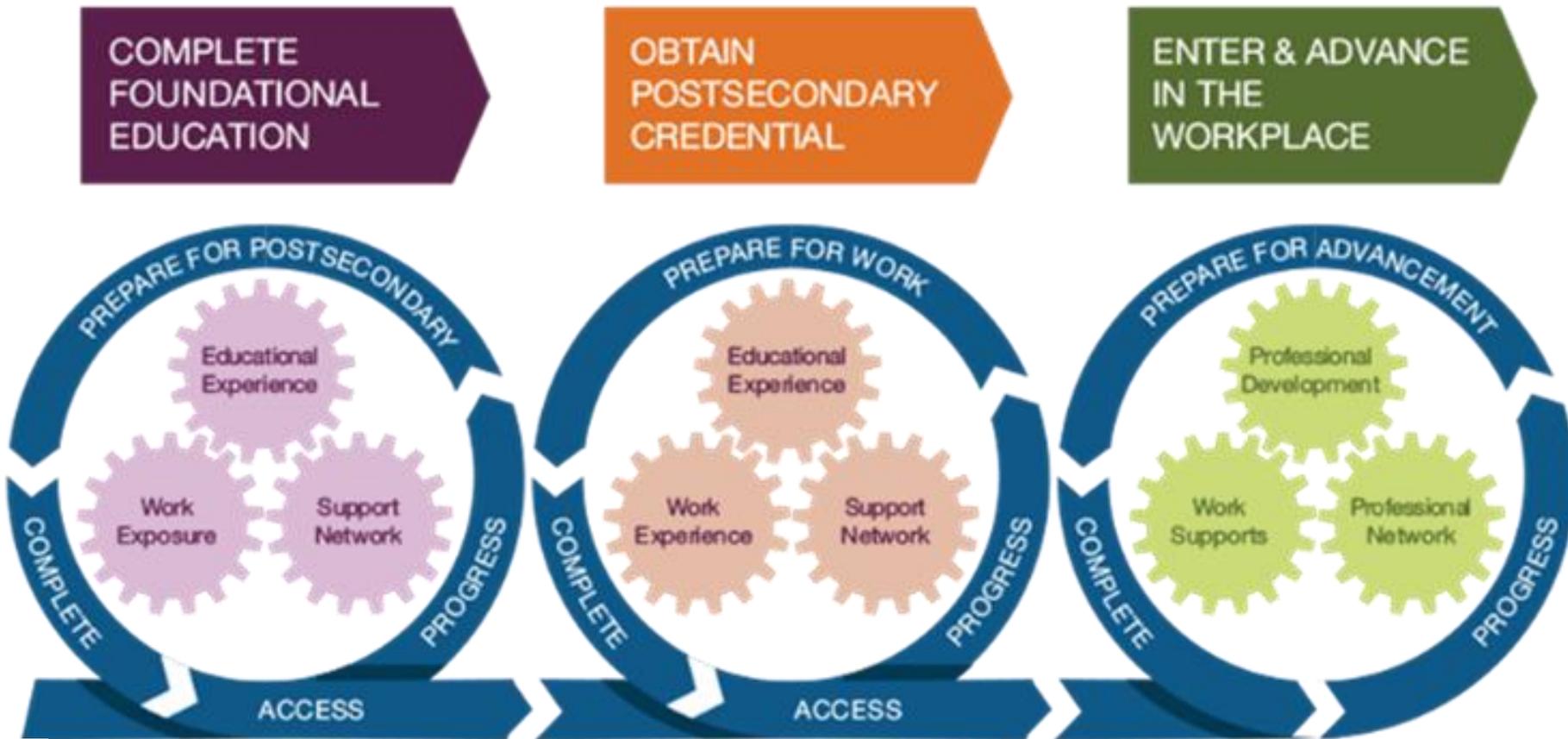
72% of MS 2-year college students do not earn a degree within 3 years

63,958 adults ages 25 to 64 were enrolled in an undergraduate postsecondary credit program in Fall 2017

- 17,822** at an MS community college
- 9,857** at a MS 4-year institution
- 3,113** at an MS non-profit private
- 5,166** at a for-profit institution

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. ACT: The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2017. IPEDS.

Examining the health of Mississippi's talent development system



Uneven improvements in the talent development system

Preparation

- Progress in 3rd grade reading holds promise for long-term literacy gains
- Statewide improvement in NAEP test scores masks growing or stubborn gaps by race/ethnicity and income at 4th and 8th grade benchmarks
- College-going rates show significant improvement; gaps remain, and recent trend-lines show flatter growth
- In-school discipline and chronic-absenteeism present challenges
- College readiness measures for high school graduates (ACT benchmarks) show no progress in closing racial gaps

Completion

- Progress on high school graduation rates should be celebrated; stakeholders must be vigilant about potential unintended consequences of new degree-endorsement model
- Perception *and* reality of college affordability remains a challenge.

Postsecondary landscape

Preparation

- Despite structural improvements to remedial education, greater attention should be given to growing or stubborn gaps by race and income

Progress

- Fall-to-fall retention gaps by race remain virtually unchanged; deep divisions by institution

Completion

- Graduation rates (150% of normal time) show widening gaps between white and black students; a stark difference between MS and SREB states

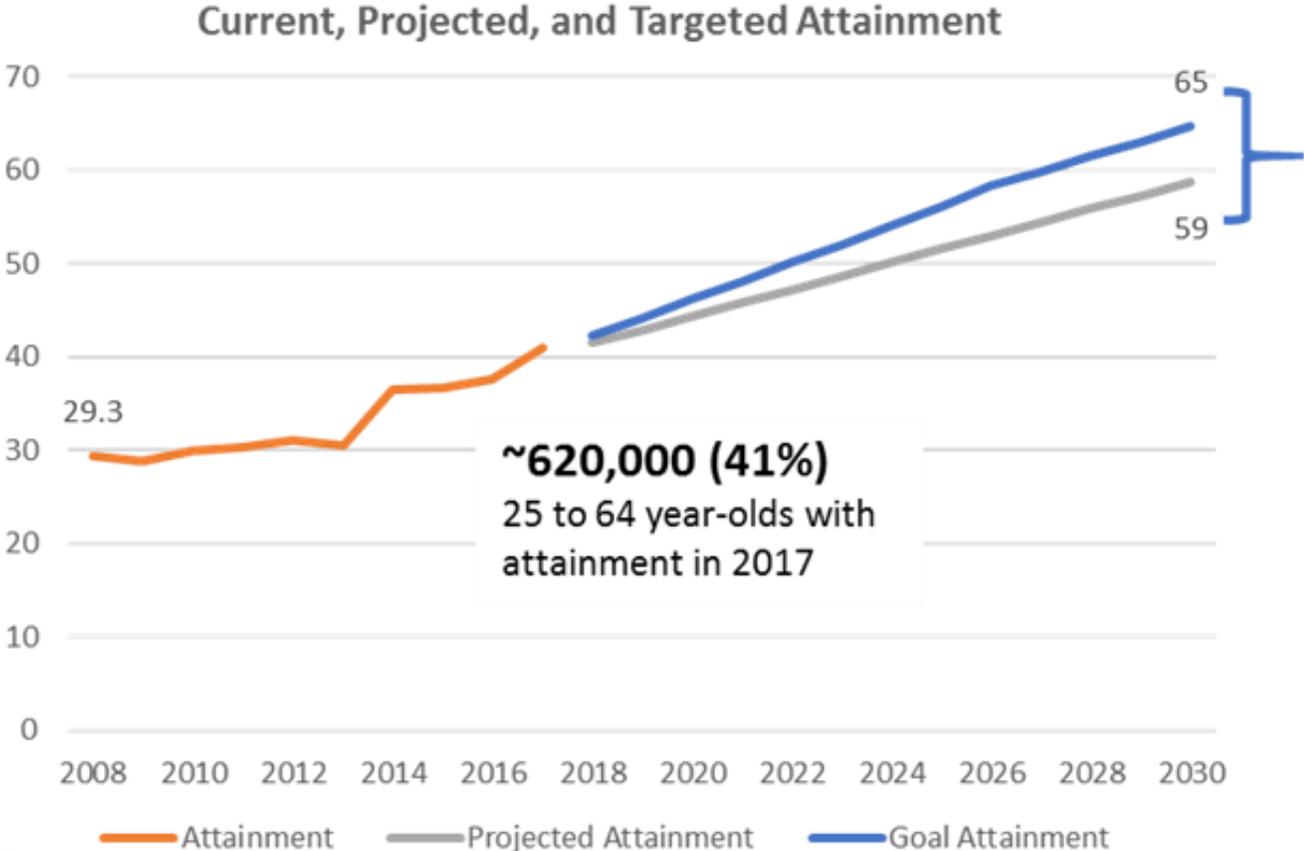
Key factors to a successful attainment goal process

- Setting the stage
- Building a case
- Identifying leaders and champions
- Engaging stakeholders and establishing a goal
- Launching and communicating the effort
- Planning to achieve the goal
- Establishing policies and plans to implement and support the goal

Source: Lumina Foundation

Projecting the state's attainment goal options

While setting a specific, measurable, and ambitious goal is important – it can't overshadow or subsume the crucial work of organizing around strategies (throughout the talent development system) to advance structural changes informed by an equity lens



~620,000 (41%)
25 to 64 year-olds with attainment in 2017

55-65%
Between 881,000 to 970,000
25-64 year-olds with attainment in 2030

Assuming current population trends hold constant, MS could reasonably consider an attainment goal for 2030, where between 55-65 percent of 25 to 64-year-olds have a certificate or degree.



10% increase over projected

Questions for Consideration

- What must be *different* about this renewed effort?
- Where are the *opportunities* to build a wider and deeper base of support?
- How can setting an attainment goal be *a tool for postsecondary advancement* and, ultimately, talent development?
- How does the state make continued progress in *changing the conversation* about the value/demand for postsecondary attainment?
- What can MS can *learn* from NC and other states further along in the process – coalition building, framing, data analysis, listening sessions?



