



## HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE ST. LOUIS REGION

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### HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE ST. LOUIS REGION

Higher education in the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area has a pervasive influence on the health and prosperity of this region. The St. Louis community is blessed with six four-year independent teaching universities, two major independent research universities, two prolific public research institutions, a growing four-year state teacher's university, and two thriving junior college districts – not to mention more than a dozen proprietary post-secondary schools in St. Louis and adjacent communities.

### DIRECT REVENUES

Area colleges and universities have an immediate effect on our community's economy through their annual revenues. Postsecondary institutions in the St. Louis area collectively employ more than 31,000 individuals and serve more than 152,000 students per year.<sup>1</sup> Based on available data, we can reasonably assume that the yearly incomes of the postsecondary schools in the St. Louis area sum to approximately \$2.5 billion, which is the *direct stream* of cash flowing into this region from college and university business activity.<sup>2</sup> However, the financial stimulus does not end there.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

Businesses, including institutions of higher learning, generate a second-level boost to commerce through a type of ripple effect that occurs when cash is transferred from consumers to providers. In the business of higher learning, this ripple effect includes extra money spent by students in addition to their college tuition and fees; thousands of jobs created and supported via the construction projects, goods, and services drawn into our community by the postsecondary schools; as well, the money earned and spent by the employees of all of the vendors involved with those enterprises. The combination of the immediate and secondary monetary consequences of

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this collective economic activity is referred to as the *economic impact* that an industry has on a region's commerce, and it is usually inferred by doubling a business's annual revenues. Higher education's annual fiscal impact on the St. Louis region, then, is an estimated \$5 billion.

## **TERTIARY EFFECT: SPINOFFS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

### **Entrepreneurial Spinoffs**

Shane (2004) has noted that universities spur their local economy via four means: (a) through "localized economic impact," which already has been addressed here; (b) by generating new jobs, which will be discussed later in this piece; (c) through university-based technological advances; (d) relatedly, through production of new products. This section examines the latter two catalysts.<sup>3</sup>

Each of the four research universities in our region contributes in its own way to the development of technologies, businesses, and product innovation or refinement. In 2006, for example, the University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL) joined forces with Express Scripts to found a research center designed to be an IT incubator with the purpose of assisting fledgling companies driven by high-performance computing.<sup>4</sup> This kind of initiative not only improves technological capabilities and services for humankind in general but can potentially spawn a wealth of new employment opportunities for the increasingly technological new college graduates produced by area institutions.

Washington University in St. Louis has long been known for its contributions to research and development in the disciplines of biology and plant science, having worked for many years with the Monsanto Corporation and the St. Louis Center for Emerging Technologies. The patents and products produced by these entrepreneurial partnerships enhance not only area commerce and industry but the region's image as well.

These outcomes, in turn, tend to attract additional grant monies, businesses, and professionals to St. Louis.

To the same productive ends, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) sponsors the National Corn to Ethanol Research Center, which is a major participant nationally in the nascent but important industry of renewable fuels. The commercial promise of that budding industry is large, and, through the involvement of SIUE, our Metropolitan Area will likely be a hub for this mission-critical enterprise.

Saint Louis University (SLU) has not only sparked innumerable area business startups through its Center for Entrepreneurship but also has registered literally dozens of product patents stemming from scientific research conducted on its campus.<sup>5</sup>

Citing data provided by the National Science Foundation, Bezold (2005) noted that our region's four research universities accounted for a \$478 million investment in basic and applied scientific research in 2002.<sup>6</sup> The immediate and indirect economic impact of that investment on our community must be considered substantial by any measure.

### **Community Health Spinoffs**

Beyond their material and commercial thrusts, universities generate a variety of other desirable enterprises in their communities, including several health-care and medical research initiatives. Washington University and SLU have earned acclaim for their progressive research



and treatment programs in St. Louis hospitals. Washington University's medical school works with Children's Hospital and Barnes-Jewish Hospital to provide both groundbreaking medical research and state-of-the-art treatment options for the region's citizens. In another sector of the city, SLU Hospital serves as a teaching venue for future medical professionals even as it provides more than 350 beds dedicated to progressive patient care. It is also certified as a level-1 trauma treatment center for the region. Would the level of medical care be as high if our treatment facilities were not associated with world-class research universities?

The other area research universities complement Washington University and SLU with their own doctoral-level medical specialties. SIUE offers doctoral studies in dental medicine and pharmacy, whereas UMSL operates a college of optometry.

