

**ONE STUDENT
AT A TIME** ADVANCING THE GOAL OF
INCREASED DEGREE COMPLETION
IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION



ABOUT THIS REPORT

If this report has one theme, it is this: the St. Louis region is moving in the right direction as it relates to degree attainment. In recent years, thanks in part to St. Louis Graduates' efforts, the region has been paying closer attention to education equity. This report shows that St. Louis is making substantial progress on postsecondary graduation rates along with several other college access measures. More students of all ages are pursuing postsecondary degrees. The percentage of adults with higher degrees has grown impressively. More degrees are being conferred by local institutions. However, there is sobering news as well. Very real, deep-rooted challenges remain; the problems are easier to identify than solve. In the region, more and more families are living in poverty. Student debt is escalating. College enrollment among 18- to 24-year-olds is down since 2007. And, while degree attainment was rising for African-Americans in the region, it dipped after 2007.

ONE PERCENT PER YEAR

St. Louis Graduate's goal is that 50 percent of adults in the St. Louis region have a postsecondary degree by 2020. To achieve this, the region needs to increase the percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree by one percent per year. Currently, the region is at a pace of increasing by 0.75 percent per year.

The 50-percent goal is attainable. In fact, four metropolitan regions (Washington, D.C., San Jose, San Francisco/Oakland, and Boston) have already surpassed the 50-percent threshold.

While the St. Louis region has made the biggest gain among the 35 largest metro areas in degree attainment over the past four years, it will need to make even greater strides to reach the goal of 50 percent by 2020.



Talent is the #1 factor in the success of any company. Regions that can develop a diverse talent pool with the skill sets needed will prosper and those that do not will decline.”

KATHY OSBORN, *Executive Director,*
St. Louis Regional Business Council

The good news is that since St. Louis Graduates' first report to the community in 2009, the percent of adults with a postsecondary degree has risen 2.2 percent to nearly 38 percent.

While there is much to celebrate, much work remains to be done and the pace of progress will need to quicken. St. Louis Graduates has organized the community around the goal of degree completion, has put forth bold goals buttressed by the planning to achieve them, and has built a stronger network among practitioners and policy makers. Working together, the goal is within reach.

About St. Louis Graduates

St. Louis Graduates (formerly known as the St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project) is a collaborative effort, leveraging the talent and commitment of educators, youth development providers, higher education leadership, business leaders, funders and policymakers. All are galvanized by a shared vision for a region in which all students—especially those from low-income households—can prepare for, enroll and succeed in higher education. St. Louis Graduates' goal is for 50 percent of adults in the region to have a postsecondary degree by 2020. The realization of that goal will have an enduring positive impact on the students who achieve degree completion, as well as the region's overall economic vitality. St. Louis Graduates supports achievement of this goal through collaboration, service coordination, professional development, communications and advocacy.

METHODOLOGY

This report provides data and analysis about how the St. Louis region is faring in achieving higher postsecondary completion rates. It is the summary version of a detailed report (500+ pages) that is available for download on the St. Louis Graduates website at www.StLouisGraduates.org.

Data were collected in the first half of 2012 from the U.S. Department of Education, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Department of Higher Education as well as U.S. Census sources including the American Community Survey.

Data reported are largely from 2010, the most current information available, and relate to benchmark data from 2007, the most recent data available when St. Louis Graduates first published a report in 2009. Data for 2000 are also reported to mark progress over the decade. In some cases, averages over time are used and are noted as such.

Data reported for the metropolitan region include the metropolitan statistical area, 16 counties in Missouri and Illinois. For much of the report, however, the St. Louis region is defined as the seven largest counties in the Missouri portion of the St. Louis metropolitan statistical area: City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson County, Franklin County, Lincoln County and Warren County. This geography was the focus of the initial report published in 2009 and is used here for continuity purposes. Together these seven counties constitute what is referred to here as the St. Louis Graduates area. This includes only the Missouri counties of the St. Louis region for the practical reason of data collection from one state versus two states, as well as inconsistencies between how the states of Missouri and Illinois collect and report data at the state level. While the St. Louis Graduates area includes seven counties in Missouri, the findings are reflective of the metropolitan area as the seven counties contain about three-quarters of the region's population and its performance drives the entire area's results.

This report examines data in five key areas.

- 1 Performance of the St. Louis metropolitan area compared to the 35 largest metropolitan areas in the country;
- 2 Educational achievement within the St. Louis Graduates reporting area, examining relationships among educational achievement, poverty and median household income;
- 3 Trends among the 18 postsecondary institutions most attended by St. Louis Graduates' target population of low-income and first-generation students, including enrollment, retention, degrees conferred, tuition and financial aid;
- 4 Trends among St. Louis residents applying for need-based financial aid; and
- 5 Performance of the 51 public school districts and 82 public high schools in the St. Louis Graduates area, including outcomes measures (e.g. MAP test scores, ACT participation, FAFSA completion) and input factors (e.g. free/reduced lunch rate, teacher-student ratio, teacher degrees, average daily attendance).

For each area, the unit of analysis varies to suit the topic, ranging from national and regional data to state, county, school district, high school building, and college/university level data. Data in this report are also reported by Public Use Micro Data (PUMA) areas. The seven Missouri counties are broken into 15 PUMAs each representing a contiguous area of at least 100,000 population. The PUMAs provide statistically valid and reliable estimates for the socioeconomic factors of interest to St. Louis Graduates, facilitating geographical analysis of the input factors and outcome measures.

The St. Louis Graduates area includes three PUMAs in the City of St. Louis (Central, North and South); eight in St. Louis County (Inner Ring North, Inner Ring South, Northeast, Northwest, South Outer, West Central, West Outer, Far West); and two in St. Charles County (East, West). Jefferson County constitutes a single PUMA. Franklin, Lincoln and Warren Counties combined comprise a single PUMA (Outer Metro).



- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 St. Louis Outer Metro (Franklin, Lincoln, Warren Counties) | 8 St. Louis County West Central |
| 2 St. Charles County West | 9 St. Louis County West Outer Suburbs |
| 3 St. Charles County East | 10 St. Louis County Inner Ring South |
| 4 St. Louis County Northeast | 11 St. Louis County South Outer Suburbs |
| 5 St. Louis County Northwest | 12 St. Louis City North |
| 6 St. Louis County Inner Ring North | 13 St. Louis City Central |
| 7 St. Louis County Far West | 14 St. Louis City South |
| | 15 Jefferson County |

It is important to note that while the data are reported on aggregate scales, St. Louis Graduates' unit of interest is students. Examining the data at various reporting levels enables greater understanding of the drivers that affect the ability of students to access a postsecondary education and persist to a degree and serves as a proxy for what any individual student may experience as he or she navigates the pathway to college.

