

# 30,000 Degrees: Steps Toward the Formation of a Staten Island Higher Education Partnership

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## Abstract

*In order to confront lower than average completion rates in New York City and to provide a strong economic and civic foundation for Staten Island, the borough's three institutions of higher education, College of Staten Island/City University of New York, St. John's University, and Wagner College, have brought together their high school and community partners to form the Staten Island Educational Partnership. Broad-based and cross-sectoral, the partnership has the goal of achieving 30,000 college degrees by 2025.*

The College of Staten Island/CUNY, St. John's University, and Wagner College have joined together to create a cross-sectoral, borough-wide initiative – 30,000 Degrees: College Readiness for a Stronger Staten Island. Modeled after Louisville's "Degrees at Work: 55,000 Degrees," the 30,000 degrees initiative brings leaders in higher education, secondary and primary education, pre-Kindergarten children services, nonprofit community-based organizations and social services, and government to form the Staten Island Educational Partnership – an organization and a vision that gives everyone a stake and role to play in improving college readiness on Staten Island. As we bring the Staten Island Educational Partnership into existence, we report as the working group tasked with this project on the outreach, organization, and organizational changes that have guided our efforts so far. We also reflect on the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead in creating a truly inclusive, borough-wide partnership that draws on the resources and responds to the challenges of growing a prosperous, educated workforce in New York City.

Although the work undertaken so far has brought the participating educational institutions closer together, we also believe that we are helping to bring higher education closer to its metropolitan context and setting, laying the groundwork for new models and narratives about the role and institutional growth of higher education in US cities. In this respect, we contribute our working group's progress and the future work of the Staten Island Educational Partnership to the growing number of institutional initiatives by the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) member institutions who are actively trying to create a distinctly urban vision for higher education and college attainment that is rooted in the needs and resources of their metropolitan community.

The Staten Island Educational Partnership has a still more vital connection to CUMU. Its signature initiative, 30,000 Degrees: College Readiness for a Stronger Staten Island, is a direct outgrowth of Staten Island educational leaders' participation in the 2013 CUMU conference. The Staten Island Educational Partnership was formed in order to achieve the results sought by a similar coalition of business, government, higher education, pre-K–12 education, and community organizations in Louisville. The partnership and the 30,000 is, therefore, a statement about what investment and participation in CUMU can accomplish. As more member institutions learn of similar initiatives throughout the country, we are happy to offer 30,000 as an example of an organizing, professionalizing potential that lies within CUMU and its journal.

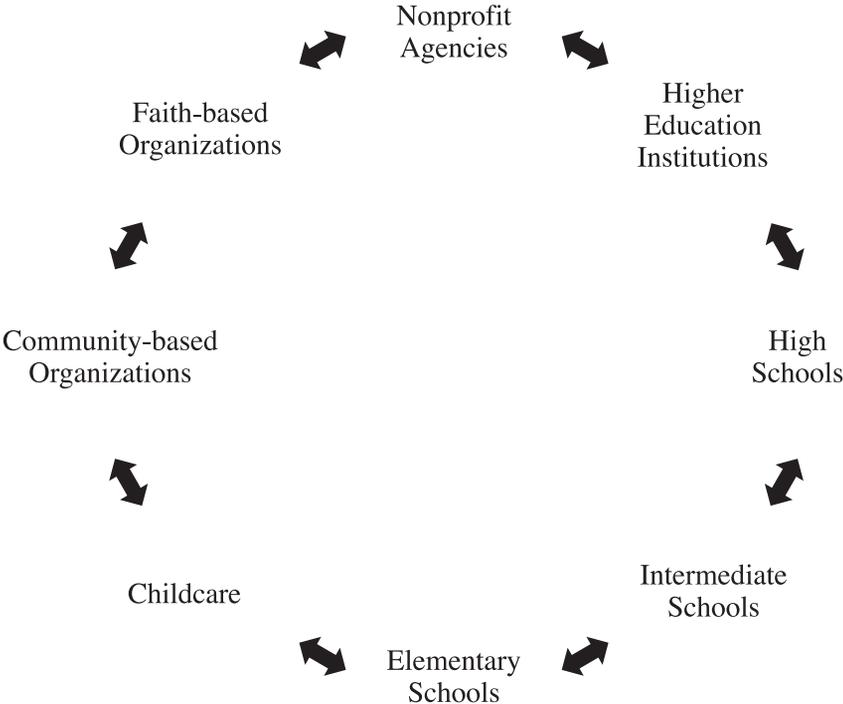
## **Origin of 30,000 Degrees**

In 2013, representatives of the College of Staten Island, Wagner College, New Dorp High School, Port Richmond High School, and Staten Island Technical High School attended the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities conference in Louisville and learned about the work of “Degrees at Work: 55,000 Degrees.” Among the goals of degrees at work are the objectives “to improve the ease with which working adults access the postsecondary system; to increase the affordability of education; to promote the adoption of education-friendly programs, policies, and practices among Louisville employers; to measure and report the completion rates of working-age adults who return to school.” The Staten Island participants at the 2013 CUMU conference recognized the need for such an initiative in their home borough and the benefits that could be realized by expanding the traditional “feeder school” relationship between high schools and colleges to include K–12 schools, business, and community organizations.