Our country suffers – and will likely continue to suffer – from an intensifying shortage of skilled nurses. Thanks to the bounty of active collegiate schools in our geographic domain, however, we will continue to receive relatively better nursing coverage than many of our sister regions in Middle America. Our research universities join McKendree University, Maryville University, Webster University, and the area community colleges to offer degrees in nursing, ranging from the associate's level through the Ph.D.

Many other programs complement those mentioned above to support this region in regard to health care. For example, Maryville offers a physical-therapy doctorate, and Lindenwood University provides programs leading to bachelor's and master's degrees in athletic training, exercise physiology, and health management. A number of area schools also produce psychologists, professional counselors, and gerontologists, many of whom set up practice right here.

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Alumni Gate at Lindenwood University.

### **Educational Spinoffs**

Faculty members, students, and administrators from our regional universities have been venturing far outside their ivory towers for decades and, in fact, frequently establish mutually beneficial partnerships with both the K-12 sector and the junior college districts. Teach for America, for instance, has an active branch in St. Louis that employs the talents of about more than 150 recent college graduates, many from the St. Louis region. Most of these civic-minded young adults were referred to the Teach for America program by their professors. Several of those referring professors work at area universities and are involved with Teach for America in the role of mentor and trainer. The purpose of Teach for America is to bring educational equity to K-12 schools by enjoining exceptionally talented recent college graduates to commit two years as teachers in selected urban and rural schools. This region can make a contribution of this socioeconomic significance because it has so many ambitious colleges to help supply the talent, training, and administration for such a promising project.

Another connection between our postsecondary institutions and our K-12 schools is Missouri's Early College Start program, also known as Dual Enrollment. Most of the area universities – both public and independent – participate in this initiative, which enables academically qualified juniors and seniors to take standard college-level classes at their respective high schools, for both high school credit and university hours. The program, which requires the university partner(s) to design the courses and approve the instructors, encourages the students to continue their collegiate studies upon completing high school while providing them with a fast start at the postsecondary level. The net effect of these efforts is to increase the percent of the region's population possessing a postsecondary degree. As will be established later, that boost, in turn, enhances the overall prosperity of the region.

Charter schools in St. Louis give K-12 students access to superior educational

options. The St. Louis City School District now includes 15 charter schools serving more than approximately 6,000 students, and some of these institutions exhibit improved outcomes on standardized tests and graduation rates in comparison to traditional schools in the District.<sup>7</sup> Each of these schools must be monitored and supervised by a non-profit entity, and many of the sponsors in and around St. Louis are area universities, including these: UMSL, Harris-Stowe University, Missouri University of Science and Technology, SLU, Washington University, Missouri Baptist University, Webster University, and SLCC. Although not all charter school sponsors are colleges and universities, most charter schools in the St. Louis City School District sponsored by area postsecondary schools. The latter provide pedagogical expertise based on their teacher education programs. They also foster a climate of assessment, which is a basic feature of charter schools.

In recent years federal, state, and local governments, as well as the entire range of education sectors, have bemoaned the comparative slippage of the U.S.'s schoolchildren in mathematics, science, and technology. In response, many public and private projects have been initiated to make science education both more prominent and more effective. A number of St. Louis area colleges and universities have been at the core of these special programs. For a couple of examples, both SLU and Lindenwood University are serving as host institutions for FIRST Robotics competitions, and St. Charles Community College (SCC) annually hosts the Missouri Tri-County Regional Science and Engineering Fair. The rationale for involving postsecondary institutions in these competitions is that holding the sessions on a college or university campus will likely heighten the interest of the K-12 participants in pursuing a college education.

Along similar lines, Lindenwood and SCC presently are working with St. Charles County's Partners for Progress organization (a civic and planning group of business leaders) to create, fund, and operate a Regional METS (Mathematics-Engineering-Technology-Science) Coalition that will provide area teachers with advanced professional education in the teaching of mathematics, science, and technology. This project will emphasize the use of the exceptionally-high-bandwidth Internet II in K-12 science and mathematics classes. Its objective is to help our K-12 schools appreciably increase student interest in math and science studies and ultimately to improve the number of scientists, technologists, engineers, and science and math teachers in and around St. Louis.

Nearly all of St. Louis's four-year universities seek and foster articulation agreements with their junior-college partners, educationally prolific agreements that are too numerous for individual mention. One advantage of such pacts is that they lower the cost of a college education by enabling thousands of students to take their first-year and sophomore studies at community-college tuition rates. Another advantage is that associate's-degree completers are encouraged and enabled to continue their collegiate studies toward bachelor's degrees. A third, and most interesting, benefit is that unique bachelor's-degree majors are made possible by combining the practical technology and skill banks of some community-college programs with the advanced business and teacher-education curricula of four year schools. A few examples in the St. Louis area include bachelor's-degree programs in mortuary management, industrial technology education, and hospitality services management.

