



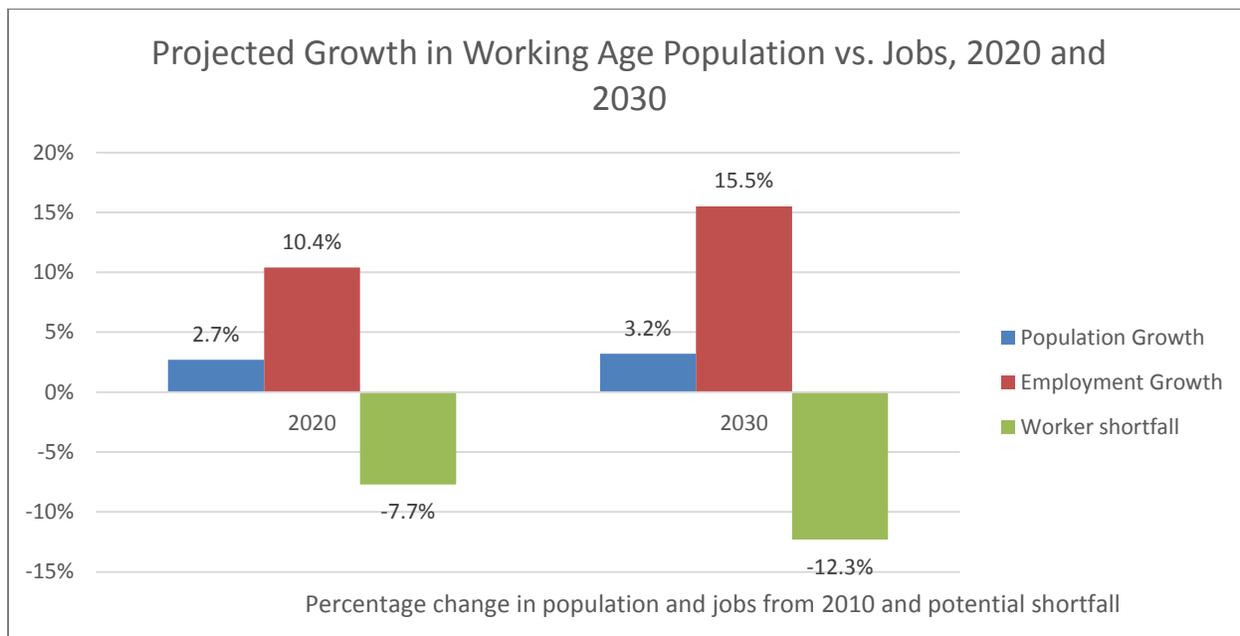
PARCA Annual Meeting: Charting a Pathway to Progress

Alabama is known for its economic development successes, from autos to aerospace. These results stem from such assets as our business-friendly attitude, a teamwork approach, a highly-regarded worker training program, and a willingness to compete in offering financial incentives.

Increasingly, however, the initiative in economic development is shifting toward workforce preparedness. Companies are seeking out states that have an adequate supply of skilled and well-educated workers. Creating such a workforce calls for a close partnership between business and education.

Many elements of an effective workforce strategy are being developed in Alabama, but it is imperative that we shift those efforts into high gear. There are clouds gathering on the horizon: demographic and technological trends that could keep the state and its people from reaping the full reward from the economic development investments already made. Alabama’s efforts, as well as insights from South Carolina’s experience in this area, will be the subject of PARCA’s Annual meeting, Jan. 31, at Birmingham’s Harbert Center ([Agenda](#) and [registration](#) available online. Deadline is Friday, Jan. 24).

Simply put, Alabama needs to produce a bigger, better-skilled and better-educated workforce if the state is to reach its economic potential. It is a situation that is going to require changes not only from the educational establishment but also leadership from business and industry. Because whether we realize it or not, we’re all headed together into some pretty strong headwinds.



