POST-SECONDARY ATTAINMENT IN SOUTHERN NEVADA
How does Nevada rank in the Mountain West region?

Post-secondary attainment is the proportion of adults with college degrees (associates, bachelors, graduate, professional). It can also include high quality certifications and industry-recognized credentials required for employment.

In Nevada, 54% of today’s jobs require some form of post-secondary education, but only 30% of Nevada and Clark County residents hold a post-secondary degree.

In order to build the skilled and knowledgeable workforce necessary to compete in a global and technology-focused economy, Southern Nevada will need to increase its levels of post-secondary attainment.

Increased post-secondary attainment is critical to break generational cycles of poverty, prepare people for employment and achieve sustained economic growth in Southern Nevada.

In the United States, 37% of adults over the age of 25 hold a post-secondary degree. Nevada is part of an 8-state region called the Mountain West. Nevada has the lowest rate of any Mountain West state, as only 30.2% of adults have achieved some level of post-secondary attainment. In Clark County, 29.7% of residents over the age of 25 hold a post-secondary degree.

Both the State of Nevada and Clark County (30%) trail the national post-secondary attainment rate of 37%.

Why is post-secondary attainment important in Southern Nevada?

In Nevada, 54% of jobs require a post-secondary degree and only 30% of residents qualify.

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Clark County falls behind the national average in adult educational attainment in terms of adults with some college or higher: 32.9% of adults have completed some college or have an associates degree and 22.2% have obtained a bachelors degree or higher. The United States rates are 29.1% and 29.3%, respectively.

In addition, only 4% of adults aged 24 to 64 held a quality credential outside of a degree in 2014.

### Educational Attainment for Adults 25 and Over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less Than High School</th>
<th>High School / EQ</th>
<th>Some College / Associates</th>
<th>Bachelors or Higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States</strong></td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nevada</strong></td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clark County</strong></td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder City</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesquite</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Las Vegas</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial aid is one of the most effective mechanisms for improving access to higher education, and is often obtained by parents and students through state-run college savings programs and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Funding for college obtained through FAFSA not only ensures that college is more affordable to students, but also inspires them to consider and focus on life after high school. To qualify for financial aid, students must start and complete an application starting in October of the year before they plan to attend college. At eleven Clark County high schools, fewer than one in three seniors completed a FAFSA.

Once in college, students may have difficulty keeping up with college level coursework due to issues like costs and scheduling. According to data compiled by the Lumina Foundation, fewer than 25% of students in Southern Nevada colleges and universities graduate within six years. Often this is due to a misalignment in high school curriculum and college and university classes. By creating alignment in K-12 curriculum and higher education coursework, students can persist in college to reach graduation day.

Supporting programs that assist parents and students in navigating the financial aid landscape can help strengthen the pathway from high school to college. Increasing collaboration between K-12 and higher education providers to ensure timely completion of college coursework can improve the college to career pathway for all residents.
FAFSA initiation rates differ on a school-by-school basis in Clark County. Only at eleven high schools do more than 60% of students start the FAFSA, mostly at magnet schools or career and technical academies. Once they start filing out the FAFSA, however, approximately 91% of Clark County students complete it.

Average neighborhood school FAFSA submission rate is only 37.9%
Improving post-secondary attainment in Southern Nevada will require the concerted collaboration of families, community members, schools and policymakers. Working together, we can make considerable progress toward ensuring that everyone has access to educational opportunities.

**FAMILIES**
Families can create a home environment that supports learning and actively seek to educate themselves on the options available for financing a college education or other post-secondary plans.

**SCHOOLS**
Schools can implement policies that proactively support student success. Strategies should include hosting FAFSA awareness and initiation events, increasing the amount of dual enrollment classes, integrating college and career preparation more purposefully into curriculum, and offering one-on-one guidance.

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
Community members can provide support by attending school-related events and offering to share their own experiences accessing college funding by volunteering at FAFSA awareness and completion events.

**POLICYMAKERS**
Policymakers can identify and support a diverse set of initiatives that strengthen student transitions from high school to college and career. Focus on adapting evidence-based program models to meet the specific needs of Southern Nevada.
What programs help to improve college completion?

Increasing post-secondary attainment in Clark County and across Nevada is essential for the future of Southern Nevada’s families and communities. Both locally and across the United States, programs are working to improve FAFSA completion rates and ensure timely completion of college coursework in an effort to strengthen the pathway from high school to career development.

United Way of Southern Nevada leads Mission Achieves, a coalition of program providers, educational institutions, corporate partners and other stakeholders that focus on the entire cradle-to-career pipeline, established with funding from the Lumina Foundation. Mission Achieves follows a Collective Impact model to improve college access and completion, while targeting support for the schools and students that need it the most.

Mission Achieves is part of a nationwide effort in over 75 communities to raise the post-secondary attainment rate to 60% by 2025 and better prepare students for career success. In Nevada, both county and statewide partners have confirmed their commitment to creating a more prepared workforce, with increasing post-secondary attainment serving as a focal point of the 2017 legislative agenda.

10 to Finish

Nevada higher education providers are working statewide to encourage students to enroll in at least 15 credits a semester to ensure on-time graduation.

Students who enroll full-time (15 credits per semester) are more likely to progress from freshman to sophomore status, graduate, pay less in college fees and living expenses, and gain additional years of earnings.

Clark County School District

- The Office of Guidance and Counseling holds financial aid nights at high schools throughout the district.
- The goal is to improve awareness, submission, and completion of FAFSA applications.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

- In 2015–2016, UNLV held over 70 Financial Aid Information Nights and numerous FAFSA completion workshops both on campus and throughout the region.
- Through use of predictive analytics and interventional advising campaigns, UNLV saw a 3% increase in retention of first-year students from 2015-2016.

College of Southern Nevada

- College of Southern Nevada, in partnership with CCSD, offers dual enrollment programs at local high schools.
- Since 2014, 1,824 students have completed 13,274 credit hours.

GEAR UP

- GEAR UP provides intensive academic support, college-awareness and life-preparation activities to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.
- 2,158 CCSD students received engagement services.
- 71% of GEAR UP participants went on to college following graduation.

On Point for College

Syracuse, NY

Coordinated outreach at community centers, consistent communication, college access advising, and wrap-around services ensured that 80% of students stayed on track to graduate college.

College Life 101

Reno, NV

Student retention increased by 12% after students developed education action plans and engaged in weekly check-in visits with advisors.

FAFSA Frenzy

Idaho

21 completion events and a state-wide FAFSA video competition led to a FAFSA completion rate of 87%.

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United Way of Southern Nevada’s Community Reports series provides an opportunity to increase our community’s awareness of local issues by presenting data in accessible and locally-relevant ways. Each report explores county-wide and city-level performance on a specific issue across the cradle-to-career pathway, offering descriptions of the data used, summaries of local trends, and recommendations for action. UWSN will use these reports to inform our own decision making and empower communities across Southern Nevada to actively participate in the issues and efforts to improve them.