MDC

FIFTY YEARS

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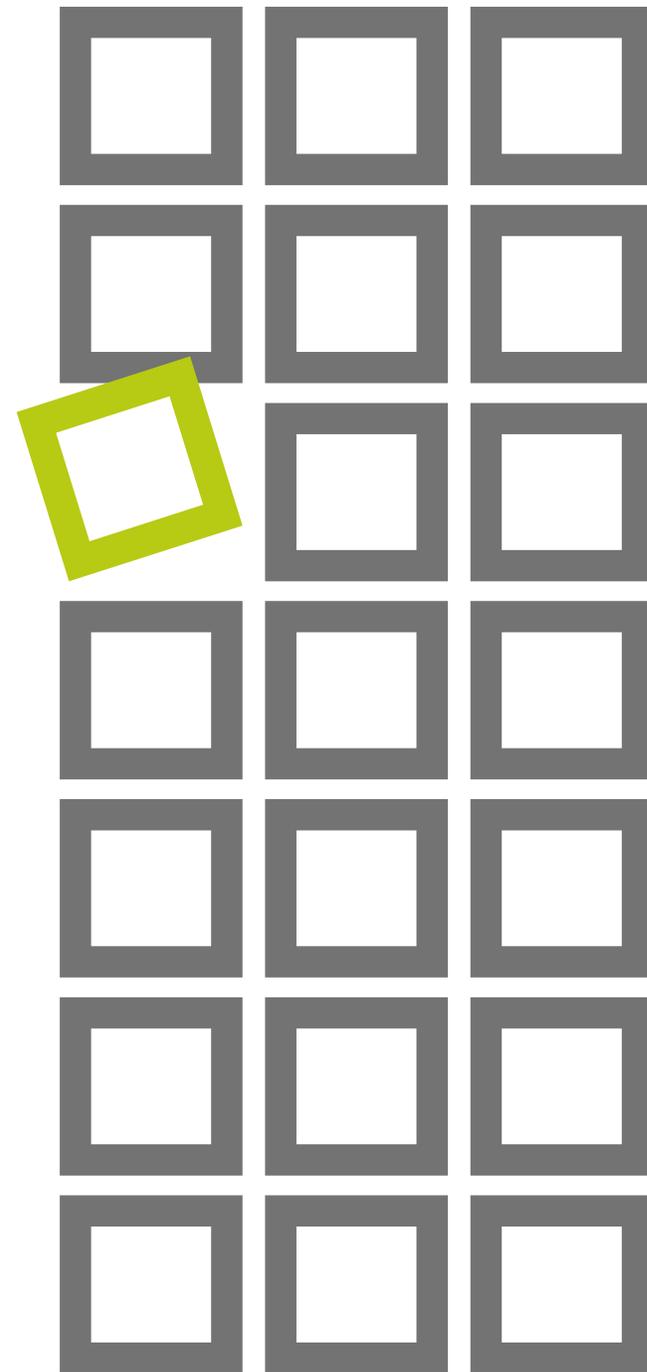
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Setting a postsecondary attainment goal for Mississippi

A Report to the Woodward Hines Education Foundation

April 2019

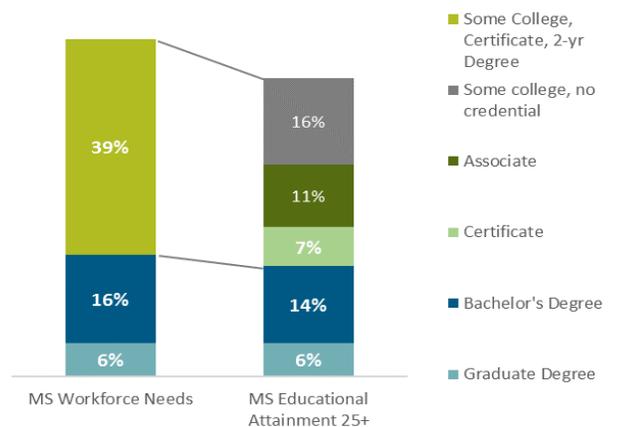
The rationale for an attainment goal

Across the nation, states are rallying to raise their rates of postsecondary attainment to position themselves and the country to compete in a global economy where talent and skill are the primary drivers of prosperity. Many states now have set challenging targets to drive transformational increases in adult credential attainment. By joining this national movement, Mississippi has a timely opportunity to center its investments and collective energy toward equipping its residents with the knowledge, skills, and training to compete in a 21st century economy.

A powerful and compelling postsecondary attainment goal can serve many purposes. First, a compelling goal, skillfully communicated and widely endorsed, can forge a consensus among leaders in the private, public, and civic sectors; without aligned and supportive leadership, structural improvements in system performance will not take root. Second, a powerful attainment goal can drive policy and practice in the component parts of the education continuum so that primary, secondary, postsecondary, and workforce training are better aligned to reinforce and accelerate progress toward a singular, transformative outcome. Finally, when framed as a springboard to living-wage employment, a challenging goal can help shift prevailing cultural norms about the economic value and necessity of a postsecondary credential—a change that Mississippi urgently requires.

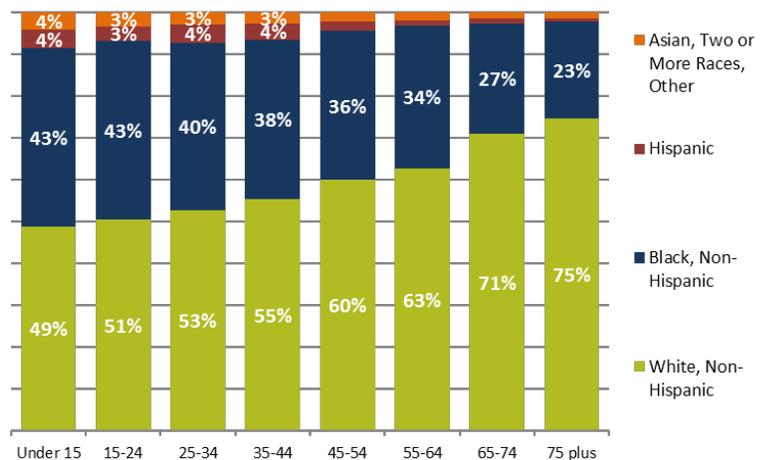
The work of organizing around an ambitious postsecondary attainment goal is just the first step to a long-term process. To achieve greater equity and competitiveness for the current and emergent workforce, stakeholders must start with a shared analysis of the deep disparities that characterize the entire talent development system and commit to strategies that fundamentally produce different outcomes.

Overall Projected MS Workforce Needs (2020) by Degree Type vs. Current Degree Distribution



Source: Education Requirements Through 2020 – Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce

Mississippi's Shifting Demographics: The future workforce is more diverse – by 2039 MS is projected to be a majority-minority state



Source: EMSI 2018.3

Current context and state of postsecondary attainment in Mississippi

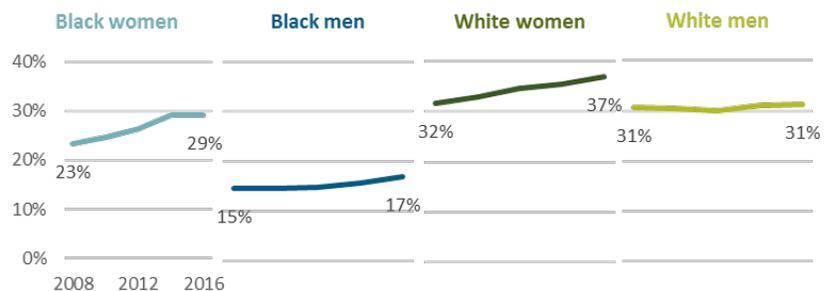
For the state of Mississippi to mobilize efforts around a clear, challenging, and quantifiable postsecondary attainment goal, there must be shared understanding of the current landscape of attainment across dimensions of race and ethnicity, gender, and geography of the state’s working age population—as well as a sober assessment of the complete talent development pipeline that is preparing youth and young adults for the jobs of the future.

The clarion call to substantially improve outcomes for both the state’s current working age population, as well as its youth and young adults, could not be clearer. Analysis by the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce projects that by 2020, 65 percent of the nation’s jobs will require postsecondary education beyond high school.

While Mississippi’s projected demand for greater attainment rates trails much of the nation, the current gaps require greater urgency. In Mississippi, 39 percent of 2020 jobs are expected to require some college, an Associate degree, or a postsecondary vocational certificate, compared to only 16 percent that will require a bachelor’s degree, and 6 percent for a master’s degree¹.

