

Georgia Landscape - Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Economic opportunities are on the rise in Georgia as the economy is expanding. Employer job postings have grown over 150% since 2010, outpacing the national growth rate.²³⁰ Meanwhile, Georgia ranks 34th among states for unemployment. Though the number of jobs available is increasing, many potential workers are unemployed or underemployed. These factors indicate that Georgia is experiencing a talent gap, meaning there is a mismatch between the degrees and skills needed by employers and the degrees and skills of the population.

Currently, a low 31% of job postings require only a high school diploma or just some college, while 60% of job postings require at least an associate's degree — a level of education that only 38% of the Georgia's adult population has achieved.

In recent years, Georgia has been aggressively putting in place multiple pathways for post-secondary success to close this gap. The state has been focusing on increasing the rigor of traditional pathways to high school graduation; readying students for post-secondary education; implementing innovative programs that blend high school, career, and post-secondary education; and increasing access to and success in post-secondary education.

Traditional Pathways

Consideration of graduation pathways begins in middle school. As part of the BRIDGE Act (Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy) passed in 2010, students must complete an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP), which helps map out the academic core subjects and focused work students plan to take in math, science, the humanities, the fine arts, world languages, or a sequenced career pathway.^{231,232}

In addition to the regular high school graduation requirements, once students enter high school, they must also complete a pathway selected from four primary options shown in Table 7.2 in order to complete their IGP.

230 Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. (2016). *Georgia: Your Talent Your Future, Educators and Policy Makers Report*. Atlanta: Metro Atlanta Chamber.

231 Georgia Department of Education. (2015). What Is the BRIDGE Law? Retrieved from GaDOE, Transition Career Partnerships, Move On When Ready, Dual Enrollment/ Dual Credit: <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Documents/BRIDGE-separatecard.pdf>.

232 The BRIDGE ACT also calls for career counseling and regularly scheduled advisement for middle and high school students with career counseling to choose a focused plan of study. Note that even in high school, students can change their career path as their interests change.

TABLE 7.2 GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION PATHWAYS²³³

PATHWAY	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS
Advanced academics	Allows a focus on English/ language arts, math, science, or social studies	1. 4 credits in selected subject ²³⁴ 2. 1 Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course in selected subject 3. 2 credits in one world language
Fine arts	Allows a focus on dance, journalism, music, theater arts, or visual arts	3 courses successfully completed in one of the five areas
World language	Allows a focus in French, Spanish, German, Latin, Chinese, or Japanese	3 successive courses in selected language; third course may or may not be an AP or IB course
Career, technical, and agricultural education	One of 17 career pathway options	Requirements specific to the pathway are completed

Georgia’s most robust set of pathways is career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE). CTAE offers students more than 130 pathways to graduation within 17 career clusters. Each cluster includes multiple career pathways. For example, the STEM career cluster includes separate pathways for electronics; engineering and technology; and engineering drafting and design. The clusters are based on the National Career Cluster program used across the United States. Five of the programs saw enrollments of more than 32,000 students in the 2014–2015 school year: business management and administration, finance, information technology, government and public administration, and health science.²³⁵ Two of those clusters – health science and information technology – are directly focused on areas experiencing a workforce shortage, thereby linking post-secondary preparation with industry needs. See Figure 7.4 for pathway enrollments.

