

Pathways to Post-secondary Completion

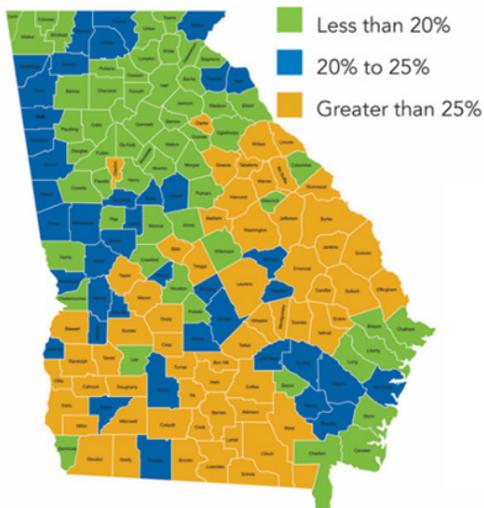
RLN Issue Update - A Georgia Partnership Initiative

Issue Overview

Georgia's economic recovery and long-term success requires a strong workforce, which increasingly requires a strong pathway to and through post-secondary education. Before the COVID crisis, the Southern Regional Education Board projected that without intervention, the current trends of automation, industry, and educational attainment would result in 1.5 million unemployable Georgians by 2030. These trends have been exacerbated by the COVID crisis, which is forcing both K-12 and higher education institutions to rethink how they recruit, council, support and prepare students for post-secondary success. At the same time, the crisis has accelerated the timeline. The looming crisis predicted for 2030 may now become a reality closer to 2025.

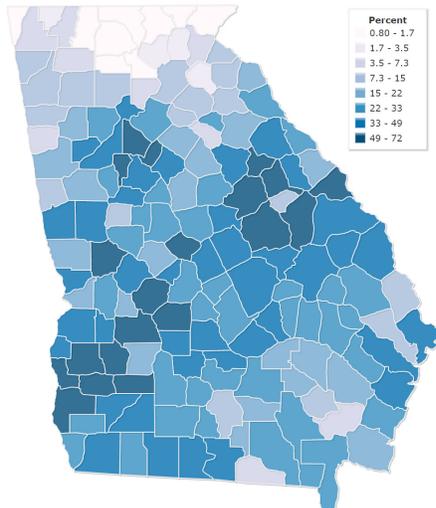
State of Rural Georgia

Rural Georgia sits squarely in the intersection of these dire trends. Post-secondary success data reveal that first generation, low income, and Black and Latinx students face significant challenges in accessing and completing their post-secondary education. Those students least likely to go to and complete post-secondary certification or degree programs are highly represented in the rural communities of our state (for more information on these challenges see the Additional Resources & Data selection below).



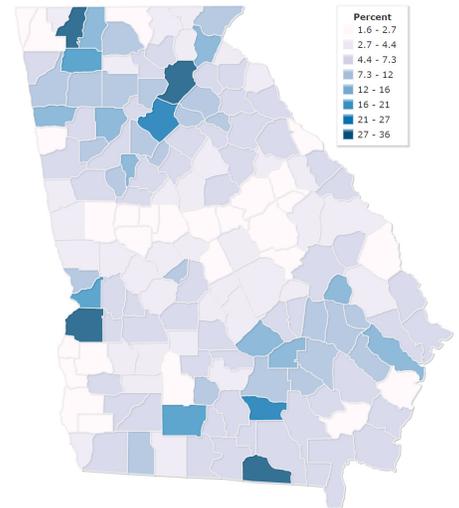
GA poverty rates by county

Source: ACS 2015 5-year estimates/
Kids Counts Data Center



Black population by county

<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/georgia/>



LatinX population by county

<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/georgia/>

RLN Insights & Challenges

Rural communities with limited access to broadband are significantly impacted by the move to virtual recruitment, counselling, and classes. Many rural communities are cut off from supports that, pre-COVID, were available in person to get students into and through their higher education experience.

Smaller post-secondary institutions are facing soft enrollment numbers. This will impact their budgets, and their capacity to serve those students who benefit from student support services and other programs that target groups facing completion challenges.

Waiving milestones testing and college entrance exams (SAT/ACT) affects post-secondary institutions trying to prepare to support their incoming classes in academic success. There is an opportunity now to build stronger relationships between feeder high schools and post-secondary institutions to ensure alignment of curriculum and academic expectations and support services. This is especially important considering smaller and lower income school districts do not always have the budget to provide college and career counseling to their students.

A four-year degree is not equally relevant in all communities. There are growing industries in rural communities that primarily hire high school graduates and then offer further certification or training internally. Building a robust rural educational pipeline from birth to the workforce requires an understanding of industry needs as well as educational opportunities.

The most important strategy for success that the RLN identified is creating systems in alignment: clear connections between high schools, post-secondary institutions, and industry.

Strategies for Success

The University of North Georgia launched a research initiative identifying and overcoming gaps in the educational pipeline for first generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students. (For more information contact Jennifer Herring: Jennifer.Herring@ung.edu)

Grady County School System has built a robust college and career counseling department through partnership with the College Advising Corps (CAC) and Southern Regional Technical College.

- Grady Schools secured a federal Talent Search grant in partnership with Southern Regional to put two counselors in their high school, two times a week (for more information: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/triotalent/index.html>).
- The CAC counsels high school students on plans for after graduation, targeting minority and first-generation. (For more information: <https://ihe.uga.edu/georgia-college-advising-corps>).

Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber has put together Project Purpose, connecting industries, Southern Regional Technical College, and both the city and county school districts. Local industries found it less expensive to invest in current employees than to go hire new workers and approached the Chamber to develop the project. Participating high school graduates, ages 18-30, are connected with a job, then the employer pays for relevant education at the technical college, some willing to go up to bachelors or masters level degrees. (For more information: <http://bit.ly/ProjectPurposeThomasCounty>)

Additional Resources & Data

EdQuest Georgia “Clear Pathways to Post-secondary Success” <http://www.edquestga.org/clear-pathways-to-post-secondary-success/>

Top Ten Issues to Watch in 2020: Issues 9 and 10: https://1hlp161d4zqn27aufu3ikxut-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/GPEE-Top-Ten-2020_Final_Jan-9.pdf

SREB State Economic Outlook for Georgia, June 2019: <https://www.sreb.org/publication/georgia-o>

GBPI 2019 Georgia Higher Education Data Book: <https://gbpi.org/georgia-higher-education-data-book-2019/>