

# Graduate! Philadelphia:

*The Challenge to Complete*



**Graduate! Philadelphia** is a joint call to action of the Pennsylvania Economy League – Southeastern PA and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board

*Graduate!*  
philadelphia ●



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2005

In the fall of 2004, the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (PWIB) came together to investigate and seek solutions to an urgent community challenge: to compete effectively in today's and tomorrow's economy, the city of Philadelphia will need to increase dramatically its supply of college-educated workers. One of the most effective ways to accomplish that challenge, it became clear, was to help the 80,000 Philadelphians who already have some college credit to finish their degree – to finish what they started. This executive summary outlines the nature and importance of that challenge and outlines some fresh and novel approaches to attacking the challenge. (To read the full-length report, visit [www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org](http://www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org).)

Both PEL and the PWIB are deeply involved in addressing “human capital” challenges. In recent years, PEL has made improvement of workforce quality and connections a focus of its mission to make the region more competitive. One of the key outcomes in PEL's Great Expectations agenda, adopted in 2004, is to encourage Philadelphians to “Get a Degree” – to raise college degree completion in the region from 30 percent to 40 percent. Since its inception, the PWIB, a private sector-led body appointed by Mayor John F. Street, has bridged policy and practice in working to advance Philadelphia's competitive workforce advantage. The PWIB governs the local CareerLink system, which connects job seekers to employment and training and employers to a broad range of potential workers, and is accountable for setting the strategic direction for the city's over \$200 million public workforce system. In addition to this effort, the PWIB is engaged in a variety of other initiatives designed to enhance the city's labor force, including WorkReady Philadelphia and Excel Philadelphia, all of which are designed to better align labor supply with business demands and thereby enhance Philadelphia's competitive advantage.

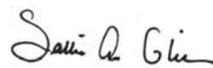
Philadelphia faces a stark challenge. Today's economy demands well-educated workers practiced at complex and creative problem-solving. Leading urban economies deliver that workforce to employers: in Boston, for example, 25 percent of the workforce has a college degree; in Seattle it's 36 percent. In Philadelphia, only 14 percent of the workforce, one in seven, has a degree. The city of Philadelphia is at the bottom – 92<sup>nd</sup> – of the country's 100 largest cities in the percentage of college educated residents. This poorly educated workforce discourages business growth and formation and prevents residents from realizing their earnings and career growth potential.

At the same time, almost 80,000 Philadelphians between the ages of 25 and 45 have more than one year's worth of college credit but no degree. Many of these former students are "working poor" and first-generation college-students who took a bold step and made financial sacrifices to start college. For a variety of reasons they never completed the degrees that would have given them entrée into better-paying jobs and a better future.

This "blue paper" – a cross between a white paper that outlines the problem and the blueprint to tackling it – lays out the magnitude and consequences of this problem. More important, it delivers some provocative ideas about steps that community leaders can take to encourage many of the 80,000 to return to school – to make an educational "come back" – and complete a degree. This effort will require engagement of the business community, labor, legislators, policy leaders, as well as educators and students. It is an unabashedly aspirational agenda, but it's doable. The stakes are high, but so is the potential for success.



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# The Need for A High Quality Workforce in Philadelphia

In today's fluid, mobile, technology-driven knowledge economy, jobs move to people more than in any period in our history. In that context, Philadelphia's economy finds itself in transition from a predominantly manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based economy in which college credentials are considered a necessity, not a luxury. The city's ability to prosper in that context, to attract the potential jobs and investment represented at the recent biotechnology industry BIO 2005 Convention held in Philadelphia, will be largely dependent on the quality of the city's workforce.

With its current workforce, Philadelphia cannot compete effectively for this kind of economic opportunity. Only one in seven Philadelphians are equipped with a college degree, far lower than the national, state, and regional averages. Philadelphia ranks 92<sup>nd</sup> of the 100 largest U.S. cities in terms of the college attainment of its workforce, in a league with Newark, Detroit, and Hartford.