After the conference, President William Fritz of the College of Staten Island and Richard Guarci of Wagner College presented this vision to Vice Provost James O’Keefe of the Staten Island campus of St. John’s University, and a three-college partnership was born. Although meetings of university presidents and executives are not uncommon, this would be the first time that the three institutions of higher education on the borough of Staten Island were devoting resources and strategic focus to a shared agenda: improving college readiness in the borough

The executives of the three colleges formed a working group composed of Dr. Michael Kress, vice president of information technology and the Economic Development and Civic Prosperity unit for the College of Staten Island/CUNY; Sandy Sanchez, director of the Economic Development and Civic Prosperity unit at the College of Staten Island/CUNY; Dr. Kenneth Gold, dean of the School of Education for the College of Staten Island/CUNY; Samantha Siegel, director of the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement for Wagner College; Dr. Christopher Cuccia, academic assistant vice president for St. John’s University; and Dr. Robert Fanuzzi, director of civic engagement and public programs for St. John’s University. Working closely with the high school principals in their core high school partnerships, the 30,000 working group moved quickly to establish a paradigm for their program goals and their methodology. The paradigm became summarized as a circular, mutually beneficial

relationship that drew not only on the traditional “feeder school” relationships but also on the middle schools that delivered students to the high schools, and the community centers and organizations that supported the students outside their schools.



## About the Participating Institutions

### College of Staten Island/City University of New York

The College of Staten Island is a four-year, senior college of The City University of New York that offers exceptional opportunities to all of its students. Programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies lead to bachelor’s and associate’s degrees. The master’s degree is awarded in eighteen professional and liberal arts and sciences fields of study. The college will now assume degree-granting authority of the doctorate in physical therapy, and this will become effective for students enrolled in the class of 2017 (beginning fall 2014). The college participates in doctoral programs of the city university graduate school and university center in biology, chemistry, computer science, nursing, physical therapy, and physics.

The historic mission of The City University of New York (CUNY) has been to provide both access to and excellence in higher education. The 2012–2016 master plan articulates “a steadfast insistence on the ability to serve students from all backgrounds, ensuring that each student has the opportunity to proceed smoothly through the educational pipeline to degree completion . . . and a dedication to the university’s urban setting.”

As the borough's only public institution of higher education and the second largest employer on Staten Island, the College of Staten Island (CSI) plays an integral role in developing sustainable campus-community partnerships. Community engagement and service/experiential learning components are integrated values and fundamental principles of CSI's strategic plan. We actively work to instill the value of education and civic participation and are proud of our leadership role for Staten Island.

Furthermore, CSI has committed internal university budget allocations dedicated to supporting institutional engagement within the community. Under the auspices of a senior executive, the newly created Economic Development and Civic Prosperity unit has forged major inroads within the community, elected officials, educators, and civic and business leaders.

### **St. John's University**

In 1870, the Rev. John Loughlin, Bishop of Brooklyn, asked the Vincentian community to establish an institution of higher education to serve a growing immigrant population. The result was St. John's College on Lewis Avenue in Brooklyn. The college grew into what is today known as St. John's University, with four campuses in New York—Queens, Staten Island, Manhattan, and Oakdale—and locations around the world. As a Catholic and Vincentian university, St. John's applies its vast resources on behalf of those in need, combating the root causes of injustice and creating paths to a more equitable world.

St. John's University's commitment to Staten Island dates to the late 1960s, when Archbishop Terrence Cardinal Cooke of the Archdiocese of New York asked the Vincentian Fathers of St. John's University to integrate Notre Dame College, a premiere but struggling small college that had been educating women since the 1930s, in order to maintain Catholic higher education in the borough. With the New York State Board of Regents approval in 1971, St. John's has been a vibrant educational force on Staten Island for more than forty years, presently serving more than 2,000 students who are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs. This unique campus, where the graceful buildings of the former Ganz estate stand alongside state of the art technology centers, has graduated more than sixteen thousand students and continues to fulfill the promise of bringing together the academic rigor of a national Catholic university with the Vincentian mission, devoting its intellectual and physical resources to search out the causes of poverty and social injustice and to encourage solutions which are adaptable, effective, and concrete.