Government statisticians and futurists concur that the U.S. is about to experience severe teacher shortages in particular specialties. Although the Metropolitan Area will feel some effect of that crunch, we will be much better supplied with fresh teaching talent than

many other regions, simply because we have so many postsecondary institutions that produce teachers and school administrators. Universities in East Central Missouri and Southwestern Illinois collectively graduated more 3,431 K-12 teachers and administrators in 2007 – 1,146 at the bachelor's-degree level, 2,182 at the master's level, and 103 with doctoral credentials.<sup>8</sup> The immediately preceding two years showed a similarly prolific degree-completion profile.<sup>9</sup> The availability of many newly credentialed or re-credentialed K-12 professionals year after year makes our region desirable along a quality-of-life dimension as well as for a variety of economic reasons.

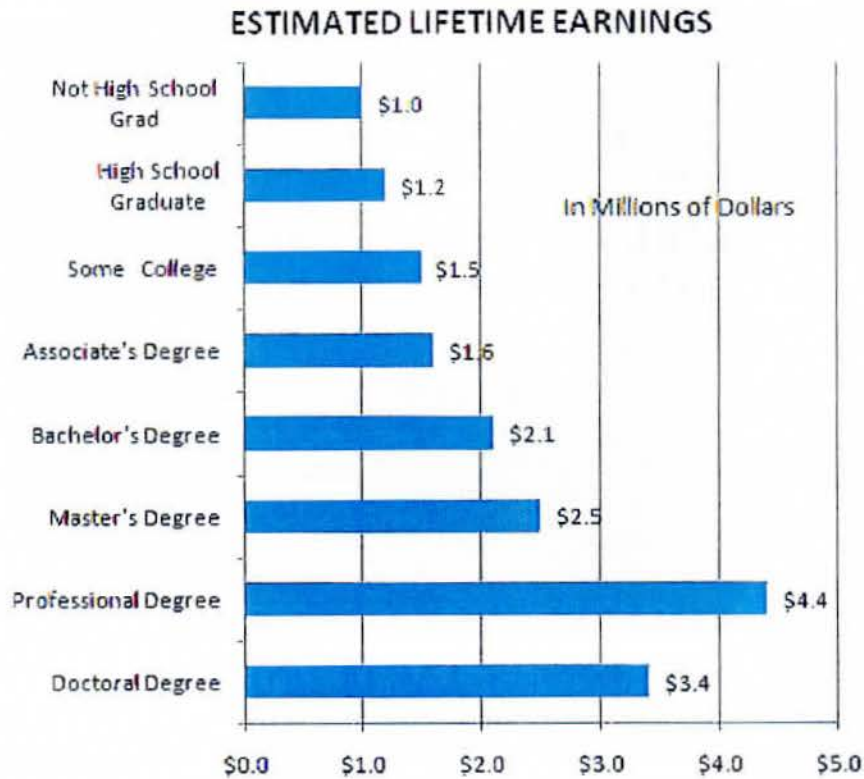
A number of our universities partner with areas school districts to offer professional-development opportunities and continuing education on numerous K-12 campuses. This form of educational outreach is geared toward practicing teachers. It helps ensure continuous quality improvement in the performance of the K-12 pedagogues as well as providing ample opportunities for them to improve their pay levels.

## **QUATERNARY IMPACT: POPULATING THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE**

Our higher-education sector sponsors a fourth (but crucial) force in area commerce: the education and training of the professionals who sustain and enhance the operations that underlie economic impact. Colleges and universities in the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area continuously feed new degree holders into the business sector. In fact, we graduate in excess of 43,000 of these well-educated individuals annually.<sup>10</sup> To the extent that they elect to pursue a family life and a career in, near, or around St. Louis, the whole community benefits in a host of ways. One fundamental variable is the earning power of degree holders: Using estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, Day and Newberger (2002) note that, relative to merely completing high school, having an associate's degree will increase one's lifetime earnings by \$400 thousand and that earning a bachelor's degree will hike lifetime income by about \$900 thousand.<sup>11</sup> What is more, a graduate education can double or triple one's cumulative income in the long run, as shown in Figure 1. The powerful earnings stimulus provided by higher education opportunities potentiates the primary economic impact of the higher education sector by continuously feeding higher income earners into the local economy. Better remunerated residents have more discretionary income, which not only nourishes retail sales on a year-round basis but also yields more tax monies to support publicly funded initiatives, services, and jobs.

