



Partnerships, Programs, and Progress:

update on the

Berkshire Compact

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Dear Friend,

In February 2005, we launched the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education to explore the demographic and economic shifts of our region, to examine these within a national context and to consider how best to prepare Berkshire County residents to thrive in the 21st century. In recent years, Berkshire County has undergone a rapid shift — from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based economy. This transformation provides a wealth of opportunities; however, these opportunities increasingly demand a commitment to lifelong learning. The conclusion of our work was clear: Berkshire County's success is rooted in education.

The Berkshire Compact was originally formed to assess the educational needs of Berkshire County in the 21st century. Through our work, we set the following goal: to provide opportunities for every resident to achieve the minimum 16 years of education and/or training necessary to thrive in the new economy. To accomplish this, the Berkshire Compact envisioned a strong, interconnected educational and employment continuum that ensures educational access, encourages and rewards innovation, raises aspirations, values lifelong learning and takes advantage of the power of technology.

The Compact itself is comprised of dozens of committed leaders, including legislators, educators, business executives and public officials. Since 2005, we have made tremendous strides. Working with legislators, educators and employers from a wide range of sectors, we have started turning our goals into action. We have begun to raise aspirations through the Berkshire Passport, which introduces college to students as young as eight years old. We have made college more accessible to both high school students and adult learners by offering classes at central transportation hubs and by offering specialized programs that target high school students and adult learners. We have advanced technology by offering new courses and skills training. We have engaged experts to help us assess how best to help our students aspire to higher education and take advantage of educational opportunities. We have started building new connections between employers and our existing workforce, and we are collaborating with many county agencies to advance these initiatives.

The Berkshire Compact's efforts are consistent with Governor Deval Patrick's landmark education action agenda, *Ready for 21st Century Success: The New Promise of Public Education*, published in June 2008. Governor Patrick's agenda is based on the results of the Commonwealth Readiness Project, an ambitious nine-month exploration of the future of public education in Massachusetts. As Governor Patrick reports, "Our future, and that of our children, depends on what we do and set in motion today. The choices — and responsibilities — belong to us."

In the following pages, we profile some of the Berkshire Compact's work to date. Clearly, achieving our goals requires an investment — an investment that will pay off through a more educated population, a more competitive region and greater economic prosperity for all.

Please support our work, and join us as we transform education for a 21st century Berkshire County.

Sincerely,

Mary K. Grant, Ph.D.
President, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Andrew Mick
Chair, Berkshire Compact for Higher Education

About the Berkshire Compact



Senator John Kerry addresses Berkshire Compact.

What is the Berkshire Compact?

The Berkshire Compact for Higher Education is a county-wide initiative focused on promoting a continuum of education in Berkshire County. The Compact came together to assess the region's educational needs. The Compact serves all Berkshire County residents, with the premise that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, should have the opportunity to aspire to higher education.

Through our work, we determined that a minimum of 16 years of education and/or training are required to thrive in Berkshire County's new economy. Today, the Compact is focused on raising the aspirations of our residents to view a minimum of 16 years of education or training as the norm; providing them with access to education; and encouraging them to obtain the skills, technologies and tools they need to enjoy all of the opportunities presented by the new economy of Berkshire County. This work supports Goal 3 of Governor Patrick's ambitious education action agenda, *Ready for 21st Century Success: to prepare every student for postsecondary education, career and lifelong economic, social and civil success.*¹

¹ The Patrick administration education action agenda, *Ready for 21st Century Success: The New Promise of Public Education*, June 2008.

² Sandy Baum and Jennifer Ma, *Education Pays 2007: the Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society, Trends in Higher Education Series*, www.collegeboard.com.

³ The Patrick Administration, *Ready for 21st Century Success*, June 2008.

Why is the Berkshire Compact important?

