

Atlanta Talent Dividend Summit

Executive Summary:

On Tuesday, April 14, 2009, over 30 corporate, civic and community leaders gathered in Atlanta for the Talent Dividend Summit. The Summit was hosted by the Atlanta Committee for Progress, Atlanta Education Fund, and Mayor Shirley Franklin. The attendees engaged in an exciting dialogue on the merits of the Talent Dividend's findings, as well as the key issues to address in increasing Atlanta's level of college attainment. The human side of the Talent Dividend potential was brought home when a current college student made a presentation on his journey and challenges to successfully get to and through college. Everyone agreed with the findings and the strong potential for Atlanta to be a national leader in this effort. Participants overwhelmingly felt the information presented was useful and helped provide insight into Atlanta's status and where we should go in helping our young people become more productive citizens.

1) What do you believe is your best opportunity for achieving the Talent Dividend in your community within 24-36 months?

Atlanta Public Schools has already implemented key reforms to increase the college attainment level from the K – 12 cohorts. Improved teacher training and support strategies coupled with reformed high schools are increasing the number of students successfully graduating from high school and going to college. A key area to sustain and increase Atlanta's numbers lies with post-secondary institutions. Working with post-secondary institutions, we can create initiatives to improve student retention and success as well as increase opportunities for adults to re-connect and obtain their college degrees. Participants also discussed President Obama's emphasis on college attainment and potential federal support that might be available to help support this work.

Some of the other opportunities to explore are:

- Improving seamless transition from High School to post-secondary institutions. This includes dual enrollment programs and summer programs.
- Improving transition from 2 year to 4 year college
- Collaboration between county government and school districts
- Partnerships between AUC institutions and corporations to provide college completion resources and incentives to remain in Atlanta.
- Creating a "Youth Advisory Council" with at-risk students who made it to and through college to make recommendations to city leadership.
- Connecting with the Georgia General Assembly

2) What are the next three steps you need to take now to achieve the Talent Dividend for your community?

The following are the steps we will take:

1. Meeting with key Atlanta stakeholders to identify lead organization or committee. In the meantime, the AEF has a focus on College Success and has a number of key Atlanta stakeholders represented on its board. Talent Dividend options will be reviewed at their next board meeting to determine what role the AEF can play in moving this effort forward. Potentially, a College Success Committee may be developed to include all interested parties.
2. Meeting with ARCHE and other representatives from the post-secondary community, especially the 2 year and technical schools.
3. Establish what each potential partner capacity/needs are and develop a unified plan (with timelines and benchmarks) to begin addressing this issue. It will be critical to identify the “low hanging fruit” opportunities.

3) What would you like to know that you don't currently know that you believe would make your Talent Dividend pursuit more effective?

More detailed information on college degree attainment and barriers to college degree attainment for our metro area. In addition, information on the statistics for students and adults that either do not continue to college immediately and/or take a “break” from their pursuit for a period of time and “re-enter” at a later time.

Additional information on other cities models for college attainment as a holistic city approach.

4) Finally, what can the CEOs for Cities partner network do to support your efforts?

- Connect us with National funders that may be interested in supporting our local efforts.
- Connect groups across cities to leverage collaborative support and resources.
- Continue the research to ensure detailed data is available.