

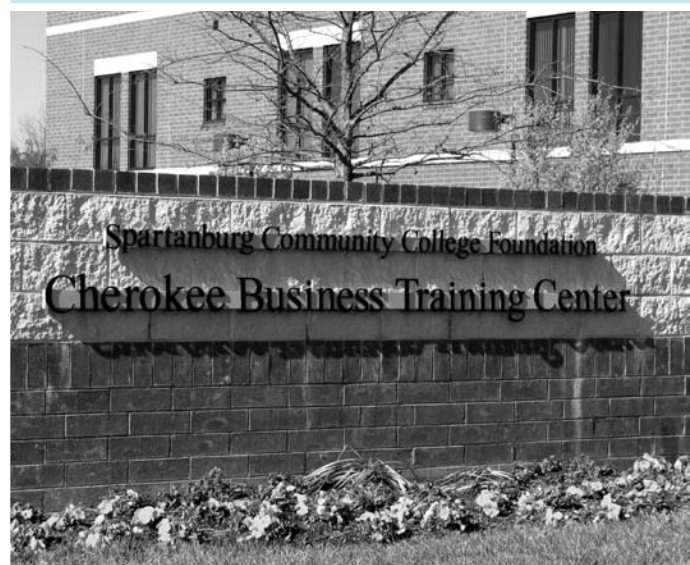
EDUCATION

In recent years there has been a national awakening in regard to a widening education gap between the U.S. and heretofore “underdeveloped” countries. In 2001, India graduated almost a million more students from college than the U.S. did. China graduates twice as many students with bachelor’s degrees than the U.S., including six times as many graduates majoring in engineering (Friedman, 2005). According to the Lumina Foundation (2008), among older adults ages 55-64, the U.S. has the highest percentage of college degree holders among all countries ranked by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; however, among young adults ages 25-34, the U.S. ranks eighth. To close the gap in degree attainment to match the level of the highest performing nations, the U.S. would have to increase degree attainment to over 30% of current levels, equating to an additional 10,000,000 college graduates in the adult population.

Many economists believe that an “education crisis” has begun to challenge U.S. capacity to innovate and, therefore, the country’s economic and social pre-eminence. In fact, the economic stability of a community is highly correlated with the educational attainment of its citizenry. Compared to national, state and peer data, Cherokee County has markedly low educational status (Table E1). Of Cherokee County adults over age 25, 25% have less than a high school education, compared to 16% of adults nationwide. Educational status is highly correlated with income. In fact, according to the S.C. Department of Commerce (2009), in South Carolina, an increase of 1% in the population with a Bachelor’s degree is associated with an increase in state per capita income of \$314. The causal relationship between low educational attainment and low socioeconomic status is widely accepted. This relationship is borne out in Cherokee County where demographics indicate that the county has the both the lowest educational attainment, and the lowest per capita income, household median income, and median family income among peer counties, the state and the nation (Table F2).

“Education also plays a vital role in many aspects of economic growth and quality of life, from reducing poverty and crime rates, to attracting high-tech industries, to promoting and developing innovation. Education is a pivotal means by which a state can capitalize on the potential benefits of growth in the working age population. Proper education of this age group can lead to increased productivity, increased employment, and ultimately increased per capita income (less poverty). Therefore, investment in education at all levels must be a priority.”

*From S.C. Department of Commerce
South Carolina Key Performance
Indicators, 2009, P. 31*



In the last two years, leadership in neighboring Spartanburg County has identified a local “education crisis” in terms of low college degree attainment. This crisis threatens personal and family economic stability, as well as county-wide economic development and quality of life. Significant community effort and resources have been dedicated to addressing this crisis. If there is a national education crisis that threatens U.S. innovative and economic pre-eminence, it is magnified in South Carolina and magnified further in Cherokee County (Figure E1).

