



**Resource Development Paper
(RP2-2011)**

**College Completion
“Exceeding the National Challenge in Florida”**

*Prepared by the
Florida Council for Resource Development (FCRD)
Board of Directors
2011*



PRESIDENT:

Phyl Renninger, Director, Resource Development, Florida State College at Jacksonville

1ST VICE PRESIDENT:

Chuck Clemons, Vice President for Development, Santa Fe College

2ND VICE PRESIDENT:

Debbie Douma, Dean, Institutional Effectiveness and Grants, Pensacola State College

SECRETARY:

Patti Bartels, Director, Resource Development, Miami Dade College

TREASURER:

Judy Green, President, The Florida College System Foundation

PAST PRESIDENT:

Tracy Porter, Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Polk State College

DIRECTORS:

Rosanne Brandeburg, Executive Director, Foundation, Lake Sumter Community College

Ellyn Drotzer, Associate Vice-President, Resource Development & Strategic Planning, Broward College

Adrienne Garcia, Executive Director, Foundation, Hillsborough Community College

Robin Johnston, Vice President, Institutional Advancement, Tallahassee Community College

Maggi LeClair, Associate Director, Resource Development, Gulf Coast Community College

Mike Lee, Executive Director, Foundation, Florida Gateway College

Patrice Whitten, Executive Director, Foundation, Pensacola State College

Wendy Warner, Chief Fiscal Officer, College of Central Florida Foundation

October 2011

Dear Reader,

This is the second paper by the Florida Council for Resource Development (FCRD); this one focuses on national and statewide college completion efforts. It provides information on where Florida started, where we are, and where we are going on improving college completion rates. In addition to the progress being made, this paper also highlights grants and foundation efforts to support and enhance this important initiative. This paper is also being presented at two venues: 1) The Council of Presidents (COP) meeting October 26, 2011 in Naples, Florida and 2) the FCRD Conference held February 1 - 3, 2012 in Tallahassee.

The FCRD first Resource Paper, the History of the Philip Benjamin Matching Program (September 2011) shared information on the background or history of the PBMP.

Future papers will continue to discuss topics important to our colleges. We welcome any suggestions you may have towards this effort.

Phyl Renninger

FCRD President

The Resource Paper committee:

Dr. Phyl Renninger, Director of Resource Development, Florida State College at Jacksonville

Wendy Warner, Chief Fiscal Officer, College of Central Florida Foundation

Carrie Henderson, Coordinator of Student Success, Division of Florida Colleges

Resource Development Paper

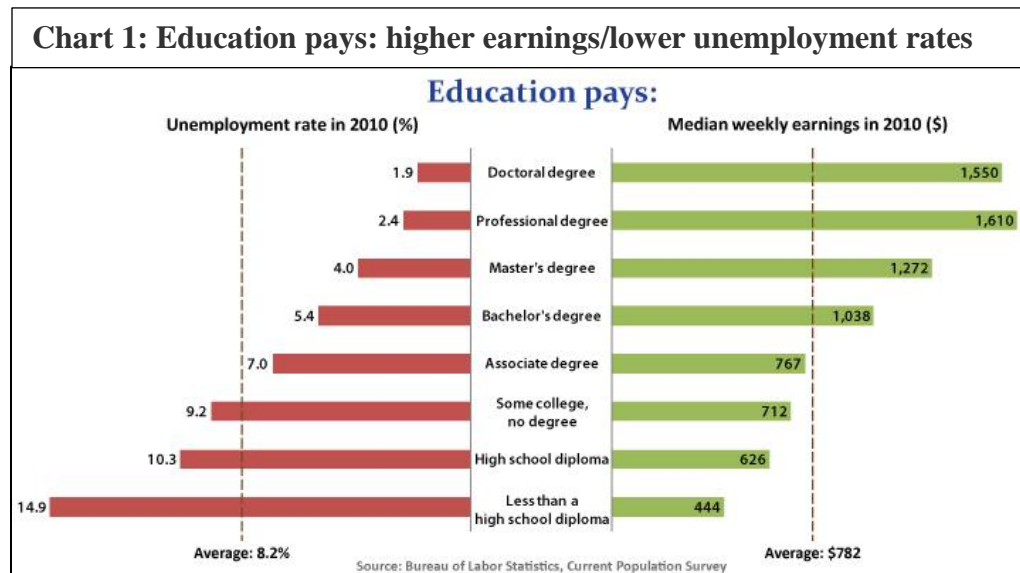
College Completion “Exceeding the National Challenge in Florida”

