2013-2016 strategic plan
background

Since its creation as a 501(c)3 in 2004, Campus Philly has focused on helping the region attract, engage and retain college students. In an area that boasts 300,000 students, increasing retention of college graduates is critical to the region’s future success. In fact, CEOs for Cities estimates that a 1% increase in adults with college degrees will yield a $4.4 billion impact in regional earnings. The growth of the Philadelphia metropolitan area depends on having a large pool of knowledge workers who: start new businesses; attract other businesses to locate here; and allow existing businesses to grow here.

Campus Philly has enjoyed significant success and measurable results in its programs to retain college graduates. Its strengths and assets include a deeply invested core of higher-education and corporate partners, a distinct identity as an organization and an array of programs and offerings that serve students well. In addition, strong relationships with other nonprofit, cultural and civic groups and a reputation for successful partnerships make the organization a first stop and a one-stop shop when others want to meet and connect with college students.

Leveraging these assets and building its programs focused on serving college students has yielded significant impact. Campus Philly’s 2010 study, From Student to Resident, found that the percent of non-native college students staying in the region after graduation rose from 29% in 2004 to 48% in 2010. And, 2010 Census data confirmed that more college-educated young adults were choosing Philadelphia, boosting the city’s population for the first time in 50 years.

The question for Campus Philly is: What will equip the organization to build on this impact and propel Philadelphia into the next tier—the top tier—of cities that attract young, talented residents?

This strategic plan was commissioned by Campus Philly’s board of directors and made possible by a grant from the Knight Foundation. The plan reflects on the internal and external factors impacting Campus Philly’s mission, consider significant refocusing of its strategic priorities and communicate to stakeholders the relevance of the organization’s refocused priorities.

Changes in the External Environment

New Areas of Strategic Focus

From Strategy to Action

1 CFAR is a private management consulting firm that began as a research center inside the Wharton School. CFAR’s diverse consultants combine their academic expertise in diverse disciplines with pragmatic ways to help leaders solve new or stubborn organizational problems. They are committed to giving clients new ways of thinking about their organizations, and the skills and tools to sustain lasting performance improvement.
At the time of this writing, the environment in which Campus Philly operates is changing in some potentially disruptive and relevant ways, including:

**Shifting dynamics for college attainment and retention in the Philadelphia region.**

Recent Census data shows an increase in the retention of college graduates in the region. As cities across the country become more popular places for millennials, Philadelphia has benefited from this national trend and its own millennial-friendly assets which, include: a walkable downtown; an effective public transportation system; affordability; and a high concentration of quality-of-life assets such as arts and culture, outdoor spaces, dining and entertainment.

For the first time since the 1950 Census, the city of Philadelphia gained population, with much of this growth driven by the increased numbers of residents ages 20-34 (50,306 new residents in that age range from 2000 to 2010).

**National stories about poor employment outcomes for recent college grads masking the real opportunity that exists for college graduates in our region.**

Malemployment and underemployment continue to persist as problems for recent college graduates, especially in specific fields and for specific majors. However, a number of employment sectors in the Greater Philadelphia region—technology and financial services, specifically—are facing talent shortages, and health care and education continue to be strong employers of recent college and graduate students.

According to a 2010 report released by the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, 3.5% of Philadelphia residents with college degrees are unemployed, compared to 19-25% of residents without degrees. Nationally, Northwestern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies found 7% of college graduates under 25 years old are unemployed, but 36% of under-25 college-educated workers are in positions that do not require degrees.

**An improvement in the “Philadelphia narrative,” i.e., the city’s image regionally and nationally.**

This upswing in perception creates a different environment for attracting students to the region and retaining them after graduation, though it is important to note that Philadelphia is still a city with significant economic and social challenges.

In 2010, 19% of area students said Philadelphia was the most significant factor in their decision about where to go to school, and 31% said it was “somewhat significant.” In a separate survey in 2013, 26% of students said Philadelphia is “my favorite part of going to my school,” with another 55% saying it’s an “added benefit.”
An increasing public focus on the value of internships as part of the educational experience.