Berkshire County has undergone a profound cultural and economic shift. Where manufacturing once served as the basis of our economy, today we compete in a knowledge-based economy. We are striving to create an environment where both employers and individuals can thrive in this new economic reality. The focus of the Berkshire Compact is supported by findings from a number of studies which all found strong evidence for the link between postsecondary education and economic success. The Report *Education Pays 2007* found that there is a positive correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings/better employer benefits and that the income gap between high school graduates and college graduates is increasing significantly over time.² It is noted in *Ready for 21st Century Success* that individuals who complete a bachelor's degree earn an additional \$1.1 million over the course of a lifetime, when compared with high school dropouts³.

Who has participated in the Berkshire Compact?

The engine of the Berkshire Compact is a committed group of civic, education and business leaders. This includes the entire Berkshire legislative delegation, as well as the mayors of both Pittsfield and North Adams. The Compact also includes members from a range of area employment sectors such as cultural institutions, finance, health care, and specialty manufacturing, along with educators, municipal officials and representatives of nonprofit organizations. Some of the organizations that the Compact works closely with, in addition to the region's schools and higher education institutions, are the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, Berkshire Creative, the United Ways, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, superintendents' and principals' roundtables and Berkshire Visitors Bureau.

How was the Berkshire Compact unveiled?

The initial report of the Berkshire Compact was released in 2006. This document reported on the economic conditions of the nation, Commonwealth and region, outlined the higher education and training needs of the residents and employers of Berkshire County and established the goal that every Berkshire County resident have the opportunity to achieve at least 16 years of education and/or training. It also listed specific strategies to help address those needs, based on four primary goals.

What are the four goals of the Berkshire Compact?

The four goals of the Berkshire Compact are:

- **Raise the aspirations** of all Berkshire County residents to view 16 years of education or greater as the accepted norm.
- **Improve access** to education, training and lifelong learning.
- **Advance technology** so that Berkshire County remains a competitive location for knowledge-based economies; make Berkshire County residents among the most technologically educated populations in New England.
- **Develop a new “social contract” among employers, employees, and educational institutions** that encourages and promotes learning, earning and civic engagement.

How has the Berkshire Compact progressed since the first report?

After publishing our initial findings, we broke into four working groups, each focused on one of the Compact’s goals. Each group set priorities and began to implement those initiatives that were identified as both immediate and high-priority. At the same time, the groups began laying the groundwork for longer-term initiatives. As you will see in the following pages, the Berkshire Compact made great strides with the Berkshire Passport, fast-track college

degrees for adult learners, and improved accessibility of college classes. We also organized studies about student aspirations and demographic shifts in Berkshire County so that we could better understand the context in which we are preparing students for college. During this time, Governor Deval Patrick organized the Readiness Project, a statewide initiative that envisioned the future of public education throughout the Commonwealth; this vision is wholly consistent with the Berkshire Compact. Now, the Compact is working toward other, longer-term goals such as providing financial assistance for Berkshire County students who reach the milestones of the Berkshire Passport as they apply to and attend college.

QUICK FACTS

- Employers report a shortage of potential employees with essential skills and competencies: communication, collaboration, self-direction and motivation.
- Massachusetts employers struggle to find workers with the knowledge needed for high-growth jobs, including the technology-dependent fields of life sciences, renewable energy and health care.
- Of the Commonwealth’s 74,000+ job vacancies 43 percent require a bachelor’s degree or higher.⁴
- Among all racial and ethnic groups, unemployment is much lower for college graduates than for high school graduates.⁵

⁴Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, *Massachusetts Job Vacancy Survey: Hiring Trends by Industry and Occupation*, Second Quarter 2008.

⁵ Baum and MA, *Education Pays*, 2007.



How will success be measured?

The Berkshire Compact represents a long-term strategy whose efforts will be realized incrementally. In the short-term, we will measure our success by looking at several factors:

- Community involvement in the Berkshire Compact
- The number and depth of programs available to promote higher education for all residents and to connect education with the workforce
- The number of students reaching each milestone of the Berkshire Passport
- Student awareness of the steps to reach college
- Parent/guardian involvement in education

Longer-term success will be determined by quantitative measures such as:

- An increase in the Berkshire County high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent, the goal established by the Patrick administration
- An increase in the rate of high school graduates who go on to attend colleges or other post-secondary education
- Freshman year college retention rates for Berkshire County graduates
- An increase in the rate of graduation among Berkshire County residents in post-secondary programs

The Compact's working groups are developing other quantifiable measurements. For example, data suggests that Berkshire County students who are accepted to college continue after the first year of college at the same rate (81 percent) as the state average. While this is laudable, college graduation rates will also be an important long-term measure for the Compact.