Service Provider Directory

In addition to the data collected for this report, St. Louis Graduates distributed a comprehensive survey to nonprofit youth-serving organizations and pre-collegiate programs of higher education institutions to capture the range of services being provided, the locations of services in schools and in the community, and the numbers of students served. As a result, St. Louis Graduates has cataloged the efforts and anticipated outcomes of 24 agencies and higher education institutions, which comprise the majority of formal efforts to support low-income students' success in postsecondary degree attainment. A directory created from the survey information is available at www.StLouisGraduates.org.



WHY A POSTSECONDARY DEGREE MATTERS

Earning a postsecondary degree gives a person power over his or her future path, greater financial security and a higher likelihood of employment, even during challenging economic times.

Fortunately, St. Louis has reason to celebrate. Compared to peer metropolitan areas, St. Louis increased in its ranking among the 35 largest metropolitan areas and now ranks 22nd in percent of adult population with an associate's or baccalaureate degree, up from 25th in 2007.

More jobs require some postsecondary education.

- ➔ By 2018, 59 percent of all jobs in Missouri will require some form of postsecondary education, according to the Lumina Foundation.
- ➔ In the St. Louis region, 37.8 percent of adults have a postsecondary degree. This is up from 35.6 percent in 2007 but still a long way from the goal of 50 percent and even further from reaching the state's anticipated need of 59 percent.
- ➔ The emergence of the "knowledge" economy increases the emphasis on postsecondary education. In the St. Louis region's economic plan, key industry clusters like finance, information technologies, healthcare, bioscience and advanced manufacturing require workers to have a range of educational backgrounds with a significant proportion requiring some postsecondary education. For example, the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association (RCGA) indicates almost 60 percent of all occupations in financial and information services require a bachelor's or higher level degree.

People with a postsecondary degree earn more.

- ➔ The connection between educational attainment and financial prosperity has become closer and more intense.

MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR 25+ POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR THE ST. LOUIS GRADUATES AREA

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	2010
LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL	\$18,620
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	\$27,453
SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	\$33,064
BACHELOR OF ARTS	\$45,422
GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	\$56,953

- ➔ Nationally, the metropolitan areas among the top 10 in degree completion are also the top 10 in median household income. St. Louis' ranking as 22nd in degree completion mirrors its status as 25th among the 35 largest metros in median household income.

Greater earnings are just the beginning; a degree brings improved quality of life.

- ➔ According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which looks at economic and social

well-being around the globe, higher levels of education lead to a variety of positive outcomes, including longer life expectancy, greater likelihood to vote and engage in civic life, and greater satisfaction with life.

- College helps individuals better understand a complex world. According to the American Council on Education and Lumina Foundation's Know How 2 Go initiative, continued education improves capacity to grasp abstract concepts and theories, build knowledge and skills, express thoughts clearly in speech and in writing, and increases understanding of the world.

People with a postsecondary degree are less likely to be unemployed or underemployed.

- Between 2005 and 2009, the average unemployment rate for those in St. Louis with a bachelor's degree or higher was 2.7 percent compared to 8 percent for those with a high school diploma. Over the same time period, the number of full-time employed individuals with some college or more increased while full-time employment declined for those without any college.

Greater education levels make for a stronger regional economy.

- Regions with higher levels of education have higher median earnings. The top 10 metropolitan areas in postsecondary degree holders in 2010 are also the top 10 regions in median household income.
- The median household income for the St. Louis metropolitan area in 2010 is \$51,183, ranking St. Louis 25th out of 35 major metropolitan areas, in sync with the region's ranking of 22nd among the same metro areas in the share of adults with an associate's or bachelor's degree.
- According to CEOs for Cities, every one percentage point increase in adult four-year college degree attainment adds an additional \$763 to per capita income per year. Aggregated, that's a significant economic impact for a region like St. Louis.
- As evidence of the importance of a postsecondary degree to the region, the RCGA says that if it could change one measure to improve the regional economy it would be making a substantial increase in the percentage of population with a postsecondary degree.



This work is so important and sometimes it feels like there aren't enough stakeholders taking an interest in issues surrounding college access. It was empowering (at PDI) to be surrounded by like-minded people with the same goal."

St. Louis Graduates Professional Development Institute participant



BETTER COORDINATING SERVICES: GATEWAY STEM HIGH SCHOOL

On the surface, Gateway STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) High School in St. Louis Public Schools might seem to have all the systems in place to ensure all of its students have a college plan in place. Student advisors from seven college access organizations and pre-collegiate programs work with the school's approximately 1,200 students, supplementing the school's four counselors who provide myriad counseling services, including college advising. However, as Principal Beth Bender explains, "We had all these advisors in the building and we were feeling good about our work with students but then we realized that everyone was serving the same kids and some kids were getting no help at all."

In response, Bender and her team took a fresh approach by examining student data on a case-by-case basis to find out where their efforts may be missing students.

The on-site counselor team, which includes the four school counselors and a student advisor through the Missouri College Advising Corps, now meets every two weeks to review a spreadsheet of all seniors. More often than not, Bender herself participates in the meeting. They discuss who has taken the ACT, who has completed critical financial aid forms and other measures of postsecondary planning. The team reviews other factors as well, such as if the student has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), is an athlete or a new immigrant. Once a month, the meeting includes advisors from all of the agencies working with students on college access and planning to ensure all students are being served and efforts aren't duplicated.

Bender recalls some students were completing the same paperwork four times to meet deadlines set by different college advising providers. Now, however, the work is better coordinated. Examining each student's data helps the team make informed decisions as to what services a student needs and who could use more help. Bender shared this emerging model when she hosted a visiting team from Normandy School District.

Bender credits St. Louis Graduates with providing context for this work by elevating the importance of postsecondary access for low-income students. It's easier for the district and partners to be supportive of efforts to better coordinate services when the issue is viewed as a regional priority, she says.

"So often in education we are in crisis mode," Bender notes. "This is a matter of being pro-active. This work isn't hard. It doesn't take money. It takes the will to do it."

WHERE THE REGION STANDS: SOME PROMISING NEWS, SOME CHALLENGING FINDINGS

THE PROMISING NEWS

The St. Louis region has the highest point increase in degree completion among the 35 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S.

