

# **Improving Access to Bachelor's Degrees in Macomb County**

**A Report from**

**Institute for Higher Education Policy**

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## Background

Access to higher education has been an important element of the policy discussion in Michigan in recent years, and was highlighted as a key priority in the final report of the Lieutenant Governor's *Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth* (also known as the Cherry Commission report). Since the report's release in late 2004, significant progress has been made on many of the report's 19 major recommendations. However, an important aspect of the report's unfinished agenda concerns access to baccalaureate institutions and degrees, particularly in specific counties and communities.

Access to the bachelor's degree is a significant issue for the state and its communities. At the statewide level, the benefits of investing in higher education are enormous, and the payoff of a baccalaureate degree is substantial. Michigan residents with a bachelor's degree earn nearly twice as much per year compared to high school graduates (\$45,928 vs. \$26,095), have much lower rates of unemployment (less than one-third the level of their high school peers), and volunteer and vote at much higher rates (IHEP 2005). These are all indicators of the enormous individual and societal benefits that result from the investment in higher education.

In order to further examine issues concerning access to baccalaureate institutions and degrees in underserved Michigan communities, the Institute for Higher Education Policy<sup>1</sup> is undertaking an independent study of the specific concerns about access in underserved Michigan communities. This study focuses on three geographically diverse areas of the state: suburban Macomb County, the Saginaw area, and six rural counties in the northeastern lower peninsula—Alpena, Presque Isle, Montmorency, Crawford, Oscoda, and Alcona. The study has included analyzing demographic and educational data, conducting interviews with community and education leaders, and comparing the targeted areas to similar communities in other states. For each of the three areas, a report will be produced that summarizes the analytic findings and proposes specific

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) is an independent, nonprofit organization that is dedicated to access and success in postsecondary education around the world. Established in 1993, IHEP uses unique research and innovative programs to inform key decision makers who shape public policy and support economic and social development. The Institute's work addresses an array of issues in higher education, ranging from higher education financing to technology-based learning to quality assurance to minority-serving institutions.

strategies for improving access in that community. A final report will propose policy alternatives for addressing the challenges of access to baccalaureate degrees and institutions statewide.

Among the questions being explored in the study are:

- What do we know about the higher education gaps that exist in specific Michigan communities, especially those related to enrollment in higher education and eventual baccalaureate degree attainment?
- What is the type and quality of higher education available in these communities?
- What specific barriers exist in these communities that are preventing college enrollment and eventual baccalaureate degree attainment?
- To what extent is limited higher education access in these communities attributable to educational factors as compared to economic, social, or cultural factors?
- What role can local community leadership play in improving higher education opportunities in these communities, and what role can state leadership play?

This first report focuses on our analysis of Macomb County. It includes both findings from our research as well as proposed options for enhancing access to higher education for Macomb County residents. The research conducted by the Institute for Higher Education Policy includes detailed analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau that examines both County information as well as information from comparison counties in other states. The research includes interviews with nearly 40 government and college officials, K-12 leaders, students, parents, and other interested parties. The study also draws from hearings held in the fall of 2006 that were conducted by the Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth in Macomb County, established by an Executive Order of Governor Granholm. The report also benefited from prior analyses conducted under the auspices of the 12th District Congressional Advisory Committee on Higher Education in Macomb County.

## **Context of Macomb County**

With a diverse population of over 800,000 people, Macomb is in many ways a crucible of how local communities are impacted by the forces of globalization. The County's primary economic

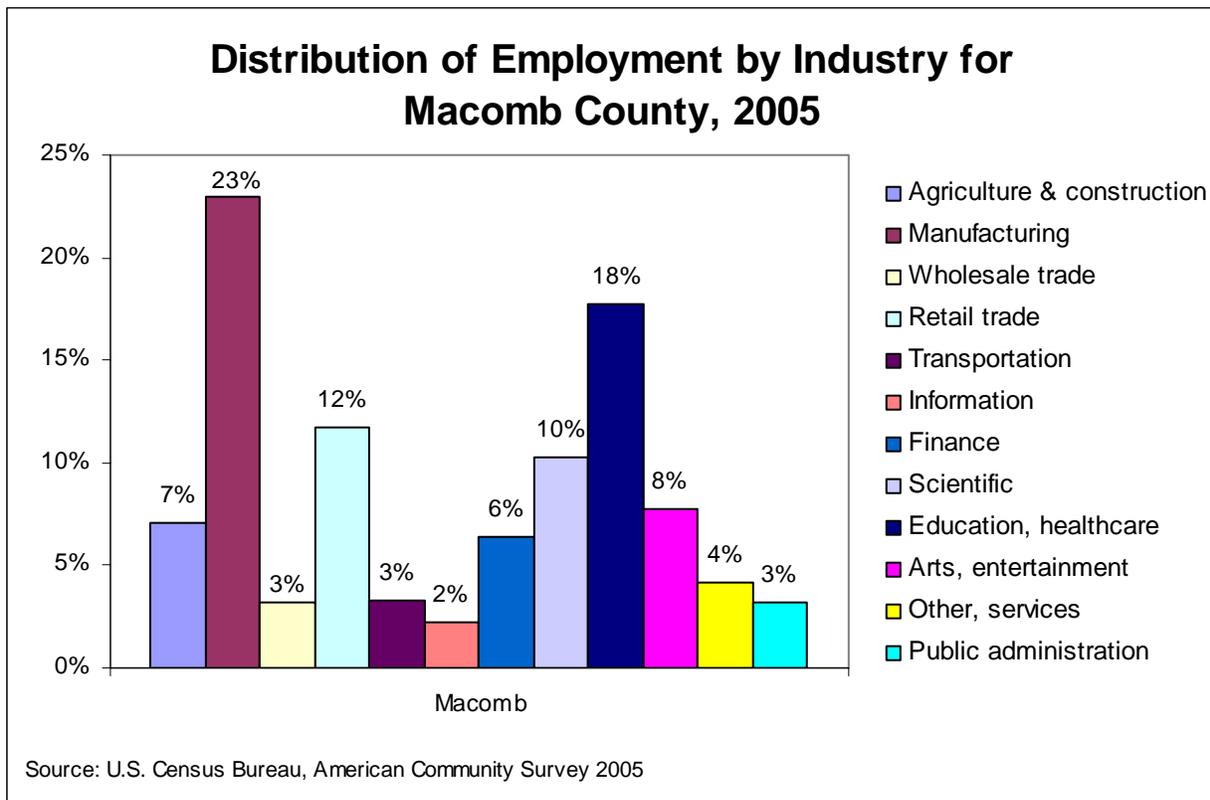
engine is an industry that is being strongly buffeted by the winds of change brought about by globalization. Its workforce is faced with world-wide competition that threatens jobs and livelihoods. Without substantial increases in postsecondary educational attainment, the people of the County will not find a path to economic and civic prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nationally, the number of new high school graduates is high and has been projected to continue through 2017-18. However, the number of high school graduates in the Midwest is projected to increase by only 2.7 percent, compared to the South, which anticipates an 18.7 percent increase and the West, which is projecting growth of 15.8 percent (WICHE 2003). The number of public high school graduates in Michigan has been increasing over the past decade at a lower rate than nationally, and is projected to decline over the next decade. The predicted decline in high school graduates indicates the state and the Midwest in general will increasingly rely on an older student population to boost its higher education enrollments. This makes the goal of improving participation in postsecondary education and achievement of a degree all the more pressing.

Macomb County is not likely to escape these trends. Located in the southeastern portion of the state in close proximity to Detroit, Macomb County ranks third among all state counties in population, totaling over 800,000 residents. Overall, Macomb demographic patterns are typical for a middle class suburban area: the median household income is about \$53,321 (compared to \$46,039 for the state as a whole) and about 89 percent of the population is White (compared to 80 percent for the state). About 8 percent of Macomb residents are ages 18-24 – the traditional age for enrollment in college (U.S. Census Bureau 2005).

At the same time, the County is changing. The population is aging, and it already has somewhat higher proportions of older residents than Michigan as a whole. Household structures are changing, with more persons living alone and an increase in single parent families. Traditional families now account for less than a quarter of all households. Meanwhile, the County has seen an increase in racial and ethnic diversity, including an increase in immigrants, who are providing a substantial proportion of regional growth (Macomb Community College 2007).

More than 420,000 residents of Macomb participate in the labor force, a little over half of the total population. The County's predominant industries are manufacturing and services, employing nearly two-thirds of Macomb's workforce. Major employers include General Motors (including the GM Technology Center), DaimlerChrysler Corp, Ford Motor Co, TACOM/TARDEC, St. John Health System, and St. Joseph Hospital (Macomb County Dept. of Planning and Economic Development 2003). Macomb hopes to increase employment by targeting growth industries such as defense and advanced manufacturing, advanced automotive, life sciences and biotechnology, and alternative energy. At present, the unemployment rate in the County is about 8 percent. Over the past 10 years, Macomb has experienced a 2.7 increase in unemployment (BLS 2006). The County's unemployment rate is projected to worsen if the economy continues to rely on auto manufacturing and related industries. As recently as February 2007, one of the County's top employers, Chrysler, announced a 13,000 job cut. Part of this downsizing is scheduled to occur at the Warren Plant, located in Macomb County's largest community (*Columbia Tribune* 2007).