The Berkshire Passport: Increasing Access, Raising Aspirations



Third grade students board bus after college visit.

Among the most important steps we have taken is the introduction of the Berkshire Passport. The Passport is aimed at identifying pathways that make higher education accessible to everyone and removing barriers that could hinder students' aspirations. Still in its early stages, the Berkshire Passport will ultimately offer an itinerary and rewards to students on the path to college. The Berkshire Passport will introduce college to students as early as the third grade. Later, these students will be motivated and guided along the path to higher education through an array of educational "touchpoints" and milestones. The Passport will foster cultural change in our county by helping *all* students and their families to aspire to obtaining a college education.

"By 2020, any student of any age who is interested in pursuing secondary education will have access to an affordable opportunity to do so."

— The Patrick administration,
Ready for 21st Century Success



MCLA faculty member demonstrates chemistry experiments to third grade students.

In the elementary school years, children can begin to understand the value of a college education and to accept it as a real, fully attainable goal.

- Berkshire County students will make their first visit to a college campus in third grade. There, they will talk with college students, tour science labs, visit dormitories and see the college as a vibrant place, rich with opportunities.
- Students will spend time with college student-mentors and attend campus programs during school vacations, summer programs or after school.
- Parents and guardians of Berkshire County students will be encouraged to meet with parents of college students and to begin to identify strategies to plan for college.

BERKSHIRE PASSPORT MILESTONES

Elementary School

College campus visit 3rd grade
Mentor program with local college students
Vacation, after school, or summer program addressing art/music, science/math, or robotics
Open a college savings account*
Involve parent mentors*

Middle School

College campus visit 6th grade
Job shadow day to explore career options
Summer programs based on science and math
“Quest for College” board game
Continue mentoring program with local college students
Parent/guardian campus visit*
“Operation Smart” program sponsored by Girls Inc.*

High School

“Quest for College” board game
Dual enrollment
More in-depth college visits — include overnight/mentoring programs
Internships based on aspirational/interest assessments
PSAT and SAT prep classes and exam
Student Town Meetings
Continue to build a culture of savings*
STEM Summer Academy*
Berkshire Youth Leadership Program*

Senior Year High School

SAT assistance
Admissions and financial aid application assistance
Internships/skilled apprenticeships
Parent/guardian engagement
Adams Scholars
Dual enrollment
Berkshire Scholars Program*
Seniors serve as mentors to middle school students*

Ideally, students who complete all the activities of the Berkshire Passport will be rewarded with reimbursement of college application fees, financial assistance for SATs, and even free or reduced college tuition and other fees. While this assistance is not yet funded, these incentives are a priority for the Berkshire Compact, as they are for the Commonwealth. As Governor Patrick's *Ready for 21st Century Success* states, “our long term goal is to establish a public education system that guarantees free access to community college or the equivalent postsecondary or vocational education.”⁶

*in planning stages

Middle school will bring additional opportunities to encourage students to pursue a college education.

- In sixth grade, students will visit college campuses again.
- Middle school students will participate in summer programs, job shadowing programs and ongoing relationships with college mentors.
- The Quest for College board game will help students begin to understand how early efforts pay off years later.
- Parents and guardians will be encouraged to make visits to campuses and to continue saving for higher education.

High school is the launch pad to college.