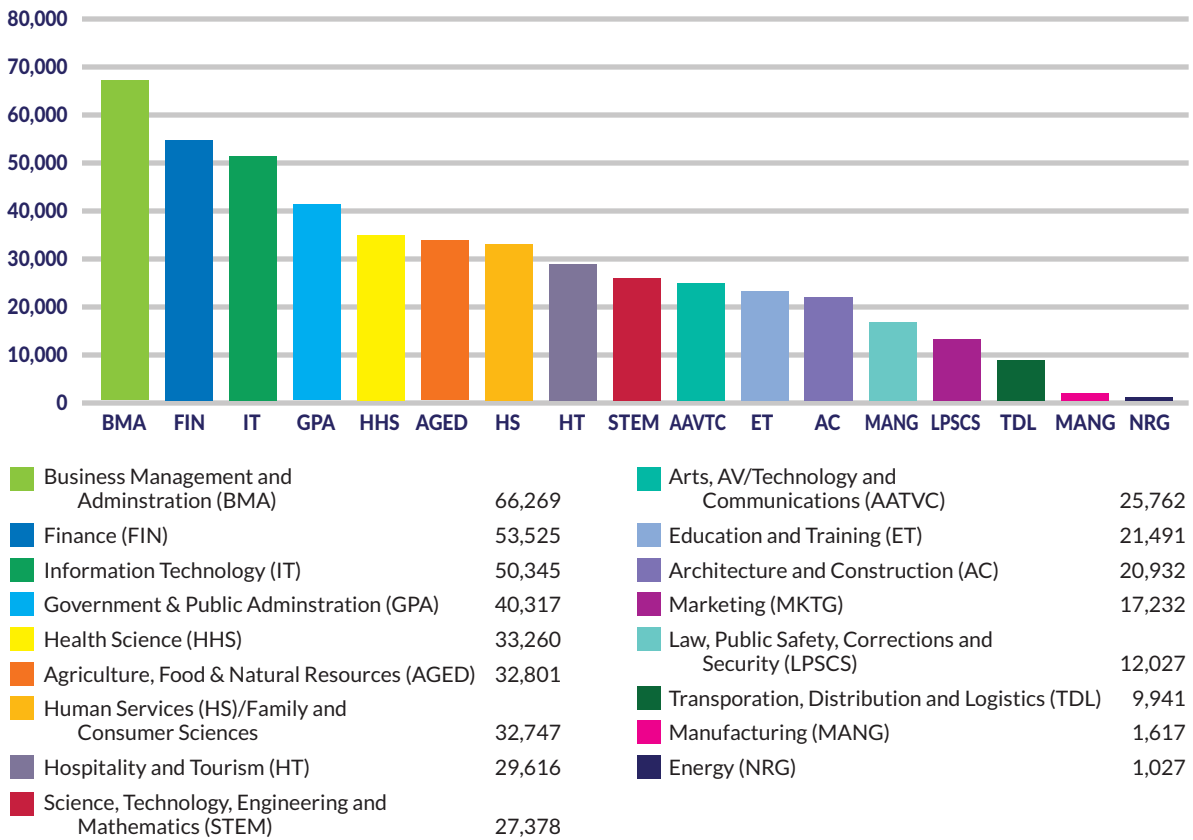
233 <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/pathways.aspx>.

234 For the social studies pathway, students need three credits in social studies.

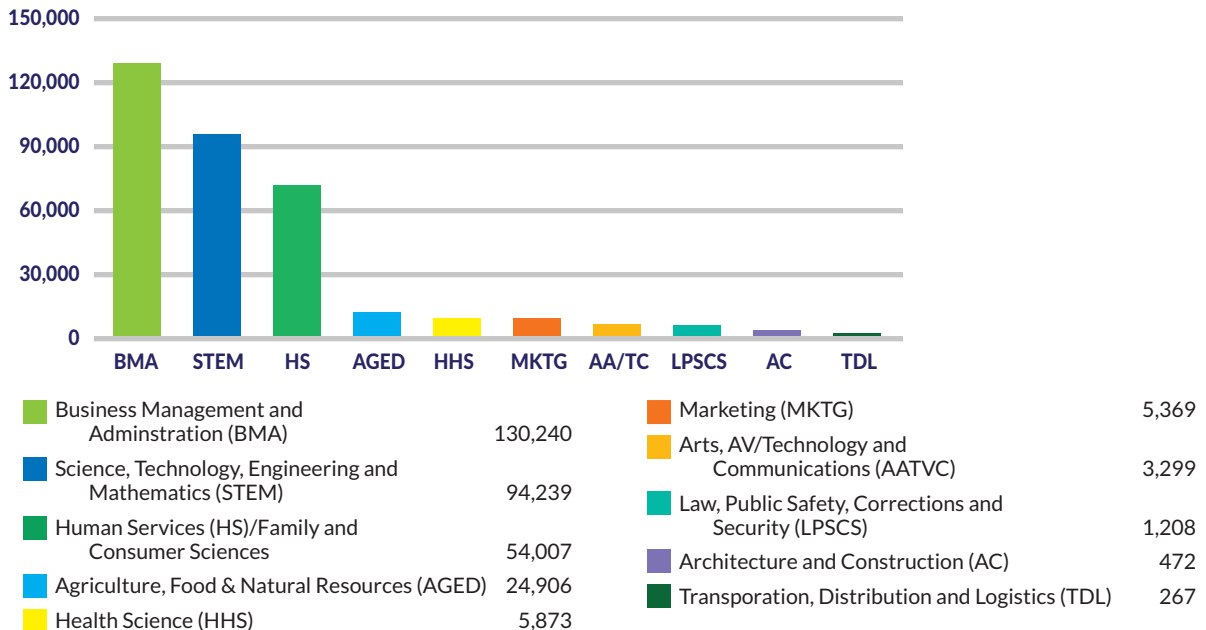
[235 Georgia CTAE. (2015). *CTAE Georgia’s Pathways to Future Workforce: CTAE Annual Report 2015*. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.

