Business at the Table

The Employer Drive for Higher Education Attainment

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Introduction

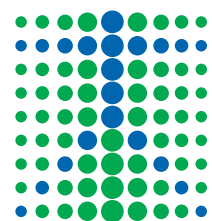*Business at the Table: The Employer Drive for Higher Education Attainment* is about communities uniting around a common goal to help drive economic development. The goal is closing the college attainment gap and growing the educated workforce. This report explores the challenges and successes of local, regional, and national education reform initiatives. It highlights lessons for all **chamber and business leaders** interested in making progress toward the goal.

This selection of case studies was created in part for *Business at the Table*, an initiative led by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) with Partners for Livable Communities (Partners), supported by Lumina Foundation, to develop strategies for improving higher education attainment (degrees and credentials) in the United States through chamber of commerce and business involvement. Lumina, the nation's largest private foundation focused on increasing higher educational attainment in America, has forged ambitious goals: "Goal 2025" seeks to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025.

Goal 2025 is the driver for this work. Educational attainment improvement is critical to regional and national competitiveness and should not be left solely in the hands of government and educators. The workforce of the 21st Century will be a product of the higher education system, and businesses can exert their influence to ensure that local workforce needs are being met.

Without the active help of the business community—individually through corporate leadership and collectively through chambers and similar entities—Lumina's ambitious goal of increasing American degree attainment may be difficult to achieve.

In February 2012, over 50 chamber, business, and community leaders met at Lumina Foundation headquarters. The meeting introduced Lumina's Goal 2025, and elicited chambers' responses about the urgency to act. Chambers replied that in order to begin, they would need a series of tools and tactics to learn from, and examples to show the successes and pitfalls of other strategies from communities around the country. They requested demonstrations of higher education achievement effectively integrated into wider regional development agendas to broaden their understanding of what college attainment looks like across the country.

This compendium of case studies provides business and chamber leaders the perspective to further their conversation. Included are programs led by chambers of commerce, two-year and four-year colleges and universities, and national and local higher education achievement programs. Interviews were conducted with the CEO or director of each program, providing personal accounts of trials and victories on the road to success. Case studies explore the history of the program or organization, key players, geographic context, specific place-based economic challenges that were overcome, and the short and long-term goals that have been achieved.

A window into the detailed accounts, challenges, and success stories of higher education achievement programs around the nation, this report will help chambers and businesses move forward on the path toward Lumina's Goal 2025. These case studies outline best practices that can be adapted to help meet the needs and achieve the goals of communities across the country. By learning from these examples and creating their own unique strategic plans, chamber and business leaders can become spokespeople for this important work and take action in their own communities. They can catalyze a great impact on their city and regional economic development through improving higher education attainment and workforce development. ■

55,000 Degrees

Key Lessons

- A public-private initiative established by a community collaborative (education, business, civic) that receives local private funding.
- Businesses are leaders in supporting post-secondary attainment by offering tuition assistance, flexible work schedules, interest-free loans, and college advising.
- A city-wide competitive campaign encourages *everyone* to play a role.

Geographic Focus

Louisville & Jefferson County, Kentucky, Metro Region

Purpose

A public-private partnership with a goal to add 40,000 bachelor's degrees and 15,000 associates' degrees by the year 2020

Louisville, Kentucky is a city with an education movement, and its own big goal: to achieve 55,000 new associates and bachelor's degrees by the year 2020. 55,000 Degrees is a unique public-private partnership founded in 2010 to unite the city around the common goals of higher education attainment and workforce development.

The initiative promotes a college-going and college-finishing culture by focusing on raising high school graduation, college-readiness, and college completion rates. It also capitalizes on the business community to leverage resources. Through tuition assistance, flexible work schedules, interest-free loans, and college advising programs, Louisville businesses have become one of the biggest champions for working-age adults to return to college and complete their degree.

Background

In 2003, the Louisville city and county governments merged; now, Jefferson County and city of Louisville, also known as the Louisville metro region, has a population of 750,000.[1] Located on the border between Kentucky and Indiana, Louisville lies on the Ohio River, former home to a major 19th century shipping port and a center for manufacturing and production in World War II. The 17th largest city in the nation, Louisville has a 71 percent Caucasian and 23 percent African American population, with 12 percent of the city living below the poverty line.[2] The Louisville business community lacks a strong talent pool. Only 31 percent of residents have received a bachelor's degree or more, and 100,000 Louisvillians ages 25 to 65 have achieved some college credit but no degree. Many working-age adults are deterred by high costs of college tuition, and that completion would take too long. In 2003, Louisville was at a crossroads: its state of higher education and workforce development had to be changed.

As a result of a report produced by the Brookings Institute called *Beyond Merger*, The Greater Louisville Project was established in 2001 as an independent, nonpartisan civic initiative to serve as "a catalyst for action, and to provide research, data, and analytical tools…to support an agenda of long-term progress focused on three 'Deep Drivers of Change': Education, 21st Century Jobs, and Quality of Place."[3] The Project is led by an advisory board from a consortium of local and national foundations. To jumpstart the Project's education focus, Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson initiated the 2008 Education Roundtable, an unprecedented collaboration of university presidents, business and civic leaders, and school superintendents. Critical to the Roundtable was the role of Greater Louisville, Inc. (the metro chamber of commerce) and the Business Leaders for Education. The chamber brought expertise from the Business Higher Education Forum (BHEF), the nation's oldest organization dedicated to advancing higher education and workforce solutions through a partnership between senior business and higher education executives.

Consensus developed among Education Roundtable members that an aligned plan of action was possible. A retreat was held in 2009 for all of the collaborators. It was hosted by Humana, whose board chairman resided in Louisville, in which the collaborative group considered a sample strategic plan. The leaders agreed to the bold goal of raising Louisville's college attainment level from one-third to one-half of the working-age population by 2020. Resulting was a six-month, collaborative process to create the five most important goals to achieve 55,000 more degrees.

Challenges

Executive Director of 55,000 Degrees, Mary Gwen Wheeler, states that, "One of the greatest challenges was forming consensus around the goals and their accompanying strategies—the key to the group's success was crafting the right working team assigned under each goal."[4] Each team was chaired by a college president or provost and contained members from the business, K-12, nonprofit, and civic sectors. The result was the groundbreaking *Greater Louisville Education Commitment*, a long-term plan for half of the city's working-age adults to achieve college degrees by the year 2020.

When Mayor Abramson declined to seek a second term in 2011, leaders of the Roundtable, which was still based out of the Mayor's office, realized the need for an independent status.
With support from the local funding community, the organization raised more than $1 million for a three-year incubation period, 2010-2013, and 55,000 Degrees was officially launched in October 2010. Housed in the Community Foundation of Louisville, which serves as the fiscal agent, the organization operates under the leadership of the board of directors, chaired by Mayor Greg Fischer, and Ms.

Courtesy of 55,000 Degrees.

Wheeler, who served in the Mayor's cabinet for eight years as the secretary of health and family services, strategic planning, and policy adviser, and in her last two years as the Mayor's education adviser.

Nationally, 55,000 Degrees has become known as "the Louisville model," an outcome-based collaboration centered on trust, relationships, and hard data to continue increasing achievement exponentially. The five original goals have become the organization's main objectives: create and support a college-going culture; use the business community's unique points of leverage to accelerate attainment; prepare students for success in college, career, citizenship and life; make post-secondary education accessible and affordable; increase educational persistence, performance and progress.

The racial achievement gap is a challenge in Louisville where only 14 percent of working-age African Americans have a bachelor's degree, ranking Louisville last among its 15 competitor peer cities (including such cities as Raleigh, Charlotte, and Memphis).[5] The African American community has set a goal to "claim 15,000 of the 55,000 total new degrees." Partnerships between faith-based institutions, businesses, and the education community are creating more out-of-school time and summer programs, raising scholarship funds, and leveraging existing financial aid opportunities to help reach that goal.

Programs and Operations

To carry out its second objective, support from Lumina Foundation, Business Leaders in Education, and other local funders led to the creation of the "Employee Education Delivery System (EEDS)," now known as "Degrees At Work." The program is based out of Greater Louisville Inc., and provides a complete support system, trainings, and toolkits for Louisville employers to encourage their employees to complete their degrees. The initiative is committed to making it easier for employees to navigate the system of higher education, making a college education more affordable, increasing the flexibility of the workplace for part-time student employees, and tracking the data and outcomes of working-age adults who return to school.

To teach "college knowledge," Degrees At Work offers employers information about college affordability options, support opportunities such as mentoring programs, education fairs, and how to elect a college advocate in the workplace. Employers can help make tuition more affordable through: tuition reimbursement and tuition deferment programs, a company scholarship program, and by helping employees complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Tuition reimbursement is an employer-financed opportunity, covering the complete cost of tuition for employees to upgrade their skills and value to the company; deferment enables the company to negotiate payment options and a timeline for the employee to begin paying tuition.

Outcomes

Each year, 55,000 Degrees publicizes a report card to show the city's progress toward the 2020 goal, and how far there still is to go. After its first year, early indicators show that high school graduation rates had increased four percent, but still only one third of high school graduates are college or career-ready. According to the organization, "After one year, nearly 27,000 adults have enrolled in college, an increase of 20 percent; additionally, more working-age adults with some college but no degree are back in school, and more part-time students are returning for a second year. Degrees At Work has set a goal to have 3,500 *more* working adults complete their bachelor's degree by 2014. The number of college degrees has also increased—after one year there are 14 percent more 2-year and seven percent more 4-year degrees in Louisville."[6]

The strategy behind how the city works hard is part of what makes this program unique: 55,000 Degrees is a full-city effort. Residents, businesses, colleges, K-12, foundations, nonprofits, and more are on-board to make the city of Louisville competitive in the job market, and to improve its quality of place. ■

Partners

- Archdiocese of Louisville, Bellarmine University Business Leaders for Education
- Community Foundation of Louisville
- Greater Louisville, Inc.
- Indiana University Southeast
- Ivy Tech Community College Southern Indiana
- James Graham Brown Foundation
- Jefferson Community and Technical College
- Jefferson County Public Schools
- Kentuckiana Works
- LG&E and KU Energy LLC
- Louisville Metro Government
- Louisville Urban League
- Metro United Way
- Simmons College
- Spalding University
- Spatial Data Systems, Inc.
- The Sullivan University System
- University of Louisville

Contact

www.55000degrees.com

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Online Resources

55,000 Degrees' Education Data Dashboard: Interactive Data Set with Statistical Outcomes for the State of Education in Louisville
http://www.55000degrees.com/dashboard.swf

Degrees At Work
http://www.55000degrees.org/DegreesAtWork/Employers

College Knowledge, Logistics, Affordability, and Ongoing Support Tool Kits
http://www.55000degrees.org/DegreesAtWork/Employee

Graduate! Philadelphia

Key Lessons

- Graduate! Philadelphia is a unique program that organizes and builds local resources to support the ability of residents, who had enrolled in college but had not finished, to return to college and earn a degree.
- The region, having lost much of its manufacturing base, found that its many employers had rapidly increasing demands for college-educated workers.
- Graduate! Philadelphia offers hands-on, individualized supports to its "Comebackers" (those who return to college) that helps them to navigate the complexities of college enrollment, its costs, course requirements for a degree, career choices, and time management.

