



GETTING READY

GETTING IN

and GETTING THROUGH

An Action Plan to Increase Post-Secondary Degree Completion
for Low-Income and First-Generation Students in the St. Louis Region



The St. Louis region can only grow if we have a talented workforce to meet the demand for employees with technical skills and problem-solving abilities. We need all students to make a plan for continuing their education beyond high school — and we need the resources in place to support them every step of the way.”

WARD KLEIN

Chief Executive Officer, Energizer Holdings, Inc.
and Chair of St. Louis Civic Progress Education Committee



THE NEED: MORE GRADUATES

In St. Louis, increasing the number of low-income students who go to and complete college can have myriad benefits. For individual students, the value is clear and highly personal. Earning a college degree gives them the power to define their own future path, fulfill academic aspirations and achieve greater financial security.

For the region, increasing the number of college graduates is a critical economic development strategy. A vibrant and healthy community needs an educated workforce — people with a range of technical abilities complemented by the critical thinking skills required to address the needs ahead.

St. Louis needs graduates with vocational-technical, two-year and four-year degrees. Unfortunately, among adults age 25 to 64 in the bi-state region, only 9 percent have an associate's degree and less than 20 percent have a bachelor's degree.

A Missouri full-time worker with a bachelor's degree...

earns 156% more than a high school graduate

...and 230% more than a high school dropout.



WHERE WE STAND

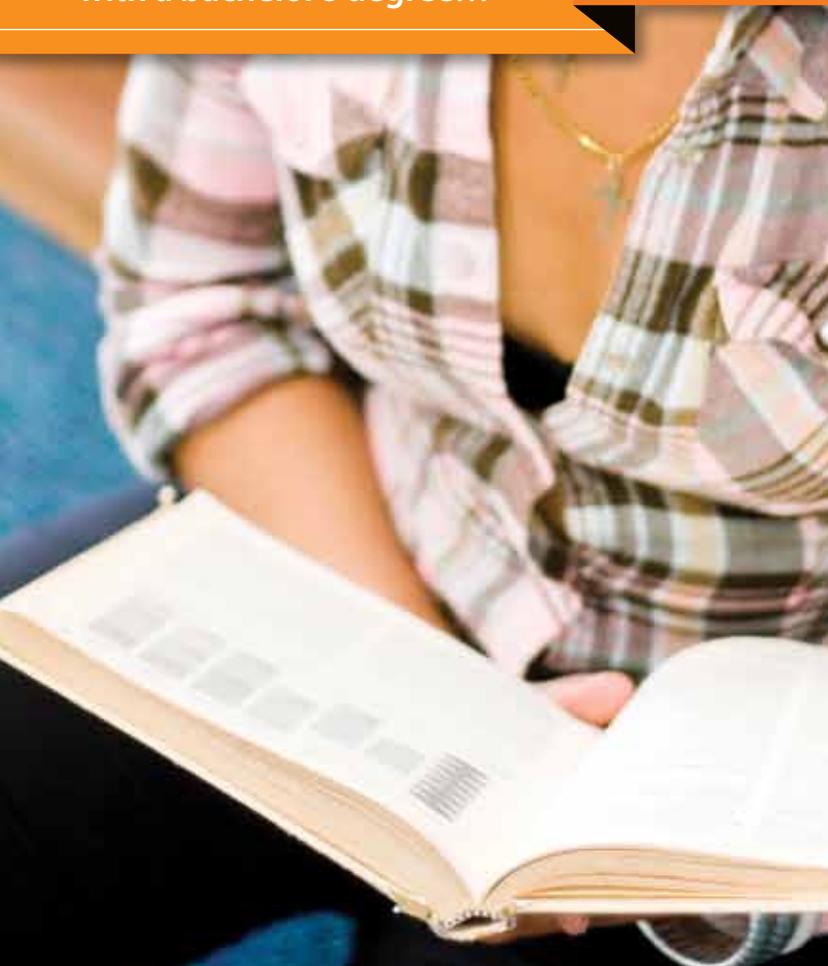
Among the 35 largest metro areas in the United States in 2007, the St. Louis region ranks:

12th in percent of population with a high school diploma

24th in percent of population with a baccalaureate degree

27th in average household income

31st in percent of African-Americans with a baccalaureate degree



THE COLLEGE ACCESS PIPELINE PROJECT

St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project (CAP) is a network of college access service providers, K-12 educators, higher education administrators, business and philanthropic leaders committed to making a post-secondary degree accessible and attainable for all students — particularly low-income students and those who would be the first in their family to obtain a degree.

