



The Northeast Ohio **TALENT DIVIDEND** *... Progress by Degrees*

An Action Plan to Increase College Attainment in Northeast Ohio



Prepared by the Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education with
the support of its regional Talent Dividend Steering Committee

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Foreword

A bold vision for higher education and collaboration in the region is not new; in fact, it was the basis of NOCHE's inception sixty years ago. NOCHE's founding principles are alive today through its mission to mobilize the region's higher education and business communities for collective action that advances regional economic development.

We have much to celebrate about higher education and business in Northeast Ohio. We are the 12th largest region in the U.S. with more than four million residents and a \$140 billion economy fueled by 160,000 businesses. The region's 27 colleges and universities plus several for-profit institutions of higher education serve more than 210,000 students, a talent and resource pool with few peers in the world. Through the efforts of our education community and our partners in the business, government, and civic arenas, we have made progress in the creation, attraction, and retention of college graduates in the region.

But we must do more.

We live in a time of unprecedented economic change. More is required for Northeast Ohio to keep pace with the knowledge economy. Other regions are ahead of us in their abilities to attract talent and create new businesses. Northeast Ohio needs a plan to unite its education, business, civic, and philanthropic resources with a shared vision of talent development that meets the needs of the region's growth industry clusters. In order to meet the contemporary needs of the global economy, Northeast Ohio must increase college attainment—not just incrementally—but significantly.

We are, therefore, pleased to present this plan to increase college attainment in Northeast Ohio. While the goal is large, through focus and concerted effort we have the power to achieve it. Our future depends on it.

We offer our thanks to the NOCHE Board of Trustees and to the Talent Dividend Steering Committee for their commitment this past year. Your vision and support were key to today's plan and are essential to tomorrow's success.

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Executive Summary

The Talent Dividend provides the perfect opportunity to reap significant economic benefit for Northeast Ohio by a targeted effort to increase the level of college attainment in the region. With Ohio's rank below national averages for every age category for every level of college degrees, and the projection that almost 60% of new jobs in the state will require some postsecondary education by 2018, Northeast Ohio *must* come together to increase college attainment. Our goal is to make Northeast Ohio **the best talent pool in America**.

The Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education ("NOCHE") and leaders from around the region seized this opportunity following a September 2009 presentation by CEOs for Cities, the national network of urban leaders. At the summit held last year – sponsored by NOCHE together with the Lumina Foundation, Fund for Our Economic Future, Forest City, and The George Gund Foundation – CEOs for Cities argued its case to increase college degrees in Northeast Ohio by just one percentage point to gain an increase in regional personal income of \$2.8 billion each year. That income increase would be spread across the region's entire population, because increasing college attainment by one percentage point would raise the skill level of everyone. That income benefit is the talent dividend.

NOCHE and its Board, along with key regional partners, have set their sights on this quantifiable, achievable, and important regional goal and have been working on the development of an Action Plan for a year. A Steering Committee of stakeholders and leaders has been exploring options and likely opportunities. NOCHE partnered with the nonprofit organization Public Agenda which conducted qualitative research in Northeast Ohio to test interventions that help young people pursue and succeed in postsecondary education. With the research and advice of Public Agenda, which has been working at the national level on the Talent Dividend, the Steering Committee recommends that the region focus on the following goals:

1. improving college readiness;
2. increasing retention to degree completion; and
3. increasing degree attainment among adults with some college and no degree.

Strategies addressing one or more of these areas have been identified by the Steering Committee to help the region attain the Talent Dividend. Many stakeholders are already working on strategies to increase college attainment.

NOCHE's and the Steering Committee's ongoing job will be to build consensus around the goals, identify additional implementers, share best practices and successes, and measure progress through key metrics.

The Steering Committee recommends the following strategies:

- **increasing participation in dual enrollment programs** to help build the rigor of high school courses, allow students to become comfortable with college-level work while still in high school without full tuition costs, and give students the chance to earn college credit prior to high school graduation;
- **increasing the college knowledge** of pre-college students and families so they are familiar with the requirements for college entrance and college completion;
- **increasing social support for students** and encouragement and accountability to guide them to successful completion of college;
- **engaging employers in college recruitment** and enhancing college-going culture in the workplace;
- **expanding adult experiential learning pathways** for career advancement; and
- **providing professional development opportunities** for implementers so they can better support and inform stakeholders and the public.

The members of the Steering Committee will work with local stakeholders across the region to engage their participation in implementing one or more of these strategies.

Results of the Northeast Ohio Talent Dividend will be measured through key metrics including on-time high school graduation rate, college continuation rate, adult postsecondary participation rate, college completion rate, number of degree holders, and yearly change of degrees awarded.

Regular reports on progress will be published, including a dashboard of the key metrics. Everyone can participate in this exciting initiative by visiting NOCHE's website (www.NOCHE.org/TalentDividend) to watch progress and by engaging in individual action toward success, such as by returning to college following a hiatus due to job, family, finances or the like. We all need to commit to making the Talent Dividend a success. The success of Northeast Ohio demands it!

Introduction

What is the Talent Dividend?

While many activities to boost college attainment have been under way in Northeast Ohio for some time, CEOs for Cities helped to marshal thought and energy around the concept among a group of Northeast Ohio leaders in September of 2009 with a presentation of its case for increasing college attainment in the region. Hosted by the Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education (“NOCHE”) and sponsored by the Lumina Foundation, Fund for Our Economic Future, Forest City, and The George Gund Foundation, the Talent Dividend Summit showcased the opportunity for Northeast Ohio to systematically pursue increasing college attainment to realize a calculable economic benefit. For just a one percentage point increase in college attainment, the region could enjoy an additional \$2.8 billion in new personal income each year. This economic benefit of the new resulting talent is the talent dividend. To become more competitive, Northeast Ohio must aim for a significant increase in college attainment to build the best talent pool in the nation.