Geographic Focus

Greater Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Regional

Purpose

To increase the attainment of college degrees by adults in the region

Graduate! Philadelphia's record is already impressive. The enrollment, since 2008, of 1,500 adults pursuing college degrees is directly attributable to Graduate! Philadelphia's direct services program, which helps adults overcome obstacles as they return to college to complete their degrees.

To date, 150 students have graduated and 3,500 have received direct services from the organization. Collaboration is key; Graduate! Philadelphia provides cross-sector, hands-on support for the students it serves. Particularly important are the 16 colleges and universities that help to sustain the scholarly pursuits of Graduate! Philadelphia's clients.

The mission of Graduate! Philadelphia is to increase the number of Philadelphians who complete college degrees. From the perspective of Hadass Sheffer, the organization's president, "The goal is to organize resources around this agenda." It is important, she adds, "that all stakeholders contribute, to include government, institutions of higher learning, students themselves, labor organizations, employers and community-building organizations."

Background

Philadelphia is the heart of the Greater Delaware Valley area (population over six million), the region served by Graduate! Philadelphia. The city's population is over 1.5 million with 41 percent of the population

Caucasian, 43.4 percent African American, 6.3 percent Asian and 12.3 percent Hispanic.[7] The drivers of the city's economy are a variety of services, including finance, information, insurance, computers, and a range of health services. Trade and tourism thrive and the educational institutions in the city and region are major contributors to the economy.

According to the Pew Foundation's *Philadelphia: The State of the City—a 2010 Update*, 24.3 percent of Philadelphians live in poverty.[8] Sheffer adds, "Many in the middle class, who have risen through the employment ranks but don't have a college degree, are vulnerable if they are laid off, or want to change positions or employers." The area has lost much of its manufacturing base, creating the need for higher levels of education to assure career security, a decent standard of living for individuals, and the economic development of their communities. Sheffer argues that many more living in the Philadelphia area should have a chance to earn a degree "in the midst of what is probably the densest concentration of higher education institutions in the country." She notes that the most optimistic research estimates that "only about one in four Philadelphia adults has a college degree."

The initial focus on the need for greater educational attainment resulted from the serious concerns about the increasing demands for college-educated workers shared by the Pennsylvania Economy League, Southeastern Pennsylvania (PEL); the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (PWIB); and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania. The three organizations faced a daunting obstacle—Philadelphia was near the bottom of America's 100 largest cities in the availability of college-educated residents. They knew that, if this circumstance prevailed, the economic competitiveness of the area would be in serious decline.

In 2005, the PEL and PWIB formed Graduate! Philadelphia and issued a call to action that proposed a unique solution: recruit some of the 300,000 adults in the region who had taken some college-level courses to finish their education. With appropriate support, many could complete a degree program. While these students would initially face many impediments to earning a degree, Graduate! Philadelphia would assist with the admission process, facilitate the transition back into college and offer continued assistance until graduation. Graduate! Philadelphia calls the adults who enroll in the program Comebackers, "for their potential to make a comeback."

Until Graduate! Philadelphia developed its Comebackers approach, the traditional emphasis on educational attainment and college-access programming was reserved for college-age youth. While this focus is undoubtedly very important, it does not account for the 300,000 in the Philadelphia region who have been enrolled in college at some point in their lives. As Sheffer describes, "Hitherto largely overlooked in economic and workforce development and college access programming, adults who started but have not completed a degree can quickly infuse the local talent pool with their new skills and knowledge. They can increase their earnings, raising families out of poverty or near-poverty, and

Courtesy of Graduate! Philadelphia.

increase their career security. For their children, they reduce the risk of dropping out of high school and college associated with first-generation college students, and they create a multiplier effect by helping others succeed in college."

Program and Operations

Graduate! Philadelphia focuses its work on three strategies: raising awareness and engaging regional partners in a collaborative effort; influencing policy and systems change; and developing and piloting innovative programs. While advocating for change and greatly increased access for all to a college education, the organization keeps its sights firmly focused on individual students. The organization states, "Whether you need assistance finding a college and program that's right for you, filling out and filing financial assistance forms, getting academic support, navigating your work and family schedules, accessing a computer, completing your paperwork, or improving your study skills, we can help." Graduate! Philadelphia also advises about scholarships, and offers a variety of workshops on such subjects as Internet research, testing, and note-taking.

Sheffer points out that Comebackers receive ongoing individual support from a Graduate! Philadelphia advisor. Services are available in locations around the city, and by phone, and email. The level of coordination is the secret of Graduate! Philadelphia's early successes.

Graduate! Philadelphia, Sheffer explains, typically serves "those who are lower income, from families with little to no history of college graduates… The reason we see more of this population is because no one in their immediate circles has been through college and can help guide them successfully back to and through it. We do, however, also see middle-class clients with college graduates in their families who want our assistance. All of our clients tell us that we are an 'honest broker.' We help them organize their resources, and find their best options among the dozens that are available. Often, they need someone to talk to who is outside of their family and social circle. Sometimes, they need someone with deep expertise and the right resources to help resolve long-standing or seemingly intractable problems."

The organization crosses socio-economic boundaries by offering resources that benefit all students, such as expert advisors. Training for new advisors is unique because it incorporates many disciplines that college advisors and college-access counselors don't usually have. Advisers learn a deep knowledge of the region and how it works: people, places and neighborhoods, government, transportation, employers, other organizations, and institutions of higher education.

From the outset, Graduate! Philadelphia has stressed the consequential role businesses can play in promoting the ability of employees to re-enter college level studies. Sheffer emphasizes that businesses and chambers of commerce can champion greater educational attainment for their employees, by offering support services onsite and tracking their course work so that it will lead to a degree. Flexible working hours and generous tuition reimbursement policies are approaches that Graduate! Philadelphia encourages, and in the end employees who graduate contribute to a more capable, productive workforce.

Graduate!'s work is funded by Lumina Foundation, TG Public Benefit Program, the William Penn Foundation, the Delaware Valley Regional Economic Development Fund, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia. Graduate! Philadelphia has made its mark far outside the boundaries of the Philadelphia region—it is now national in scope with programs in Chicago and the State of Connecticut and coming soon to Memphis, Greensboro, NC, Indianapolis, and Chattanooga. The guiding philosophy of Graduate! is an emphasis on building local competencies. As Sheffer states, "The work cannot be outsourced. You need to know how the city and the region work." ■

Partners
- Center for Urban Theological Studies
- Chestnut Hill College
- Cheyney University
- The City of Philadelphia
- Community College of Philadelphia
- Drexel University
- East Stroudsburg University
- Geneva College
- Harcum College/I-Lead
- Peirce College
- Penn State University
- The Philadelphia Education Fund
- Philadelphia University
- The Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board
- Rosemont College
- Rowan University
- Rutgers University – Camden
- Springfield College – Wilmington
- Temple University
- Thomas Edison State College
- The United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Contact
www.graduatephiladelphia.org

Hadass Sheffer
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Online Resources
Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce
http://cew.georgetown.edu

The Pew Foundation's *Philadelphia: The State of the City—a 2010 Update* http://www.pewtrusts.org

The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce

Key Lessons
- The Chamber offers local businesses the opportunity to plug-in on education and workforce development initiatives when they unsure how to get involved.
- The Chamber acts as a neutral liaison between the business and education sectors
- The Chamber is proactive to improving education gaps through fiscal, advocacy, and programmatic support.

Geographic Focus
El Paso, Texas, Metro Region

Purpose
To involve all stakeholders community-wide in ensuring that El Paso students are prepared to succeed in higher education and in their careers

The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce is known for its leadership in business and its leadership in education—the Chamber has made education a priority since its inception.

Through its Education and Workforce Development Division (EDWD), the Chamber "leads partnership development efforts between business and education leaders and advocates for meaningful policy change in order to enhance education and workforce development outcomes in El Paso."[9] The Chamber has successfully advocated for area school districts, The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), and El Paso Community College (EPCC). It has advised a local workforce solutions board, and is a partner in the *El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence* (EPCAE), a preK-16 education reform initiative formed between El Paso civic leaders from all sectors, under the aegis of UTEP.

Background

El Paso County has a resident population of 800,647, and is 82.2 percent Hispanic/Latino, 13.1 percent Caucasian, and three percent African American.[10] EPCAE works within the broader El Paso Region, comprised of 12 school districts, with a school-going population of approximatley180,000. The student population is 76 percent low-income, 27 percent limited English proficient, and 23 percent of students achieve a high school degree, while only 18 percent achieve a college degree. [11]

According to Richard Dayoub, President and CEO of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber began engaging in higher education and workforce development

efforts in the early 1990s when the Chamber established its Foundation. With initial funding from the Foundation, the Chamber created its Education and Workforce Development Division (EDWD), led by an Executive Committee, which started managing elements of Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande.

