

# Building a Grad Nation

Executive Brief: Overview of 2012-13  
High School Graduation Rates





## Civic Enterprises

Civic Enterprises is a public policy firm that works with corporations, nonprofits, foundations, universities, and governments to develop innovative initiatives and public policies in the fields of education, national service, civic engagement, conservation, global health and more. In 2006, Civic Enterprises released *The Silent Epidemic*, a seminal report that drew domestic and international attention to the nation's dropout crisis and gave voice to our disconnected youth. Since that time, it has also released more than a dozen reports on the high school dropout challenge, including the annual *Building a Grad Nation* report. Civic Enterprises led the first National Summit on America's Silent Epidemic, co-led the development of a Civic Marshall Plan to establish and meet a national goal for high school graduation rates, and co-convenes the annual GradNation summit with America's Promise Alliance, Alliance for Excellent Education and The Everyone Graduates Center.

## The Everyone Graduates Center

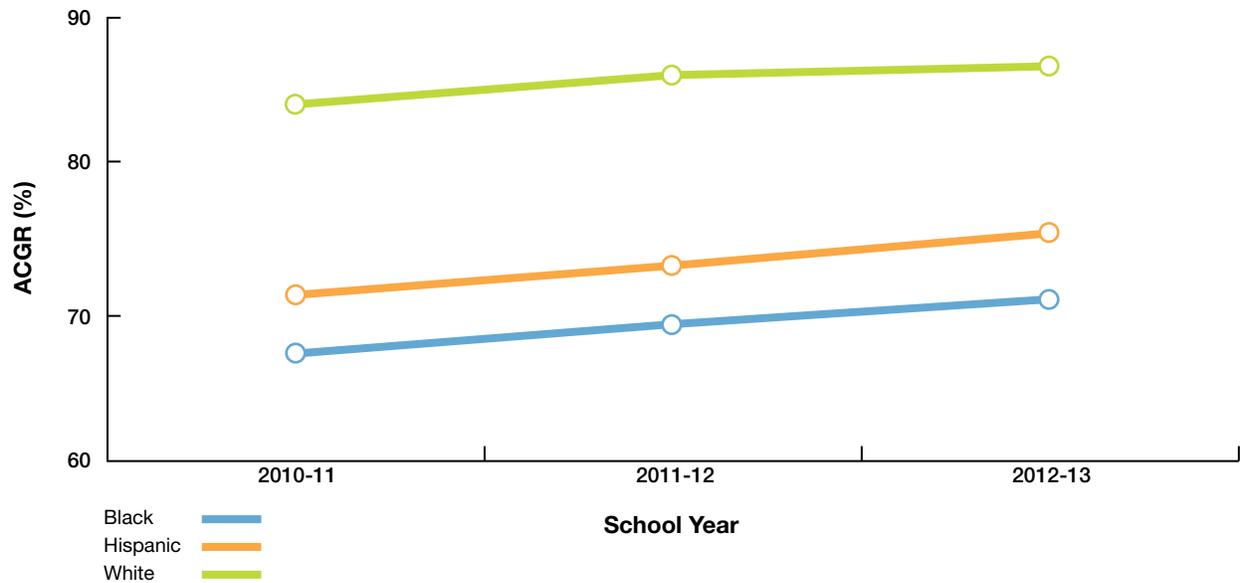
The Everyone Graduates Center, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University is a research and action center that focuses on understanding who graduates high school in America, and the characteristics of students, schools, communities and states that are making progress and those that are not. Seminal work includes *Locating the Dropout Crisis*, a 2004 report pinpointing the number and locations of the nation's "dropout factories" and bringing the dropout challenge to the nation's attention. The research and its dissemination underpin the second half of the Everyone Graduates Center's work – development and advancement of models and tools, including Early Warning Systems to identify off-track students as early as the sixth grade accompanied by interventions to get students back on track. Research and work are accomplished in concert with states, districts, schools, universities and "think tank" partners.