The stakeholders involved in CAP are committed to a BIG goal:

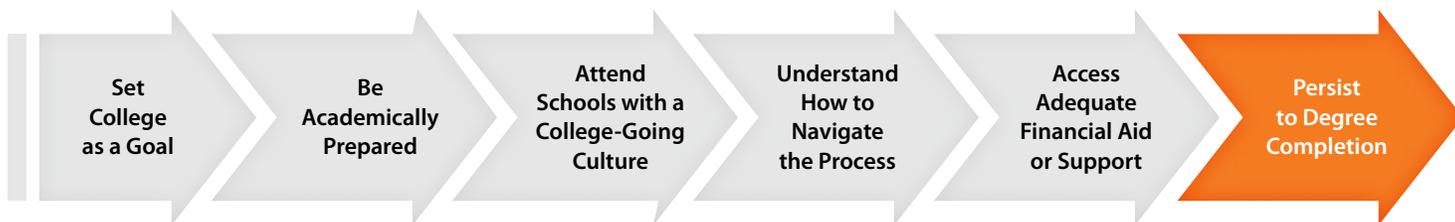


ENSURING 50 PERCENT OF ADULTS IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION HAVE A POST-SECONDARY DEGREE BY 2020.

Getting there will take high schools, post-secondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, business and community leadership all working together to support students and families as they navigate the process of post-high school planning and degree attainment.

“As a high school principal, I was not aware of the resources in our community that support our mission. Getting to meet with college access providers has been very helpful.”
High school principal

COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS PIPELINE



***Beyond Academics.** Academic success and the ability to persist through the college access pipeline rely heavily on student development of “social-emotional” skills. Such skills include navigating risk and opportunity, goal setting, communication, collaborative problem solving and responsible decision-making, as well broader themed attributes such as connectedness with community.*

CAP’S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

In 2010-2011, CAP convened approximately 70 college access service providers, youth development workers, K-12 educators, guidance counselors, higher education administrators, and business and philanthropic leaders to develop a coordinated, region-wide plan to increase degree attainment.

All participants agreed to work toward a common goal and to focus on the work at a regional level. Individual expertise was brought to the discussion but organizational affiliations were “checked at the door” as participants met to determine the most effective actions the St. Louis region can take to increase degree completion among low-income students.

With a generous capacity building grant from TG Public Benefit Grant Program, CAP enlisted American Institutes for Research (AIR) to facilitate the six-month planning process. AIR’s expertise in education research and policymaking ensures that all of the recommendations are rooted in the research literature and built on evidence-based practices here and in other communities.

AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE ST. LOUIS REGION

Accomplishing all of the recommendations will require diligence, commitment and continued collaboration.

CAP leadership is now considering how best to coordinate with partners, prioritize and support these essential strategies. However, CAP also recognizes the urgency for action and has already moved forward on a number of the recommendations articulated in the plan. CAP looks forward to broadening the involvement and extending the reach of this work as others identify solutions that can be implemented within existing organizational endeavors.



When I was in my senior year of high school, I recall having no knowledge whatsoever of the FAFSA until the deadline was almost upon me and this coming from a straight A, National Honor Society member. I don't think that students of more affluent areas would be ignorant of this information. Opportunity may not always come in the form of monetary reward, but rather the sheer information needed in order to overcome adversity."

Fourth-year college student



GETTING STUDENTS READY

Better Coordinate Service Delivery

PROBLEM

Too few college access services are available to first-generation and low-income students and those that do exist are not evenly distributed. In fact, only about one-third of low-income students in the region have access to any college support services. Those services that do exist need to be better coordinated within schools housing multiple college access providers, and all area schools and youth development organizations enrolling a significant low-income population should have some college access services.

SOLUTION

- ↳ Establish **common definitions and outcome measures** to be used by providers and funders across the region. Measure effectiveness accordingly.
- ↳ Develop **a region-wide searchable database** that provides information on college access services available through nonprofit organizations and in schools.
- ↳ Expand **professional development opportunities for service providers**. Focus on peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices and collaboration.