Ana Luz Hernandez, Director of Policy and Programs at the Chamber, describes that after many years of dedicated work, in 2009 the EDWD suspended its committee meetings to restructure, in order to produce more measurable results and a greater impact. In January 2010, through a grant provided by the Hunt Family Foundation, the Chamber enlisted the help of UTEP's Institute for Policy and Economic Development (IPED) to gauge the interest of the business community to become involved in educational attainment initiatives. Survey results revealed that 78% of business respondents expressed interest in the Chamber engaging business and education leaders in a series of structured meetings, to identify methods of partnership to benefit both sectors. The EDWD Executive Committee also acted on feedback provided by area educators and initiated an Education Advocacy group to collaboratively identify and craft a legislative agenda for the region.[12]

The EDWD Executive Committee agreed that the new mission of the Division was to facilitate communication and collaboration between the business and education sectors and engage in advocacy. Dayoub says, "The business community has a desire to help [with educational attainment] but many do not know how to become involved."[13] The Chamber has provided opportunities for businesses to plug-in, and though Dayoub says the work is challenging—he believes that the Chamber has ignited businesses to become more proactive.

Programs and Operations

 "It's much easier to engage our [Chamber] members in initiatives that offer the opportunity to interact with youth. They walk away feeling as if they've made a difference," says Hernandez. In 2011, the Chamber partnered with the El Paso Independent School District to launch *When I Grow Up*, a program that exposes fifth grade students to STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and health sciences careers through visits to the offices of architects, engineers, and health sciences professionals who share their personal stories and offer interactive activities. The program reached 49 students in the spring of 2011 and anticipates reaching an additional 40 students in the spring of 2012.

El Paso's superintendent underscores that sixth grade is when most students determine if they will go to college, and that early exposure is critical, particularly for students who are

Courtesy of The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce.

first generation college students and low-income.[14]
The second program, *Adventure for Your Future*,
targets sixth grade students and their parents
in an annual community-wide event. The event
offers interactive student workshops that build
excitement about STEM, and parent workshops
that provide concrete strategies to implement
student supports for college preparation at home.
Over 200 youth and parents took part in the
January 2012 event.

"It's much easier to engage our
[chamber] members in initiatives
that offer the opportunity to
interact with youth. They walk
away feeling as if they've made a
difference."

—Ana Luz Hernandez
The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce

Adventure for Your Future was developed in
conjunction with the Chamber's Healthcare Professional Shortage Task Force, which has
a mission to increase the number of students pursuing a career in the health sciences
channeled through the K-16 pipeline. According to a 2009 report by the Chamber, "El
Paso is the least staffed large city [of healthcare professionals] in the United States, and
faces shortages in physicians, dentists, nurses, and others."[15] The Chamber is developing
plans to both import health professionals from other parts of the state and around the
country, and to grow El Paso's own healthcare labor sector.

Additionally, the Chamber is part of The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence
(EPCAE). Founded in 1991, EPCAE is a broad partnership of nine school districts,
UTEP, EPCC, the Chamber, and the Education Service Center- Region 19 (support for
teachers and administrators). EPCAE's goals are to ensure success for all students PreK-
16, improve high school graduation rates, college-readiness, and to close the El Paso
achievement gaps. EPCEA's approach is data-driven and standards-oriented. Overall high
school graduation rates have jumped ten percent since EPCEA's founding. EPCEA has
received major funding from the National Science Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, the
U.S. Department of Education, the Lucent Technologies Foundation, and others.

Challenges and Outcomes

The Chamber faces a lack of resources, with a very tight budget. It is in the process
of applying for grant funding to help support and staff its education and workforce
programs. Dayoub says, "The business sector is willing to help, but has limitations due to
similar requests that are competing for attention and funding." He adds that the second
greatest challenge is working with partners and chamber members that are relatively
new to the process, and lack knowledge on pressing policy issues. To aid in educating the
business community, the Chamber has sent staff to statewide conferences to expand their
understanding of key legislation, engaged area superintendents to discuss pressing state
policy issues, is hosting the president of Lumina Foundation to serve as a keynote speaker

for the state of higher education address in May 2012, and more. The third challenge is a lack of statistical outcomes of Chamber programs, which Dayoub says is due to the shortage of resources and staffing. Dayoub knows that when specific, measurable goals are established, business and education leaders will give their time and resources. Once the Chamber can garner more support, it will continue to scale its efforts.

But the Chamber has seen a positive evolution in its relationships between the business sector and the education community. "The Chamber has had a big hand in improving the infrastructure of UTEP, EPCC, the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine at Texas Tech University, and the major school districts," Dayoub says. Momentum created by the business-education partnerships, within the community and through the legislature, has resulted in additional funding for the UTEP School of Nursing, and the School of Medicine's growth from a two-year to a four-year program. Additionally, the Chamber has persuaded tax payers to support nearly $1 billion in bonds to build new schools and remodel existing ones throughout the past decade. The Chamber was a key partner and advocate throughout the lengthy, costly, and often political, processes to accomplish these feats. ◼

Partners
- ADP
- Boeing
- Borderland Area Health Education Center
- Conde, Inc.
- Educate Texas
- El Paso Community College (EPCC)
- El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence (EPCAE)
- The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas
- Innovate El Paso
- The Clint, El Paso, San Elizario, Socorro, and Ysleta Independent School Districts
- Las Palmas Del Sol
- Metro 8 Chambers of Commerce (Arlington, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Houston)
- Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
- Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
- Region 19 Education Service Center
Security Services Federal Credit Union
- Sierra Providence
- Texas Gas
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- TTUHSC Paul L. Foster School of

Medicine
- TTUHSC Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing University Medical Center
- The University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP)
- UTEP's Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education and Research
- Wells Fargo
- Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande

Contact
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Online Resources
The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence (EPCAE)
http://www.epcae.org

The University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP)
http://www.utep.edu

The Greater Reading Keystone Innovation Zone (GR KIZ)

Key Lessons

- The Greater Reading KIZ provides funds to partners to generate job growth through tech transfer and entrepreneurship.
- The state-wide KIZ program is focused around connecting colleges and universities with early stage businesses.
- Eligible companies within a KIZ can apply annually for $100,000 tradable tax credit in addition to programmatic grants for interns, micro grants or training.

Geographic Focus

Greater Reading, Pennsylvania, Metro Region

Purpose

State-initiated program to accelerate economic growth and promote collaboration among colleges, universities, economic developers, government, and businesses located within identified regional clusters

The Greater Reading Keystone Innovation Zone (GR KIZ), implemented by the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GRCCI), is part of a state-designated program to accelerate economic growth and promote collaboration among colleges, universities, local economic developers, local government, and businesses in key industry clusters in close proximity to colleges.

GR KIZ was designed to enable both the state and local communities to leverage one of their strongest assets—clustered networks of colleges, universities, and research institutions. In Reading, Pennsylvania, the local chamber has emerged as a key institution for coordinating the GR KIZ program and bringing business and higher education to the same table. "Chambers are ideal collaborators," said Ellen Horan, President and CEO of the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "The chamber can bring the collaborators together. Businesses, particularly early stage businesses are too busy to explore these types of things."

Background

Throughout Pennsylvania, state-designated districts are at the center of efforts to make Pennsylvania destinations for companies employing well-educated people in high-paying jobs.[16] The Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ) is a state-wide program established in 2005

through the Pennsylvania legislature's passage of Governor Rendell's economic stimulus package. At the state level, the program is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Technology Investment Office. Under KIZ, colleges, universities, and other post-secondary schools can partner with local businesses and economic development organizations to have the areas around their campuses designated as eligible zones.[17]

To apply for designation, partnerships must include: institutions of higher education, economic development organizations, private sector businesses, business support organizations, commercial lending institutions, venture capital firms, and foundations.

According to the Pennsylvania DCED, Pennsylvania ranks 42nd in employment growth. The state's existing research and development clusters are underdeveloped to support entrepreneurial activity and jobs. Addressing brain drain has become a priority of the DCED as the state continues "to lose many of its talented young professionals and graduates."[18]

Berks County, which includes Greater Reading, has a population of 373,638. Greater Reading's main industries are in manufacturing, health and social assistance, retail trade, and educational services. The region benefits from a diverse pool of workers: approximately 41 percent of these are employed in trade occupations such as production, construction trades, material moving, food preparation, and installation maintenance and repair. The other 59 percent are employed in professional occupations such as office and administrative support, management services, health care, sales and education training, and library services.[19]

Programs and Operations

Established in 2006, the Greater Reading KIZ is coordinated in partnership with five higher education institutions. The goals of the Greater Reading program are to drive economic development opportunities and to encourage entrepreneurship based on the creation of new, innovative enterprise. Additionally, the program strives to enhance existing businesses, develop a tech-ready workforce, and create strong partnerships between the region's higher education institutions and the business community.[20] The program currently includes seven businesses: Adhezion Biomedical, Colorfin, Directlink Technologies Corporation, The Fiber Optic Marketplace, LLC, Liquid Interactive, Mogistic, and XenGenn, LLC.

The Greater Reading KIZ targets two main geographic areas: Greater Reading and Kutztown, and includes five geographic nodes of activity. The geographic boundaries were selected based on the availability of space for early-stage business development, proximity to higher education institutions, programmatic linkages with higher education institutions, and the presence of KIZ eligible business and activity in the designated zone. Five higher education institutions within Greater Reading include: Albright College, Alvernia University, Kutztown University (KU), Penn State University – Berks, and Reading Area Community College (RACC)

During the 2006 application phase, the Berks Economic Partnership (BEP)—a nonprofit economic development organization—was the initial pursuer of the program. However, from an implementation standpoint the chamber was better suited to coordinate the program and became the lead organization. Once approved by the state, Greater Reading Chamber received funds to hire a full-time staff member to oversee and implement the program.

Horan said the KIZ program is a good fit for Greater Reading to encourage more early stage businesses to locate in their community. "Most of our job growth comes from smaller companies," she said. To be eligible, businesses must be less than 8 years old, located within a designated KIZ region, and part of a designated target industry. For participating companies, KIZ funds must be matched at least dollar for dollar with another funding source, either from the company itself or another non-lending institution. From 2007 through 2011, the Greater Reading KIZ provided participating businesses with dollars for internships; training programs for employees; aid in intellectual property, patents, and trademark research and protection; aid in developing and/or submitting applications for other alternative sources of funding; aid in locating, developing, and contracting with research partners, especially with KIZ higher educational institutions.