As well, a growing base of well-educated affluent professionals makes the community more attractive to startup enterprises and existing businesses looking to relocate to or branch into additional municipalities. The metropolitan area's colleges, then, are an essential personnel engine that helps propel our collective prosperity in both a direct way, by supplying the region with new commerce and prosperous graduates, and indirectly, by ensuring an appealing workforce scenario for prospective and existing employers.

Figure 1.<sup>12</sup>



### **Economic Impact Revisited: Considering the Skill-Base Factor**

Earlier in this chapter, it was estimated that the region's postsecondary schools produce approximately a \$5 billion economic impact on this area of the country. That estimate was calculated using the conventional "economic-base" approach, which considers the following factors: federal and state grants, tuition and fees garnered, augmentation of area commerce, and increments in incomes and job opportunities for community residents as a result of the presence of the university. Brown and Heaney (1997) described a second approach, which starts with a broader and farther perspective on the economic influences of higher education.<sup>13</sup> This more inclusive "skill-base" approach starts with the economic-base factors and adds to them: A university does not just generate additional cash transactions, jobs, businesses, and tax monies in its community as a result of its day-to-day business operations. It also imbues its region with a skills-enhanced workforce – a population of workers with better developed literacy, numeracy, communication competence, and technical ability.

To the extent that these educated employees elect to live and work in the region that



contains their *alma maters*, that area of the county profits from a windfall of commerce and associated tax monies over a period that lasts as long as a community can attract and keep a majority of its postsecondary degree holders. The *cumulative effect* of a region's perennial infusion of educated talent into its business sector means that the actual economic impact of higher education is many times that estimated from the conventional economic-base model alone. Brown and Heaney cite three skill-base analyses of higher-education impact (in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Illinois) illustrating that considering the workforce-skills effect of higher education multiplies economic-impact projections by factors of 19, 5, and 3, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Applying the most conservative multiplier observed by Brown and Heaney to the "economic-base" estimate of \$5 billion for the St. Louis region, we might expect a skill-base analysis to show that our colleges and universities make at least a \$15 billion difference annually in the area's economy when both long-term and short-term processes are considered.<sup>15</sup>

## CHALLENGES WITHIN OUR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY

The facts and perspectives covered so far indicate that the region's colleges are a major economic boon in our daily lives and, as well, contribute in countless ways to the status of our healthcare and K-12 education sectors. Although the foregoing observations are collectively quite positive, however, they raise a pivotal question that merits our serious attention: Can our region continue to provide a work environment robust enough and a life space attractive enough to reliably engage and retain the commitments from a growing number of young professionals and businesses in the coming years – and, if not, what we can do to emend the situation?

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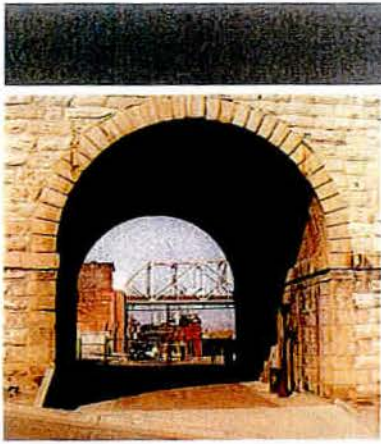




Regional colleges and Universities supply the Metropolitan Area with more than 43,000 new graduates annually.

Data on the commercial and social/cultural appeal of the St. Louis region provide a moderately sanguine picture that suggests considerable room for improvement. Here are the facts that can be identified presently:

- According to records compiled by United Van Lines, Missouri holds a “balanced” position in the interstate migration competition: We have lost about as many residents as we have gained in recent years. In the same studies, Illinois lost more residents than it gained from year to year. Favorite destinations for the restless are several of the Western and Southeastern States.<sup>16</sup>
- Annually Forbes.com develops an index of the “Best Places for Business and Careers,” based on the level of taxes and the cost of labor, energy, and office space. Unfortunately, no municipality in East Central Missouri or Southwestern Illinois makes the top 50 in that list.<sup>17</sup>
- On the positive side of the picture, Forbes.com recently placed St. Louis 15<sup>th</sup> among the top 40 cities for young professionals. The magazine’s assessment took into account the relocation choices of new graduates of several of the most select universities in the country, as well as the ratio of salary level to cost of living, the number of premium job openings, and the number of young singles in a city.<sup>18</sup>
- The Forbes.com rating is consistent with available, though dated, empirical evidence. According to 2000 U.S. Census data on migration patterns of young, single, college-educated individuals – although now somewhat dated – St. Louis ranks 17 among the 20 US cities with the best inbound-to-outbound ratio for that population.<sup>19</sup> See Table 1.