As colleges and universities strive to demonstrate their benefits and ROI to students and their families, they increasingly look to internships as a way to improve students’ vocational readiness and help position them for jobs after school. And, as employers seek to hire employees who can immediately add value to their firms, the internship experience is an increasingly important and popular credential over and above the college degree.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers reports that 63% of students with a paid internship during college had at least one job offer upon graduation, as opposed to 37% who had an unpaid internship and 35% who had no internship. Campus Philly found, similarly, that 70% of students with a summer internship in Philadelphia stayed after graduation, compared to 57% of students with no internship experiences at all.

A larger cohort of native Philadelphians in college.

An increased emphasis on college access and success in the city of Philadelphia over the past six years has resulted in more Philadelphia public school students enrolling in college. And the vitality of Philadelphia as a place to attend college has meant students with options to go elsewhere are often more interested in attending school in Philadelphia or coming back to the region for graduate school. As the cohort of native Philadelphians in college increases, so does the opportunity to raise college attainment in the region by having more Philadelphians receive their education here and stay here after they graduate.

In 2010, 149,405 Philadelphians were enrolled in college or graduate school as compared to 115,671 in 2000, a growth of 29%.

Increasing competition among U.S. cities for college-educated workers and the competitive advantage Philadelphia enjoys by having a Campus Philly organization.

CEOs for Cities has found that 58% of a city’s success, as measured by per capita income, can be attributed to the percentage of the adult population with college degrees. A recent New York Times analysis, A Gap in College Graduates Leaves Some Cities Behind, showed a broadening gap between metro areas with college graduates and those without, as well as the accompanying economic and health disparities between cities with a high percentage of college graduates and those with a low percentage.

The Philadelphia region ranks 21st in the country for the proportion of adult residents with college degrees, at 33%. Regions such as Boston, San Francisco and Washington, DC hover around 45%. Cities such as Syracuse, New York; Saint Louis, Missouri; and Columbus, Ohio—all with lower percentages of college grads than Philadelphia—have been in touch with Campus Philly about creating a similar program in their regions.

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Through the strategic planning process, Campus Philly reaffirmed its mission to grow the regional economy by encouraging students to study, explore, live and work in the Greater Philadelphia region. This mission was identified as still relevant for three reasons:

1. The region ranks 21st in college attainment out of the top 100 metro regions in the country and has the opportunity to move to the top-10 tier of cities with young, college-educated residents.

2. The organization is distinctive among nonprofits and economic development organizations in the region and is the sole organization regionally with so many and such deep relationships with colleges and college students.

3. External factors facing the region—especially the increasing importance of internships and student-employer connections—provide opportunity for Campus Philly to increase its impact through better and more focused programs.

The organization had framed its mission through the three goals to attract, engage and retain college students. The strategic planning process uncovered how significantly this language had “run out” as a way to talk about the organization’s work: it was both unappealing language for the student audience (who wants to be “attracted” and “retained”?) and bespoke a defensive position for the region, as if the only reason students would choose Greater Philadelphia is if they were deliberately “attracted” and strategically “retained.”

Therefore, while reaffirming its mission, Campus Philly will refocus its work from the three program areas of “attract, engage, retain” to areas that have the potential to have greater impact on our overarching goal of becoming a top city for college-educated residents. Campus Philly will devote increased focus and resources to...

Accelerate Internships
Connect to Community
Serve New & Native Philadelphians

Accelerate Internships

Research shows that good internship experiences are “sticky”—they connect students to the region’s employers and civic life, increase future work opportunities and increase the likelihood that students will stay in the region after they graduate. Campus Philly adds unique value by creating informed awareness among students about the job opportunities that exist in Greater Philadelphia, helping students find valuable regional internships and helping companies build their talent pipeline by creating more internship opportunities.

In fact, the value that Campus Philly currently adds in promoting and securing internships can be elevated to have greater impact on the number of students obtaining internships and the number of employers who offer them. Functioning as an internship accelerator means increasing the number of internships in the region and fostering the connections between employers and students that get those internships filled. Examples of programs that will drive this growth include:

1. A transformed Campus Philly website to focus on the organization’s distinctive role as an internship accelerator. A more robust online platform will help students and employers find each other for internships and entry level jobs, create a dialogue between students and employers that equips students to be more prepared for the workforce and leverage Campus Philly’s database of thousands of employers seeking interns and thousands of students seeking internships. Currently, campusphilly.org/careers functions as an ancillary service and website to the primary campusphilly.org website. With internships becoming a central area of strategic focus, the priority of the site will flip, focusing primarily on internships and jobs while presenting vehicles and resources for engaging and connecting to Philadelphia as a resident.