A major benefit to participating businesses is the KIZ Tax Credit program. After a company's third year in the KIZ program, it can apply for up to $100,000 in tradable tax credits annually. A company must continue to show revenue growth to be eligible for tax credits. The Greater Reading KIZ recorded $800,000 in tax credits during a four year period. Many times, the tax credit is sold by the company in exchange for working capital.[21]

Challenges and Outcomes

The Pennsylvania DCED structured the KIZ funding to encourage recipients to seek outside resources to sustain and fund the zone after three years. The program provided a maximum of $250,000 for the first year and declining operations support thereafter. Horan said that the intent of the program was to determine a sustainable operational model.

The Greater Reading KIZ received less funding than anticipated from the program. To address the funding challenge, the chamber has encouraged the cost-sharing practices, such as requiring matching funds. Despite no longer having operation support for staff, the chamber continues to assist businesses that benefit from the KIZ tax credits. In Greater Reading, Horan said "businesses did not begin because of KIZ, but we had a role in assisting several [businesses] that were in the early stages [of developing]."

Courtesy of The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Participating start-up companies benefited through association with higher education institutions. The Greater Reading KIZ program helped start-ups advertise at on-campus internship fairs. Recruited interns had increased opportunities to be hired in entry-level positions the following year. For tech start-ups, Horan said, "it's an economical way to get the labor they needed and find the brightest in that industry. To encourage students to consider entrepreneurial opportunities, the Greater Reading Keystone Innovation Zone conducts an annual *Business Idea Challenge* competition. Students from the five colleges submit business ideas related to technology and are competing for small cash prizes. The competition helps students flesh out ideas and combine and apply all the things they have learned in college. ■

Partners

- Albright College
- Alvernia University
- Berks Economic Partnership
- Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Kutztown University (KU)
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development: State of Innovation
- Penn State University – Berks
- Reading Area Community College (RACC)

Contact

http://www.greaterreadingchamber.org/greater_reading_keystone_innovation_zone.html

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Online Resources

Greater Reading Keystone Innovation Zone
http://www.greaterreadingchamber.org/greater_reading_keystone_innovation_zone.html

Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry
http://www.greaterreadingchamber.org

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development: State of Innovation
http://www.newpa.com

Berks Economic Partnership
http://www.greaterreading.com

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

Key Lessons
- A chamber leading a formal collaboration of diverse players in a regional education reform effort
- A chamber involved in state and local-level policy change
- A chamber that creates partnerships between business, foundations, schools, colleges, and the city

Geographic Focus
Los Angeles, California, City-Wide, County-Wide, and Regional

Purpose
To leverage chamber and business resources to improve early childhood education, K-12, higher education, and workforce development in the Los Angeles region

As the largest and most influential business association in Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (L.A. Chamber) is a leader in education and workforce development.

For more than 120 years, the L.A. Chamber has served the needs of business through its programs and advocacy initiatives. The nonprofit organization UNITE-LA is an affiliate of the L.A. Chamber, and was established in 1998 through a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

UNITE-LA is the second largest School-to-Career Partnership in the nation serving over 800,000 youth and students in the greater Los Angeles area.[22] The organization leads systems change work, actively engages in education reform policy efforts, promotes business-education partnerships, collaborates to expand college access and success, and provides workforce development opportunities for youth in Los Angeles. The L.A. Chamber has a vision that all students in Los Angeles will have access to education and training opportunities preparing them for high-skill, high-wage employment in a fulfilling career of choice, resulting in a thriving regional economy.

Background

A city of 3.7 million people, Los Angeles is a sprawling 467 square miles of urban metropolis.[23] The city is approximately 28.75 percent Caucasian, 49.8 percent Hispanic or Latino, 11.3 percent Asian/Pacific-Islander, and 9.6 percent African American—a shocking 21.6 percent of the City's population lives below the poverty line.[24] The Los

Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is 710 square miles,[25] and encompasses 763 K-12 public schools and a total student enrollment of 919,930, including adult basic education. Seventy-five percent of LAUSD students are Hispanic/Latino, and of the English Language Learners (ELL) that constitute 33 percent of the district's K-12 population, 94 percent are Spanish-speakers. The Los Angeles public education system faces the daunting task of addressing these challenges faced by the student body. Without an effective public school system, Los Angeles will not be able to meet the economic, social and cultural challenges of the coming decades.

Programs and Operations

In 2007, the L.A. Chamber's President & CEO Gary Toebben met with the founding members of *The L.A. Compact* to begin work on its development. A historic education reform collaborative, *The L.A. Compact* is a collaboration committed to prioritizing the problems, and developing solutions, inherent in the LAUSD. In addition to the L.A. Chamber, founding members included Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, LAUSD Superintendent David Brewer, LAUSD Board President Monica Garcia, and United Teachers Los Angeles President A.J. Duffy. They met with David Rattray and Neil Sullivan, Executive Director of the Boston Private Industry Council and the longtime convener of the Boston Compact. Today, Rattray is the Senior Vice President of Education & Workforce Development at the L.A. Chamber and President of UNITE-LA.

The L.A. Chamber describes that, "In 2009, several *L.A. Compact* partners and others participated in thirteen meetings with Congressional leaders to discuss the future of the federal workforce development policy and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These advocacy efforts resulted in the inclusion of nearly $4 billion for national workforce development efforts, of which the City of Los Angeles received $39 million via the Workforce Investment Act."[26] In 2010, *The L.A. Compact* was publicly launched with an unprecedented collaboration of 19 major Los Angeles institutions, including: LAUSD Board of Education, Los Angeles City Council, The City of Los Angeles, the L.A. Chamber, Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, and 11 Los Angeles area institutions of higher education. Members of the *Compact* work together to accomplish the

"While past Los Angeles public school reform efforts have had varied levels of success, there has never before been a concerted, collaborative effort made by major Los Angeles institutions to prioritize problems and develop solutions to effect positive and lasting improvements in the area's public school system."

—The L.A. Chamber, regarding *The L.A. Compact*

following agreed upon goals, tied to specific measurements: all students graduate from high school, all students have access to and are prepared for college, and all students have the skills necessary for sustainable jobs and careers.

The L.A. Chamber collaborates on challenging and exciting education and workforce development policy issues with partners statewide through the R.E.A.L. (Regional Economic Association Leaders) Coalition. The Coalition comprises 20 of California's most influential business associations representing more than 11,000 employers, and providing more than three million jobs across the state.

Additionally, a new partnership leveraging the powerful network of ACCE's membership with the L.A. Chamber's expertise in strengthening education systems, policy, and programs is expected to dramatically enhance the nature of business involvement in education and workforce development issues at the regional, state, and national level. Through convening and surveying chambers throughout the U.S. to determine capacity, aspirations, and perceived challenges to engagement on issues such as workforce development and education reform, the partnership is establishing a national resource center comprised of leading practices to aide chambers and their members across the country in engaging more deeply and effectively in educational outcomes.

Additional Policy and Program Work

By bridging the gap between advocating for large-scale systemic reform and implementing and growing programmatic work from the ground level, the L.A. Chamber's efforts are clearly authentic. The L.A. Chamber is seen by the governor as a leader on fiscal and higher education policy. It has developed a strong advocacy agenda, including writing and sponsoring bills both individually and state-wide via the R.E.A.L. Coalition (such as passing S.B. 1143, a bill that established a California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, and winning support from stakeholders throughout California) as well as actively monitoring and stating strong support or opposition for state budgeting, financial aid, and higher education legislation.

The L.A. Chamber leads numerous programs with a variety of concentrations. First, several programs help strengthen L.A. schools, and the schools' relationships with the local business community. *Pillar* is a partnership between the L.A. Chamber and the Los Angeles Unified School District to create new business-education partnerships to reinforce schools and produce a world-class workforce. *Principal for a Day* and *Executive for a Day* connect more than 2,000 business executives and public school principals for a day of hands-on exchange. *Themed Small Schools* and *Small Learning Communitie*s help transform challenged schools into high-performing schools by providing technical assistance and strategic planning to provide career-based learning programs for students in every industry.

Many of the L.A. Chamber's programs assist students to achieve academic excellence and college and career readiness. *Job Shadow Day* is a partnership with Junior Achievement of Southern California to provide job shadowing opportunities for local high school students. *Cash for College* is highlighted by a two-day convention that attracts more than 13,000 students and their families to engage with college and career exhibitors and take college preparatory and financial aid workshops. *L.A. Youth at Work* provides programs that train and certify youth to be work ready and also engages businesses to provide entry-level employment opportunities for youth. Lastly, *HIRE L.A.'s Youth* is a partnership with the Mayor's office, the City of Los Angeles, and the L.A. City Workforce Investment Board which provides employment opportunities for youth and young adults ages 16 - 21.

Selected Outcomes

To date, more than $4 million in scholarships have been awarded since *Cash for College*'s inception in 2002. The L.A. Chamber has supported the development of 420 small schools and small learning communities within the Los Angeles Unified School District. Additionally, 450 business-education partnerships have been created, thousands of youth between 16 and 24 years of age have been placed in meaningful, entry-level employment, and 167,000 students have been served through *Cash for College*. ■

Partners
- The Los Angeles Unified School District
- The Los Angeles Mayor's Office
- The City of Los Angeles
- The Los Angeles Compact
- The R.E.A.L Coalition

Contact
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Online Resources
The Los Angeles Compact
http://www.lacompact.org

UNITE-LA
http://www.unitela.com

Pillar
http://www.pillarla.com

L.A. Cash for College
http://www.lacashforcollege.org

LA Youth at Work
http://www.layouthatwork.org

Purdue University Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

Key Lessons

- TAP demonstrates how large universities can play a direct role in economic development through partnerships with businesses and governmental units.
- TAP provides business consulting and worker training services to health care providers, manufacturers, and governmental units in Indiana.
- To keep faculty and students engaged in the program, being involved in TAP activities offers incentives and benefits.