- ➔ Between 2007 and 2010, the 16-county St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) saw the largest percentage point increase in both associate degree completion and baccalaureate completion.
- ➔ The percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree was 37.8 percent in 2010, up from 35.6 percent in 2007 and 31 percent in 2000. This includes both associate and baccalaureate degrees combined for adults 25 and older.
- ➔ St. Louis' relative rank among the 35 regions improved only marginally, going from 25th in 2007 to 22nd in 2010. Baccalaureate degree completion ranking increased from 24th to 21st over the four-year period from 2007 to 2010; associate's degree completion ranking moved from 15th to 14th.

ST. LOUIS AREA RANKING AMONG TOP 35 METROPOLITAN REGIONS

2007 2010

SHARE OF POPULATION WITH...

A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	12TH	10TH	↑
AN ASSOCIATE'S OR BACHELOR'S DEGREE	25TH	22ND	↑
AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	15TH	14TH	↑
A BACHELOR'S DEGREE	24TH	21ST	↑

SHARE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION WITH...

AN ASSOCIATE'S OR BACHELOR'S DEGREE	28TH	31ST	↓
AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	27TH	28TH	↓
A BACHELOR'S DEGREE	31ST	29TH	↑

SHARE OF 18- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS...

ENROLLED IN COLLEGE OR GRADUATE SCHOOL	16TH	18TH	↓
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SELECTED METROPOLITAN AREAS: SHARE OF POPULATION 25+ WITH B.A. OR A.A. DEGREE IN 2010

	Overall		African-Americans		Income	
	SH	R	SH	R	INC	R
WASHINGTON, D.C.	52.4	1	36.2	2	\$85,767	1
SAN JOSE	52.3	2	42.9	1	\$85,165	2
SAN FRANCISCO-OAKLAND	50.2	3	32.2	7	\$73,379	3
BOSTON	50.2	4	31	12	\$68,515	4
MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL	47.3	5	30.1	15	\$63,011	7
BALTIMORE	41.3	10	26.4	24	\$65,406	5
ATLANTA	41.1	11	34.6	4	\$53,938	21
KANSAS CITY	39.3	17	25.7	26	\$54,340	18
ST. LOUIS	37.8	22	23.8	31	\$51,183	25
CINCINNATI	36.7	26	24.3	30	\$51,975	23
CLEVELAND	35.5	28	20.8	35	\$46,396	33
DETROIT	35.3	30	23.7	32	\$48,447	30
RIVERSIDE-SAN BERNARDINO	27.1	35	31.3	10	\$54,063	19

SH = Share of population

R = Rank among 35 largest metro areas

INC = Median household income



More degrees are being conferred.

↳ The four-year institutions in the St. Louis Graduates area awarded 21,931 bachelor's degrees in 2009-2010, up 15.9 percent from the average annual 18,922 between 2002-2003 and 2006-2007 and 4 percent between 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. The four largest producers were the University of Missouri-Columbia, Missouri State University, the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Washington University. The four community colleges in the area (East Central, Jefferson, St. Charles and St. Louis) awarded 3,758 associates degrees in 2009-2010, an increase of 16.3 percent. Over half were granted by St. Louis Community College.

ONE-YEAR PERSISTENCE RATE BY INSTITUTION

INSTITUTION	2006	2007	2008	2009
HARRIS-STOWE	32%	27%	36%	8%
MISSOURI STATE	76%	78%	77%	74%
MISSOURI UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	85%	86%	84%	89%
SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE	67%	68%	72%	63%
TRUMAN STATE	85%	90%	86%	88%
U. OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA	81%	83%	84%	80%
U. OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS	65%	70%	63%	62%

Persistence is defined as completing the first academic year with at least 24 credit hours and a minimum grade point average of 2.0. Only first time, full time freshman are included in the calculations.

Data are for public four-year institutions. Data for four-year independent institutions are not available.

More students are enrolling in college although persistence is mixed.

- ↳ The share of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college or graduate school rose 9.3 percentage points between 2000 and 2010 and 1 percentage point between 2007 and 2010 and stands at 42.4 percent in 2010. However, the region's rank among the 35 largest metro areas has slipped from 14th in 2000 to 18th in 2010.
- ↳ The 18 institutions tracked for this report had 25,871 first-time, full-time equivalent freshmen enrolled in fall 2010, up 17.2 percent from the average of 22,078 between fall 2003 and fall 2007. The largest increases between 2008 and 2010 were at two-year institutions.
- ↳ The proportion of full-time, first-time freshmen successfully completing their first academic year with at least 24 semester credit hours and a 2.0 grade point average has remained relatively constant when examining nearly all of the seven four-year public institutions having substantial enrollments from the St. Louis Graduates area.

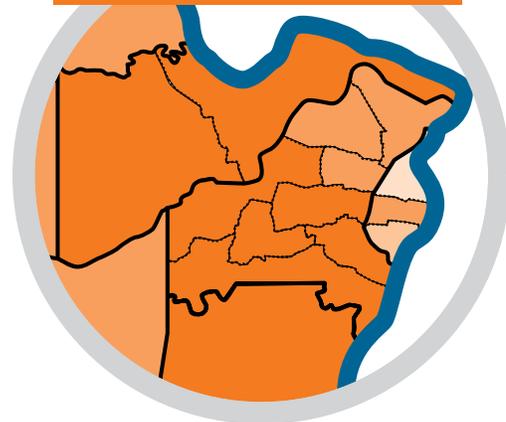
“ I worked my way through college. After my brother, I am the second person in my family to earn a college degree. College changed life for my family. It's critical that St. Louis put in place the support systems to help more students become the first in their families to earn a degree.”

GEORGE PAZ, *Chairman and Chief Executive, Express Scripts, Inc. and Chair of Civic Progress Education Committee*

More students are graduating from high school.

