

A Rebuttal to “America's Most Economically Segregated Cities”

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A few big strikes

- This report uses data from the Tallahassee Metro Statistical Area which includes Leon, Gadsden, Jefferson and Wakulla Counties, but in writing refers only to the city itself.
- This report also fails to clearly define what “economic segregation” means, and...
- Makes the mistake of using a politically-charged word to describe differences between regions.

Unfair Metrics for College Towns

- **To the study's own admission, "almost all of the most segregated smaller metros are college towns"**
- This makes sense:
 - Students are more often geographically separated, living near campus.
 - Students tend to be employed in low-wage settings regardless of how much they eventually earn.
 - Tallahassee has three large colleges and many smaller ones serving its population, making its student-to-resident ratios differ from most smaller metro areas.

What would it mean to be among the least “segregated” in this study?

- In this study, the "least segregated" areas are places that are largely homogenous, with most of the population resembling one another in income, job sector, education levels, etc.
- According to the metrics used in this report, Tallahassee would look far less economically "segregated" if our entire population lived below the poverty line.
- ... But nobody can argue that would be a good thing.

What would it mean to be among the least “segregated” in this study?

- Indeed, this study admitted that their measure of segregation is “positively associated with the share of the population that is black, Latino, or Asian.”
- This makes their methods perhaps a better indicator of racial composition than of segregation. The two are not synonyms.
- For example, look at some of the metro areas that this study reports having the lowest levels of "economic segregation":
 - Fond du Lac, WI (91% white)
 - Monroe, MI (88% white)
 - St. George, UT (87% white)

 - Tallahassee, FL (53% white)

Tallahassee is diverse and creative... and that is a good thing

- Just two years ago, the same author of this report **praised** Tallahassee for our large and growing share of "Creative Class" workers.
- The author, Richard Florida, has written extensively on the benefits to communities of fostering creative class jobs. He writes that cities that attract and retain creative residents prosper.
- Rather than noting Tallahassee's growth in the creative sector as a positive, this current study actually punishes Tallahassee for having a large portion of creative class workers who may live in different areas than service or blue collar workers.

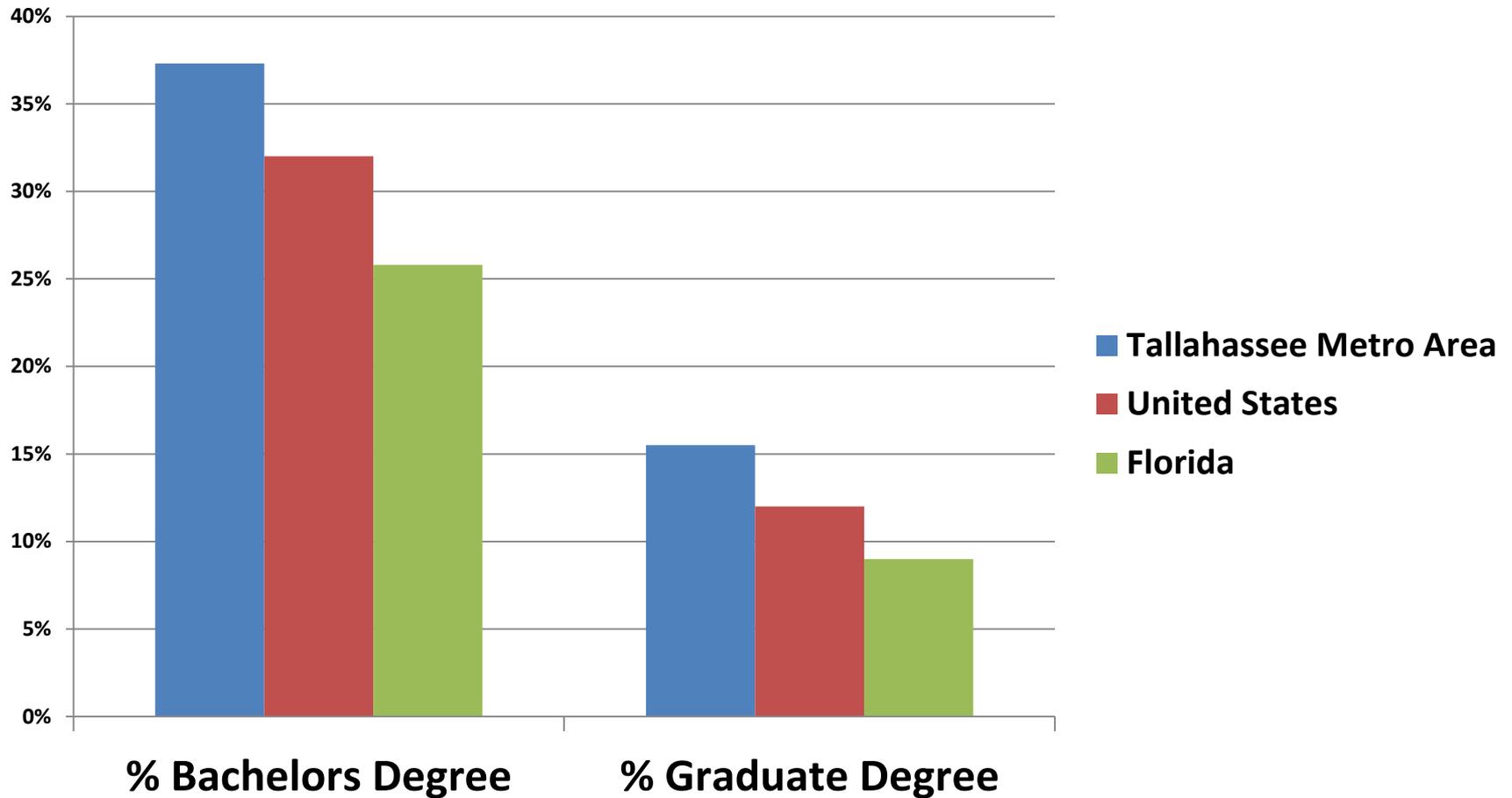
Tallahassee is improving, too...