In Philadelphia's manufacturing past, the skills obtained through a high school education plus on-the-job training were good enough. A postsecondary degree was typically considered a middle-class luxury rather than a necessity for getting a family-sustaining job. Not any more: 70 percent of all occupations, especially those paying better wages and providing benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans, now require a postsecondary credential. A college degree today is worth \$1 million more in lifetime earnings than is a high school diploma and is the single most critical key to moving out of what has been termed the "working poor" and into the American middle class.

Businesses, too, put a premium on college credentials in potential hires. They view a degree as a proxy for communications, math, science, and problem-solving skills and as evidence of trainability. **Projections to the end of this decade show a 31 percent increase in demand for workers with associate's degrees and a 22 percent increase in demand for workers with bachelor's degrees.** Demand for workers with no more than a high school diploma will increase by only 12 percent.

How then, can Philadelphia quickly add to its valuable stock of college educated workers? Much attention has been paid to the so-called "brain drain," suggesting that the biggest leak in the workforce pipeline is college graduates leaving the area after graduation. In response, the Knowledge Industry Partnership (KIP) was launched in 2003 and has quickly become a national model. In its research, KIP pointed out that Philadelphia is actually doing a good job of retaining native-born Philadelphians. Almost 86 percent of college graduates originally from Philadelphia continue to live and work here after graduation.

But what has also become clear is that **the quickest and most effective way to increase our stock of college-educated workers is to look to native Philadelphians who were admitted to a college and accumulated credits but who stopped short of an associate's or bachelor's degree.** One in six Philadelphians has some college credit but no degree, leaving Philadelphia as one of the few cities with more partial-completers than actual graduates. If the right incentives and supports can be put to work, these adults can "make a come back" and finish their degrees. **This report suggests that these "Comebackers," largely ignored by educational institutions, policy choices, and civic initiatives, could be the key to the growth of the college educated workforce in Philadelphia.** By increasing our educated population, we attract more and better jobs, and higher employment at college graduate wages will improve the circumstances of the "Comebackers" and their families.

Who are these potential Comebackers? Broadly defined, they are lower-income working adults age 25 to 45 years old who are first generation college students. Many recognize that they need more education in order to move up the economic ladder. Often, it was not academic failure that prevented completion of their degree but instead such barriers as inadequate finances, conflicting demands on time, and lack of childcare or transportation. Many can only take courses half-time or less, further limiting their eligibility for financial aid, slowing their progress towards the degree

and its associated rewards, and placing them in a cycle of ever higher risk for non-completion. **But with 20 to 40 work years ahead in their future, the investment to get them to graduation at last would be regained in higher wages due to higher education, and, subsequently, higher tax revenues to the city.**

The problem of non-completion and of how to encourage Comebackers has been largely invisible outside of academe. Yet the impact of this undereducated population on non-academic sectors is enormous. The numbers and history indicate that it is a systemic problem that cannot be resolved by institutions of postsecondary education alone. Business, labor, social services agencies, policy makers, and legislators all have a vested interest in addressing this problem together with educators and students.

To start a conversation about these issues and move toward a solution, the Pennsylvania Economy League and Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board have formed **Graduate! Philadelphia** – a partnership of those who understand the potential of taking on this challenge. **Graduate! Philadelphia's** goals are to:

- Raise the visibility of the need to increase the number of college educated people in Philadelphia
- Work with Philadelphians who have some postsecondary education and help them get a degree (the Comebackers)
- Set an expectation of postsecondary degree completion for all Philadelphians
- Engage the business community in this effort.

Approximately 80,000 Philadelphians and their families stand to benefit directly from such an effort.<sup>1</sup> The impact on the city and region's economic health will be substantial.

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*\* A note on terms used in this report: "Philadelphia" and "Philadelphians" refers to the city, not to the Greater Philadelphia region. "Degree" refers to both two-year associate's degrees and to four-year bachelor's degrees.*

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## Exploding the Myth

True or False? *With more than 80 colleges and universities in the region, Philadelphia must have a large number of college graduates.*