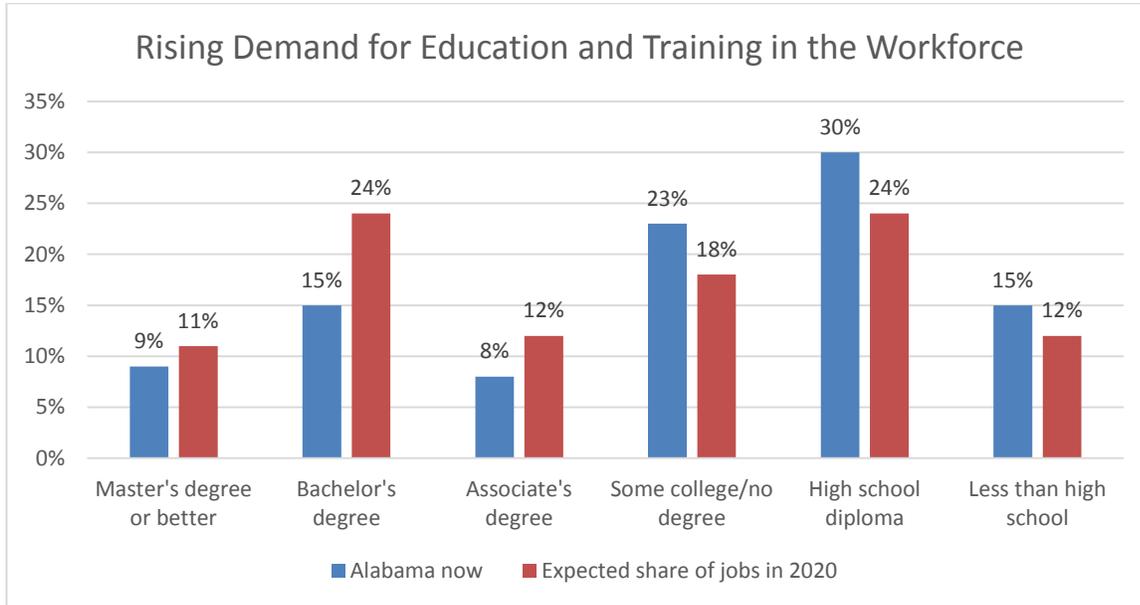
Source: State of the Workforce Report VII: Alabama, Center for Business and Economic Research.

Right now, the Post World War II Baby Boom generation is beginning to age out of the workforce, and relatively few people are moving to Alabama. As a result, the growth of our workforce appears unlikely to keep pace with the projected rate of job creation. According to [Alabama’s 2013 “State of the Workforce” report](#), the state faces a potential worker shortfall of over 190,000 by 2020. By 2030, the gap between worker supply and job demand could swell to more than 300,000 according to the report.

At the same time, the level of training and education required to land a good job is rapidly rising in tandem



with technological advances occurring throughout the economy. Experts project that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require postsecondary education, training or certification. Currently, 45 percent of working Alabamians have only a high school diploma or less.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, U.S. Census Bureau.

Considering these trends, it is imperative for Alabama to maximize the potential of every individual. More students need to graduate from high school. From elementary school on, students need to be shown how the reading, writing and mathematics they're taught connects to the world beyond. They need to graduate motivated and better prepared, with a clearer path through training or higher education toward their life aspirations. Working adults who are under-educated need avenues to new opportunities.

As part of the effort to address the looming realities, the State Board of Education's Plan 2020 hopes to raise the high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and have every child graduate ready for college and career. That plan includes a focus on career goals for students in an effort to better align what they're learning in the classroom with where they are going in the workplace.

The state's system of two-year colleges is aiding in that effort by deploying career coaches to K-12 schools, by working to expand dual enrollment opportunities for high school students, and by establishing next generation apprenticeship programs in cooperation with business and industry.

The Mobile area has used its Regional Workforce Development Council as a building block for better communication between governments, business and industry, education providers, and potential employees. With a board led by business and industry, a nonprofit supported by public and private partners works to see that local workforce needs and priorities are addressed through education and training opportunities, while at the same time making individuals aware of available opportunities. It's a model being copied elsewhere in the state.

Earlier this month, after a year of study, Gov. Robert Bentley's College and Career Ready Task Force presented recommendations for improving communication and cooperation between education and business and industry. Their initial proposals are now being shaped into legislation. Members of the Task



Force will discuss these recommendations as a part of our program on January 31.

A Peek at a Neighbor's Playbook

As Alabama attempts to devise a concerted strategy to address these issues, it is worth looking at the efforts of South Carolina, a demographically-similar Southeastern neighbor that devised a game plan to attack workforce development challenges.

Don Herriott, former head of Roche Global Pharmaceutical Chemical Manufacturing, chaired the SC Governor's task force that devised South Carolina's strategy. Herriott, also a former head of South Carolina's Chamber of Commerce, will deliver the annual meeting's keynote speech.



Thanks to 2005 legislation, which was championed by the business community, every student in South Carolina's middle and high schools has an individualized graduation plan devised in consultation with the child's parents, a [Personal Pathway to Success](#). Those plans are developed with the help of about 550 trained career specialists employed by the schools. Also thanks to the legislation, every workforce region in South Carolina has a Regional Education Center to connect employers, K-12, postsecondary and higher education partners.

Subsequent legislation, also championed by business leadership, reenergized the concept of apprenticeships, sparking the establishment of 4,000 registered apprenticeship programs, which has received [a good deal of notice nationally](#). The reform movement in South Carolina has produced an enduring engagement between the business community and the public schools.

The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce annually publishes [its education goals](#) and tracks progress toward those goals, from expanding Pre-K to doubling the number of GED's earned annually by adults. The Chamber and allied bodies like New Carolina, also known as the South Carolina Council on Competitiveness, continue to explore successful [new approaches to education and support innovation](#) in the public schools.

The ongoing relationship also promotes a continuity of progress that endures despite changes to the political landscape. South Carolina isn't waiting for its next "education governor" championing reform. It's taking care of business - and education.