



## **“Hold Fast to Dreams:”**

### MILWAUKEE LEADERS TALK ABOUT COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

NOVEMBER 2009

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A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY AND PREPARED FOR  
COMPASS GUIDE, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION

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### HIGHLIGHTS

*“One of the great things that the founders of this country understood was that it doesn’t have to be perfect; it just has to be good. They understood that the perfect is the enemy of the good and that democracy is not a perfect system. Life is messy, democracy is messy and so we have to look for what is possible and do it. So the answer to the question, ‘Is it possible to prepare a workforce for the future?’ is that we just are going to need some time to do it. Do we have things in place for that? Yes, we do.”*

– COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW, FALL 2007

To identify new and fresh ways to promote college access and success, COMPASS Guide, in collaboration with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, turned to community leaders. Thirty-one people, representing a cross-section of community leaders, participated in comprehensive, in-depth interviews between November 2007 and April 2008.

Several key themes emerged in the course of these interviews:

- ♦ Young people can do more than we ask of them.
- ♦ The Mayor, political leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, teachers, parents, and every community member should be communicating a college-going/post-secondary message every single day in myriad ways.
- ♦ Milwaukee, like most other communities, is not adequately preparing the workforce of the future. We need a much closer tie between education and workforce development. Education is currently tied to 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century, jobs.
- ♦ As a community, we need to recognize societal changes resulting from technology and new forms of communication, including changes in students and changes in learning and teaching styles.
- ♦ There is a need for a rigorous academic system, one that expects a great deal from **all** students, teachers, and parents and from the community at large, including the business community. As one respondent said, “Milwaukee serves different communities differently.”
- ♦ We need to recognize that children and families face problems that are broader than education alone, including social, economic, and health related challenges. Thus, the solution to problems cannot come from just one place.
- ♦ Early childhood education has to be a priority, both in the short term and in the long term.
- ♦ A wide range of quality public and private post-secondary opportunities is available in the Milwaukee area.
- ♦ The definition of post-secondary education should be broad, encompassing the liberal arts, but also including technical training, the trades, and other possibilities.
- ♦ More connections need to be made in the education community, both vertically and horizontally (Public education ↔ private education, colleges and universities ↔ elementary/secondary education).
- ♦ Milwaukee has many effective college access programs, but most serve only 50-100 students; collectively programs reach fewer than five percent of the area’s secondary school students. We need to bring effective programs to scale.
- ♦ The public needs education about the availability, effectiveness, and value of existing pre-college programming.

Based on these interviews, Milwaukee has many effective programs targeted at helping young people gain access to and succeed in college. By enhancing and expanding these efforts, we have the capacity to ensure that students graduate with the education they need to excel in the years to come, thereby creating a strong 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

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*Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.*

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### FOREWORD

Evaluation, a key component of “program development,” has been utilized annually to review and critique both COMPASS Guide, a project assisting high school students secure college scholarships, and the Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS), a collaborative seeking to improve post-secondary enrollment and success for low-income Milwaukee students. In 2007, we decided to use a new strategy. Rather than assessing from within, we chose to reach out to the Milwaukee community to gain a better understanding of what OUR community was seeing, hearing, feeling and experiencing in relation to Milwaukee pre-college initiatives. What is working? What is not working? And what is missing?

In selecting community leaders to be interviewed, attention was paid to identifying individuals representing multiple sectors. Our report provides a voice from each of these perspectives:

- ♦ Business
- ♦ K-12 public education
- ♦ K-12 private education
- ♦ Public University
- ♦ Private University
- ♦ Minority (African-American, Asian and Hispanic)
- ♦ Funders
- ♦ Faith-based programs
- ♦ Community-based programs
- ♦ Workforce development
- ♦ Economic development
- ♦ Elected officials
- ♦ Community volunteers
- ♦ Parent representatives
- ♦ Education representatives
- ♦ Private school collaborative representatives
- ♦ Career and technical education representatives

Interviews were conducted, starting with the open-ended question: “Is Milwaukee adequately preparing the workforce of the future?” followed by questions more specific to college access and success. Each leader was asked to talk about what IS working, as well as to offer observations on shortcomings. The interviews were faithfully recorded and transcribed, providing for the first time, a voice from our community on this important issue.



