

**Pathways to Prosperity:
Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young
Americans for the 21st Century**

**William C. Symonds
Director
Pathways to Prosperity Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar
Oct. 13, 2011**

Agenda

- **The Challenge Facing the U.S.**
- **A More Demanding Labor Market**
- **Our Failure to Meet the “College for All” Goal**
- **Why are we Failing to Prepare so Many Young Adults?**
- **Lessons from Abroad**
- **The Road to an American Solution**
- **The Implications for Wisconsin**

What is the Pathways Challenge?

The United States is increasingly failing to prepare young people to lead successful lives as adults:

- We have lost our global leadership in educational attainment and achievement.
- Teens and young adults (20-24) are increasingly unable to find work.
- The transition to adulthood is far longer.

A More Demanding Labor Market

In 1973, a high school diploma was the passport to the American Dream:

- 72% of the workforce of 91 million had no more than a high school degree.

Source: Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University

Today's Reality: PSE Credential is the New Passport

Post-secondary education (PSE) is necessary to compete in the global economy in 2010 and beyond:

- Between 1973 and 2007, we added 63 million jobs.
- Jobs held by those with no more than a high school education fell by 2 million over this period.
- Workers with a high school education or less now make up just 41% of the workforce, as compared to 72% in 1971.

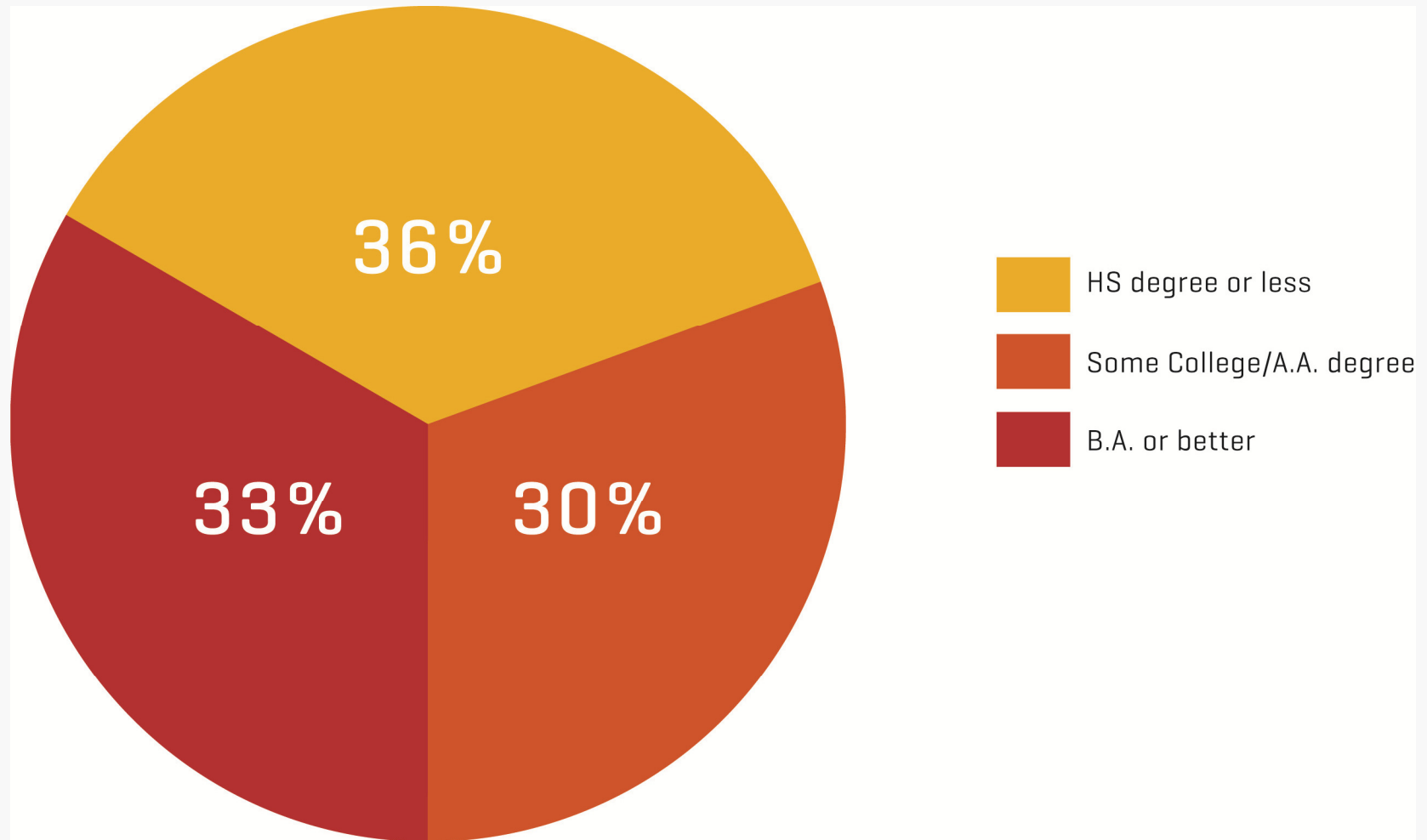
PSE Will Be Even More Important Tomorrow