- Although not generally available from most area universities, employment-destination percentages of two institutions indicate that about 75% of recent graduates obtain jobs in the metropolitan area.<sup>20</sup> However, there was no information available regarding the effect of workforce drift on how long the typical graduate continues to work in this vicinity.

Positive indicators notwithstanding, there is fierce competition from other states and regions for the essential talent of our new university graduates.<sup>21</sup> If we are earnest about proactively ensuring a healthy economic and cultural future for the metropolitan area, our task is clear: One of the most important present-day and future challenges for the St. Louis area is to develop incentives for attracting even more of its newly minted university alumni into careers in Eastern Missouri and Southwestern Illinois – and then keeping them around. We have a cornucopia of potentials and possibilities for our college-educated youth, but are we communicating that effectively? If not, it would be in our best interests – as well as theirs – to learn how to get the message across, a matter that will be addressed later in this chapter.

## **WHAT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WANT**

To keep premium talent in this part of the country, we educators and business leaders must become aware of and more sensitive to what degree holders in their twenties and thirties are looking for in both their careers and their communities.

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**Table 1. Net Domestic Migration of the Young, Single and College Educated for the 20 Largest Metropolitan Areas: 1995 to 2000** <sup>22</sup>

Rank	Metropolitan area of residence (2000)	Total Population (2000)	Net Migration			
			immigrants	outmigrants	Number	Rate
1	San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose CMSA	7,039,362	103,641	54,173	49,468	198.9
2	Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange County MSA	16,373,645	95,712	62,714	32,998	92.3
3	Atlanta MSA	4,112,198	61,758	29,871	31,887	282.2
4	Washington, Baltimore CMSA	7,608,070	90,851	65,382	25,469	102.4
5	New York, Northern New Jersey, Long Island CMSA	21,199,865	132,437	107,306	25,131	37.4
6	Dallas, Fort Worth CMSA	5,221,801	48,277	24,428	23,849	236.2
7	Denver, Boulder, Greeley CMSA	2,581,506	41,851	22,172	19,679	264
8	Chicago, Gary, Kenosha CMSA	9,157,540	70,971	52,221	18,750	73.1
9	Seattle, Tacoma, Bremerton CMSA	3,554,760	40,044	22,490	17,554	194.5
10	Phoenix, Mesa MSA	3,251,876	29,209	15,441	13,768	250.5
11	Houston, Galveston, Brazoria CMSA	4,669,571	30,901	19,497	11,404	139.2
12	Minneapolis, St. Paul MSA	2,968,806	28,760	18,511	10,249	123.5
13	San Diego MSA	2,813,833	30,701	23,618	7,083	99.5
14	Miami, Fort Lauderdale CMSA	3,876,380	24,157	18,393	5,764	75.6
15	Boston, Worcester, Lawrence CMSA	5,819,100	61,738	57,002	4,736	21.9
16	Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater MSA	2,395,997	16,172	11,687	4,485	116.1
17	St. Louis MSA	2,603,607	15,043	14,427	616	11.6
18	Cleveland, Akron CMSA	2,945,831	14,948	15,911	-963	-15.8
19	Detroit, Ann Arbor, Flint CMSA	5,456,428	27,407	28,591	-1,184	-10.2
20	Philadelphia, Wilmington, Atlantic City CMSA	6,188,463	35,791	38,382	-2,591	-16.9

The net migration rate is based on an approximated 1995 population, which is the sum of people who reported living in the area in both 1995 and 2000, and those who reported living in that area in 1995 but lived elsewhere in 2000.

### What Executive Employees Want from Their Jobs

*Heathfield* (2008) reports that recent surveys by the Society for Human Resource Management and *CareerJournal.com* show the importance not only of compensation and benefits but also the career-development potential of one's workplace and what a position offers in the way of "a new experience."<sup>23</sup> The upshot of these polls is that employees generally prefer a work environment that (a) provides for professional growth and upward mobility and (b) minimizes or avoids burnout. Consistent with these observations were the survey responses of human resources professionals, most of whom cited provision of tuition reimbursement for employees as the number-one program that employers use to retain workers. These survey outcomes corroborate Green's (2006) conclusion that organizations can reduce employee attrition by establishing a "culture of development" that creates an atmosphere of learning and self-improvement with the work group.<sup>24</sup>

The relevance of accessible and affordable higher-education programs to these interests is obvious. Just as obvious is the pivotal role that St. Louis' colleges and universities play in making the Metropolitan Area attractive to upwardly mobile young adults.