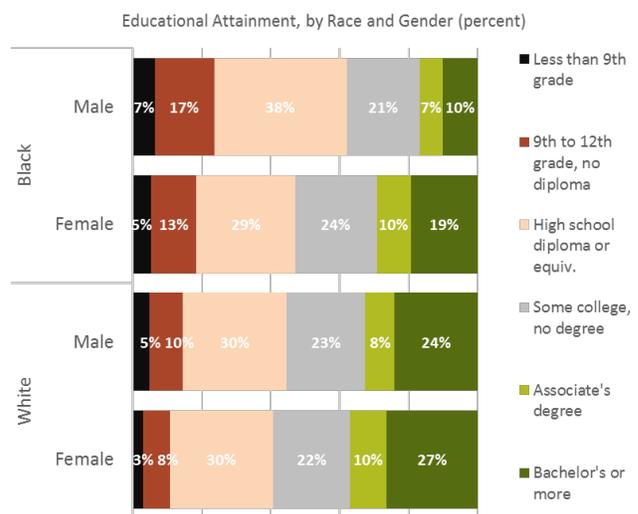
Currently, only 32 percent of the state’s adult population has some college (16%), a certificate (7%), or 2-year degree (11%). For employers, today’s educational training translates directly to skills needed in the workplace—middle-skill jobs account for 58 percent of Mississippi’s labor market, but only 50 percent of the state’s workers are trained to the middle-skill level.²

Percent of adults 25+ with an Associate degree or higher, by race and gender (2008-2016)



Source: American Community Survey

With the state projected to become a majority-minority state by 2039, the historic inequities that have characterized the outcomes of the state’s talent development system are no longer viable for the state to produce a workforce that meets the needs of a globally competitive economy. The latest Census figures show a growing divide along gender and racial dimensions; the gap in attainment rates (for those with an Associate’s degree or higher) between White women and Black women is 8 percentage points (37 percent compared to 29 percent). Meanwhile, the gap between Black men and White men is 14 percentage points (31 percent compared to 17 percent). With a growing gender gap in college-going rates (61 percent of degrees conferred by public universities have been women since



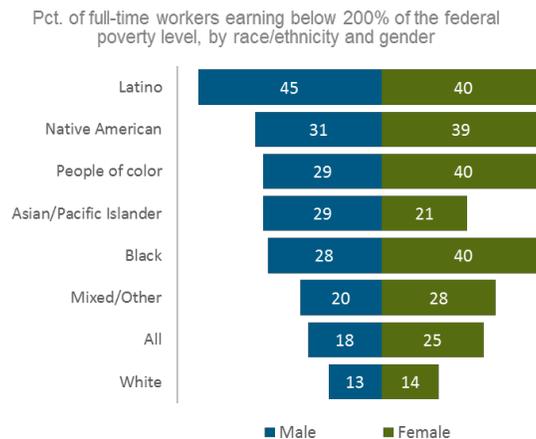
Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2017

2013), the state risks seeing a growing attainment rift, particularly for Black men, in the preparation and access to the growth industries and occupations in the state.

To close these disparities by race and gender, the state would need to add an additional 43,000 degrees (Associate or higher) conferred to Black men, and 29,000 degrees conferred to Black women to achieve parity within the current adult population .

Prioritizing pathways to family-supporting employment

While the state’s unemployment rate of 4.7 percent would seem to point to strong economic performance, the state’s labor force participation rate of only 55.9 percent is well below the national average (62.9 percent), indicating that a large portion of the state’s working-age population has either given up on looking for a job or cannot work. Even for many of those currently employed full-time, wages are not keeping pace with the cost of living.



Source: National Equity Atlas

Nearly a fifth (18 percent) of the state’s full-time male workers earn less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, a benchmark of meeting basic needs, while one-quarter (25 percent) of the state’s working women make below this important threshold. These figures are more troubling when disaggregated by race—40 percent of the state’s full-time Black female workers earn below 200 percent of the FPL, as well as 40 percent of Latino women (45 percent for Latino men).³

For most Mississippians, a postsecondary credential or degree represents the only prospect for securing a family-supporting wage. According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, which estimates the minimum costs for food, health insurance, child care, housing, transportation, and other basic needs, it takes an hourly wage of \$21.07 (or an annual salary of \$43,825) to support a household of one adult and one child in the state of Mississippi. With approximately 45 percent of the state’s children growing up in single-parent households, and a staggering 41 percent of those parents with only a high school diploma (includes equivalency) or less, it will be critical to create larger and more diverse on-ramps for more of the state’s working-age adults.

Aligning opportunity with demand

Unfortunately, much of the forecasted demand for labor across most of the state over the next 10 years is concentrated in low-wage occupations. Approximately 12 percent of the state’s total job openings between 2017-2027 will be in occupations where the median hourly wage is above the state’s living wage.

As illustrated by the table below, the top three occupations expected to have the most job openings (cashiers; retail salespersons; and laborers and freight, stock, and material movers) have a median hourly wage of less than \$12/hour (and require no education beyond a high school diploma). Only two of the top 20 occupations (general and operations managers and registered nurses), offer median hourly earnings above the living-wage.

Top 20 Occupations with Most Openings (2017-2027)										
Description	Typical Entry Level Education	Living wage (Median Earnings)	Regional Completions (2013)	Annual Openings	2017 Jobs	2027 Jobs	2017 - 2027 Openings	2017 - 2027 Change	Median Hourly Earnings	2017 - 2027 % Change
Cashiers	No formal credential	No	-	7,331	38,756	38,473	73,314	(283)	8.80	-1%
Retail Salespersons	No formal credential	No	-	6,346	39,738	43,056	63,460	3,318	10.51	8%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	No formal credential	No	-	4,638	29,337	32,887	46,384	3,550	11.15	12%
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	No formal credential	No	24	4,390	19,172	23,737	43,895	4,565	8.90	24%
Waiters and Waitresses	No formal credential	No	-	4,067	19,687	21,298	40,673	1,611	8.89	8%
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	No formal credential	No	-	-	20,388	23,204	31,221	2,816	9.71	14%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary nondegree award	No	114	2,922	24,693	26,035	29,219	1,342	17.95	5%
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	HS Diploma or equiv.	No	225	2,659	25,572	23,829	26,587	(1,743)	14.64	-7%
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	HS Diploma or equiv.	No	-	2,557	18,522	19,638	25,574	1,116	10.99	6%
Customer Service Representatives	HS Diploma or equiv.	No	2	2,523	17,038	19,100	25,232	2,062	12.31	12%
Assemblers and Fabricators, All Other, Including Team Assemblers	HS Diploma or equiv.	No	-	2,475	20,909	20,049	24,747	(860)	13.65	-4%
Office Clerks, General	HS Diploma or equiv.	No	-	2,383	19,388	19,824	23,833	436	12.33	2%
General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	Yes	2,388	2,265	25,467	26,779	22,647	1,312	29.32	5%
Personal Care Aides	HS Diploma or equiv.	No	82	2,118	9,687	14,050	21,180	4,363	9.51	45%
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	No formal credential	No	-	2,034	14,168	14,933	20,335	765	8.91	5%
Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	Yes	2,777	1,738	29,015	30,740	17,380	1,725	27.33	6%
Cooks, Restaurant	No formal credential	No	33	1,689	10,503	11,673	16,887	1,170	9.78	11%
Cooks, Fast Food	No formal credential	No	24	1,681	12,047	11,624	16,813	(423)	8.69	-4%
Nursing Assistants	Postsecondary nondegree award	No	176	1,679	13,077	14,384	16,785	1,307	10.52	10%
Food Preparation Workers	No formal credential	No	44	1,611	8,881	9,440	16,113	559	8.92	6%
Grand Total			5,889	60,228	416,044	444,753	602,277	28,708	12.64	166%

Sources: EMSI Q3 2018.3 Data Set. EMSI occupation employment data are based on final EMSI industry data and final EMSI staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (Self-Employed).

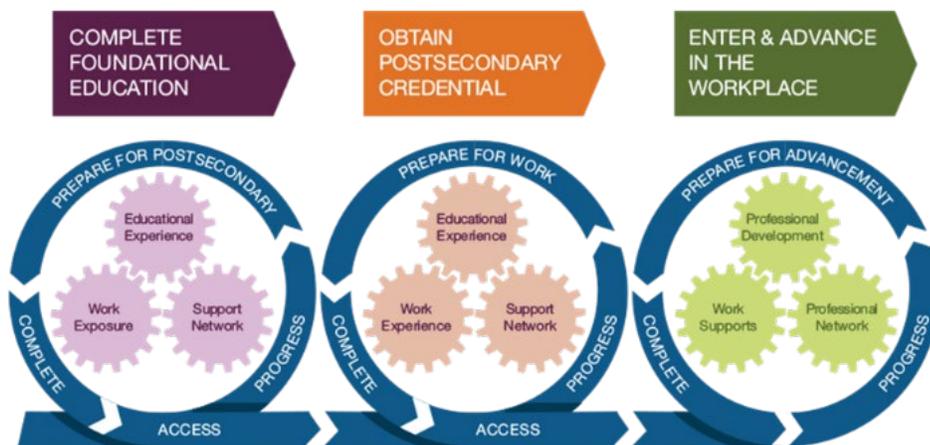
For those jobs with an entry-level educational requirement of a postsecondary, non-degree award, the prospects improve greatly—nearly half (43 percent) of 2017-2027 job openings offer the prospect of a living-wage or higher. The largest number of projected openings include jobs in general and operations managers, registered nurses, postsecondary teachers, accountants, and auditors.

Top 20 Living-wage occupations by total job openings*										
Description	Typical Entry Level Education	Regional Completions (2013)	Annual Openings	2017 Jobs	2027 Jobs	2017 - 2027 Openings	Average of Median Hourly Earnings	2017 - 2027 % Change		
General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	2,388	2,265	25,467	26,779	22,647	29	5%		
Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	2,777	1,738	29,015	30,740	17,380	27	6%		
Postsecondary Teachers	Doctoral or professional degree	2,336	992	10,684	11,793	9,919	34	10%		
Accountants and Auditors	Bachelor's degree	814	650	6,573	7,026	6,495	28	7%		
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	Bachelor's degree	20	378	3,497	3,927	3,776	30	12%		
Financial Managers	Bachelor's degree	231	342	3,794	4,272	3,420	43	13%		
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	Postsecondary nondegree award	-	288	2,552	2,532	2,876	25	-1%		
Medical and Health Services Managers	Bachelor's degree	490	274	2,886	3,264	2,738	37	13%		
Administrative Services Managers	Bachelor's degree	2,354	273	3,145	3,272	2,728	32	4%		
Educational, Guidance, School, and Vocational Counselors	Master's degree	234	252	2,116	2,320	2,517	25	10%		
Management Analysts	Bachelor's degree	2,251	244	2,285	2,634	2,439	28	15%		
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	Master's degree	243	215	2,694	2,716	2,148	37	1%		
Loan Officers	Bachelor's degree	216	204	2,161	2,342	2,044	29	8%		
Compliance Officers	Bachelor's degree	31	203	2,400	2,477	2,028	24	3%		
Lawyers	Doctoral or professional degree	383	196	4,323	4,151	1,963	40	-4%		
Training and Development Specialists	Bachelor's degree	82	191	1,670	1,868	1,905	26	12%		
Nurse Practitioners	Master's degree	121	190	2,501	3,059	1,903	47	22%		
Computer Systems Analysts	Bachelor's degree	366	164	2,099	2,295	1,636	29	9%		
Sales Managers	Bachelor's degree	2,820	162	1,573	1,776	1,624	41	13%		
Physical Therapist Assistants	Associate's degree	64	153	933	1,183	1,527	24	27%		
Grand Total		18,221	9,371	112,368	120,428	93,713	32	186%		

* For job requiring a postsecondary award or higher. Sources: EMSI Q3 2018.3 Data Set. EMSI occupation employment data are based on final EMSI industry data and final EMSI staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (Self-Employed).