Consistent with its mission and history, the Staten Island campus of St. John's remains focused on the aspirations of the ever growing immigrant population in New York City and the needs of the underserved and marginalized, including access to educational opportunities for nontraditional students. St. John's University faculty and students explore issues related to poverty and social injustice, enhancing their studies with skill-building experiences, community-based research, and academic service learning in their local and global communities through the Vincentian Institute for Social Action, the

Office of Campus Ministry, the Office of Global Studies, the College Advantage program, the Scholars Program, the School of Education's Community Engagement Project, the Office of Adult & Veterans Services, and other programs and services.

## **Wagner College**

Wagner College was founded in 1883 as the Lutheran Proseminary of Rochester, N.Y., working to prepare future Lutheran ministers for admission to seminary. As the school grew in reputation and size, the New York Ministerium, a Lutheran church organization in control of Wagner, recognized the need to find a new location. Reverend Frederic Sutter, a graduate and lifelong supporter of Wagner College, had established his own ministry on Staten Island in 1907. Through Sutter's efforts, Wagner College relocated to Grymes Hill on Staten Island in 1918. The new campus found a home on the thirty-eight-acre former country estate of nineteenth century shipping magnate Sir Edward Cunard. Wagner's move to Staten Island ushered in a new era in the history of Wagner in which the college became well known for its liberal arts curriculum and, as a result, grew both in its academic reputation and enrollment over the next three decades.

Today, Wagner College is uniquely positioned as the only true, private, traditionally residential liberal arts college within the five boroughs of New York City. More than two thousand students in more than thirty academic programs and four graduate departments make up the Wagner College community, which is ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* among the top twenty-five regional colleges and universities in the northeast, continuing its tradition of academic excellence into the twenty-first century. Keeping with its tradition of community engagement, Wagner College is intimately connected to the greater community locally, nationally, and internationally.

The mission of Wagner College is to prepare students for life, as well as for careers, by emphasizing scholarship, achievement, leadership, and citizenship. Wagner offers a comprehensive educational program that is anchored in the liberal arts, experiential and co-curricular learning, and service to society, and that is cultivated by a faculty dedicated to promoting individual expression, reflective practice, and integrative learning.

Wagner College achieves this mission through the implementation and enhancement of The Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts, which was formally launched in 1998. This innovative and bold curricular framework is predicated on direct links between theory and practice. It builds upon Wagner's history of combining liberal arts and focused professional programs, coupled with our unique location and requires community-based learning for all students. The plan has, thus, ushered in a new vision of engaged student learning that is at once reflective and integrated, theoretical and practical.

Working to deepen the Wagner plan, the Port Richmond Partnership was developed in the spring of 2008 and is made up of representatives from Wagner College, leading organizations, and institutions in Port Richmond and focuses on the areas of education, economic development, immigration, health and well-being, and the arts. The

partnership further demonstrates the Wagner commitment to learning by doing and to rejuvenating a historically rich but economically distressed community. The partnership seeks to increase student learning, raise civic consciousness, and further sustain its impact and commitment to the local community.

### **Ralph McKee Career and Technical Education High School**

Ralph McKee Career and Technical Education High School has been a leading representative of Staten Island in career and technical education (CTE) for more than ninety years. McKee is like a private school, with small classes, committed faculty, secure grounds, and sophisticated technologies. Led by Principal Sharon Henry, McKee provides students with the knowledge, study habits, resources, and guidance not only *to go* to college, but also *to thrive* once accepted by equipping students with the skills and certifications to pursue career fields like drafting, graphic arts, CISCO/A+ networking, automotive technology, cosmetology, and construction. Today, as it prepares youth for key roles in the twenty-first century, McKee's motto is, "McKee: College, Career, Life." As a recipient of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant to start the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, McKee stands as the only AVID certified CTE secondary school in the Northeast region. In 2013, it was one of thirteen schools to be awarded a Bloomberg Technology Initiative Software Engineering Program (SEP), through which students are on a path to receive New York state certification as a CTE designation on their high school diploma. Other recent achievements include a first place in desktop publishing and design and third place in package design in the 2014 Citywide Graphic Arts Competition; both a first and third place finish in the 2014 Greater New York Automotive Dealer's Association automotive technician citywide competition; second place finishes for both advertising design and architectural drafting in the 2014 Skills USA New York City Area 5 competition; and both first and second place finishes in desktop publishing and design in the 2013 Citywide Graphic Arts Competition.

### **New Dorp High School**

New Dorp High School serves more than twenty-seven hundred students in grades nine through twelve. Its student population is 51 percent White, 27 percent Hispanic, 12 percent Black, and 7 percent Asian. Seventeen percent are special education students, and 4 percent of students are English language learners (ELLs). More than 57 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The school is located on the east shore of Staten Island. Principal Deirdre DeAngelis has led the school since 1999.