### What Young Executives Look for in Choosing a Community

Citing an aging workforce as a major socioeconomic concern for the U.S., Bullard stated that "cities are competing furiously amongst themselves to attract and retain that coveted demographic: the 'young professional,' defined as workers who are in fields that are fundamentally knowledge driven and technology reliant."<sup>25</sup> Most of these fields and employees

require a postsecondary degree.

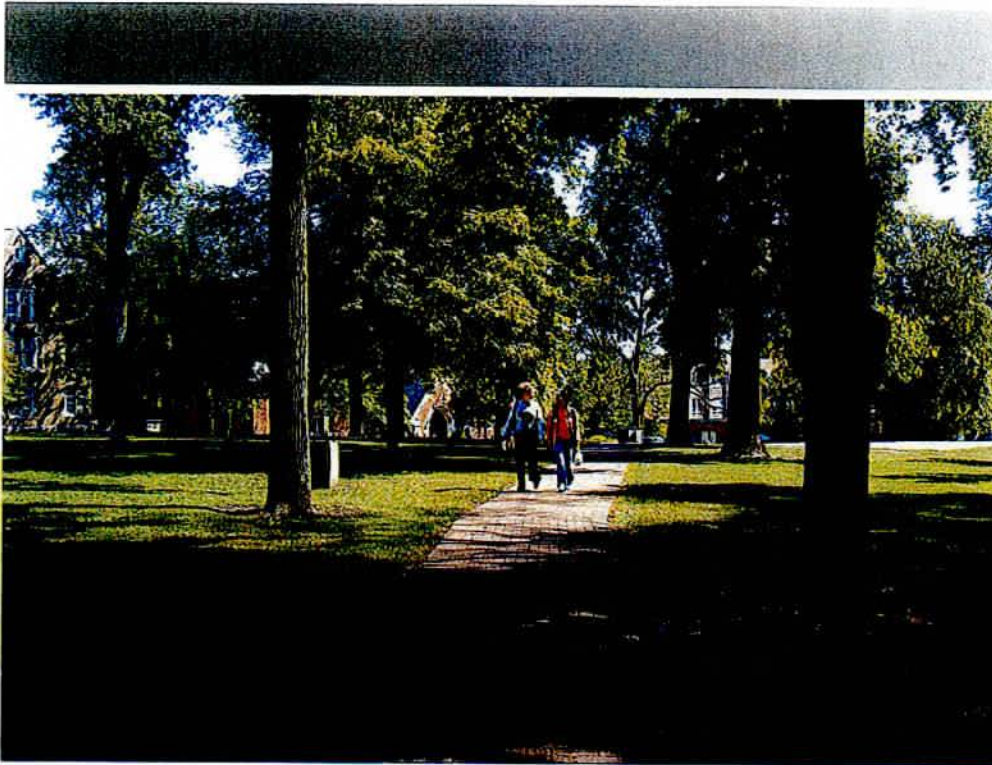
Significantly, Bullard notes that today's young professionals "look for a place to live first, and then they find a job."<sup>26</sup> That is, members of this prized group often give quality-of-life considerations a higher priority than a particular company or job when deciding where they will ply their skills. In fact, Bullard cites reports showing that about three quarters of workers under the age of 28 give substantial weight to the following job-context factors in making employment decisions: diversity in employment options within the community, civic service opportunities, and a wide range of recreational, entertainment, and artistic venues.<sup>27</sup> These upwardly mobile job seekers can be picky simply because they are in great demand and they have so many potentially desirable location choices in today's business environment.