- During the high school years, Passport milestones will guide students through the complex process of setting goals, selecting a higher education path, applying to colleges and/or training programs and preparing themselves for this critical transition.
- High school students will explore interests, related career options, and educational paths; make in-depth college visits, participating in overnight and mentoring programs; assess their own interests and aspirations; participate in job shadowing, internships and apprenticeships; and take PSAT and SAT preparation classes and exams.
- By senior year students will receive assistance with applications and can even take “dual enrollment” classes that allow them to earn high school and college credits simultaneously.
- Adams Scholars will be eligible for free tuition at Massachusetts state colleges based on their MCAS scores.
- High school students will begin the process of serving as mentors to younger students — ensuring that future students aspire to higher education as well.

⁶ The Patrick Administration, *Ready for 21st Century Success*, June 2008.



Berkshire County Goes to College Day

Each April, sixth graders throughout Berkshire County — up to 1,400 in total — visit local college campuses, including Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), Berkshire Community College (BCC), Bard College at Simon's Rock and Williams College. During the inaugural event in 2008, these students engaged in a wide variety of exciting projects — from creating a mock television program, to feeding sea anemones, and from visiting dormitories to watching chemistry demonstrations.

This event is the first milestone of the Berkshire Passport to be fully implemented. With the guidance of the Berkshire Passport, these same students will soon be prepping for SATs, meeting with college student mentors, shadowing professionals, assessing their own goals and strengths and ultimately applying to — and graduating from — college themselves.

Interviewed for iBerkshires.com on the day of a campus visit, Clarksburg Elementary School teacher Audrey Witter said, “This is a whole new world. Some kids think (college) is out of their reach, but a visit like this opens it up to them.”

“What do we need to make Berkshire County everything we want it to be? We need all of you. It’s going to take all of us to make the county everything we know it can and should be.”

— State Senator Benjamin B. Downing, D-Pittsfield, speaking to sixth graders at Berkshire County Goes to College Day

Through all of the Berkshire Passport activities which take place over several years, students will not only be inspired to attend college or a training program, they will understand the steps required to reach that goal. Ultimately, this effort will make higher education as accessible as it is appealing.

FAST FACT

The Berkshire Passport is an ideal complement to the “Readiness Passport,” a simple tool to provide parents, guardians and agencies with the ability to document key elements of a child’s educational experiences. The Readiness Passport is one of the goals of Governor Patrick’s *Ready for 21st Century Success*.

Other Compact Initiatives



Intermodal Education Center.

Other tangible outcomes of the Berkshire Compact are:

Intermodal Education Center: Early in 2008, BCC, MCLA, and the city of Pittsfield opened the Intermodal Education Center in downtown Pittsfield. Located on the second floor of the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority's Intermodal Transportation Center on the corner of North Street and Columbus Avenue, this space eliminates significant barriers — accessibility, convenience, and transportation — to earning a college degree. As a public transportation hub, the Center is accessible by bus from anywhere in the county. The Intermodal Center also provides outreach to immigrant populations for assessment, advising and a place to begin the pursuit of a college degree. Since the Center opened, nearly 500 people have participated in educational and workforce development courses, and an additional 500 people have participated in community events.

Fast-Track Program at MCLA: For busy adults, accessibility of higher education means being able to earn a degree while working full-time or part-time, and while taking care of a family. To meet the needs of adult learners MCLA launched the Fast-Track degree program, which allows busy adults to earn a bachelor's degree with an accelerated pace of study, flexible enrollment options and convenient scheduling. Classes are offered on the MCLA campus, at the Intermodal Education Center in Pittsfield and at BCC's South County campus in Great Barrington. The program has quickly expanded from 17 students in September 2007 to 70 students in January 2009. The first group of Fast-Track students will graduate in May 2009.

BCC's Associate's Degree in Applied Manufacturing Technology: While manufacturing continues to be an important sector for the region, the techniques and skills involved with manufacturing and product production have changed dramatically. Today, manufacturing jobs require new skills and training. To address these needs, BCC offers an associate's degree in manufacturing technology incorporating credit classes at C.H. McCann Technical School and Taconic High School. Through this partnership, high school students earn up to 16 college credits toward an associate's degree. BCC has applied for funding that will allow incumbent Berkshire employees to enroll in a degree program in this field.



Computer laboratory at Intermodal Education Center.