US Census

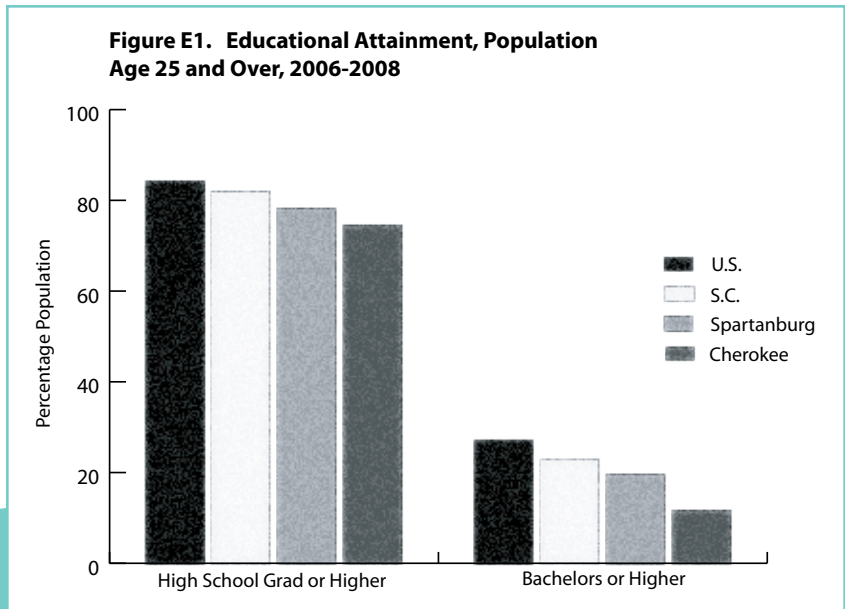


Table E1. Educational Status, Population 25 Years and Over, 2006-2008

	Cherokee	Greenwood	Laurens	S.C.	U.S.
Less than 9th	8.4%	7.1%	11.1%	6.1%	6.4%
9th - 12th no diploma	16.9%	13.5%	16.3%	11.7%	9.1%
High school grad or higher	74.7%	79.4%	72.6%	82.1%	84.5%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	11.8%	22.5%	15.2%	23.2%	27.4%

U.S. Census

This relationship is further illustrated for Cherokee County, in comparison with the U.S. in Table E2.

Table E2. Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months by Educational Attainment, 2006-2008

	Median 12-month earnings (2008 inflation-adjusted dollars)		Educational Attainment (Population age 25 and over)	
	Cherokee	U.S.	Cherokee	U.S.
Less than high school grad.	\$20,805	\$19,989	25.3%	15.5%
High school grad. or equivalent	\$26,378	\$27,448	41.8%	29.6%
Some college or associate’s degree	\$28,522	\$33,838	21.0%	27.5%
Bachelor’s degree	\$35,622	\$47,853	7.8%	17.3%
Graduate or professional degree	\$51,010	\$63,174	4.0%	10.1%

U.S. Census Bureau

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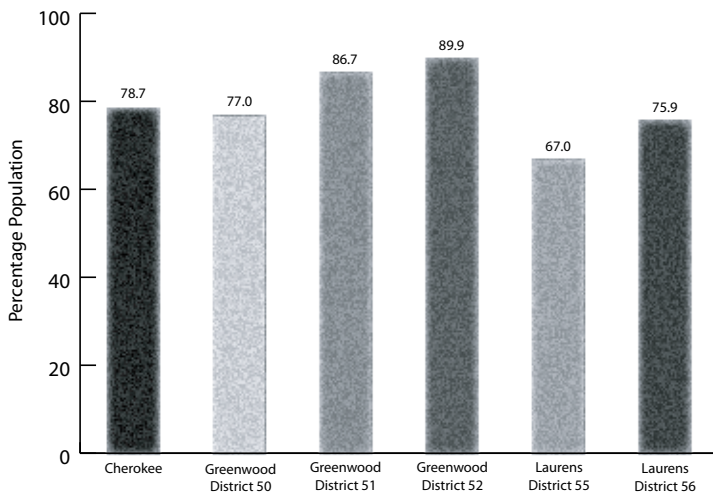
According to the 2009 S.C. Kids Count, Cherokee County ranked 31st out of the 46 South Carolina counties for the percentage of 8th grade students who did not drop out by 12th grade. These data indicate that 31% of Cherokee County students had dropped out by 12th grade, as compared to 25% of students state wide. Cherokee County's dropout rate is higher than rates in Laurens and Greenwood counties (Table E3).