2. In-person events and programs that help shape informed awareness among students of job opportunity in the region, allow for networking that is a necessary, but under-utilized practice for college students and provide opportunities for employers to meet prospective employees. Campus Philly has started to produce these targeted events over the past two years to great effect. There is more opportunity to involve the corporate community in these events, grow the number and caliber of students attending, incorporate training for businesses that are interested in building their internship programs and create more relationships between students and employers.
Connect to Community

The Philadelphia region offers many paths to leadership—a process that seems to happen faster in Philadelphia than in other large cities—and we know the next generation of Greater Philadelphia leaders will largely come from our universities. Campus Philly can be the pipeline for these future leaders to find the communities, causes and organizations that motivate them to stay in Philadelphia, thus providing the civic leadership on which Philadelphia will rely. And because Philadelphia has such robust civic, cultural and service communities, Campus Philly has the opportunity to plug students into authentic experiences that build relationships between students and recent graduates who have chosen to stay in Greater Philadelphia. Two examples of programs that will enhance Campus Philly’s work developing these leadership connections include:

1. The Campus Philly Exchange, a cohort of engaged student ambassadors. The Exchange will foster deeper relationships with a core group of students interested in exploring, connecting and leading in Philadelphia. Through meet-ups and access to Campus Philly’s cultural and corporate partners, the Exchange will deepen students relationships to each other, Philadelphia and Campus Philly.

2. Open Arts, Campus Philly’s region-wide cultural access program that uses arts and culture to unlock the city for the student. This program introduces students to the impressive set of cultural institutions and events they can enjoy here and connects them to the communities that make those cultural experiences possible.

Serve Native & New Philadelphians

As the only regional organization devoted solely to the support and success of regional college students, Campus Philly has been an active partner in regional efforts to grow college attainment among native Philadelphians through such initiatives as CEOs for Cities Talent Dividend Competition, the Lumina Community Partnership for Attainment and collaboration with Philadelphia’s college access community. Examples of programs that will further Campus Philly’s impact on increasing the number of native Philadelphians with college degrees include:

1. Increased partnerships and collaboration with Philadelphia college access professionals in order to raise awareness and use of Campus Philly programs among students who have graduated from Philadelphia high schools. By working with the college access community in Philadelphia, Campus Philly will build awareness of internship opportunities for their students in college; arts and culture access through Campus Philly’s Open Arts program; and networking and mentoring opportunities through Campus Philly’s professional development and leadership programs.

2. Paid summer internships for first-generation and underrepresented students. Paid internships are a key driver of career success, with 63% of those with paid internships having at least one job offer upon completing college (as opposed to 35% of students with no internship experience). Through its StartUp PHL grant and its partnership with Ben Franklin Technology Partners, Campus Philly initiated a paid summer internship program in 2013 to place college students in internships with startup tech companies. Campus Philly will seek to expand its 2013 Philly StartUp Scholars paid summer internship program to focus on first-generation and underrepresented students, many of whom have to pass up internship experiences in favor of more lucrative, but less professionally relevant, summer jobs.
Our strategic planning deliberations confirmed our mission: “Fuel economic growth in Greater Philadelphia by encouraging students to study, explore, live and work in the region.” At the same time, it has refocused how we will achieve that mission. As we live this plan, we will develop specific goals, an implementation timeline and metrics to monitor our success. Campus Philly’s annual strategic workplan will begin from the three strategic focuses of this plan—Accelerate Internships, Connect to Community, and Serve Native and New Philadelphians—and identify specific initiatives, programs and partnerships that will help us realize the plan that year. Frequent surveys of employers and students will inform us about our effectiveness while the organization’s quadrennial survey of recent graduates will show if we are having an impact on growing the number of college students who choose Philadelphia as home. We are confident that the strategic priorities outlined here will enhance and accelerate our impact.