Economic forecasters widely agree that these trends will continue.

For example, the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce forecasts:

- 63% of all jobs will require at least some college in 2018, up from 59% now.
- The U.S. will need to produce 22 million more post-secondary education degrees by 2018, but we are likely to fall short.

College for All does not mean everyone needs a B.A. Even in this decade most jobs do not require a B.A.



Source: March CPS data, various years; Center on Education and the Workforce forecast of educational demand to 2018.

What is the right goal for the U.S.?

“College for All” needs to be broadened to mean a meaningful “post-high school credential” for all.

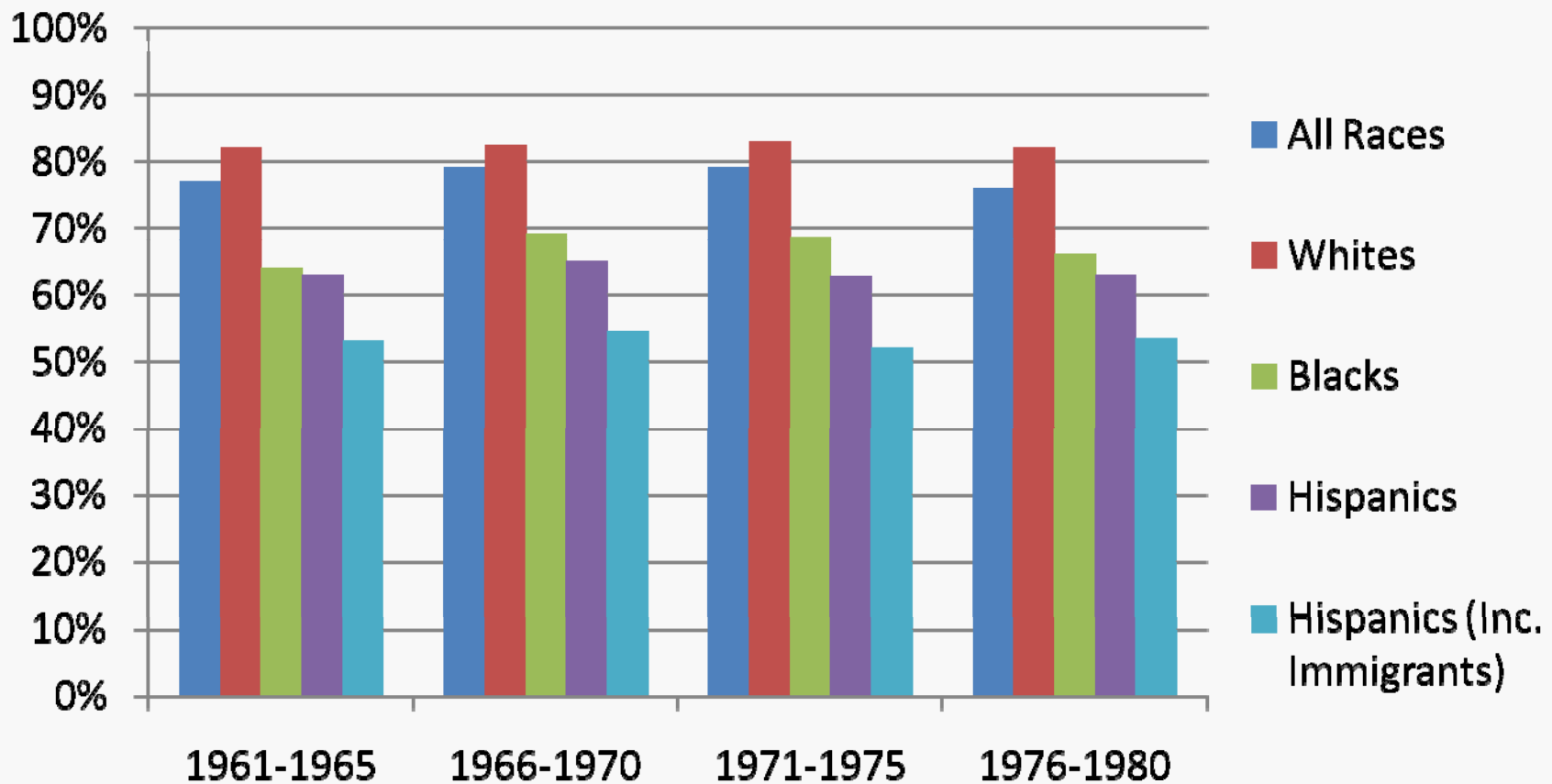
A meaningful credential can be earned in many ways:

- Community college
- Apprenticeships
- The military/community service
- Four year college

Stagnant High School Graduation Rates

Despite two decades of reform, high school graduation rates have not changed much since the 1980s.

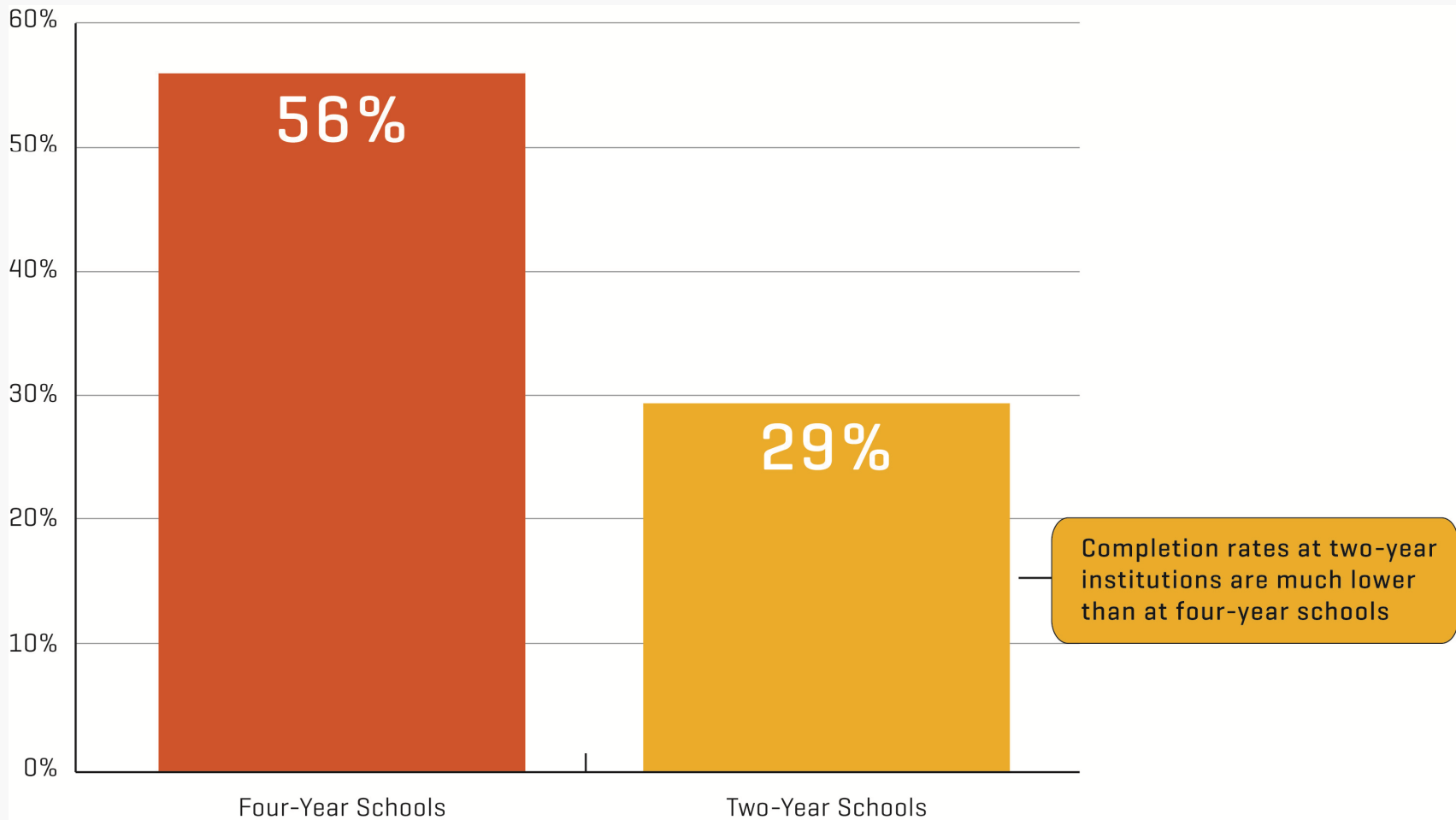
High School Graduation Rates by Race and Birth Cohort