To combat economic decline and increase employment in growth industries, increased participation in higher education will be necessary for Macomb residents. Currently, Michigan has about 110 colleges and universities, of which 15 are public four-year institutions and nearly 30 are public two-year institutions (*Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* 2006). Although Macomb County does not host one of the public four-year institutions, a variety of other colleges and educational facilities are located there. For example, Macomb Community College (MCC), in addition to associate's degrees, affords the opportunity to acquire certification in a number of fields. In addition, MCC offers additional study opportunities through a partnership with the Macomb University Center. This partnership allows students to pursue a bachelor's or master's degree affiliated with the following universities across the state: Central Michigan University, Ferris State University, Lawrence Technological University, Oakland University, Rochester College, University of Detroit Mercy, Walsh College, and Wayne State University (Macomb Community College 2007). Many students take classes at the University Center after completing a two-year program at MCC. A recent survey of University Center students (Macomb Community College 2005) noted that typical students are female, around 30 years old, and working almost full time. About two-thirds live in Macomb County, and the average commute is about 14 miles one way. The majority have annual incomes under \$75,000. According to the 2005 survey, a majority of students at the Center desire compressed schedules, advanced technologies, and the ability to complete courses only on weekends.

Both Oakland and Wayne State Universities are located in counties adjacent to Macomb. There are also several private, for-profit colleges in the County, such as Baker College, which offers a variety of associate's degrees and certificates as well as the option of pursuing a bachelor's degree, and the Dorsey Business School, which provides training and certification in the medical, legal, business, and computer fields.<sup>2</sup> There are no private, non-profit four-year institutions located in the County, although some are located in nearby counties.

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<sup>2</sup> Other private, for-profit institutions offering postsecondary certificates include Warren Woods Vocational Adult Education Center, Ross Medical Education Center, and Virginia Farrell Beauty School.

In 2004, postsecondary education institutions located in Macomb conferred 3,077 degrees and certificates, 1,296 of which were associate's degrees. This is a relatively low number of degrees and certificates awarded annually for a County with a population over 800,000. About 26 percent of the total degrees and certificates were in Business programs (NCES 2004).<sup>3</sup> MCC enrolled the highest proportion of students in Macomb institutions, with more than 20,000 students in the fall of 2004, and also awarded the majority of degrees and certificates.

The population of Macomb included about 53,000 college students as of 2005.<sup>4</sup> More than half of these students (53 percent) were 25 and older. Of the traditional age group of 18-24 year-olds, about 39 percent were enrolled as undergraduates in 2005, with an additional 2 percent as graduate students. These figures for traditional age students are slightly lower than for the state as a whole.

The educational attainment of Macomb County residents age 25 or older is similar to that of the state as a whole—about 45 percent attained a high school diploma or less, 34 percent completed an associate's degree or have at least some college credit, and 21 percent attained a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>5</sup> However, the percentage in the County with a bachelor's degree or higher is lower than in the state as a whole (25 percent for the state, 21 percent for Macomb County), while the percentage earning associate's degrees or at least some college credit was slightly higher.

Within these overall figures, there are some major gaps in college enrollment and educational attainment of Macomb residents by income, race/ethnicity, and other characteristics. For example, more than half of traditionally aged residents in the highest family income quartile were enrolled in higher education at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. This is a marked

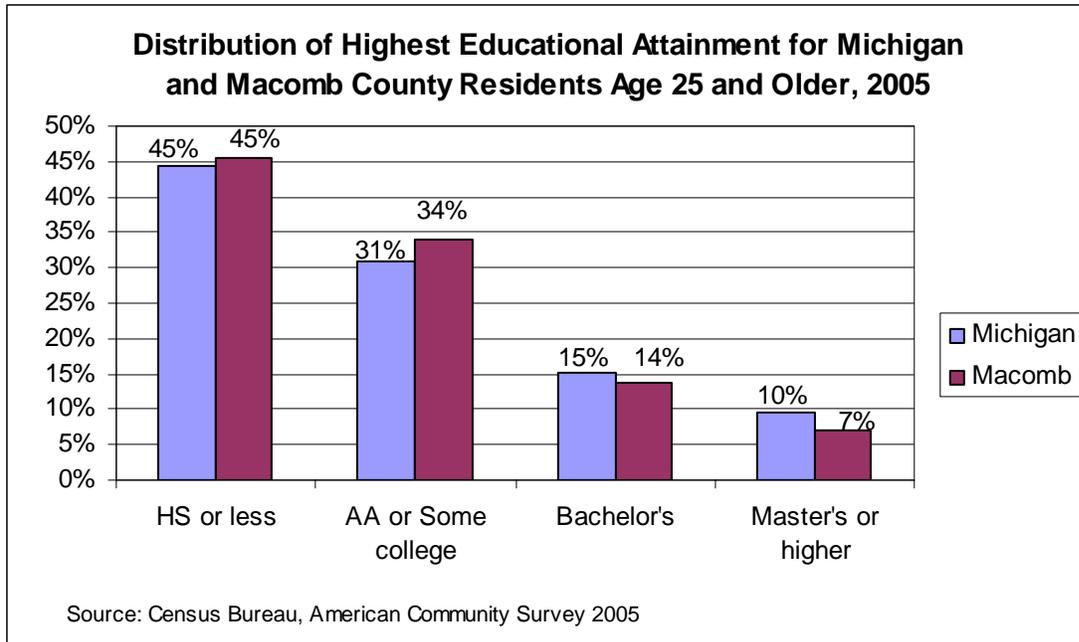
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<sup>3</sup> The NCES data do not include degrees awarded by partner institutions through the University Center. The data include information reported by MCC, Dorsey Business School, Warren Woods Vocational Adult Education Center, Ross Medical Education Center, and Virginia Farrell Beauty School. Therefore, the total degrees awarded may be higher. However, many of the degrees awarded could have been conferred on non-Macomb residents, so it is not clear what the net effect may be for the County.

<sup>4</sup> Unless noted otherwise, the data in the rest of this section are derived from ACS 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the college enrollment and educational attainment figures pertain to Macomb residents, regardless of where they attend(ed) college.

contrast to residents in the lowest income quartile, roughly 83 percent of whom were not enrolled in higher education. Similarly, Macomb County residents ages 18-24 who fall below 150 percent of the federal poverty line were substantially less likely to enroll in college than more affluent residents. If they did enroll in college, they were also slightly more likely to enroll in public institutions (90 percent compared to 85 percent of affluent residents).



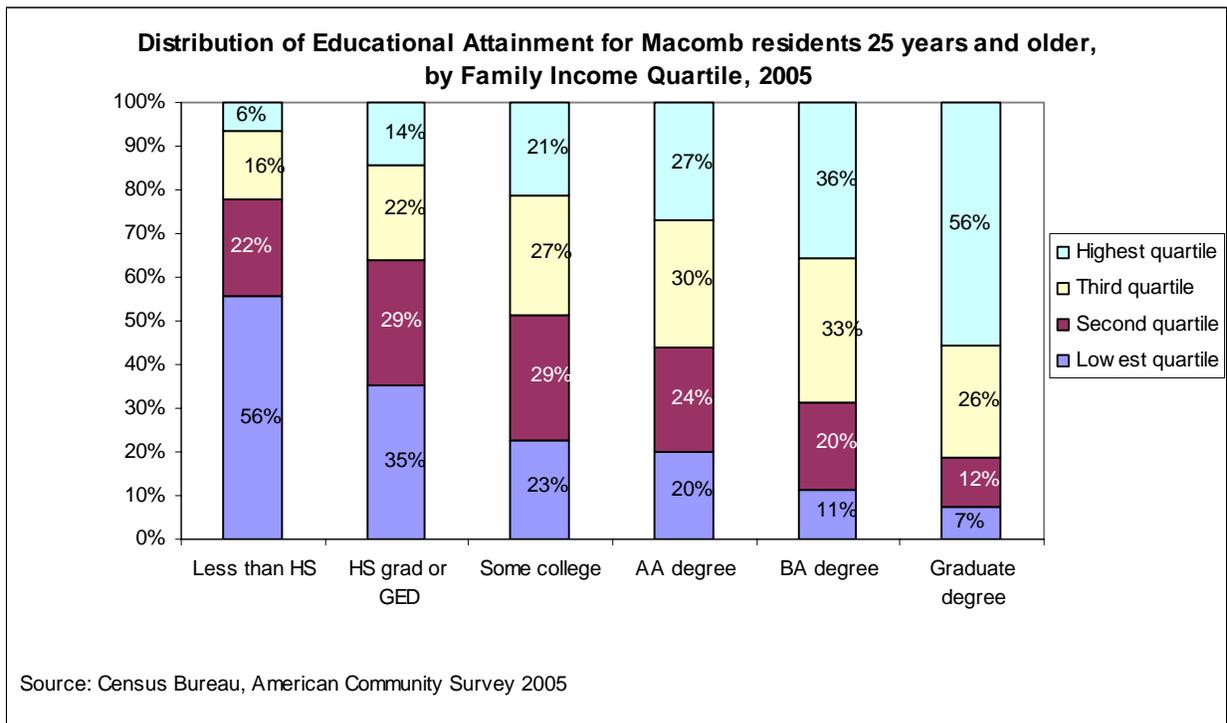
These findings suggest that residents from more disadvantaged backgrounds may not be able to afford college, or may be limited in their access by other related factors. For example, Macomb’s historical reliance on manufacturing may have impacted the decision to attend or not to attend college, if residents felt that college was not necessary for employment. In this sense, access and college enrollment trends become a question of affordability as well as of the options that are available for residents.

Although Macomb has only a small minority population, some important educational differences can be seen between various racial/ethnic groups. While White and Black county residents age 18-24 have similar rates of postsecondary attendance, White residents age 25 and older are more likely to have completed a degree. A greater number of Asian residents older than 25 hold

bachelor's and graduate degrees than any other group. Hispanic residents, conversely, have a stronger representation at the associate's degree level.