Examining the health of Mississippi's talent development system

The implications of establishing an attainment goal will require greater access, alignment of goals, and coordination among stakeholders throughout the state's talent development system. This work begins with shaping each young person's foundational education experience—ideally starting with high-quality pre-K—all the way through an educational experience beyond high school that connects with the potential of securing a family-supporting wage. While much of the analysis presented here focuses on commonly utilized measures of access, preparation, persistence, and success, this analytic focus on the progress of youth and young adults does not occur in a vacuum. For every young person growing up in communities across the state of Mississippi, there are a broad set of factors that influence success in the classroom; they include everything from a child's social, mental, and physical health—concurrent experiences that are shaped by their lives at home and within their communities.



For too many youth and young adults coming up through Mississippi's talent development system, there are far too many obstacles and stumbling blocks that delay or derail momentum. For the state to make sustained progress in creating strong pathways to postsecondary success for youth and young adults, these trap doors and stumbling blocks must be removed, and for every young person who becomes disconnected from school or work, there must be sufficient on-ramps back into the formal system that provide a meaningful opportunity to regain and sustain momentum. This includes giving the necessary attention to the conditions and success of youth and young adults who are receiving education programming in correctional facilities, and productive re-engagement through youth employment and education programs for out-of-school youth and young adults.



Source: Mississippi First: State of Pre-K in Mississippi. 2017 Report

Early education: Pre-K through 3rd grade

The national movement to extend high quality pre-K access to all four-year-olds is taking root across the country. According to the Mississippi Department of Education⁴, there are approximately 2,140 four-year-olds enrolled in the state's pre-K programs, with 3,200 projected for the 2019-2020 school year.

Recent estimates, however, show that roughly 39,000 four-year-olds are not in preschool or kindergarten. The Mississippi Early Learning Collaborative received \$3 million in funding during the 2014/15 State Fiscal Year (up to \$7 million in SFY 2016) that supported 11 collaboratives serving roughly 4 percent of the state's four-year-olds. Meanwhile, roughly 25,000 children aged three and four were enrolled in a combination of special education or federally funded Head Start. For those select few who are enrolled in the state's pre-K program, Mississippi has received national recognition for passing nine of the 10 quality standards that include elements like a rigorous monitoring system, specialized teacher training, restricted class size, and comprehensive early learning and development standards⁵. While the state has made significant efforts to improve the quality of the state-funded programs, long-term efforts will be required to ensure that all three- and four-year-olds, regardless of income and geography, have access to high quality early education that ensures a good start. According to a 2017 analysis by Mississippi First, geography is one of the most influential factors in kindergarten enrollment.

3rd grade reading: Large investments, substantial progress

In 2013, the governor signed Senate Bill 2341, Mississippi's 3rd Grade Literacy Retention Promotion Act, a law that focuses on improving literacy skills beginning in Kindergarten and extending through 3rd grade. It's stated goal is to shift the focus from a "learning to read" model to the development of proper skills to "read to learn" by the time they enroll in 3rd grade. The Act requires every school district to provide a reading-intensive-based curriculum as well as a set of interventions for students displaying a substantial deficiency in reading. Most significantly, the law denies promotion from the 3rd to the 4th grade for any student whose deficiency is not remedied before the end of 3rd grade. Supported by a comprehensive parent engagement process, progress appears to be accelerating. The initial pass rate has increased every year since 2015, rising from 85 percent to 93.2 percent in 2018⁶.

NAEP scores show overall progress but widening equity gaps

While there are no universally accepted measures of success in the elementary and secondary educational environments, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only assessment that measures what U.S. students know and can do in various subjects that allow for comparisons across the nation. Also known as The Nation's Report Card, NAEP has provided information about how students are performing academically since 1969. NAEP assessments serve as just one of many important metrics to track progress at critical junctures of a state's talent development system. While the state has supported top-tier growth across several benchmarks, there are troubling signs concerning the unevenness of improvements across dimensions of gender, race/ethnicity, and income.

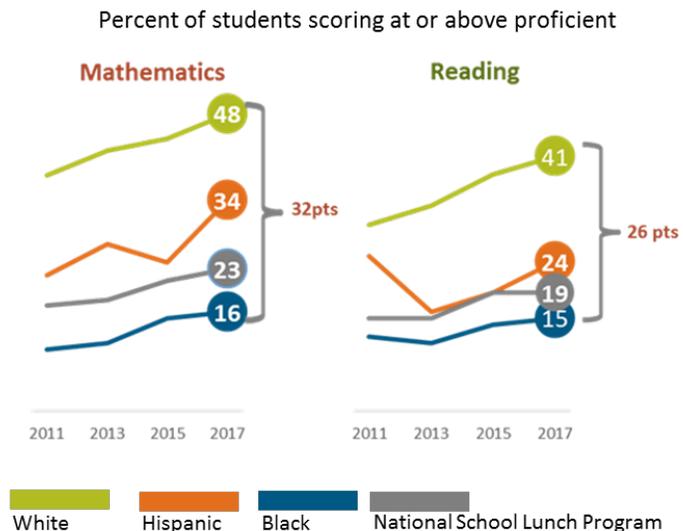
4th grade NAEP scores

Reading

Nationally, states are focusing on the reading and math NAEP scores as predictors of future academic success. Despite the 10-year trend of improvement in reading scores, the average 4th grade reading score wasn't significantly different from 2015.

Sixty percent of students in Mississippi performed at or above the Basic threshold (the lowest achievement level) in 2017, 7 percentage points below the national average. Meanwhile, only 27 percent performed above the NAEP Proficient level, 8 percentage points below the national average.

While 4th grade reading scores improved overall, large gaps remain across gender, race/ethnicity, and income. Only 15 percent of Black students scored at or above proficiency in reading, compared to 24 percent of Hispanics and 41 percent of White students. Mississippi is one of only five Southern states that witnessed a decline in the gap between Black and White students over a 10-year period.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

The largest measurable gap is between low-income students (as measured by those eligible for the National School Lunch program) and those who are not eligible, which has not narrowed since 2011. Evaluated over a 10-year period, Mississippi has shown considerable growth, ranking 2nd for largest growth in 4th grade reading in the country, outpacing national growth. To sustain that continued growth, the state will need to establish policies and practices that continue to raise the state's scores, while closing gaps along dimensions of gender, race, and income.

Math

The performance of Mississippi fourth-graders on the latest Math NAEP assessment shows no significant improvement from 2015. Slightly more than three quarters of 4th graders scored at or above the Basic threshold, while only 31 percent of 4th graders score at or above Proficient. According to the Mississippi Department of Education data, no measurable growth occurred in subgroup performance with the notable exception of Hispanic students. Hispanic students saw a 10-point increase in average scores and roughly a quarter (24 percent) with scores at the Proficient threshold or better in 2017.

While overall 4th grade math scores have improved in Mississippi, large gaps remain across gender, racial/ethnic, and income. The largest measurable gap, 34 percentage points, is between low-income students (as measured by those eligible for the National School Lunch program) and those who are not eligible—a gap that has not narrowed since 2011.

Eighth-grade NAEP scores

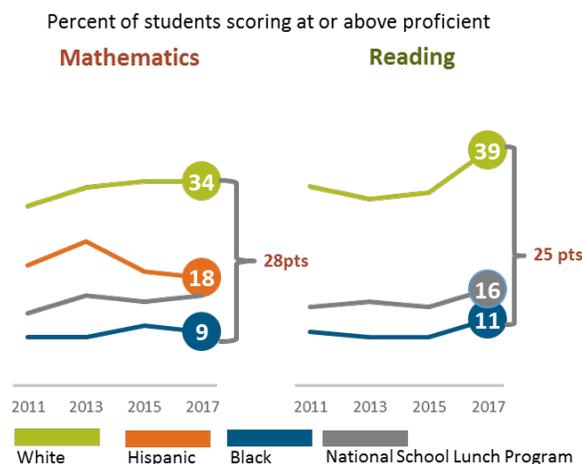
Scores on the NAEP for eighth-grade reading and math, in addition to other state-based assessments and the ACT, provide one of the first initial indicators of potential college-going status in young adults. Over the last 10 years, Mississippi has witnessed significant improvement in both reading and math, ranking the state's improvements at 12th and 2nd, respectively.

Reading

In 2017, the percentage of students in Mississippi who scored at or above the Basic threshold in 2017 was 66 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of students scoring at or above Proficient in Grade 8 reading was only 25 percent—10 percentage points below the national average.

