



## 2015 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE BRIEF

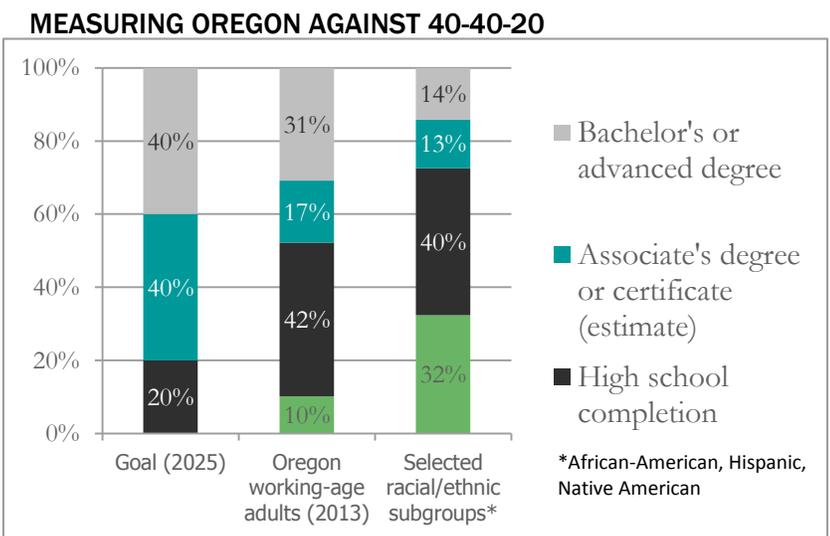
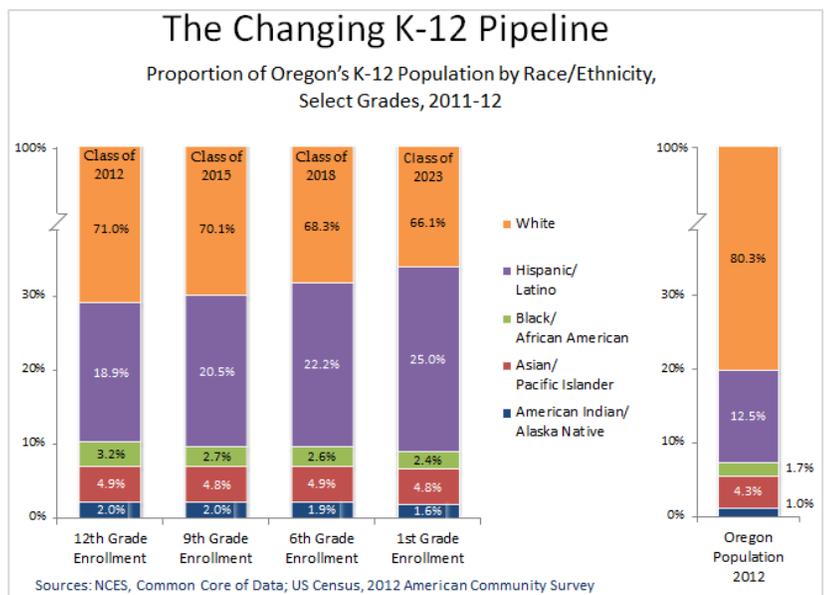
### EQUITY: POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS FOR OREGON'S INCREASINGLY DIVERSE POPULATION

Oregon's diversity is increasingly multifaceted, including racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, gender, geographic (urban and rural), gender identity and sexual orientation, disability, and age/generational diversity. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission has adopted the Oregon Education Investment Board's Equity Lens and is firmly committed to the representation, inclusion, and engagement of broadly diverse populations through a variety of initiatives. Equity is firmly at the forefront of our prioritization, decision-making and daily work.

#### OREGON'S CHANGING

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** References to increasing racial/ethnic population diversity are frequent and important, but other factors including growing low-income, first-generation students and the aging of current workforce and subsequent boomer generation retirement curve is also of note. According to the Governor's Office of Diversity & Inclusion, 20% of existing state employees will be retirement eligible by 2018, and other sectors overall are experiencing similar trends. Rural economic recovery continues to significantly lag metro areas. The demand for 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge workers is increasing and those attributes generally include postsecondary education. To be competitive in today's innovation economy, Oregonians seeking jobs, careers or those with entrepreneurial aspirations must secure additional skills.