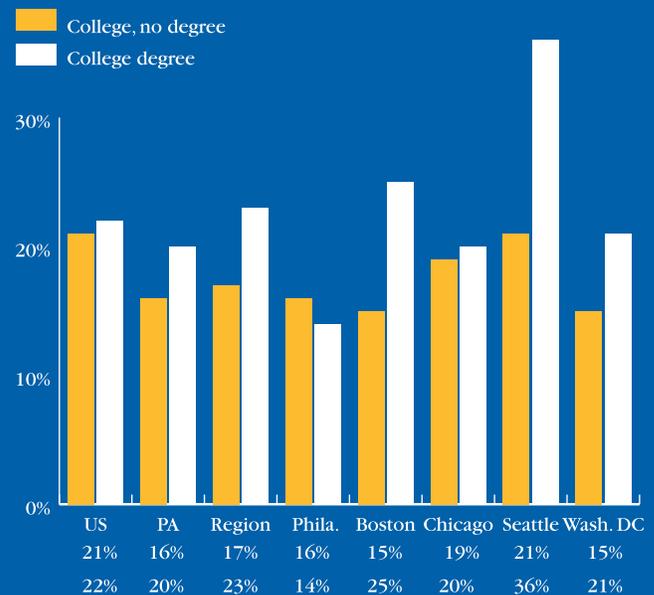
False.

Only one in seven Philadelphians over the age of 25 has an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Philadelphia ranks 92<sup>nd</sup> of 100 of the largest U.S. cities in the number of citizens who hold a college degree.

On average, over 40% of students who enroll in Philadelphia-area colleges don't get a degree within 6 years. The numbers are much worse for lower-income students.

### Philadelphia's Postsecondary Attainment Versus National, State, Regional, and Peer Cities' Rates.



*Data Source: US Census 2000, Population 25+*

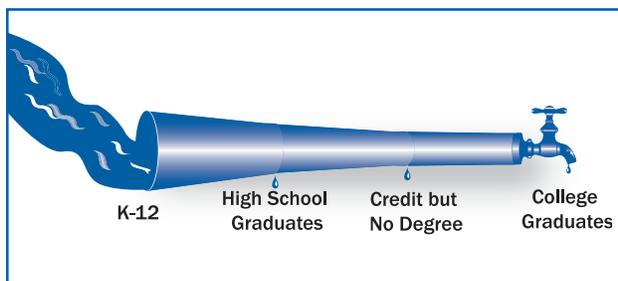
And, as shown above, **Philadelphia is unique in that the number of people who started college but did not get a degree is higher than those who actually did complete a degree.**

What Philadelphia does have is a large, untapped population that has accumulated some college credit but not completed a degree: 80,000 Philadelphians between the ages of 25 and 45.

# Identifying the Leaks in the Workforce Pipeline

An educated workforce relies on a pipeline of students who are adequately prepared and educated at each stop along the way. The pipeline begins at pre-K and, while it never really ends, traditionally ends with the completion of a college degree. The educational attainment of our workforce is simply the end result of the education of the people who flow through that pipeline.

Unfortunately, Philadelphia's pipeline has several big leaks:



**K-12:** well over 20 percent of kids drop out by their senior year in high school

**High School Graduates:** over half of the students who graduate from the city's high schools don't go on to college<sup>ii</sup>

**Credit but No Degree:** only 60 percent of people who enter a college program get a degree within six years; an unknown percent take some college courses at some point but don't get a degree<sup>iii</sup>

**College Graduates:** 36 percent of people who graduate from college in Philadelphia leave soon after.

Logically, then, there are three ways to improve the ultimate flow in the pipeline: improve students' preparation for college and increase the number of high school graduates who enroll in college; increase the percentage of college graduates who stay in Philadelphia; and increase completion rates among people who have some college experience. Fortunately, the first two of

these are being addressed by powerful partnerships: the Philadelphia School Reform Commission is working with the School District to improve the academic preparation of children, and organizations like Philadelphia Futures, White-Williams Scholars, and the City Core Program are making it possible for more young people to go to college. The Knowledge Industry Partnership, with its OneBigCampus initiative, is leading activities designed to attract and retain students and recent graduates. The third – helping people finish a degree program – to finish what they started, is the goal of **Graduate! Philadelphia**.