Barbara Goldberg and Associates, LLC served as consultants for the entire process. Barbara Goldberg conducted all the interviews. Following completion of the interviews, she and Tora Frank worked tirelessly to compile the information in a way that remains true to each conversation, but also identifies common themes, noteworthy observations and a set of recommendations to move forward.

What resulted is “our story” in the words of our 31 community leaders. You will hear their optimism, as reflected in the report’s title “Hold Fast to Dreams.” And you will hear the collective voice in 16 specific recommendations to better support students and parents, strengthen programs and institutions, and change policies. Our work is cut out for us.

I invite you to read this report and join us as we work together to increase the number of underrepresented, first generation and low-income Milwaukee students access and succeed in college.

— VICKI TURNER  
DIRECTOR, COMPASS GUIDE  
CONVENER, PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report represents an unprecedented effort to engender new plans and ideas to promote college access, enrollment, and success for Milwaukee’s youth through COMPASS Guide and other community resources.

Those who participated in the interview process demonstrated an extraordinary level of commitment. Thirty-one community leaders, representing a diverse cross section of Milwaukeeans, with additional input from key regional and state representatives, contributed their insights and opinions about workforce development and college access and success. These interviews were inspiring and enlightening, filled with wisdom and passion. We wish to acknowledge the participation of the following individuals<sup>1</sup>:

Lauren Baker	Kevin Ingram	Pastor Steve Robertson
Ellen Bartel	William Jenkins	Esteban Romero
Hugo Cardona	Judy Jorgensen	Eileen Schwalbach
Bruce Connolly	Mary Kellner	Tim Sheehy
Sen. Alberta Darling	Daniel McKinley	Carrie Smith King
Mary Diez	Linda Mellows	Devon Turner
Joe Donovan	Therese Palazzari	Vicki C. Washington
Kathryn Dunn	Linda Post	Elmer Winter
Susan Frieber	Joan Prince	Ronny Yang
Rep. Tamara Grigsby	Roger Pulliam	
Bama Grice	Sister Joel Read	

We especially want to note the contributions of Elmer Winter, who passed away this fall at the age of 97. We had the good fortune to benefit from his insights, gained throughout his long, remarkable life.

Vicki Turner, Project Director, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s COMPASS Guide, and Stephen Percy, Acting Dean, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Public Health, Director, Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, both contributed immeasurably to the development and implementation of this study. We are grateful for their leadership and guidance throughout this process.

We are grateful to Linda Nash, Barbara Goldberg & Associates, LLC, for transcribing all the interviews and to Laura Siitari, Siitari by Design, for designing the report. We also would like to acknowledge the support of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

Consistent with the strong expectations of the community leaders interviewed for the project, we hope that the ideas presented in the report serve as a call to action to ensure post-secondary success for every Milwaukee student.

—BARBARA GOLDBERG  
TORA FRANK

<sup>1</sup> Full titles and organizations of those who were interviewed are included in Appendix A.

# “Hold Fast to Dreams:”

## Milwaukee Leaders Talk about College Access and Success

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### PART I. INTRODUCTION

**BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2007 AND APRIL 2008**, comprehensive, in-depth interviews were completed with 31 Milwaukee community leaders. (See Appendix A.) These interviews focused on issues of workforce development and college access and success. The interviews were designed to gain a better understanding of the realities, challenges and possibilities of college access in Milwaukee and to engender new plans and ideas for promoting college enrollment through COMPASS Guide and other community resources. Because of the depth and breadth of interest in the project, its scope, richness of information, and importance expanded significantly beyond the initial concept. As the project evolved, the interview list was expanded, as community leaders suggested other key informants.