According to CEOs for Cities’ analysis, education tends to explain most differences in metro income, and the organization calculated that each percentage point increase in college attainment was associated with a \$763 increase in per capita income. This translates to about \$1,900 to \$2,290 per year for an average household of 2.5-3 people. Northeast Ohio’s attainment rate for adults 18 and older is 28.9% (2009 data). Increasing that rate to 29.9% would involve just an additional 31,000 degree holders. Furthermore, increasing any postsecondary attainment provides an economic benefit.

As a regional initiative the Northeast Ohio Talent Dividend complements statewide and national goals to boost college attainment. Ohio ranks 39th in the country in the number of bachelor’s degrees and the United States ranks 12th among 36 developed countries in the number of 25 to 34-year-olds with college degrees.

Based on a recent study by The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, by 2018 almost 60% of jobs in Ohio will require postsecondary education. In turn, new jobs requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 153,000 while jobs for high school graduates and dropouts will grow by just 29,000 (Carnivale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Increasingly, Northeast Ohioans will need postsecondary education to be competitive in the job market.

Evolution of the Action Plan

Armed with enthusiasm, statistics, and a vision for the benefits of the Talent Dividend, NOCHE embarked on planning, convening and fundraising to engage education stakeholders from across Northeast Ohio in this venture. NOCHE's first year plan included the following activities, all of which have been accomplished:

- convening and communicating with key stakeholders committed to increasing educational attainment;
- assessing the Northeast Ohio educational attainment landscape;
- identifying and obtaining necessary data in furtherance of the Talent Dividend and development of a regional “dashboard”; and
- developing a coordinated, regional Talent Dividend Action Plan to achieve the Talent Dividend and present it at an end-of-year summit.

The nonprofit and nonpartisan firm Public Agenda was consulted for strategic oversight and research, and local firm Thundertech was engaged for public relations assistance. A Steering Committee was formed, consisting of chamber, P-16 council, higher education, K-12, and business and philanthropic leaders from the region who met through the spring and summer of 2010. The group decided early to look at the best opportunities for success and to measure any postsecondary attainment through postgraduate degrees. Action teams drawn from the Steering Committee were established to draft the substance of the Action Plan to achieve the Talent Dividend.

During the summer, Public Agenda conducted three focus group sessions of 18 to 24-year-olds in Akron, Cleveland and Youngstown to assess programs that work which could assist these participants and others in going to college. Results of the study were presented to the Steering Committee in October. Among the key strategy focuses of the study were those to improve college readiness, increase retention to degree completion, and increase degree attainment among adults with some college and no degree (Public Agenda, 2010). Concerns expressed by focus group participants included not having the time and resources to go to college, not having a strong support system, and not having a clear understanding or clear expectations regarding college. That study formed the guiding principles for the Action Plan. Ultimately, the Talent Dividend Steering Committee seeks to improve Northeast Ohio students' chances for college success by identifying, supporting, implementing or replicating programs that work.

Northeast Ohio's Opportunity

Northeast Ohio is home to numerous institutions of higher education and more than 210,000 enrolled college students, as well as 160,000 companies that offer college students a wide range of employment opportunities. Its 4.1 million residents contribute to a \$140 billion regional economy, making it the 12th largest region in the United States. With that abundance, the region clearly has the resources to educate the talent to meet the needs of the region's businesses, and a coordinated effort among a variety of stakeholders will only enhance the opportunity. That is the ultimate purpose of the Talent Dividend initiative: to forge a cross-community collaboration championing and facilitating college attainment to produce the talent to fuel Northeast Ohio's economic resurgence.

A role model in regional collaboration is the Fund for Our Economic Future. The Fund has been working since 2004 "to encourage and advance a regional competitiveness agenda which will lead to long-term economic revitalization" (Fund for Our Economic Future, 2010), and has succeeded in bringing together many stakeholders to further its purpose as a philanthropic collaboration. It has also recognized the importance of talent development and lists it as one of the group's four strategic priorities in its June 2010 Phase 2 Report.

The Talent Dividend initiative seeks to develop the talent in the region by cultivating a heightened awareness of the importance of postsecondary education to personal and regional success, and enhancing and replicating programs that drive college completion.

National Talent Dividend Network

Northeast Ohio is not alone in its pursuit of strategies for college attainment. CEOs for Cities' initial Talent Dividend Tour took the concept across the country and inspired initiatives in other locations, although most of these efforts are city-focused. While no one approach for achieving the Talent Dividend has been singled out, a number of sites are exploring their own quests, with different leadership organizations involved depending on the local landscape. Cincinnati, Memphis and Milwaukee are moving forward in their work, and those cities along with others are cited in Public Agenda's "Inventory of Talent Dividend Sites" which Lara Birnback prepared for NOCHE (personal communication, October 22, 2010).

Northeast Ohio is also participating in a National Talent Dividend Network, spearheaded by national consultant FutureWorks, and NOCHE staff attended an October 2010 Network conference in Cincinnati. The Network provides key data, research, best practices and advice for participants, and keeps Northeast Ohio visible in the national progress.

