



## Philadelphia struggles to lure college-educated to city

by josh cornfield / metro philadelphia

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CENTER CITY — With its industrial heyday behind it, Philadelphia has struggled to turn its residents into college graduates and keep those that do complete their degrees here.

Only 20 percent of those 25 and older in the city had a bachelor's degree in 2004, according to research released last week from the Associated Press. Among the nation's 21 largest cities only Detroit, Cleveland and Las Vegas have a smaller share of residents with college degrees.

Graduate Philadelphia is trying to do something about that. According to Hadass Sheffer, the group's director, Graduate Philadelphia is working to push residents toward finishing college for both those finishing high school and the 80,000 adults in the city with at least a year worth of college credits to their name.

### **What is Graduate Philadelphia doing to increase the number of college grads in the city?**

There are two strategies for increasing the number of college grads in the city. There's an import-and-attract strategy and there's the grow-your-own strategy, which is what we're part of. When you look at who stays and who leaves after college graduation, you find that nine out of 10 Philadelphians will stay here after college. Those that come here from other places tend to leave.

### **How is the Philadelphia economy doing transitioning to the 21st century?**

It faces a challenge that our workforce is not quite what you'd need in order to be cutting edge. We don't have enough college grads, we don't have enough of the people businesses need to be on the cutting edge of global competition. I think we're moving in that direction. I think there's a lot of really good energy here. When you listen to businesses, there's a lot of optimism.

### **Do people see Philadelphia as a place to get educated and then get out?**

I think many of them do. That's not surprising. From working with populations that have just graduated from college for many years, D.C., the West Coast, Seattle, Boston, New York have always been the attractive places to go to. I don't think much has changed. I think we're poised to be a player in that arena if we're smart about it. I think that's a big change. Twenty years ago we weren't.

**Ex-students need to finish**

In its quest to increase the number of college grads that call the city home, the biggest thing Philadelphia has going for it are its residents that started school but didn't finish, according to Hadass Sheffer, director of Graduate Philadelphia.

There are more than 80,000 in the city with at least one year's worth of college credits, Sheffer said. Get those people their degrees, and Philly jumps into the Top 10 of number of college grads in the country.

"These are people who have really proven themselves as college-worthy," Sheffer said. "I don't think anyone is paying attention to them. They're here. They're already in the workplace. They just lack a little extra push to finish getting the skills, credentials and knowledge that a college degree will get them."

Sheffer said the 80,000 need to be informed of the financial aid available to them, including increased aid from the state and programs many businesses have to pay some of their workers' tuition costs.