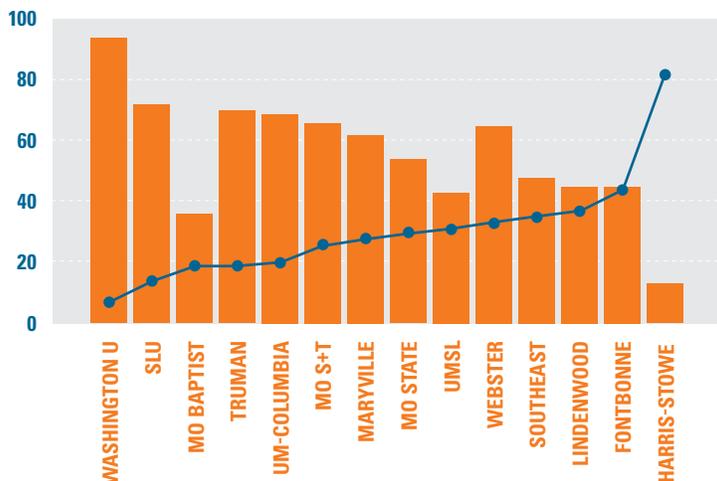
- ↳ The St. Louis region's share of high school graduates among its 25-and-older population increased to 88.9 percent in 2010, up from 83.1 percent in 2000 and 87.2 percent in 2007. This ranks St. Louis 10th overall in high school diplomas among the 35 largest metropolitan areas, up from 16th in 2000 and 12th in 2007.
- ↳ The graduation rates at St. Louis Graduates area high schools increased from 85.5 percent in 2007 to 87 percent in 2011. African-American graduation rates increased as well, from 74 percent in 2007 to 78.5 percent in 2011.

2011 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE BY AREA (PUMA)



● 50-59% ● 60-69% ● 80-89% ● 90-100%

GRADUATION RATES AND PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY: AN INVERSE RELATIONSHIP



- Percent of Pell Grant eligible students at fall enrollment. Federal Pell Grants are awarded to students with significant financial need.
- 2010 six-year graduation rate

Low-income students are seeing some financial relief, but the need continues to grow.

- ➔ A slowing of tuition increases in recent years is good news for low-income students, but tuition is not the only factor in affordability. Undergraduate tuition increases were in the single digits between 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 for 17 of the 18 colleges and universities that largely serve students in the St. Louis Graduates area. The one institution with a higher rate was Missouri Baptist University with an increase of 11.4 percent, just barely in the double digits. These were much lower increases than the 20-to-40 percent tuition increases between 2003-2004 and 2007-2008.
- ➔ The availability of both total financial aid and need-based aid increased between 2007-2008 and 2009-2010. Total aid increased by 22.6 percent; need-based financial aid increased by 26.3 percent. It is important to note that non-tuition costs, including room, board, books and fees, are not included in this analysis. Any significant increases in those costs could effectively reduce the impact of lower tuition increases coupled with increased institutional aid. Further, the fact that more students qualify for state need-based aid, for instance, reduces the average award made per student. While need-based aid may have increased in total, the effects on students and families may not be commensurate.

More families are completing the FAFSA.

- ➔ Beginning in 2010, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has been collecting the number of students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for each public high school in the state. For 2010, 15,469 high school seniors in the St. Louis Graduates area completed the FAFSA. This represents 72.3 percent of all

BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: DARRYL CHERRY



When St. Louis Graduates launched its Professional Development Institute (PDI) workshop series in the fall of 2011, Darryl Cherry responded enthusiastically; he enrolled in all six sessions.

One of the PDI sessions Cherry found most helpful was on academic and social factors related to making the right college match. Led by presenters Trent

Ball, associate dean of students, and Valdis Zalite, director of TRiO student support services, at Southeast Missouri State University, the session raised considerations for students and parents who are investigating college options.

Cherry is a counselor with the TRiO Upward Bound program housed at St. Louis Community College. Upward Bound is a federally funded program that provides academic and other support services for high school students who are low-income and/or first-generation. He presently works with about 80 students in St. Louis Public Schools and Confluence Academy. In addition, he monitors progress of approximately 200 more students who are alumni of the Upward Bound program currently enrolled in postsecondary education. Cherry says he likes that the PDI workshops are research-based and the speakers are well versed in their topics.

In addition to the session content, the PDI workshops have helped Cherry make new connections. As an example, Cherry strengthened his relationship with Shauna Cunningham, counselor with Central Visual and Performing Arts High School. The two are now working together to develop an African-American male initiative to increase Central's graduation rates and college admissions among this cohort.

"This effort is grassroots, it is welcoming, and it develops best practices that can be shared with others," Cherry says.

high school graduates for that year and 65.9 percent of all high school seniors for the period.

- ➔ The total number of FAFSA filers in the St. Louis Graduates area rose 44.5 percent between 2007 and 2011.
- ➔ Beginning in 2011-2012, the U.S. Department of Education is now reporting by school the number of applications submitted and completed. For the St. Louis Graduates area as a whole, 9,234 FAFSA forms were submitted; 93.4 percent of these were complete.

THE CHALLENGING NEWS

The poverty rate is up for all except those with a college degree and disparities continue to grow.

- Between 2002 and 2006, the number of youth ages 5 to 17 living in poverty in the St. Louis Graduates area averaged 48,907. That decreased to 47,166 in 2007 before rising 10.8 percent to 52,277 in 2010.
- The proportion of students in public school districts eligible for free or reduced lunch, a proxy for income status, has risen substantially. It averaged 28.7 percent between 2002 and 2006, was up to 34 percent in 2007 and reached 42.1 percent in 2011.
- Moreover, high poverty is concentrated in parts of the region. The 2011 free/reduced lunch share is substantially higher in the St. Louis City North (84.7 percent), St. Louis City South (84 percent), St. Louis City Central (74.6 percent), St. Louis County Northeast (74.6 percent) and St. Louis County North Inner Ring (67 percent) PUMAs.

ST. LOUIS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH MAJORITY LOW-INCOME STUDENTS IN 2011

	2011 % FRL	% CHANGE 2007-2011
BAYLESS	50.5	37.6
CHARTER*	85.6	-5.0
ELSBERRY R-11	50.9	52.4
FERGUSON-FLOISSANT R-11	66.1	14.4
GRANDVIEW R-11	66.8	38.6
HANCOCK PLACE	66.0	13.8
HAZELWOOD	53.0	46.3
JENNINGS	72.1	68.2
MAPLEWOOD-RICHMOND HEIGHTS	56.8	6.2
NORMANDY	82.5	23.1
RITENOUR	63.0	25.5
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	81.3	34.8
ST. LOUIS CITY	77.9	10.7
UNIVERSITY CITY	55.4	.5
AVERAGE**	42.1	23.9

For all districts listed, more than half of the student population is eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch (FRL) program, an indicator of poverty. Only 8 districts were in this category in the 2009 St. Louis Graduates report.

* For the purposes of this report all city charter schools are grouped together as a district.