Achieving the Talent Dividend

This report is a culmination of these year-long efforts and a roadmap to raise college attainment in Northeast Ohio. The good news is that many organizations, colleges and universities, school districts, and others are already heavily engaged in activities that will further college attainment and help achieve the Talent Dividend. The challenge we all face in implementing these ideas is to build on the level of energy and engagement of stakeholders which has marked this planning year. NOCHE will continue to convene stakeholders, implementers, and champions of achievement; build alignment around strategies and goals; showcase successes and best practices; advertise to the region's citizens the critical importance of going to college; and measure our progress. We invite all of you to do your part.

Northeast Ohio's College Attainment Landscape

With hundreds of K-12 school districts, thousands of businesses, dozens of civic and educational nonprofit organizations, and one of the largest networks of institutions of higher education in the country, Northeast Ohio has remarkable resources for increasing college attainment. In fact, many organizations are already addressing key themes of college attainment such as pre-college readiness, retention of current college students, and adult degree attainment. This section contains examples of several efforts; however, the list is not comprehensive. In fact, the landscape is constantly expanding.

With respect to **improving college readiness**, most higher education institutions offer dual enrollment programs. Many organizations, such as Mahoning Valley's College Access Program, the Stark Education Partnership, Lorain County's Urban League and GEAR UP, offer matriculation information and support for high school students. STEM education is also vital for readiness, and public schools in Akron, Canton and Cleveland, for example, provide critical STEM preparation. Organizations such as Cleveland Scholarship Programs and Ashtabula County's ACCESS program promote scholarship and financial aid education to support readiness.

Many programs and initiatives exist to **increase college retention**. Counselors at Stark State College, Notre Dame College and Youngstown State University, for example, intervene during and after each semester to ensure student continuation. Also, institutions are reforming their curricula to help retain students. Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga Community College and Lorain County Community College, for example, offer learning studios or specialized learning communities to help retain students. Cleveland State University, Kent State University, The University of Akron and Youngstown State University have articulation agreements or partnerships with community colleges which ensure efficient and effective transfers from two-year programs into four-year programs, facilitated in large part by the Ohio Board of Regents' credit transfer initiative.

Organizations such as the Lake/Geauga Educational Assistance Foundation and Cleveland Scholarship Programs offer scholarships and financial literacy training to assist students while they are in school. Moreover, the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce and Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, for instance, use their young professionals' initiatives to retain students during school and after graduation.

Along with efforts to improve college readiness and increase retention, endeavors exist to **increase degree attainment among adults with some college and no degree**. Perhaps the most salient examples are accelerated, evening and weekend (e.g., the Weekend College at Hiram College), and online programs (e.g., distance learning at Kent State University). Institutions throughout the region offer these programs to accommodate the needs of adults. Specialized programs offer support services or funding for adults, such as Lorain County Community College’s “Make Your Layoff Payoff” program, Kent State University’s “Literacy and Independence for Family Education” program for single parents and Cleveland State University’s Veteran Student Success program. Workforce development initiatives, particularly those offered through Workforce Investment Boards or Adult Career Centers, also provide support for degree-seeking adults.

Employers, too, are key players in college attainment. Some employers have education available in the workplace. For instance, Cleveland State University offers a bachelor’s in business administration at Progressive Insurance, and Ashland University teaches master’s in education courses in various school districts. Employers offer tuition support as well.

Education and the Economy—By the Numbers

By 2018, nearly 60% of all jobs in Ohio will require education beyond a high school diploma (Carnivale et al., 2010). Moreover, as the region’s industry clusters grow—such as advanced manufacturing or biomedical and life sciences—the need for a skilled workforce will as well. Additionally, Carnivale et al. note that

- new job creation or retirement will create 1.7 million job vacancies in Ohio;
- between now and 2018, the pace of job growth for college graduates will exceed high school graduates resulting in five times as many jobs for those with a postsecondary credential than for those with a high school diploma;
- the difference in median earnings between those with an associate's degree and those with no college is \$8,356 in Ohio (2007 data), a greater difference than in most states;
- the difference in median earnings between those with a bachelor's degree and those with no college is \$19,650 in Ohio (2007 data), a greater difference than in most states; and
- Ohio lags the national average in the percentage of older workers enrolled in postsecondary education (the seven states below Ohio are Arkansas,

Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Louisiana).

The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio (2010) indicates that states “whose populations have proportionately more bachelor's degrees than Ohio also have higher family incomes.” This chart provides comparative information.

MSA	2009 Educational Attainment (those 25+ with a bachelor's or higher)	2009 Per capita income
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	43.5%	\$38,448
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	42.2%	\$36,174
Baltimore-Towson, MD	34.7%	\$32,994
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	34.1%	\$27,380
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	30.8%	\$27,523
Buffalo-Niagara Falls	28.2%	\$25,984
Pittsburgh, PA	27.9%	\$26,856
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	26.3%	\$25,240
Northeast Ohio	24.8%	\$24,724
Memphis, TN-AR-MS	24.2%	\$22,585

Goals and Rationale

Upon consultation with CEOs for Cities, FutureWorks, Public Agenda, and leaders in Northeast Ohio, the Talent Dividend Steering Committee determined that the region will achieve its Talent Dividend if it

- improves college readiness,
- increases retention to degree completion, and
- increases degree attainment among adults with some college and no degree.

In her book about youth aspirations for college, Dunnivan (2008) notes that “fractured systems between K-12 and higher education institutions, inequalities throughout systems in college counseling, college preparation, course offerings, and connections with postsecondary institutions contribute to the reality that although students aspire to attend college, many students do not successfully make the transition because they lack confidence in their academic preparation as well as the knowledge of how to make the transition” (p. 10). Through research, it is known that successful transition to college depends upon adequate education and personal preparation (Conway, 2007; Dunnivan, 2008). Therefore, the Steering Committee designated improving college readiness as its first goal.