Table E3. Percentage of students enrolled in the 8th Grade not enrolled in 12th grade 4 years later, 2006-2008

S.C. County Rank (of 46)	County	All	White Male	White Female	African-American and Other Male	African-American and Other Female
31	Cherokee	30.7	32.8	25.1	41.4	28.0
9	Greenwood	21.8	21.0	16.5	33.6	18.4
27	Laurens	28.5	34.3	21.0	34.5	23.8
	S.C.	24.5	24.4	19.2	34.7	20.4

SC Kids Count

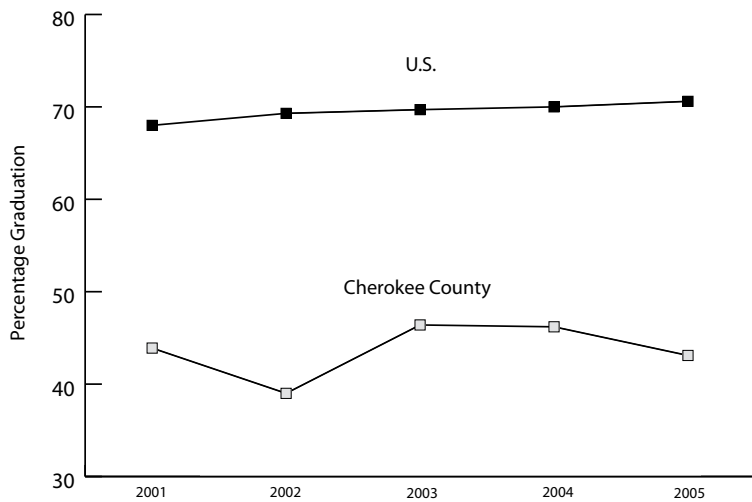
Figure E2. On-time Graduation Rate by District, 2008



It is evident that reported graduation rates vary widely by source and there is, therefore, considerable controversy surrounding the subject. The South Carolina Department of Education reports that the on-time graduation rate for Cherokee County School District was 79% in 2008. This rate was below two of the three Greenwood County districts, but above both Laurens County districts (Figure E2).

SC Department of Education

Figure E3. Graduation Rates, County and National Trends



Ed Week.org

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (www.edweek.org) provides graduation rates for every school district in the country based on a single federal dataset. Thus, rates are comparable with national peers. Based on these data, the 2005 graduation rate (the latest available from this source) for Cherokee County School District was 43.1%. The national average in 2005 was 70.6%. Trend analysis based on this data source is found in Figure E3.

For the 2006-2007 school year, the State Department of Education reported the following drop-out rates (note that the sum of dropout rate and graduation rate is not equal to 100%):

Table E4. Dropout Rate by District and High School, 2006-2007

District	School	Dropouts	Enrollment	Dropout Rate
Cherokee	Blacksburg High School	21	562	3.7
Cherokee	Gaffney Senior High	197	2,052	9.6
Laurens 55	Laurens High School	116	1,545	7.5
Laurens 56	Clinton High School	9	980	0.9
Greenwood 50	Emerald High School	61	959	6.4
Greenwood 50	Greenwood High School	75	1,663	4.5
Greenwood 51	Ware Shoals High	20	339	5.9
Greenwood 52	Ninety Six High School	6	510	1.2
SC Total	State Total	7,891	206,673	3.8

S.C. Department of Education

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The national college continuation rate for 2007 high school graduates was 67.2%, the second highest rate on record since data began to be collected in 1959, and second only to the peak of 68.6% reached in 2005. This equates to 1,986,000 of 2007 high school graduates enrolling in a degree-granting college in October 2007. Approximately 43.1% of 2007 graduates continuing to college enrolled in four-year colleges, and 24.1% enrolled in two-year colleges. Since 1973 the trend has evidenced strong growth in college continuation; however, growth slowed from an average of .87% per year prior to 1991 to .32% per year after 1991 and slowed further after 1997 to an average of .02% per year (Post-secondary Education OPPORTUNITY, 2008).