** Average is for the seven-county St. Louis Graduates area.

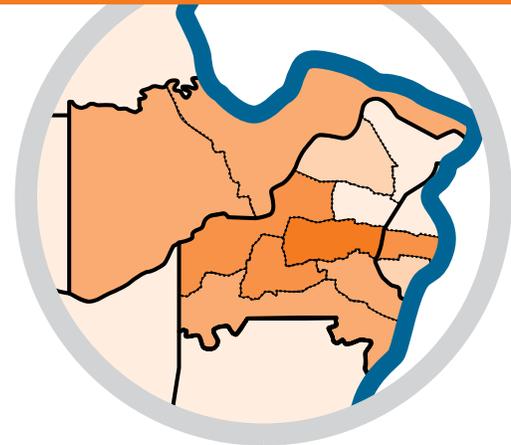
Increase in degree attainment is less for African Americans.

- Among 25-and-older African Americans, the share with an associate or baccalaureate degree in 2010 is 23.8 percent, up from 18.4 percent in 2000 but down from 24.7 percent in 2007. The region has dropped from 28th to 31st among the 35 largest metropolitan areas in the share of African Americans 25-and-older with an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Increases in degree attainment are uneven across the region.

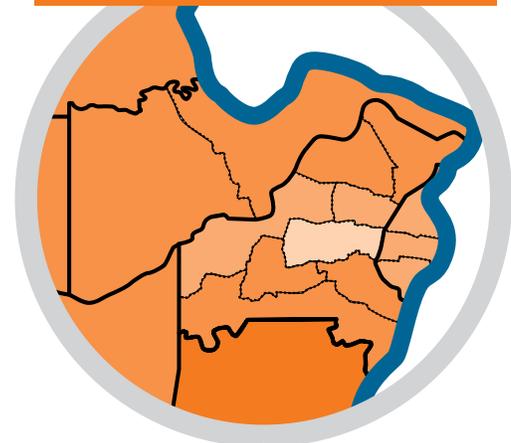
- There are substantial differences in degree completion across the region, with the north and rural areas having proportionally fewer degrees than west and south. There is a 27.4 percentage point gap between the highest PUMA (40.8 percent in St. Louis County West Outer Suburbs) and the lowest (13.4 percent in City of St. Louis North). This compares to 33.4 percent of adults with degrees in the region as a whole.

2011 BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE BY AREA (PUMA)



10-19% 20-29% 30-39% 40-59% 60-100%

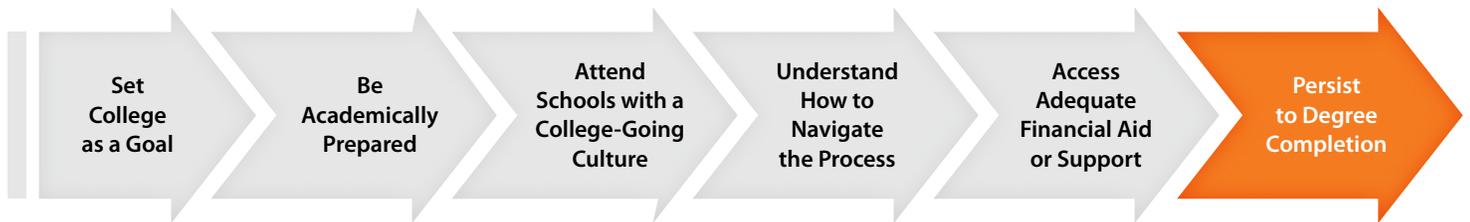
2011 ASSOCIATES DEGREE BY AREA (PUMA)



3-4% 5-6% 7-8% 9-10%

WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO SUCCEED: RECENT STATE AND REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

COLLEGE ACCESS/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.

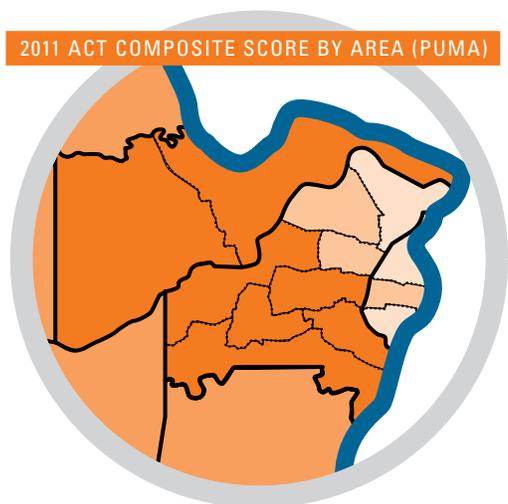
In 2009, St. Louis Graduates introduced the college access/success pipeline in its “Building Better Futures” report. The pipeline was developed as a result of a comprehensive literature review on best practices in college access and success. Extensive discussion of these findings can be found at www.StLouisGraduates.org.

Since then, St. Louis Graduates has used the pipeline and the research literature undergirding it to guide planning and action. Over the past three years, the region has experienced mixed outcomes on the steps that impact students’ ability to progress along the pipeline.

1. BE ACADEMICALLY PREPARED

- ↳ Reading and writing skills are assessed in Missouri through the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test in Communication Arts. In 2011, the percentage of 11th grade high school students testing at or above proficient or advanced for the MAP in Communications Arts is 68.4 percent, about two percentage points higher than the state average, but down 1.5 percentage points over the region’s status in 2008-2009.
- ↳ The region has made great strides in math and science over the past four years. The share of 11th graders in the St. Louis Graduates area scoring at or above proficient or advanced on the science MAP test is 58.1 percent. This is slightly lower than the state share but nearly 10 percentage points over 2008-2009. Over the four-year period, the share increased 18.2 percent.

- ↳ Between 2004 and 2011, the ACT composite score among students in the St. Louis Graduates area taking the test has remained constant at 20.7, slightly below the mean composite score for Missouri of 21.6. As with other indicators examined, the composite score varies by PUMA within the St. Louis area, with low mean composite scores in higher poverty areas of St. Louis County Northeast (16.4), St. Louis City North (15.3) and St. Louis City South (15.3).



SCORE RANGE: 15-17 17-19 20-21 22-24

2. ATTEND SCHOOLS WITH A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

↳ In September 2012, the Missouri Board of Education gave preliminary approval for the fifth cycle of the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP 5). MSIP is used to assess school district performance in meeting state standards. MSIP 5 emphasizes improving student achievement with a goal of all students being college and career ready.