According to the latest NAEP national report cards, Mississippi is one of only 10 states that showed a significant increase in 8th grade reading; this progress, however, has occurred without

closing the large gap in average scores between Black and White students (29 points) and has remained unchanged since 1998. While Mississippi has witnessed long-term growth in 8th grade reading, large racial gaps still exist; only 11 percent of Black 8th graders score at or above the Proficient achievement level, compared to 21 percent of Hispanic/Latino students, and 39 percent of White students. The largest and perhaps most stubborn achievement gap, however, is found between students who are eligible for the National School Lunch program and those who are not. This gap has grown significantly larger since 1998.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Math

In 2017, the percentage of students in Mississippi who scored at or above the Basic threshold in 2017 was 59 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of students scoring at or above Proficient in Grade 8 reading was only 22 percent—12 percentage points below the national average

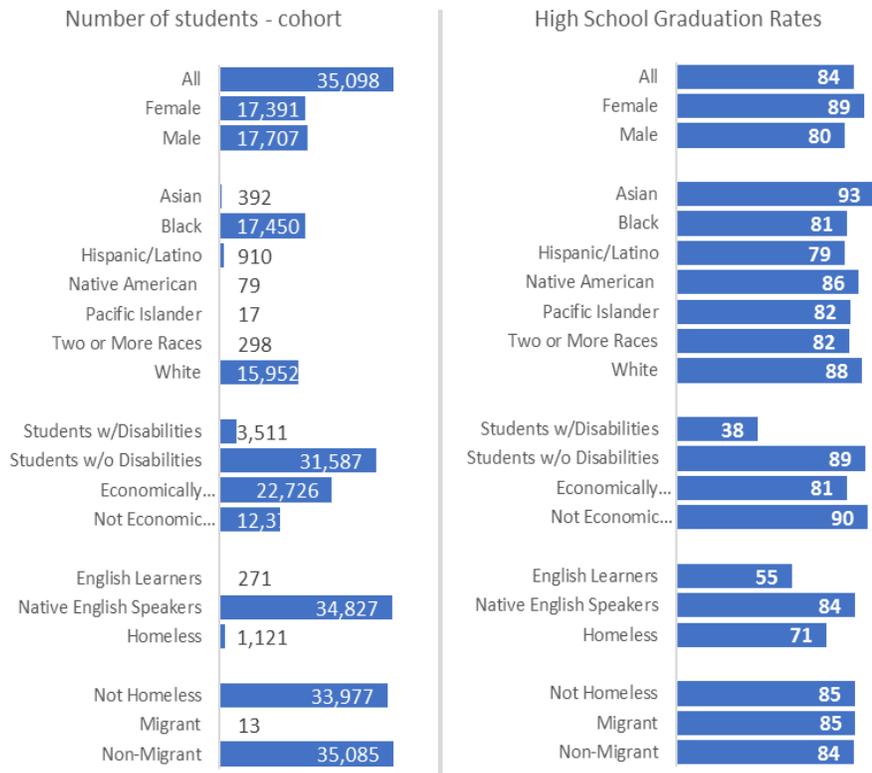
While the long-range trend in Mississippi's 8th grade math scores indicates significant improvement, rising from an average of 254 to 271, performance gaps across subgroups have remained virtually unchanged. Less than half of Black students (43 percent) score at or above Basic achievement on Math, compared to 60 percent of Hispanics and 75 percent of White students.

High School graduation rates

The state of Mississippi has made substantial improvements in its high school graduation rate over the last decade. Newly released data show that the graduation rate has risen to an all-time high of 84 percent. Despite notable improvement in the state's high-school graduation rates, disparities are found when disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, and gender. The largest gap (9+ percentage points) is between male and female students, followed by Black/White (7 pts) and Hispanic/White (9 pts). Economically disadvantaged students are similarly trailing the upward trend in high school graduate rates.

The introduction of a new, tiered endorsement diploma model, allowing ninth graders to choose between four tracks of academic and workforce preparation, holds both opportunities and risks for greater stratification in the progress and preparation of Mississippi's future workforce. Starting in the 2018-19 academic calendar, students were given the option of working towards a traditional diploma or taking additional classes to earn an academic, distinguished academic, or career and technical education

High School graduation rates - 2018

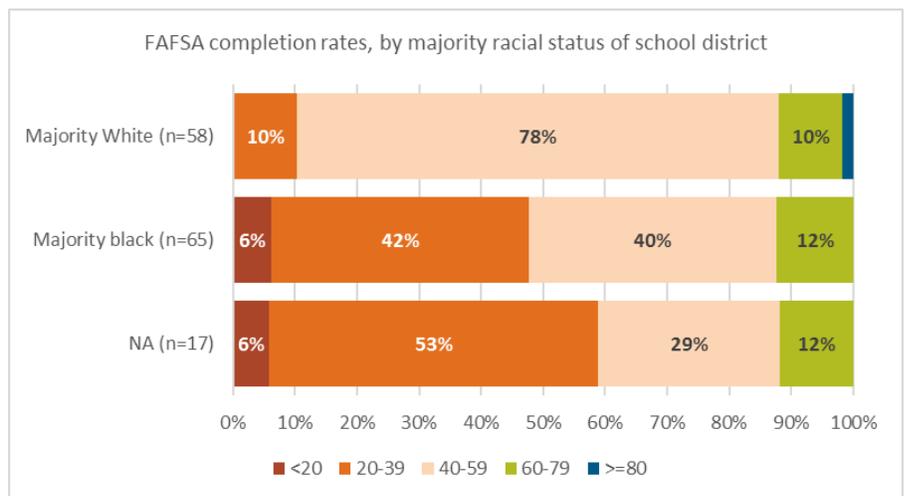


Source: Mississippi Department of Education

endorsement. One area of promise is the potential of assisting students with disabilities in securing valuable skills to compete in the workforce—with only 38 percent of students with disabilities currently completing a high school degree, the changes hold the potential of lifting the prospects of vulnerable students in a tight labor market. The concern for parents and educators is that without a corresponding increase in the state's student-to-counselor ratio (currently sitting at 438:1) the choices and internalized prospects of a young person's career can be shaped at an age when far too many young people don't have a strong sense of the full range of choices in front of them.

FAFSA completion rates

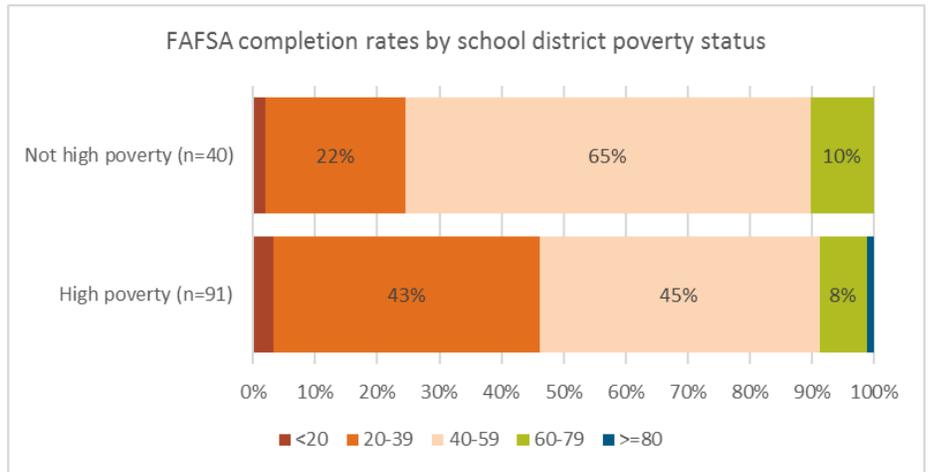
Completing the FAFSA is the lynchpin for students to gain access to federal, state, and institutional financial aid to attend college, and Mississippi has made significant strides in closing informational and resource barriers to this important step in exploring postsecondary enrollment. Approximately 61% of Mississippi high school seniors complete the FAFSA by high school graduation,⁷ compared to 57 percent nationwide.



Source: US Department of Education: Federal Student Aid

Yet stark divides in the state's FAFSA completion rates appear when disaggregated by racial composition (50 percent or more of students are either Black or White) of the school district and poverty rates.⁸

For districts where White students comprise 50 percent or more of the student population, only 10 percent of districts have extremely low rates of FAFSA completion (less than 40 percent). Meanwhile, nearly half of majority-black districts have FAFSA completion rates less than 40 percent.



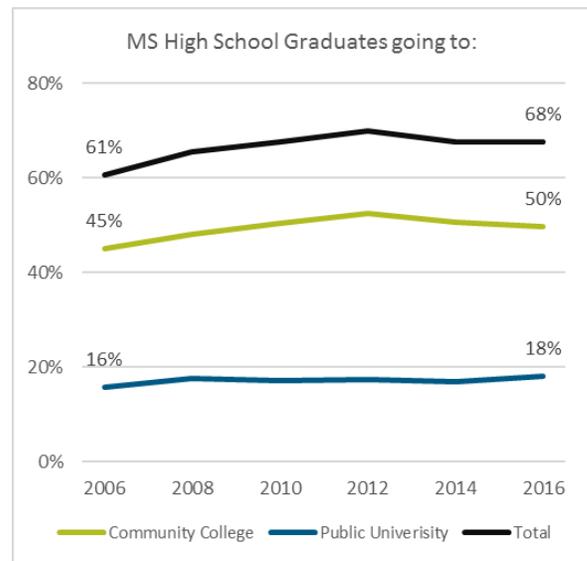
Source: US Department of Education: Federal Student Aid

A recent report by the National College Access Network⁹ finds that there are large gaps between FAFSA completion rates between wealthy and impoverished schools. As Mississippi is one of three Southern states (including Georgia and Alabama) with the highest median district level poverty, FAFSA completion is a critical lever to increasing college access. Yet, despite the fact that low-income students' prospects of college enrollment are more heavily dependent upon financial aid (particularly the Pell Grant), the study found that higher-poverty districts were associated with lower FAFSA completion. On average, for every 10 percentage-point difference in the share of children five to 17 living in poverty, the district FAFSA completion rate is about 3 percentage points lower.