Successful transition into college must be followed by successful completion of degree programs. As recently as September 2010, the Southern Regional Education Board (2010) offered policy recommendations to increase college completion that included a focus on increasing student retention to degree completion. Public Agenda (2009) conducted research for the Gates Foundation exploring reasons why students leave college without finishing, which led to findings that challenge the historical view of the typical college student. The report indicated that substantial numbers of today’s college students are working more hours and financially supporting themselves through college (Public Agenda). Public Agenda concluded that “college and university officials, state and federal policymakers, employers, foundations, and other advocates trying to ramp up college completion need to take a fresh, clear-eyed look at their current assumptions and practices” (p. 3). The Steering Committee designated as its second goal increasing retention to degree completion to devote attention to this demonstrated need.

Adult learners are an afterthought in American higher education, and they are often at risk for failing to complete postsecondary degree programs (Pusser et al., 2007). In addition to balancing work and family obligations, they often navigate higher education systems designed for younger, full-time students (Pusser et al.). A study funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education conducted at the University of Virginia Curry School of Education found that “[a]dult learners’ varying life circumstances require postsecondary policymakers, institutional leaders and other stakeholders to provide convenient and affordable access, create flexible subsidies and develop innovative planning tools to increase student success” (Pusser et al., p. 2). For these reasons, the Steering Committee designated its third goal to be increasing degree attainment among adults with some college and no degree.

Strategic Initiatives

The Talent Dividend Steering Committee, through the work of three Action Teams established to develop strategies to meet each of the three goals, collectively identified six strategic initiatives to undertake as part of the Talent Dividend. Each initiative includes suggested measures to track progress, which will be monitored by both implementers and Steering Committee members.

I. Increase Participation in Dual Enrollment Programs

What It Is

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to receive credit on a high school and college transcript simultaneously. Different types of dual enrollment programs are offered. Early College, Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), Career Tech Prep, and Seniors to Sophomores are some of the programs in which students can earn college credit prior to high school graduation.

Why It Is Important

With respect to college readiness, dual enrollment programs build the rigor of high school curricula and help students become comfortable with college-level coursework. Additionally, families save money because they do not pay full tuition costs. In fact, some students can even earn an entire year's worth of college credit prior to high school graduation.

From a college retention standpoint, dual enrollment enables students to earn at least 20 credits by the end of their first year in college, a key indicator of college success. A report for the U.S. Department of Education (2006) notes that

[l]ess than 20 credits by the end of the first calendar year of enrollment (no matter what term one started, whether summer, fall, winter, spring) is a serious drag on degree completion...It is all the more reason to begin the transition process in high school with expanded dual enrollment programs offering true postsecondary coursework so that students enter higher education with a minimum of six additive credits...Six is good, nine better, and twelve is a guarantee of momentum (p. xx).

Measuring Progress

The use of dual enrollment programs can be measured through headcounts or number of courses or credits successfully completed. The data may be available from colleges and school districts, but care must be taken not to double-count dual enrollment students.

II. Increase College Knowledge

What It Is

College students and their families need to be familiar with the requirements for college entrance and college completion. “College Knowledge” includes college and career aspirations, admission and entrance exam requirements, appropriate course selection, and financial literacy.

Increasing College Knowledge may occur through targeted communications or special events that teach prospective students and their families about college going. For adults with some college and no degree, “education blitz” events, which have been implemented in other regions with great success (Muchmore, 2010), can bring together colleges and universities, employers, and potential students to offer targeted seminars and college fairs for adult learners.

Why It Is Important

According to Public Agenda (2010), the “[l]ack of information and support about college and financial aid decisions is an avoidable barrier to postsecondary education” (p. 11). Potential college students, particularly first-generation students and low-income students, need counseling to support a college-going culture. Adult learners often lack knowledge of college programs, employer benefits, credit transfer policies, or they may be generally fearful of returning to the classroom. Nearly three-quarters of students surveyed by Public Agenda (2009) supported programs to work with advisors to make good decisions about college.

Measuring Progress

Measuring progress for College Knowledge includes tracking the number of communications and events designed to offer counseling to prospective students, the number of participants at the events, event evaluations or pre- and

post-event tests, and the number of students attending an event who enroll at a postsecondary institution.

III. Increase Social Support, Encouragement, and Accountability

What It Is

Once students—especially first-generation students—arrive on campus, they often need guidance to successfully complete their degree programs. First Year Experience programming, learning communities, financial literacy seminars, and career and academic advising provide support that is critical to retention. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (2010) notes that engagement beyond the classroom also helps student retention.

Why It Is Important

The Gates Foundation (2010)—through its Completion by Design initiative—and Public Agenda (2010) underscore the need for a holistic and systematic approach to achieving these objectives. Many first-generation students require “hand-holding” and therefore need proactive interventions and intense monitoring that hold them accountable. Additionally, consistent and continual career advising and personalized academic advising have been shown to predict persistence and degree completion, as have First Year Experience programming, learning communities, and other cohort strategies (e.g., group tutoring or study skills sessions).

Measuring Progress

Colleges and universities may track the socioeconomic status of enrolling students, including non-native English speaking and first-generation data; the number of high school graduates with a degree, certificate, or college hours earned; the number of students continuing their education in the region; and the overall success rate for both two-year and four-year degrees. Correlating these measurements enables institutions to monitor what programs work and for whom.