FIGURE 7.4 CTAE PROGRAM PATHWAYS AND ENROLLMENTS²³⁶

CTAE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM ENROLLMENT: 2014-2015
Total HS Enrollment 513,003



CTAE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM ENROLLMENT: 2014-2015
Total MS Enrollment 496,361



236 Ibid.

The results of the CTAE pathways have been impressive.²³⁷

- 96% graduation rate for CTAE career pathway completers in 2017
- First state to adopt a career pathway requirement for all high school students
- One of the first two states to offer an International Skills Diploma Seal

Innovative Pathways

Georgia CTAE has also led the way in innovative pathways to increase post-secondary credentials by partnering with other state agencies, businesses, community leaders, and other statewide initiatives.

The Georgia Competitiveness Initiative brought state government and the business community together to develop a long-term strategy for economic development in the state. Led by the Georgia Department of Economic Development and Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the Georgia Competitiveness Initiative examined Georgia's strengths and weaknesses, gathered information and ideas from leaders from various regions and industries, and developed recommendations to stimulate job creation and economic growth.²³⁸

As an outgrowth of the Georgia Competitiveness Initiative Report, in 2014 Governor Deal created the High Demand Career Initiative to allow state partners involved in training Georgia's future workforce to hear directly from the private sector about industry needs (i.e., degrees/majors, certificates, courses, skill sets desired).²³⁹

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), specifically the CTAE division, has taken the recommendations seriously and has been working with the business community and Georgia industries to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce. Georgia CTAE has two primary goals: 1) to increase business and industry involvement with the CTAE pathways throughout Georgia, and 2) to increase the visibility of CTAE pathway options and opportunities among parents and students.²⁴⁰

Several initiatives and partnerships are being undertaken to achieve those goals. One is a partnership with Harvard University's Jobs for the Future Pathways to Prosperity project. Pathways to Prosperity is focused on creating a seamless P-20 pathway for students from elementary school through college, vocational training, and into a successful career. In Georgia, 10 state agencies are working together to implement the vision of the Pathways project.²⁴¹

CTAE is also working with local communities, businesses, and technical colleges to leverage partnerships and highlight best practices between industry and CTAE. One example is the Carrollton/Carroll County Education Collaborative (CCEC). Consisting of leadership from both school districts, West Georgia Technical College, and the University of West Georgia and representatives of the local chamber of commerce and the community, the CCEC has established a common vision for K-16 success. Established in late 2014, this regional effort is focused on aligning curricula and post-secondary success through dual enrollments, post-secondary education early readiness in the middle schools, and data sharing on student performance to inform programming and necessary interventions. The goal of this collaborative is for every student to identify and be supported in their own pathway to post-secondary success.

237 Georgia Department of Education. (2016). *Educating Georgia's Future, 2016*. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.

238 See more at: <http://www.georgiacompetitiveness.org/about/#sthash.XBrWaj6N.dpuf>.

239 Georgia Department of Economic Development. (2014). High Demand Career Initiative, Preparing Georgia's Future Workforce Now. Retrieved from <http://www.georgia.org/competitive-advantages/workforce-division/programs-initiatives/high-demand-career-initiative-hdci/>.