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## Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for Black, Hispanic, and White Students from 2010-11 to 2012-13



ACGR by School Year

Ethnicity	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Black	67.0%	69.0%	70.7%
Hispanic	71.0%	73.0%	75.2%
White	84.0%	86.0%	86.6%

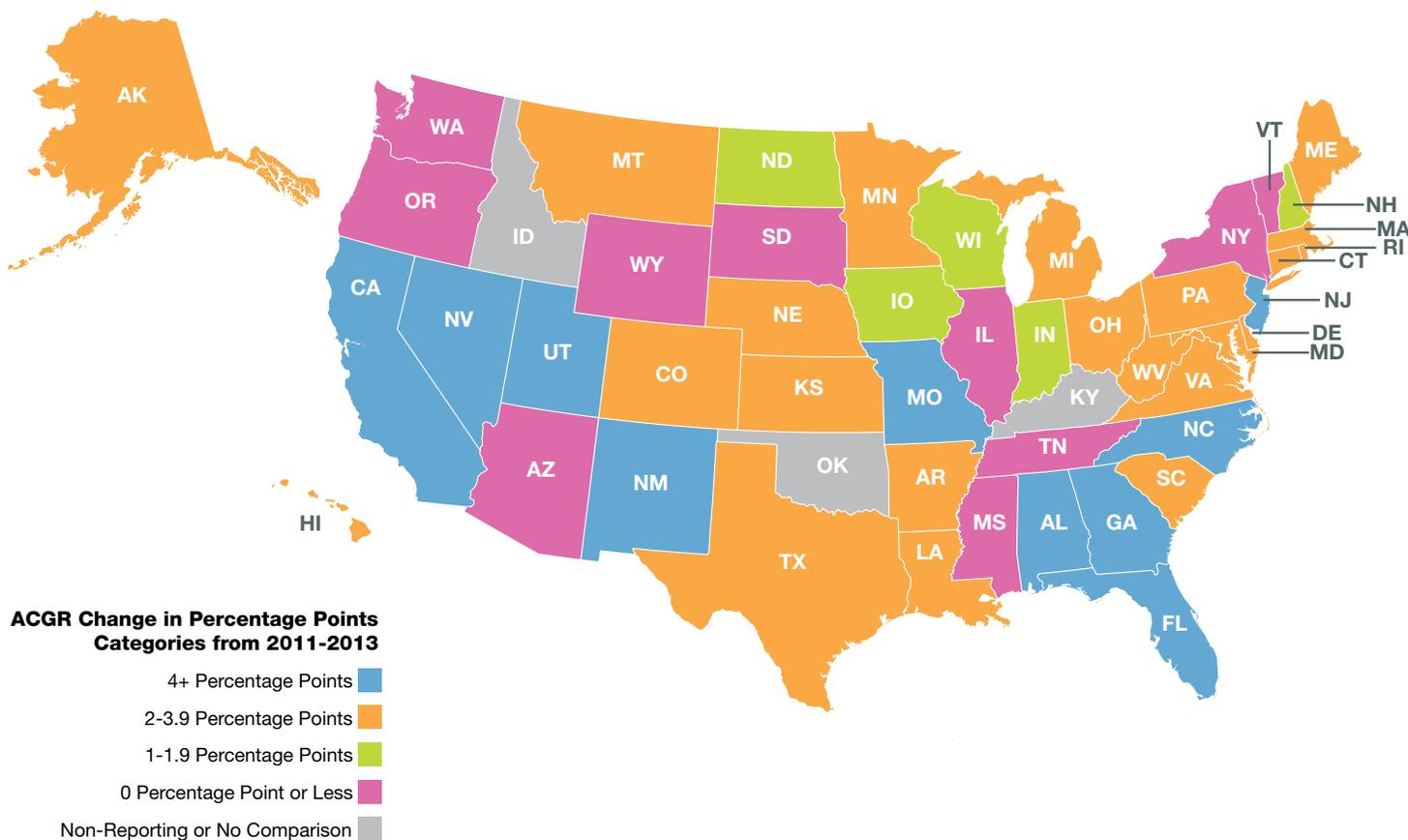
Evidence reported in the 2014 *Building a Grad Nation* Annual Report showed that Hispanic/Latino and African-American students were the subgroups making the greatest gains in graduation rates – 15 and 9 percentage points, respectively, over the six years from 2006-2012. The latest national Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate data shows similar trends over the last three years.

- Hispanic/Latino students – the fastest growing student population – have made the greatest gains in the ACGR reporting era, improving 4.2 percentage points from 2011 to 2013.
- African-American students, one of the student subgroups with historically low graduation rates, also continue to show improvement, rising 3.7 percentage points from 67 percent in 2011 to 70.7 percent in 2013.

- White students have an 86.6 graduation rate for 2013. Though having traditionally high graduation rates, white students have recorded sluggish gains in recent years, increasing only 2.6 percentage points since 2011.

Despite the promising gains of Hispanic/Latino and African-American students, these subgroups still fall well below the national average of 81.4 percent. Many schools, districts and states will need to redouble their efforts to bring these students up to the current pace for Hispanic/Latino and African-American students to reach the 90 percent goal by 2020.

## Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Change from 2010-11 to 2012-13, by State



The rates of improvement vary among states. Thirty-nine of the 47 states reporting ACGR from 2011 to 2013 increased their graduation rates by 1 percentage point or more during that period – an improvement across 80 percent of the nation. With seven more years until 2020, that is enough gain for some to reach 90 percent (on-pace states), but not enough for others to do so unless they accelerate their work.

- Ten states – Nevada, Alabama, New Mexico, Utah, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, and California – increased their graduation rates by four percentage points or more from 2011-2013. Five of these states are among the top 10 enrollment states in the country, meaning that they play a significant role in the nation's gain.

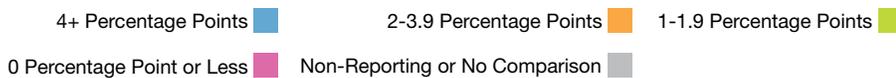
- More than half of the 22 states making gains of 2 to 3.9 percentage points outpaced the national average, including Texas, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, also high enrollment states that significantly drive the national average.
- Within the group of 10 states registering the greatest gains, four (Nevada, New Mexico, Georgia, and Florida) still have relatively low graduation rates (70 to 78 percent), and have a long road ahead to achieve 90 percent.

Unfortunately, 10 states gained less than one percentage point or lost ground over the past three years. And many of the states that are closest to reaching the 90 percent goal have recently made little progress, suggesting that as states approach the 90 percent threshold, the challenge becomes that much greater.

## Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Change from 2010-11 to 2012-13, by State

State	ACGR, 2013 (%)	ACGR Percentage Point Change from 2011-2013	Percent of High School Students in the Nation (%)	State	ACGR, 2013 (%)	ACGR Percentage Point Change from 2011-2013	Percent of High School Students in the Nation (%)
Nevada	70.7%	8.7	0.9%	Montana	84.4%	2.4	0.3%
Alabama	80.0%	8.0	1.7%	Maine	86.4%	2.4	0.4%
New Mexico	70.3%	7.3	0.6%	Ohio	82.2%	2.2	3.7%
Utah	83.0%	7.0	0.9%	Maryland	85.0%	2.0	1.7%
Georgia	71.7%	4.7	3.1%	Massachusetts	85.0%	2.0	2.0%
Missouri	85.7%	4.7	1.8%	Texas	88.0%	2.0	9.1%
Florida	75.6%	4.6	5.4%	Iowa	89.7%	1.7	1.0%
North Carolina	82.5%	4.5	3.0%	North Dakota	87.5%	1.5	0.2%
New Jersey	87.5%	4.5	2.7%	New Hampshire	87.3%	1.3	0.4%
California	80.4%	4.4	13.3%	Indiana	87.0%	1.0	2.2%
Arkansas	84.9%	3.9	0.9%	Wisconsin	88.0%	1.0	1.8%
Alaska	71.8%	3.8	0.4%	Oregon	68.7%	0.7	1.2%
South Carolina	77.6%	3.6	1.4%	Mississippi	75.5%	0.5	1.0%
West Virginia	81.4%	3.4	0.6%	Washington	76.4%	0.4	2.2%
Michigan	77.0%	3.0	3.4%	Tennessee	86.3%	0.3	1.9%
Pennsylvania	86.0%	3.0	3.9%	New York	76.8%	-0.2	5.9%
Colorado	76.9%	2.9	1.8%	South Dakota	82.7%	-0.3	0.2%
Minnesota	79.8%	2.8	1.8%	Vermont	86.6%	-0.4	0.2%
Rhode Island	79.7%	2.7	0.3%	Illinois	83.2%	-0.8	4.1%
Kansas	85.7%	2.7	1.0%	Arizona	75.1%	-2.9	2.2%
Louisiana	73.5%	2.5	1.4%	Wyoming	77.0%	-3.0	0.2%
Virginia	84.5%	2.5	2.5%	Oklahoma	84.8%		1.1%
Connecticut	85.5%	2.5	1.1%	Kentucky	86.1%		1.3%
Nebraska	88.5%	2.5	0.6%	Idaho			0.6%
Delaware	80.4%	2.4	0.3%				
Hawaii	82.4%	2.4	0.4%				

### ACGR Change in Percentage Points Categories from 2011-2013



Note. Washington, DC is not included in this table. ACGR Percentage Point Change from 2011-2013 = the 2012-13 ACGR minus the 2010-11 ACGR; therefore, positive values indicate an increase in graduation rate. Percent of High School Students in the Nations (%) = the total number of high school students in each state, divided by the total number of high school students in the U.S. (Not including Washington, DC). As long as the high schools had students enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12 grade [or 10th, 11th, and 12 grade for high schools that begin in 10th grade], they were included to calculate the percent of high school students in this table; however, some schools may have had students enrolled in grades below 9th grade (e.g., 8th grade) as well.