Bullard's observations shed light on the many reasons that St. Louis has a relatively strong inbound-to-outbound ratio in its young-professionals population.<sup>28</sup> These reasons represent the abundance of preferred job-context conditions that characterize our region. Here are just a few of the desirable features of living and working in this metropolitan area, according to the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association: affordable housing, vigorous social-life possibilities, desirable and healthy environment for families, innumerable recreational and entertainment options, community arts and science attractions, an abundance of acclaimed public spaces, the highest civic-service rate in the nation, better than average health care, and cultural diversity.<sup>29</sup>

Although the RCGA did not specifically mention the contributions that regional postsecondary institutions make to creating and enriching the enviable job context we enjoy, the list of amenities stemming from our higher-education network is impressive.<sup>30</sup>

## **CREATING A DESIRABLE LIFE SPACE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

Our innovative and active group of colleges and universities helps ensure future growth and development by making the area more attractive to new businesses and talented, ambitious professionals, not only because rising businesses and upwardly mobile families demand higher-education opportunities and choice but also because those campuses offer cultural enrichment and a rewarding, meaningful life space. These value-added assets should not be overlooked or underestimated, for they represent crucial intangibles that help, in a very pervasive and powerful way, to attract and keep businesses and high-stakes talent in the Metropolitan Area. They are sources of an intangible excitement experienced by prospective residents and businesses that walk onto an area campus as they consider our region for their future home.



Our campuses inspire residents and visitors alike.

### **Beautiful and Useful Campuses**

Many area institutions have campuses that are veritable gardens. Stately architecture combines with green spaces to create a park-like ambience enjoyed not only by the students, professors, and staff of the schools but also by thousands of campus visitors and residents of adjacent neighborhoods. Those campuses serve as hiking and biking havens, and often the schools' athletics facilities are available for use by individuals and organizations from the surrounding community.

### **Libraries**

University libraries are widely viewed as treasure troves of information, Web connectivity, social venues, and contemplative nooks. Although the general public cannot borrow library materials from every college or university, it is not at all unusual for average citizens, K-12 students, and their parents to access the rich resources within these productive spaces.

### **Arts and Entertainment**

College and university mission statements often include reference to the purpose of contributing and nurturing "arts, culture, and enlightenment" within the general community. In no other way is this shared value of higher education more evident than in the art exhibitions, plays, concerts, and recitals that are frequently conducted on campuses as a part of the curriculums – and that often are open to the public. However, several of our universities have gone a step further by building professional entertainment spaces that rival many Broadway's outlets. Several facilities come to mind, including Lindenwood's J. Scheidegger Center, UMSL's Touhill Center, and SLU's Chaifetz Arena. These beautiful new performance venues, which

bring some of the world's top entertainers and artists to the metropolitan area, are in addition to the dozens of older theatres and performance halls on many of the regional campuses.

### **Speaker Series**

Virtually every postsecondary school in the St. Louis region offers some variety of speaker series, some that levy admissions charges on the general public but many that grant free access to anyone. Many of these presenters are figures of national and international note. Their talks bring new information and novel perspectives to community members in attendance, as well as igniting scholarly and political discussion and debate among students and faculty members.

### **Evening Degree Programs**

Courses and academic majors offered after the typical workday hours have proliferated at a moderately high rate over the past several decades.<sup>31</sup> This phenomenon likely resulted from a convergence of two modern-day middle-class norms: (a) the trend among employers to offer tuition assistance as a major benefit and (b) the progressively stronger desire among working adults to realize not only a living but also a life from their jobs. Opportunities for professional growth remain very strong incentives for employees to enter and stay at an organization.<sup>32</sup> The area's postsecondary schools fulfill this increasing need and, at the same time, further expand the region's skill base by enabling employees who work full-time during the day to earn basic and advanced degrees in various fields through a plethora of evening programs.

These evening programs will become more important to commerce and community progress in the coming decades because three of every four of the fastest growing professions require a postsecondary degree.<sup>33</sup>

### **Diversity Exposure**

Bezold (2005) reported that 60 percent of Washington University's students come from other states and countries.<sup>34</sup> SLU has students from all 50 states and nearly 80 foreign countries. Lindenwood serves students from 45 states and 84 foreign countries, and Webster maintains a two-way avenue with several countries through its network of overseas campuses. In fact, all of the junior and four-year postsecondary institutions in the region sustain a significant, and in many cases growing, contingent of students from other countries. Further, all of St. Louis's higher education institutions attract faculty members from other states and countries.

The intercultural mix deliberately designed, affected, and championed by our colleges and universities educates and enriches both their campuses and the communities that they serve. Most importantly, this human-capital enterprise equips all of us to more productively and harmoniously grow into our irreversibly global society. How far would our region have progressed in this modern-day Enlightenment without the influence wrought by its forward-looking campuses?



The J. Scheidegger Center for the Arts.