- What this study calls "segregation" may more accurately be a depiction of *growth or improvement*, at least in the case of Tallahassee.
- The Tallahassee Metro Area has, and still faces, higher than average rates of poverty.
- Our counties, cities, and residents have been working hard to reverse this trend, and we're making progress.
- Part of that progress means growing and adapting... and these efforts bring their own challenges.
- Part of that progress also means succeeding, but that happens in stages.

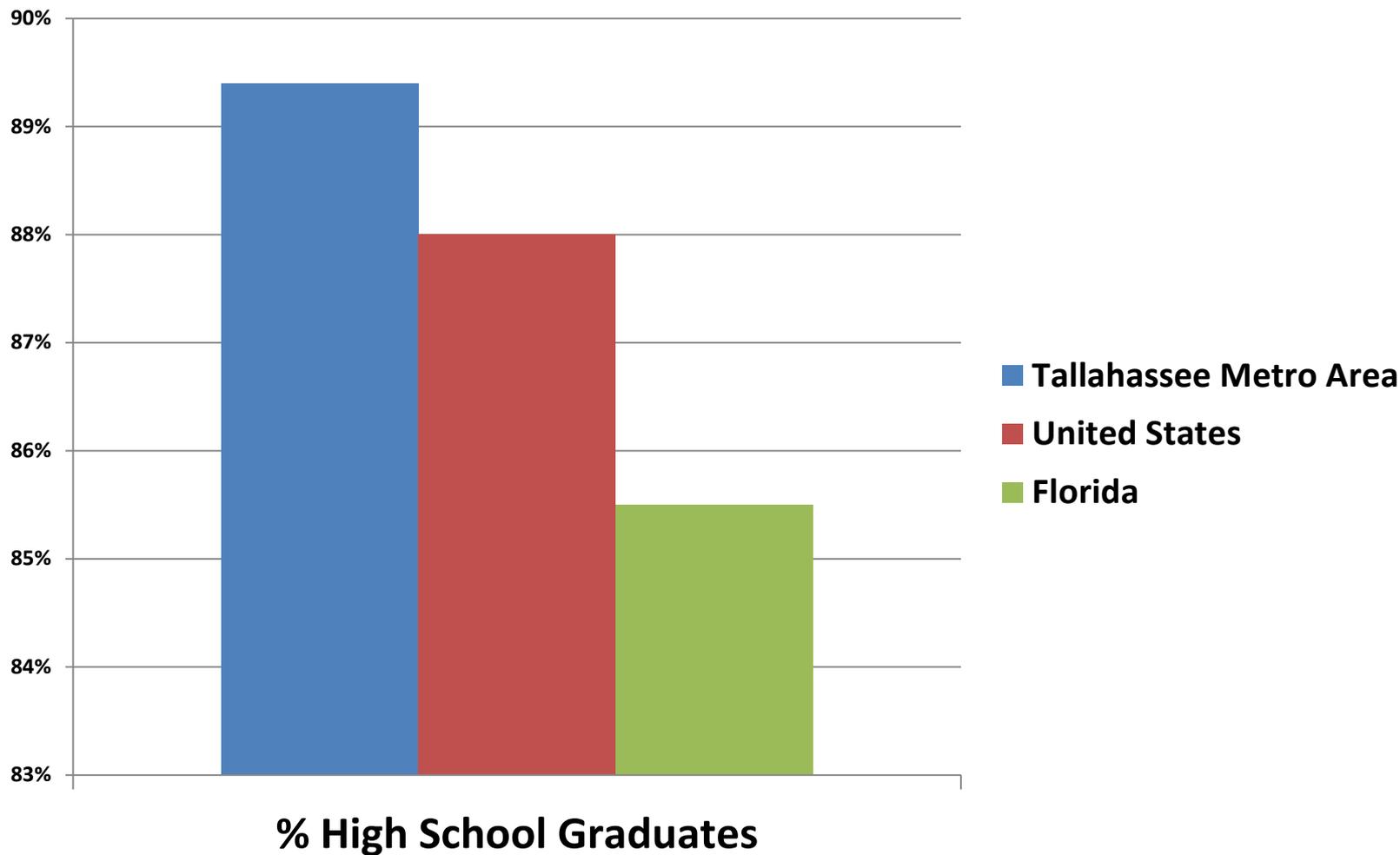
Tallahassee is improving, too...

- In 2012, Tallahassee was noted for being among the nation's best midsize cities for job growth.
- In that same year, Tallahassee was listed among the 10 best cities for millennials, praised for its accessibility to housing and education.

Here's how Tallahassee looks today...



Here's how Tallahassee looks today...



The work never ends to improve

- The Big Bend area has a lot of promise, and we are working hard to address many challenges:
 - Affordable housing
 - Education
 - Poverty
 - Health care, and more...
- This study, however, fails to capture the true issues we face, just as it fails to define our community with a poorly measured and inappropriate term.