Note: Does not include GED recipients. Unless indicated, does not include recent immigrants. Rates are for age group of 20-24 or 25-29 dependant on their age at the time of census

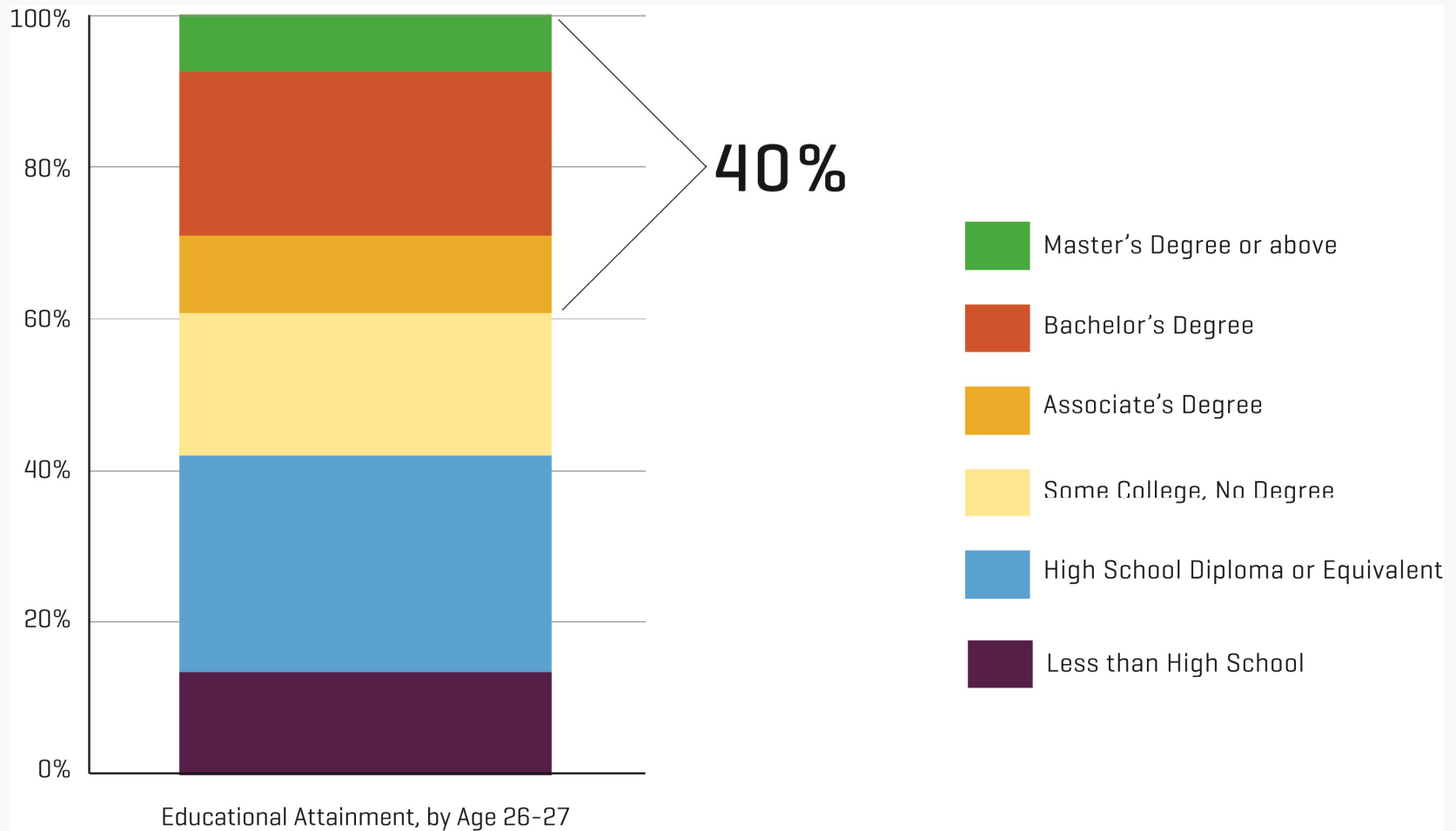
Source: Heckman and LaFountain (2007), U.S. Census data, and other sources