In 2008, a total of 38,712 South Carolina students completed high school. Of those completers, 67% entered a college freshman class. The continuation rate in Cherokee County was lower, with 52% of graduates entering college. Other differences in the data, as indicated in Table E5, include:

- a disparity in continuation rates between Blacksburg High School graduates and Gaffney High School students
- a markedly lower percentage of Cherokee County students entering four-year colleges
- a lower percentage of Cherokee County students going to college out of state
- a higher percentage of Blacksburg High School students than Gaffney High School students entering technical college

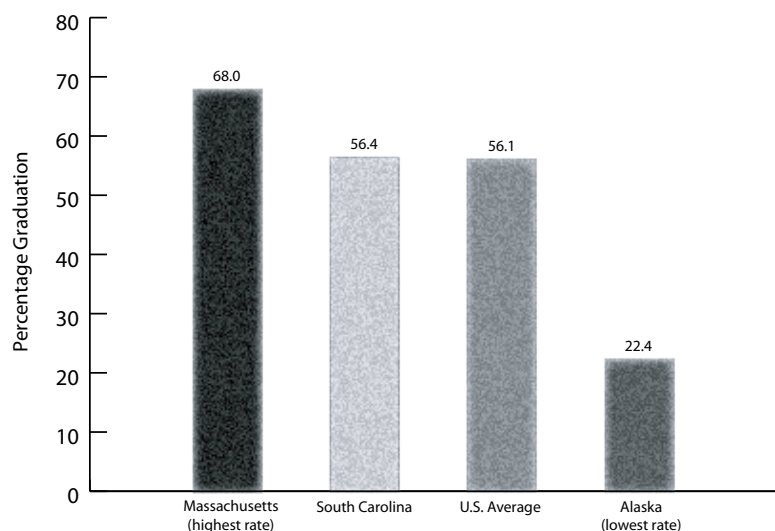
As has been demonstrated, a well-educated workforce fuels economic development by drawing high wage employers. Low educational attainment of county residents, low high school graduation rates and low college continuation rates would indicate that Cherokee County does not have a ready work force to entice these high wage employers; thus, these data have profound implications for the county.

Table E5. 2007-2008 High School Completers Enrolled in College Freshman Class 2008-2009

	Blacksburg High	Gaffney High	Cherokee County	S.C.
Total high school completers	103	351	454	38,712
Completers in freshman class	33 (32.0%)	202 (57.5%)	235 (51.8%)	25,978 (67.1%)
Entering 4-year college	11 (10.7%)	107 (30.5%)	118 (26.0%)	15,536 (40.1%)
Entering 2-year college	0 (0%)	76 (21.7%)	76 (16.8%)	1,694 (4.4%)
Entering technical college	22 (21.4%)	19 (5.4%)	41 (9.0%)	8,748 (22.6%)
Entering in-state colleges	33 (100%)	192 (95.0%)	225 (95.7%)	23,569 (90.7%)
Entering out-of-state college	0 (0%)	10 (5.0%)	10 (4.3%)	2,409 (9.3%)