Students from Pittsfield and Taconic High Schools shadowed Mayor Ruberto and General Dynamics employees on Ground Hog Job Shadow Day.

**“Coming here just opened my eyes.
It made me feel more like an adult.”**

— Jillian Cahoon, one of eight at-risk students who participated in the Positive Options pilot program. Thanks to the program, Cahoon — like all other senior-level students in the program — has earned her degree and will continue her education.

Positive Options Alternative High School: This pilot initiative is a collaboration between Berkshire Community College and the North Adams Public Schools. The program offers at-risk students an alternative way to complete high school. In 2007-08, eight Drury High School students, each of whom was at serious risk of dropping out, attended an alternate high school based at BCC. With the help of a teacher and an online competency program, these students worked at their own pace to catch up with the credits required to graduate from high school. They completed internships based on their own interests, had access to college resources and took college credit courses. The program has been a phenomenal success. All seven seniors who participated received their high school diplomas or a GED certificate in June 2008. An eighth student, a junior, is currently finishing high school. This program represents an innovative approach to education in the 21st century.

Berkshire County Public Education Organization Survey: To explore how to best structure the K-12 educational experience in Berkshire County — with the dual goals that more students aspire to higher education and more students are prepared to transition to higher education — the Compact engaged the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute to prepare a report that reviewed the research literature on K-12 district consolidation and related issues as well as the demographics and test results of Berkshire County districts. The report concluded that increasing school district size in Berkshire County would not inherently achieve those goals and that many Massachusetts districts have benefited from participation in educational collaboratives. Since the report was published, the Berkshire County Superintendents’ Association has been moving towards the establishment of a county-wide educational collaborative. To this end, a feasibility study has been completed, and the Massachusetts Department of Education awarded a planning grant for the effort.

Survey of Student Aspirations: To assess the learning culture in Berkshire County schools and determine how to best raise the educational aspirations of our youth, the Quaglia Institute for Students administered the My Voice survey to 7,500 Berkshire County students, grades 6-12, in 2006-07. The results suggested ways to empower all

Berkshire Compact Berkshire Blueprint:

The Berkshire Compact serves as the educational arm of the Berkshire Blueprint, an action plan for economic development organized by the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation. The Berkshire Blueprint charges the Compact to:

- (1) organize with employers and economic clusters to identify workforce priorities;
- (2) further align the programs and curricula of our educational institutions with the needs of local, emerging and targeted businesses and clusters;
- (3) connect our educational institutions with employers to develop training programs that meet regional employment needs; and
- (4) encourage industry-specific opportunities for internships and recruitment.

students to assume more responsibility for their academic achievement and social and personal growth. Results were analyzed locally and presented to both the Berkshire County Superintendents' Association and the Berkshire County High School Principals' Association, who immediately began following up on key recommendations. For example, when data revealed that students have a strong desire for positive recognition, the Compact began a discussion with members of the media about how different types of student achievement can be recognized and encouraged. Plans are underway to offer professional development for teachers and other school staff that will address issues raised in the study.

Online Learning: Faculty from MCLA and BCC are working to develop online curricula, making it easier for non-traditional students to achieve higher education degrees. Already, BCC offers online classes in computer literacy, web development, childhood education, health care, computer science, mathematics, environmental studies, literature, biology, humanities, computing, history, the arts, psychology and software integration. MCLA is expanding its distance learning opportunities for Fast-Track and traditional graduate students through online course offerings. In the fall of 2007, five online courses were offered, with 38 students enrolled. By the fall of 2008, eleven online classes were delivered, with 150 students enrolled.

College Advising Corps: MCLA and Drury High School piloted a four-year program of the Massachusetts Campus Compact College Advising Corps to aid high school students as they apply to and attend college. Through the program, a College Advising Corps advisor was dispatched to North Adams to act as a liaison between MCLA and Drury High School. This advisor identified high school students requiring higher education assistance, mentored them as they achieved all the necessary steps to get into college — standardized tests, college searches, applications and financial aid — and supported these students as they applied to and transitioned into college.