New Dorp High School has implemented a variety of structural and instructional systems using data to develop school-wide approaches to improve student outcomes. Through an inquiry approach, staff and administrators continually identify areas for growth and strategize possible levers for improving student outcomes. Concerned about the school's graduation rate, they divided the large, comprehensive high school into eight Small Learning Communities (SLCs in 2006), each with a specific career focus, a dedicated administrator, guidance counselor, teaching staff, and other support staff to create a personalized environment to better meet the needs of all students.

Academically, they focused on writing as a growth area throughout the school based on analysis of student data. As a result, all teachers have been supported in explicitly teaching analytic writing in their content areas. With more than a 22 percent point increase in their four-year graduation rate since 2006, the results are starting to show. Parents and families are key partners in New Dorp's turnaround—a widely used online grading and information sharing system keeps them updated and allows them to communicate with teachers regularly.

### **Port Richmond High School**

The mission of Port Richmond High School is to provide students with individualized challenges, opportunities, and resources, to become lifelong learners and productive, responsible citizens. Port Richmond High School believes that all students can learn and achieve at a high level of expectation given the proper attention to their individual needs. Principal Timothy Gannon believes that close community partnerships with colleges, universities, and local organizations help enhance students' educational experience and provide them with multiple options. In 2013, 61.1 percent of Port Richmond High School students graduated in four years and about 50 percent of students graduated with a weighted diploma. Overall, the school received a B for college and career readiness with around 75 percent of graduates taking academically rigorous classes and 43 percent enrolling in postsecondary classes after graduation.

### **Staten Island Technical High School**

Staten Island Technical High School is among the prestigious New York City's specialized high schools. The admissions process is highly competitive and based upon the specialized high school admissions test, which is taken annually by more than twenty-seven thousand New York City students. All ninth grade students receive an iPad to use in school and take home for four years via the 1:1 Digital Education Initiative. The school's college preparatory curriculum provides a robust and challenging experience through courses in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), as well as the liberal arts and health and physical education, along with a cutting edge career and technical education program and extensive Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) opportunities for the scholar-athlete. Staten Island Technical High School is one of our nation's top high schools, with all core courses taught on the honors level and featuring one of the best college preparatory experiences across the curriculum, with a strong emphasis in STEAM education, and premier college and career readiness programs, producing the nation's finest scholars, innovators and athletes.

Staten Island Technical High School was recently ranked sixth in *Newsweek's* 2014 list of America's top high schools. One hundred percent of Staten Island Tech's graduates go on to four-year colleges and universities, including the service academies. The 293 students of the class of 2014 earned \$61 million in college scholarships, with most students earning sixteen to sixty college credits via the school's vast Advanced Placement program and dual-enrollment college accredited courses. Pivotal partnerships with the College Board's Advanced Placement program, CUNY College

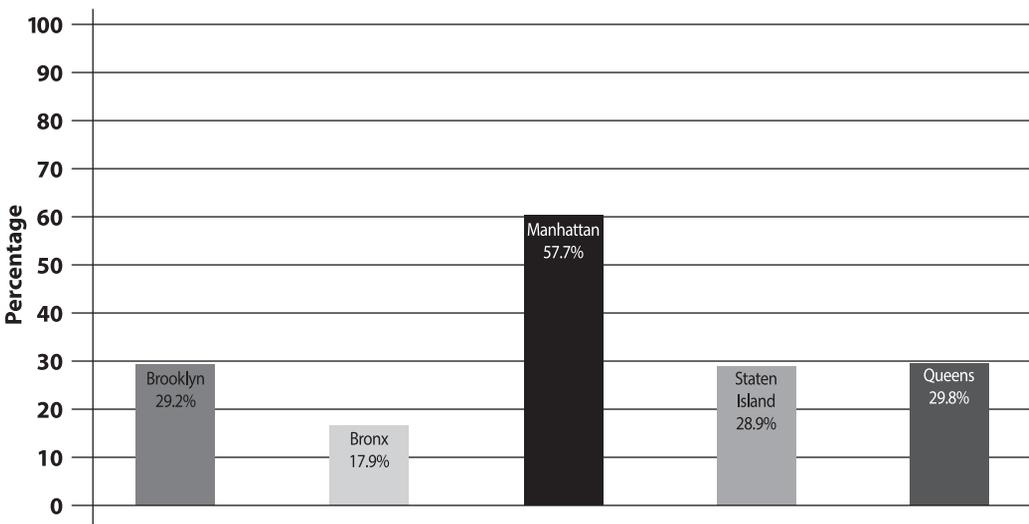
Now, SUNY University in the High School, St. John’s University College Advantage, and the College of St. Rose provide students with the opportunity to earn and graduate with fifteen to sixty college credits. Over 60 percent of the faculty members teach AP and college-level courses.

