

America's Rural Opportunity

**Gaining by Degree: Increasing Rural
Education, Career and Community Success**

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Gaining by Degrees: Increasing Rural Education, Career and Community Success

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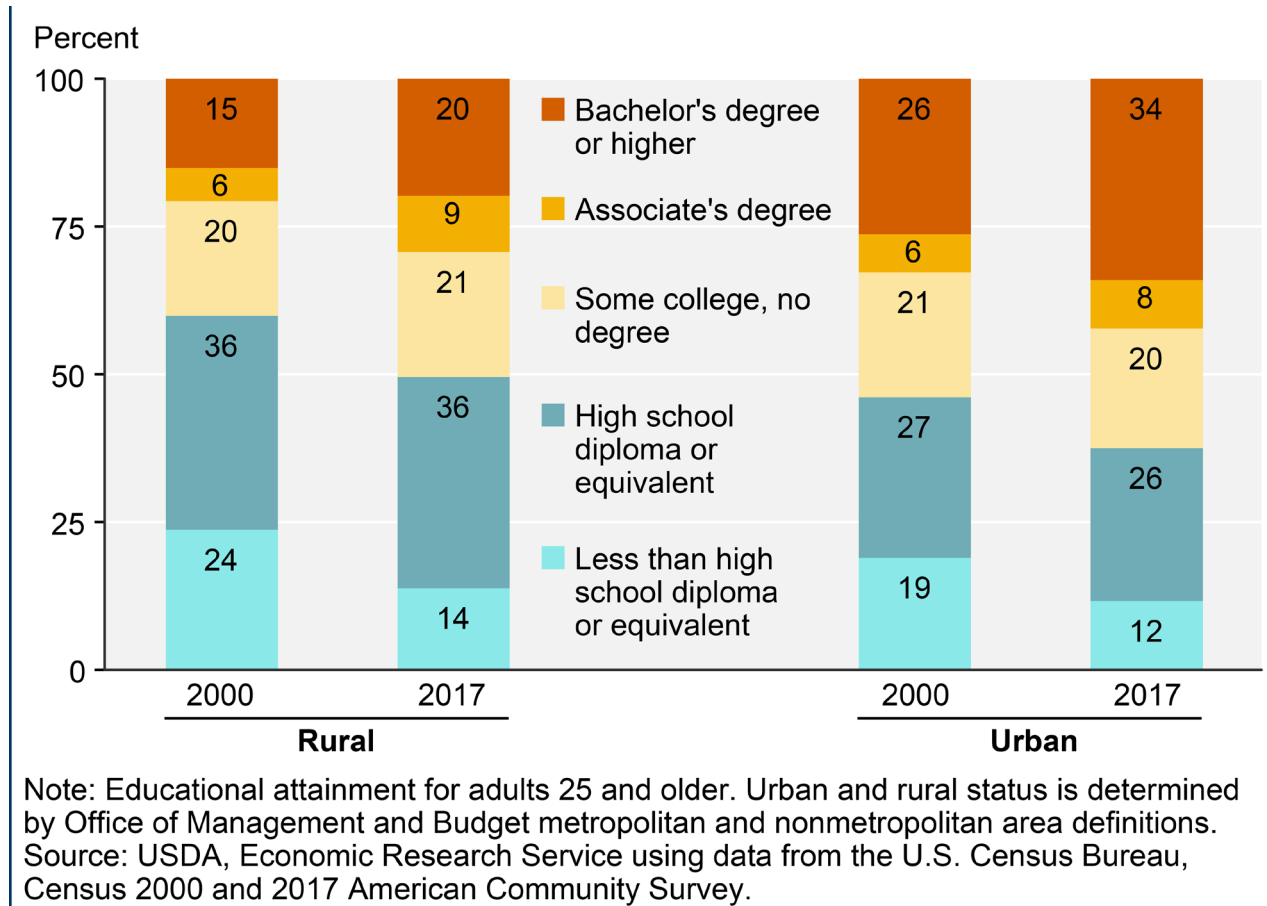
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Educational Attainment in Rural Communities



Educational Attainment in Rural Communities

- Among the bottom 10% of counties in the U.S. in terms of postsecondary educational attainment, 84% are rural
- There are 21 million adults without a college degree in rural America