Geographic Focus

West Lafayette, Indiana, City-Wide, Regional, and National

Purpose

Purdue University is a land grant college and research institution with a broad mission that includes economic development

The Purdue University Technical Assistance Program (TAP) is a perfect example of how a large university can play a direct role in national economic development. Based in Indiana, TAP's mission is to "advance Indiana's economic prosperity, health, and quality of life," by serving companies, hospitals, health departments; and governmental units through employee training and several unique programs.[27]

TAP services include: providing technical assistance projects on a broad range of issues; conducting energy efficiency and assessing sustainability; training companies with high energy costs; and developing green enterprise to teach green manufacturing skills. TAP also offers Healthcare TAP, a short-term performance improvement and health care training program for Indiana hospitals, the public health system, and other health care providers. *The Manufacturing Extension Partnership* (MEP) provides on-site training, project analysis, and workshops to "help businesses increase profitability."[28]

Background

The state of Indiana enjoys a reputation as the "Crossroads of America" given its accessibility by car (80 percent of the U.S. population is within a day's drive). It has three international airports, more than 4,165 miles of active railway

Courtesy of Purdue University Technical Assistance Program.

tracks, and the world's second-largest FedEx hub. With a labor force of more than three million, Indiana's main industries are agriculture, manufacturing, health care, and the service industry.[29]

Indiana developed the TAP program in 1986 to meet the challenges presented by the economic recession of the early 1980s. When it was first established, TAP's primary goal was to support the manufacturing sector reach global competitiveness; however in the past seven years its objectives have expanded to support other sectors.[30] According to Program Director David McKinnis, the goals of the program support those of Purdue University, which are to provide a higher education that meets today's global needs and standards. He said, "We strive to be what society needs and our mission is to advance our country's economic development, health, and quality of life. We do this mostly focused on the business and health care sectors."

Programs and Operations

With manufacturing as one of Indiana's largest business sectors, the state's global competitiveness in the industry is a prominent issue for businesses and policy makers. This includes price competitiveness, quality delivery, and service—all of which require a mature and highly-functioning workforce. TAP tackles the challenge of workforce development through the MEP, which works with 3000 to 4000 workers in the adoption of green technology to assist companies in becoming more energy efficient. In TAP's health care sector, much of the work is done with hospitals, to overcome the immediate concern of lowering the cost of health care.[31]

Courtesy of Purdue University Technical Assistance Program.

TAP's services and expertise have benefited thousands of Indiana organizations and businesses, and created millions of dollars in economic impact since the program was launched. In the fiscal year ending June 2011, TAP programs and services have boosted sales by $176 million, increased capital investments by $47 million, contributed to cost savings of $17 million, and saved or added 2,464 jobs in the state, according to the organizations that were assisted.[32] TAP clients participating in MEP were asked to quantify the program's impact on their companies throughout a one-year period following assistance. The study reports that between July 2005 and December 2011, MEP led to a generation of more than $535 million in sales, cost savings of more than $72 million, and investment of more than $144 million—a total monetary impact of more than $651 million. Additionally, 7,212 jobs were created and retained.[33]

Challenges and Outcomes

According to McKinnis, a principle challenge has been trying to keep faculty and students engaged in the program and not detracting from activities that lead to tenure and graduation. The University has adopted certain mechanisms to deal with this issue,

such as paying participating faculty on an "overload" basis; professors working on TAP projects receive additional pay on their salary based on the amount of work conducted for the program. This offers high enough compensation to entice faculty to continue working for the program. Faculty may also be promoted in certain colleges of the University based on their work in the TAP program. Additionally, to avoid hindering students' timely completion, TAP is flexible with students' participation schedules, so that they do not miss class or fall short on their workload.

TAP works with its many partners to make Indiana's economy stronger and improve the health and quality of life of its citizens. TAP recently launched the *Front Line Green Worker Certificate*, which is now being offered by WorkOne job centers run by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. This teaches participants sustainable manufacturing practices to deliver cost savings while improving the environment. Participants will also earn an industry-recognized credential that will make them valuable to employers for green jobs in all sectors. The *Front Line Green Worker Certificate* initiative is designed to give unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers the knowledge and tools necessary for 21st century manufacturing jobs. This initiative is one of many that equip workers with the tools to be competitive in the 21st century job market.

Purdue University's Technical Assistance Program supplies the region with significant technical expertise. It also demonstrates how fostering direct relationships between private, public, and nonprofit institutions and between emerging and in-training professionals, can provide mutually beneficial exchange to support the state's economic development strategy. McKinnis points out a crucial lesson for other higher education institutions: "The capability of a large university can have a significant, long-term, and positive impact on the business sector… the more we can get universities to be effectively involved in the longer term with business development, the more competitive we will be as a nation. But it is easier said than done." ■

Partners

- Center for Advanced Manufacturing
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development
- Indiana Economic Development Corporation
- Indiana Hospital Association
- Society of Manufacturing Engineers

Contact

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Online Resources

Purdue University Center for Advanced Manufacturing
https://engineering.purdue.edu/CAM/index.html

Indiana Department of Workforce Development
http://www.in.gov/dwd

Indiana Hospital Association
http://www.ihaconnect.org

Society of Manufacturing Engineers
http://www.sme.org

St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association (RCGA)

Key Lessons

- The St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association's "talent strategy" demonstrates the key leadership role a chamber can play in developing a meaningful approach to enhancing the capacity of a region's workforce.
- Identifying the strongest local industry clusters is a critical step in determining the requirements for educational attainment that support growth in those industries.
- Engagement of all sectors in planning and implementing a "talent strategy" is critical to its success.

Geographic Focus

Bi-State St. Louis, Missouri and Illinois (eight counties in Missouri and eight counties in southwestern Illinois), Regional

Purpose

The St. Louis RCGA, working with employers, educators, civic groups, government agencies, job seekers, and students, advocates that talent is an advantage in the retention, attraction, and development of business in the St. Louis region

For the St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association (RCGA), the need to create a comprehensive plan for expanding the number of skilled, knowledgeable employees required by regional businesses drove its design of a strategic planning methodology of remarkable breadth and depth.

RCGA has developed a "talent strategy," which the Chamber defines as a strategy to develop those who have natural abilities as well as the learned knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform occupations in demand in the regional economy. The Chamber's talent strategy is business-led and data-driven, and includes the leadership of its 16-member Talent Council, along with more than 300 business and cross-sector leaders to plan and enhance region-wide coordination.

Background

Creating the talent strategy involved the completion of wide-ranging, in-depth research; surveys of displaced workers and human resource professionals; analysis of the region's current and future economic conditions; identification of high-value industry clusters; and a framework for coordinated talent development. The talent strategy also included the publication of a full report, *Talent: The Future of Metro St. Louis in the*

Knowledge Economy, encompassing all of the relevant issues as well as five supplemental publications.[35] The recommendations in the publication are tied to the regional economic development strategy, the *St. Louis Overview and 2011-2015 Strategic Plan*.

Blair Forlaw, a consultant for RCGA who worked with St. Louis leaders for three years on the development of the talent strategy, points out that the goal of the strategy was to "[work] with employers, educators, civic groups, government agencies, job seekers, and students to advocate talent as an advantage in the retention, attraction, and development of business in the St. Louis region."[37] The talent strategy specifies that those who meet the requirements for employment in the knowledge economy of the 21st century must be "prepared to work," with a post-secondary education as a starting point; "equipped to perform," by developing the requisite skills; and "positioned to advance" over time due to acquiring additional credentials, skills, knowledge, and experience. The emphasis of the talent strategy, however, is on the need for post-secondary education.
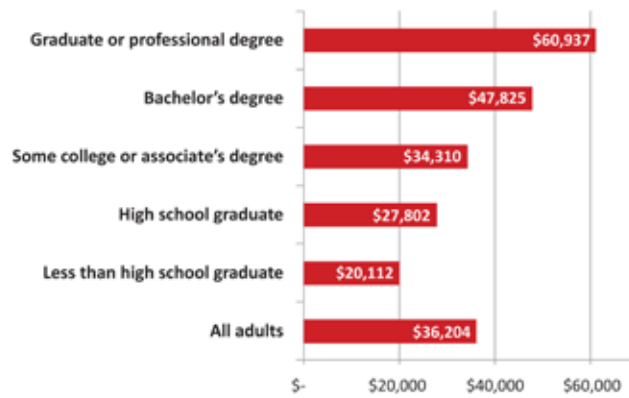
Program Operations

The business and economic leaders in the region define three characteristics of strong employees that are essential to realizing their vision: "By the year 2020, Greater St. Louis will be consistently ranked among the top 10 out of the 20 metropolitan areas in indicators of (1) regional vitality, (2) economic health, and (3) the creation of community wealth." The St. Louis region was hard hit by the recession and its population growth is slow, in spite of its advantageous location at the geographic center of the nation.

With over 2.8 million residents, the St. Louis area (which includes the 16 county, bi-state region comprising the City of St. Louis, the Missouri counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Lincoln, Warren, Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington; and the Illinois counties of St. Clair, Jersey, Madison, Clinton, Monroe, Bond, Macoupin, and Calhoun) is the 18th most populous in the country. The *Talent* report notes, however, that "more people left the St. Louis area than moved in for 14 out of the 16 years from 1993 to 2008." Additionally, immigrants are only four percent of the population, significantly less than in many other American cities, and so do not boost the St. Louis area population growth to the same extent as they do elsewhere.

The planners of the talent strategy leave no doubt about the importance of the educational attainment of employees in the 21st century economy. *Talent: The Future of Metro St. Louis in the Knowledge Economy* states that, "Being prepared to work in today's knowledge economy requires educational credentials beyond the high school level." It further notes that, "National reports on the importance of post-secondary skills variously estimate the proportion of emerging economy jobs requiring such credentials as between 65 and 75 percent." The concern on the part of the leaders of the region is clearly corroborated by these statistics, as only 32 percent of the residents have a bachelor's or higher degree. Forlaw explains that a sense of urgency prompts the RCGA's great interest in talent development. Site-selection consultants, who work with companies that are relocating, now view the percentage of bachelor's degrees in a region as the key indicator of the

Median Earnings by Educational Attainment for Persons Aged 25 and Older
St. Louis MSA, 5-Year Average, 2006 – 2010

Educational Attainment	Median Earnings
Graduate or professional degree	$60,937
Bachelor's degree	$47,825
Some college or associate's degree	$34,310
High school graduate	$27,802
Less than high school graduate	$20,112
All adults	$36,204

Courtesy of St. Louis RCGA.

quality of the talent pool needed for growth and job creation.