## About Staten Island

As the smallest of New York City’s five boroughs, Staten Island has come into sharper local focus and into national consciousness in the wake of super storm Sandy. It currently ranks fourth among the five boroughs in the rate of college degrees by borough residents:

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### Percentage of Borough Residents with a Baccalaureate Degree or Higher



**The New York City average is 32.5%; Staten Island 30,000 Degree target is 35%**

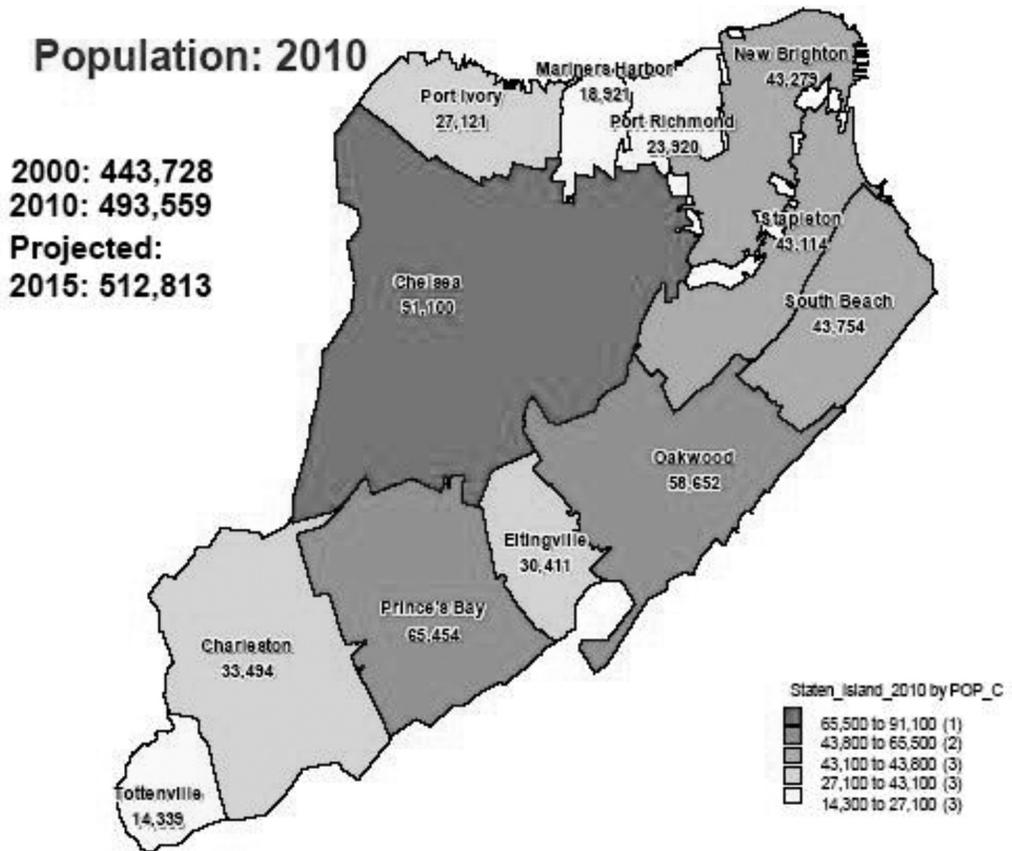
Source: 2012 United States Department of Commerce, United States Census Bureau Report. Manhattan, 57.7%; Queens, 29.8%; Brooklyn, 29.2%; Staten Island, 28.9%; and Bronx, 17.9% of baccalaureate degree or higher attainment (age 25+) 2007-2011

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2010 census data informs us that the percentage of persons aged twenty-five or over (2007–2011) who have attained a baccalaureate degree or higher is 28.9 per cent (136,040 degrees) of the island’s 470,728 residents. Based on the analysis of Staten Island population growth and recent trends in higher education, a goal of thirty thousand additional degrees from the baseline 2012 census will require an increase of 2,128 degrees above the trend over the ten-year period from 2015–2025. Also, based on the national average completion rate of 50 percent this would require an additional 426 college-ready high school graduates per year who choose to go to college (United States Census Bureau Report 2014).

An extra opportunity and incentive for the Staten Island Educational Partnership to reach these goals is the 35 percent increase in the foreign-born population in the borough from the census years 2000 to 2010. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2008–2012 American Community Survey, the foreign-born will number 97,369 out of a total population of 468,374, almost a quarter of the population. Will Staten Island’s newest residents become part of the borough’s educational progress? The Staten Island Educational Partnership was formed with this challenge in mind.

The Staten Island Educational Partnership made a close study of other relevant demographic trends that will inform its focus and outreach.



Using information collected from the 2012 American Community Survey and the 2010 US Census, a report issued by St. John’s University found that other than the Bronx and Staten Island, all the other boroughs will see increases in the ten to fourteen age group in 2015. The entire city will grow in population by about 5.2 percent. Staten Island will have the largest decrease in the ten to fourteen age group at –4.4 percent. Overall, the fifteen to seventeen age population will decrease by about 6.5 percent around the city.