IV. Engage Employers in College Recruitment

What It Is

Employers and human resource professionals should take the lead in conducting outreach to adults with some college and no degree in order to recruit them back to college. Current adult learners or successful graduates may partner with the employers to provide testimonials that returning to college is possible despite competing demands for their time and attention. Employers should use this opportunity to disseminate information about their programs to make college going possible for adult students (e.g., flexible work schedules or tuition reimbursements). Initiatives in other regions (Greater Milwaukee Committee, 2010) have shown successful results in direct employer-to-student outreach.

Why It Is Important

In a focus group study in Northeast Ohio, Public Agenda (2010) found that “[f]or many young adults, balancing the financial and time demands of college with work were seen as the greatest barriers to enrollment” (p. 5). Colleges and universities engage in targeted student recruitment for adult learners, but encouragement directly from the prospective student’s employer may make the transition back to the classroom more attainable. Northeast Ohio needs to improve the college-going culture in the workplace, including messages about the economic benefit of earning postsecondary credentials.

Measuring Progress

Measuring progress on engaging employers includes tracking the number of employers who have college-friendly practices and the number of those employers engaging in outreach with their employees. Other measurements include the number of adults with some college and no degree who enroll in a postsecondary program as a result of employer outreach.

V. Expand Adult Experiential Learning Pathways

What It Is

Earning a postsecondary credential is only one point on a continuum for college students, a continuum that for adult learners may include prior college coursework, previous work experience, and even a commitment to remain with an employer in exchange for tuition benefits. Pathways for adult learners should

include expanded prior learning assessments and awarding of credits by colleges and universities, and expanded tuition benefits in exchange for terms of service by employers. In addition, pathways may include co-ops or internships, common practices for traditionally-aged students but less available to adult learners.

Why It Is Important

Northeast Ohio has more than half-a-million residents with some college and no degree, a figure that undoubtedly includes adults who are ready and willing to return to college given the strong connections between postsecondary credentials and career advancement. Here the goal is more than to award more college degrees; it is to put adult learners on a pathway to career advancement that aligns with critical industry sector and market needs in Northeast Ohio. Also important is to create “stackable” course programs that build upon each other and eventually lead to degree attainment. Research has shown that it is easier to attract and retain adult learners if they build their postsecondary education around an associate degree and certificates that build to a bachelor’s and advanced degrees.

Measuring Progress

Measuring progress on expanded pathways includes tracking the number of colleges and universities that offer credit for prior learning or work experience, the amount of credit that is awarded, and the number of employers that encourage college going through tuition benefits.

VI. Provide Professional Development for Implementers

What It Is

Regional collaboration and sharing of best practices must occur to achieve the Talent Dividend in Northeast Ohio, particularly related to the aforementioned strategies. To that end, site-based or web-based regional conferences or meetings should be convened to increase participants’ knowledge of the research and practices in dual enrollment, college knowledge, student support services, employer engagement, and adult experiential learning pathways. Conferences should not only bring together local stakeholders, but also attract national experts who can provide counseling to our regional implementers on their initiatives.

Why It Is Important

The Talent Dividend Steering Committee identified initiatives and implementers that have been successful in increasing college going and degree attainment, and those efforts should be shared across the region. Providing hands-on opportunities for leaders and practitioners to convene and share their practices for others to replicate is a cornerstone of the Talent Dividend. In addition, initiatives outside of Northeast Ohio may be worthy of our attention, and bringing experts to our region to advise us is equally important.

Measuring Progress

Measuring progress on professional development includes tracking the number of conferences or meetings, the number of attendees, and written evaluations of the events. Evaluations following the conferences may assess how the sharing of knowledge has impacted practices across the region.

Key Implementers

The implementation of this strategic plan depends upon the continuing leadership of NOCHE, the Talent Dividend Steering Committee and regional stakeholders and implementers. No single stakeholder or implementer will achieve the Talent Dividend. Instead, a coalition must form in order to achieve its goals. The members of the Steering Committee will work with local stakeholders across the region to engage their participation in implementing one or more of the Talent Dividend strategies. The Council on Competitiveness (2010) found that “effective regional leadership bodies rely on existing regional organizations that can set agendas, call meetings, recruit new leaders, etc. While these organizations can and do vary in form, they all serve as systems integrators and enablers of collaboration” (p. 6). To that end, the Steering Committee has identified potential implementers in five major categories.

First, unsurprisingly, the Steering Committee identified **educational stakeholders** consisting of institutions of higher education, secondary schools, P-16/P-20 councils, and others. Northeast Ohio is home to 27 public and private nonprofit colleges and universities plus several for-profit institutions, a resource that few other regions worldwide can match. Among these institutions of higher education are NOCHE members Case Western Reserve University, Chancellor University, Cleveland Institute of Music, Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga Community College, Hiram College, Eastern Gateway Community College, Kent State University, Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College, Malone University, Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine & Pharmacy, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Stark State College of Technology, The University of Akron, and Youngstown State University. This category includes university partnerships such as that at Lorain County Community College.

Second, the **business community** is essential to the Talent Dividend. Companies large and small, chambers of commerce, and other private industry partners are important implementers.

Third, **industry associations and nonprofits** comprise a major category of potential implementers. This category includes Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, Boys and Girls Club, Center for Community College Development, El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Greater Cleveland Superintendents’ Association, KnowledgeWorks, Ohio Association for College Admission Counseling, Ohio Association of Community Colleges, Ohio Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators, Ohio College Access

Network, Ohio Grant Makers Forum, Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges, Inter-University Council, The Urban League, YWCA, and workforce development agencies. This category may also include churches and teacher associations such as Ohio Education Association and Ohio Federation of Teachers.