Modeling NCAN's analysis, school districts were categorized as high poverty when at least 20 percent or more of young people are living in poverty (as measured by the Census). Nearly half (46 percent) of high poverty school districts had FAFSA completion rates below 40 percent. In contrast, only 24 percent of wealthier districts had completion rates below 40 percent. While the state has made measurable improvements in awareness and completion in targeted areas, largely attributable to the success of the [Get2College](#) program sponsored by the Woodward Hines Education Foundation, a great deal of progress is needed to close the gaps between poor and wealthier school districts in the state.

College-going rates

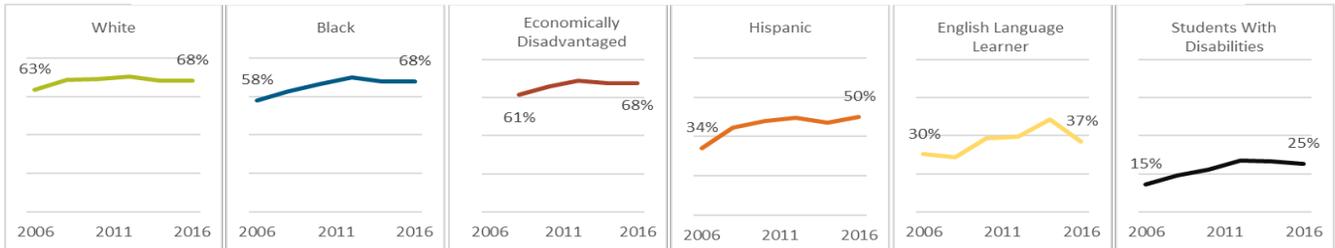
The steady climb in the state's high school graduation rate is reflected in the narrowing of equity gaps in the rate of high school students continuing onto postsecondary enrollment at either the state's community colleges or public universities. Recent data as of 2016 show that the college-going rates are virtually identical between White, Black, and disadvantaged students. While these figures don't account for students attending colleges outside of the state, the progress does seem to point to a meaningful shift in the educational aspirations and access for Black and low-income students.



Source: MS LifeTracks; nsparc

The biggest jump in college-going rates is found among Hispanic/Latino students (rising from 34 percent in 2006 to 50 percent in 2016), followed by Black students, who have witnessed a 10 percentage-point jump, from 58 percent to 68 percent. The growth rates for White students (5 percentage points), and economically disadvantaged students (7 percentage points) have shown slower progress.

Percent of public high school graduates enrolled in a MS community college or public



Source: Source: MS LifeTracks; nsparc

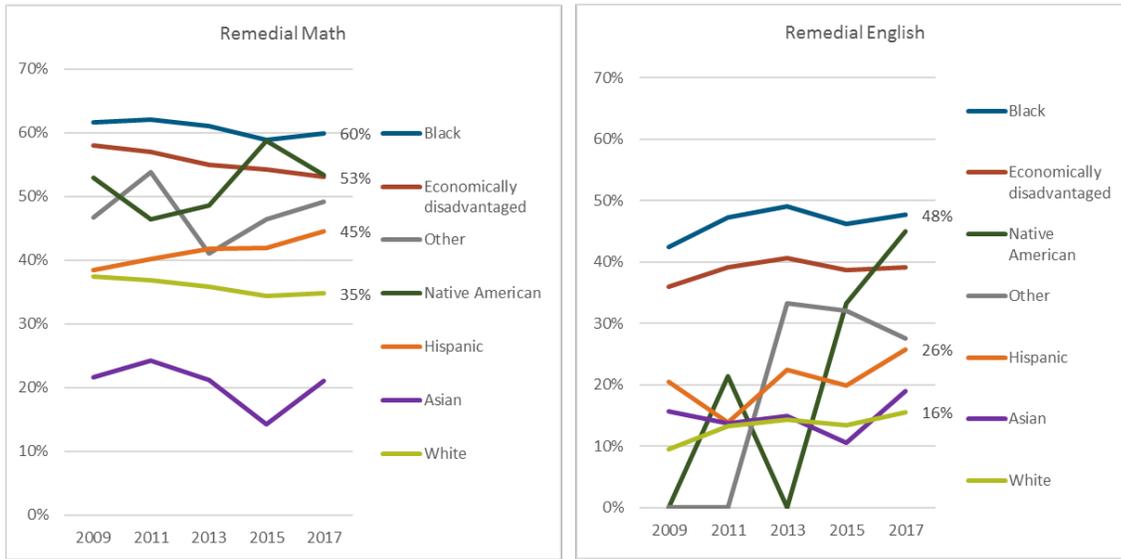
Remedial course work in 2-year and 4-year colleges

While the state’s improvements in high school graduation and college-going rates for most populations is laudable, many Mississippi community college students are still encountering barriers during their pivotal first year of college coursework. Required enrollment in remedial courses, particularly Math and English, are one of the largest obstacles for students looking to gain traction in their education.

Traditionally, remedial courses serve as a “bridge to nowhere but college debt, disappointment and drop out[s]”¹⁰; in Mississippi, however, the state’s two-year and four-year colleges are part of a national movement to transition remedial education from a prerequisite to a corequisite model, allowing students to enroll directly into college-level courses and receive academic support alongside regular classes. Evidence from states leading the way on redesigning remedial education (Georgia, Tennessee, Indiana, and Colorado), suggest that Mississippi may see improvements in the range of two- to three-times current gateway college course success rates.

Despite these essential structural improvements, the burden of remedial education in the state’s two-year and four-year colleges is still disproportionately felt by poor students and students of color. The share of Black students requiring remedial math (60 percent) or English (48 percent) at either community colleges or the state’s public universities represents one sign that college preparation is uneven across race, gender, and income. More than half (53 percent) of economically disadvantaged Mississippi high school graduates are taking remedial math within 16 months of graduation, while 39 percent are taking remedial English courses. The gap between White and Black students has remained virtually unchanged within the last 10 years. As the state tracks the long-term progress in improving student success in gateway courses, particular attention should be placed on tracking the degree to which gaps are either narrowing or closing for important target populations.

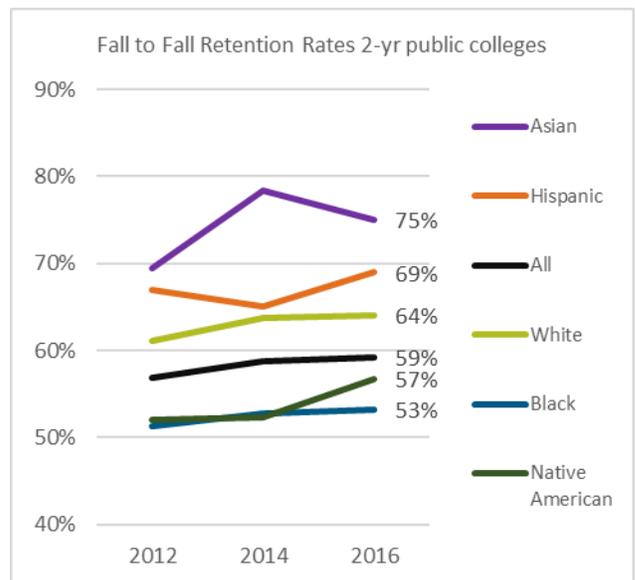
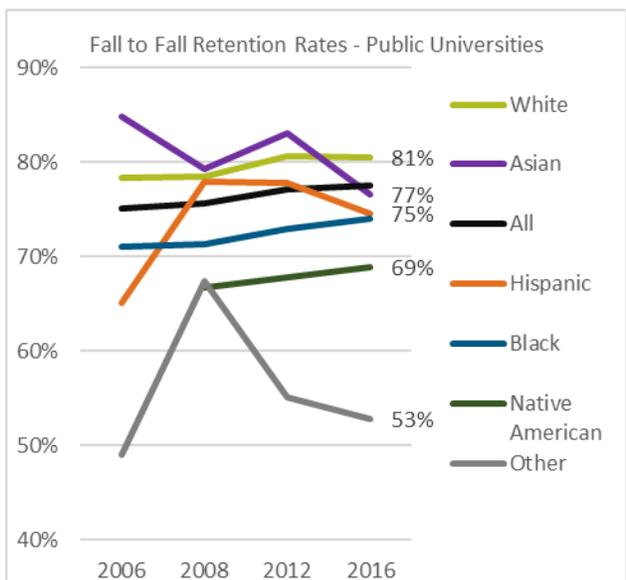
Number of public high school graduates enrolled in a Mississippi community college or public university taking postsecondary remedial courses within 16 months of graduation