In 2008 high profile foundations put out a challenge to colleges to embrace a goal of doubling the number of college graduates by 2025. The champions include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and others (Gates, 2008). Agencies, educational institutions, and employers proclaimed that a high school diploma alone was no longer good enough. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Education announced that “Ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the new, knowledge-driven economy require some postsecondary education,” yet according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006), “Only 38% of all 18-24 year olds are currently enrolled in postsecondary education.”

"Today, Americans without a college education live close to the poverty line for a family of four. That is why we are making a long-term commitment to dramatically increase college completion—a goal that is both ambitious and necessary."

Bill & Melinda Gates
Foundation, 2008

Philanthropic foundations offered millions of dollars in grants to spur the initiatives on. The programs initiated included Postsecondary Success Initiative Grants (\$8.9 million), Improving Postsecondary Education (\$33.2 million), and Strengthening Student Support (\$26.8 million). The Achieving the Dream Network, Gateway to College, Complete College America, and other programs were developed to support the initiatives.

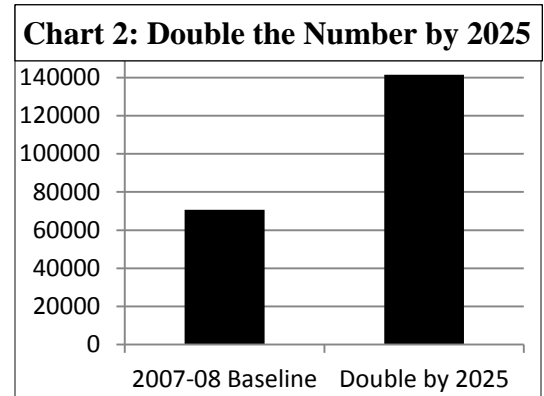


In addition to the philanthropic drive to double the number of college graduates, the Bureau of Labor Statistics provided evidence that education was directly tied to

wage increases. The Current Population Survey (2011) supports that correlation (see Chart 1). The information was based on 2010 annual averages for persons age 25 and over who were earning wages. The disparity in employment and earnings evident in the chart provides graphic documentation for stakeholders that the “doubling the number of college graduates” initiative is an appropriate, timely, and necessary focus. Armed with evidence that “Education Pays,” education leaders in Florida established a strategic plan to address increasing the college completion rate.

Stepping Up: A Strategic Plan

For Florida, the national initiative meant that the colleges would need to graduate 141,476 associate degree and certification completion students by 2025 (see Chart 2). To address the initiative, Florida set baseline data, goals, and plans for increasing the completion rates. In 2010, The Florida College System and college presidents established the strategic plan to increase college



completion with the *Stepping Up: A Strategic Plan for The Florida College System*. The plan established college completion as a primary goal and sought to “raise the state’s postsecondary educational attainment level by actively contributing to improvements in college readiness and student success initiatives, thereby increasing the percentage of certificates and degrees awarded annually” (FL DOE, 2010). Assessment of gains in student completion was based on 2007-08 completion results (n = 70,738). The goal for 2019-20 (n = 145,283) was designed to exceed double the number of associate degree and certificate graduates. The plan also established target goals for each college (see Table 1). The goals allocate the required targets to meet the statewide goal proportionally to each college and were approved by each of the college presidents.

