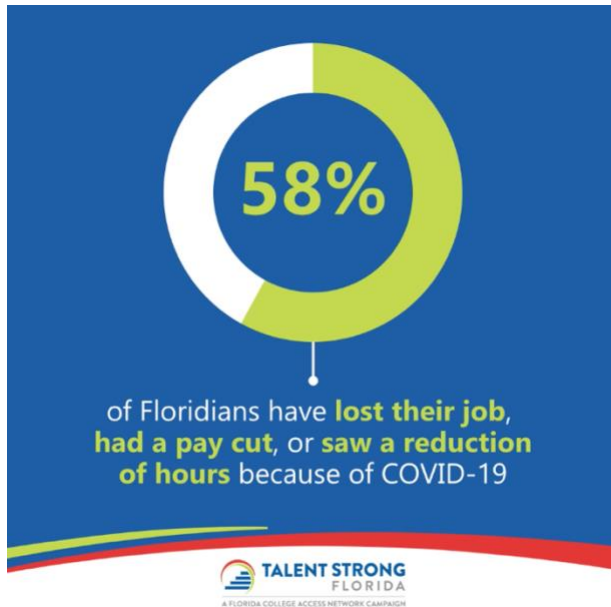


## Support Talent Strong Development



This Giving Tuesday, [donate](#) to support the Greater Gainesville Chamber's career pathway programs to ensure Greater Gainesville remains Talent Strong.

As Florida business and government leaders work to not only restart but reinvent Florida's economy, they would do well to embrace a simple but transformative idea -- that every Floridian needs education or training beyond high school.

The single best way to build a resilient economy that is able to weather and quickly bounce back from disruptions like COVID-19 is to cultivate a Florida that is well-educated --

that is, talent strong. As evidence of that, consider that the workers who recovered best from the Great Recession had at least a bachelor's degree. And nationwide, 99% of jobs created since the last recession went to people with at least some college education.

Floridians with college degrees annually earn more than twice as much than those with just a high school diploma. And those with a technical certificate earn about a third more. That's good for Florida families and our economy as a whole.

Nationally, U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that approximately 40 million people lost their jobs during April and May. In Florida, tourism-heavy sectors of the economy were especially ravaged.

A May survey of Florida voters conducted for Florida College Access Network by Sachs Media Group found that 58% of Floridians had experienced job loss, pay cuts or a reduction in hours due to COVID-19, and more than one-third of residents believed they'll need additional training or education to find work at the same pay level. The hardest hit were the people with the least education. Even before the pandemic, the warning signs were clear that the jobs requiring the lowest education levels were at the highest risk of being automated.

Understanding the need for talent to build a robust economy, the State of Florida is leading the way by setting a goal through its SAIL to 60 Initiative to increase the percentage of Florida adults holding high-value postsecondary degrees, certificates or training experiences to 60% by 2030. The current rate is 55% in Alachua County.

But steep barriers exist. Last year, 83% of Florida college students relied on federal, state, and institutional financial aid, a rate likely to be even higher now. More than half of Florida college students are from lower-income households and qualify for the Pell grant and other forms of need-based financial aid. And 42% of surveyed college students reported that they were changing their plans due to COVID-19, many for financial reasons.

Many communities throughout Florida are joining forces across education, business, local government, and the nonprofit sectors to lower such barriers to ensure all students can access the education they need for a rewarding career.

COVID-19 will not be the last disruption we navigate, and Florida's post-COVID economic renaissance will not be built on low-education service jobs. Making education beyond high school a priority for all Floridians will yield an economy that's not only strong, but resilient – creating not just a boom for some, but a better future for all.

The Greater Gainesville Chamber is working to joining forces across education, business, local government, and the nonprofit sectors to lower barriers to ensure all students and adults can access the education they need for a rewarding career through our Career Discoveries Day program and our Career Technical Education Feasibility study.