



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Susan Buehler
(215) 893-4284

**Graduate! Philadelphia launches first-of-its-kind
College Access Center for adult students**

Completing a college degree generates \$1 million more in lifetime earnings

PHILADELPHIA – Graduate! Philadelphia, an initiative of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, opened a first-of-its-kind College Access Center today, specifically tailored to providing adults the tools needed to re-enter college and complete their degrees. The Graduate! Philadelphia Center is in the College Access Center located in the Gallery at Market East in Philadelphia.

About 100 City officials, college partners, corporate and non-profit leaders, and adult college students attended the grand launch ceremony along with Lori Shorr, the City of Philadelphia's Chief Education Officer. The Nutter administration supports the center and stressed the importance of going to college and graduating. "The value of postsecondary education is indisputable," said Michael A. Nutter, Philadelphia Mayor. "The residents of Philadelphia need the skills and credentials gained in college in order to compete for the best jobs locally and globally, and our employers need more college graduates with the skills and knowledge that drive the 21st century economy."

According to Graduate! Philadelphia, one in six Philadelphia residents 25-49 years old started college but didn't complete a degree – more than 70,000 people. There are more than 300,000 such individuals in the Greater Philadelphia region. The Center will provide one-on-one guidance for adults, information about college programs and financial assistance, computer labs, workshops on returning to college, and additional resources.

"Graduate! Philadelphia is an entirely new approach to increasing educational attainment. We are bringing together workforce development, economic development, higher education, and other stakeholders, each contributing their particular strengths to this effort that will make a positive impact on our city's workforce and economy," said Sallie A. Glickman, CEO of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and co-founder of the initiative. "Working adults who are part of the way toward a college degree are an untapped talent resource. With a little bit of investment, guidance, and encouragement, our workforce is poised to receive a tremendous talent boost."

The benefits of obtaining a college degree are numerous: better job opportunities, about \$1 million more in lifetime earnings, and personal and career growth. Parents with college degrees can more easily help their children prepare for and succeed in college.

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Graduate! Philadelphia opens center

Page 2

Graduate! Philadelphia

Page 2

“Graduate! Philadelphia’s services will help adults get back on the path to complete their degree *now*, no matter when and where they originally started college, or why they stopped,” said Hadass Sheffer, executive director of Graduate! Philadelphia. “We are working closely with our partner colleges to ensure that this time around students will succeed and finish their degrees.” The new Graduate! Philadelphia Center is partnered with The Philadelphia Education Fund’s College Access Center. Together at one site, these two programs provide assistance to anyone – from middle school through retirement – seeking a college degree.

The Graduate! Philadelphia Center is funded by grants from the City of Philadelphia and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The grants are funding staffing, equipment, Web site development, education fairs, and outreach for physical and virtual centers that will offer information, guidance, workshops and a “returning to college” toolkit for adults seeking to complete a degree. Along with the center at the Gallery, ongoing outreach and neighborhood-based events will bring Graduate! Philadelphia services into communities across the city and region.

Partnering in this effort are The Philadelphia Education Fund and nine area colleges: Chestnut Hill College, Community College of Philadelphia, Holy Family University, Neumann College, Peirce College, Philadelphia University, Rutgers University-Camden, Thomas Edison State College, and Widener University.

About Graduate! Philadelphia

Graduate! Philadelphia is an initiative of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania to increase the number of working adults with college degrees in the Greater Philadelphia region. For more information, please visit www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org

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