A Taconic High School student works at Cranwell as part of BCREB's Summer Youth Works Internship Program.

Student Town Meetings: The Compact is organizing a series of student town meetings for high school students modeled after WAMC's town meetings in New York state. The meetings will provide a structured process to prepare young people to analyze and discuss social and political issues affecting them with recognized specialists in the community. The town meetings will be recorded and aired on local public television and radio stations.

Berkshire Youth Leadership Program: The Berkshire Chamber of Commerce is working toward implementation of a Youth Leadership Program, modeled after successful programs nationwide. Up to 30 high school students per year will travel to the MCLA campus to participate in workshops and will visit local employers in a variety of employment sectors. The program is designed to help

them develop leadership skills, learn about careers in critical industries and address important community issues. MCLA and BCC are looking at ways to introduce a leadership curriculum that could be awarded college credit as part of a dual enrollment program.

Connecting Employers with Employees: The Compact conducted a study that identified a range of internship programs in the county that serve both high school and college students. The goal of these programs is to introduce a younger audience to a range of career opportunities, to create collaborative hands-on learning opportunities, to create a pipeline of talent to meet the needs of area employers and to help students master the skills required by work, life and citizenship.

A Robust Working Environment



STEM Science Fair at MCLA.

Berkshire County's economy is diverse and offers workforce opportunities in various growing sectors. The Compact has inspired and implemented programs, but many other efforts to improve regional competitiveness exist independent of our work. The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations have served as active partners in leading many education and workforce development efforts.

The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board's connecting activities programs have provided a strong link between youth and the area's workforce since 1997. In fiscal year 2008, BCREB oversaw 500 high school student internships with 268 employers. Employers provided feedback to the students based on work ethic and professionalism as well as communication and interpersonal skills to help them to develop the skills that are needed for success in the workplace. Additionally, each year over 1,200 high school students participate in job shadowing and career exploration activities and approximately 25 educators participate in externships with employers. BCREB is taking the lead in gathering data to measure progress among all local high school and college programs.

"We must broaden and deepen our commitment to public education so that every student is prepared to take advantage of higher education, employment, and lifelong learning opportunities."

— The Patrick administration,
Ready for 21st Century Success

More than 2,300 sixth through eighth-grade students and teachers in Pittsfield and North Adams are using personal laptop computers through the **Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative**. A collaboration of the state legislature, the private sector and participating school districts, BWLI is designed to improve student achievement and increase engagement in the educational process. The BWLI schools are expanding the use of laptops into elementary and high schools.

C.H. McCann Technical School in North Adams has begun **hosting classes provided by Berkshire Community College**. Classes are held in the areas of math, history, psychology, early childhood education, criminal justice and manufacturing. They are open to both McCann students and the wider community.

MCLA received **STEM pipeline funding** to build connections between higher education, K-12 educators, businesses and nonprofit agencies for the improvement of science, technology, engineering and math education. Some of the initiatives that have been offered through STEM are MCLA's middle school robotics camp, BCC's *Got Math?* program, an Upper Housatonic River Valley course, and a STEM best practices database for sharing information among educators and local businesses.

The Berkshire Chamber of Commerce introduced a **training calendar** in 2009 as part of their monthly newsletter published in *The Berkshire Eagle*. The calendar provides listings about upcoming training sessions on workforce related topics.

The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board (BCREB), MCLA, and BCC began to implement **Project HEALTH** (Helping Employers Access Labor Talent in Health care), which offers classes and lectures related to growing health careers. This program is helping to create a pipeline of talent that can meet the employment needs of the health care industry.

Berkshire Young Professionals visited area colleges to speak with juniors and seniors about their experiences living and working in the Berkshires. These professionals showcased the vibrant future that this region offers to young career-minded adults. They are also developing a **413 Website** that will promote the Berkshire region and its job opportunities to recent graduates.

Area colleges continue to collaborate on issues of civic engagement and service learning through the **Massachusetts Campus Compact**, a nonprofit statewide initiative.

