

**Preliminary Recommendations for Attracting and Retaining Recent College Graduates  
from Area Schools, Other Metros, and the International Community**

*From discussions hosted at the St. Louis Regional Chamber, July 17, 2013*

**DRAFT for REVIEW**

**1. What must the St. Louis region do to break into a new trajectory toward the top ten?**

*Focus on Jobs and Internships*

- Retain higher percentage of current students studying at St. Louis universities at all levels (undergrad, grad)
  - Job opportunities are key. Need to address composition, job characteristics, and career possibilities
  - To fuel this effort, the internship is the essential inroad. Need to be aggressive.
  - Need more experiential learning opportunities in the StL region, but this is difficult
  - Use the 'white space' in the academic calendar to focus on introducing students to local business, culture, and institutions
- Need a single database of candidates that all employers can pull from.
- Increase support and funding for new businesses / start-ups with potential employment growth for college-educated individuals,
- Internship campaign that introduces college students to wealth, breadth, and diversity of St. Louis businesses / organizations / jobs.
- This group must coordinate with "current students" group
  - Waiting til after degree is complete might be too late
  - Internships, experiential programs
  - Increase "embeddedness" in the community
- How do we communicate to young people that StL is a good place to live and work? (And how do we communicate to businesses that we have these people?) Paid internships or funding for this?
- Provide more internship programs; mini-internships. Early internships are very important. Provide a central internship opportunity clearinghouse. Firms should help support the cost.
- Centralized internship database through Gateway Career Services Association.
- Provide civic mentors to the students while they are here. The same goes for immigrants.
- Centralized career services on college campuses.
- Job opportunities, especially for local graduates.
- "Farm system" – big companies create innovative programs serving to create a smooth transition into the working world. Maybe we could institute pro-active and creative use of OJT for incentives.
- Internships for rising sophomores.

### Encourage Continuing Education After the Degree is Complete

- Stress and promote post-graduate educational opportunities. Knit disparate programs into cohorts. Connect students with these opportunities for additional ‘stickiness.’
- How to attract young professionals (like CORO fellows) to stay in StL for further education (as happens with Carnegie Mellon).

### Increase Financial Assistance

- Provide scholarships.
- Offer tuition reimbursement and loan repayment programs. Young employees are very attracted to tuition reimbursement and loan repayment programs.

### Connect and Coordinate Existing Programs

- Leverage and collaborate with key community groups that are bringing StL ‘transplants’ together. StLTransplants.com. Experience StL program.
- Understand all the different ‘graduate groups’
  - From StL civic sector
  - From StL institutions
  - Other metros
  - International
  - Alumni clubs, local univ alumni departments, chapters from different universities
- Need ‘new employee’ networks.
- Communicate existing efforts (and grow them): Replant StL, StL Transplants, for example. These groups are already happening, but they need more awareness.
- Connect universities to cities and firms
- Connect students to young professionals who are here and who like it
- Build a relationship between Regional Chamber and Gateway Career Services Association.

### Expand Service Opportunities

- Need more service opportunities, opportunities to build connections.
- Better and more services to help international students transition into the workforce.
- Start with K-12 to introduce students to the region and what it has to offer.
- Companies need to recruit candidates by helping them know the community.
- “Make a Difference Day” – opportunities for civic engagement for students, to get them involved in the community.

### Get Alumni Involved

- Universities need to rethink hand-off between student life and alumni development. New message! Alumni associations should help them get internships, jobs – not just support the university. Need programming before and after college to sell StL
- Stronger alumni connectivity to potential grads. Use high-profile alums.

### Focus on International Students / Graduates

- Develop a regional retention fund to package job with the required \$5K visa fee. Provide match for mid-size companies that cannot otherwise afford the job / visa bundle needed for foreign-born talent. Could the Chamber offer a service to facilitate VISA application?
- Create a fact sheet around hiring. Which companies hire foreign-born non-HIB visa employees?
- Provide assistance to small and medium-sized businesses in navigating the system to hire someone who is not a US citizen.
- Increase awareness of importance of immigrants on the workforce. Encourage mid-cap companies to hire internationally.
- International students really want to stay here! We need to lower the hurdles.
- Immigration reform at the national level.

### Improve Transportation and Housing

- Address transportation issues to get young people off campus. Trolley system?
- Housing is an issue for out-of-region interns. Need to make arrangements for housing opportunities.

### Energize the Image and Experience of St. Louis

- We need to present a cohesive, consistent message regarding StL to recruiters
- Rebrand StL as a young city – high number of undergrads in the region
- Promote quality of life, especially image of vibrant city with opportunity. Some of this involves business and policies at the state level.
- Create a sense of place that involves culture. Food, entertainment, social scene (e.g., “Positively Cleveland.” Or Lake Forest College and its connection to Chicago. Could we replicate?). Enhance opportunities and not just in the arts.
- Highlight that StL is not just a city to settle down and raise a family, but that there are young single people as well.
- Market the ‘energy’ of St. Louis – e.g., “Food Truck Fridays,” micro-breweries, farmers markets in Tower Grove Park and Maplewood. Don’t just market on the basis of older assets like zoo, museums, and so on.
- Create a stronger link between Young Professionals and current leaders. Engage millennials in all important decision-making circles. Develop a young gov’t leaders board. Host a bi-yearly forum with young professionals. The seasoned generation needs to RECRUIT younger professionals to councils, boards, focus groups.
- Shift in mindset needs to be capitalized and the innovation revolution already started needs to be captured and present for a brand new shift.
- Create welcome info for students / new employees = awesome idea!
- Maybe create a StL Transplants-like group targeted at college students. Build stronger, younger network.
- Provide access to equal opportunities for all

## 2. What are the underlying trends and issues holding us back?

- Economic issues; lack of job growth.
- Is StL ready for diversity? It better get ready! Race and diversity barriers hold us back. Change our culture to one that is diverse and inclusive. Highlight current efforts, address polarity around race / LGBT / gender.
- We need to sell our cultural / community assets. Communication is currently lacking.
- Decentralized data.
- Communication across civic sectors.
- Current lack of un- or underemployed people to enter professional groups / networking opportunities.
- St. Louis is perceived as fragmented.
- Negative perceptions of St. Louis. Nearly all national news is negative.
- St. Louis' brand feels 'old.' We should be more welcoming of new voices, stress communication across civic sectors. Poor communication or unwillingness to consider new voices holds us back.
- Lack of involvement from all parties with a role in the issue. Young people need to be invited to meetings such as this one.
- Crime. Chief of Police in City of StL gives a wonderful presentation that better sells StL: "St. Louis is Safe." Need to get that out more.
- Limited transportation, good public access
- Perception of our city / region, especially by those on the outside.
- Folks who want to come here to raise a family need a permanent job, not just contract employment.
- *Exclusive*, rather than *inclusive*, social networks
- "Dating desert" – limited love connections!
- Businesses who assume 'trends' cannot be changed and accept status quo will lose competitiveness. Demographic shifts will alter the St. Louis workforce.
- Lack of collaboration
- Lack of access for all
- High cost of education
- Lack of money to support these initiatives
- Lack of true knowledge of benefits of the city
- Immigration law and visa issues – need to educate local employers
- Schools spend too little time and effort to introduce students to St. Louis and StL area businesses
- Companies in StL not aggressive at recruiting for internships and full time jobs.
- Problems arising from reduced reimbursement from Medicare are impacting healthcare organizations. Therefore it impacts job opportunities and even job retention.
- Protectiveness of professional contacts.
- Costs and challenges associated with sponsoring international workers.
- Making cultural / community connections beyond campus.
- Address the needs of educated immigrants.