White population will continue to decrease in the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island and increase slightly in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Staten Island has the largest increase

in Black population by 75 percent since 1990. Black population will decrease about 2.6 percent in 2015 for all but Staten Island, where it will increase by 5.4 percent. Asian populations will increase across all of the boroughs by 9 percent in 2015, with Staten Island having the largest Asian population increase at 167 percent since 1990. Hispanic populations have increased in population across the boroughs by about 35 percent since 1990, with Staten Island having a 204 percent increase in Hispanics since 1990. In 2015, projections show Staten Island’s Hispanic population increased by 16.5 percent.

The population has increased across Staten Island by about 16 percent since 2000. The largest increases were in Charleston (31 percent), Tottenville (30.8 percent), and Port Ivory with about 26 percent. Overall, population in Staten Island will grow by about 4 percent from 2010 to 2015, but the borough will see decreases in the ten-to-fourteen age population in the –4 percent range by 2015. Since 2000, the ten-to-fourteen age population has decreased at a rate of about –3.5 percent over fifteen years. High school aged populations will reach their peaks in 2012–2013 and then will be followed by a long and gradual decrease in population throughout this decade. The fifteen-to-seventeen aged population reached its highest point in 2010–2011, but decreases will be about –7 percent by 2015.

According to the same St. John’s University report, the borough will see increases in the percentage of residents without a bachelor’s degree.

**Table 41 Staten Island Area Less Than BA Degree: 2000 - 2015**

Zip Code Area	< BA 2000	< BA 2010	< BA 2015	% 15 Yr Change	% Chg 2010-2015
1 New Brighton	17,944	18,274	19,117	6.54%	4.61%
2 Mariner's Harbor	8,862	9,934	10,644	20.11%	7.15%
3 Port Ivory	10,997	13,079	14,380	30.76%	9.95%
4 Stapleton	18,244	20,158	21,659	18.72%	7.45%
5 South Beach	21,448	23,490	25,069	16.88%	6.72%
6 Oakwood	30,022	31,042	32,385	7.87%	4.33%
7 Tottenville	5,995	6,919	7,573	26.32%	9.45%
8 Eltingville	14,923	15,427	16,116	7.99%	4.47%
9 Charleston	13,662	15,921	17,443	27.68%	9.56%
10 Port Richmond	10,541	10,875	11,478	8.89%	5.54%
12 Prince's Bay	29,714	32,524	34,651	16.62%	6.54%
14 Chelsea	42,362	43,360	45,321	6.99%	4.52%
Staten Island	224,714	241,003	255,836	13.85%	6.15%

The knowledge that the borough is lagging in college attainment and projected to continue to lag spurred the 30,000 working group to ramp up their outreach efforts to high schools to see if existing programs could be intensified or more strategically utilized (Ross, Cuccia, and Hughes 2012).

## **College/High School Partnerships Underway**

St. John's University has begun an in-depth partnership with McKee High School in the St. George neighborhood of Staten Island that implements the Advancement Via Individual Determination program. Housed in McKee High School, the AVID secondary program (grades seven through twelve) "develops learning, study, and academic behavioral skills that are essential to success in rigorous coursework. It acts as a catalyst for schools to develop a culture of college readiness for all students across the campus. In the AVID elective class, students receive daily instruction and support to prepare them for college from a trained AVID elective teacher. AVID impacts students school-wide as academic strategies like writing to learn, inquiry, collaboration, organizational skills, and critical reading (WICOR ) are taught in all classes by teachers who have been trained to use AVID strategies in their specific content areas." An essential part of AVID's program delivery are the college tutors, who "create a positive peer group for students" and help them "a sense of hope for personal achievement gained through hard work and determination." Working closely with high school students, college students provide the crucial mentoring and academic follow up that is necessary for the success of AVID.

St. John's School of Education faculty member professor Kristin Pitanza is the liaison and coordinator for delivery of the AVID program at McKee, supervising students from the School of Education and from the St. John's University core class, Discover New York. She reports that the close relationship between AVID trained teachers and the St. John's University student tutors is already paying dividends. The AVID tutor sessions use college tutor facilitators to pose problems, lead inquiry-based learning activities, and to collectively develop solutions to the problems posed by students. The AVID approach rewards the student who has the best question and helps others learn to develop similar problem-posing skills. Students are empowered to become leaders and are made responsible for envisioning and performing higher level work outside the classroom.

Working together, content area teachers and college tutors are devising tutoring outcomes that will help the content area classroom and teacher reach their desired goals. By preparing students for more demanding tutoring questions, St. John's University students and the content area teachers of McKee High school are preparing their high school students for success in college by modelling and demanding a higher level of performance and participation. St. John's University students also learn about the motivational and programmatic challenges that lay ahead in the field of college readiness.