240 Ibid.

241 Those agencies are GaDOE, Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), the University System of Georgia (USG), Office of Governor Nathan Deal, Office of Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, Georgia Department of Labor, the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC), the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

To encourage industry participation, Georgia is also promoting work-based learning opportunities through CTAE. Students earn CTAE class credit while also working at a local business, aiding in the transition from school to work. In 2016, the Governor signed into law House Bill (HB) 402, which provides incentives for businesses to engage students in their communities in work-based learning opportunities.

Another important initiative seeking to prepare students for the workforce is the Georgia College and Career Academy Network, founded by Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle in 2006. Partnerships throughout the state with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and businesses have opened 37 of these charter schools, giving students another option to choose from instead of the traditional school model. Many of the schools are based on academic partnerships between multiple school systems and incorporate project-based learning in math and science problem-solving.²⁴²

Finally, in 2015, the Georgia General Assembly passed two bills that consolidated Georgia’s multiple dual enrollment programs into one, the new Move On When Ready program (now simply called Dual Enrollment). Based on recommendations from Governor Deal’s Dual Enrollment Task Force,²⁴³ these two bills expanded dual enrollment opportunities for all students in grades nine to 12 and provided a new option for high school graduation. These changes were effective July 2015.

TABLE 7.3 ELEMENTS OF THE 2015 MOVE ON WHEN READY LEGISLATION²⁴⁴

MOVE ON WHEN READY/DUAL ENROLLMENT	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION OPTION
High school students may enroll in eligible participating post-secondary institutions while in 9th–12th grades	Students complete 10th grade with the required courses (two English, math, science, social studies; one health and PE and required tests)
Earn dual credit	Eight courses that require end-of-course assessments must be completed
May take any course, academic or CTAE	Complete an associate’s degree, technical diploma, or two technical certificate programs in a career pathway
OR	
May enroll in a post-secondary program (associate’s degree, diploma or technical certificate or credit)	Awarded a high school diploma

Under dual enrollment, students receive both secondary and post-secondary credit. Courses include academic courses related to English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language and CTAE courses. These can be taught either on the high school or college campus or through distance learning. Participating high school students must meet all the entrance requirements of the post-secondary institution, and specific classes, programs, and certificate offerings vary by the individual institution.

242 Fink, A. (2016, May 12). Georgia’s College and Career Academies Preparing 21st Century Workforce. *OnGeorgia*. Retrieved from <http://www.ongorgia.org/education/georgias-college-and-career-academies.html>.

243 Members of the Dual Enrollment Task Force include leaders from the USG, the TCSG, the GSFC, the Professional Standards Commission, and the Governor’s Office as well as state legislators.

244 Mealer, G. (2015, July). *The New Move On When Ready Dual Enrollment Program*. Retrieved from GaDOE, Transition Career Partnerships: <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Documents/New-Move-On-When-Ready-General.pdf>.

CTAE and dual enrollment programs can be combined with other credit-earning programs such as AP, IB, and Early College and Career Academies to improve students' college readiness and potentially shorten the time to earn a degree or professional certificate once in college.

These priorities are reflected in Georgia's revisions to the state accountability plan, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). These revisions are part of the larger state plan developed by GaDOE under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaces federal requirements put in place under No Child Left Behind. One component of the revised CCRPI measures readiness by assessing whether students are participating in activities that prepare them for the next level of schooling, college, or career. For high schools, the readiness measures try to balance college and career readiness. Schools are held accountable for the percentage of students participating in accelerated enrollment courses – academic or technical – dual enrollment, AP, or IB. High schools are also held accountable for the percentage of students successfully completing a career pathway and receiving a nationally recognized industry credential or passing an end-of-pathway assessment.

Success in Post-Secondary Education

Once students enroll in post-secondary education, many slow down, never earn a degree, or drop out altogether due to unclear expectations and obstacles. The most common hurdles faced by students are lack of clear graduation pathways and inadequate financial resources.