In the long term, this leak will have to be fixed from within. Colleges and universities will have to develop practices and incentives that make it possible for the majority of students, once admitted, to graduate with a degree within. In the near term, **Graduate! Philadelphia**'s mission is to identify ways to help the 80,000 people who have some college experience but are now in the working world become **graduates**. A degree can help open new opportunities for these individuals, and in doing so can improve the ability of the city's economy to compete for and attract the higher-wage jobs dependent on an educated workforce.

“Being in the human resources and management consulting business, I see the way worker qualifications figure into companies' hiring decisions. It used to be that a high school degree was sufficient to signal to companies that you had potential. But in today's global economy, a college degree has become the gold standard.”

Philip A. Peterson, *Senior Vice President*  
Aon Consulting, Inc.

# Understanding the Barriers to Completion

Why don't more people complete degrees, and what does that tell us about how to design efforts to help them?

Persistently high non-completion rates cannot be ascribed to the failure of 80,000 or more individuals to thrive in college.<sup>iv</sup> Non-completion is a systemic problem and it has a huge impact on the business community as well as on neighborhoods, city government, labor, workforce development, and social service organizations.

Poor academic preparation is typically the first reason that comes to mind. Indeed, many colleges have developed academic mentoring and tutoring programs in an attempt to increase completion rates, but progress in this area has been slow, costly, and highly dependent on institutional missions and strategies.<sup>v</sup>

“Schools can't be expected to 'go it alone' in tackling the issue of non-completion. We need the support of Philadelphia's business community, which benefits from having a high quality workforce.”

Elmore R. Alexander, *Dean and Professor of Management*  
School of Business Administration, Philadelphia University

Socioeconomic status is the strongest indicator of both college access and degree completion. While 60 percent of college-eligible higher-income students attend college, and two-thirds graduate, only 21 percent of college-eligible lower-income students attend college, and only one-third graduates.<sup>vi</sup>

40 OF EVERY 100  
AFFLUENT COLLEGE-  
ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WILL  
EARN A COLLEGE DEGREE  
COMPARED WITH ONLY 7  
OF THEIR POORER PEERS.

The options in financial aid for higher education illustrate how the deck is stacked against part-time, returning students. Conventional sources of subsidy – with their once-per-year, long lead-time application processes – are designed for traditional students. And even these programs have not kept pace with advancing tuition costs.<sup>vii</sup> New tools, such as tax credits and incentives, favor the financially sophisticated and those with significant tax liability.

PENNSYLVANIA EARNED AN “F” IN COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY IN A NATIONAL REPORT CARD. (“Measuring Up 2004: The States Report Card on Higher Education.”)

Completion rates also vary greatly among institutions because of differing missions and services. Private, four-year colleges and research universities tend to have the highest graduation rates (68 percent, six years after enrollment) largely due to their more affluent and academically experienced student body. Locally, public four-year colleges show average graduation rates of 55 percent after 6 years. At two-year institutions, where the majority of working adults enroll, 14-18 percent of students who are on academic tracks graduate.<sup>viii</sup> At Community College of Philadelphia, 14 percent graduate after 5 years, but students who transfer to four-year institutions (primarily Temple University) complete their bachelor's degrees at about the same rate as students who started at the four-year institution, i.e., within 6 years of transferring.<sup>ix</sup>

## Students Enroll, But Do They Graduate?

College/University	% With a Degree After 6 Years
University of Pennsylvania	92%
Drexel University	57%
Temple University	54%
Community College of Philadelphia	16%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education IPEDS database, 2003.

Lack of previous family college experience, another important factor, is a chicken-and-egg problem. In families where parents do not have a college degree, children are less likely to aspire to and strive for a college degree. First generation college students are less savvy about navigating campus systems and are at higher risk for non-completion. Poverty, too, plays a major role in this cycle.

Also, student attitudes have a major impact on completion. Those who have been out of school for a few years may be apprehensive about their compatibility with a college environment and ability to compete academically against younger students directly out of high school. They may feel discouraged by the lack of programs and services geared to their needs at four-year colleges where campus culture and the majority of academic and social support services are predominantly geared toward younger, residential, full-time students. Students with unclear educational and career goals and a fuzzy grasp of the connection between education and career growth are also less likely to persist to graduation. Absence of family support can be detrimental, too.