U.S. “on time” college completion rates are alarmingly low



Note: Two-year schools have a three year graduation window. Four-year schools have a six-year window
Source: Higher Ed info-NCES/IPEDS Graduation Survey.

The current U.S. reality: only 40% of 27-year olds have earned an Associate in Arts degree or higher



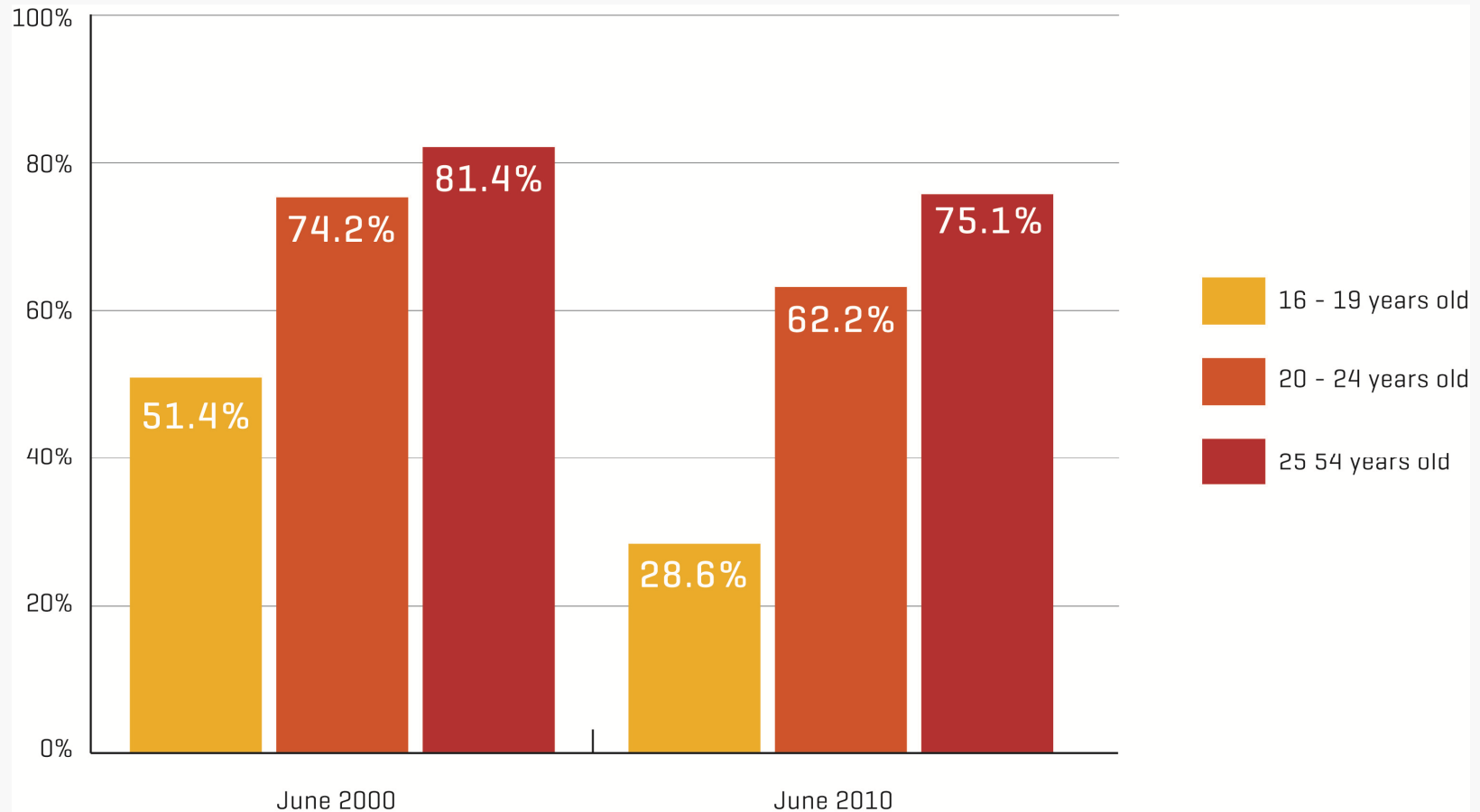
Note: Represents data collected in surveys between 2006-2008; High school equivalency degree (GED) is approximation based on data from GED Testing Program.
Source: Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