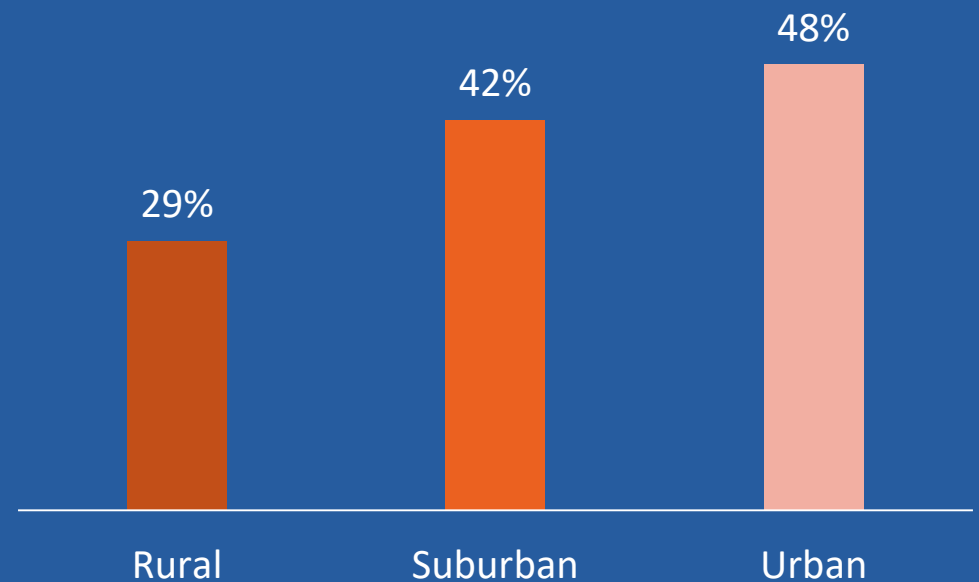
An opportunity gap, not an ability gap

- *Rural students outperform urban peers in national standardized measures of math & English (NAEP)*
- *23% of rural students earn dual enrollment credits in high school compared to 16% nationwide*



Fewer young people from rural areas are enrolled in college

% of 18-24 Year-Olds Enrolled in College



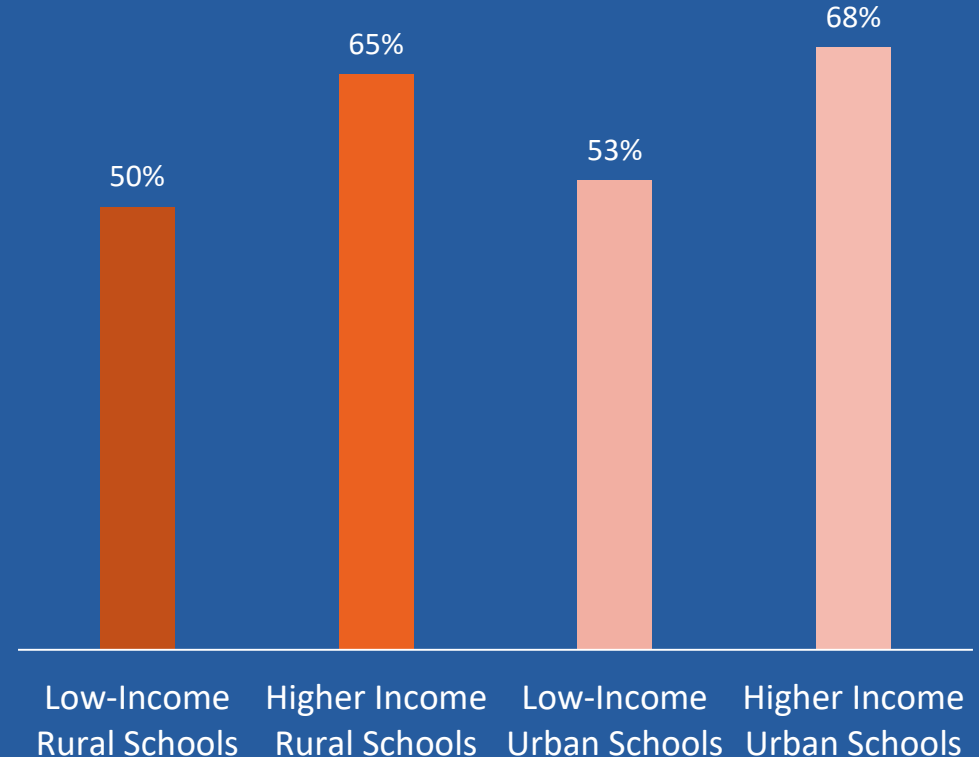
Why?