**And lastly, “life happens” factors demand energy, time, and finances:** a broken-down car makes getting to work and school more difficult, a health emergency diverts income away from education, a new baby or failing older relative require more attention and energy, childcare arrangements fall apart.... **When several of these factors coincide, as often can be the case for lower-income and first-generation students, the result is an almost insurmountable barrier to completion.**<sup>x</sup>

Incentives and assistance for completion must address all these factors: courses should meet students where they live and work and at times that don't conflict with working hours and times when children need increased attention, e.g., late afternoon and early evening; financial assistance should allow for year-round applications that accommodate year-round enrollment at community colleges; and support services should take into account past experience, life-style factors, age differences, and career goals.

“Adults, especially first generation degree earners, who go back to school and finish a program are positive role models for their children, who in turn are more likely to go on to their own college educations, and so forth, breaking the cycle of working on the edge of the economy.”

Pamela Crawley, *Senior Vice-President and Director of Public Affairs*  
Citizens Bank

# Who are the Comebackers?

They are working adults, mostly lower income, working in entry-level or support positions with little job security and few benefits and where upward mobility is dependent on a better education. By definition, all **Comebackers have some college experience, typically at a community college, but for a variety of reasons were not able to complete a degree**; some took courses without fully realizing they could attain a degree. Many are heads of families and shoulder other adult responsibilities. Most lack social and financial safety nets, and their lives are susceptible to the chaotic disruptions typical of the working poor: a health emergency, broken down car, or housing crisis can interrupt their studies for months or years. Yet, **a college degree could provide exactly the economic boost to insulate them from future disruptions** as well as set a family precedent for attending college.<sup>xi</sup>

Until now, they have been a largely invisible population. While many programs exist for traditional 18-24 year-old students, few, if any, concerted efforts exist for this Comebacker group. Yet they promise the quickest and most effective way to increase our stock of college-educated workers:

- Since most seek an associate's degree, they would provide the critical backbone for Philadelphia's industries, supporting health, office, and computer services.
  - They have proven that they have initiative and drive by investing time and money in college courses.
  - They are at the prime of their working lives and could have 20 to 40 or more productive working years during which they could benefit from a college degree.
  - They are committed to staying in Philadelphia: 97 percent of Community College students continue to live and work in the city after graduation.
- All things being equal, e.g., finances, time for studying, adult students tend to complete courses at higher rates (75 percent) than do younger students (61 percent), and some research indicates that under the right conditions, adult students get better grades.<sup>xii</sup>
  - Investing in Comebackers would impact several generations at once. As heads of households, not only do they provide for the economic health of their children and grandchildren, but they also are role models for good learning habits and educational motivation.

“Students with some college courses under their belt represent incredible untapped potential for Philadelphia. They’ve already taken the toughest step - they were motivated to enroll in a college course or even a degree program. But many interrupted their studies for reasons unrelated to academic performance. With the right incentives, these students can return and successfully complete a degree.”

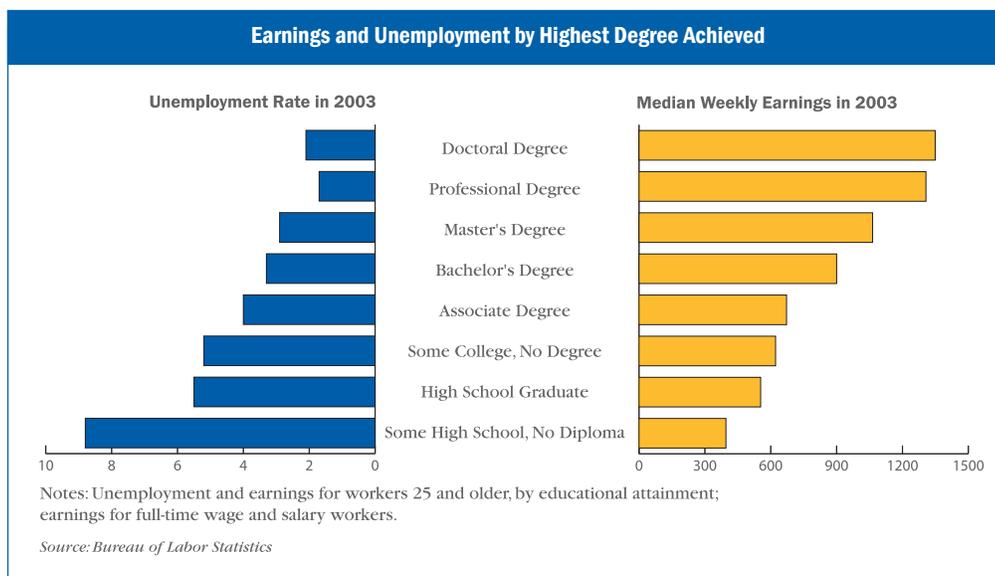
Judith Gay, *Provost*  
Community College of Philadelphia