Table 1: Total Associate Degrees and Certificates					
College	2007-08 Baseline	2019-20 Goal	College	2007-08 Baseline	2019-20 Goal
Brevard	2,969	6,140	North Florida	279	577
Broward	5,889	12,178	Northwest Florida	1,673	3,460
Chipola	608	1,257	Palm Beach	3,854	7,970
Central Florida	1,308	2,705	Pasco-Hernando	1,494	3,090
Daytona	2,615	5,408	Pensacola	1,971	4,076
Edison	1,545	3,195	Polk	1,240	2,564
Florida Gateway	808	1,671	Santa Fe	3,247	6,715
Florida Keys	266	550	Seminole	2,157	4,461

Florida State College at Jacksonville	6,228	12,879	South Florida	539	1,115
Gulf Coast	1,200	2,482	St. Johns River	850	1,758
Hillsborough	3,194	6,605	St. Petersburg	3,456	7,147
Indian River	2,863	5,921	SCF, Manatee-Sarasota	1,313	2,715
Lake-Sumter	502	1,038	Tallahassee	2,549	5,271
Miami Dade	9,165	18,953	Valencia	6,956	14,385

College Completion rates

College leaders recognize that many students take more than two years to complete an associate’s degree and many take more than four years to complete a bachelor’s degree (see Chart 3). Even with the focus on certificate and degree program completion, too many students are still not completing their education (see Table 2). While developing the goals and plans, Florida leaders examined how we are...

- Planning for maximum student accessibility,
- Scheduling courses, training, and programs for better student access – especially during increased enrollment growth and college budget constraints,
- Increasing student support services for First-Time-in-College and underserved populations,
- Decreasing student debt and educating students on debt reduction,
- Addressing the large number of students not ready for college,
- Reducing textbooks costs for students, and
- Organizing classes and courses over the full academic year.

These efforts were scrutinized to identify priorities for changes needed to increase college completions. The adjustments and improvements included changes such as intensive college readiness

Chart 3: Florida Profile

1-year certificate within 1.5 years

- Full-time: 17.5%
- Part-time: 7.3%

2-year associate within 3 years

- Full-time: 17.9%
- Part-time: 4.2%

4-year bachelor’s within 6 years

- Full-time: 64.7%
- Part-time: 36.9%

Source: Complete College America. 2011

	2-Year Public College		4-year public college	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Enroll	38%	27%	33%	2%
Return as Sophomores	24%	12%	29%	1%
Graduate on time (Associate = 2 years, Bachelor’s = 4 years)	2%	0%	12%	0%
Additional graduates (Associate = 3 years, Bachelor’s = 6 years)	5%	1%	10%	1%
Additional graduates (Associate = 4 years, Bachelor’s = 8 years)	5%	1%	1%	0%
Total graduates	12%	2%	23%	1%
Graduate in 4 years	14%		24%	

Source: CCA (2011) , Data: 2-year cohort started in fall 2004; 4-year cohort started in fall 2002

programs, accelerated programs, on-line or hybrid delivery, as well as stackable and transferrable two-years-or-less programs. College Resource Development departments sought grants to support these efforts such as Title III, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), Gates Foundation Completion by Design, Gateway to College National Network, Lumina Foundation for Education's Adult Degree Completion, and many Department of Education grants.

Foundations initiated scholarship programs such as the College of Central Florida's "Finish Line" (initially targeting students in the college's equine studies program) which would provide additional scholarship funds to students after completion of their freshman year who have maintained a certain Grade Point Average to encourage them to stay in school and complete their second year of an Associate of Science degree program.

In March 2011, Florida announced the Finish Up, Florida! initiative as another step toward increasing completion rates. Finish Up, Florida! targets students who left the FCS without graduating and seeks to bring them back to earn their degrees. Students are able to use FACTS.org, Florida's online advising network, to determine the steps needed to re-enroll.

Another completion-focused initiative in which Florida recently engaged is Project Win-Win. Project Win-Win is funded by the Lumina Foundation, designed and managed by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, and evaluated by State Higher Education Executive Officers. It is the process of finding former students who are eligible to earn a credential – or are just short of being eligible – and bringing them back to complete their degree. In Florida, Broward College, Indian River State College, and St. Johns River State College are serving as pilot colleges for Project Win-Win.