- Rural household income tends to be 20-25% less than in urban areas, making college less affordable for those in rural areas.
- Geographic distance adds both additional costs and a psychological barrier for young people growing up in rural areas.
- 41 million Americans - 82% of them rural - live in “higher education deserts” at least a thirty-minute drive from the nearest college or university



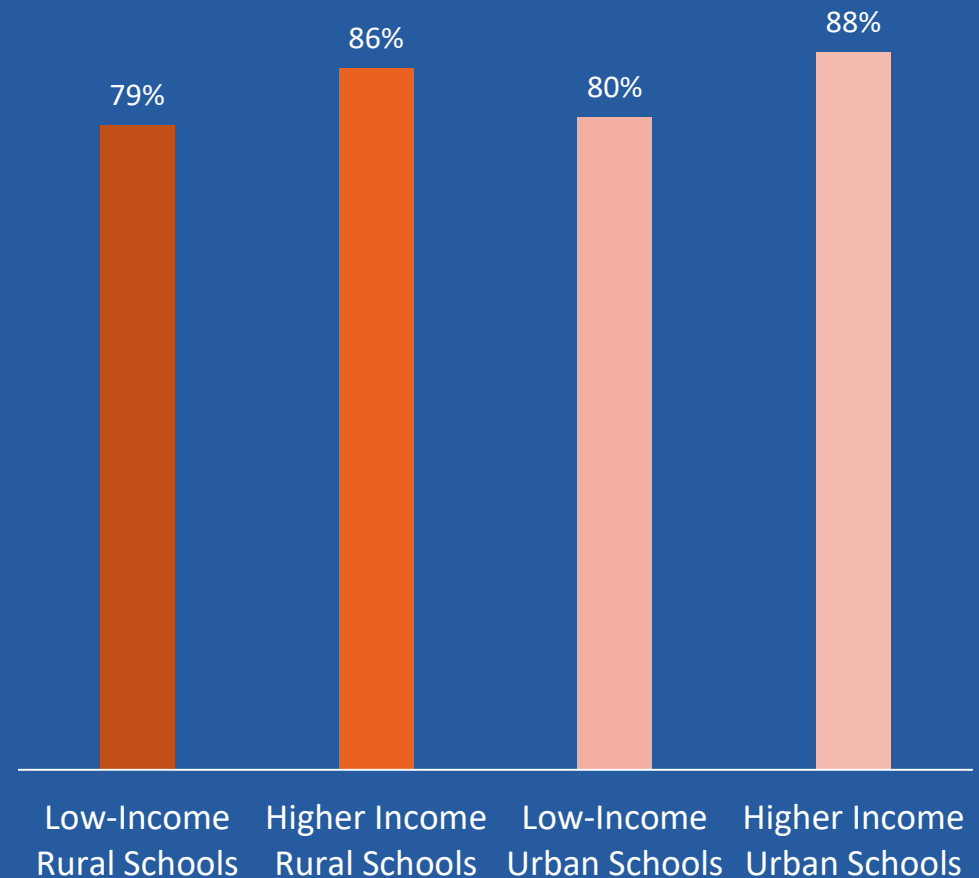
Students from low-income rural schools are least likely to go to college directly after high school