The rising cost of post-secondary programs, combined with an increase in the number of students and families living in poverty, is limiting students' ability to complete a post-secondary pathway. Georgia's allocation for higher education funding for the TCSG and the University System of Georgia (USG) has dropped dramatically over the last decade and has yet to return to pre-recession levels. For fiscal year (FY) 2017, state funding per full-time student in the TCSG was about 3% below 2007 levels in inflation-adjusted dollars.²⁴⁵ For the USG, state funding was a full 50% below 2001 levels in inflation-adjusted dollars.²⁴⁶

The Board of Regents recently released an audit of the cost of higher education within the USG. The audit found that costs rose substantially between FY 2006 and 2015.²⁴⁷

- Decreased state expenditures and changes in the HOPE Scholarship (discussed later in this section) have shifted a larger portion of costs to students through increased tuition.
- Costs have also risen due to institution-level policy decisions to expand requirements to live on campus and purchase meal plans as well as increases in mandatory fees.
- USG students' average costs of attendance increased 77%.
- State appropriations did not keep pace with enrollment, which translated into a 15% decrease in per pupil funding.
- Typical housing expenses increased 56% and typical dining expenses increased 60%, both more than double inflation.

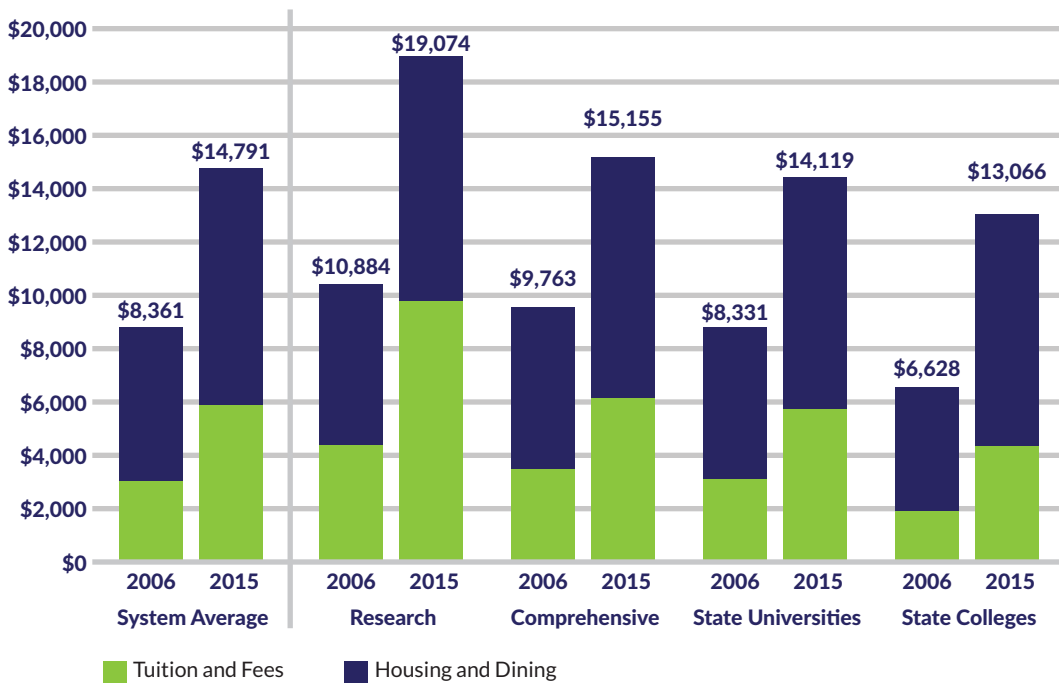
245 Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. (2016). *Georgia Budget Primer 2017*. Retrieved from <https://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/GBPI-Budget-Primer-2017.pdf>.

246 Ibid.

247 Griffin, G. S., and Leslie, M. (2016). *Board of Regents: Requested Information on Higher Education Cost Drivers*. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, Performance Audit Division.

FIGURE 7.5

Increases in Tuition, Fees, Housing and Dining Rates* Have Increased the Cost of Attendance for In-State Students Residing On-Campus, Fiscal Years 2006-2015



*Includes average tuition and fees rates for all USG institutions and average typical housing and dining costs reported by USG institutions to NCES.