Source: MS LifeTracks; nsparc

Fall-to-fall retention rates

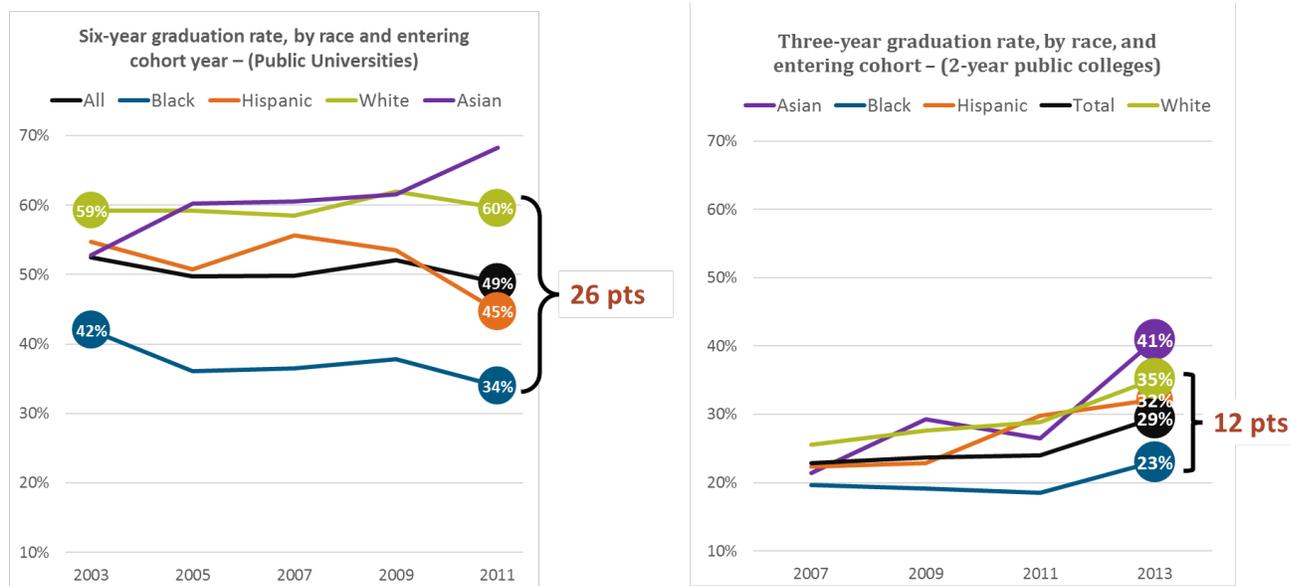
The success of the state’s public colleges and universities in retaining full-time, first-time freshmen over the past decade reflects an overall upward trend, but disaggregated data reflect a troubling pattern of disengagement from the state’s postsecondary sector. Colleges have seen increases in retention rates for White, Black, and Native American students, but a decrease for Asian and students who identify as Other. Similarly, the state’s two-year public colleges have witnessed slow and steady progress, with nearly 60 percent of first-time, full time students staying enrolled the following semester. However, with roughly one-third of the state’s four-year students, and 40 percent of community-college students, failing to return after their first year of college, there are likely a myriad of structural forces derailing continued progression.



Source: MS LifeTracks; nsparc

Postsecondary completion

Across the country, graduation rates across dimensions of race, gender, and income illustrate some gains as well as the challenges that postsecondary institutions face to support students throughout their entire postsecondary journey. The graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students in public universities and community colleges are well below that of White students, and these gaps have only widened. Despite positive indicators of progress in fall-to-fall retention rates, Black students have experienced a continuing decline in graduation rates since the 2003 cohort. Meanwhile, the six-year graduation rate for White students has remained relatively unchanged. Most troubling is that these racial gaps between White and Black students are closing in the majority of other SREB states.



Source: IPEDS and MS LifeTracks

Meanwhile, there is uniform progress among students entering the state’s community college system. While graduation rates in the community college setting always have been lower than their four-year counterparts nationally, given the population and open-enrollment process, the share of community college students graduating has risen from 23 percent to 29 percent for the 2013 cohort. However, the gap between White students and Black students enrolling in the state’s community colleges has more than doubled, rising from 6 percentage points in the 2007 cohort to 12 percentage points in the 2013 cohort. Given the shifting demographics of the state’s K-12 population, it’s clear that greater attention to the growing inequities in both the state’s two-year and four-year institutions will need to be addressed in order for the state to meet any ambitious attainment goal.

Disconnected youth and young adults

Disconnected youth are teenagers and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. There are 4,599,100 disconnected youth in America today, or about one in nine teens and young adults (11.7 percent).¹¹ These young people fall out of the traditional talent development system at numerous junctions of personal and intellectual development—they become cut off from the people, institutions, and experiences that would otherwise help them develop the knowledge, skills, and maturity that are essential to living a rewarding life as an adult.

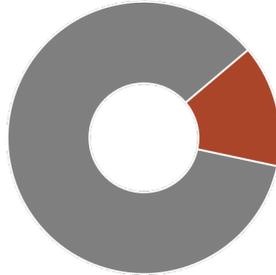
Mississippi’s youth disconnection rate in 2017 (14.3%), is nearly as high as during the height of the Great Recession, when the national average was 14.7 percent. In Mississippi, the landscape of

disconnected youth is greatly influenced by geography—high rates of disconnected youth are particularly prevalent in the Delta region. In most counties in the Delta, more than one-third of youth and young adults 16-24 are neither working nor in school, representing a systemic failure of institutions and communities to support young people as they progress.

Disconnected youth and young adults in MS Ages 16-24

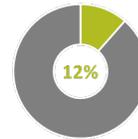
391,034

Young people age 16-24
Live in Mississippi

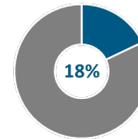


56,700

of them are
disconnected from
work or school



of white youth and
young adults are
disconnected in MS



of black youth and
young adults are
disconnected in MS

Source: Measure of America, 2017

Setting an aspirational goal: Examples from other states

As states across the country consider the changing economy and how to grow a highly skilled workforce pool, many have recently established or are working to set aspirational postsecondary attainment goals. Recent case studies by the Lumina Foundation identify the following key factors that contribute to a successful process.¹²

- Setting the stage
- Building a case
- Identifying leaders and champions
- Engaging stakeholders and establishing a goal
- Launching and communicating the effort
- Planning to achieve the goal
- Establishing policies and plans to implement and support the goal

Below is a summary of examples from other states that have established postsecondary attainment goals that reflect many of the factors identified in the Lumina report. Each of these states is at different stages of a goal-setting and implementation process. Leadership of these processes varies across states and may be led by governors, departments or councils of higher education, cross-sector alliances, and independent nonprofit organizations. Goals also vary in number or percentage, time frame or end point for achievement, and target age group. All of these states have taken a year or more to work with a coalition of stakeholders to set their postsecondary attainment goal.

North Carolina

Postsecondary Attainment Goal: 2 million 25-44 year-olds (66%) will have a high-quality postsecondary credential or degree by 2030¹³

2016: 1.3 million hold a postsecondary credential or higher (49%)

To set a postsecondary attainment goal and discuss the state's talent development needs, North Carolina formed the myFutureNC Commission in late 2017 and announced a postsecondary attainment goal in February 2019. The commission convened North Carolina leaders and subject-matter experts from the education, business, philanthropic, faith-based, and nonprofit communities as well as ex-officio representatives from the North Carolina House of Representatives, Senate, and governor's office. The effort was led by a team of co-chairs—Dale Jenkins, chief executive officer of Medical Mutual Holdings; Andrea Smith, chief administrative officer of Bank of America; and Margaret Spellings, former president of the University of North Carolina—and a Steering Committee. MDC served as an advisor, partner, and facilitator for committees of the Commission.

In North Carolina, the goal setting entity was the myFutureNC Commission, staffed by consultants reporting to the president of UNC and senior staff in the UNC General Administration office. While the myFutureNC Commission has recommended an attainment goal that has been endorsed by political, business, and education system leaders, it is not yet in legislation or in a strategic plan; this is anticipated to occur in the next stage of the process currently under development.

Tennessee

Postsecondary Attainment Goal: Drive to get 55 percent of Tennesseans (ages 25-64) equipped with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025¹⁴

2016: 40.7% postsecondary attainment rate

Launched in 2014, the Drive to 55 was created to ensure that 55 percent of Tennesseans are equipped with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025.¹⁵ An “adult” will be defined as those who are in the age range of 25-64 inclusive and who started a postsecondary credential but did not finish.¹⁶ To support this effort, Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Reconnect, and the Drive to 55 Alliance were established to support underserved students, provide scholarships, help adults complete a postsecondary credential, and engage the private sector.

The goal setting entity and vehicle for Tennessee are the governor and the Tennessee General Assembly—Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010. Additional legislation supports the Tennessee Reconnect and Tennessee Promise. The state also has developed a Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education (2015-2035).

Alabama

Postsecondary Attainment Goal: Adding 500,000 highly skilled employees (ages 25-64) to Alabama’s workforce by 2025

2017: 43% postsecondary attainment rate

In August 2017, Alabama established the Statewide Educational Attainment Committee comprised of industry, government, and policy experts to help state leaders develop guidance, set priorities, and measure progress toward postsecondary attainment in the state. Attainment is defined as the percent of working age individuals (ages 25-64) that hold a marketable degree beyond high school¹⁷. The committee is co-chaired by the Alabama Community College System and the Alabama Department of Commerce with key support from the Alabama Workforce Council. The state also has developed a Success Plus plan, entitled Alabama Success Plus, to implement this effort¹⁸. This plan was disseminated by the Alabama Workforce Council. Key planning partners include consulting firms and philanthropic institutions.

Arizona

Postsecondary Attainment Goal: 60% of adults ages 25-64 with a professional certificate or college degree by 2030

2015: 39.6% postsecondary attainment rate

In 2015, Arizona kicked off its journey with a convening of a cross-sector group of leaders, including the Helios Foundation and Gov. Doug Ducey, in a collaborative process to establish a postsecondary attainment goal. The Arizona Board of Regents formed an attainment alliance to establish an attainment goal. This attainment coalition evolved into Achieve60AZAlliance, an independent 501(c)3 organization that was launched in 2016. Key planning partners and supporters included the Lumina Foundation, Strategy Labs, the Helios Foundation, and the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Kentucky

Postsecondary Attainment Goal: Increase educational attainment level of Kentuckians between 25-64 years old with certificates or degrees to 60% by 2030.

2016: 45% postsecondary attainment rate

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education serves as the goal-setting entity in the state. Members are appointed by the governor and include citizens from education systems, business, a faculty member, and a student member, all appointed by the governor. The commissioner of education serves as a nonvoting ex-officio member.

In 2016, the Council on Postsecondary Education released *Stronger By Degrees*, a strategic plan and agenda for postsecondary attainment¹⁹. The [Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997](#) created the Council to provide direction and oversight to all Kentucky postsecondary institutions and is one of a few Southern states with legislation and a plan to support an attainment agenda²⁰.

Enabling conditions and considerations for a postsecondary attainment goal for Mississippi

To establish a state education attainment goal, Mississippi should consider a process that builds understanding, commitment, and ownership. Such a campaign should be grounded in economic possibility and urgency.