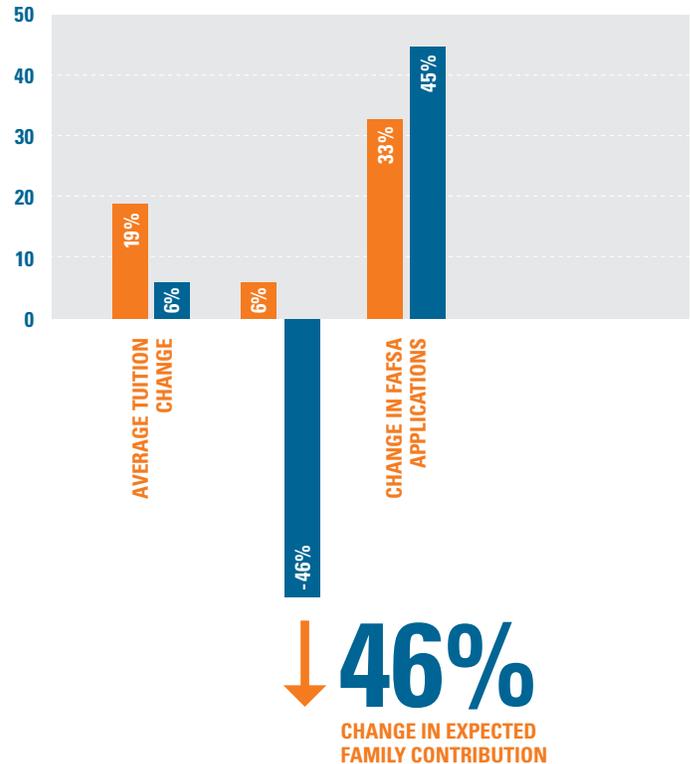
3. UNDERSTAND HOW TO NAVIGATE THE PROCESS

↳ Over the past three years, access to college advising, academic and support services for low-income students has grown substantially. Whereas in 2008, approximately 1 in 3 low-income students had access to college preparatory support services, today that number is 2 in 3 low-income students. While the growth represents a positive trend, the work of creating an equitable system for students is not done. There is likely duplication in this estimate, services are unevenly clustered so that some districts have no external college access partners and others have multiple efforts in their buildings, and very few students can participate in the 'full continuum' of services (academic preparation, support in choosing and enrolling in an institution, financial aid, and guidance in persisting) that they might need to succeed. Finally, the growth is also due in part to a five-year investment in services through the College Access Challenge Grant program of the Missouri Department of Higher Education with resources from the U.S. Department of Education. Possible discontinuation of these grants may affect future outcomes.

4. ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FINANCIAL AID

- ↳ Tuition held fairly steady over the past three years. Undergraduate tuition increases over the period from 2008 to 2011 were in the single digits for all but one of the 18 colleges and universities that primarily serve students in the region.
- ↳ Over the same period, need-based financial aid awarded by the institutions increased 26.3 percent over the period.
- ↳ Families' ability to pay for college declined. Between 2007 and 2011, the median Expected Family Contribution (EFC) dropped by 45.7 percent to \$2,480. It is interesting to note that FAFSA completion in this period rose 44.5 percent as well.
- ↳ Funding for Missouri's need-based financial aid program, Access Missouri, remained flat. The program has funding of \$62.8 million in Fiscal Year 2013, essentially level funding to the year before. This is only about two-thirds of the funding available in Fiscal Year 2009. Because more and more students will qualify, average awards per student are likely to continue to decrease. Currently the average award amount is \$1,000.

THE AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGE IN THE ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN AREA



- 2007-2011 (for FAFSA Applications 2008-2011)
- 2002-2006 (for FAFSA Applications 2003-2007)

5. PERSIST TO DEGREE COMPLETION

- ↳ Some service providers and counselors are placing emphasis on ensuring that students receive adequate counseling in regards to choosing the right "match" (academic, financial and cultural) to support persistence.

“Economic growth in the St. Louis region is dependent on investing in our greatest resource—our people. If there is one factor that will move the needle on the regional economy, it is the percentage of people with a postsecondary degree.”

JOE REAGAN, *President and Chief Executive Officer, St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association (RCGA)*



BUILDING COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE: NORTHWEST SCHOOL DISTRICT

This year, seniors at Northwest High School in Jefferson County are talking about prom tickets and gift cards at the same time they are talking about college applications and financial aid forms. Northwest is offering incentives to students who meet college and career planning deadlines.

Northwest is one of seven area school districts that participated in the St. Louis Graduates Show Me the Way Institute in July 2012. Over two days, a team of eight people – including the superintendent, executive director of secondary education, high school principal, four members of the counseling department and a representative from the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis – reviewed data, discussed best practices and crafted strategies for making their already strong college and career readiness program even stronger.

Among the goals that emerged: All seniors will have a college application completed by Halloween. If students aren't planning to go to college, they must have an acceptance letter from the military or a career plan in place. Students who meet this deadline will be entered into a drawing for gift cards to local stores. The second deadline for seniors is Valentine's Day when all forms, including the FAFSA, are expected to be completed and filed. Students who meet that deadline are entered into a drawing for a prom package that includes tickets and a limousine.

"The Show Me the Way Institute helped us narrow our focus and solidify our goals," says Kristine Alphin, counselor at Northwest.

Building college-going culture is occurring throughout the school district. "We're even making college fair announcements at sporting events and reminding the audience how much someone with a college degree makes compared to someone with a high school diploma," adds Counselor Stacy Knernschield.

Northwest has also set a goal of increasing student participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment courses by 10 percent this year. Counselors talk with incoming freshmen about making college and career plans early, including discussion of dual enrollment and AP credits.

Alphin predicts the changes being made this year will lead to a change in how students and parents think about college. "In five years it will no longer be a question of 'What are you doing after high school?'" Alphin says. "It will be 'Where are you going to school next?'"

FACTORS THAT HINDER POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Recent regional data confirms the sobering reality that students in certain circumstances, such as living in poverty or being first generation, face steeper obstacles in achieving postsecondary goals.

Students attending schools with high levels of poverty are less likely to be academically prepared for postsecondary success. Low-income status correlates to lower ACT participation and lower ACT composite scores. Low-income students tend to have lower Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test scores as well.

Students from low-income families are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education and less likely to persist to a degree, although the gap is starting to shrink. According to The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, in 2008, 55 percent of students from the lowest income backgrounds enrolled in college compared to 80 percent of those from the highest income backgrounds. It should be noted, however, that this 25-point gap is the smallest in the 24 years for which data are available.

Students from higher-income families are more likely than others to earn bachelor's degrees within six years.

Approximately 70 percent of students from the lowest economic backgrounds graduate in six years compared to approximately 83 percent of students whose parents are in the highest income category.

Students whose parents have four-year college degrees are more likely to persist to a degree.

