

SREB

# The 2030 SREB State Goals

Jeff Gagné, Director  
Policy Analysis

SREB

# Unprepared and Unaware

Upskilling the Workforce for a Decade of Uncertainty

February 2019

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

SREB.org



SREB

Policy Brief | June 2019

## The SREB Region's Economic Outlook

### The Potential Impact of Automation and AI

Many American workers find themselves in a continuous struggle to keep up with advances in automation and artificial intelligence that could potentially displace them from a growing list of occupations. Nearly every day articles and online videos highlight new technologies. We learn about machines being tested to deliver packages to homes autonomously. A robotic interviewer in Sweden now questions job applicants in an attempt to eliminate human bias from the hiring process. And researchers are working on an ocular implant for humans to record everything their eyes see during the day.

As companies continue to incorporate new technologies, making machine learning and robotics common in almost all workplaces, more and more working adults need to adapt to computerized work activities. Many need to move into new jobs raising their skill levels, or they will be out of a job altogether. According to SREB's *Unprepared and Unaware: Upskilling the Workforce for a Decade of Uncertainty*, adults with the lowest levels of skills — typically those with a high school credential or less — are most vulnerable to these changes.



If states and industry leaders do not act quickly to prepare employees for these workplace transformations, 18 million or more adults will find themselves in low-paying positions or out of a job and increasingly reliant on public services. Businesses will struggle to fill middle- and high-skilled positions. Children — future workers — will face similar struggles and likely be unprepared for future positions, worsening these problems for states and businesses.

This brief was prepared by Meagan Crowe, policy analyst, under the leadership of Jeff Gagné, director of policy analysis, and Joan Lord, vice president of education data, policy research and programs.

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board  
SREB.org

# Goal

**Increase the percent of state residents who earn a meaningful certificate or degree to insure they are well prepared for the dynamic shift in employment over the next decade.**

# Indicators

- Postsecondary enrollment rates of recent high school graduates will increase.
- Enrollment in public colleges and universities will represent the diversity of the state's recent high school graduating class.
- First-year persistence rates and progression beyond the second year will increase.
- Better align high school and postsecondary programs of study, including dual enrollment.
- Credit-hours that students earn toward degrees will not exceed the base requirements of degree programs by more than 10 percent.
- Percentages of college students who graduate on time will increase for students from all racial and ethnic groups, in both four-year and two-year programs.
- The time it takes for full-time students to earn degrees will decrease.
- The percentage of adults ages 25 to 64 who have postsecondary degrees or career certificates will increase to meet or exceed national averages.
- Advanced degrees and degrees awarded in high-need fields will increase to meet established state targets, based on state needs.
- Students will pass professional licensure examinations at rates that meet or exceed national averages.