Also within this age group, 47 percent of women ages 18-24 were enrolled in higher education while only 36 percent of their male peers were attending college. Marital status also seems to be related to college enrollment, as married Macomb residents between the ages of 18-24 were less likely to enroll in postsecondary education.

Educational attainment also correlates with family income. Overall, a college degree is indicative of a higher family income for Macomb residents. More than half of residents above the age of 25 in the highest income quartile have earned a graduate degree. Roughly the same percentage (56 percent) is found for residents in the lowest income quartile who have yet to earn a *high school* degree.



Educational attainment is also strongly correlated with other factors. For example, residents with a postsecondary degree of any kind were also more likely than the general county population to

own a home and were more likely to be employed. County residents with less than a high school degree are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as those with an associate's degree or higher. In fact, more than two-thirds of these poorly educated residents are not working, either because they are unemployed or are not in the labor force. Unemployment rates are lowest in Macomb County among those with an associate's degree or higher, and these residents are substantially more likely than the general county population to be working full time. This finding is significant in that it relates to Macomb's attempts to revitalize and shift its economy, where a postsecondary degree has become imperative for a higher employment and earning potential.

### **Comparisons with Other Counties**

In order to understand how Macomb compares to other counties facing similar challenges, we examined data and information from other counties in the Midwest.<sup>6</sup> Based on that analysis, two counties were chosen primarily due to their demographic similarities to Macomb County. A thorough examination of these additional counties and their educational attainment and college enrollment rates creates a clearer picture of how Macomb County is performing. The two comparison counties—DuPage County, Illinois, and Lorain County, Ohio—were chosen based on population density and similarities in terms of demographic and economic characteristics and were also recommended by fellow researchers in Macomb (no educational variables were considered when selecting the comparison counties so as not to bias the comparisons). There are, of course, some differences in demographics that should be noted. Both Lorain and DuPage counties have larger Hispanic populations than does Macomb County while DuPage also has a higher median household income, a lower percentage of residents employed in manufacturing, and a much lower unemployment rate.

Each county relies on manufacturing as a prime industry in their respective economies. However, in view of falling production in automotive manufacturing in the region, such strong reliance on manufacturing as a whole is proving to be a detriment to employment rates and consequently to postsecondary enrollment and educational attainment. Whereas manufacturing continues to employ over one-fifth of the workforce in Macomb and Lorain Counties, the economy in

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<sup>6</sup> Again, unless noted otherwise, the data in this section are derived from ACS 2005.

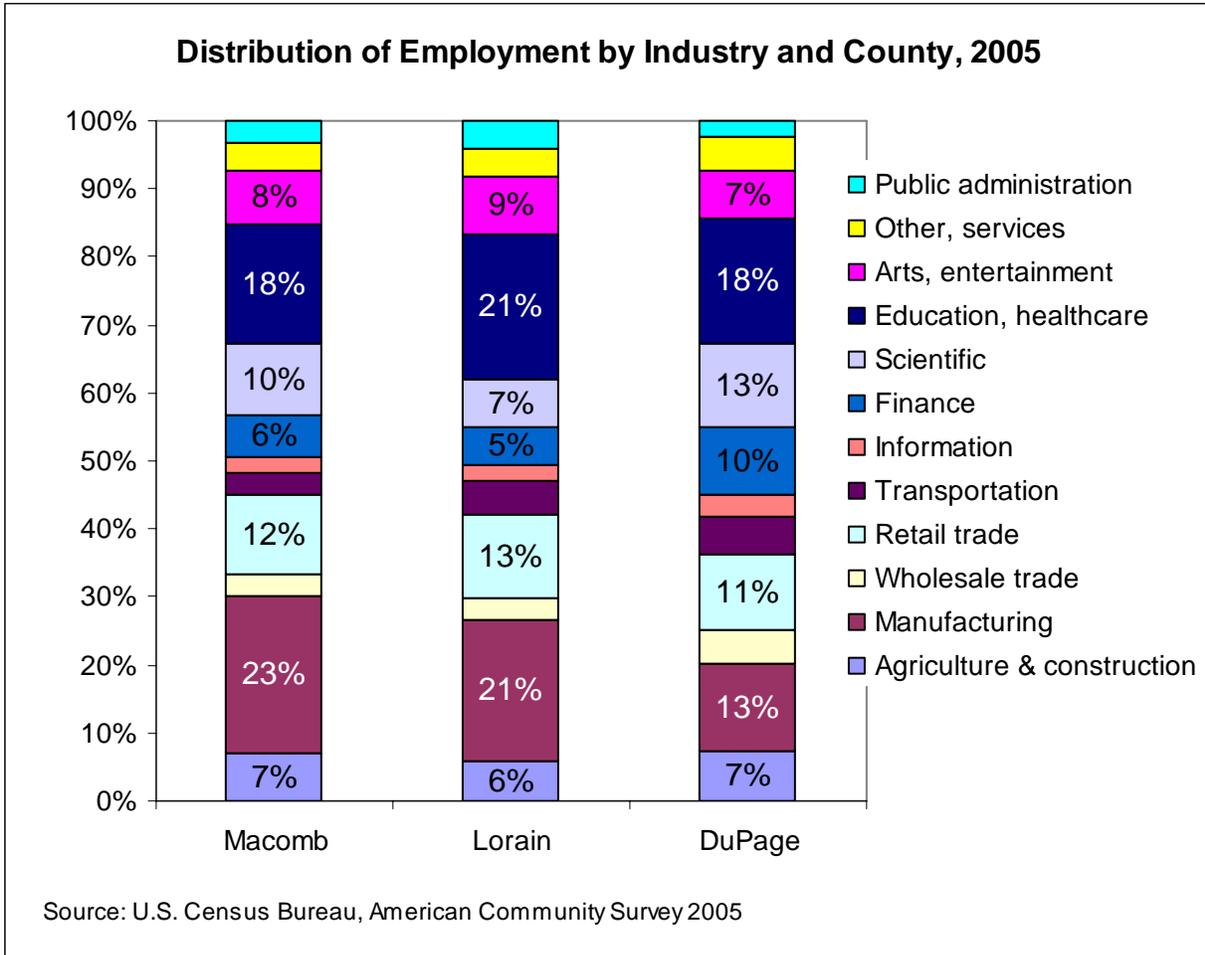
DuPage has become more diversified. In fact, this is true for all of Illinois because of the state's transition from reliance on manufacturing to focusing on the service industry since the 1950s (Podmolik 2007). As a result, any hard hits to the manufacturing industry are often buffered by Illinois' relatively wide range of industries. The reliance on alternate industries has positively impacted the DuPage economy, and its unemployment rate (3.7 percent) is lower than that of Macomb or Lorain. This appears to bode well for college enrollment and educational attainment rates in DuPage County, as its economy is not as dependent on the manufacturing sector as Macomb's or Lorain's.

## Selected Demographic Characteristics of Macomb, Lorain, and DuPage Counties, 2005

	Macomb	Lorain	DuPage
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>820,599</b>	<b>287,985</b>	<b>913,781</b>
<b>Race</b>			
White	88%	83%	73%
Black	6%	7%	4%
Asian/PI	3%	1%	10%
Hispanic	2%	7%	12%
Other/Multi	2%	1%	2%
<b>Gender</b>			
male	49%	49%	50%
female	51%	51%	50%
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	8%	8.5%	8%
25+	68%	66%	66%
<b>Income</b>			
Median household	\$53,321	\$47,913	\$70,560
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	27%	27%	26%
Married	55%	54%	60%
Divorced/Separated	11%	12%	9%
Widowed	7%	7%	5%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>			
	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005

Note: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.



Across all counties, residents who have a degree of any kind tend to fare better financially. Nonetheless, there are some differences between counties in terms of college enrollment and educational attainment overall. In comparing college enrollment of residents aged 18-24 in 2005, Macomb County (41 percent) had higher rates than Lorain (34 percent), but substantially lower than DuPage (50 percent). In particular, there are differences in college enrollment rates as they relate to income levels. For both Lorain and Macomb, residents in higher income quartiles were the most likely to enroll in college. About 17 percent in the lowest quartile in Macomb were enrolled in college, compared to 13 percent in Lorain. At the other end, about 58 percent of both Macomb and Lorain county residents in the highest quartile were enrolled in college. The stratification of educational enrollment by income is also present in DuPage County. For example, 37 percent of the lowest quartile and 72 percent of the highest quartile were enrolled in

college. However, DuPage residents were likely to have better access to postsecondary education at every income level.

**Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for 18-24 Year Olds,  
By County and Various Characteristics, 2005**

<u>Enrollment Rates</u>	Macomb	Lorain	DuPage
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	36%	28%	48%
Female	47%	41%	53%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White	43%	36%	55%
Black	39%	26%	27%
Hispanic	24%	28%	27%
<b>Poverty</b>			
150% or less	17%	18%	37%
Over 150%	45%	40%	53%
<b>Employment Intensity</b>			
Not employed	40%	17%	79%
Part-time	58%	59%	72%
Full-time	30%	23%	27%
<b>Family Income Quartile</b>			
Lowest	17%	13%	37%
Second	41%	30%	48%
Third	47%	50%	58%
Highest	58%	58%	72%

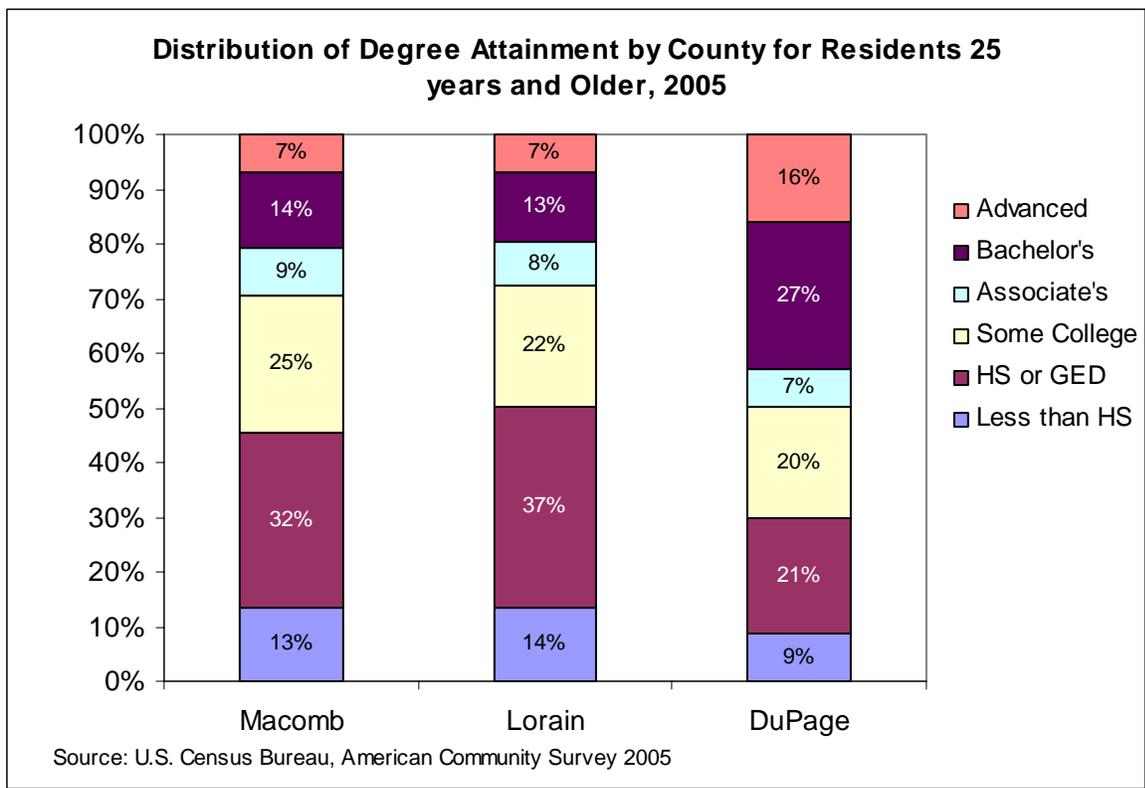
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005

Differences in other student characteristics also can be seen. For example, in Macomb, the college enrollment rate of Black students is almost as high as White students—39 percent versus 43 percent. The gaps are larger in the two other counties.<sup>7</sup> Also, the percentage of residents in this age group who worked (or did not) was correlated with college enrollment rates. In all three counties, more than half of those working part-time were enrolled in college, while less than a third of those working full-time were enrolled. Interestingly, of those who were not employed, the college enrollment rates varied considerably—40 percent in Macomb, 17 percent in Lorain, and 79 percent in DuPage. This is significant because, as mentioned, Macomb and Lorain have higher unemployment rates (8 percent and 6 percent, respectively) than DuPage and, not

<sup>7</sup> Note that the figures are based on a relatively small proportion of Black residents.

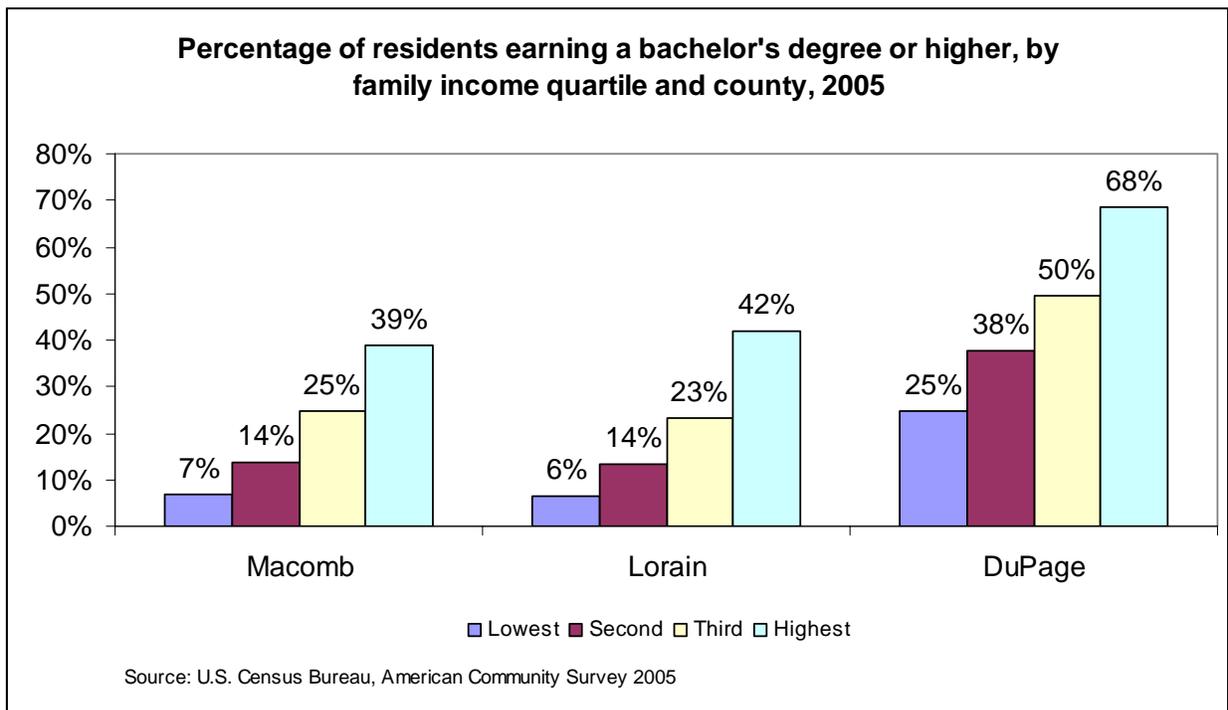
surprisingly, lower college enrollment rates. These numbers suggest differences in educational perceptions and aid opportunities. It may be more difficult for Macomb and Lorain residents who are unemployed to afford higher education, or they may be less likely to pursue college opportunities for other reasons.

Educational attainment for those 25 and older in the three counties also showed patterns of difference. Overall, Macomb and Lorain Counties had similar proportions of the population who had attained bachelor’s degrees or higher, with Macomb having a slightly higher proportion with some college or an associate’s degree. However, as with college enrollment for 18-24 year olds, overall degree attainment in DuPage was significantly higher—43 percent had attained a bachelor’s degree or higher, more than double when compared to 21 percent in Macomb.



Thus, we found that Macomb County residents have fairly low rates of educational attainment of bachelor’s or advanced degrees in comparison with DuPage County in particular. However,

drilling deeper in these comparisons, the gap between White and Black residents was smaller in Macomb—4 percentage points, compared to 11 percentage points in both Lorain and DuPage. On the other hand, as with college enrollment for 18-24 year olds, differences in educational attainment by income are large for all counties. We found that low-income persons were far less likely to have a bachelor’s degree than persons with higher incomes. Both Macomb and Lorain had big gaps in achievement of a bachelor’s degree or higher by income—less than 10 percent of those in the lowest income quartile had attained a degree, compared to 39 percent in Macomb and 43 percent in Lorain in the highest income quartile. DuPage had higher educational attainment rates in all income quartiles, but a higher gap in bachelor’s degree attainment between the highest and lowest income quartiles.



Overall, comparison between counties suggests that Macomb’s rates of college enrollment and educational attainment are somewhat higher than those in Lorain, but far lower than DuPage. Even with increases in educational attainment by Macomb residents, substantial increases in college enrollment rates would be necessary to catch up with DuPage. Part of the difference between the counties is related to the fact that DuPage currently has a median household income

that is almost one third higher than that in Macomb, as the correlation between income and education is strong—and the higher rates of educational attainment may have contributed to higher incomes. However, the gaps in college enrollment and educational attainment that exist among specific groups of residents exist in all three counties to a similar degree. It is likely that similar gaps would be found in many, if not most, of the counties in the Midwest that are facing demographic and economic change. Nonetheless, given that Macomb County is projected to see significant changes in its demographic profile over the next decade, it is imperative that these gaps be addressed.

Both the gaps in educational attainment rates among certain demographic groups and the fact that rates are low for all groups in Macomb must be addressed. Differences among counties may be related to various other factors within each county that are more difficult to measure. These differences may include:

- College options located in the county
- The structure of higher education governance in each state
- State policies on direct appropriations to institutions
- State and local policies on tuition prices and financial aid
- Programs that help the transition from secondary school to college, and transfer from two-year to four-year colleges
- Provision of other services, such as child care and transportation

For example, an obvious difference across all counties is the variance in postsecondary options. Each county has a community college as well as vocational or technical schools. However, Lorain and DuPage each have at least one four-year institution. For example, while Lorain County is the home of the nationally regarded Oberlin College, DuPage County includes several small private non-profit colleges and universities, as well as a small outreach center of a public university. On the surface, the greater number of postsecondary options in those counties would support the argument that having a four-year institution close by facilitates higher educational attainment rates. Although this may be true for DuPage, whose residents have higher educational

attainment rates than Macomb, this is not necessarily the case for Lorain—Lorain’s college enrollment and educational attainment patterns are worse than those in Macomb. However, Lorain County’s only four-year institution is Oberlin College, whose Conservatory program draws select students from across the nation and worldwide while DuPage County offers a larger number of four-year institutions and a wider range of institutional types and programs.