**OREGON'S UNDERSERVED:** Education is a primary tool to increase our most precious resource: human capital. While numerous initiatives are being deployed to reduce achievement gaps, the data demonstrates the distance we have yet to travel. Oregon's fastest growing youth populations are among Oregonians who currently have low high-school completion and postsecondary entry. In particular, Latino students are estimated to grow to 25% in 2023. Only 13% of Latino students



*"Whether we like it or they like it, the next generation will run our world; how well will we prepare them?"*

—Sam Brooks, Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs

attain a Bachelor’s degree, compared to 31% for Oregonians as a whole<sup>1</sup>. If participation and success rates of the fastest growing Oregon racial/ethnic group are not as robust as other groups, Oregon will face serious challenges reaching the 40-40-20 educational attainment goals needed for a skilled workforce and strong economy.

**CONNECTING TO JOBS OF THE FUTURE:** Whether seeking a certificate, apprenticeship or a degree, “by 2020, two thirds of all jobs will require postsecondary education.”<sup>2</sup> and “The premium of a quality, relevant education has never been higher. Education and training are key to raising individual incomes and business productivity, as well as closing historic gaps in opportunity and equity.”<sup>3</sup> What does inaction on postsecondary success equate to for our state? A recent report cites Oregon experiences significant costs for low wage workers “the total annual cost of \$1.75 billion in safety net assistance to workers and their families.”<sup>4</sup> We must better prepare tomorrow’s workforce for higher-demand, higher wage employment.

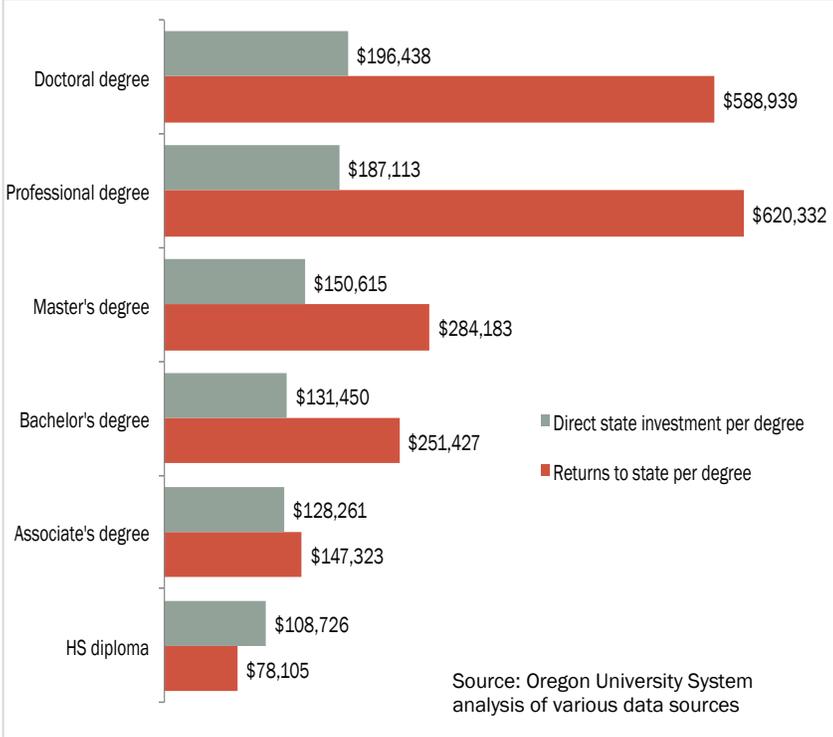
*“In January, Intel announced the creation of our new Diversity in Technology initiative to support, enhance and encourage more diversity at Intel and in the technology industry as a whole. In order to design products and services for consumers, our company make-up must more closely mirror the face of America.”*  
 —Jill Eiland, Public Affairs Director, Intel.

A growing number of companies, global in nature, recognize the need for a diverse workforce to remain intelligent in the marketplace. Given the demands on the economy, if we don’t draw upon a larger, and therefore more diverse, group of people we will be unable to supply Oregon businesses with necessary workforce in skilled labor categories.

Serving the needs of underserved students is crucial to closing gaps in student success, and ultimately increasing educational attainment rates to support the economic mobility and potential civic, cultural, and economic contributions of all Oregonians. In addition to deploying our Equity Lens, the HECC pursues **success for every student** through a variety of efforts: identifying and addressing barriers to entry and access, persistence and completion strategies. We remain steadfast in our commitment to *equitably* broaden **accessible, affordable and supportive pathways for student success**.

*“If the ladder of educational opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them.”*  
 —President Truman, in releasing a report of the President’s Commission on Higher Education, 1947

**DIRECT STATE COSTS AND ESTIMATED RETURNS TO THE STATE, PER DEGREE, Oregon**



<sup>1</sup> US Census American Community Survey 2013  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.luminafoundation.org/facts-and-figures>  
<sup>3</sup> Policy Playbook for 2015, Oregon Business Plan  
<sup>4</sup> The High Cost of Low Wages in Oregon, LERC at University of Oregon