



## INCREASING COLLEGE COMPLETION AMONG WORKING ADULTS

July 23, 2013 | 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
St. Louis Regional Chamber



## AGENDA

### Welcome and Introductions

**Beth Hummels**

*Senior Vice President of Human Resources  
Wells Fargo Advisors*

**Mark Grieman**

*President  
AdamsGabbert  
Members, Regional Chamber Talent Council*

### The Regional Case for College Attainment

**Blair Forlaw**

*Vice President for Talent Strategy  
St. Louis Regional Chamber*

### Observations about Working Adults and College

**All**

### Small Group Discussions

**All**

- What must the St. Louis region do to break into a new trajectory?
  - Policies
  - Partnerships
  - Practices to share and scale up
- What must higher education do? Business? Working adults themselves?
- What are the underlying trends and issues that will hold us back?

### Group Recommendations

**All**

### Do We Have What It Takes?

**Beth Hummels and Mark Grieman**

### Next Steps

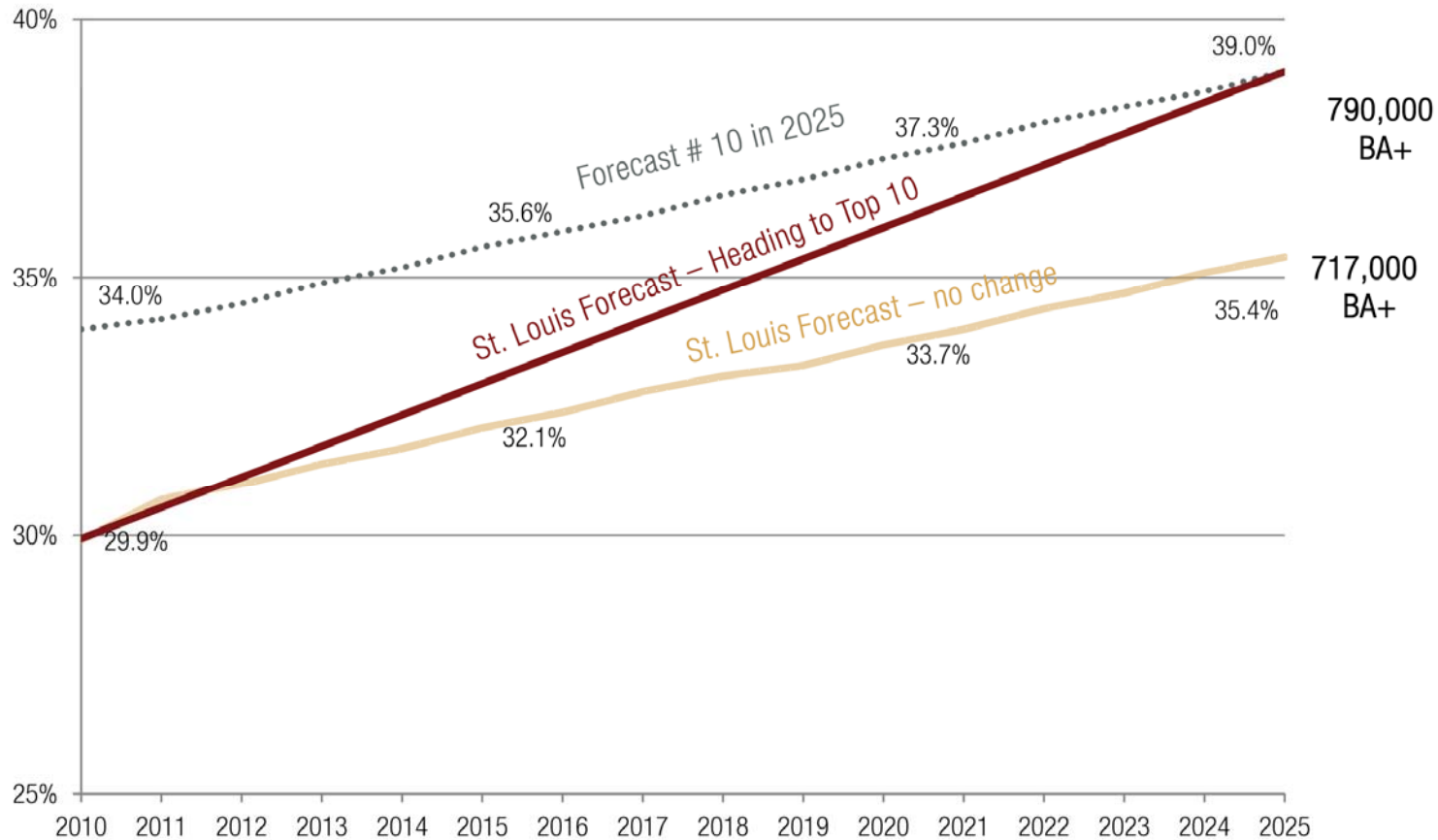
**Blair Forlaw**

### Adjourn

*Let's stay in touch at [www.TopTenEducation.org](http://www.TopTenEducation.org)*

# What Will It Take to Get to the Top Ten?

St. Louis' Path to the Top Ten Metros, 2012 – 2025



Source: Woods and Poole 2012



# What St. Louis Area Employers Can Do to Help Working Adults Finish College



No factor is more critical to the future prosperity of the St. Louis region than education. The educational attainment of our residents is the lever that increases incomes, attracts private enterprise, stimulates innovation, and drives up GDP. Post-secondary credentials are especially valuable in today's knowledge-driven marketplace. In metro markets like St. Louis, greater concentrations of college degrees fuel opportunity and sharpen competitive advantage.

