



College Now Contact: Laurel Wilder
216-635-0161
lwilder@collegenowgc.org

Cleveland State University Contact: Dave Kilmeyer
216-523-7284
d.kilmeyer@csuohio.edu

College Now Greater Cleveland, Cleveland State University Identify Adult Students as Key Factor in Regional, Statewide Economic Development

CLEVELAND, August 3, 2021 —College Now Greater Cleveland and Cleveland State University (CSU) released [“Cleveland’s Untapped Market: Adult College Students.”](#) a report prepared as a collaboration between CSU and the Cleveland Talent Hub initiative to identify ways that CSU can serve adult students more effectively and better connect its graduates to employer opportunities that could begin to address the income disparities among Cleveland’s Black residents. Over the past year, CSU worked with its adult students to evaluate programs currently in place; understand the adult student environment on CSU’s campus; and develop recommendations for campuses to better serve adult students pursuing their degrees.

Mirroring national and statewide trends at urban universities, the report notes a decline in the adult student population at CSU and the discrepancy between the persistence and graduation rates between Black and White adult students. Ohio has a statewide attainment goal of 65% of its residents having a degree or high-quality credential by 2025, a goal that can only be met if more adults who previously did not pursue postsecondary education return to a postsecondary institution and complete their degrees.

“To remain competitive in the regional and national economy, it is imperative that Ohio increase its statewide attainment rate,” said Julie Szeltner, College Now’s Senior Director of Adult Programs and Services. “We will need both traditional and adult learners to meet this ambitious goal; non-degreed adults are a key piece of this attainment puzzle. The findings from the Talent Hub-supported research emphasize the vital need of Ohio institutions to invest in their adult learner populations to support a group of students that is so critical to our workforce.”

The report also highlights the experience of adult learners at CSU through data and anecdotes gathered during surveys and focus group, as well as research conducted into the majors of choice for adult learners. Team NEO was also a key partner in the Talent Hub work and worked to connect College Now and CSU to the business community and with pertinent employment data. Based on these findings, the report offers suggestions and opportunities for investment at CSU and other higher education institutions to better serve adult students, which includes the creation of specific Adult Services offices; career services and internship support focused on the unique career needs of adult learners; and consideration for the family, work, and other obligations faced by many adult students.

Earlier this year the university unveiled CSU 2.0 – an aggressive, growth-oriented plan for emerging from the pandemic as a stronger, more-focused institution. The plan sets a goal of 4,500 additional students and 200 new faculty members by 2025. It outlines multi-million-dollar investments in research, faculty positions and initiatives to advance student success, including programs and services for adult learners, and strengthened career services.

“We appreciate the work of our CSU team and partners at College Now. The study is an affirmation of the strategy we’ve laid out in CSU 2.0,” said Jonathan Wehner, CSU vice president of enrollment management at student success. “Expanding and tailoring services for non-traditional students, and closing the achievement gap for students of color, is critical for our university, our community and our state. Plans are in place to do that just that, and we’re pleased with the progress we’ve already made in improving first year retention rates for underrepresented students.”

The Cleveland Talent Hub initiative was part of [Lumina Foundation’s \\$13 million community mobilization strategy](#), which focused on local and regional efforts to increase attainment in ways that can inform other communities. Cleveland received the Talent Hub designation in 2020 with a grant from Lumina Foundation and The Kresge Foundation.

About College Now Greater Cleveland, Inc.

College Now provides Greater Cleveland students with guidance and access to funds to prepare for and graduate from college. For more than 50 years, our goal has been to help students pursue educational opportunities that empower them to embark on rewarding careers and strengthen our community. College Now assists more than 31,000 students each year, delivering college access advising, financial aid counseling, and scholarship and retention services in five Northeast Ohio counties, in the College Now Resource Center and through community-based programs. For more information, visit www.collegenowgc.org.

About Cleveland State University

Founded in 1964, Cleveland State University is a public research institution that provides a dynamic setting for Engaged Learning. With nearly 16,000 students, ten colleges and schools and more than 175 academic programs, CSU was again chosen for 2021 as one of America’s best universities by *U.S. News & World Report*, including the #1 public university in Ohio for social mobility. Find more information at www.csuohio.edu.

###