Georgia has two primary strategies for providing post-secondary financial aid. The HOPE Scholarship and the associated Zell Miller Scholarship offer merit-based aid to students pursuing bachelors or associates degree in the USG or TCSG. The HOPE Grant is targeted at students in diploma and certificate fields in the TCSG and is not based on merit.

During the 2012 legislative session, HB 326 was passed, reducing the HOPE Scholarship award from funding 100% of tuition to only a portion of tuition. As of 2016, it ranges from 71% at the Georgia Institute of Technology to 88% at state colleges.²⁴⁸ Students must have and maintain a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) to receive and remain eligible. The HOPE Scholarship does not cover any costs related to room and board, student fees, and so forth. HB 326 also created a new scholarship program, the Zell Miller Scholarship, which provides 100% of tuition for Georgia residents who graduate from high school with a 3.7 GPA and have a combined math/ reading SAT score of at least 1200. Students must maintain a minimum 3.3 GPA in college to remain eligible.

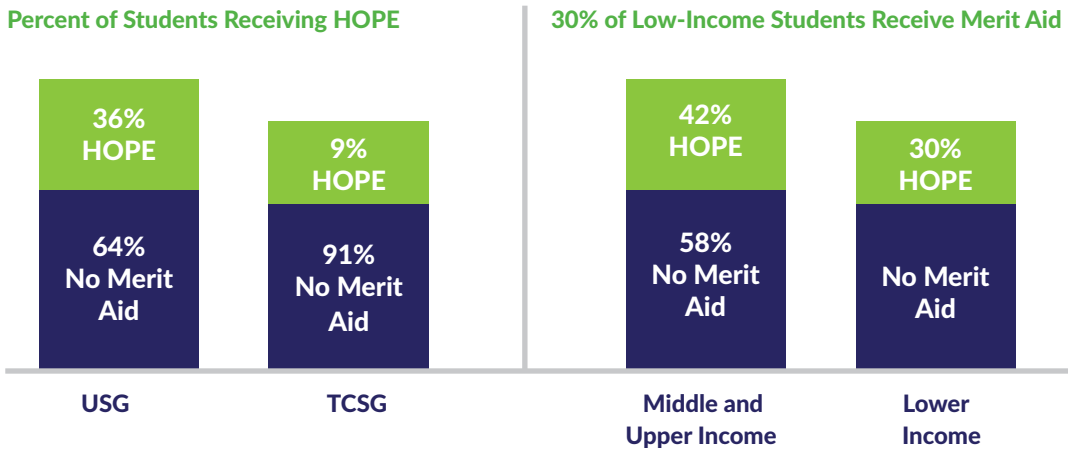
The HOPE Scholarship merit-based program leaves a large unmet need, especially among Georgia’s low-income population. Researchers at the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute found that the scholarship programs are not reaching low-income students.²⁴⁹

248 Ibid.

249 Suggs, C. (2016). *Troubling Gaps in HOPE Point to Need-Based Aid Solutions*, Policy Brief. Atlanta: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute.

- Less than half of in-state students benefit from the HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarships. The programs only reach about 36% of USG students and 8% of TCSG students.
- The HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarship programs are not equitable in their distribution.
 - 30% of low-income students receive either the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship, compared to 42% of middle-upper-income students.
 - 20% of black students and 36% of Hispanic students receive either the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship, compared to 46% of white students.

FIGURE 7.6 THE LIMITS OF THE HOPE SCHOLARSHIP²⁵⁰



Georgia does have an aid program based on financial need that is designed to increase the number of low-income students needing further aid: the Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) Program. Part of the Complete College Georgia initiative, REACH was created by Governor Nathan Deal as a public-private partnership available to low-income eighth graders, who are paired with an academic coach and mentor through high school. Upon high school graduation, participants are awarded scholarships of up to \$10,000. REACH is expanding across Georgia. In 2017, it was available in 69 of the state's 181 school districts. Important to note for statewide expansion, local school districts must raise anywhere from \$1,500 to \$5,000 to contribute toward the cost of each student's scholarship.