# How Big Is the Payoff?

## Benefits to the individual

Although it might seem obvious to those with a tradition of four-year college attendance that having a degree increases earnings and decreases the likelihood of unemployment, the numbers are worth a closer look.

Will there be jobs for the newly credentialed? According to Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry projections, Philadelphia will require 12,500 more workers with college degrees by 2010. The greatest need will be for people with associate's degrees in occupations that



Clearly, the biggest rewards come with a four-year college degree: an individual's potential earnings are double those of a high school graduate, and over a lifetime earnings are increased by \$1 million. A bachelor's degree is worth 45 percent more in potential earnings than an associate's degree and 73 percent more compared to the earnings potential of a college dropout.

An associate's diploma increases earnings potential by 35 percent compared to a high school diploma, and by 20 percent compared to the earnings potential of a college dropout. In Philadelphia in 2003, **the average salary of a community college graduate increased from \$30,000 to \$39,000 in the first year post-graduation.**<sup>xiii</sup>

Having a college degree also promises more career control and better resilience in a bad economy. A college degree today is the single most important key to moving out of what has been termed the "working poor" and into the American middle-class.

are the core of area industries: information technology specialists, allied health workers, engineering and pharmaceutical technicians, and general office support staff. In fact, these projections show a 31 percent increase in demand for workers with associate's degrees, versus a 22 percent increase in demand for workers with baccalaureate degrees, and a 12 percent increase in demand for workers with only a high school diploma.

**YESTERDAY: A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WAS SUFFICIENT FOR A GOOD JOB**

**TODAY: 70% OF ALL JOBS PAYING FAMILY-SUSTAINING WAGES REQUIRE A COLLEGE CREDENTIAL**

**TOMORROW....**  
31% INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR WORKERS WITH ASSOCIATE'S DEGREES

22% INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR WORKERS WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREES

12% INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR WORKERS WITH HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS ONLY

## Benefits to the business community

For businesses, the key to economic success in a global economy is a workforce with up-to-date knowledge and technical skills, the flexibility to respond quickly to changing needs, and the ability to evolve swiftly – the multi-faceted skills, knowledge, and trainability associated with a college degree. Seventy percent of all occupations, especially those paying better wages and providing

“With Baby Boomers reaching retirement age, we are keenly aware of the possibility of near-term shortage of credentialed workers.”

James R. Waddington, Jr., *Director of Marketing Strategy*  
Lockheed Martin Integrated Systems and Solutions

essential benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans, now require a college credential. And while businesses often can relocate middle- and upper-level employees, filling entry-level and support positions – those typically requiring associate’s degrees – relies on the local workforce.

## Benefits to the region and the city

Comebackers stay in Philadelphia’s workforce. **Ninety-seven percent of Community College of Philadelphia’s students work in the city after graduation, compared with 64 percent of graduates from four-year colleges.** And tax revenue from a college graduate is 3 times that generated by a high school graduate. College grads also are more likely to own their homes and have nearly triple the disposable income.<sup>xiv</sup>

The benefits to the community are less tangible, but worth mentioning: college grads are more likely to vote, volunteer, support charities, and be involved with their

children’s schools. In addition, college graduates are less likely to commit violent crimes or need social services.