Fourth, **state agencies** such as the Chancellor of the University System of Ohio, the Ohio Board of Regents, and the Ohio Department of Education may be key implementers.

Fifth, **foundation support** will be critical to fund not only new initiatives that emerge from the Talent Dividend, but also to continue funding the Northeast Ohio Talent Dividend through NOCHE. NOCHE will be the convener and coordinator of the Talent Dividend—a role required to maintain a regional approach and hold implementers accountable.

The Steering Committee anticipates that this represents only a partial list of implementers for the Talent Dividend. As a regional initiative, the Talent Dividend requires a “boundaryless” approach to identifying implementation partners. The Council on Competitiveness (2010) observes that “the point of boundary crossing is to build bridges to new regional partners” (p. 48). NOCHE will continue to identify and convene stakeholders; local leaders will help do the same at their level. Important implementers will undoubtedly emerge as the work of the Steering Committee continues.

Measuring Success

CEOs for Cities has prescribed four “Golden Metrics” which are key to measuring the region’s progress toward increasing college attainment, to which NOCHE has added two, and Public Agenda has identified ways to measure them. Those metrics are the following:

- on-time high school graduation rate,
- college continuation rate,
- adult postsecondary participation rate,
- college completion rate,
- number of degree holders, and
- yearly change of degrees awarded.

The Ohio Department of Education publishes on-time high school graduation rates annually. These rates are for all public school districts in Ohio. “On-time” means the student graduated after completing his or her coursework and all standardized tests, allowing up to seven years for the student to finish high school.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s “American Community Survey” and the National Student Clearinghouse “Student Tracker” data are available each year. These sources provide data on college continuation rates, adult postsecondary participation rates, and the number of degree holders. College continuation rates indicate the number of 18 to 24-year-olds enrolled in a higher education institution; adult postsecondary participation rates signify the number of 25-year-olds or older enrolled in a higher education institution; the number of degree holders measures those age 18 and older with associate, bachelor, or graduate credentials. Certificates are not counted.

College completion rates indicate the proportion of first-time, full-time students who enroll in one of Northeast Ohio’s public or private higher education institutions, including regional campuses, and earn their credential in 150% of time (three years for two-year institutions and six years for four-year institutions). Part-time or returning students are not measured. IPEDS, from the U.S. Department of Education, provides this data for Northeast Ohio institutions.

The yearly change of degrees awarded computes the difference in the number of degrees conferred at Northeast Ohio’s colleges and universities from

one year to the next. To measure the yearly change of degrees awarded, NOCHE will compile Ohio Board of Regents data with Common Data Set data and report this metric.

The Steering Committee began its conversation about the Talent Dividend by considering a one percentage point increase in college attainment and its correlative economic benefit. A one percentage point increase in college attainment would mean 31,000 more degree holders and would result in a \$2.8 billion annual improvement in the regional economy. While the Steering Committee believes the one percentage point increase is attainable, it also believes that the region needs to move further and faster to secure a competitive edge in the United States. The Steering Committee will identify specific college attainment targets for this initiative, reviewing recent trends and using the following baseline metrics from 2009 data:

On-time high school graduation rate:	82.0%
College continuation rate:	40.8%
Adult postsecondary participation rate:	3.9%
College completion rate:	39.05%
Number of degree holders:	851,193
Yearly change in degrees awarded (from 2008 to 2009):	+4,584 (+12.76%)

NOCHE will maintain a transparent and accessible “dashboard” on which stakeholders and the public can view these metrics. The dashboard will be updated annually. Also, each quarter, the Talent Dividend Steering Committee will monitor the individual measures of progress for each of the six strategies identified in this plan.

Making the Case

Communication of the Talent Dividend’s vision, goals, initiatives, and successes is an essential part of the implementation of this Action Plan. Regional collaboration on the Talent Dividend requires awareness of current college attainment levels, projected market demands for college-educated workers in the region, and the means by which we can meet future labor needs. Awareness of the correlation between college attainment and per capita income will provide a tangible incentive among stakeholders to participate in the Talent Dividend. In addition to situational awareness, awareness of the initiatives in this plan will provide specific, actionable steps that regional stakeholders and implementers can take in order to achieve the Talent Dividend. Awareness of successes will reinforce the viability of the Talent Dividend and provide examples for future implementers to follow.

Goals

The goals of the Talent Dividend communication plan are to

- build broad-based regional support for the Talent Dividend, and
- solicit participation in the Talent Dividend among potential implementers.

Audiences, Objectives and Messages

Build Broad-based Regional Support for the Talent Dividend.

Market segments for building regional support include industry sectors (e.g., business, higher education, civic, etc.), educational attainment (e.g., some college and no degree, bachelor’s attainment, graduate or professional degree), and city or county (e.g., Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Youngstown). Target audiences include leaders in business, community, and higher education, as well as current and future students enrolled in postsecondary education. The leaders value postsecondary education for its contributions to both economic development and personal enrichment. Regional leaders also recognize the need for increased college attainment given current demands for recruiting new employers to Northeast Ohio and projected demands for jobs requiring postsecondary education in the region.

The objectives of communications to build regional support will be to

- cultivate an understanding of the personal and regional importance of a college education,
- dispense targeted messages about the Talent Dividend and its goals,
- identify and publicize practices that work to achieve the Talent Dividend, and
- make known the connection between college attainment and economic benefit.

Messages for building regional support will reinforce the need for postsecondary education, the labor trends, the value education adds personally and professionally, and the work already being done in the region to achieve the Talent Dividend.