Additionally, the Division organized The Florida College System Advising Network in summer 2011, which consists of a listserv of over 160 administrators across the System and a monthly newsletter entitled *A Community for Completion: Promising Practices to Increase Completion in The Florida College System*. The goal of the network is to share information about ways to improve completion rates through student advising. Topics of interest have included equity in advising, advising student veterans, and automatic graduation.

One way colleges will be able to track student progress toward completion is with the Student Success Data Dashboard (Dashboard). Florida designed the Dashboard to include institutional-level results so colleges have the improved ability to track students as they reach key milestones such as developmental education coursework completion and degree completion. Once

colleges have access to progress and outcome metrics through the dashboard, administrators and faculty will be better positioned to make data driven decisions.

Florida also has a number of policies in statute and rule designed to foster student completion. Florida's "2+2" articulation system, long seen as a national model, promotes the smooth transfer of students from an associate to a baccalaureate degree. Equity and civil rights compliance outlined in section 1005.05(4), Florida Statutes, requires colleges to implement methods and strategies designed to promote completion of underrepresented populations. Finally, Florida's new placement test, the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (P.E.R.T.), is better equipped to accurately place students in entry-level college credit coursework. More accurate placement will lead to greater student persistence toward completion.

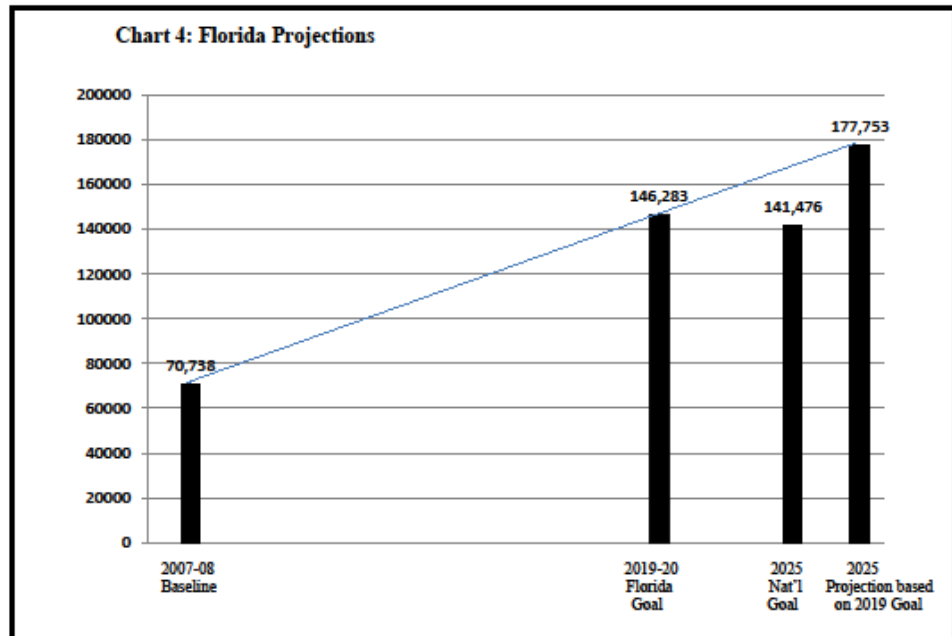
In addition to statewide efforts, Florida Colleges are joining national efforts to improve college completion rates. For example, organizations such as the Lumina Foundation (2004) established programs such as the *Dreamkeepers*SM to help keep students in school (and increase completion rates). This effort, a program of Scholarship America^R recognizes that short-term financial emergencies are one of the top reasons open access college students drop out of school. The funds available from this program can only be used for emergency living expenses, specifically not to be used for tuition and books. The most common use of the funds is for housing, utilities, meals, transportation, car repairs, and childcare. Community colleges participate in this program nationwide, and Florida is no exception. The program, supported by the Lumina Foundation, the Walmart Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation, showed a national 84 percent success rate in re-enrollment during 2008-2009.