Lessons from MDC's recent work with myFutureNC suggest the following enabling conditions and considerations:

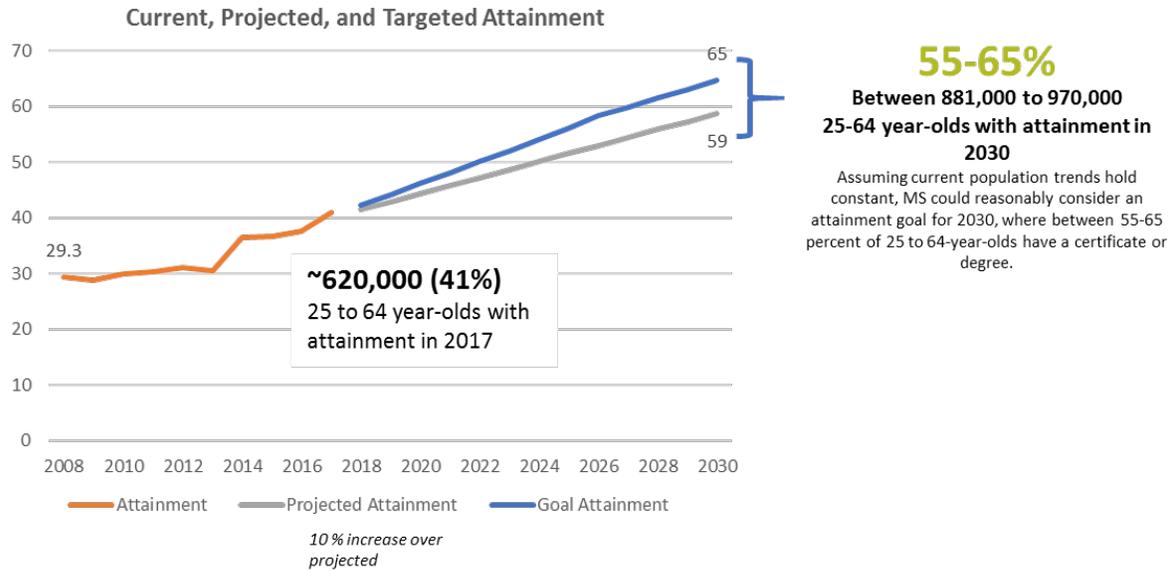
1. Begin with a review and understanding of the current landscape and state of postsecondary attainment through a review of disaggregated data from pre-K to postsecondary education, entry into the labor market, and labor market outcomes.
2. Examine the data and the needs of the demand side of talent development.
3. Consider geographic distinctions and differences in access to services, resources, instructional delivery, and technology.
4. Review the data to identify areas of potential strengths, gaps, and inequities across the state. Where is there momentum and leadership?
5. Understand the political and policy landscape; identify allies from the beginning.
6. Ensure that the private sector in established and emerging industries is at the table from day one.
7. Identify a lead entity and set of partners to set an attainment goal. Determine the structure, governance, roles, and responsibilities and how the effort will be funded from the beginning.
8. Engage students and community members.
9. Identify short -, mid-, and long-term goals and consider how progress toward an attainment goal will be measured. How will it be implemented and who will be charged with leading the effort?

Current, projected, and proposed attainment ranges in Mississippi

Establishing and meeting an aspirational postsecondary attainment goal will require significant improvements in the state's talent development system, but also substantial increases in the number of adults who enroll in postsecondary institutions and programs and earn credentials beyond high school that have labor market value. Recent estimates commissioned by the Lumina Foundation find that with the addition of workforce certificates (beginning in 2014), approximately 41 percent of the state's 25- to 64-year-olds have some postsecondary credential or degree (7 percent, or roughly 100,000 adults, have a certificate)²¹. The creation of an aspirational goal for the state of Mississippi will require careful attention to examining the net effects of current trends in the state's birth rates, in-migration, and ability to retain more of its homegrown talent. In contrast to many other states that have adopted attainment goals, estimates for Mississippi are complicated by the state's economic growth, declining birth rates, and net-negative immigration (particularly of international residents). While it's difficult to project the net in-migration of talent from other states (which is a product of multiple factors, including home-grown business development, traditional out-of-state business recruitment, and other factors that attract talent), the ranges presented below are offered for consideration.

The projections below represent a conservative estimate that by 2030, the state will have roughly 1.5 million adults between the ages of 25 and 64²². Assuming current rates of degree and

certificate production, it is estimated that by 2030, 59 percent (881,000) of the state’s working age population would have some form of a postsecondary credential or degree. This would represent an increase of approximately 270,000 credentials or degrees over what is current held by the 2017 adult population. A phased-in growth model, assuming year-over-year increases over current trends in degree and certificate production, show that an appropriate range for an attainment goal may be between 55%-65% (of working-age adults between 25-64 by 2030).



Source: Lumina Foundation for Education. Calculations by MDC.

Potential next steps and caveats

A compelling attainment goal will be a key driver of any state-level campaign to raise postsecondary attainment rates. To catalyze system change, reorient policy, and spur more Mississippians to aspire to a postsecondary credential, however, broad understanding of the rationale and urgency behind the goal is required along a clear action plan built through an inclusive process that engages key stakeholders in shaping a reform agenda.

MDC recommends that the EAC consider the following steps to build understanding, inclusion, and commitment to an attainment goal and to build readiness and appetite for the implementation of key reforms.

- Create a cross-sector leadership “council” first to set a postsecondary attainment goal. To do so, such a council will shape and oversee the process of developing a more detailed analysis of the barriers to increased attainment, priority recommendations for change in policy and practice, and an implementation plan. Membership should include representation of key stakeholder groups within and beyond the education sector, including:
 - Employers (particularly those in high-growth sectors and living-wage sectors that are driving innovation in the Mississippi economy)
 - Elected officials at the state, county, and local levels
 - Representatives of regions and constituencies whose postsecondary attainment is lagging
 - Private philanthropy and innovators in the social/nonprofit sector
- The “council” should be established with a clear mandate to select an aspirational goal based on the preliminary options contained in this report, create recommendations for action based on a fleshed-out analysis of the issues illuminated in this document, and suggest an implementation plan focused on high-leverage opportunities for change. Ideally, the EAC would agree to endorse and advocate the plan to ensure that implementation moves forward.
- An essential aspect of the council’s work would be to oversee a process to engage a representative array of stakeholders to build understanding and commitment to the attainment goal and to the reform agenda required to advance it. Employers, civic groups, the media, education sector representatives, and students in the conventional school to postsecondary continuum, as well as older adult learners, should be priority audiences for outreach and should be invited to validate and reinforce both the analysis of barriers and opportunities and to help shape recommendations for action. Attention should be given to early briefing of key decisionmakers in relevant sectors so they are not surprised by the analysis, goal, or recommendations.
- The council could either sunset after its work is accomplished or continue as an independent vehicle to ensure accountable execution of its action plan and recommendations.

Looking ahead

Achieving higher postsecondary attainment for all adult Mississippians will require equal attention to fundamental improvements in the state’s talent development system and redoubled efforts to create more high-paying jobs. Mississippians will aspire and reach for a postsecondary credential only if they see realistic opportunities to improve their life chances and earnings through higher credential and skill attainment. Until Mississippi can increase dramatically the proportion of its jobs that pay family-sustaining wages, aspirations for postsecondary attainment run the risk of being

depressed because the return on investment is unclear or elusive, or because people with credentials will leave the state for more rewarding work opportunities elsewhere. Mississippi will ultimately need to align the desire for higher postsecondary attainment with a commitment to strengthen the sectors of its economy that can reward attainment through good wages. Ultimately, achieving a stronger, more competitive, and more equitable Mississippi will hinge on how well supply and demand for talent reinforce each other.

Endnotes

¹ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020/>

² <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/2017-middle-skills-fact-sheets/file/Mississippi-MiddleSkills.pdf>

³ https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/EmploymentEquityMississippi_05_18_18.pdf

⁴ https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/SSE/2018-AnnRep/2018_Annual_Report.pdf

⁵ http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Mississippi_YB2017.pdf

⁶ https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OEA/OPR/2018/3RD_GRADE_MAAP_ELA_RESU_LTS_2018_5.31.18_Final.pdf

⁷ <https://get2college.org/fafsa-completion-project>

⁸ Source: American Community Survey

⁹ An Analysis of the relationships between School District Poverty and FAFSA Completion in June 2016-2018. <http://www.collegeaccess.org/BlogItem?dg=c7821796adae48a5844dfc865bfb539>

¹⁰ <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/corequisite-remediation.pdf>

¹¹ <https://measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive/#Overview>

¹² Statewide Educational Goals: A Case Study, Lumina Foundation

¹³ https://www.myfuturenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/A-Call-to-Action-Final-Report_February-2019.pdf

¹⁴ www.driveto55.org

¹⁵ <https://tnachievers.org/about-us/drive-to-55>

¹⁶ <https://www.tn.gov/thec/learn-about/drive-to-55/tn-reconnect.html>

¹⁷ <https://alabamaworks.com/successplus/>

¹⁸ ¹⁸ <https://alabamaworks.com/successplus/>

¹⁹ <http://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/documents/201621strategicagenda.pdf>

²⁰ <http://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/documents/201621strategicagenda.pdf>

²¹ <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/MS>

²² This estimate is slightly different (2% different) from estimates by the CDC found here: Population Projections, United States, 2004 - 2030, by state, age and sex, on CDC WONDER Online Database, September 2005. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/population-projections.html> on Apr 4, 2019 11:49:22 AM

Age Group	Projected Populations
25-29 years	179,551
30-34 years	166,711
35-39 years	176,333
40-44 years	178,594
45-49 years	196,122
50-54 years	200,986
55-59 years	192,224
60-64 years	185,477
Total	1,475,998



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