<b>DuPage County Postsecondary Institution Profiles</b>				
<b>Institute</b>	<b>Institution Type</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Degrees</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
Benedictine University	Four-year private non-profit	1887	AA, BA, MA, Doctoral	Undergrad: 2,320 Grad: 1,080
Elmhurst College	Four-year private non-profit	1871	BA, MA	Undergrad: 2,691 Grad: 229
North Central College	Four-year private non-profit	1861	BA, Post-Bac Certificate, MA	Undergrad: 2,133 Grad: 339
Wheaton College	Four-year private non-profit	1860	BA, Post-Bac Certificate, MA, Doctoral	Undergrad: 2,417 Grad: 515
Robert Morris College-DuPage Branch	Branch campus of four-year private non-profit	1988	AA, BA, MA	<i>Main campus:</i> Undergrad: 5,418 Grad: 0
Westwood College-DuPage	Private for-profit	N/A	AA, BA	Undergrad: 675 Grad: 0
Illinois Institute of Technology-DuPage	Branch campus of Four-year private non-profit	1991	BA, MA (courses offered: upper-level undergrad and grad)	<i>Main campus:</i> Undergrad: 2,216 Grad: 4,256
University of Illinois-Extension DuPage	Extension office of four-year public	N/A	Community programs/workshops	N/A: more of a community resource
Northern Illinois University-Naperville	Outreach center of four-year public	2000	BA, Undergrad Certificate, MA	<i>Main campus:</i> Undergrad: 18,467 Grad: 6,741
National University of Health Sciences	Four-year private non-profit	1906; expanded beyond chiropractics 2005	Certificate, BA, MA, First Professional, First Professional Certificate	Undergrad: 149 Grad: 382
College of DuPage	Community College	1967	AA and Certificate	Undergrad: 27,117 Grad: 0
Northwood University	Private for-profit	N/A	BA in Business Admin and Management	N/A: Programs for Adult and Vocational Education

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education 2007; DuPage County Government 2007

<b>Lorain County Postsecondary Institution Profiles</b>				
<b>Institute</b>	<b>Institution Type</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Degrees</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
Oberlin College	Four-year private non-profit	1833	BA, MA, Music certificates	2,800 Total students, predominately out of state
Lorain County Community College	Community College	1963	AA and Certificate	Fall 2004: Full-time: 6,132 Part-time: 3,779 ALL commuter
Lorain County JVS	Private for-profit	1971	Technical training and certificates for teens and adults	Serves over 4,000 students from Lorain and surrounding counties
Ohio Business College	Private for-profit	1903	Diploma, AA, Real-Estate licensing, Certificate	Serves Lorain and Sandusky counties

Source: Lorain County Government 2007

Without a four-year institution in the county, facilitating transfer from community colleges and four-year schools becomes more important. Macomb relies on the University Center to facilitate partnerships with state four-year institutions, but some residents see it as an imperfect option for a variety of reasons (see below). Lorain does have a private four-year institution located in the county, but also benefits from its University Partnership program (housed at Lorain County Community College, LCCC), which partners with eight four-year colleges throughout the state. DuPage, in addition to a number of private four-year institutions, has an outreach center of Northern Illinois University, one of the state's many public four-year schools. The center was designed with the intention to service the Western suburbs of Chicago, but is primarily geared at recruiting students who are in the latter stages of their degree or adults pursuing accelerated training programs. At the same time, the issue of transfer is also related to state policies on articulation and transfer. For example, the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) was established as a voluntary state transfer agreement among 110 participating 2- and 4-year institutions in the state, both public and private. IAI has designed a General Education Core Curriculum, and to date, more than 18,000 courses have been approved (IBHE 2007).

## **Impact of State and Local Policies**

In addition, statewide and local policies may prove helpful to better understand why Macomb lags behind places like DuPage in terms of educational attainment. For historical and other reasons, Michigan lacks a centralized coordinating or governing office for higher education—one of the few states in the nation where this is the case. Rather, information for the higher education system is primarily affiliated with the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Office of Postsecondary Services. The state promotes and defines a strong relationship between educational and occupational progress. Postsecondary policy roots itself in creating a capable and functioning workforce. Governance tends to occur at the system and institutional level; for example, the University of Michigan system has an independent Board of Regents and the Michigan State University system has an independent Board of Trustees.

Ohio and Illinois, conversely, boast more centralized higher education systems. In 1997, the state of Ohio created the Joint Council of the State Department of Education as well as the Ohio Board of Regents. These organizations were the result of recommendations posited by the Secondary and Higher Education Remediation Advisory Commission (SHERAC) to address the high remediation rates evident in the state's higher education system. They moved to restructure the K-16 system of the state, and put forth initiatives and competencies deemed necessary for postsecondary preparedness. The Ohio Board of Regents website provides easy to reach information on colleges and universities, financial aid, and transfer policies in one place.<sup>8</sup>

Illinois has a nationally regarded higher education system and centralized office that places higher education policy on the forefront of state legislation and initiatives. As the Illinois economy evolved over the past decades and shifted focus, the state recognized the need for an educated workforce. Since 1961, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)<sup>9</sup> has served as the backbone of the state education system, which greatly emphasizes access and completion for all of its constituents. The state board oversees and evaluates public and private institutions, the development of new degree programs, the dispersal of federal funding, as well as the creation of

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<sup>8</sup> <http://regents.ohio.gov/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ibhe.org/>

alternative forms of financial aid offered by the state for eligible residents. As a result of these efforts to regulate higher education policy, Illinois postsecondary institutions have similar goals and standards, reflected in how institutions favor traditional fields of study over a vocational track. This is most evident in the state's community colleges, which generally provide an array of degree options rather than just a technical track (NCPPE 2005).

Initiatives sponsored by the Illinois Board of Higher Education reflect the state's commitment to higher education access. For example, IBHE sponsors and oversees the Illinois Commitment, including an initiative designed to improve access throughout the P-16 pipeline with particular focus on minority and adult students (IBHE 2007). The initiative is a partnership of IBHE, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition, IBHE requires each college and university to annually inventory student demographics, degrees conferred, fiscal spending, and other relevant variables as a way to ensure each institution is educationally and economically relevant for residents and the state as a whole. The state also established the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) in 1957.<sup>10</sup> ISAC's website allows students to find information about higher education opportunities including grants, loans, and other programs and services.

These differences in statewide governance may have direct or indirect impacts on specific counties as well as on the state as a whole. They might enable the tracking of student college enrollment patterns in the state, which would inform state decision-making on policies related to higher education. In addition, the provision of easily accessible, centrally located information to students may impact their awareness of the opportunities that exist within the state.

Beyond governance, the two counties (and states) have other differences that may impact educational opportunity. One example is state financing. For example, over the past five years (FY 2002 to 2007), state appropriations in Michigan decreased by 8.1 percent in nominal terms, compared to an increase of 4.4 percent in Ohio and a decrease of 3.9 percent in Illinois (Grapevine 2007). In 2006, educational appropriations per full-time student were about \$5,799 in

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.collegezone.com/>

Michigan, and the state ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in appropriations per capita (NCHEMS 2007). In both cases, Michigan's investment was lower than Illinois' but higher than Ohio's.

In the case of all three states, the percentage of higher education expenses dedicated to state grants was similar in 2004-05 (13.8 percent in Illinois, 11.4 percent in Ohio, and 10.3 percent in Michigan). However, Illinois had a substantially higher amount of undergraduate grant dollars per full-time equivalent (FTE) student—more than \$750 compared to \$554 in Ohio and \$496 in Michigan. Illinois was also far higher than the other states in terms of need-based grants per FTE—\$691 versus \$231 in Michigan (\$370 in Ohio). This reflects Illinois' overwhelming focus on need-based aid (91 percent of total undergraduate student aid). In contrast, Michigan had 29 percent of grants based only on need, with an additional 15 percent based on need and merit. Meanwhile, need-based grant aid in Michigan increased only a little over 1 percent over the past five years, compared to 67 percent in Ohio (Illinois remained flat). On the other hand, non-need-based aid increased considerably, with the introduction of a new aid program in Michigan (NASSGAP 2006). If one goal is to narrow the gaps in educational opportunity, investment in need-based aid is an important component.

To illustrate some of these differences, following is a brief overview of state-wide financial aid programs and county offerings:

- The state of Michigan offers a number of scholarships and grants. Among the largest is the Michigan Merit Award program, which was established in 1999 and provides grants to high school graduates for outstanding performance on their assessment test. Other major programs include Private Tuition grants, Competitive Scholarships, and a Tuition Incentive Program for high school completion. There is a small aid program for part-time students, as well as a number of other programs. The new Michigan Promise provides a \$4,000 scholarship to every person attending a college, community college, or technical training program in the state who meets specific academic requirements (Michigan.gov 2007). In Macomb, there are several financial aid options specific to county residents: the Macomb Community College Grant (up to \$500 per academic year); the Indian Tuition

Waiver program; and an array of private scholarships for residents pursuing specific degree tracks (Macomb County Government 2007).