Are our Youth Career Ready?

U.S. employers increasingly complain that young adults lack “21st Century Skills”:

- “Are They Ready To Work?” Report
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills
- Tony Wagner’s “Seven Survival Skills”

Shrinking Employment Opportunities: Teens and Young Adults have been Hit the Hardest by the Great Recession

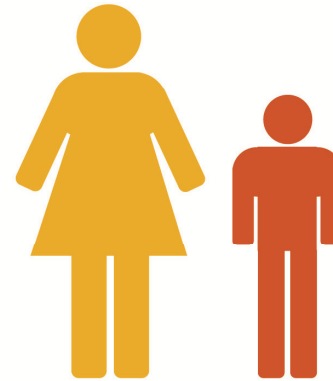


Source: Center for Labor Market Studies; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "CPS Labor Force Statistics".

The Growing Gender Gap in our Nation's Colleges: What are the Implications?



WOMEN NOW ACCOUNT FOR **57%** OF COLLEGE STUDENTS



WOMEN EARN **57%** OF COLLEGE DEGREES

MEN EARN JUST **43%** OF COLLEGE DEGREES



WOMEN NOW ACCOUNT FOR **60%** OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

Why Are We Failing To Prepare So Many Youth?

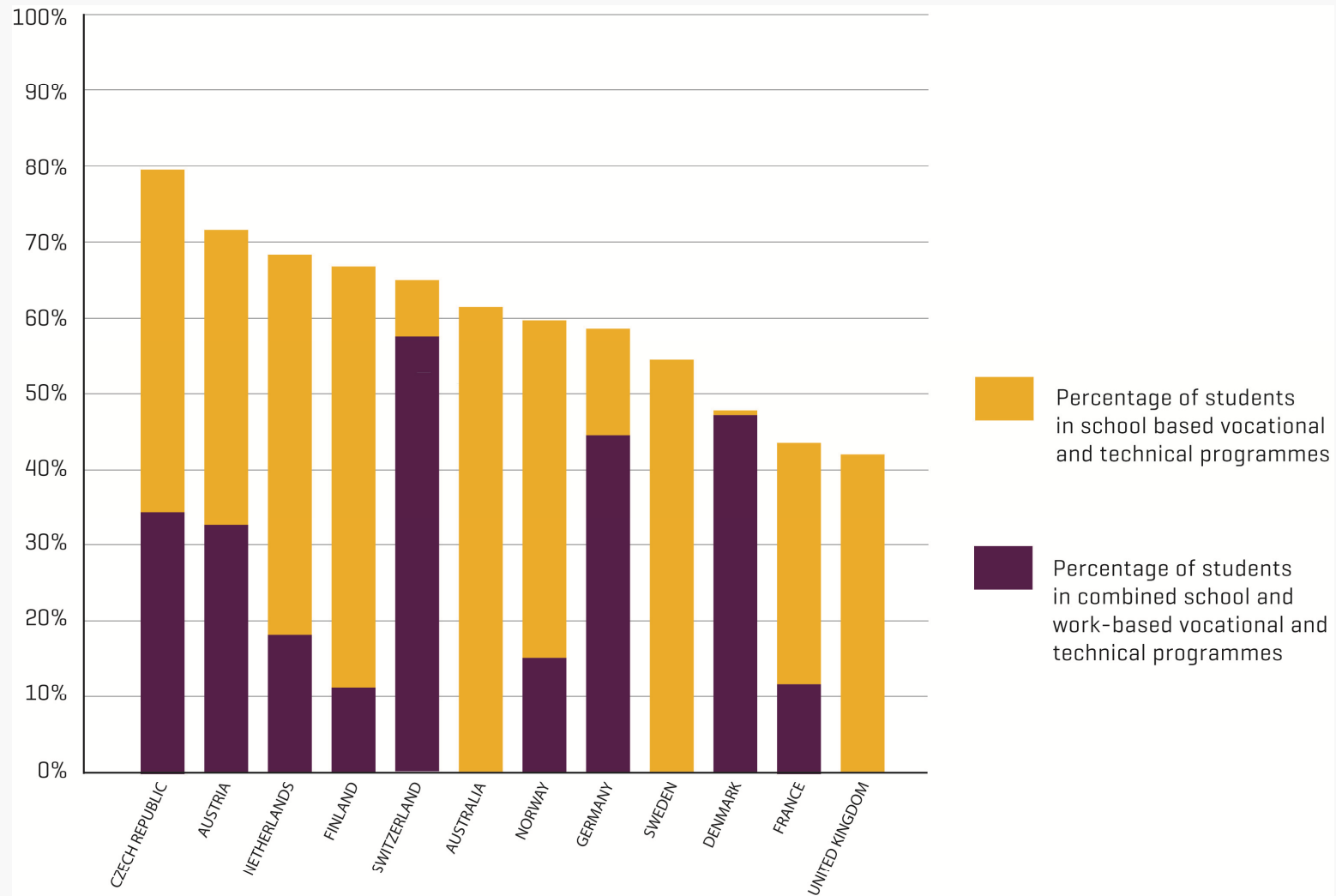
- Our focus has been too narrow.
- The transition to adulthood has changed radically, but our system has not evolved.
- We need a broader, more holistic system of **Pathways to Prosperity**.