If 10,000 Comebackers completed their college degrees by the end of the decade:

- City tax revenues would increase \$3.96 million in the first year, and \$273.2 million over 30 years.
- Purchasing power would increase \$35 million in the first year, and \$1.05 billion over 30 years, not counting potential salary increases.
- Social service expenditures would save up to \$10 million in the first year, and \$300 million over 30 years.<sup>xv</sup>

“No doubt, regions that elevate the quality of their workforce will reap the greatest gains from technology innovations and the information economy.”

Jeff James, *District Marketing Director*  
Microsoft Corporation

# Graduate! Philadelphia's Recommendations

The stakes are high: our economy, already hampered by an under-educated workforce and facing the looming Baby Boomer mass retirement, requires an immediate inflow of better-educated workers. In the short term, our best strategy is to bet on people who already live and work here, who have proven they have the drive to succeed, and who have some experience—that is they have already started college and now need a boost to finish. **Graduate! Philadelphia** provides several provocative yet doable models for moving Comebackers toward a college degree, and for raising the value of our workforce.

## 1 Recognize that we are all responsible for the education of our workforce. **Graduate! Philadelphia**

provides a new context for college degree completion that requires engagement of the “consumers” of college graduates – the business community, labor, legislators, policy leaders – as well as the “producers” and the students themselves.

## 2 Realize the untapped potential of the 80,000 adults who have some college experience by getting them to degree completion.

These are working adults, most of them lower-income, who have made significant sacrifices to start college. Targeting those who have at least one year's worth of degree-credits and who possess the academic ability (as evidenced by past performance) will quickly result in new, work-ready graduates. An outreach campaign could channel Comebackers to a “re-engagement” center where they would receive individual academic, financial, career, and logistical counseling for finishing a degree in a timely manner.

## 3 Create appropriate support structures for adult students.

The re-engagement center would replace the need for a series of visits to several offices in order to coordinate a

return to studies. A cohort-based, condensed weekend course of study (similar to many executive MBA approaches) would answer many of the needs of lower-income working adults.

## 4 Develop statewide requirements for postsecondary institutions and put special emphasis on programs that accommodate the needs of working adult students.

Community colleges are the primary gateway to postsecondary education for adult students, but we need more fluidity across levels of education so that they don't become the end post for students.

- Mandate more 2+2 alignment and transfer programs between community colleges and four-year institutions to allow smooth transitions for students seeking a four-year degree and to minimize the number of credits lost when a student transitions to a four-year degree
- Mandate fluid and flexible cross-institutional curricular alignments and reimbursement practices to allow students to take courses at multiple campuses that are geographically convenient to their work or place of residence
- Develop curricular alignment with the secondary education system so that high schools can prepare students for the content and types of learning they will need in order to succeed in college
- Increase state funding for community colleges
- Improve reporting of student achievement and track student achievement across levels of education.

## 5 Provide incentives and rewards for businesses that encourage and support their employees in getting college degrees.

It is in our best interest to keep such forward-looking companies in the city.<sup>xvi</sup>

## 6 Provide employer and college incentives for students to return to school:

for example, flexible work schedules with extended or condensed workweeks, paid time off for classes, clearer tuition reimbursement policies. Flexible scheduling and course programming: late evening and weekend courses, courses that start more often than once a semester, several time-slots per module/assignment, opportunities for group-discussions and sessions with the instructor, online/blended courses; amnesty expired credits, waive readmission fees, offer bookstore vouchers, child-care, and transportation assistance; package existing credits to count toward a degree; recognize work-based learning experiences; create a more flexible application process for PHEAA (Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Authority).

## 7 Connect college completion programs to Job-Ready PA.

(Governor Rendell's workforce agenda in the FY 2006 budget). College completion programs for the working-adult population can quickly impact our economy and thus maximize the impact of tax dollars invested in raising the educational levels of our workforce. While *Job-Ready PA* currently addresses the preparation of high school students for immediate entry to college, the reality is that many lower income students delay their entry to college until they are in their twenties or later, and for many the main barriers arise not at the start of college but after enrollment: getting to completion. Since many of these degree-less former students are already in the workforce, an investment in completing their education will have an immediate, direct impact on our economy.

Ultimately, every Philadelphian should have access to a college education and the appropriate incentives and support structures for graduation. The recommendations set forth by **Graduate! Philadelphia** are also designed to “filter down” to affect Philadelphians and college education in the area more broadly.