Solicit Participation in the Talent Dividend Among Potential Implementers.

Market segments for soliciting participation include the categories named above, and might also include the goals and strategies in this Action Plan (i.e., improving college readiness, increasing college retention, and increasing attainment among adults with some college and no degree). Target audiences include those implementers named in this Action Plan as well as implementers not yet identified by the Steering Committee.

The objectives of communications to solicit participation will be to

- engage the implementers identified in this plan on an ongoing basis, and
- encourage new implementers to become involved in the Talent Dividend.

Messages about soliciting participation will explain the Talent Dividend, convey the need for regional collaboration, and offer ways that implementers can contribute to the initiative.

Activities, Assessment and Timeline

Communication activities will include a variety of methods and media, including direct communications via email, postal mail, telephone, and face-to-face meetings; and mass media via media relations and advertising through

display ads, radio, or television. A Talent Dividend website (www.noche.org/TalentDividend) will disseminate a variety of information about the initiative. A social media outreach effort will be included in the communications activities as well.

NOCHE will begin its focus with goal one, building broad-based regional support, while the initial activities of the Steering Committee will be focused upon goal two, soliciting participation. Specific activities, assessments, and timelines will be established as the work of the Steering Committee continues.

Going Forward

NOCHE and the Steering Committee will work together to implement the Talent Dividend Action Plan. NOCHE will continue to serve as the regional coordinator to bring people together in this initiative, championing the effort to build broad-based support, cultivating the participation of regional stakeholders and their commitment to work toward achieving the Talent Dividend, and raising media awareness. The members of the Steering Committee will work with local stakeholders across the region to engage their participation in implementing one or more of the Talent Dividend strategy recommendations. Specifically, NOCHE will coordinate Talent Dividend activities across Northeast Ohio, work to align strategies and goals, assist in the identification and sharing of best practices, facilitate collaborations to replicate successful programs, collect data and measure outcomes. To this end, NOCHE will refine a Talent Dividend dashboard of key metrics to monitor progress and publicize regional successes along the road to building the best talent pool in America.

NOCHE is the only organization in Northeast Ohio, and one of the few in the country, which brings together the higher education and business communities specifically to collaborate to advance economic development in the region. As a nonprofit consortium of colleges, universities and business leaders which promotes higher education and economic development in Northeast Ohio, NOCHE is therefore in an ideal position to lead the Talent Dividend. NOCHE is the appropriate education organization to lead a college attainment initiative among Northeast Ohio residents.

The Talent Dividend aligns well with statewide goals to boost the college graduation rate – with Ohio ranking 39th in the country in the number of bachelor’s degrees – and national efforts to do the same – with the United States now ranking 12th among 36 developed countries in the number of 25 to 34-year-olds with college degrees. The Northeast Ohio Talent Dividend therefore is the regional component of a much larger effort to raise college attainment. Not only does Northeast Ohio want to be the best, it needs to be the best to improve the economic vibrancy of the region. The average college graduate earns about 66% more than a high school graduate over a lifetime, and other data show that the unemployment rate in the recession is 5% less for bachelor’s degree holders than for high school graduates. Coupled with that is CEOs for Cities’ data on the income benefit to a region derived from increasing college attainment by even one percentage point, which for Northeast Ohio would be about \$2.8 billion annually.

Some measures of college attainment show Northeast Ohio's numbers gradually increasing, albeit very slowly. Changes in per capita income, however, are either stagnant or decreasing, especially given the effects of the current recession. With these trends in mind, the college attainment needle must move forward as quickly as possible, and with a coordinated region-wide effort we should be able to amplify and accelerate current trends. With the metrics identified in this report, the Steering Committee will be tracking key indicators of college attainment. Importantly, these numbers will be updated annually and course adjustments will be recommended to address the region's immediate needs.

Ohio has had a series of higher education studies and goals capture its attention in the last decade which can assist here. Notably, the 2004 Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, chaired by Northeast Ohio's Richard W. Pogue, and the legislatively created 2007 Northeast Ohio Universities Collaboration and Innovation Study Commission, chaired by Ted Boyd, both offered college participation and/or completion goals, recognizing the importance of postsecondary education to the state's and the region's economy. Similarly, Ohio recently has made college a priority as a matter of state policy, setting college enrollment and attainment goals for Ohio to become more competitive (230,000 more enrollees and 20% more graduates by 2017). The Ohio Board of Regents' (2008) Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2008-2017 noted the conundrum that Northeast Ohio likewise faces, for although college attainment may be going up, "Ohio will not advance economically if our rate of improvement is slower than our competitors around the country and the world...Therefore the educational attainment of Ohio's workforce must catch up with outside competitors" (p. 23).

With regional efforts under way to capitalize on targeted business sector growth opportunities (e.g., MAGNET, manufacturing; BioEnterprise, biomedical; NorTech, technology clusters; JumpStart, entrepreneurship), and with regional collaboration for government and economic development efficiencies being spearheaded effectively by the Fund for Our Economic Future, a focus on college attainment is clearly required next. The educational and economic shortfalls burdening the region provide the motivation for this endeavor, because without a concentrated focus on improving our college attainment numbers, personal and regional economic growth will continue to lag. Northeast Ohio has the colleges and universities to support the effort, and with the call to action from key regional stakeholders on the Talent Dividend Steering Committee and beyond, a meaningful increase in college attainment, and the resultant economic benefits, will be realized.