Sources: Reproduced from the United States Department of Education (2015). Provisional Data Files: SY2010-11 and SY2012-13 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

## Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Percentage Point Change Groups from 2010-11 to 2012-13 and Percent of National High School Students, Minority Students, and Low-Income Students

ACGR Percentage Point Change Group from 2011-13	Number of States Within ACGR Change Group (N)	Percent of National High School Students (%)	Percent of National Minority Students (%)	Percent of National Low-Income Students (%)
States with 4 or more	10	34%	42%	37%
States with 2-3.9	22	39%	35%	37%
States with 1-1.9	5	6%	3%	5%
States with 0 or less	10	19%	19%	19%
Non-Reporting States or No Comparison	3	3%	2%	3%

A comparison of percentage point gains with the percent of minority and low-income students attending high school in each state tells an even more significant story.

- Historically, African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students have had the lowest graduation rates. It is encouraging that the 10 states with high percentages of these students are among the top gainers (4 percentage points and more) followed by the 22 states in the next tier (gaining 2 to 3.9 percentage points), which also educate higher percentages of minority and low-income students.
- Combined, these two groups of states and their significant gains demonstrate that it is indeed possible to improve educational outcomes for youth in some of our country's most-challenged schools and that their success not only contributes to – but in many cases will be the significant driver of – national success.

## Summing It Up

The nation is making exciting progress in raising graduation rates, and much of that progress is occurring in states that educate high percentages of students who have had historically low graduation rates. At the same time, there is one subset of states where progress has slowed or that have even lost ground, and another subset in which progress has not been sufficient to off-set initial low rates.

With seven years remaining (school years 2013-14 to 2019-20), there is indeed time for each and every state to “make it to the finish line” although some states will have to exert much more effort than others. For a deeper analysis than this brief permits, please see the 2015 *Building a Grad Nation* Annual Report, to be released in May 2015.

Note. See Table “Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) Change from 2010-11 to 2012-13, by State” for the list of states within each percentage point change group. As long as the high schools had students enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12 grade [or 10th, 11th, and 12 grade for high schools that begin in 10th grade], they were included to calculate the percent high school students, minority, and low-income high school students; however, some schools may have had students enrolled in grades below 9th grade (e.g., 8th grade) as well. Percent of National High School Students (%) = the total number of high school students within each ACGR percentage point change group divided by the total number of high school students in the U.S. Percent of National Minority Students (%) = the total number of non-white high school students within each ACGR percentage point change group divided by the total number of non-white high school students in the U.S. Percent of National Low-Income Students (%) = the total number of high school students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch within each ACGR percentage point change group divided by the total number of high school students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch in the U.S.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education (2015) Provisional Data Files: SY2010-11 and SY2012-13 Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys.

## Why a High School Diploma Matters

A high school diploma is a significant milestone in the life of a young person, with a far-reaching impact on his or her future, in school, work, and life. Without this credential, young people struggle to live lives that are healthy and secure. They have fewer opportunities to contribute positively to their communities, or to raise their children in environments that are conducive to future success and well-being. The benefits of high school graduation have been well researched:

### Economic Benefits

Students who graduate from high school can expect to see a lifetime of increased earnings.

- In 2012, the average annual salary for a high school graduate was \$30,627 – fully \$10,386 more than for an individual without a high school diploma.<sup>i</sup>
- In addition, higher levels of education enable young people to build resilience to dips in the global economy. In 2012, the employment rate for young adults who completed high school was 64 percent, compared to 48 percent for those without a high school diploma.<sup>ii</sup>
- And while unemployment rates for high school dropouts have varied over time – from a low of 23 percent in 2006 to a high of 55 percent in 2009 – they have consistently remained higher than unemployment rates for students with a high school diploma.<sup>iii</sup>
- Given these statistics, it is not surprising that poverty rates for 18- to 24-year olds are significantly lower for individuals with a high school diploma (24 percent) than for those who failed to complete high school (31 percent).<sup>iv</sup>

### Health Benefits

Positive outcomes in terms of physical well-being are also correlated with high school graduation.

- The more education a person has, the less likely he or she is to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, being overweight, or not exercising.
- The CDC reported in 2011 that individuals with high school diplomas are less likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than those with less than a high school education.<sup>v</sup>
- High school and college graduates also have increased longevity as compared to their peers with less education. On average, college graduates can expect to live at least five years longer than those without a high school diploma.<sup>vii</sup>

### Social Benefits

A high school diploma is also a predictor of decreased reliance on government assistance and interactions with law enforcement.

