

Stopping the brain drain

Cities strive to retain college grads

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PHILADELPHIA Many cities along the East Coast are competing to keep their college grads by selling them on many aspects — youthful image, affordability, job availability, social scene, and culture — and some are faring off better than others.

“It really comes down to three things — availability of jobs, cost of living and connection to the city,” said Jim Klocke, executive vice president of the Greater Boston Chamber. “But, the job factor is the most decisive in retaining [college grads].”

According to a survey conducted in 2003, by GBC and the Boston Foundation on “brain drain,” 50 percent of

Retention rates

- While Philadelphia has 83 colleges and universities, the city’s not among the top-tier of knowledge industry regions. These regions have a high level of education attainment, more than 40 percent, compared to Philly’s 29 percent.
- For every 10 students who graduate from high school in Philadelphia and go to college, four students will wind up residing elsewhere, according to the 2003 KIP study.
- Of 168,484 Philadelphians with a college degree or higher, 11,453 reside in Center City, according to a 2006 report by the Center City District.

(METRO/EC)

college grads leave Boston for various reasons — better job

opportunities elsewhere, expensive cost of living, or better living experience in another city. Even so, 42 percent of non-native grads from Boston remain there. Philadelphia, on the other hand, keeps 64 percent of its college grads, only hooking in 29 percent of non-natives, according to a Knowledge Industry Partnership Report from 2003.

Considering 86 percent of graduates retained are native Philadelphians, it comes down to selling Philly’s college grads on the plethora of job opportunities, the social and cultural scene, and inexpensive housing, said Josh Sevin, spokesman from KIP.

“Everyone thinks they have to be in New York on Madison Avenue, there’s this image in their mind and Philadelphia suffers a bit of a double-edged



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sword,” said Sevin. “They [college grads] need to realize Philly’s a place where they can get a job and make a go of it, they don’t have to pay a pound of flesh to put a roof over their heads, and yet they get to live in a really vibrant and cool city.”

Philadelphia was ranked No. 12 in 2005 on Forbes magazine’s list of best cities for singles and the average rent in 2006 for a one-bedroom apartment in Philadelphia is around \$969 as opposed to Boston, where it’s \$1,746, and New York City where it’s \$2,701, according to Apartmentratings.com.

“It is so much cheaper for us to live here,” said Kendra Gaeta, a New York City trans-

plant to Philly.

But, the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce said New York City still has one up over Philly despite its high rent.

“People come here [NYC] for the cultural diversity and the great job opportunities but it does come at a high cost,” said Mark Jaffey, president of GNYCC. “Even so, the draw’s so huge they [college grads] stay, they just get roommates.”

Thirty percent of non-native Philly graduates, who chose a city other than the one they grew up in and who leave Philly, headed to NYC and six percent booked it to Boston, according to the 2003 KIP report.