Rates of College Enrollment in the First Fall after High School Graduation



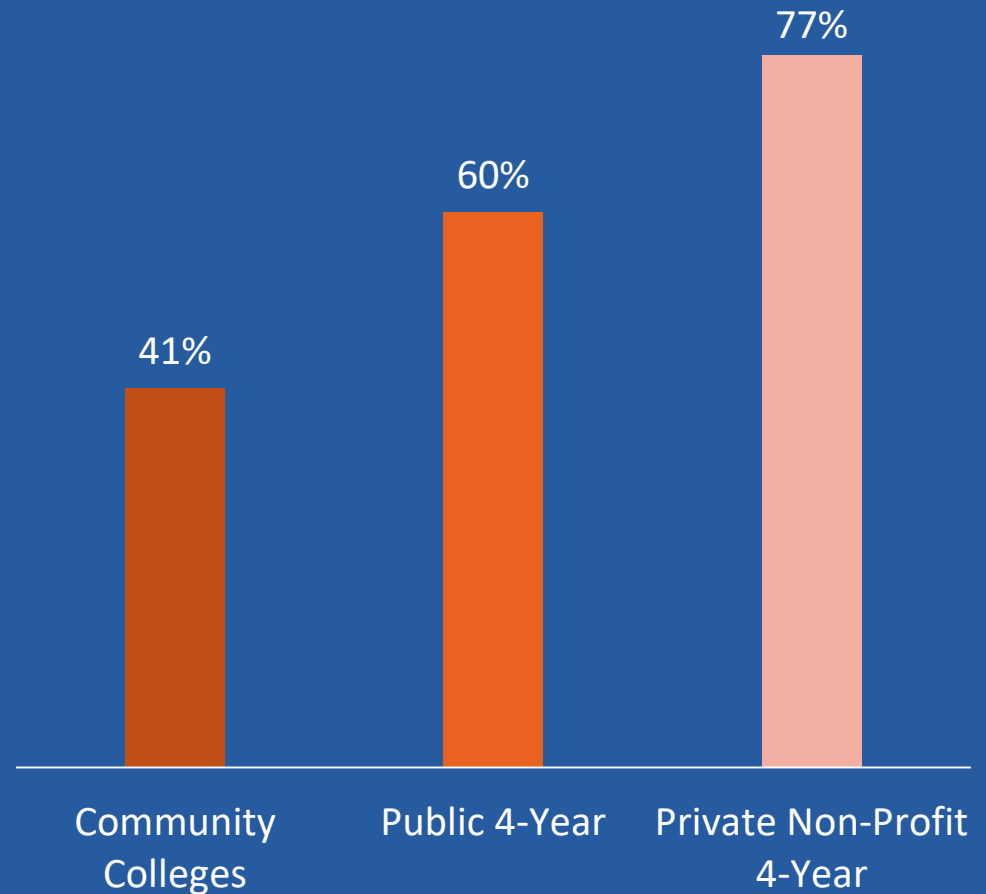
Students from low-income rural schools who do enroll in college are less likely to persist

Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College



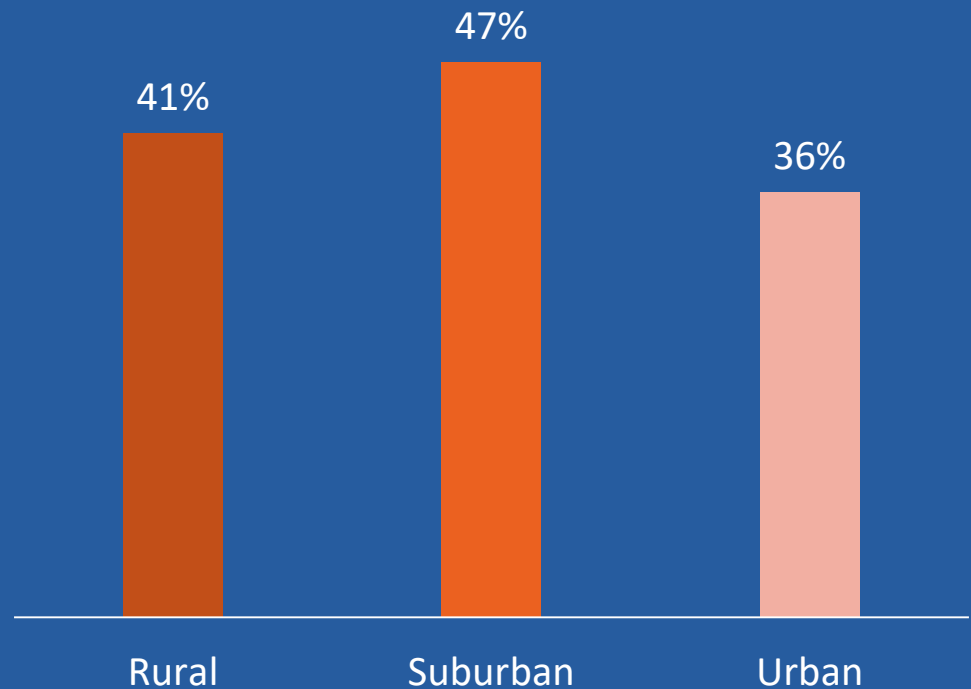
Many enroll
in community
colleges

College Completion Rates Six Years after High School Graduation, Class of 2012, Public Non-Charter Schools