The disparity in the percentages poses a serious threat to economic development in the region. Though residents have access to 50 degree-granting institutions in the region and three major universities in Missouri and Illinois, the *Talent* publication reports that American Community Survey data for 2009 shows that 49 percent of students were 25 and older, 53 percent were in two-year colleges, and 42 percent in four-year programs were part-time. Many are working and find completing their studies a herculean task due to such obstacles as time constraints, lack of a supportive environment, rising costs, and uncertainty about the benefit of a degree.

To identify and take advantage of its economic strengths, RCGA contracted with Market Street Services, Inc., to ascertain the industries in the St. Louis region that showed maximum growth potential in "value, jobs, and wages." Leaders of the talent strategy then chose three regional, top-tier economic clusters: financial and information services, health science and services, and sustainable technologies, as areas needing special attention for cultivating the talent that would advance the region's role in these clusters.

Financial and information services have the benefit of offering higher pay than the other industries in the region, on average, but they also require that nearly 60 percent of employees have a four-year bachelor's or higher degree. The RCGA report, *Making the Case for a Campaign to Increase College Completion Rates*, cites data demonstrating that 30 of 41 occupations in financial and information services are high growth.[38] The sustainable technologies sector in St. Louis is relatively small, with employment of just over 14,000, though green industries are expected to expand. Wages in this cluster vary widely. Health science and services, the third and largest cluster, are increasingly important everywhere in the nation—and the world. The *Talent* report points out that "skill and competency requirements" are shifting in some medical professions, as responsibilities evolve and change. An example is the greater dependence on nurse practitioners for assuming roles formerly limited to physicians. *Making the Case* states that 61 of the 95 occupations in this sector are high-growth.

Making the Case asserts that the "nature of the work in these economic clusters has been—and will continue to be—transformed by technology and innovation. Businesses

increasingly require a skilled, technically-proficient, and continuously-learning workforce." To assure the availability of employees able to participate in a workforce fitting this description, the planners of the talent strategy recommended the following:

- Establish Graduate! St Louis as a region-wide umbrella, bringing together all programs in the region that are working to improve college completion rates for the purpose of sharing ideas, information, best practices and leveraging stronger outcomes;
- Launch a regional approach to improving college completion among adult learners, with an initial focus on those who started college but did not finish;
- Develop a menu of potential actions that businesses can take to support their employees in earning post-secondary credentials; and
- Articulate a public policy agenda to support the development of a regional workforce, with particular attention to the occupations in the economic clusters targeted in the plan.[39]

Though its implementation of the talent strategy has just begun, the St. Louis region's ambition to boost its talent base is bearing fruit. The RCGA Talent Council continues its leadership role, the talent strategy has been distributed widely, coordination among sectors to increase the educational attainment of its residents grows stronger, and regional businesses are increasing their support for post-secondary education of their employees. ■

Partners

- Colleges and universities throughout the bi-state St. Louis area
- Division of Workforce Development, Missouri Department of Economic Development
- Human Resource Management Association of Greater St. Louis
- Human Resource People & Strategy, St. Louis Chapter
- Innovate St. Louis
- Society for Information Management, Gateway to Innovation
- St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment
- St. Louis County Workforce Investment Board

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Online Resources

Talent: The Future of Metro St. Louis in the Knowledge Economy
http://www.stlrcga.org

St. Louis Overview and 2011-2015 Strategic Plan
http://ofallonchamber.com

Making the Case for a Campaign to Increase College Completion Rates
http://www.stlouisgraduates.org

Syracuse Say Yes to Education

Key Lessons

- A community collaborative creates a district-wide education reform initiative to offer "wraparound" services to all students and families.
- A university serves as the anchor institution in the community initiative by offering fiscal and in-kind resources.
- The city uses the resources, best practices, and support of a national organization to create a successful local initiative.

Geographic Focus

Syracuse, New York, City-Wide

Purpose

A college tuition promise for public school graduates that encompasses a full-community effort

Ronald and Nancy Reagan famously asked young people nationwide in 1986 to "Just Say No" to drugs. A group of education reformers had an idea for a counterpart to this message: "Say Yes to Education." Say Yes to Education, Inc. (Say Yes) is a national, nonprofit education foundation with six local chapters, committed to increasing high school and college graduation rates for inner-city youth.

Founded in 2007, Syracuse Say Yes is the first local chapter to embrace an entire city school district, making it the largest school improvement program of its kind in the nation. Syracuse students that meet residency, graduation, and admission requirements receive the promise of free college tuition to attend one of more than 100 Say Yes colleges. Additionally, Syracuse Say Yes offers a comprehensive support system for children and their families beginning in kindergarten that ranges from family support services, to after school and summer programs, to health and wellness resources and legal clinics.

Background

Syracuse is the economic and educational hub of Central New York (a population of just over 150,000, and a metropolitan region of just over 660,000)[40] with over nine colleges and universities that call the city home. But in 2011, only half of the Syracuse school district's 6,000 high school students graduated, compared to a statewide 77 percent,[41] and only 15 percent of students were considered college-ready.[42] Syracuse is 56 percent Caucasian, 30 percent African American, eight percent Hispanic/Latino, and 5 percent

Asian. The city experiences widespread poverty, with 31.1 percent of the population living below the poverty line,[43] and 78 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced school lunch.[44]

Say Yes to Education, Inc. started its Syracuse chapter in 2008 by building on its record of successes with chapters in Harlem, Cambridge, Philadelphia, and Hartford. Say Yes president Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey was searching for a location to start the first district-wide program, and chose Syracuse after a discussion with Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor. Chancellor Cantor volunteered Syracuse University to be the anchor institution responsible for raising resources and leading the collaborative. Pat Driscoll, Director of Operations for Syracuse Say Yes describes that in order for a community to host a Say Yes chapter, it must have an anchor institution willing to commit resources, and a community willing to change the way it does business.

Upfront, Syracuse University committed a host of resources such as faculty, scholarships, and tutors. It was soon joined by the New York Community Foundation (the main source for scholarships), the Mayor's Office, and the Onondaga County Executive's Office (which committed funding streams), the Syracuse Teachers Association, and the Syracuse City School District. Driscoll explains that one of the biggest challenges during the chapter's founding was being inclusive, and more specifically, engaging community based organizations (CBOs). He says, "The local CBOs provide great services and programs for youth and families, and it was critical to have their support. Now, Syracuse Say Yes has a CBO Task Force that collaborates with Say Yes in a more distinct fashion—a great improvement from 2008."[45]

Program Operations

Syracuse Say Yes is led by an 11-person operating committee and seven task forces. The operating committee is responsible for the day to day management of operations. The operating committee, led by Pat Driscoll, is comprised of: the Syracuse Teacher's Association, Syracuse University, the Syracuse City School District, Say Yes to Education, Inc., and the City of Syracuse. The seven task forces are charged with putting specific initiatives in place, and include: *Community Advisory Group* (engagement with local and state elected leaders); *Leadership Council* (ensuring financial support); *Community Based Organization Task Force* (communication with community-based organizations); *Health and Wellness Task Force* (physical and mental health support for students); *Legal Task Force* (legal support services for students and families); *Communication Task Force* (effective communication plan to build awareness); and *Community Engagement Task Force* (collaboration with faith-based and neighborhood based organizations).

To support students on a large scale, Say Yes began the *Syracuse Higher Education Compact*, a partnership with public and private colleges and universities that pledges

to collectively provide Say Yes participants with full tuition. Syracuse has recruited some of the highest ranked institutions of higher education, including 27 nonprofit private institutions and more than 100 colleges and universities in total. Some participating schools are: Columbia University, the Rochester Institute of Technology, and Syracuse University, as well as a large number of SUNY and CUNY schools. In order to qualify for Say Yes, a student must be a city of Syracuse resident, enrolled in a Syracuse city high school for a

Courtesy of Syracuse Say Yes to Education.

consecutive three years in grades 10 through 12, graduate from a Syracuse high school, and enroll as a full time student in a participating college or a university within one year of graduation.

Syracuse Say Yes is a "last dollar scholarship," meaning that it fills the tuition gap remaining *after* a student receives any gift aid money (grants or scholarships that the student does not have to repay). Say Yes students attending any public institution receive tuition funding from Say Yes; students attending a private college receive funding from the college. While all private institutions guarantee tuition to students from families with incomes of less than $75,000, most do not guarantee tuition for families in higher income brackets. Participating public universities, however, *do not* have income caps. In addition, *Opportunity Grants* provide high-need students residing on SUNY and CUNY campuses to assist with college costs beyond tuition (such as books, housing, and deposits).

Say Yes to Education, Inc. wanted the Syracuse school district to focus on post-secondary readiness and success. Say Yes believes that in order to close the achievement gaps in inner-city school districts, it is necessary to create a complete support system for students and their families. Syracuse Say Yes identified four major obstacles for low-income students: academic, social-emotional, health, and financial.[46] Driscoll says, "The program has made great strides in providing 'wraparound' services that respond to those obstacles." Services offered to K-12 students include: in-school and after-school tutoring and mentoring, student diagnostic testing and monitoring, inclusive school settings for students with disabilities and English language learners, after school and summer programs, counseling and family engagement, and college selection counseling.

Challenges and Outcomes

Syracuse Say Yes is serious about assessment. Achievement is monitored by third-party researchers that conduct regular assessments to examine indicators of attendance, suspensions, and test scores. They have noticed upticks in these indicators, as well as a 20 percent increase in matriculation at college, increases in ninth grade algebra scores,

and increases in attendance and graduation rates. Since the fall of 2009, nearly 2,000 Say Yes students have enrolled in college. During the academic year 2011-2012, over 1200 students are enrolled at Say Yes colleges.

