

## POLITICS &amp; ECONOMICS

## Philadelphia Sales Job

Retaining Graduates Has Been a Tall Order

By DEAN TREFTZ

Philadelphia

**S**TILL STRUGGLING to break out of its postindustrial stagnation, the City of Brotherly Love is aggressively wooing its college students, showering them with affection in hopes of persuading them to stick around.

Philadelphia boasts 82 colleges and universities in and around the city—including highly regarded schools such as Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr and the University of Pennsylvania—but has a hard time hanging on to their graduates.

That's a big problem for one of the nation's largest cities, as well as for midsize cities such as Pittsburgh and Cleveland. In a knowledge-based economy, a foundation of well-educated young people can be just as important as real-estate development and big companies. Besides contributing dollars to the local economy, a pool of young professionals serves as a draw for big employers and a spur to entrepreneurship.

While a 2004 report showed the Philadelphia area retained a higher percentage of recent graduates than did the Boston metro area—64% and 50%, respectively—most of those who remained were locals to begin with. Only 29% of graduates originally from outside the Philadelphia area stayed on—compared with 42% in Boston.

"We've come to see students as four- or five-year tourists," says David Thornburgh, president of the Philadelphia-based Alliance for Regional Stewardship, a consulting network.

Since 2003, a public-private partnership effort, Campus Philly, has worked to retain a greater share of the area's rich supply of graduates. The organization has developed a three-step program that meshes with college careers.

First, along with area schools, Campus Philly works to boost applications and total enrollment, which now exceeds 350,000 students. Next, it tries to build up students' fondness for the area, starting each fall with a festival for students. Last September's included a motocross rally, rapper Fat Joe and pop-punk band Saves the Day. It also reaches out with a booklet of coupons and event listings, several career and internship fairs, and a Web site, [www.campusphilly.org](http://www.campusphilly.org), featuring articles by students and lists of activities from sporting events to concerts. "A student might see [a link to a career fair] when

they're looking for their party," Campus Philly Director Jon Herrmann says.

Finally, Campus Philly looks to seal the deal with internships, giving students a taste of what life could be like after graduation. "It's kind of a 'try it before you buy it' strategy," Mr. Thornburgh says.

Since 2003, the group has established 5,000 internships at 1,500 companies including GlaxoSmithKline, Amtrak, Comcast Corp. and Aflac Inc., says Mr. Herrmann, who predicts the temporary jobs will soon lead to permanent ones. And as more graduates stay on, or so the thinking goes, companies will expand or open. "It's a chicken-and-egg game," he says.

Philadelphia is hardly alone in chasing

bawa, a Drexel University senior from the suburb of Burlington, N.J., who interned with a Philadelphia law firm through Drexel's mandatory co-op program. After interning, "you actually realize that there are jobs in Philly," says Ms. Zabawa, who adds she will likely live in the city after graduation.

Others retain a view of Philadelphia as a gritty place with a less-than-vibrant culture. Detroit native Eldra Walker, in her second year of a masters program in historical preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, says she will focus her job hunt on Washington, D.C., where she previously worked. "Even if it wasn't as well-paying a job, I'd still take it in D.C., because I just like it more," Ms. Walker says. "There would just have to be more things to do, a wider variety of cultural attractions" to win her over.

Part of Philadelphia's challenge is overcoming the vestiges of its old manufacturing base. The area's economy has shifted to information and services businesses, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, as well as a revived tourism industry tied to plentiful historical attractions. But the city also missed out on some of the urban-revival growth of the 1990s, and lost some big companies to out-of-town mergers during the past decade.

Its population dropped to 1.41 million in 2005

from 1.59 million in 1990, notes Harvard economist Ed Glaeser, while its family poverty rate of 19.9%, compares with a 10.2% nationally. Only 17.9% of Philadelphia County residents above the age of 25 have undergraduate diplomas, according to Moody's Economy.com, compared with 32.5% in Suffolk County, Mass., where Boston is located. As a result, Collegia President Todd Hoffman says, Boston lacks "the same sense of urgency that there is in Philadelphia."

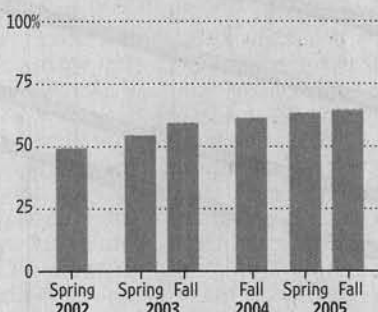
City leaders are sanguine, citing what they say is the community's renewed sense of optimism, a downtown revival and positive feedback, including a 2005 National Geographic Traveler article declaring Philadelphia the "next great city."

And there are success stories like Hannah Schulman. When she arrived at Haverford College from Los Angeles four years ago, she says, "I knew the stereotypes" such as local accents. Now an environmental education intern on a nearby farm, she is looking for work in the area's nonprofit sector.

"There's a lot to be said about the culture of the city," she says, "especially the neighborhoods."

## Retaining Grads

Percentage of students at Philadelphia area schools who said they are likely to stay in the area:



Note: Education data based on residents 25 years and older \* Not seasonally adjusted

Sources: Campus Philly (retention); Census Bureau (demographics); Bureau of Labor Statistics (unemployment)

## Population snapshot

	2000	2005	change (pct. pts.)
<b>High-school diploma</b>			
Philadelphia	71.2%	78.5%	▲ 7.3
National	80.4	84.2	▲ 3.8
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>			
Philadelphia	17.9%	21.6%	▲ 3.7
National	24.4	27.2	▲ 2.8
<b>Family poverty rate</b>			
Philadelphia	18.4%	19.9%	▲ 1.5
National	9.2	10.2	▲ 1.0
<b>Unemployment rate, January*</b>			
Philadelphia	6.9%		
National		5.0%	

college students. Collegia, a Boston-based consulting firm for college-community partnerships including Campus Philly, also works with Boston, Pittsburgh, Lancaster, Pa., and northeastern Ohio.

The idea for Campus Philly was born a decade ago, after many roundtable discussions and fact-finding trips to other college-dense areas like San Francisco and Boston. With Silicon Valley thriving, the country had just witnessed the first knowledge-driven boom, and "what was really hitting home was that human capital was the coin of the realm," says Mr. Thornburgh, a key player in the effort and son of Dick Thornburgh, former senator, governor and U.S. attorney general.

Surveys have shown that the effort has drawn more students to the Philadelphia area, and raised students' opinions of it. Data from 40 schools showed the number of full-time freshmen rose 9.6% in 2004 from 2001, and a fall 2005 survey by Campus Philly showed that 65% of students wanted to stay in the area after graduation, up from about 50% in 2002.

But the long-run success of Campus Philly depends on students like Karolina Za-