Appendix A: Organization Profiles

About CEOs for Cities

CEOs for Cities (www.ceosforcities.org) is a civic lab of today's urban leaders catalyzing a movement to advance the next generation of great American cities. With support from the Lumina Foundation, CEOs for Cities has visited 35 cities to introduce urban leaders to the Talent Dividend. Carol Coletta, President and CEO, and Bridget Marquis, Program Director, are CEOs for Cities' key personnel supporting efforts of the Talent Dividend Network. CEOs for Cities is working in close partnership with FutureWorks to implement and support the Talent Dividend Network.

About FutureWorks

FutureWorks (www.futureworks-web.com), a consulting and policy development firm, is leading the design and implementation of the Talent Dividend Network. FutureWorks designs and builds strategies and institutions that promote sustainable, skill-based regional economic growth. Brian Bosworth, President and Founder of FutureWorks, is the senior person leading the National Talent Dividend Network. Others on the FutureWorks team are Stephen Michon, Vice President, Professor Malo Hutson, of the University of California Berkeley's Department of City and Regional Planning, and Joe Cortright, economist and principal of Impresa Consulting.

About the Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education (“NOCHE”)

Celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2011, NOCHE (www.noche.org) is a unique nonprofit collaborative encompassing 16 counties, 160,000 businesses, and more than 210,000 degree-seeking students at 27 public and private nonprofit colleges and universities plus several for-profit institutions of higher education. NOCHE's mission is to mobilize Northeast Ohio's higher education and business communities for collective action that advances regional economic development. Key personnel leading the Talent Dividend are Robert Reffner, Chairman of NOCHE's Board and Vice President, Legal, at FirstEnergy, and Ann Womer Benjamin, Executive Director of NOCHE.

About Public Agenda

Public Agenda (www.publicagenda.org), a nonprofit and nonpartisan public opinion research and public engagement organization, works to

strengthen the American democracy's capacity to tackle tough public policy issues. For over 30 years, Public Agenda has been providing unbiased and unparalleled research that bridges the gap between American leaders and what the public really thinks about issues ranging from education to foreign policy to immigration to religion and civility in American life. Jonathan Rochkind, Vice President and Director of Research, has been the lead liaison to Northeast Ohio's Talent Dividend.

About Thundertech

Thundertech (www.thundertech.com) is an integrated marketing agency based in Cleveland, Ohio, that provides services in the areas of web, graphic design, interactive media, video, public relations, social media and advertising. Using an innovative mix of capabilities, Thundertech builds and executes comprehensive marketing plans for clients using a variety of traditional and new media. The company's representatives to the Talent Dividend are Michael Schwabe and Misty Fry.

Appendix B: Northeast Ohio Talent Dividend Steering Committee and Action Team Members

Bethia Burke
Manager of Emerging Initiatives, Fund for
Our Economic Future

Daniel C. Colantone
President and CEO, Greater Akron Chamber

Roseann Canfora
Deputy Chief of Strategic Communications,
Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Dewey Chapman
Superintendent, Portage County Education
Service Center

Jani Davis
Director, Westfield Foundation

Cathy Dietlin
Executive Director, REACHhigher P-16
Council

Gloria Dunnivan
Director, Dual Enrollment Programs, Kent
State University

Maryann Dwyer
Executive Director, Lake/Geauga
Educational Assistance Foundation

Holly Harris Bane
Associate Vice President for Strategic
Initiatives and Engagement, The University
of Akron

Edward "Ned" Hill
Dean, Levin College of Urban Affairs,
Cleveland State University

Thomas Humphries
President and CEO, Youngstown/Warren
Regional Chamber

David Kaminski
Director of Education and Government
Affairs, Canton Regional Chamber of
Commerce

Kimberly A. Landis
Executive Director, Ashtabula County
Continued Education Support Services

Cathy Mansor
Dean of the Weekend College, Hiram
College

Shana Marbury
General Counsel & Director, Strategic
Initiatives, Greater Cleveland Partnership

Cynthia McDowell Lazor
Vice President, Programs, Stark Community
Foundation

Theresa Nielsen
Admissions Counselor, Weekend College,
Hiram College

Adrienne O'Neill
President, Stark Education Partnership

Robert Reffner
Vice President, Legal, FirstEnergy (NOCHE
Board Chair)

Joseph Rochford
Vice President, Stark Education Partnership

Stephanie Shaw
Executive Director, Eastern Ohio P-16
Partnership for Education

Ann Kowal Smith
Project Manager, Education Works

Christopher Thompson
Director of Marketing, Communications,
and Civic Outreach, Fund for Our Economic
Future

Thomas Waltermire
President and CEO, Team NEO

Karen Wells
Provost and Vice President of Academic &
Learner Services, Lorain County Community
College

Rebecca Guzy Woodford
Senior Vice President, Greater Akron
Chamber

Linda Williams
Senior Director of Education Services,
Ideastream

Ann Womer Benjamin
Executive Director, Northeast Ohio Council
on Higher Education

**Action Team on Improving College
Readiness**

Gloria Dunnivan, Chair
Maryann Dwyer
Kimberly Landis
Cindy Lazor
Shana Marbury
Stephanie Shaw

**Action Team on Increasing Retention
to Degree Completion**

Karen Wells, Chair
Bethia Burke
Cathy Dietlin
Joe Rochford
Chris Thompson
Tom Waltermire

**Action Team on Increasing Degree
Attainment among Adults with Some
College and No Degree**

David Kaminski, Chair
Dan Colantone
Jani Davis
Barbara Hanniford (Action Team Guest
Member and Dean of Continuing Education,
Cleveland State University)
Holly Harris Bane
Terrie Nielsen
Linda Williams

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