Approximately 70 percent of students whose parents have no college experience graduate within six years of enrollment. This compares to 79 percent of students whose parents have a college degree and 83 percent of students whose parents have a graduate degree. In 2011, 50 percent of the parents who completed FAFSA forms in the St. Louis Graduates area reported having no college education.

According to The College Board, in 2008, 56 percent of African-American students enrolled in college within one year of high school graduation compared to 70 percent of white students. While the gap fluctuated between 8 and 10 percentage points in the period from 1998 and 2004, it grew to 14 percent by 2008.

However, African-American enrollment is going up in the St. Louis region. Among the 18 institutions that serve the majority of students in the St. Louis Graduates area, African-American enrollment is up 18.4 percent from 2008 to 2010.

Students from low-income families or who are first in their families to consider college are less likely to have guidance on fit or match.

According to the National College Access Network, fit includes academic, social and financial considerations, while match refers to the relationship between an institution's selectivity and a student's academic ability, typically as assessed by the ACT or SAT. Unfortunately, low-income and first-generation students are less likely to have the kind of guidance and good information that leads to a good fit, putting them at risk for greater debt and increased likelihood they will "undermatch" by enrolling in less selective colleges than those for which they are qualified.



Attending PDI has helped me find new strategies to share information and ways to empower students and families in the planning process.”

St. Louis Graduates Professional Development Institute participant

REGIONAL ISSUES

Not all students have access to postsecondary guidance counseling that meets their needs. Guidance counseling is available to all high school students in Missouri, but not all high schools have counselors focused specifically on college counseling. Moreover, many counselors have caseloads of hundreds of students, making it difficult to provide significant individualized support to any one student.

Not enough college access support services are available to meet the demand. For this report, St. Louis Graduates collected detailed information from 24 nonprofit organizations, middle and high school programs, and pre-collegiate programs offered by postsecondary institutions; programs with demonstrated success in helping students and families at various aspects of the college preparation, application and enrollment phases of the college access pipeline. While the region is fortunate to have these programs in place, the reach does not meet the demand.

Those college access services that do exist appear to be unevenly distributed. While some districts of high need, based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, are being served by multiple service providers, others have few or no outside service providers serving students. Ferguson-Florissant, Normandy and St. Louis Public Schools all have 10 or more service providers working with students, although the range of services and number of providers varies within each district’s high schools. Hancock Place, with 66 percent free/reduced lunch students has support from two service providers while Hazelwood (53 percent) and University City (55.4 percent) have seven and five service providers respectively.

Disparity related to access to services appears greatest when comparing urban to rural districts. Many students in rural districts have few or no support services at all. Elsberry, Grandview, St. Clair and Valley Park all have high poverty student populations (greater than 40 percent eligible for free/reduced lunch) but none have additional support services from local community organizations or pre-collegiate programs.

THE ST. LOUIS REGION SUPPORT NETWORK

For the region to effectively support low-income students in their postsecondary pursuits, it must have a range of effective community-based nonprofit organizations and pre-collegiate programs supporting the work of school districts and postsecondary institutions. Following are some of the organizations and programs making a difference for students.

College Access Programs

College Bound St. Louis
College Summit – St. Louis
EnTeam Organization
Missouri College Advising Corps
The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis

Youth Development Organizations with College Access Components

Aim High St. Louis
Beyond Housing/24:1
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri
Boys and Girls Club of St. Louis
Boys Hope Girls Hope of St. Louis
Christian Activity Center
Covenant House
Edgewood Children’s Center
Epworth Children and Family Services
Father’s Support Center
Girls Incorporated
Grace Hill Settlement House
HomeWorks!
INROADS
Inspire STL
Kingdom House
Mathews-Dickey Boys & Girls Club
Northside Community Center
Sherwood Forest Camp
St. Louis Internship Program
Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis
Wyman Center
YMCA of Greater St. Louis
Youth in Need

School-based Programs

Access Academies
AVID – St. Louis Public Schools
De La Salle Middle School
Loyola Academy
Marian Middle School

University-based Pre-collegiate Programs

East St. Louis Community College Center
Harris-Stowe State University, Educational Talent Search
Higher Education Center/Equal Opportunity Center
Upward Bound – St. Louis Community College
Lindenwood University
Maryville University
Missouri State University, Upward Bound
Ranken Technical College, Student Achievement Center
Saint Louis University
St. Charles Community College, First Alert
St. Louis College of Pharmacy
St. Louis Community College
University of Missouri, Office of Access Initiatives
University of Missouri – St. Louis, Bridge Program
Washington University, Institute for School Partnership

ST. LOUIS GRADUATES RESPONDS: PUTTING A COMMUNITY PLAN INTO ACTION

To create a community strategy to meet the goal of 50 percent of adults with a postsecondary degree by 2020, St. Louis engaged 70 college access service providers, youth development workers, K-12 educators, guidance counselors, higher education administrators, and business and philanthropic leaders. Together, they developed a coordinated, region-wide plan to increase degree attainment. Over six months in 2010-2011, they developed a blueprint for helping students get ready, get in and get through a postsecondary education to a degree.

That plan, rooted in best practice and informed by the data, focused on myriad aspects of access and postsecondary success:

- ➔ Helping students and parents navigate the college access pipeline,
- ➔ Better coordinating service delivery so students in need have appropriate support,
- ➔ Providing students access to financial resources to address challenges of affordability,
- ➔ Creating a college-going culture in schools, and
- ➔ Supporting students as they persist to a degree once enrolled.

Accomplishing all of the recommendations requires diligence, commitment and continued collaboration. Much progress has already been made. The full plan is available at www.StLouisGraduates.org.

RECOMMENDATION #1: BETTER COORDINATE SERVICE DELIVERY

St. Louis Graduates established a multi-pronged professional development program to increase regional capacity to serve students. With initial support from TG Public Benefit Grant Program and support this year from The Laclede Group Foundation, St. Louis Graduates is meeting a significant need for professional development focused on college access and success. Programs include:

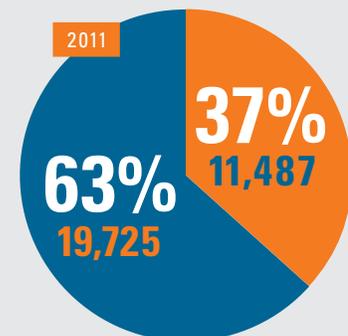
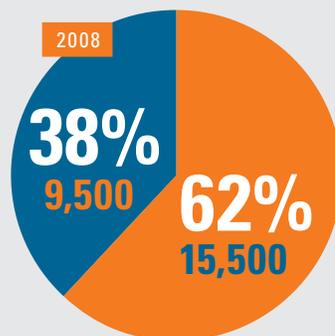
- ➔ Lunch & Learn, now in its third year, which uses a cohort approach to build a peer network for frontline staff at youth-serving organizations;
- ➔ Professional Development Institute, now in its second year, which brings nonprofit, high school and postsecondary professionals together to delve into the literature, research and regional expertise to understand the theory behind best practices; and
- ➔ Learning Circles, small discussion groups that are now being formed around current professional challenges and “problems of practice”.