Principal Sharon Henry reports with great satisfaction on the working relationship and level of cooperation achieved so far between St. John's University and McKee High School and looks forward to achieving tangible outcomes in college readiness as the program continues throughout the academic year.

St. John's University also administers the College Advantage Program in the following local high schools: Curtis High School, Miraj Islamic School, Moore Catholic High School, Monsignor Farrell High School, New Dorp High School, Notre Dame

Academy, Staten Island Technical High School, St. John Villa High School, St. Joseph-by-the-Sea Academy, St. Joseph Hill Academy, St. Peter's Boys High School, Susan Wagner High School, and Tottenville High School.

Wagner College believes that comprehensive neighborhood partnerships are the most effective ways for institutions of higher education to align with like anchor institutions in order to achieve long-term measurable and sustainable community good. Considered the cornerstone of the curricular framework, the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts/Port Richmond Partnership seeks to develop collaborative programs that contribute to school improvement, economic growth, health care enhancement, and immigration reform. The partnerships play a significant role in advancing research and inquiry about pressing community issues and builds mutually beneficial curricular and co-curricular placements for Wagner College students to broaden their experiences and strengthen a wide variety of community-based initiatives.

Community leaders first broached the Port Richmond Partnership in 2008 as a way to augment Wagner's highly successful Civic Innovations Program. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the spring of 2009, officially establishing the partnership. Based on an agreement between Wagner College and leading organizations and institutions in Port Richmond, the partnership was designed to extend Wagner's commitment to learning by doing and to rejuvenating an economically distressed community.

Over the past three years, the number of partnership organizations has doubled, and through regularly scheduled meetings, partners have worked together closely to tap into existing community assets by continuing to build significant, sustainable, and increasingly ambitious partnerships. To date, 30 percent of Wagner College undergraduate students have at least one community experience through which they work with and learn from the residents of Port Richmond. The Port Richmond Partnership offers the following opportunities:

- Curricular- and co-curricular-based placements for Wagner College faculty, students, and staff .
- Professional development activities for area students, teachers, educational personnel, and organizational leaders.
- Cooperative programs to forward school improvement, economic development, immigration reform, and health promotion efforts.
- Research, data collection, and dissemination.

With a strong focus on college readiness, citizenship education, and school improvement, the education subcommittee of the Port Richmond Partnership is the most profound example of community engagement work at Wagner College. In 2010 MARGA Incorporated conducted a year-long study of the Wagner Plan for the

Practical Liberal Arts/Port Richmond Partnership and found that more than twenty community partners across disciplines agreed that the educational partnerships were the strongest and most central way for Wagner College to connect to the greater community. Since 2011 around \$500,000 of grant money has been received and distributed to augment education work in the Port Richmond community.

The most profound example of this work is the Port Richmond Partnership Summer Leadership Academy for rising juniors at Port Richmond High School. Wagner College launched the Port Richmond Partnership summer leadership academy to increase the likelihood of at-risk youth going to college and graduating with a strong degree and moving on to a successful career. Working in close partnership with the New World Foundation, Wagner College, Port Richmond High School, and Project Urbanista have designed a summer leadership academy for high school students residing in the Port Richmond community of Staten Island. This leadership academy is based on the Civic Opportunity Initiative Network (COIN) model of increasing college access for students from underserved communities through programs that encompass the following key elements: increased access to higher education, effective mentoring, community engagement, and development and a commitment to advancing civic engagement and education as core aspects of democratic citizenship. During the pilot summer of 2014, twelve students from Port Richmond High School participated in a five-week summer academy at Wagner College participating in courses as well as interning in the Staten Island community. It is anticipated that the summer academy in 2015, 2016, and 2017 will be held for the duration of seven weeks and will contain a maximum of sixteen students per cohort. Sixteen of the academy graduates will receive full tuition scholarships to Wagner College.

The College of Staten Island, and in particular its School of Education, has long worked closely with New Dorp High School in the preparation of future teachers. New Dorp hosts CSI students in the Teacher Education Honors Society for field observations, New Dorp teachers have joined as members of the adjunct faculty in education at the college, and teacher education students serve as student teachers at New Dorp in many different subject areas. New Dorp sits atop an extensive feeder system that includes three intermediate schools and twelve elementary schools. Among these schools were many that also had lengthy collaborative relationships with the College of Staten Island. For example, PS 13, PS 14, PS 39, PS 57, PS 78, and IS 49 are all stalwart collaborators in the field experiences of the teacher education students.

