

## Four-Year Degrees: *Preparation for Life & Career*

As our nation continues to experience radically shifting demographics and changes and adaptations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic disruptions, students from all backgrounds aspire to obtain a college degree.

According to a recent survey, **96%** of high school students in the south King County region want to go to college to pursue a fulfilling career; **72%** of students specifically hope to obtain a four-year degree<sup>1</sup>.

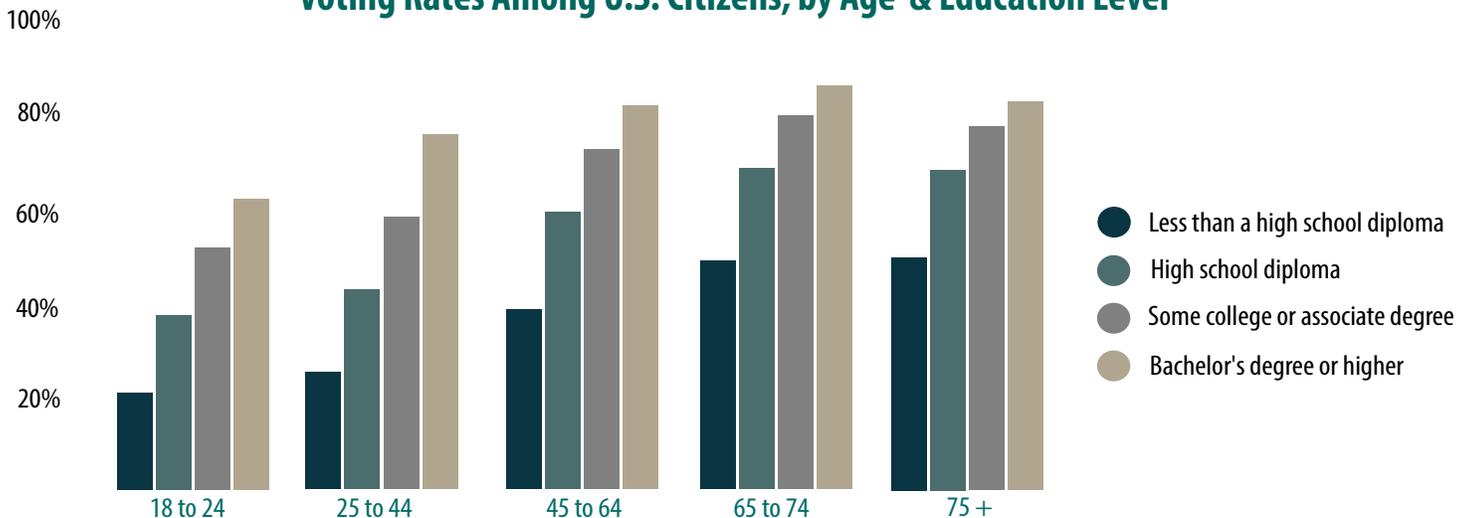
Looking back on the economic recovery from the Great Recession, out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession period from 2010-2016, 8.4 million or more than **72%** required a bachelor's or advanced degree<sup>2</sup>.