St. Louis is positioned to succeed in the educational attainment challenge. Our region ranks 19<sup>th</sup> among the nation's 20 largest metros in population and 14<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of our population with BA or higher degrees. Taking advantage of a wealth of colleges, universities, and promising programs, we can lift our region from our current position into the top ten of the largest metros in educational attainment.

***The St. Louis Regional Chamber's Talent Council invites the bi-state business community to join us in working with educational institutions, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and professional groups to lift the St. Louis region into the top ten of the nation's 20 largest metros in college attainment by 2025.***

We believe that this aspirational goal can be realized — if our community comes together with a focused and persistent effort.

Employers are uniquely positioned to implement three important steps toward this goal.

- 1) Champion college completion from every bully pulpit, network, and available platform.
- 2) Support completion within your company's workforce by assessing current learning and development practices and agreeing to adopt one more this year.
- 3) Help the region measure, monitor, and report progress.

Here are the details:

***First, we encourage business leaders to champion college completion.*** Leaders in the c-suite can begin to move the metrics in the right direction if they use every available bully pulpit, network, and platform to broadcast the importance of career-long learning and credentialing.

With follow-up and reinforcement throughout our organizations and supply chains, we can advance a regional culture of learning and development. This culture will help motivate young students, working adults, unemployed individuals, veterans, and others to finish their degrees. It will also be a magnet for the region to attract and retain college-educated individuals who might not otherwise have selected St. Louis as a place to live and work.

***Second, we urge employers to support college completion within their own workforce.*** Almost one of every four adults in St. Louis has earned some college credits, but no degree. The most effective way to reach these adults is in the places where they are employed.

On the back of this page is a menu of proven techniques that employers can use to help their employees finish college. Few companies are positioned to do all of them, but every company can implement a few of them — and that can make a big difference.

***Third, the St. Louis Regional Chamber invites other companies to join in measuring, monitoring, and reporting progress in college completion within our workforce.*** Business leaders understand that if we measure it, it will get done. We can set the standard for regional progress by keeping track of educational inputs and outcomes, and monitoring progress toward targets. The St. Louis Regional Chamber invites businesses throughout the region to help us ensure that this initiative to increase college completion is data-driven and delivers measured results.

# Nine Employer Practices to Help Working Adults Finish College

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## 1 *emphasize college in employee development plans*

Encourage employees who have not yet graduated to make higher education a part of their development plans. Senior leaders can help managers with information and techniques to support direct reports who are students, with follow-up to make sure that support systems are effective.

## 2 *empower employees to be smart consumers*

Make information about a range of higher educational opportunities available in the workplace, so that employees can compare their options. A kiosk can display information about college programs (both traditional and online), schedules, pricing and financial assistance, and services of special interest to working students.

## 3 *encourage peer support*

Encourage the informal networks that naturally develop in workplaces that are also learning places. Businesses can complement these by creating affinity groups; setting up a working students' blog, bulletin board, or social media group; or establishing a quiet place for employees to study during lunch or before / after work hours.

## 4 *get alumni involved*

Sponsor lunch-time dialogue groups in which employees who are alum of area colleges and universities to talk with current or prospective students about the experience of going to school. Employers can encourage volunteers to serve as tutors in subjects like math, which are difficult to many adult students.

## 5 *help drive down costs*

Offer tuition assistance, scholarships, matched savings plans, or other forms of financial assistance to employees to encourage college enrollment and persistence. Employers can help further by negotiating tuition or fee discounts with colleges on behalf of their employees. If asked, corporate leaders can step forward to assist college and university leaders in recalibrating business models to new economic realities.

## 6 *make credit counseling available*

Help employees navigate the complex world of college financing by making credit counseling services available on site or through referrals. Employers can arrange for training for existing employee assistance staff, or connect employees with outside resources.

## 7 *help employees get credit for non-collegiate learning*

Encourage employees to take advantage of tools available to help them get college credit for what they learned at work. Employer-sponsored training can be evaluated for college credit. Credit-by-examination, challenge exams, and prior learning portfolio assessments all cost less money and time than completing a full course.

## 8 *be flexible*

When it does not interfere with work flow, allow working students some flexibility in juggling school, work, and family. Consider formal arrangements such as four-day work weeks or ad hoc arrangements such as allowing employees to leave early on exam days or attend a daytime lecture. Such arrangements can accommodate needs of both employee and supervisors.

## 9 *acknowledge and reward*

Acknowledge and celebrate milestones along the way of the often-long journey to a college degree, using tangible and intangible rewards. Supervisors and employees should talk together about future options for career advancement, so that both have realistic and satisfying expectations.



One Metropolitan Square  
211 North Broadway, Suite 1300  
St. Louis, MO 63102

phone 314.231.5555 | fax 314.444.1122