Lessons from Abroad

Why Are Other Countries Surpassing the U.S.?

- **The Key Role of Vocational Education**
- **The OECD’s “Learning for Jobs” Report: Reviewed VET (Vocational Education and Training) in 17 Countries**

In Many European Countries over Half of Upper Secondary Students are in Vocational Educational and Training



Source: OECD (2008), Education at a Glance 2008, OECD indicators, Table C1.1, OECD, Paris.

Variations in Vocational Education and Training By Country

The Dual-Apprenticeship Model:

- Germany
- Switzerland
- Denmark
- Austria

School-based model:

- Australia
- Sweden

The Case for Vocational Education and Training

Pedagogical

- Best way for many young people to learn
- Apprenticeships support developmental needs of young people

Higher attainment

- Many countries with the best vocational education and training systems surpass the U.S.

Finding work

- Facilitates transition to labor market

The Bottom Line

- The U.S. is increasingly an outlier on vocational education.
- We can use the principles and practices of the best vocational education and training systems to develop an improved American approach

The Road to an American Solution

Three Core Elements of the Pathways System

1. **Multiple Pathways**
2. **An Expanded Role for Employers**
3. **A New Social Compact with Young People**

Multiple Pathways

Key Elements:

- Elevate career education to world-class levels
- Provide high-quality career counseling
- Greatly expand and improve opportunities for work-based learning

Proven Examples

- **Career Academies**
- **Project Lead the Way**
- **Massachusetts Regional Vocational Technical High Schools**
- **Oklahoma Technology Centers**

Expanded Role for Employers

Goal: Businesses need to become full partners in the Pathways system.

Key roles for business/employers:

- **Career Guidance**
- **Designing/Developing Programs of Study**
- **Providing Opportunities for Work-based Learning and Work**

Excellent Examples of Employer Engagement

- **US First Robotics Competition**
- **Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship**
- **National Academy Foundation**
- **Year Up**

A New Social Compact

- **Why a Compact is Needed**
- **National Action Steps**
- **Regional Action Steps**

Implications for Wisconsin

- What is the Pathways Challenge here? Who is being left behind?
- What is the mismatch between education and emerging employment opportunities?
- How does this vary by region?
- How can we build on success?
- Creating a Pathways movement in Wisconsin