TAKING ACTION

- ↳ With leadership from Wyman Center, College Bound and College Summit, CAP partners are working to develop common outcomes measures and definitions that indicate community progress toward increasing degree completion, as well as **indicators of college access/success program quality and effectiveness**.
- ↳ An initial cohort of more than 30 college access providers is participating in a **bimonthly peer exchange**. The series has focused on diverse topics, including financial aid, matching students to the right college for them and parent engagement. CAP will expand this into a Professional Development Institute that will provide training and networking for the full spectrum of college support providers, including K-12 educators, higher education administrators and service providers.
- ↳ United Way of Greater St. Louis has agreed to add college access service provider information to its **2-1-1 resource database**. This will provide students and their families easy access to programs in the area.

Provide Students Access to Financial Resources

PROBLEM

Students from low-income families are less likely to attend college and far less likely to obtain a degree than students from middle- and upper-income households. Connecting students to financial resources is a critical step to making education beyond high school possible. Advocating for need-based aid is equally important to helping students and parents bridge the financial gap between what post-secondary education costs and what families can afford.

SOLUTION

- Establish a centralized portal where students and families can obtain **current information about scholarship opportunities**, apply online for several grant opportunities and access financial aid planning resources. Expand matched savings opportunities and encourage participation.
- Advocate for **need-based financial aid** at the state and federal levels.
- Support the creation of **matched savings accounts** as an incentive for students to financially plan for their educational future.

TAKING ACTION

- With support from Wells Fargo Advisors, Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation and The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis have created a **database of private scholarship opportunities** available to students in the St. Louis region. Through a partnership with AcademicWorks, CAP is developing a scholarship clearinghouse that ultimately will enable students to enter search criteria to identify scholarships that match their needs, skills and interests. A **common online application** will simplify processes considerably for students.
- CAP's Advocacy Committee has actively supported **sustained funding of the Access Missouri need-based financial aid program** and identified for CAP stakeholders opportunities to advocate for the Federal Pell Grant Program.



Participating in the Lunch & Learn peer exchange introduced me to other advisors working in the same schools. It gave us time to share ideas and identify ways to collaborate.”

College access service provider



Being prepared for college cannot come overnight. Students should be prepared starting their freshman year in high school. Support throughout college years can serve as encouragement as well. It allows us, as students, know that we have standards to live up to and if we mess up, it will affect more than just ourselves.”

First-year college student

Create a College-Going Culture in Schools

PROBLEM

Research indicates the presence of a college-going culture is the single greatest predictor of whether students in a given school will enroll in and graduate from a post-secondary institution. Peers, counselors, teachers and school administrators, along with college access providers, all have important roles for helping students set college as a goal and developing a plan to get there.

SOLUTION

- **Provide professional development** for teachers, school staff and other youth development providers that focuses on elements of a college-going culture.
- Develop **formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage** of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation, access, transition and persistence).

TAKING ACTION

- Missouri Association for College Admission Counseling is convening a **professional development day for area high school counselors** in Fall 2011. The session will focus on methods and tools of college counseling.
- TG Public Benefit Grant Program has awarded CAP a grant to launch a **Professional Development Institute**. The institute will enable CAP to assist with peer exchange training for counselors in schools, frontline service providers and higher education professionals. Cooperating School Districts has expressed interest in partnering with CAP on this work.



I didn't go to college and neither did any of my family members. I believe there are plenty of students in this same situation today. If we have programs that will assist us and our children with the preparation, or just give us information we need to prepare, I believe more students will attend college. Lack of information is keeping our students from going to college."

Parent of student participating in a college access program

GETTING STUDENTS IN

Help Students and Parents Navigate the Process

PROBLEM

Even those who attended college have difficulty helping students develop a continuing education plan. The process is especially daunting for students whose parents and family members have not attended post-secondary school, as well as for students with no adult guidance.

SOLUTION

→ Engage, inform, and support parents and families on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.

TAKING ACTION

- CAP has created an online resource for students and parents, educators and access providers at www.StLouisGraduates.org. The website serves as an initial connection to regional resources to help students and families navigate the process. The site also encourages information and resource sharing among college access professionals. The site will link to the websites of Graduate! St. Louis Workforce Consortium and United Way's 2-1-1 resource database.
- TG Public Benefit Grant Program recently announced funding to College Bound for a **formative and summative evaluation**.



I will not give up. Whatever it takes I will get my degree."

