

# Pathways to Opportunity:

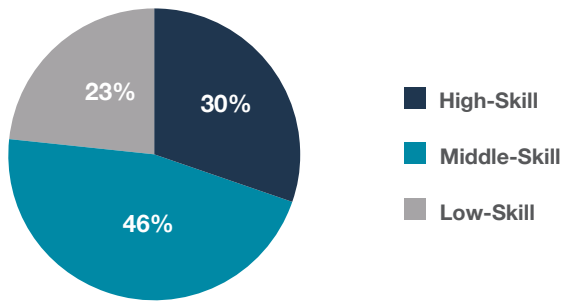
## Closing Opportunity Gaps and Increasing Economic Mobility

### Oregon is out front nationally and forging the way with Pathways to Opportunity.

Under the vision of Portland Community College President Mark Mitsui, the college is leading the statewide Pathways to Opportunity initiative that was codified under HB 4043. The initiative brings together a coalition of all 17 community colleges, state agencies, philanthropists, and anti-poverty advocates. **Pathways to Opportunity closes opportunity gaps and increases economic mobility by expanding the federal, state, and local resources available to low-income students so more individuals can attend and complete college.** Addressing these inequities is a social justice imperative, and an economic development necessity to meet the current and future needs of communities and industries across Oregon.

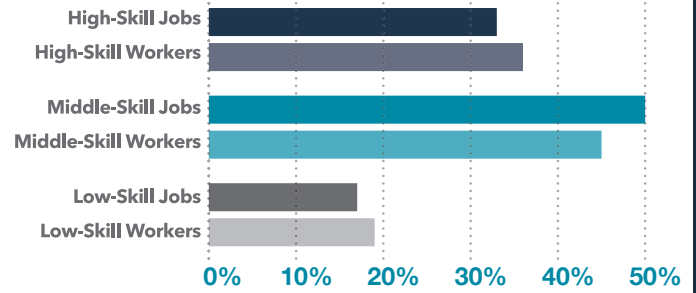
- ◆ Despite record economic growth, historically low unemployment rates, and increasing rates of educational attainment in Oregon, there are persistent opportunity and skill gaps that threaten Oregon's future.
- ◆ Disparities in educational attainment and income are growing for communities of color and rural residents, stagnating economic mobility for generations.
- ◆ Oregon's 40-40-20 and Adult Attainment goals provide solid, equity-informed educational attainment targets to aim for, but the state also needs to be thinking about the student supports, federal and state benefits, policy levers, funding, and programs that must be in place to achieve these goals.
- ◆ Unmet financial needs are a key barrier preventing too many individuals from attending and completing college, disproportionately impacting students of color, rural Oregonians, and other underserved populations.
- ◆ Due to the correlation between educational attainment and income, there are significant wage gaps that perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit Oregon's economic growth and resiliency. The National Equity Atlas found that Oregon's gross domestic product would have been \$14.67 billion larger in 2015 if racial wage gaps were eliminated.
- ◆ At the same time, employers are clamoring for a more robust and skilled talent pipeline to meet their workforce needs.
- ◆ This confluence of opportunity and wage gaps, coupled with rapidly rising costs of living and college, creates even more urgency to find solutions before growing inequities are crystallized in Oregon's communities and pathways out of poverty and into the middle class are fractured beyond repair.
- ◆ To close these opportunity and skills gaps in Oregon, collective action from policy makers, business leaders, state agencies, and institutions of higher education is vital.
- ◆ Pathways to Opportunity is an innovative approach that brings together a dynamic coalition of stakeholders.
- ◆ Through this coalition, participants have learned from national policy experts and educational equity leaders. This community of practice provides a forum to lift up promising practices and share information about benefit programs that can support college access, completion, and entry into family wage career paths.
- ◆ Pathways to Opportunity is ground-breaking work that must continue. Doing nothing to address the opportunity, skills, and income disparities designates Oregon as a state with pathways to opportunity for some, and not for all. Inaction will not propel us through the 21st century, and the inevitable economic booms and down-turns. Continued support for Pathways to Opportunity allows Oregon to lead the way to pioneer solutions that increase equity, close opportunity gaps, and expand economic mobility.

## Job Openings by Skill Level, Oregon, 2014-2024



Source: NSC analysis of long-term occupational projections from state labor/employment agency.

## Jobs and Workers by Skill Level, Oregon, 2015



Source: NSC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics by State, May 2015 and American Community Survey data, 2015.

**442,000 adults** 25 and older in Oregon are unemployed or working making less than \$15/hr without postsecondary credentials. It would take 9 years of HS grads to equate to this number to address the skills gap.

Reference: Oregon Employment Department

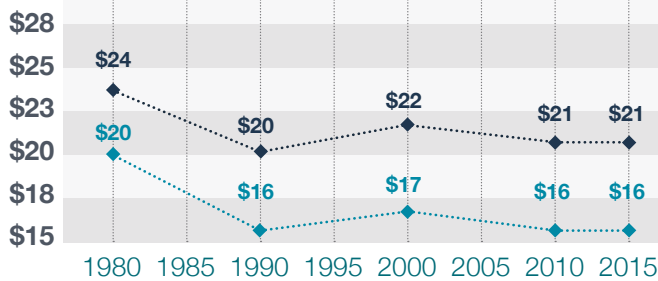
Approximately **2 in 3** community college students experience food insecurity

About **1/2** of community college students experience housing insecurity

**13% to 14%** of community college students experience homelessness

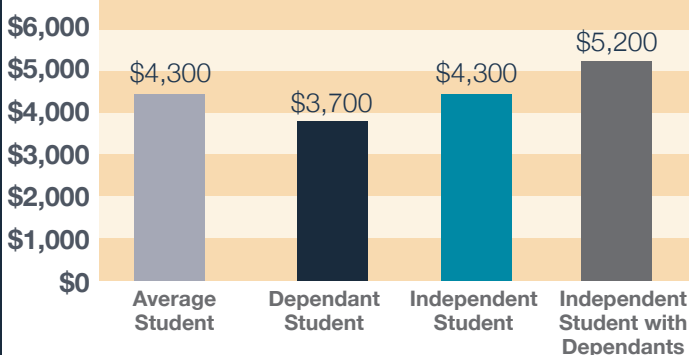
Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education (Goldrick-Rab 2017,1)

## Median hourly wage by race / ethnicity: Oregon, 1980-2015



Source: National Equity Atlas

## Oregon Community College Student Unmet Needs: 2016



Source: CLASP, Lauren Walizer

## Outcomes and Impact:

- ◆ 4 statewide Pathways to Opportunity Summits with representation from all 17 community colleges, state agencies, and community-based organizations
- ◆ STEP: In collaboration with Department of Human Services, the Community College STEP Consortia expanded access across the state for SNAP recipients to build skills, earn college credentials, and move into careers offering pathways out of poverty
  - 9 colleges scaled up program, increasing SNAP recipients served and support service funding
  - 5 colleges implemented new STEP programs
  - 3 colleges planned programs for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020
  - All 17 community colleges are projected to be offering services through STEP Consortia in FFY 2020
- ◆ 67% increase in revenue for FFY 2019, resulting from college investments and new federal reimbursement
- ◆ Exceeded grant outcomes by 214%, serving 3,344 STEP participants; and 265%, offering 3,882 services/activities