This year, St. Louis Graduates created a glossary of common definitions of college access and success terms in an easy-to-understand format for use by students, families, service providers and funders.

Looking ahead, St. Louis Graduates plans to develop a searchable database and interactive map of college access services using data collected as part of the research for this report. The tool will be used to direct families to resources as well as to identify gaps in service and facilitate collaboration to meet needs. It will be available at www.StLouisGraduates.org.

NUMBER OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO COLLEGE ACCESS SERVICES

In 2008, approximately 1 in 3 low-income students had access to college preparatory support programs, today that number is closer to 2 in 3 low-income students. There is likely duplication in this estimate and very few students have access to the full continuum of services (academic preparation, support in choosing and enrolling in an institution, financial aid, and guidance in persisting) that they might need to succeed.



- With Access to College Access Service(s)
- Without Access to Services

RECOMMENDATION #2: PROVIDE ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Scholarship Central, launched last year by St. Louis Graduates, is a common application tool and an online database of scholarships available to students in the St. Louis region. Supported by a grant from Wells Fargo Advisors, Scholarship Central makes it possible for students to apply online to multiple scholarships. Scholarship Central is one of the few online portals to community-based scholarships in the country.
- St. Louis Graduates advocates for need-based financial aid at the state and federal level. Through commentaries in the newspaper, testimony at budget hearings and letters to legislators, St. Louis Graduates has been particularly active in supporting funding of Access Missouri, which has seen level funding remain in place despite deep budget cuts in higher education over the past two years.
- Looking ahead, St. Louis Graduates will seek reform of financial aid award letters that rely heavily on loans but lack the clarity students and families need to make informed decisions, along with stronger transition programs over the summer between 12th and 13th grades.

RECOMMENDATION #3: PROMOTE A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE IN SCHOOLS

- In July 2012, with support from TG Public Benefit Grant Program and the Norman J. Stupp Foundation, St. Louis Graduates held the Show Me the Way Institute, a two-day academy in which teams from seven area school districts created postsecondary success action plans with support from national experts at the U.S. Department of Education and The College Board as well as state and regional resources. The seven districts included a mix of urban, suburban, rural and charter school districts. Several districts received additional on-site counseling and support to implement their plans, which focus on building a college-going culture in their high schools.

RECOMMENDATION #4: HELP STUDENTS AND PARENTS NAVIGATE THE PIPELINE

- St. Louis Graduates created its website with the needs of the community in mind. That's why www.StLouisGraduates.org organizes information by the end user, whether a student, family member, educator, service provider or a community member. Some of the resources on the site, such as Scholarship Central, are exclusive to St. Louis Graduates; others, including handouts from presenters at professional development programs, are created by trusted sources locally and nationally and made available for broader community use.

RECOMMENDATION #5: HELP STUDENTS PERSIST TO A DEGREE ONCE ENROLLED

- Addressing the issue of student persistence remains the most challenging aspect of work on the college access pipeline. For that reason, the professional development programs in 2012-2013 focus on strategies to better help students for college and career readiness and transitioning between 12th grade and the first year of college.
- St. Louis Graduates advocates for policies to support persistence. Tracking of FAFSA completion data is a welcome addition to the data reported at the state and federal level. St. Louis Graduates supports further changes to data tracking, including the collection and analysis of longitudinal data and use of National Student Clearinghouse data to track college enrollment and degree completion instead of the self-reported 180-days-post-graduation metric now used by school districts to report to Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

In the race to improve degree completion, St. Louis has made strong strides over the past three years. Reaching the "big goal" will require running even faster. Everybody has a role to play in ensuring that students excel and that the region grows stronger.

Students and families can connect with support services to pursue academic dreams; nonprofits and educators can commit to learning and practicing best strategies to help students thrive; funders can support outcomes that matter; donors can establish scholarships; legislators can advocate for policies that help our region grow and retain great talent. St. Louis is poised to capitalize on the commitments partners can make.

St. Louis Graduates exists to harness the energy, the innovation, and the good will in the region and direct it towards a shared goal. Working together, the region can ensure that by 2020, 50 percent of the adults in St. Louis have a postsecondary degree. The region will be a stronger, healthier and more equitable community when more of its citizens pursue and succeed in postsecondary education. Learn more and join the movement at www.StLouisGraduates.org.

St. Louis Graduates Steering Committee

Jane Donahue, *co-chair*
Vice President, Deaconess Foundation

Faith Sandler, *co-chair*
*Executive Director, The Scholarship
Foundation of St. Louis*

DeAngela Burns-Wallace
*Director of Access Initiatives,
University of Missouri*

Alan Byrd
*Dean of Enrollment Services,
University of Missouri-St. Louis*

Stacy Clay
Executive Director, College Summit

Cynthia Curry Crim
*Foundation Program Manager,
Commerce Bank*

Melanie DiLeo
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Director Missouri, Community
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Myrtle Dorsey
*Chancellor, St. Louis
Community College*

Sherry Harsch-Porter
Principal, The Porter Bay Group

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Amy Basore Murphy
*Director of Scholarship and Donor
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Community Foundation*

Cheryl Polk
*Executive Vice President and Chief
Strategy and Engagement Officer,
United Way of Greater St. Louis*

Kathy Reeves
*Corporate Community Relations
Manager, Enterprise Holdings*

Allison Williams
*Senior Vice President – Programs,
Wyman Center*

Lisa Orden Zarin
Chief Executive Officer, College Bound

St. Louis Graduates Administrative Support

Laura Winter,
Project Manager

Kris Lewis,
*Team Leader, Professional
Development Institute and
Learning Circles*

Angela Whitlow,
Team Leader, Lunch & Learns

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Commerce Bank, Trustee
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Wells Fargo Advisors

About this Report

Research was designed and directed by E. Terrence Jones, professor of political science and public policy administration at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Dr. Jones was joined in the collection and analysis of the data by Cynthia Palazzolo and Marquita Bowers, both advanced political science doctoral students at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

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