**Graduate! Philadelphia**'s models for “Comebacker” degree completion can make Philadelphia stand out among cities and regions in its own “come back” strategy. It is the right thing to do for our residents. It is the smart thing to do for business. And, it is the best way to position the region as a bold and innovative leader in human capital development.

## Endnotes

- <sup>i</sup> Eighty thousand is the number of Philadelphians age 25-45 who started a college course of study (i.e., took more than a random course here and there) but did not earn a degree.
- <sup>ii</sup> A system for tracking the postsecondary education paths of Philadelphia's high school graduates is under development by a local consortium. However, initial indications show that there is tremendous disparity between college going rates of students from higher income families (85 percent, nationally) and those from lower income families (53 percent, nationally) and between graduates of private and public high schools.
- <sup>iii</sup> This average has wide ranging data points. Similar to college access, degree completion is also closely correlated with family income, with lower income students graduating at less than half the rate of higher income students.
- <sup>iv</sup> It is hard to differentiate, except in the long term, whether a student stopped out – interrupted course-taking for a short period of time with the full intention of returning to complete the degree, or dropped out without intention of attaining a degree. Swirling—changing colleges, seeking courses online or in locations convenient to home or work—presents a challenge in tracking Comebackers and can be problematic for accumulating credits toward a degree.
- <sup>v</sup> There is often tension between the social mission of a college and its “bottom line” needs.
- <sup>vi</sup> Carey, Kevin. (2004). *A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates In Four-Year Colleges and Universities*. The Education Trust. Washington DC.
- <sup>vii</sup> The College Board's report “Trends in College Pricing 2003” found that over a 10-year period ending in 2003-04, average tuition and fees rose 47 percent at public four-year colleges and universities and 42 percent at private colleges. Community College of Philadelphia, along with other Pennsylvania public two-year colleges, saw slightly lower tuition hikes, but CCP is still more expensive than community colleges in most other states. The current maximum for Pell grants, \$4,050, covers only a third of average tuition at a public institution, compared to nearly 85 percent of tuition when the program was initiated three decades ago. State funding in Pennsylvania through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) provides up to \$3,300 per student per year. PHEAA grants are pro-rated for half-time students, but many community college students study less than half time.
- <sup>viii</sup> Graduation rates at two-year colleges are harder to measure. Many students take occasional courses with no intention of completing a degree, and the “open access” status of community colleges, which means that anyone can enroll, means also that these institutions deal with more inadequately prepared students than do other higher education institutions – students who may not persist beyond one or two courses.
- <sup>ix</sup> Students who start at a community college and then transfer can take over eight years to complete their bachelor's degree.
- <sup>x</sup> All apply to college access as well and the cost of college in particular is a big deterrent for many lower-income students who may qualify for more financial aid than they expect.
- <sup>xi</sup> Children of parents with college degrees are more likely to attend college themselves than children of parents who do not have college degrees.
- <sup>xii</sup> Hagedorn, Linda Serra (2005). “Square Pegs: Adult Students and Their “Fit” in Postsecondary Institutions,” in *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*. January/February 2005. American Association for Higher Education.
- <sup>xiii</sup> *The Economic Impact of Community College of Philadelphia*, Institutional Research Report #140, Office of Institutional Research, Community College of Philadelphia. October 2004.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Rand Education 1997 report for California.
- <sup>xv</sup> According to Rand Corporation estimates that disposable income increases \$3,500 for a 30-year old African American woman head of household who completed a college degree in California in 1997. The same study estimates a savings in public social services of \$3,500 per year for each 30-year old African American woman head of household who completed a college degree in California in 1997. From Vernez, Georges, Richard A. Krop, and C. Peter Rydell (1999). *Closing the Education Gap: Benefits and Costs*. Center for Research on Immigration Policy. RAND Education.
- <sup>xvi</sup> The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning describes nine exemplary practices in employee learning at [www.cael.org](http://www.cael.org). Jobs For the Future has a list of 17 employer practices that support employee learning at [www.workforceadvantage.org](http://www.workforceadvantage.org).

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