- Ohio provides a number of grant programs, including Need-Based Student Aid, Academic Scholarships, and Private Institution Student Grants. In Lorain, LCCC awards an Incentive Award for Non-Traditional Students for needy County residents with no prior higher education experience; a Minority Incentive Award given at the high school level; a LCCC Trustee Scholarship awarded to high school students with at least a 3.7 GPA; a Presidential Scholarship for those with GPAs between 3.4 and 3.69; the LCC Comprehensive Scholarship Program for current LCCC students as well as County high school students through private donors. Part-time students qualify for these awards. In addition, LCCC offers multiple “financial aid filing fairs.” Also, the Lorain County Community College Foundation, through the generous support of private donations, has made scholarship dollars available to University Partnership students (Lorain County Government 2007).
- In Illinois, the Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) provides scholarships and grants primarily based on need (ISAC 2007). In particular, the need-based Monetary Award Program (MAP), established several decades ago, is the second largest program of its kind and awards over \$300 million in grants annually (ISAC 2007). In DuPage, the County recently received a Community Services Block Grant for eligible low-income residents; provided through state funds, the block grant will be used to provide financial aid and scholarship money to County residents interested in pursuing degrees or occupational training with a particular interest, but not limited to, technological fields. The County also offers a number of scholarship opportunities per semester, with a substantial proportion funded privately by local sponsors (DuPage County Government 2007).

To further explore the potential impact of financial aid on affordability for residents, it is important to set it in the context of the difference (or lack of difference) in tuition among the three counties and their states. The average tuition and fees in Michigan were \$6,015 at public four-year institutions and \$1,868 at public two-year institutions in 2005-06. In comparison, the

figures were \$6,561 and \$2,793 in Ohio, and \$5,653 and \$1,783 in Illinois (*Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* 2006). These figures suggest that there were not large differences in sticker prices among the three states. In this case, financial aid could be having a relatively higher impact on college enrollment and degree completion by allowing students to pay less overall. Further, prices per credit hour for students at Macomb Community College, \$68 per credit hour for in-district students, are lower than those at Lorain Community College (\$92) and College of DuPage (\$103).

### **Other Factors**

It is also important to focus on high school students' immediate enrollment in college, because students who enroll directly after high school graduation are more likely to persist in college and earn a degree. On the high school level, MCC has currently partnered with 135 high schools to help students transition directly into MCC upon graduation; students must pick a designated career track. The County also holds career academies and a small early intervention program for at-risk youth. In Lorain, the College Tech Prep program exists for high school sophomores interested in specific fields, who may enroll in college courses for the last two years of high school for free. The Ohio Postsecondary Enrollment Option B also enables free college enrollment while in high school, and credits transfer to LCC or other higher education institutions. In addition, with support from foundations and members of the local community, the Early College High School Experience Program allows first-generation students entering high school to attend courses at the LCC campus for free. In DuPage, the College of DuPage has partnered with eight local schools for dual credit programs. Clearly, each county has made a great effort in attempting to connect residents to higher education options. It is difficult to assess the extent to which these efforts have impacted transitions to college. However, it is important to note that most of these efforts focus on the transition into vocational or other programs at community colleges, which are the primary public institutions located in Lorain and Macomb Counties.

Finally, county services that facilitate students' attendance at a two- or four-year college may differ. Interviews and visits to Macomb County suggest that such factors may play an important

role in the dynamics of educational opportunity, especially for the most disadvantaged groups in the County. MCC does not have child care services, while at LCC and College of DuPage, students receive discounted rates for child care. Child care would be even more difficult at institutions located outside the county. Yet with the predicted decline in high school graduation rates, and the growing number of non-traditional students, child care services will prove to be necessary in recruiting and retaining potential residents interested in finishing their degree track while concurrently balancing familial responsibilities.

Transportation is also important. Macomb does not have a sufficient county-wide system, although there is a shuttle service for low income and physically disabled residents and a suburban shuttle service (SMART), most of which require patrons to be senior citizens. This is problematic for Macomb residents who would like to attend Oakland and Wayne State Universities, since no transportation services currently exist between the County and the respective university locations. Lorain County has similar transportation issues. In DuPage, PACE bus routes and Chicago metro transit extends out to the suburbs. In view of increased gas prices and other additional automotive expenses, offering a sufficient transportation system will promote greater feelings of accessibility as well as a cost-cutting incentive when commuting to school.

These comparisons to other counties suggest that in order to build a more inclusive pathway to the baccalaureate degree, there are no magic solutions. While other counties fare better in some cases, in others the comparisons suggest that a County like Macomb has certain advantages. A key issue, then, is what makes some counties perform better than others. What is present in counties that seem to do reasonably well may be absent in others. In many cases, it appears that statewide policies have a significant role in influencing the success of a county in producing baccalaureate graduates. Other factors also are important, including the availability of college opportunities in a county, the existence of programs that encourage transition from high school to college, and services such as transportation and child care. Macomb clearly has deficiencies in several of these areas that may be affecting the eventual attainment of baccalaureate degrees in

the county. These factors and other are explored further below in our qualitative analysis of information provided through interviews with Macomb County leaders and citizens.

### **Goals and Challenges: Community Perspectives**

Given the gaps in college enrollment and educational attainment, Macomb residents as well as policymakers see a compelling need for improvement. However, the specific path of improvement is not always clear. Site visits and structured interviews with nearly 40 government and college officials, K-12 leaders, students, parents, and other interested parties revealed a number of different—and sometimes conflicting—perspectives on how to address the issue of baccalaureate degree attainment in Macomb County. These perspectives, as well as those offered during hearings conducted by the Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth in Macomb County, can be grouped into several themes: 1) lack of satisfaction with current postsecondary education opportunities; 2) lack of a public four-year institution in particular; 3) suggestions for alternative options; and 4) potential obstacles to implementing change.

First, almost all of those interviewed felt that the postsecondary education options currently available in Macomb were not sufficient. Interviewees generally believe that Macomb Community College is doing a very good job at the associate degree and technical education levels. However, to address the growing needs for postsecondary education in the County, MCC has begun to explore the idea of offering four-year degrees in select fields where there is high workforce demand (an idea that would require both state approval and the consent of accreditors). Many interviewees suggested that this could put a strain on the institution and potentially reduce its effectiveness in serving students who are workforce-ready or four-year college transfer-ready.

As mentioned above, the University Center houses extension centers from various Michigan universities, with the goal of enabling Macomb residents to obtain a four-year degree. Most of those interviewed appreciated the presence of the Center. In addition, the most recent University Center survey in 2005 showed that 97 percent of students would recommend UC to others, and 82 percent believed the quality of their programs is better than previous college experiences.

The average credit hours earned per semester was 6.3. Most of those interviewed also felt that UC has not fully addressed the educational needs of the Macomb population. Most interviewees believe that it does not provide adequate student guidance services, and completing a BA degree is very difficult for many students because course sequences, scheduling options, and access to professors are also inadequate. As noted in one of the Commission hearings, one married student with grown children has been trying to complete her BA degree for the past 14 years, and has been unable to do so despite accumulating over 150 college credits.

Both Oakland and Wayne State Universities are within 20 miles of most of the northern and southern parts of Macomb County (respectively). Nonetheless, interviewees did not see either as a sufficient option, especially for people with other obligations (such as work and family responsibilities) and/or without cars. Michigan in general and Macomb in particular does not have an adequate public transportation system. One person interviewed noted the considerable transportation problems in trying to shuttle between the University Center and Wayne State University. Some of the people interviewed said that the Wayne State campus was located in a transitional urban area, and they or their relatives did not feel comfortable driving there by themselves or after dark.

In addition to the perceptions that currently available options in Macomb are not sufficient, residents argued that the County should have its own four-year institution. There are only two other counties the size of Macomb in the United States that do not have a four-year institution, according to analysis conducted previously and confirmed through our work. In addition, Macomb houses almost 10 percent of the population of Michigan, while other areas of the state have far less population and more public higher education. Further, many feel that the taxes paid by Macomb residents support state universities located elsewhere, and this imbalance should be corrected. Thus, many of those interviewed felt that a four-year institution located in the County would strongly benefit residents as well as the County as a whole.

In particular, it was suggested that a four-year institution is key to the county's economic development. Numerous research studies have suggested that the presence of a public four-year

institution has economic benefits for the surrounding communities (for example, Duhart 2002). Macomb has been falling behind the rest of the state and the rest of the country, given the downward slide of the automotive industry headquartered in the state of Michigan and specifically, in and near Macomb County. In years past, a college degree was not a prerequisite for a good paying job in Macomb, because the auto industry was there and was strong, but that is no longer the case, and those interviewed recognized that the County will continue to fall behind if its young people leave to get a degree elsewhere or stay and fail to get a degree. The absence of a university also means Macomb is not getting research grants, and other state and federal dollars associated with university activity.

Some interviewees noted that the lack of a four-year university nearby has an impact on residents' educational aspirations; according to one, most classmates never even considered enrolling in college, despite the fact that most high schools offer information and counseling on college planning. This perception is confirmed by national higher education research which indicates that aspirations are impacted in part on the wide availability of educational choices. The more students are exposed to higher education in their communities and see it as a reasonable option for their life, the more likely they are to actually aspire to, and eventually enroll in, college. (Carter 2001) The demographics of many schools include many parents who have not gone to college themselves; for these students, a local four-year institution would provide a concrete opportunity to pursue a college degree. Others noted that the students most in need of steering towards college are in the blue collar southern part of the county and that any new institution should be located in that area. Most of the students in that area, if they do enroll, tend to enroll at community colleges such as MCC.

When asked to visualize what a four-year institution in Macomb might look like, some citizens offered eloquent speeches about the value and merit of a liberal arts education as the best preparation for a changing world. Others thought Macomb should build on its strengths, and develop high tech programs based on:

1. Its links and experience with the increasingly computerized auto industry;

2. Its proximity to the Great Lakes, which can be explored as ecological treasures and alternate sources of energy; and
3. The military research work underway at the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, where a lot of the equipment used in Iraq is developed and tested.