Berkshire Creative is identifying how the region can leverage its rich cultural and artistic assets to help grow the regional economy. Aligning educational programs with cultural needs is an important part of this process. Berkshire Creative brings together a collaborative group of volunteer members throughout the year to plan strategies for developing the Berkshires' creative economy.

MCLA responded to the needs of Berkshire County's robust arts sector by launching an **arts management major and the Berkshire Hills Internship Program (B-HIP)**, which provides students from across the country with Berkshire County summer internships in the arts.

Area colleges offer a **wide array of technology skills classes** — basic computer applications, web graphics and multimedia, database management, graphic design, PC networking and more. Other programs that meet the needs of local employers include health care, veterinary care and grant writing.

“As we move headlong into another decade of unprecedented innovation and change, our challenge — our obligation — is to ensure that all Massachusetts students have the skills, knowledge and dispositions they need to take full advantage of all the opportunities that this new, post-industrial information age presents.”

— The Patrick administration,
Ready for 21st Century Success

BCC's **Workforce Development Team** helps businesses maintain a competitive edge by providing general, industry-specific and customized training at either BCC or at the employer's worksite. Many of these programs link employees with degree programs, helping meet employers' needs while raising employees' aspirations.

MCLA's Evelyn H. and Arlindo Jorge **Visiting Professorship in Education**, the College's first-ever endowed chair, will bring scholars of exceptional merit to teach in the field of education.

The Berkshire Immigrant Center holds an annual **Immigrants' Day** and Employment Based Immigration workshop. These events offer information about social services, job opportunities and legal services for immigrants.

Area colleges offer **ongoing professional development for educators**, including workshops and teacher licensure programs; summer courses and workshops in science and math education; the Leadership Academy, which provides integrated training for leading and promoting change in educational environments; the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in Educational Leadership; an instructional technology program; an innovative reading program, which helps educators take leadership roles in the evolving field of literacy education; and a teacher resource center, currently in the planning stages, which will advance adult learning opportunities in education.

Why Higher Education?

“Everyone should have a chance to be educated beyond high school.”

— Thomas Friedman

An educated and skilled workforce is essential to a competitive regional economy. Higher education is also important at an individual level; people with college degrees earn more money, have more employee benefits and enjoy better health than those who haven't graduated from college.

According to *Education Pays 2007*, a publication of the College Board⁷:

- In 2005, the typical full-time employee with a four-year college degree earned \$50,900, 62 percent more than the \$31,500 earned by the typical full-time worker with only a high school diploma.
- Those with master's degrees earned almost twice as much as high school graduates, and those with professional degrees earned over three times as much.
- The typical college graduate working full-time pays over 100 percent more in federal income taxes and about 82 percent more in total federal, state and local taxes than the typical high school graduate.
- Sixty-seven percent of college graduates working at least 20 hours per week for half the year were covered by health insurance in 2005, compared with 51 percent of those with just a high school degree.



In Berkshire County, the need for higher education remains acute. A 2008 Labor Market Study conducted by Northeastern University showed that in Berkshire County at the end of 2007, job vacancy rates in fields that generally require a college degree tended to be above the overall state average job vacancy rates in these fields. However, only 30 percent of the Berkshire County civilian labor force hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 39 percent statewide.⁸ Data reported by the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board show that 35 percent of our labor force may lack even the most basic literacy skills necessary for the 21st century.

There are no economic development or educational shortcuts. To stem the tide of population losses, and to advance the area economically, we must continue to advance the work of the Berkshire Compact and to exercise our political will. To achieve the goals that the Compact has set forth will be to ensure the success of the region, of the Commonwealth and of our residents, long into the future.

As the Berkshire Compact continues to pursue short and long term goals, more work must be done in measuring where we are now and where we want to be. Partners throughout the county are working together, useful data has been gathered and many initiatives have been implemented or are in progress. The Compact must now put together baseline data and set targets that can be achieved in its major goal areas.

⁷ Baum and Ma, *Education Pays 2007*.