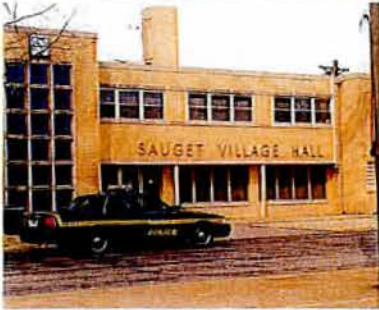
## **Outlook and Recommendations**

Persuading more of our university graduates to actualize their professional lives here, rather than seeking their fortunes in other states and regions, will help make St. Louis not only younger but also fiscally and socially stronger. There are several steps we can take toward this objective.

### **Attracting and Keeping Young University Graduates in the Metropolitan Area**

We must start by informing young adults about (a) the economic and life style advantages of earning a college degree and (b) the availability of desirable – indeed, premium – career opportunities in the region. Annually, our postsecondary institutions hold several college fairs for high schools students and job fairs for university students, but those events would be more effective if they included brief informational and motivational sessions presented by young professionals who are working in desirable positions in the metropolitan area. Such sessions can be persuasive because the student career aspirants can readily relate to and believe first-hand accounts of success from other (slightly older and wiser) young adults who have been “around the block” in a particular vocation and really like their jobs.

It is not enough, however, just to invite high school students to the college fairs. We area professionals must actively and persistently reach out to the whole K-12 spectrum by establishing “career-information” speakers’ bureaus that operate regularly scheduled workshop programs throughout the K-12 school circuit. Let us get the students thinking and dreaming about fulfilling professional lives in the metropolitan area early and often. To complement the career-information speakers’ circuit, our higher education institutions should collaborate systematically with Partners for Progress, the RCGA, Civic Progress, and the Regional Business Council to conduct annual ad campaigns directed at area students from the kindergarten level through the senior year. Such a campaign would incur front-side outlay of money that would



be repaid one-thousand fold or more in future prosperity and advancement of the region.

Persuading youthful talent to launch careers in this area is just an intermediate step. There will be ample incentives for our college graduates to jump the fence if we fail to attend to the widely expressed desire for professional growth and development options. Career development programs must become a regular part of organizational culture, and each worker's growth plan and progress chart should be the highlight of his or her annual performance review. For the same reasons, it would benefit every organization and most of its employees to include lifestyle-enhancement workshops on its master calendar.

These suggestions represent what can and should be done to secure and strengthen our population of educated and technically capable workers. This chapter has discussed some of the significant ways in which our colleges and universities bolster the area workforce and economy. However, our educational institutions cannot perform these services optimally without endorsement and cooperation from area business, government, and community organizations.

### **Supporting Higher Education to Support Our Region**

College affordability continues to be a very intense and controversial topic at the time of this writing. For many area students, access to college is itself dependent on affordability. Yet presently the State of Missouri is contemplating a reduction of funding for higher education. The proposed reduction is considered a cost-cutting measure designed to reduce pressure on tax revenues that are reeling from the economic recession of 2008-2009. That putative "remedy" is akin to the thinking of the shortsighted farmer who, according to fable, killed a goose that had been laying golden eggs so that he would be better off in the present at the cost of his financial future. Analogously, culling a hefty portion of funding for higher education would soon curtail the amount of available tax monies after a brief period of respite, for reasons discussed throughout this chapter. More than ever, it is crucial that state funds be invested to invigorate and improve higher education – not curtail it – through reasonable increases in direct funding to higher-education institutions, the Monetary Award Program (in Illinois) and Access Missouri grants for individual students, and workforce development programs. Troublingly, Missouri already ranks 31 among all 50 states in the average number of

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dollars allocated per postsecondary full-time student equivalent— before any additional cuts that might occur.<sup>35</sup>

The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) reported that 27.3 percent of area residents who are at least 25 years old have a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>36</sup> With sufficient state support and region-wide teamwork by the business and higher-education communities, there is no reason that we cannot move that percent to 30 within five years and to 33+ within a decade.

Better communication between government agencies and colleges and universities would help avoid or resolve the kinds of funding issues described above, and could result even more effective higher education systems for both Missouri and Illinois. Much to its credit, Missouri's Coordinating Board for Higher Education has made appreciable strides in opening and improving those communication channels. Nonetheless, more energy and focus are needed in this area, in both directions.

Businesses, K-12 school districts, health care, and non-profit organizations can furnish valuable additional support through seeking and sponsoring creative new partnerships with postsecondary schools and taking the initiative to expand internship and practicum programs for college and university students. RCGA, the Regional Business Council, Partners for Progress, and other civic organizations dedicated to regional prosperity are in excellent positions to conceptualize, promote, facilitate, and recognize these cooperative undertakings.

## Endnotes

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