S.C. Department of Education

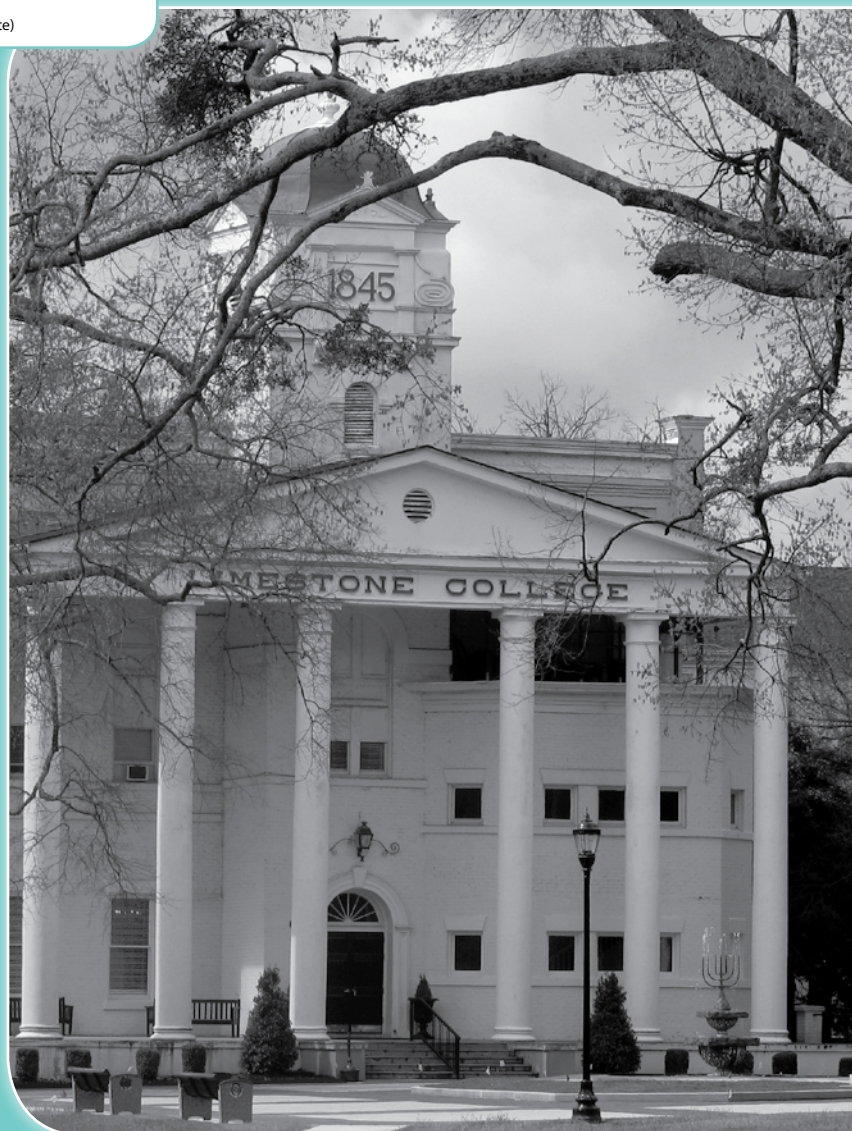
Figure E4. Six-Year Graduation Rates of Bachelor's Students, 2007



National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Persistence to college graduation is associated with first-year retention rates, as the stage at which most students abandon their pursuit of a degree is during their first year. In South Carolina, approximately 74% to 78% of first-time college freshmen return their second year (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2010). Student retention at the post-secondary level is affected by numerous variables. Generally, the primary obstacles to access to and success in post-secondary education are unmet financial need, inadequate academic preparation, and insufficient information, guidance and encouragement (Lumina Foundation, 2008).

Although college graduation rates are not available by county, state rates indicate that 56% of South Carolina freshman college students who are seeking bachelor's degrees graduate within 150% of normal program length (Figure E4). This is somewhat higher than the U.S. average.



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Although 66% of high-growth, high-wage jobs and 90% of the fastest growing jobs require a college degree, only 33% of Americans have one. Only 23% of South Carolina residents have one. Only 12% of Cherokee County residents have one.

Table E7 illustrates that jobs in the highest paid occupational areas for Cherokee County require a skilled workforce whose members have completed post-secondary training. Many of these are among the fastest growing occupations.

Table E7. 20067-2016 Occupational Projections, Cherokee County

Occupation	2007-2016 County Projected Growth	2007 County Median Hourly Wage
Management	15%	\$24.56
Business and Financial Operations	29%	\$20.82
Computer and Mathematical Science	32%	\$23.14
Architecture and Engineering	24%	\$23.69
Life, Physical and Social Science	23%	\$15.77
Community and Social Services	15%	\$10.60
Legal	21%	\$20.39
Education, Training, and Library	21%	\$20.32
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	26%	\$8.35
Healthcare Practitioner and Technical	24%	\$23.07
Healthcare Support	18%	\$9.67
Protective Service	24%	\$13.02
Food Preparation and Serving	17%	\$7.19
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	27%	\$7.21
Personal Care and Service	10%	\$7.73
Sales and Related	24%	\$11.35
Office and Administrative Support	17%	\$11.90
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	35%	\$11.09
Construction and Extraction	25%	\$16.49
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	17%	\$14.83
Production	8%	\$14.91
Transportation and Material Moving	14%	\$13.99

S.C. Department of Commerce

CHEROKEE CAMPUS



SPARTANBURG
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

FREIGHTLINER

Custom Chassis

CHEROKEE COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

CAMPUS DRIVE