Some also pointed out that Macomb County has educational and public health needs that call for the training of teachers and medical personnel at the baccalaureate and graduate levels. Reference was made to the possible establishment of a center for osteopathic medicine in Macomb. Everybody emphasized that Macomb students should receive a quality education, because for many of them the university would be the only opportunity to discover bodies of knowledge and areas of inquiry beyond the familiar.

When asked to suggest options to the establishment of a four-year institution in Macomb County—whether a four-year university is found to be economically or politically unfeasible, or as transitional measures while the university comes into being—interviewees mentioned the following:

1. Add and expand four-year program options at Macomb Community College and at nearby St. Clair Community College.
2. Convene the institutions that currently make up the University Center in Macomb, and work with them to address the weaknesses and gaps in their current offerings.
3. Reach a financial and programmatic agreement with one of the state institutions to offer a number of full-fledged programs in Macomb—in effect, a satellite campus.
4. Reach an agreement with a smaller private institution, as it may be easier to find partners in private industry.
5. Make more and better use of distance and online education options. However, there was not much enthusiasm for this option, and it was suggested that only a small percentage of Macomb students currently make use of the distance education options available now.

6. Create a coalition of industry and educational leaders to bring to Macomb distinguished researchers and scientists to develop one or two high-visibility and cutting edge programs that would be located in Macomb.
7. Develop an effective public transportation system.

Although almost all citizens interviewed agreed that a four-year institution was needed, they also agreed that cost was a major consideration. There was general agreement that it was not realistic to start from scratch. Many suggested methods by which an institution could be created with minimal costs. For example, many believed that existing infrastructure could be used to house a new campus or branch of a university. The one most often mentioned was Selfridge Air National Guard Base, a military base near Lake St. Clair, with ample land, buildings, and other facilities.<sup>11</sup> Other options mentioned less often were the Macomb Community College campus and its facility housing the University Center.

Still, some level of funding would be required if a four-year institution was to be located in Macomb. Most people interviewed did not believe that major funds for this purpose would be available from the state, given the severe fiscal restraints in the state. Raising taxes to pay for a new campus was not viewed as politically feasible. Some suggested that the Michigan Congressional delegation look into federal funding; other possible sponsors mentioned were the auto industry, the business community, and other counties in Southeast Michigan. Elected officials underscored the need for an ambitious, big picture regional development vision formulated by high state officials that would bring together leaders from the public and private sectors to integrate their efforts to transform the economic model and standard of living for the region. Higher education would be a key part, but not the only part of this model.

Several of those interviewed believed that a four-year institution in Macomb would not be economically viable under any foreseeable circumstances. In addition, they believe the current

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<sup>11</sup> While the Selfridge Base has been included in the federal base closure discussions over the last several years, using the base as a university campus would be a substantial change. For example, when Fort Ord in California was closed in the 1990s, a new California University campus (CSU-Monterey Bay) was built on part of the former base. A significant part of the initial construction costs for the CSU-Monterey Bay campus were paid for with federal funds, with the state of California paying for much of the subsequent growth and development.

higher education establishment would not be supportive of a new four-year institution, especially given the cuts in the higher education budget over the past few years. In fact, any attempt to fund a new four-year institution would likely face strong criticism from several corners.

Many of those who believe that a four-year institution is impossible think that other options exist, both within driving distance—Wayne State and Oakland Universities—and through an overhauled University Center. Both the University Center partners and Wayne and Oakland would need to make a greater commitment to Macomb than they have up to now, according to many interviewees, but this might be easier to accomplish, in their view, than developing a four-year institution from scratch. One caveat was that MCC ran the danger of becoming overextended if it kept adding programs and BAs to its offerings, and so should continue to be very good at what it does best. In addition, there was some concern expressed that if MCC were to be expanded to a full-blown four-year institution it could lose its local ‘millage’ funding and be dependent entirely on the state for financial support.

## **Options for Moving Forward**

One clear conclusion of these analyses is that there are important barriers to baccalaureate degree attainment in the County. Simply put, more opportunities to attain a bachelor’s degree need to be available in order for the County to be successful in serving its citizens. Absent these opportunities, the County will face an array of economic and social hurdles as it tries to meet the challenges of a new economy and a rapidly evolving workforce.

The key question, then, is what are the best ways to create more opportunities to attain a baccalaureate degree? We see the possible options for improving opportunities for baccalaureate degree attainment in Macomb County as falling into four broad categories.<sup>12</sup> These categories are not hierarchical or mutually exclusive; while they can stand alone, they also can support each other, in order to provide immediate, midterm, and long-term remedies to the educational needs of Macomb County. Costs will vary depending on the type or sequence of options to be pursued.

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<sup>12</sup> There are other options as well that go beyond this report, particularly those that relate to broad state policy concerning higher education and governance. These statewide and cross-county issues will be addressed in the summary report of the larger project being undertaken by the Institute for Higher Education policy later this year.

In practically every case, the costs will be substantial. They will include financial resources, time, and political capital. However, there seems to be the political will among the Macomb citizenry and elected officials to strongly support one or more of the following groups of options:

1. Targeted investment in innovative financial aid and other support for the demographic of students who aren't going to four-year colleges;
2. Major improvements in the current offerings at the University Center;
3. A branch or satellite campus of an existing institution in the state; and
4. A new, public four-year institution located in the County.

These options should not be seen as having equal status. In fact, there may be important reasons for there to be more emphasis placed on one set of options over another, or to pursue several of the options simultaneously. As such, these options should each be considered on its merits with varying degrees of importance and emphasis placed on the different options presented.

### **1. Targeted investment in innovative financial aid and other support for the demographic of students who aren't going to four-year colleges**

In Macomb County, as in other jurisdictions, issues related to student financial aid and overall student support are critical to academic success and degree attainment. Concerns about the cost of college, student motivation, and logistical and informational challenges represent serious impediments to four-year degree attainment.

Macomb could become a proving ground for the introduction of new, innovative strategies for student success and baccalaureate degree attainment in the state. Building on the exciting potential of the Michigan Promise, several new targeted investments could be made to support students who currently are not receiving a four-year education as County residents. These include:

- A program that encourages high schools to build a postsecondary planning infrastructure that fosters a college going culture across each high school. This can be accomplished through national models such as College Summit, which introduce a postsecondary

education planning course for all high school seniors (including hands-on support to negotiate the college application process) and provide teachers and counselors with professional development to lead the course.

- Dual-enrollment programs with high schools that help students get a leg up on the college track. These models can range from IB programs to AP courses and are especially important at helping students see the opportunities that are available with a four-year degree. In order to explore this option, it would be important to assess the efforts already in place at Macomb County high schools.
- A grant that supports timely degree completion by awarding a “performance bonus” to students. This grant would supplement other financial assistance and be need-based. For example, second-year students might receive a \$500 Bonus Grant if they had completed 32 credits with a 3.0 GPA; third year students with a 3.0 GPA and a minimum of 60 credits could receive a \$750 Bonus Grant; and students entering the fourth year with a 3.0 GPA and 90 credits could receive a bonus of \$1,000.
- Targeted grant assistance for students who transfer from MCC to a four-year institution in the state. These transfer grants could supplement the aid available through the Michigan Promise and help ensure that students will be able to attend their choice of four-year college or university.
- A new County-wide transportation system that helps students get to four-year colleges in nearby jurisdictions, such as Oakland University and Wayne State University. Reducing the barriers posed by geography may help those students without access to reliable transportation get to and from school on a regular basis.
- A program that improves college financing literacy for families and students. This program could include partners from all sectors and parties who benefit from the investment in higher education—including business, philanthropy, government (both federal and state), and institutions. Such a program should include information on the total costs of education, savings plan options, tax credit programs, student loans, and expectations for financial assistance programs.

## **2. Major improvements in the current offerings at the University Center**

University centers are an attractive and effective mechanism for bringing quality four-year higher education to communities where the number of institutions is limited or the population is geographically dispersed. In Lake County, Illinois, for example, 18 public and private institutions provide education to more than 5,000 students per year. The Lake County University Center's enrollment has increased for 12 percent annually for the past six years and includes state-of-the-art education technology and classroom facilities. In 2004, 47 degrees and 13 certificate programs were offered (University Center of Lake County 2004). At the University Center of Greenville in South Carolina, 22 bachelor's degree programs, 30 master's programs, and six doctorate programs are offered through seven participating public and private colleges.

In Macomb County, there is a widely held perception that there are a number of limitations to the ways in which the University Center is currently addressing the County citizens' needs for baccalaureate degrees. As noted earlier, these limitations include the limited availability of student guidance services, and significant obstacles to students' ability to complete a bachelor's degree because course sequences, scheduling options, and access to professors are often inadequate.

The experience of other university centers around the country suggests that several key elements are important in making them work successfully. They include:

- Effective and clear inter-institutional cooperation in program planning and delivery;
- A diverse range of programming appropriate to the needs of the local economy, often coordinated by an agency that works in partnership with the center's institutions;
- Access to both public and private higher education; and
- The opportunity for seamless transfer among a wide range of institutions.

Because of Michigan's particular history with regard to a lack of statewide coordination and governance for higher education, there are significant barriers associated with credit transfer in the state. States with high rates of success with student transfer, retention, and degree attainment (like Florida, New York, and North Carolina) also tend to have strong statewide governance and

data collection capacities. This means that in states like Michigan the onus for making transfer successful rests primarily with the institutions and local entities.