Driscoll describes that sustainability remains both a challenge and opportunity. Like many organizations, Say Yes Syracuse must continue to find resources to sustain the program, but he is confident that their efforts have been successful and will continue to produce results. The business community has been an important force in supporting Say Yes. Driscoll pointed to a $5 million grant from the Syracuse Research Corporation as key to leveraging additional resources from both the public and private sectors. Along with broad collaboration, continuing to be proactive will help Say Yes Syracuse support students in the future. Driscoll says the operating group continues to meet bi-weekly to discuss issues and challenges, and to identify potential sources of revenue. Through their ongoing efforts, the students of the Syracuse area have greater opportunities to "Say Yes!" to education. ◼

Partners
- The Syracuse City School District
- Syracuse University
- Say Yes to Education, Inc.
- New York Community Foundation
- Onondaga County
- City of Syracuse
- Syracuse Teacher's Association

Additional outside partners include:
- The Boy's and Girl's Club of Syracuse
- Catholic Charities
- Contact Community Services
- Dunbar Association
- Hillside Work Scholarship Foundation
- Huntington Family Center
- The Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County
- Northeast Community Center
- On Point for College
- Parent Partnership Network
- The Salvation Army
- Seeds of Peace
- Westcott Community Center
- YMCA
- YWCA
- 100 Black Men of Syracuse

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Online Resources
Say Yes to Education, Inc. national foundation website
http://www.sayyestoeducation.org

Complete listing of Syracuse Say Yes colleges
http://www.sayyessyracuse.org/say-yes-college/say-yes-colleges

Listing of Say Yes to Education Chapters
http://www.sayyestoeducation.org/programs/chapters

The Strive Partnership

Key Lessons

- Through cradle to career civic infrastructure, all students will be prepared for school; supported in and out of school; succeed academically; enroll in college; graduate and enter a career.
- The Strive Partnership has a large, cross-sector partnership network, enabling the organization to mobilize the entire community.
- Scrupulous collection and analysis of relevant data and meticulous, detailed planning are the hallmarks of the Strive Partnership's approach.

Geographic Focus

City of Cincinnati, Ohio and the cities of Covington and Newport, Kentucky

Purpose

Supporting students from cradle to career through collaborative action and employing and integrating resources that the data shows are effective

In Cincinnati, Ohio, the Strive Partnership did not think small or plan for slow, incremental progress. Instead, it determined that a successful educational experience is essential for all children, from "cradle to career," that the need was urgent, and that it must be a community-wide responsibility.

Background

Since its start in 2006, the Strive Partnership has collaborated with more than 300 organizations that span all sectors and systems whose impact is related to the education of children, or who benefit from a well-educated populace. The organization is on a path to success due to collaborative action, and its remarkable rigor in collecting and analyzing relevant data that measures progress, identifies activities that are not working as expected, and assures participant accountability.

The Partnership's five goals for students are both succinct and daunting: all students will be prepared for school, be supported in and out of school, succeed academically, enroll in college, graduate and enter a career. The motivation for creating the Partnership originated with the presidents of three local colleges: the University of Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky University, and Xavier University. Jeff Edmondson, the founding executive director and current managing director of the Strive Partnership, explains that

these colleges are very community-minded and were disappointed in the failure of too many students to earn their degrees. They probably could not have conceived of the 300 organizations representing multiple sectors that would collaborate in a partnership that took on the task of "building a civic infrastructure" to achieve its goals.

In Cincinnati, residents are 49.3 percent Caucasian, 44.8 percent African American, 2.8 percent Hispanic, and 1.8 percent Asian.[47] While Cincinnati boasts ten Fortune 500 companies and many prosperous businesses and residents, 48 percent of its children live in poverty—the third worst poverty level for children in the country.[48] In 2009, 20.8 percent of the city of Covington residents were living below the poverty level[49] and in the city of Newport, 22.5 percent.[50]

Though 10 years ago the conditions in Cincinnati prompted civil unrest, Edmondson reports that a growing sense of cohesion characterizes the relationships of the city's leaders. Edmondson describes Cincinnati as a giving community—the willingness of so many to contribute to the effort to increase educational attainment is testament to that. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, and KnowledgeWorks (a national foundation promoting new ways to approach education) joined with university presidents to launch the Partnership. According to Edmondson, "further development was a grassroots effort among grasstops leadership."[51] Superintendents of the school systems in the three cities joined the Partnership, as did private and parochial schools, Procter and Gamble, Duke Energy, the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber and many others. Ultimately, over 100 high-level executives came together to support the Partnership's goals.

Edmondson acknowledges that directing the Partnership was difficult. "There were [a wealth] of programs, but they were not coordinated. In essence, we were program rich and system poor." The Strive Partnership was determined to change the paradigm, to make the best use of existing resources, to coordinate them, and thereby enhance the effectiveness of the many investments already being made.

Programs and Operations

The Strive Partnership has succeeded on a number of fronts. Greater Cincinnati leaders in the education, nonprofit, community, civic, business (including the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber), and philanthropic sectors are working collectively to assure that, in Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport, all students achieve eight specific outcomes. They include kindergarten readiness; fourth grade reading proficiency; eighth grade math proficiency; improved high school graduation rates and ACT (American College Testing) scores; and higher post-secondary enrollment, retention, and completion. To promote the ability of students to meet these standards, The Partnership has focused on four strategic priorities: early childhood education, teacher and principal excellence, linkage of

community supports to student achievement, and post-secondary access and success.

Greg Landsman, Executive Director of the Strive Partnership, stresses the importance of exacting compilation and analysis of data in the Partnership's decision-making. In the Partnership's early days, an executive from Procter and Gamble was assigned to assist in developing a prototype for the organization's data collection. Reliance on data is so significant to The Partnership's approach that it has undertaken the arduous task of developing uniform reporting systems so that the data is integrated—in spite of the great variety of organizations that provide it. Landsman explains that, "The key is to leverage data in a way that brings people together and helps service providers and schools get better. We don't believe data should be used in a punitive or divisive way."[52] Analysis and reporting of the data is completely transparent to all stakeholders.

Outcomes

The Strive Partnership tracks student achievement of its goals and desired outcomes and reports to stakeholders annually. Strive's annual report on student progress in 2011 indicates that 81 percent of its measures are "trending in the right direction," as compared to 74 percent last year and 68 percent two years ago. Specific examples of progress include the recognition by the state of Ohio of Cincinnati Public Schools as the first urban school district to be defined as "effective." In Covington, schools have shown growth in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math and high school graduation rates. Newport's students have improving ACT scores and post-secondary rates.[53]

The Strive Partnership is a framework for meticulous, detailed planning, a remarkable feat given the many parties engaged in its work. The Partnership also subjects its activities to continual examination. If an idea initially sounds great, but does not work, it is terminated. Though this is difficult at times, especially when those who fund or participate in Strive are affected, it is sometimes necessary to re-direct funding streams so they are used to greater advantage.

The success of the Strive Partnership has led to the launch of the national Strive Network. Over 100 communities have reached out to Strive to learn about the *Framework for Building Cradle to Career Civic Infrastructure*, which is a tool communities use to organize their local assets and identify potential gaps as they seek to have collective impact. Over 50 communities have joined the network, and Strive is currently supporting 12 sites as they work to create their own unique partnerships. Jeff Edmondson is the managing director of the network. ■

Partners

300 collaborating organizations ranging from foundations, business, nonprofits, K-12 school systems, early childhood, higher education

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Online Resources

The National Strive Network
http://strivenetwork.org

The Strive *Framework for Building Cradle to Career Civic Infrastructure*
http://strivenetwork.org/strive-approach

KnowledgeWorks
http://knowledgeworks.org

West Kentucky Community and Technical College (WKCTC)

Key Lessons

- A comprehensive community college supports the economic development of its community by offering up-to-date classes and laboratories to prepare graduates with career-readiness.
- Business leaders must work with leaders of colleges and universities to identify their current and future requirements for employee training and education.
- Chambers of Commerce can play a crucial role in supporting colleges to create the infrastructure and curriculum changes required to prepare students for work in modern industry.

Geographic Focus

Paducah, Kentucky, Regional

Purpose

In 2003, the separate community and technical colleges were consolidated, and the combined programming allowed the college to evaluate what was needed to obtain its vision of excellence and better serve the region in economic development

The development of a comprehensive community and technical college in 2003 became the catalyst for change in Paducah, Kentucky. West Kentucky Community and Technical College (WKCTC) is an institution rooted in the community, with a mission to provide Paducah students with an academic and technical curriculum to meet current and future workforce needs.

Background

In 2002, Dr. Barbara Veazey was appointed president of WKCTC, which at that time had created a vision of becoming a premier college that would be recognized at a national level. In 2003, WKCTC was formed as the unique product of two consolidated institutions: Paducah Community College and West Kentucky Industrial College (later known as West Kentucky Technical College).

Veazey led teams of college and community leaders for visits to colleges around the country. The Paducah team reflected that based on what they were seeing at the other colleges, they did not have the curriculum, facilities, or equipment to be able to meet the workforce demands to attract new business to the area. Veazey knew that, "The task of elevating technical education as the driver of economic development, and obtaining a new facility was a far greater project than the College could do alone." [54]

In the same time period, Wayne L. Sterling became the new President and CEO of the Greater Paducah Economic Development Council and confirmed that the college's assessment of its inability to meet higher standards of student preparedness, facilities, and course offerings was accurate. As the former Chief of Staff at the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Sterling had been instrumental in recruiting the new BMW plant to Greenville, South Carolina. In that role, he had worked closely with Greenville Technical College and knew the value of the college's participation in preparing a skilled workforce. Sterling's advocacy for WKCTC's focus on workforce development strategies, including a new Emerging Technology Center, solidified the community behind the college and its projects.

Paducah is a small city, with a population just over 25,000.[55] The region has a population of 233,000, and nearly 111,000 people in the work force. The larger industries are manufacturing, retail, healthcare and social assistance, and accommodation and food service.[56]

The obstacles in the path to excellence were, according to Veazey, "The recognition that technical education was necessary and should be embraced by the community and the recognition by the College that we were not at the level to meet the needs of business and industry and, therefore, not serving our students, who so badly needed to be employable and industry-ready." With a fierce commitment to becoming a critical channel for economic development in the region, Veazey convened the leadership of the College, met with legislators, and sought funding from organizations or individuals who could help support the building of a new facility and up-to-date equipment. Simultaneously, the faculty was supplementing its expertise through professional development and certifications.

The Paducah Area Chamber of Commerce and other community partners identified the Emerging Technology Center, which would provide state-of-the-art laboratories and an

Courtesy of the West Kentucky Community and Technical College.

environment for education and training in the newest technologies, as the highest priority. An example of the kind of partnership that evolved in support of the Center is the one with the HAAS Corporation that provided the latest CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machines to the Emerging Technology Center for use in training students. Businesses can send employees to the College for training, and HAAS replaces the machines when newer models become available.