⁸ Paul Harrington, *Labor Market Developments in the Berkshire County Workforce Area*, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, June 2008.

Labor market report supports Berkshire Compact efforts

In June 2008, Paul Harrington, associate director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, presented a lively snapshot of Berkshire County's local labor market. His presentation to the Berkshire Compact reviewed the key findings of a 140-page report commissioned by the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, analyzing trends, unmet labor needs and occupational and educational implications.⁹

Harrington's conclusion was consistent with the founding principle of the Berkshire Compact: career success, and the growth of the region, is dependent on higher education.

"These are the best data we've seen in a long, long time," said John Lipa, former chairman of the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, of Harrington's data.

Harrington reported that there are 64,000 jobs in Berkshire County; at any time, there are 2,200 openings and 3,000 job seekers. Yet the skills of the job seekers don't match the qualifications required for the vacant jobs.

"There's no room . . . for high school dropouts here," said Harrington.

Harrington reported that in 1979, a high school dropout in Philadelphia could expect to earn \$1 million over his lifetime working in the thriving manufacturing industry; today, that same dropout would expect to earn just \$450,000.

"It's also true here. If you're a high school dropout, you're not going to get a job," said Harrington.

Harrington reported that children should be introduced to the idea of higher education no later than sixth grade, and he commended the Berkshire Compact on its efforts to bring sixth graders to campus during Berkshire County Goes to College Day.

According to Harrington, the strongest area of job growth is health care; the second is the arts. Manufacturing offers fewer than half the jobs that it did several decades ago, although certain sectors are performing well. The creative economy is growing, on the other hand, adding 324 jobs over three years, an increase of 18 percent.

McCann Technical School Superintendent James Brosnan, a member of the Berkshire Compact, noted that Harrington's presentation "proved exactly that we're on the right track."



Left: Paul Harrington presents results of labor market study to Berkshire Compact members.

⁹ Harrington, *Labor Market Developments*.

Conclusion



Getting people to the table is a challenge; keeping them at the table is a greater challenge still. For the members of the Compact and the many stakeholders who have contributed to this long-term, regional effort it is inspiring to hear both our Governor and our President identify education as the essential ingredient in economic, civic and international success.

As we look ahead, the work of the Compact has never been more important or timely. These early years of the 21st century have proven to be enormously complex. There remains little doubt that those with higher levels of education are likely to navigate these complexities more successfully than those without. We also know that economic uncertainties underscore the Compact's commitment to continuing to build and deepen partnerships and collaborations that strengthen the educational continuum.

The work of the Compact is to serve as a catalyst for collaboration and for digging deeper to identify the barriers to educational success. Some of the challenges or goals we have identified are fairly straightforward; for example, improving access to education. With a willingness to examine new models, create new programs, and identify more convenient points of access we have begun to tackle this one head on. However, funding to underwrite the cost

of education presents a serious obstacle and a potential, ongoing barrier to access.

Other goals are far more complex. Barriers to education that may have their origins in individual and community aspirations require a deeper level of understanding and a range of potential strategies. Thus a seemingly simple collaboration, such as Berkshire County Goes to College, may have far reaching implications, as will programs that encourage family members to participate in educational programs, young adults to stay in school and older adults — at any point in life — to step back into a classroom.

We have found that with so many members of this incredibly engaged community sitting at the same table — and continuing to make room at the table for more voices and more perspectives — we raise our own aspirations about what is possible. The leadership and advocacy of the members of our Berkshire legislative delegation has ensured that the Compact work continues. We are fortunate to have a delegation that has been part of this effort from day one, and continues to bring great wisdom and a shared desire that all residents not simply reach, but that they exceed, their educational potential.

This vital area of the Commonwealth is well poised to take advantage of the new industries and new opportunities that will drive the 21st century economy. We know that the key ingredient is a well educated, competitive workforce. There is much at stake.

The Compact will continue to be a vehicle through which we identify areas for collaboration and gaps in the educational continuum, and push to use our resources to support shared goals. While the work to date has been inspiring and rewarding, it is now, more than ever, a matter of necessity.



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