A concrete next step should be to use the leverage of the state to convene the institutions that currently make up the University Center in Macomb and work with them to address the weaknesses and gaps in their current offerings that make it so unlikely that students can graduate in a reasonable period with a bachelor's or higher degree. To be a driver of higher education opportunity for the County, the University Center must be at the forefront of efforts to identify the emerging needs of the County's residents and employers. It should build dynamic relationships with the civic, business, educational, and social service communities of the County. Ultimately, the University Center must serve as an advocate for those communities with the colleges and universities that participate in the University Center's activities.

It is unclear at present how realistic it may be to pursue such a significant overhaul of the University Center. Given the absence of many of the factors noted above that define effective university centers in other states, and the perception among many County residents and leaders that the University Center is just not a likely option, the chances for making the University Center into a major pathway to baccalaureate degree attainment seem limited. Nevertheless, improvements to the University Center might be seen as part of an overall strategy to improve higher education opportunities in the County.

At the same time, plans to accelerate MCC's ability to grant bachelor's degree in certain areas of high workforce need should be considered. Such an enhancement of a community college's capacity is not unheard of; according to the Community College Baccalaureate Association, community colleges in a dozen states have the authority to grant baccalaureate degrees, usually in fields like education and nursing where there is a very high demand at the local level for qualified workers. (CCBA 2007) While this solution will not "solve" the Macomb County problem of limited bachelor's degree attainment, it would seem to be a reasonable option to explore. Both approval from the state and from institutional and programmatic accreditors would be required to effect this change.

### **3. A branch or satellite campus of an existing institution in the state**

Michigan has an admirable array of higher education institutions. It may be desirable to establish a branch or satellite campus of one of these existing institutions, or perhaps to establish two different satellites—one in the northern part of the County, and one in the southern part.<sup>13</sup> For this to be effective would require a major commitment on the part of the parent institution to Macomb County and its values.

Research indicates that for a satellite campus to be effective, it will need to include:

- A high quality physical space or facility;
- Committed teaching faculty, preferably those who live in the community;
- Reasonable opportunities for students and faculty to interact with those from the main campus;
- Adequate financial resources both for start-up and multi-year operating costs;
- A prospective student body willing to attend a branch campus of an institution that is based elsewhere.

Based on the analysis conducted for this study, the key for Macomb County will be to determine whether a satellite campus can meet the high expectations of its citizens for expanded higher education opportunities. For example, the University Center apparently has not met the needs of the County's residents with regard to bachelor's degree attainment. It is possible that this is in part due to the fact that the UC's partners are not Macomb in name—that is, they grant degrees bearing the names of other institutions. Overcoming this perceived limitation will be important for a satellite or branch of another institution in the state to be successful in Macomb.

### **4. A new, public four-year institution located in the County**

Despite the advent of distance learning and a more mobile society, higher education continues to be an overwhelmingly local phenomenon. Nationally 63 percent of undergraduate students attend

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<sup>13</sup> Such a strategy could make geographic access much easier for residents in the different parts of the County. One caution, however, is that this could unintentionally create divisions between the two halves of the county.

college less than 25 miles from home (NCES 2004b). Transportation, family responsibilities, and living costs are some of the many reasons why this is the case. So a new, public four-year institution in the County is certainly not an unreasonable proposal, given the size of the County and the lack of four-year college access within the County's borders.

The question then becomes one of what kind of four-year institution would best fit the County's and the state's needs. There are a variety of new four-year institution options that could be envisioned in Macomb County, ranging from a new, comprehensive institution that offers a range of programs similar to those offered at other public universities in the state to a more innovative, forward-looking institution.

Each of the different models needs to be carefully considered with regard to the time, allies, and financial and political costs that would be required to make it a reality. The leadership of Michigan's renowned public university systems must be brought into the conversation and asked to commit their talents and resources to the resolution of this public need. Private institutions, both academic and entrepreneurial, also should be a part of the solution.

The opportunity to "do something different" than the norm seems particularly appropriate for Macomb. Historically, in times of seismic changes in the US economy, postsecondary education has been a big part of the solution. Globalization and its many consequences is clearly the great economic challenge of our time, and Macomb County has been for the most part adversely affected by it thus far. There are some university-based efforts in various states and in several countries abroad dedicated to the study of globalization, and the amelioration of its various deleterious effects at the local or regional level. However, there is no major postsecondary institution, program, or policy in the world with a specific focus on addressing the issues rising out of the new world economic and demographic order which is emerging around us. Building on our theme of Macomb County as an example of globalization's promise and peril, the County may be the ideal place to establish a new kind of four-year postsecondary institution—one that can address the complex historical, economic, political, sociological, ecological, and

entrepreneurial forces which are reshaping the world as we know it and challenging the ability of individuals to attain the American dream of prosperity and civic enlightenment.

This new institution could serve as a model for a new kind of university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This new model, global in outlook but local in its delivery, could be this century's equivalent of what the land grant university was to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in America, using the knowledge of the best minds available to bring practical solutions to a population struggling with the dramatic shift from an agricultural to an industrial society. One of the keys to the success of the land grants was their proximity to the people they were trying to help. They brought the professoriate from the ivory tower to the small towns and fields of an emergent America.

Similarly the new Macomb University for Innovation (this is merely a working name for illustration purposes) could assemble the best minds in the world in such fields as economic development, entrepreneurship, and environmental protection and focus this knowledge on providing an education which would ensure the residents of the County a prosperous and fulfilling future. Just as the land grants helped the *status quo* farmer adapt and improve while at the same time ushering in the new industrial age, Macomb University for Innovation could both assist the current economic infrastructure and prepare a workforce for the future. Macomb University for Innovation could become the model for a new kind of extension, helping the workers of the new economy to innovate and expand their potential, thereby benefiting the County and its residents in a profoundly new and dynamic way.

No institution so far has been able to take on this challenge largely because all postsecondary institutions have commitments to departments and faculty left over from a different age. There is a genuine need for a new type of institution to be built *de novo* to meet the current and future challenges of globalization. Macomb County would thus seize the opportunity, both to save its citizens from the negative effects of globalization, and to provide a postsecondary education model for the nation and the world that is rooted in the experiences, values, and energies of a local community. Clearly this is the most ambitious of all the options suggested and as such,

likely the most expensive and complex. It would need careful planning, significant support from the corporate sector, and visionary leadership.

## **Conclusions**

There are no magic solutions to the challenge of building a more inclusive pathway to the baccalaureate degree in Macomb County. Many factors impact educational attainment, ranging from the availability of college opportunities in the County, to the aspirations of Macomb's citizens, to statewide policies and higher education governance structures, to programs that encourage transition from high school to college, to services such as transportation and child care. These and other factors haven been shown to have been part of the challenge for Macomb County as it endeavors to be more competitive within the state, and beyond.

It is no secret that there is widespread support in the County for a new four-year institution. However, even if funding for such an institution was quickly generated, the fact remains that it would take several years for an institution to be established and fully functioning. We therefore urge that the other options we have outlined here get serious consideration in the policy discussion. Each of the options we have identified can function in a complementary manner, creating momentum for increasing baccalaureate degree attainment in the County. At a minimum, a strategy of pursuing several of these options simultaneously will ensure that progress can be made in the transition so that current students are not left behind.

Clearly, having more residents who have attained a bachelor's degree is a necessity for the County to prosper economically and civically in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The urgency of improving baccalaureate degree attainment in the County requires a multi-faceted, long-term plan that should begin with some immediate efforts to increase opportunities for the County's citizens. With each day that passes and each educational opportunity forsaken, the County and indeed the state in general pays an increasing price in terms of the economic, social, and human potential lost due to an undereducated population.

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## **Persons Interviewed for This Study**

Lil Adams  
Sterling Heights Chamber of Commerce

Jake Allport  
Fitzgerald High School Student

Dana Camphous-Peterson  
Macomb County Board of Commissioners

Angela Chirio  
Macomb Community College Student

Mark Cummins  
Macomb Intermediate School District

Dan DeGrow  
St. Clair RESA

Kathy Downey  
Commission Member

Jim Edoff  
Commission Member

Nancy Falcone-Sullivan  
Commission Member

Bart Fiumano  
Macomb County Community College

Paul Gielegem  
Commission Member

Gayle Green  
Macomb Intermediate School District

Harold Haugh  
City of Roseville Mayor

Peter Hedemark  
Educator

Jim Jacobs

Macomb County Community College

Phil Jankowski  
Fitzgerald High School

Tom Kalkofen  
Macomb County Health Department

Diana Kolakowski  
City of Warren Economic Development

Kevin Lane  
Fitzgerald High School

Sander Levin  
U.S. Representative

Al Lorenzo  
Commission Member

Ida McGarity  
Commission Member

Fred Miller  
State Representative

Lou Moss  
Commission Member

Greg Murray  
Mt. Clemens School Board

John Nitz  
O'Reilly & Rancilo

Jacqueline K. Noonan  
City of Utica Mayor

Barbara Rossman  
St. Joseph Mercy Hospital

Joan Sergent  
Tri-County Alliance for Public Education

Grace Shore  
Commission Member

Honorable George Steeh  
Commission Chair

Paul Strong  
Macomb County Community College

Rich Sulaka  
Warren City Clerk

Mickey Swiatalski  
State Senator

Ted Wahby  
Macomb County Treasurer

Nancy White  
Macomb County Board of Commissioners

Lisa Wojno  
State Representative

Note: Staff of the Institute for Higher Education Policy met with the members of the Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth in Macomb County in November, 2006 to hear the perspectives of commission members. Institute staff also benefited from attending one of the commission meetings. Some commission members also were interviewed individually, as noted above. In addition, a small number of persons were interviewed for this study but chose not to be identified in the report.