Third-year college student

GETTING STUDENTS THROUGH

Help Students Persist to a Degree Once Enrolled in Post-Secondary School

PROBLEM

Enrollment does not assure a degree; CAP is focused on ensuring students have the support to make the transition from high school to — and through — a post-secondary program.

SOLUTION

- Develop **university-sponsored and university-led programs that support entering students** beginning in high school and continuing through post-secondary completion.
- Engage a **higher education coalition** that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure that low-income students succeed in college.

TAKING ACTION

- CAP is meeting with area post-secondary institutions and school districts to identify opportunities to **pilot projects and develop models that work locally**.
- Several area higher education leaders have committed to establishing a **peer exchange around post-secondary transition and persistence**.
- Wyman Center and The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis received funding from TG Public Benefit Grant Program to **provide funding and support to teens** in partnership with three area post-secondary institutions.

MAKING CONNECTIONS CAP benefits from shared learning as part of a national network of communities and organizations working to improve degree completion for low-income students. For example, St. Louis is one of 14 cities participating in the National League of Cities' Postsecondary Success City Action Network (P-SCAN). CAP representatives are also working closely with the National College Access Network (NCAN) and the United States Department of Education.



**TRACKING
PROGRESS**

To ensure the St. Louis region continues to improve outcomes for students requires good data to determine what works and where improvement is needed. CAP supports work already underway at the state level by Missouri departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Higher Education and Economic Development to track disaggregated student outcomes beginning in high school and continuing through degree completion and into the workforce. This could position Missouri as one of the few states with a longitudinal data system to track student progress.

The following organizations have supported the work of St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project by participating in the planning process, implementing recommendations, funding CAP and related programs, as well as collaborating with CAP to increase degree completion in the region. CAP thanks them for their support and invites others to become involved.

Schools and School Districts

Bayless High School
Cooperating School Districts
Ferguson-Florissant
Lift for Life Academy
Maplewood-Richmond Heights
North Tech High School
Normandy
Ritenour
St. Louis Public Schools
Shearwater Education Foundation
University City

Higher Education

Harris-Stowe State University
Lincoln University
Missouri State University
Ranken Technical College
St. Louis College of Pharmacy
St. Louis Community College
Southeast Missouri State University
University of Missouri-Columbia
University of Missouri-St. Louis
Washington University
Webster University

Government/Civic

Mayor's Office, City of St. Louis
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Missouri Department of Higher Education
St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment
St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association
U.S. Department of Education

College Access Service Providers/ Youth Development Organizations

AVID
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Boys Hope Girls Hope
Christian Activity Center
College Bound St. Louis
College Summit-St. Louis
De La Salle Middle School
Epworth/Aging Out Initiative
Gear Up-St. Louis
Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club
INROADS, Inc.
Missouri Area Health Education Centers
Missouri College Advising Corps
St. Louis Internship Program
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis
Sherwood Forest Camp
TRIO
Wyman Center
YMCA of Greater St. Louis

Corporations and Foundations

Ameren Missouri
Citi
Commerce Bank
Deaconess Foundation
Enterprise Holdings
Express Scripts
Gateway Center for Giving
Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation
The Porter Bay Group
TG Public Benefit Grant Program
Trio Foundation of St. Louis
United Way of Greater St. Louis
Wells Fargo Advisors



Greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact.”

*Collective Impact,
John Kania and Mark Kramer*

Steering Committee

Jane Donahue, *Co-chair*
Deaconess Foundation
Faith Sandler, *Co-chair*
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis
DeAngela Burns-Wallace
University of Missouri-Columbia
Stacy D. Clay
College Summit-St. Louis
Cynthia Crim
Commerce Bank
Melanie Dileo
Citi
Sherry Harsch-Porter
The Porter Bay Group
David Hilliard
Wyman Center
Timothy Hopkins
Missouri Department of Higher Education (through July 2011)
Wendy Jaffe
Trio Foundation of St. Louis
Orvin Kimbrough
United Way of Greater St. Louis
Patrick McEvoy
Bayless High School
Mary McMurtrey
Gateway Center for Giving
Amy Murphy
Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation
Kathy Reeves
Enterprise Holdings
Allison Williams
Wyman Center
Lisa Orden Zarin
College Bound St. Louis



**ST. LOUIS REGIONAL
COLLEGE ACCESS
PIPELINE PROJECT**

The full CAP strategic plan is available online at:

www.StLouisGraduates.org

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