The college's work with PS 78 is of particular note. Located in the Stapleton neighborhood of Staten Island, PS 78 is a Title I school serving large numbers of low income families. It is a site for the CSI Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK program, in which participating children are paired with College of Staten Island student tutors/mentors. These mentors provide homework assistance and tutoring services, using best practices drawn from reading, math, writing, and other academic areas. The tutoring is tailored to academic needs that become obvious during homework time and/or upon request by the student or school staff. In addition, SEEK offers leadership and financial literacy workshops. The leadership development workshops are based on Steven Covey's 7

*Habits of Highly Effective People* and cover principles of self-development, personal responsibility, goal setting, and team work. Financial literacy is based on the principles of saving, spending, donating, and investing.

With so many schools already intertwined with New Dorp and CSI, Principal Deirdre DeAngelis and Dean of Education Ken Gold gathered the principals of the New Dorp feeder schools together at the high school on March 10 and April 25, and they subsequently met again at the college in July. The group of invitees gradually expanded as additional schools learned about the initiative and asked to participate. Most notable was the addition of Staten Island Technical High School. Given its physical proximity to New Dorp and the close professional relationship between the leadership of the two high schools, the Staten Island Technical High School was also invited to join the working group and quickly became a central partner. All participants eagerly embraced the cradle to career concept that emphasized college graduation as a motivating goal.

The meetings produced some animating principles and possible programs for the schools to establish, some in conjunction with the college and/or community organization. The principals articulated a need to address socio-cultural issues (e.g., imagining a future in college) as well as academic ones (e.g., preparing for a future in college). Participants completed an interest inventory of activities and programs that they were currently running or interested in launching. Some of these included career fairs, college information sessions, learning communities, internships, and parental outreach activities. The idea of structured school visits garnered the most immediate traction, with the principals interested in launching or expanding their efforts to acclimate students to the intermediate and/or high school that they would subsequently attend. Two-way visits were envisioned, with students returning to their previous school to address younger students and with students visiting their next school to speak with the alumni of their current school. In this way, each school would send and receive student ambassadors. Both New Dorp and Staten Island Technical have enlarged their school visit programs for the 2014–2015 academic year.

## **Achieving Collective Impact**

The Staten Island Educational Partnership took an important turn when it held its first community forum in May 2014. A large group of community leaders, elected officials, educators, and other stakeholders agreed in principle with the overall objectives of 30,000 Degrees but desired a larger organizational structure that would allow them to work alongside the representatives of the three higher education institutions. Betsy Dubovsky recognized the opportunity to achieve a “collective impact” with the help of the nonprofit Strive, and engaged Strive as a consultant to grow the partnership beyond its current membership and to bring the organizational objectives into better alignment with the needs and capacity of the Staten Island community.

As described by Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania, and Mark Kramer (2012) in their Stanford Innovation Review article, “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact



As we work through these organizational challenges, the members of the working group are particularly excited about developing strategies for attaining the first three articles of this agenda. Of special interest is developing the “shared measurement” that will be based on the various ways that the participants in collective impact define their progress toward the common agenda. “Mutually reinforcing activities” will arrive as we complete our inventory of what we are able to measure and contribute toward achieving our common agenda: thirty thousand degrees and a better educated workforce for Staten Island.

## **Conclusion**

On September 13, 2013, during NBC’s fourth-annual Education Nation Summit, a gathering on the state of education in America, the United States secretary of education Arne Duncan announced that education in America is in “a real state of crisis.” Findings of a study showed that American adults fare poorly in mathematical and technical skills needed for a modern workplace compared to their counterparts in most other developed nations (Chuck 2013). Nationally, college enrollment in 2012 declined by nearly a half million students compared to a year earlier, according to new figures released by the US Census Bureau, with students over the age of twenty-five leading the miniature exodus from higher learning (United States Census Bureau 2014).

This information has special import for the educators who work in New York City’s least populous but most fast changing borough and its metropolitan institutions. Although the members of the Staten Island Educational Partnership knew at the outset that our efforts would partner us closely with leaders of the community and K-12 education, we could have never realized the extent to which our efforts would engage us in prospects for the health, welfare, and development of our borough. Each member of the working group brought an exceptional portfolio of program activities and initiatives to the effort as we began our work, but we already have achieved our own collective impact in realizing that we are actually doing each other’s work in a mutually reinforcing fashion: the education of Staten Islanders. Never before have the stakes for this effort been clearer to us as we confront the costs of an uneducated workforce, high school drop-out rates, and lack of college attainment as well as to the prospects for the borough as a whole. While Staten Island continues to recover from the most destructive storm this city has ever seen, we take great pride in bringing equal focus and determination to an equally destructive problem that threatens to leave the borough behind the city’s and the nation’s economic progress. We are heartened in this effort by the contributions of a wide range of leaders and stakeholders who likewise realize that a college educated workforce is the work of us all. The best potential and strategic plans for a metropolitan college or university, we posit, will always have this fact before them.

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