- High school graduates are less likely to rely on government health care<sup>viii</sup> or use other public services, such as housing assistance or food stamps.<sup>ix</sup>
- A study from Columbia University shows that if you cut the high school dropout rate in half, you would save U.S. taxpayers \$84 million a year in lower social services and increased revenues from more productive graduates.<sup>x</sup>
- Individuals who drop out of high school are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested and 8 times more likely to be incarcerated.<sup>xi</sup>
- A 2009 study from Northeastern University found that on any given day from 2006-2007, nearly 1 of every 10 young male high school dropouts was institutionalized versus less than 1 of 33 high school graduates,<sup>xii</sup> and nearly 1 in 4 young black male dropouts was incarcerated or institutionalized.
- A 2013 report by the Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that raising the national high school graduation rate for male students by only 5 percentage points could save the nation as much as \$19.7 billion in annual crime costs.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Civic Engagement Benefits

Individuals with a high school diploma are also more likely to have greater levels of civic and community engagement.

- High school graduates are more than twice as likely to vote as those who drop out. During the 2012 presidential election, those levels increased to six times as likely – 24 percent of high school graduates voted, 37 percent of college graduates voted, and only 4 percent of youth who dropped out of high school voted.<sup>xiv</sup>
- High school graduates are also three times more likely to volunteer or work with their neighbors to solve problems than those who failed to earn a high school diploma.<sup>xv</sup>



## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0232.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> Child Trends. (2014). *Making the Grade: Assessing the Evidence for Integrated Student Supports*.
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- <sup>iv</sup> The Statistics Portal (n.d.). *Unemployment Rate of High School Graduates and Dropouts Not Enrolled in School in the United States from 2000 – 2013*. (Data file). Retrieved from <http://www.statista.com/statistics/184996/unemployment-rate-of-high-school-graduates-and-dropouts/>
- <sup>v</sup> Centers for Disease Control, (n.d.). "Age-Adjusted Incidence of Diagnosed Diabetes per 1,000 population Aged 18-79 Years, by Education, United States, 1980-2011." Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/statistics/incidence/fig7.htm>
- <sup>vi</sup> N. Freudenberg & J. Ruglis, Reframing School Dropout as a Public Health Issue. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2007;4(4). Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/oct/07\\_0063.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/oct/07_0063.htm).
- <sup>vii</sup> The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2013). *Why Does Education Matter so Much to Health?* Retrieved from [http://www.rwjf.org/en/blogs/new-public-health/2012/08/better\\_educationhea.html](http://www.rwjf.org/en/blogs/new-public-health/2012/08/better_educationhea.html)
- <sup>viii</sup> P. Muennig, "Health Returns to Education Interventions", paper prepared for the symposium Social Costs of Inadequate Education, October 24–25, 2005, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- <sup>ix</sup> I. Garfinkel, B. Kelly, and J. Waldfogel, "Public Assistance Programs: How Much Could be Saved with Improved Education?", paper prepared for the symposium Social Costs of Inadequate Education, October 24–25, 2005, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- <sup>x</sup> H. Levin, C. Belfield, P. Muennig, C. Rouse, "The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children." October 2006, Teachers College, Columbia University. New York, NY.
- <sup>xi</sup> Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. (2009). *School or the Streets: Crime and America's Dropout Crisis*. Retrieved from <http://www.fightcrime.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/reports/National%20BTS%20Report.pdf>
- <sup>xii</sup> Northeastern University. (2009). *The Consequences of Dropping out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers*. Retrieved from [http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Dropping\\_Out\\_of\\_High\\_School.pdf](http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf)
- <sup>xiii</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. (September 2013). "Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The Impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings." Retrieved from <http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SavingFutures.pdf>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> CIRCLE. (2012, November 15). *Young Voters in the 2012 Presidential Election: The Educational Gap Remains*. Retrieved from: [http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CIRCLE\\_2012Election\\_ExitPoll\\_OverviewFactSheet.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CIRCLE_2012Election_ExitPoll_OverviewFactSheet.pdf)
- <sup>xv</sup> National Conference on Citizenship. (2010, September 16). *2010 Civic Health Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://ncoc.net/103k117>
- <sup>xvi</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. (2011). *Career Clusters: Forecasting demand for High School Through College Jobs*. Retrieved from <http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/uploads/clusters-execsum.pdf>
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ibid.





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