Following an intensive lobbying effort, led by the Chamber, funds were allocated in 2006. As Veazey explains, "The natural next step was to also include an engineering research wing in the new building." The College successfully partnered with the University of Kentucky and received funding for the research wing from various private sources. WKCTC's Emerging Technology Center and the Engineering Research Center opened their doors in January 2010.

Programs and Operations

With the Emerging Technology Center ready for students and faculty, the College launched its curriculum in Applied Engineering Technology, which offers courses leading to associate degrees. According to the College catalogue, the program "provides students with a strong foundation of engineering practices to stimulate their interest by using a problem-solving approach in state-of-the-art laboratories. It builds leadership, management, communication skills, and professional ethics, which serve as a foundation for future development and career success."[57]

Workforce Solutions also grew out of revamping the college. This program consults with companies to develop training plans for employees, customizes courses to meet specific training and education needs, coordinates all aspects of the training, maintains a level of excellence, and assists in identifying funding that may be available.[58] Lauding the Chamber's role in helping to overhaul the college, Veazey notes the Chamber's strong advocacy on behalf of the business community, its objectivity in choosing what it will champion, and its leadership capacity. She also stresses that the business community must, "step forward and be active partners with the college, and give honest feedback, as that is the only way a college program can keep current and grow."

To assure that WKCTC sustains its capacity to deliver high quality education and training relevant to regional businesses, Veazey meets every month with community leaders to assess strengths and to identify current challenges. Each year the Paducah Area Chamber of Commerce conducts a regional forum, in which the college participates, to determine the requests for action by the Kentucky legislature. Additionally, business leaders are appointed to all of the college's advisory groups and are expected to provide honest feedback.

Outcomes and Goals

West Kentucky Community and Technical College was named a "College of Distinction" and one of the top five community colleges in the nation by the Aspen Institute in

December 2011. The Aspen Institute states that the College is, "relentlessly focused on three non-negotiable outcomes: a high bar for learning, a focus on college completion, and real attention to preparing their students for 21st century jobs."[59] WKCTC does not rest on its laurels. Veazey says that the following goals must be met now and in the future:

- Create programs that meet industry standards and produce graduates with applicable skills for the workplace.
- Provide a learning environment that allows students to work on the latest in technologic advancements.
- Create ongoing relationships with the business community that will assure quality alignment and external information exchange.
- Continue to provide professional development for faculty to stay abreast of the latest technology.

The College can already claim some significant successes. The College enrollment is more than 9,000 students annually, and according to the 2011 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), West Kentucky's graduation rate is 39 percent compared to 19 percent for the College's peer comparison group. The increase in students receiving state-of-the-art education expands the availability of a trained workforce in the community. Additionally, the *Workforce Solutions* program provides training for employees in varies industries such as Swift and Staley; NewPage Corporation; and the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union. ■

Partners

- The Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- The Paducah Area Chamber of Commerce
- Paducah City and McCracken County Government
- Paducah Economic Development
- Paducah Junior College Foundation
- The University of Kentucky
- West Kentucky Community and Technical College Board of Directors

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Online Resources

Kentucky Technical and Community College System
http://www.kctcs.edu

The Aspen Institute, College Excellence Program
http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/aspen-prize

The Greater Paducah Economic Development Council
http://www.epaducah.com

Western Governors University (WGU)

Key Lessons

- Partnerships and resource-sharing across regions tackle key development issues.
- WGU uses technology to provide interactive instruction, increase productivity, and maintain an affordable tuition rate.
- A competency-based approach measures student learning rather than time, allowing students to move quickly through material they know. This approach can shorten time to graduation.
- Affordable higher education delivered online can expand access for lower income and minority students across all 50 states.

Geographic Focus
National

Purpose
To expand access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and accredited online bachelor's and master's degree programs

Western Governors University (WGU) is a nonprofit, online institution that is revolutionizing higher education. Formed as the brainchild of Utah Governor Mike Leavitt with the support of 19 U.S. governors and the Western Governors Association, it began enrolling students in 1999 and has rapidly expanded to a student population of more than 32,000 today.

While the WGU administrative center is located in Salt Lake City, Utah, the University serves students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as active-duty military personnel and their spouses at overseas military installations.

WGU seeks to serve as many students as possible, including minorities, first-generation college students, those with modest incomes, and others whose lives or geographic locations do not allow them to attend traditional institutions. The University's affordable tuition of $2,890 per six-month term (for most programs) makes it ideal for working adults with job and family responsibilities who wish to complete a bachelor's or master's degree. The University demonstrates that technology has the potential to provide both affordable and quality higher education.

WGU's competency-based approach measures learning rather than time spent in class to accumulate credit hours. Students complete coursework at their own pace, moving quickly through material they already know and focusing on the subject matter they still need

Courtesy of Western Governors University.

to learn. To advance in their degree programs, students must complete rigorous assessments such as projects, papers, or traditional exams. WGU also provides its students with mentors to support them throughout their education process. Mentors not only serve as academic guides, but are coaches and friendly supporters.[60] Required competencies for each degree program are defined in collaboration with external program councils that are composed of representatives from industry and higher education. By working with these councils, WGU ensures that students graduate with the knowledge and skills employers need.

WGU does not develop course content and curriculum; faculty members identify and qualify learning resources from the best third-party sources in the country. Students have a variety of resources to choose from to guide their learning process such as textbooks, web-based tutorials, instructional videos, and simulations.[61]

Background

At no other time in the history of higher education have the governors of several states joined forces to create a university.[62] The idea for WGU was born in 1995 as a proposed solution to one of the western states' most pressing problems: rapid population growth confronted by limited public funds for higher education services. Thus, the University was developed to make maximum use of distance learning technologies. Additionally, WGU is supported by over 20 major corporations and foundations that advocate the University's mission of producing highly competent graduates including Dell, HP, Google, Microsoft, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In July 2009, WGU received a $1.2 million grant from the Gates Foundation to boost college-graduation rates among low-income and minority young adults.[63]

Programs and Operations

According to Joan Mitchell, WGU's Director of Public Relations, the learning model used by WGU is very cost effective, helping to expand student access by increasing productivity, a higher level of student support, and decrease time to graduation.[64] The model is different from other institutions of higher education in two important ways: First, WGU uses a competency-based learning model that allows students to earn their degrees by demonstrating what they know and can do rather than spending time in class to accumulate credit hours, dramatically shortening the time to graduation.

Second, while most online universities simply use technology to distribute "traditional" classroom education—classes led by a professor with a fixed schedule and syllabus—WGU actually uses technology to deliver instruction and content. This changes the role of the faculty from that of a "sage on the stage" to a "guide on the side" and delivers significant increases in productivity.

Courtesy of Western Governors University.

WGU's operations allow the University to be self-sustaining on the individual tuition of less than $6,000 per year for most programs. Students register for a six-month term, which for most programs, comes at the flat rate of $2,890. This fee enables students to complete an unlimited number of courses in a given term, though courses are completed one at a time. All students are considered full time and must complete a minimum number of courses in each term (the equivalent of 12 credits for undergraduate students and eight credits for graduate students).

Outcomes and Challenges

The number of WGU graduates grows substantially every year—it increased by 74 percent between July of 2010 and June of 2011. WGU awards bachelor's, post-baccalaureate, and master's degrees in high-demand career fields: education and teacher licensure programs, business, information technology, and health. To monitor the success of WGU graduates, employers are surveyed annually. In a June 2011 study, managers and supervisors of WGU alumni demonstrated high employer satisfaction with the University's graduates: 98 percent of employers agreed that WGU graduates meet or exceed their expectations, 97 percent rated their job performance as good or excellent, and 98 percent consider WGU graduates strongly prepared for their jobs.[65]

The University's success is also demonstrated by graduate performance in prominent national examinations: the WGU student's average performance on the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification exam is 64 percent, compared to a national average of 57 percent. Thirty seven percent of WGU students score in the national top 15 percent of the PRAXIS Math Exam (National Teachers Exams), and 23 percent score in the top 15 of the PRAXIS Elementary Education Pedagogy Exam. After graduating from WGU, a significant portion of students gain work related benefits: 50 percent reported increased responsibilities at work, 30 percent received a promotion and 53 percent received a salary increase. Sixty five percent of all WGU graduates experienced at least one of these benefits.[66]

The biggest challenge for the University has been the creation of a new institution. According to Mitchell, "Whenever you create a disruptive model in an existing industry steeped in tradition, you will face many challenges to gain acceptance. Key challenges were earning accreditation, ensuring that we met the requirements to allow our students to receive federal financial aid, and simply gaining credibility and recognition as a quality

university."[67] Through it focus on academic rigor, collaboration with key industry and academic leaders, and the success of its students post-graduation, WGU has been able to gain acceptance and credibility as a higher education institution despite its different model.

As the University continues to build its reputation, national institutions for higher learning have taken notice, awarding WGU national and regional recognition. In 2006, the WGU Teachers College received accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the largest institution to evaluate the professional education programs of universities, colleges, and departments of education. NCATE seeks to determine whether programs meet rigorous national standards for preparing teachers and specialists for the classroom. WGU was the first exclusively online university to receive NCATE accreditation for its degree programs that lead to teacher licensure, joining the ranks of 623 other colleges and universities, such as Stanford, Teachers College of Columbia University, Purdue, Texas A&M, BYU, Southern Utah State, and others with NCATE accreditation.

WGU was also recently presented with several International Distance Learning Awards by the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA): the 21st century Award for Best Practices in Distance Learning and the Outstanding Leadership by an Individual in the Field of Distance Learning, both received in 2008 and 2011. In 2010, the president of WGU, Dr. Robert Mendenhall, received a McGraw Prize in Education for his outstanding work in post-secondary education. ◾

Partners
- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)
- Western Governors Association
- Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE)

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Online Resources
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
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National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)
http://www.nchems.org

Western Governors University Annual Report 2011
http://www.wgu.edu/about_WGU/annual_report_2011.pdf

Western Governors Association
http://www.westgov.org

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