

# World's Unlocking the Nation's <sup>^</sup> Potential

*A Model to Advance Quality and  
Equity  
In Education Beyond High School*

**Paul L. Gaston**  
Consultant to Lumina Foundation



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## The Challenge

How can we support colleges and universities to serve today's students well, increase attainment rates, close equity gaps, and provide high-quality credentials to all learners?



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How can we support colleges and universities to serve today's students well, increase attainment rates, close equity gaps, and provide high-quality credentials to all learners *in a post-pandemic world?*



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## A US Initiative—with international implications

- Blue-ribbon task force convened in fall 2018 by Lumina Foundation—academic administrators, accreditors, association heads, and thought leaders
- Three person-to-person meetings led to the findings presented in *Unlocking the Nation's Potential* and to five explicit recommendations focused on collaboration to:

Generate and use strong data sets

Operationalize a commitment to quality and equity

Build seamless pathways

Support faculty development and collaboration

Plan for institutional closures and mergers



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## What do these recommendations share?

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As a result of the pandemic, each has become more urgent and compelling.



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## Strong data sets

- To enable cumulative, student-owned transcripts
- To allow for performance comparisons of institutions and alternate delivery methodologies to catalyze improvements
- To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of accreditation given new models
- To expose and document inequities—and to track the effectiveness of student success interventions



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## Quality and equity

- A commitment to quality requires attention to equity
- A commitment to equity and generating real opportunity requires defining and advancing quality
- Post-pandemic reforms should reflect these commitments to both *as one priority*



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## The Quality and Equity Imperative

**Only quality credentials will provide expanded, more equitable access to:**

- **economic opportunity**
- **social mobility across generations**
- **meaningful civic participation**

“Ultimately, the most valuable education over the long term is the one that provides the most marketable combination of specific and general skills.”

(Carnevale, 2019)



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## What do we know concerning quality?

- Employers report gaps between what they need and what BA degree holders possess in terms of both general and specialized skills.
- The process of curricular change is failing to keep up with workplace skill shifts.
- Though 80% of employers rate complex communication, critical thinking, and analytic reasoning skills as very important, fewer than 30% rate BA holders well prepared in those areas.
- One assessment project supported by Lumina found only 10% of college seniors in 4-year programs rated proficient in critical thinking.



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## What do we know concerning equity?

**While 34%** of all individuals ages 25-65 have earned a 4-year degree—

- Only **17% of Latinos**
- Only **24% of Black individuals**
- Only **21% of Native American individuals**

— have done so.



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## Seamless pathways

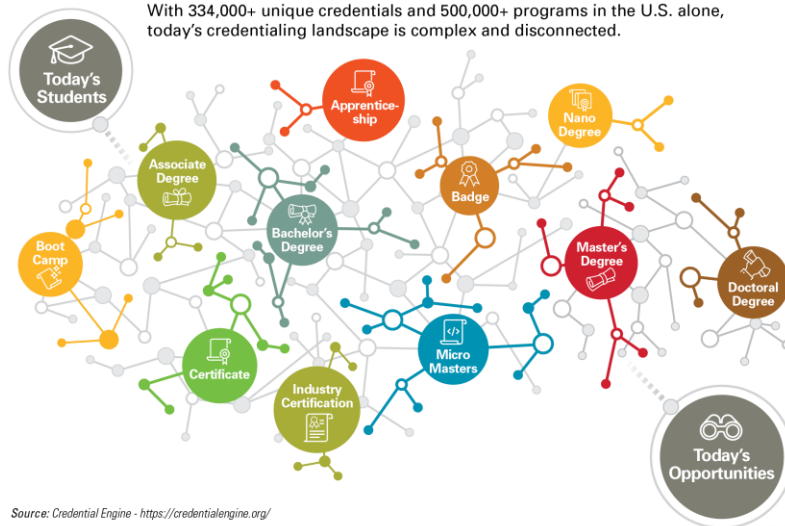
- Provide guidance for students facing an increasingly complex and opaque credentials environment
- Express the resolve of colleges and universities to enhance the coherence, cumulativeness, and efficiency of their programs
- Enable bridges students may cross to connect providers, programs, aspirations



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## TODAY'S CREDENTIALING LANDSCAPE

With 334,000+ unique credentials and 500,000+ programs in the U.S. alone, today's credentialing landscape is complex and disconnected.



Source: Credential Engine - <https://credentialengine.org/>



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## What do we know concerning completion rates?

In the 3000 four-year colleges and universities in the US, fewer than 300 institutions award credentials to at least 70% of students within 6 years. Considering all US institutions —

- Only **60 percent** of all students
  - Only **40 percent** of Black students
  - Only **54 percent** of Latino students
- graduate within 6 years.



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## Faculty development and collaboration

- Supports increased responsiveness to unexpected challenges
- Reinforces emphasis on student success
- Increases awareness of inequities while building skills for recognizing and addressing them
- Strengthens commitment to defining, seeking, and assessing quality



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## Plan for institutional closures and mergers

- Improve quality and frequency of monitoring
- Explore alternatives to closure, including mergers
- Provide more effective “early warning” to students while protecting vulnerable providers from negative spirals
- Strengthen standards for teach out, faculty placement, staff placement, and resource deaccession plans
- Recognize the interests of providers’ host communities



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## Practical means toward critical ends (1-6)

- 1 Improvements in student support services
- 2 More effective assurance of affordability
- 3 Greater reliance on co-requisite remediation
- 4 More attentive, frequent, and thorough academic advising
- 5 More effective integration of equity-minded high-impact educational practices to promote achievement of learning goals and increase completion rates of all students—and especially returning adult students
- 6 Expanded access to alternate delivery systems with quality checks and that are aligned with needs of adult students (e.g. shorter-term courses, competency-based programs, work-integrated options)



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## Practical means toward critical ends (7-10)

- 7 Build work-integrated learning options for all students
- 8 Create more partnerships with employers and educators to design and redesign programs with employability capabilities intentionally built into curricular pathways and to create new BA degrees in high-growth fields
- 9 Expand work-study funding and flexibility and connect work-study placements directly with curricular requirements and key institutional learning outcomes
- 10 Expand and improve policies that award credit to working adults for competencies learned on the job either prior to enrollment or while enrolled



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## Practical means toward critical ends (11-14)

- 11 Implement “guided pathways” more broadly to improve efficiency through the embedding of high quality teaching and learning approaches.
- 12 Build alternative pathways for working adults into and through traditional BA/BS programs (e.g. competency-based curricula and more appropriate assessments) that enable them to learn more effectively and to finish more quickly.
- 13 Build more effective pathways among institutions and credentials especially in public systems with 2-year and 4-year institutions (e.g., dual-degree programs, BAAS pathways, embedded certifications, etc.)
- 14 Ensure that all degree pathways develop essential competencies for long-term success.



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Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. The Foundation envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials.



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