In addition to financial needs, students have historically faced other barriers to successfully navigating post-secondary options. To address these issues, in 2011, Governor Deal launched Complete College Georgia (CCG), a statewide initiative to improve college completion and produce 250,000 more adult post-secondary credentials by 2025. The TCSG and USG have been central to carrying out the initiative.

Since implementation, shortening the time to a degree, restructuring education delivery models, and strengthening remedial courses have all been central to the CCG plans across institutions of higher education. Georgia State University (GSU) is one example of the work being done. GSU has been using innovations in data and technology to implement an early warning system that identifies students who may be struggling and in danger of dropping out. Such systems allow academic advisors to focus their attention and resources on students who are the most in need of support services, and together with the student they devise plans to move toward degree completion. At GSU, this system has contributed to increased graduation rates among students overall and among specific minority and economically disadvantaged students.

250 Ibid.

To help low-income students, GSU has also established Panther Retention Grants. These targeted grants are for students at risk for leaving school due to nonpayment of tuition and fees. The results are astounding: 71% of seniors who received the grant graduated within two semesters, and a full 90% of freshmen receiving a Panther Retention Grant were retained.²⁵¹

As a result of the overall CCG strategy, GSU's graduation rate has improved 22 percentage points.

TABLE 7.4 GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE CONFERRALS, SINCE LAUNCH OF COMPLETE COLLEGE GEORGIA STRATEGIC PLAN²⁵²

	ACADEMIC YEAR					
	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	4-Year Change
Pell-eligible students	2,015	2,321	2,607	2,711	2,742	36%
Black students	1,300	1,440	1,552	1,682	1,777	37%
Hispanic students	288	313	360	394	415	44%

Complete College Georgia has also targeted nontraditional students. Typically, policymakers and practitioners track outcomes of first-time freshmen attending school full-time. These “traditional” students are the targets of most higher education policies and programs. However, only a quarter of students attend full-time, go to residential colleges, and have most of their bills paid by their parents. Moreover, a full 40% of students enrolled in post-secondary institutions are enrolled part-time, which lengthens their time to completion and increases the likelihood they will accumulate debt without earning a degree.²⁵³

Because most policies and programs focus on traditional students, older students, students trapped in remediation classes, and students pursuing career certificates and technical degrees have been virtually ignored.

Georgia has recognized the importance of “nontraditional” students and is now including them in statewide efforts, such as Complete College Georgia, to raise the skill level of the workforce and increase the percentage of the population with a higher education degree. Both the USG and TCSG are restructuring their delivery systems to meet the needs of the diversifying student body. The USG restructuring will be concentrated in five areas:

1. Building and sustaining effective teaching
2. Exploring and expanding the use of effective technology models
3. Distance education
4. Adult and military outreach
5. STEM initiatives²⁵⁴

251 Renick, T. (2016, September 22). What Do We Know About College Affordability? *Forum on the Future - Georgia's Workforce Pipeline, College Affordability and the Impact of Need-Based Financial Aid*. Atlanta: Metro Atlanta Chamber/ Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta.

252 Ibid.

253 See <http://completecollege.org/helping-the-new-majority-graduate/>.

254 USG and TCSG. (2012). *Complete College Georgia: Georgia's Higher Education Completion Plan 2012*.

The TCSG is focusing on two areas of restructuring: accelerating success and developing clearer pathways for completion. These changes are intended to create faster, more structured pathways to the completion of a degree or certificate.²⁵⁵

The TCSG in particular has targeted adult learners through education programs that enable them to study for and earn a GED diploma. During FY 2017, more than 55,000 Georgia adult learners took part in the TCSG's GED instruction and testing, English as a Second Language programs, or Adult Basic and Secondary Education programs. Since 2006, the TCSG has awarded nearly 160,000 GED diplomas.²⁵⁶ These GED graduates can now transition to a college education and join the growing number of nontraditional students our institutions are being asked to serve.

255 Ibid.

256 TCSG. (2017). Technical College System of Georgia Fast Facts and College Directoy 2017. Retrieved from https://tcsge.edu/download/TCSG_Fast_Facts_Directory_v.2017_web.pdf.