

Looking At The ISSUES

Stark
Education
Partnership
inc.

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Beyond College Access: Grants Recognize New Approaches on College Completion in Stark County

Could Stark really become the most educated county in Ohio? Can we become the most educated county in the nation? Today Stark County ranks 21st out of 88 counties in Ohio and 933rd out of 3,140 counties and county equivalents in the United States in the percent of its population with a Bachelor's degree or higher.¹ Yet, a single factor could move Stark dramatically in a new direction. That factor is college completion, and the math is compelling. If we could find ways to support all residents currently enrolled in college and help all those who once started college to complete a degree, Stark would have a college educated rate of 44.8% and rise to first in the state and 30th in the nation. Clearly college completion is a priority for Stark County.

With over 1,450,000 non-completers, it is also priority for the state of Ohio and for the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN). Founded in 1999, by KnowledgeWorks Foundation, in collaboration with the Ohio Board of Regents and Ohio Department of Education, OCAN's mission is to help increase

the college going rate in the state. The Stark Education Partnership has worked with OCAN on a variety of initiatives since 2003. This need for new approaches to foster college persistence and completion underscores the importance of two grants awarded to the Partnership by OCAN this week.

- *Ohio Can! Go to College* is an initiative of the Ohio Legislature managed by OCAN and the Ohio Board of Regents. *Ohio Can* seeks to expand the number of individuals preparing to enter and complete postsecondary education. Funding under this program will be awarded to organizations working to seek additional scholarships or who create new innovative internship and cooperative programs that help sustain student success. The Partnership has been awarded a \$5,000 planning grant in response to a letter of intent to establish a *Council of Scholarship Providers* and to submit a full funding proposal to the state.

- The Partnership's proposal for a *College Success Partnership Implementation* grant has also been funded. This \$50,000 award will be matched with \$50,000 in Partnership funds. Under this grant the Partnership will conduct an RFP process that will allow for at least one Stark County high school and one two-year open enrollment college join together to implement a new strategies or to scale up emerging best practices, to increase college retention and graduation.

Looking At The Week

Public-Private Collaborative Commission

On Tuesday, Dr. Joe Rochford attended the meeting of the Public-Private Collaborative Commission in Columbus. Established by the Ohio Legislature, the commission will recommend ways of encouraging students and their families to develop a greater vision for their successful future in Ohio.

Education Works

Dr. Adrienne O'Neill, a member of the Education Works (<http://www.advancenortheastohio.org/node/146>) leadership team attended the first two day workshop held by the group this week. Education Works, a committee of Advance Northeast Ohio, is intended to identify and sponsor innovative collaborations between high schools, higher education, and work force programs to increase the rate at which students go on to higher education, are prepared when they arrive, and graduate successfully.

¹ Rankings from StatsIndiana at: <http://www.stats.indiana.edu/>