In another national effort, Florida joined in partnership with Complete College America (CCA). The CCA Alliance of States was built to join state education efforts together in a bold movement to significantly increase the number of students who successfully complete college and achieve degrees or credentials. The effort examines the labor market outlook and focuses on attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations.

Next Steps

Florida is on the right track for success (see Chart 4). Using the Florida baseline from 2007-08 (first column) and Florida goal for 2019-20 (second column), a projection can be made for 2025 (last column) as compared to Florida's 2025 national goal (third column). With this projection in mind, Florida is employing effective practices to more than double the number of college completion

degree and certificate students by 2025. As the colleges continue efforts that have proven effective and examine other successful initiatives in the state and nation, the Florida College System will implement and adopt best practices toward the attainment of the completion goals.



The national college completion initiative has placed appropriate focus on examining what is happening in the nation. In that examination, Florida colleges are also focusing on the degree completion efforts in alignment with the needs in the state. State leaders recognize that we should always consider improvement, but Florida can be proud of the fact that we are exceeding many other states in this initiative: 1) Florida is at the top of the Southern regions outpacing Texas, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia (Circelli, 2011); 2) The state has the highest three-year graduation rate at 34.4 percent, which is 16 percentage points higher than the Southern region average and 23.6 percent greater than Texas (Florida College System, 2011); and 3) Florida's system is also No. 2 of the 10 largest public university systems for retention rates of first-time-in-college students (The State University System, 2011).

Florida can be proud of its success rate, but the culture of the system is that we never stop looking for improvements. With the help of the Florida College System Institutional Research and Effectiveness unit and each of the college's Institutional Effectiveness, Resource Development, as well as Research and Evaluation Departments, we continually examine trends, analyze success, and set new goals. As we approach the marker to double our college completion rates in associate degree and certification programs, Florida College's grants departments and foundations will continually strive to be at the forefront of government, private, and corporate foundation funding opportunities, as well as individual philanthropy to help ensure the attainment of this vital goal.

References

- Achieving the Dream Network. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.achievingthedream.org/>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). Current Population Survey: Education pays. Washington, D.C.: May 4, 2011 Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/>
- Circelli, D. (2011). Higher education reforms on the way for Florida. The Daytona Beach News-Journal: October 3, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.news-journalonline.com>.
- Complete College America. (2011). *Complete College America*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://www.completecollege.org/>
- Florida College System. (2011). *Data and Reports*. Institutional Research and Effectiveness unit: the Division of Florida Colleges. Florida Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/Evaluations>
- Florida College System. (2011). *Stepping Up: A Strategic Plan for the Florida College System*. Florida Department of Education. Retrieved from <Http://fldoe.org>
- Gates Foundation. (2008). *New Initiative to Double the Number of Low-Income Students in the U.S. Who Earn a Postsecondary Degree by Age 26*. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved form <http://www.gatesfoundations.org>
- Gateway to College. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/>
- Kresge Foundation. (2011). Retrieved from <Http://www.kresge.org>.
- Lumina Foundation. (2011). *DreamkeepersSM*, a Program of Scholarship America. Retrieved from <www.dreamkeepers.org>. Minneapolis, MN.
- Lumina Foundation. (2011). Lumina for Education. Retrieved from <http://www.luminafoundation.org>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2006). U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/>
- Scholarship America. (2011). Dollars for Scholars^R; *DreamkeepersSM*, a Program of Scholarship America; and Scholarship Management Services^R. Retrieved from <www.scholarshipamerica.org>. Minneapolis, MN.
- State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). (2008). *Second to None in Attainment, Discovery, and Innovations: The National Agenda for Higher Education*.
- The State University System of Florida. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.flbog.org/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2007). Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/>
- Walmart Foundation. (2011). Community Giving. Retrieved from <http://walmartstores.com>.