### Why does a four-year degree matter?

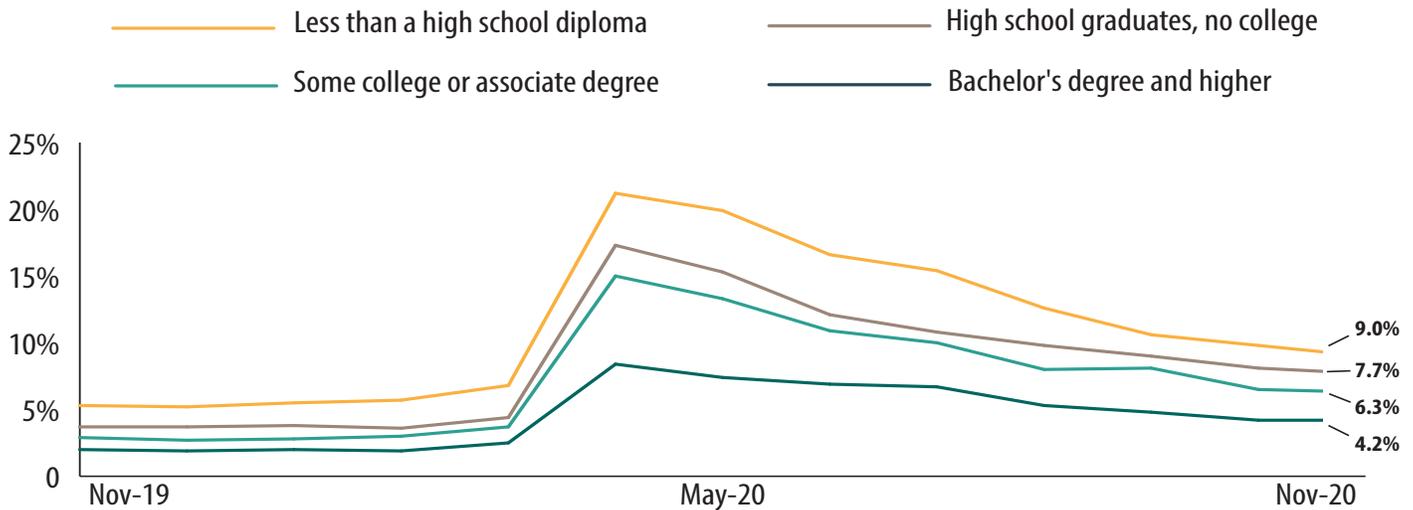
Possessing a bachelor's degree confers a multitude of benefits in comparison to those with a high school degree<sup>3</sup>:

- ◆ Increased lifetime earnings
- ◆ Lower unemployment rates
- ◆ Lower incidence of poverty
- ◆ Lower crime and incarceration rates
- ◆ Better health outcomes
- ◆ Longer life expectancy
- ◆ Higher rates of volunteerism
- ◆ Higher rates of voting and political involvement
- ◆ Higher average personal savings balance<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Higher payback in the form of sales, property, and state income taxes

### Voting Rates Among U.S. Citizens, by Age & Education Level<sup>5</sup>



## Employment Status of the Civilian Population 25 Years & Over by Educational Attainment



### Enrolling in a four-year college or university also opens one up to a world of possibilities:

- ◆ Study abroad opportunities
- ◆ Internship experiences
- ◆ Applied learning
- ◆ Exposure to cutting edge undergraduate research and technology
- ◆ Expanded networking opportunities
- ◆ Preparation for graduate and professional programs

Yet many of these opportunities are not accruing to Washington residents. Our state ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in the percent of bachelor's degree holders among 25-44 year-olds but this is due in large part to the fact that Washington is extremely successful in importing educated individuals from out of state.

Our lack of a college-going culture potentially leaves Washington residents untrained for the jobs of tomorrow. Washington is home to some of the best four-year colleges and universities in the nation. However, we rank 48<sup>th</sup> in participation in public four-year higher education at the undergraduate level and 43<sup>rd</sup> in public bachelor's degrees produced per 1,000 population aged 20-34<sup>7</sup>.

### How can we rise to meet these challenges?

- ◆ Create high aspirations for all students that align with their career goals
- ◆ Ensure all Washingtonians – from high school students to working adults - know that they can gain admission into a four-year college or university
- ◆ Continue to develop innovative and dynamic degree pathways that provide students with skills for today and tomorrow
- ◆ Maintain seamless student transfer pathways

#### Sources:

1. Community Center for Education Results: "Let Us Succeed: Student College & Career Aspirations": <https://roadmapproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Let-Us-Succeed.pdf>
2. Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce: [America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots](https://www.georgetown.edu/news/2019/06/20/america-divided-recovery-college-haves-and-have-nots).
3. Lumina Foundation: "It's Not Just the Money: The Benefits of College Education to Individuals and to Society": <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/its-not-just-the-money.pdf>
4. 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF): <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scfindex.htm>
5. Statista. Voting rates in the U.S., by age and education level, 2016, Published by Published by Erin Duffin, May 28, 2020: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/234576/voting-rates-by-age-and-education-in-the-us/>
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7. Council of Presidents: "2019 Public Baccalaureate Sector Fact Book": [https://councilofpresidents909036322.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/2019\\_01\\_cop\\_sector\\_factbook.pdf](https://councilofpresidents909036322.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/2019_01_cop_sector_factbook.pdf)