



Graduate! Philadelphia

Graduate! Philadelphia Overview: Launched in 2005, Graduate! Philadelphia was formed by the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (PWIB) to address Philadelphia's low post-secondary educational attainment levels, focusing on the impact on the city's economy and workforce. While the initiative targets adults who have some college credit but no degree, it pays special attention to lower-income working adults who need a degree in order to obtain employment with family-sustaining wages and benefits. Specifically, Graduate! Philadelphia seeks to promote solutions based on cross-sector partnerships between business, unions, government, postsecondary education, service providers, and the Philadelphia community.

Unique Opportunity: Today's economy demands well-educated workers practiced at complex and creative problem-solving. Leading urban economies must be capable of delivering that type workforce to employers: in Boston, for example, 25 percent of the workforce has a college degree; in Seattle it's 36 percent. But in Philadelphia, less than 20 percent of the workforce has a college degree. 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. The barriers facing them are time, energy, and money for school. This population is a largely overlooked and underutilized resource with the potential to be a powerful lever for local and regional economic development.

Investing in college degree completion for our working adults, growing our own talent, is important for four reasons:

1. It will have an immediate impact on our talent base: Philadelphians are 3 times more likely to stay here after graduation as those who come from other places.
2. There is a clear need: over 80,000 adult Philadelphians have at least one year's worth of college credits but no degree.
3. Investing in Philadelphia's working adults will pay dividends for generations: One of the strongest indicators for success in college is having parents who are college graduates. Investing in adults will have a lasting impact on the educational outcomes of their children.
4. Raising the number of college graduates will enhance our economic strength: thereby attracting businesses, encouraging investments in city-building and education, and enhancing Philadelphia's marketability to a diverse range of individuals and groups.

The initiative's first major event was an education fair tailored to the needs of working adults: Twenty-two of the area's colleges participated and provided hundreds of attendees with on-the-spot advising and course registration; The main state lender, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and event sponsor Citizens Bank developed a special workshop to help working adults with financial aid. Other workshops addressed issues important to adult students: aligning and achieving career and education goals, prior learning assessment, strategies for success in college, and hot jobs and their educational prerequisites were offered. A "Comebacker" Panel highlighted four individuals who had re-engaged with college after age 25. Graduate! Philadelphia's media partner, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, featured articles, a 20-page supplement, and an op-ed about the event, and there was extensive print, radio, and television coverage through other media outlets.

Website: <http://www.graduatephiladelphia.org>

Additional Partners: The Greater Philadelphia Alliance of Colleges and Universities, which incorporates 34 of the area's colleges with continuing education and adult-focused programs, has emerged as one of Graduate! Philadelphia's primary partners and has served an integral role in organizing this year's educational fair. Other partners include the AFL-CIO's central committee, 1199c Training Fund, and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency – AES/PHEAA.

In addition to partnering with a multitude of colleges and universities to plan and organize the educational fairs, Graduate! Philadelphia has also collaborated with various institutions to discuss next steps for the initiative.

Funding: Funding for Graduate! Philadelphia has come primarily from the PWIB and the PEL in the form of seed funding. In FY2006 PEL contributed \$57,000 and the PWIB contributed \$30,000 with the understanding that the initiative is to develop other funding sources and ultimately a self-sustaining funding model that does not rely heavily on the seed funders. In FY2006, additional funds were raised from over 20 local colleges to support the educational fair and other related activities.

Press Room & Highlights: Graduate! Philadelphia has been featured in various local media outlets including *The Metro* regional newspaper, FOX29-TV, and the *Philadelphia Business Journal*. To find press clippings and additional information about the initiative please visit the Graduate! Philadelphia website.