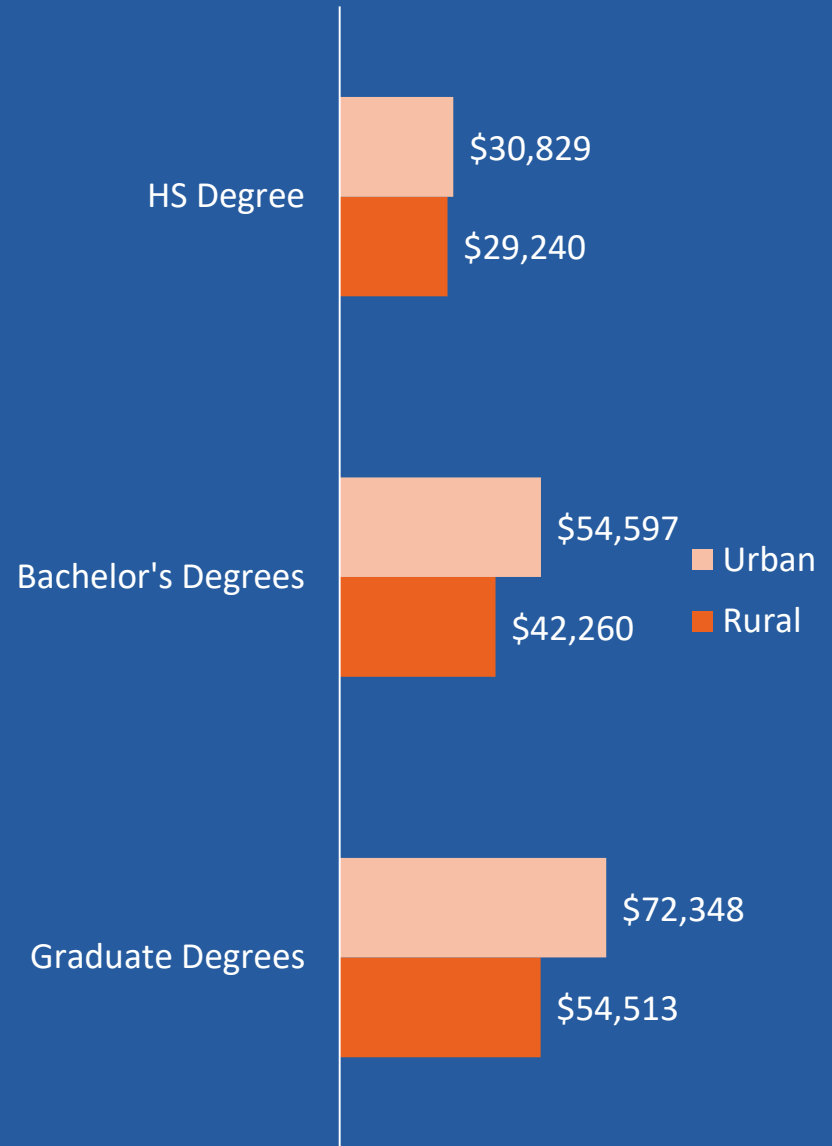


Rural students who persist experience higher college completion rates than urban students

College Completion Rates Six Years after High School Graduation, Class of 2012, Public Non-Charter Schools



