

# dateline Washington

## New Data Shows Small Rise In College Completion for Young Adults

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO, AP EDUCATION WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP) — The percentage of young adults earning a college degree has increased slightly but still remains far below the level needed to reach the president's goal of having the U.S. rank first worldwide in college graduates.

Data being released by the Education Department says 39.3 percent of adults ages 25 to 34 had earned an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree in 2010. That's a half-percentage point increase over the previous year.

Rising tuition costs is one of several reasons why more young adults aren't graduating from college.

In remarks to the National Governors Association, Education Secretary Arne Duncan urged states and institutions to help the federal government keep costs down. Tuition at four-year public universities increased 15 percent between 2008 and 2010, a rise driven largely by cuts to state funding. Forty states trimmed their higher education spending in the last year, the department said.

"We've made some progress, but the combination of deep state budget cuts and rising tuition prices is pushing an affordable col-

lege education out of reach for middle-class families," Duncan said.

The United States ranks 16th in the percentage of young adults who have earned a college degree, behind countries including South Korea, Canada, Japan and Russia, according to a 2011 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Sixty-three percent of adults ages 25 to 34 have earned a college credential in South Korea, compared to 41 percent in the United States.

While the proportion of young adults in the U.S. with a college degree is about the same as it is for older adults who are now exiting the labor market, there is concern that the number of people with a post-secondary degree isn't rising fast enough.

The U.S. has 35.7 percent of the world's college graduates in the 55-to-64 age bracket, but only 20.5 percent in the 25-to-34 age range.

The percent of all adults in the U.S. with a college degree increased from 34 percent to 41 percent between 1997 and 2009, according to the OECD, and the U.S. ranks fourth globally when all age groups are included. But other

### NUMBERS

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countries have made larger leaps, including Canada, where half of adults are college graduates.

"Part of it is that the rest of the world has caught up to us," said Thomas Bailey, director of the Community College Research Center at Columbia University's Teachers College. "I think that we basically up until the last 15 years we were very proud of our post-secondary system. And perhaps complacent about it."

Bailey noted it was only in the last 10 to 15 years that education leaders have had a consistent measure for graduation rates at colleges. He said leaders need to

focus especially on low-income and minority students, who have the lowest college completion rates. Community colleges and vocational schools could also play an important role in improving the numbers.

President Barack Obama set a goal shortly after taking office for the U.S. to lead the world in the proportion of college graduates by the year 2020. He also called on every American to commit to at least one year of higher education or career training.

To meet the president's goal, an estimated 10 million more Americans ages 25 to 34 will need to earn a two- or four-year degree, according to figures previously released from the Education Department.

The data shows most states will need to make dramatic leaps in order to meet the goal of having 60 percent of the nation's young adults with a college degree. In Florida, there were 816,946 adults ages 25 to 34 with a post-secondary degree. That number will need to increase to at least 1.48 million. In New York, the number will need to rise from 1.3 million to 1.67 million.

Montana saw the largest year

to year increase in young college graduates, rising from 37.1 percent in 2009 to 40.3 percent in 2010, but the state also is among the smallest in terms of population. North Dakota is the state with the highest percent of college graduates in the 25 to 34 age range, at 50.8 percent, but again, its population is relatively small compared to other states.

Nearly 69 percent of young adults in the District of Columbia had a college degree.

Education leaders and advocates for increasing college access and completion said the overall increase was not strong enough.

"It is a small jump and it's nothing near what we need to see to be competitive," said James Applegate, vice president for program development at the Lumina Foundation, which works toward improving college enrollment and completion. The foundation set its own goal of increasing the proportion of the U.S. population with a higher education degree to 60 percent by 2025 in 2007.

"We've got to begin to ramp it up to meet the demands of this economy," Applegate said. ▲

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## Mission, *from page 7, col. 1*

accreditation response headquarters. Work groups made up of up to a dozen students, faculty and staff have been formed to address each of the commission's recommendations. Commission staffers have conducted workshops to help the work groups complete their tasks.

The state's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team has been dispatched to San Francisco to help the college manage its new fiscal reality.

Faculty members have cancelled summer vacations to be part of the process. The college's 2012-13 budget is in balance, in part through pay cuts and givebacks from employees and the elimination of some 700 courses.

"We're very concerned," said Karen Saginor, a CCSF librarian and president of the college's Academic Senate. "We are doing all we can do, and we'll continue to do so. We were surprised. We expected to get a sanction. But we never expected to go from no sanction to show cause."

"But people are stepping up. City College is deeply committed to the city and the city is deeply committed to the college."

For CCSF, the stakes are high. Founded in 1935 during the depths of the Great Depression as a vocational arm of San Francisco Unified School District, CCSF became a separate community college in 1970. Today, the college offers 66 associate degrees, 125 credit certificate programs, 84 noncredit certificates and other certificates of accomplishment. It serves students

preparing to transfer to four-year universities as well as those looking for additional training to advance in the workforce.

CCSF also provides adult education, dual enrollment programs for at-risk high school students. A majority of the students served by CCSF are minorities — more than 30 percent are Asian, 21 percent are Hispanic and 7 percent are black.

In addition, more than half of the 90,000-plus students enrolled at City College are there part-time, taking non-credit and non-degree bearing certificate programs that range from ESL to computer skills.

Whether the college can continue to offer a full array of courses is at the center of the accreditation debate. Even as funding has been shrinking, California community college leaders are prodding colleges to reform, based on the recommendations of the state's Student Success Task Force.

After a year of study and public hearings, the task force and the state college governing board are stressing positive student outcomes over unfettered access.

For colleges like CCSF, "it's kind of a perfect storm," said Alisa Messer, a CCSF developmental English instructor and president of the local chapter of the American Federation of Teachers.

"On one hand, you have the systemic defunding of colleges, and at the same time different measures of success. Our sense is that in reframing the mission of colleges, there's an insistence of moving people

through quickly.

"That's an important thing to do, so students can meet their academic goals. My concern is that we'll have a narrowing of access. We won't be able to help the students who really need the help. We'll be focusing on students who are the sure things. I think City College is about the students who need a second, third or fourth chance. They're not covered under the new metrics. They need extra time and support...you're narrowing the pathways."

Fisher, the interim chancellor, insists that some fundamental changes are on the way as the college tries to balance its mission with fiscal restraints.

"The CCSF community will need to implement dramatic systemic changes," she wrote in her response to the commission. "CCSF currently spends 92 percent of its budget on personnel costs, placing it at the very highest end of the state's community

colleges. Reducing this number, to allow funding of the other critical needs identified in the Accreditation Report, is central to a meaningful resolution of the college's fiscal crisis. Equally as important, the college will need to reexamine the effectiveness of its shared governance and decision-making process, including appropriate roles for trustees, faculty, administration, staff, and students. Additionally, we will need to continue to improve our integrated planning and focus on student outcomes."

Fisher is among those who vow that the college will not close. Messer agrees.

"We are not going to let that happen," she said. "One of the silver linings of this is we are finding out in profound ways how many people the college has touched. I really believe it has improved lives. We don't think that success and access are mutually exclusive. We think you can have both." ▲

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