

# CLOSING THE U.S. SKILLS GAP IS WITHIN OUR REACH

## STATE OF THE U.S. WORKFORCE

**NOW**  
Fewer than  
**40%**  
of Americans have a college degree.



**By 2018**  
More than  
**60%**  
of jobs in the United States will require postsecondary credentials.

**\$\$**  
Americans with a bachelor's or higher degree  
**EARN TWICE AS MUCH**  
as those with a high school diploma or less.  
**\$**

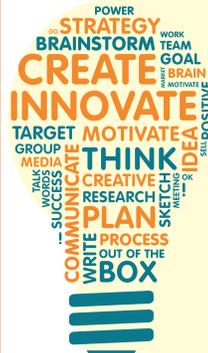
IN THE SUMMER OF 2014  
**4.7** million jobs unfilled  
**9.7** million adults unemployed



## CURRENT FINDINGS

- Nearly all companies offer resources for employee education, but many employees either do not know about or do not take advantage of benefits.
- Employee schedules can make it challenging to pursue traditional postsecondary education programs.
- Resources for education can be vulnerable in tight economic times.
- Most companies do not focus explicitly on increasing postsecondary degree attainment for employees, but rather on ensuring employees have needed skills.
- Employees without postsecondary degrees may get less attention in many large companies with a highly educated workforce.
- Today's workers typically have shorter tenure at any one employer. This has implications for employers as they think about investments in education.
- Quality partnerships between companies and postsecondary institutions are needed, but take extensive time and resources to get right, and depend on many factors.
- We must focus also on the role of "place": Broader regional strategies can help mobilize employers to support their employee educational attainment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



### EMPLOYERS

- Leadership and communication matter.
- Educational benefits can be the make-or-break factor for employees pursuing education.
- Support employees' educational endeavors by providing flexibility in work schedules.
- Work with university partners to prioritize credit-earning coursework.
- Improve systems for collecting data on employee education.
- Understand that some great educational resources are low-cost or free.

### EMPLOYEES

- Be vocal with employers about educational goals.



### POLICYMAKER/ CITY LEADERS

- City leaders, business support organizations, and community foundations can help connect higher education institutions with employees.
- Know that supporting educational attainment is easier if part of a broader metro strategy.
- Provide political will for making external funding and other resources available.



### UNIVERSITY/ COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERS

- Be flexible and responsive to employer needs.
- Help employers understand potential opportunities for return on investment (ROI) in employee education.

*"Just as we focus on people, we must also focus on places if we want our college attainment efforts to succeed... While many factors contribute to the quality of life in a city, its education attainment level is a powerful determinant... An educated city demands better schools, values diversity, and embraces the arts... These efforts work best when they involve all of the relevant stakeholders: that is, political, business, education, philanthropic, faith-based, and community leaders."*

—Jamie P. Merisotis, President & CEO, Lumina Foundation (2012)