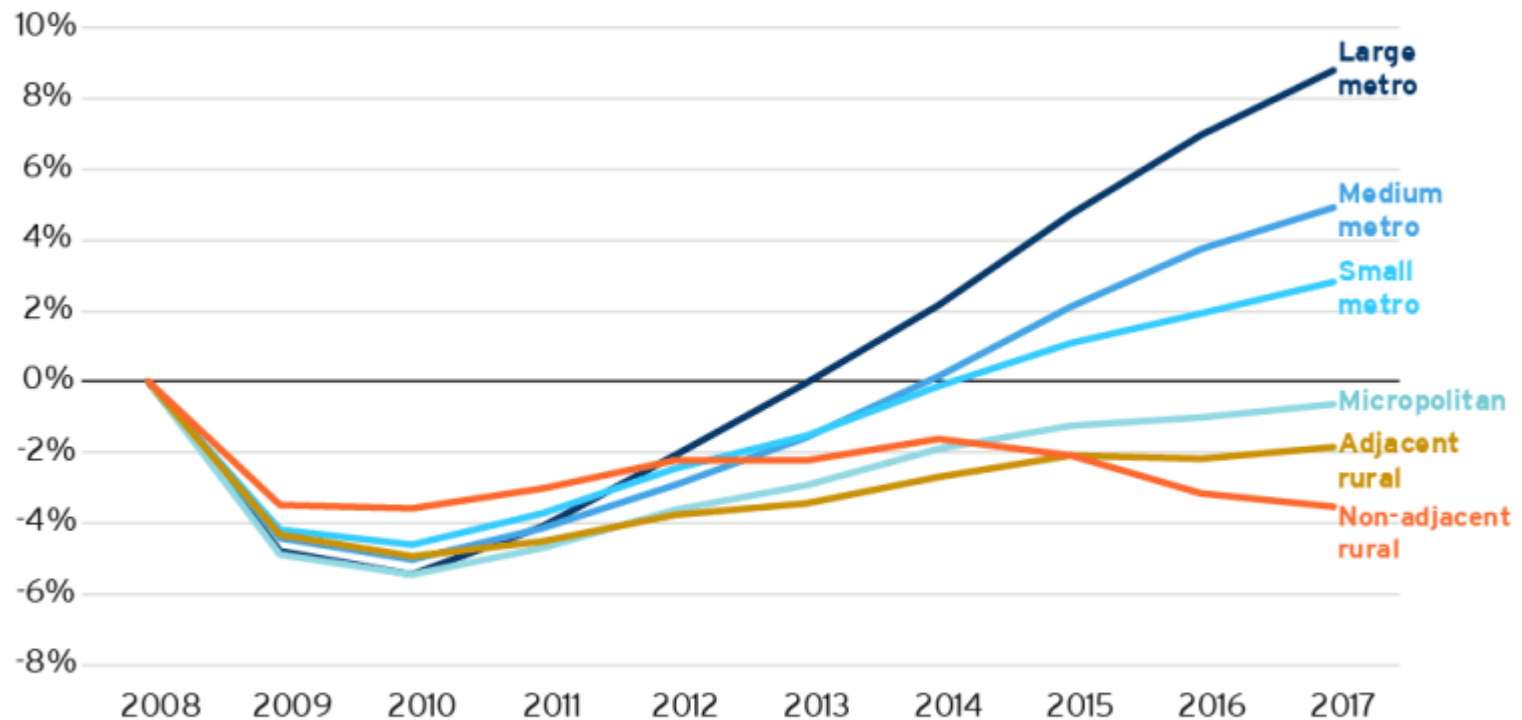
Those who do earn bachelor's degrees often move to find work in metropolitan areas that offer more job opportunities and higher wages.



Most rural economies have not recovered from the Great Recession

Isolated rural communities have experienced declining employment

Employment growth since 2008 by community type, United States



Source: Brookings analysis of Emsi data

Yet there is a “skills gap” in rural America

- Growth of low-wage service jobs
- Unfilled jobs in rural communities that provide a living wage requiring postsecondary credentials
- Misalignment of training programs with the needs of rural communities



Vacant jobs in rural communities that pay a living wage

- Teachers
- Registered Nurses
- Accountants
- Paralegals
- Manufacturing production workers
- Truck drivers
- Healthcare professionals
- Healthcare technicians
- Retail sales managers
- Welders
- Automotive mechanics
- Food service managers
- HVAC & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers
- Public safety officers and EMT's



The paradox of college attainment in rural areas

- Improving rural economies increasingly depends upon residents with post-secondary credentials
- Improving college access for rural students often means students leaving to attend college
- College completion often accelerates rural out-migration of young adults



Rural community colleges are the linchpin

- 428 rural community colleges across 43 states
- 1.2 million students enrolled in rural colleges
- Evidence from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence has shown that rural colleges have demonstrated remarkable success in areas such as equity outcomes and degree completion
- Excellent rural community colleges serve special purposes in addition to postsecondary education as key employers, regional conveners, data analysts, and catalysts of economic development



Lake Area Technical Institute has a partnership with Caterpillar called ThinkBIG, preparing students for high-skilled jobs in South Dakota.