We chose to speak with a diverse cross section of local leaders — leaders who had broad knowledge and specific areas of expertise. The interviews lasted between one and two hours. Each person interviewed brought a strong commitment to Milwaukee’s youth and to this community, a vision for change, and creative ideas. Every interview was inspiring and insightful. Every interview reflected a deep knowledge of the Milwaukee community and an abiding belief that significant change could occur for the central city’s youth and their families.

The interview questions were developed jointly by representatives of COMPASS Guide, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, UW-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, and Barbara Goldberg & Associates, LLC. The questions were designed to move beyond the recurring conversation about Milwaukee’s disheartening educational statistics. The interview questions (included as Appendix B) focused on six key areas:

#### 1. Preparing the Workforce of the Future

- ♦ Is Milwaukee adequately preparing the workforce of the future? If not, what is missing? (*Question 1*)

#### 2. The Milwaukee Context

- ♦ Changes in the surrounding community can influence a program’s capacity and effectiveness. In regard to Milwaukee’s “community context,” would you say that there have been changes in the past few years that affect college access? If so, in what ways? (*Question 5*)
- ♦ Do you feel that local pre-college programs need to adjust program content or organizational strategy because of these changes? If so, how? (*Question 6*)

#### 3. Community Capacity and Assets

- ♦ In your view, what does this community do well when it comes to assisting low-income and/or first generation college prospects in preparing for college? (*Question 2*)
- ♦ When you think of successful programs or policies that help low-income and/or first generation college prospects to prepare for college, what efforts come to mind? (*Question 3*)
  - a. What common elements do these programs or policies share that contribute to their success?
  - b. Why do you think these programs work, when so many other efforts have not been successful?

#### 4. Shortcomings and Gaps in Support of Students

- ♦ What do you think are the greatest shortcomings or gaps in the support available to these students? (*Question 4*)



## 5. Significant Barriers and Pressing Issues

- ♦ In your opinion, what are the primary barriers to a college education for low-income students and first generation college prospects? (*Question 7*)
- ♦ What do you think are the most pressing issues related to increasing the college-going rate for low-income students and students who are the first in their families to go to college? (*Question 8*)
- ♦ What do you think are the most pressing issues related to helping these students succeed in, and graduate from, college? (*Question 9*)

## 6. Promoting College Access: COMPASS Guide and PCAS

- ♦ Do you have any comments about **COMPASS Guide** that you would like to add? (*Question 10*)
- ♦ Do you have any comments about the **Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS)** that you would like to add? (*Question 11*)
- ♦ Is there anything else you'd like to add about college access in Milwaukee? (*Question 12*)

The purpose of this report is to ensure that the wisdom, ideas, and passion of the community leaders who were interviewed are fully captured, that findings are widely disseminated, and that the ideas presented in these interviews serve as a catalyst for action throughout the community. All of these purposes are consistent with the interviewees' strong expectations for the project.



## PART II. KEY THEMES

*“One of the great things that the founders of this country understood was that it doesn’t have to be perfect; it just has to be good. They understood that the perfect is the enemy of the good and that democracy is not a perfect system. Life is messy, democracy is messy and so we have to look for what is possible and do it. So the answer to the question, ‘Is it possible to prepare a workforce for the future?’ is that we just are going to need some time to do it. Do we have things in place for that? Yes, we do.”*

—COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW, FALL 2007

**CERTAIN CONSISTENT THEMES** emerged in the course of the interviews, from question to question and, often, from person to person. These key themes are summarized below:

### HIGH EXPECTATIONS

- ♦ Young people can do more than we ask of them.
- ♦ The Mayor, political leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, teachers, parents, and every community member should be communicating a college-going/post-secondary message every single day in myriad ways.

### PREPARING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

- ♦ Milwaukee, like most other communities, is not adequately preparing the workforce of the future. We need a much closer tie between education and workforce development. Education is currently tied to 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century, jobs.
- ♦ As a community, we need to recognize societal changes resulting from technology and new forms of communication, including changes in students and changes in learning and teaching styles.
- ♦ There is a need for a rigorous academic system, one that expects a great deal from **all** students, teachers, and parents and from the community at large, including the business community. As one respondent said, “Milwaukee serves different communities differently.”

### THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT


- ♦ We need to recognize that children and families face problems that are broader than education alone, including social, economic, and health related challenges. Thus, the solution to problems cannot come from just one place.
- ♦ Early childhood education has to be a priority, both in the short term and in the long term.

### ENCOURAGING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN MILWAUKEE

- ♦ A wide range of quality public and private post-secondary opportunities is available in the Milwaukee area.
- ♦ The definition of post-secondary education should be broad, encompassing the liberal arts, but also including technical training, the trades, and other possibilities.
- ♦ More connections need to be made in the education community, both vertically and horizontally (Public education ↔ private education, colleges and universities ↔ elementary/secondary education).

### PROMOTING PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMMING

- ♦ Milwaukee has many effective college access programs, but most serve only 50-100 students; collectively programs reach fewer than five percent of the area’s secondary school students. We need to bring effective programs to scale.
- ♦ Parents and the public need education about the availability, effectiveness, and value of existing pre-college programming.



Based on these interviews, Milwaukee has many effective programs and services targeted at helping young people gain access to and succeed in college. By enhancing and expanding these efforts, we have the capacity to ensure that students graduate with the education they need to excel in the years to come, thereby creating a strong 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

## PART III. KEY FINDINGS<sup>2</sup>

### A. Preparing the Workforce of the Future

*Question 1: Is Milwaukee adequately preparing the workforce of the future? If not, what is missing?*

#### KEY POINTS

- ♦ Most community leaders who were interviewed felt that, while there were “good things happening” in the area, Milwaukee was **not adequately preparing the workforce of the present or of the future.**\* Many began their responses to this question by describing the profound changes in the city resulting from the loss of 20<sup>th</sup> century manufacturing jobs.
- ♦ The 31 community leaders, again and again, focused on **key factors that were limiting Milwaukee’s capacity to create a strong workforce now and into the future.** These included: poor and inadequate academic preparation and a lack of rigor in the Milwaukee Public Schools; an education system too often tied to 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs; and a lack of “soft employment skills” among many of those who are entering the workforce.\* Some leaders felt that the connections between education and workforce development were too limited and that there was an insufficient focus on the trades, apprenticeships, and technical education as viable paths for post-secondary education.
- ♦ In spite of these observations, community leaders talked passionately about **the possibilities of change**—of creating a Milwaukee community where many more youth would attain the education and skills they needed to thrive in the workforce—now and into the future.\*
- ♦ These leaders recognized the importance of addressing the community’s social issues but also **advocated changes that were essential to significantly altering Milwaukee’s economic environment:** creating a rigorous academic system, identifying 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and jobs and tying to them education, and recognizing and promoting technical training, the trades, and apprenticeships as post-secondary educational opportunities.\*

#### DETAILED FINDINGS

##### *Realities and Challenges*

*How optimistic are Milwaukee’s leaders about the city’s workforce of the present and of the future?* Most of the leaders we interviewed felt that Milwaukee, like most big cities, was not laying the foundation for a strong 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Asked if Milwaukee was “adequately preparing the workforce of the future,” many of those interviewed responded with a resounding no. One community leader said:

- ♦ “It is ‘no’ from the plant floor, from manufacturing jobs, to the engineering jobs and, to the executive suite. It is ‘no’ from the standpoint that enough kids are getting out with the skills and the educational base to be lifelong learners. It is ‘no’ from the standpoint of being able to attract and retain diverse talent.”

Others emphasized that there were a “number of good things” happening in the area, but not enough:

- ♦ “I think there are some segments that are being prepared, but I think if you listen to some of the business leaders and community leaders around town, they will say that we are not preparing our workforce to take jobs that are here now, not to mention jobs that are coming down the pipeline in the future, particularly when you look at the rates that countries like India and China are preparing their young people. We are nowhere near that rate anymore.”

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<sup>2</sup>An asterisk designates a general consensus among three-quarters or more of the interviewees.

Several of those interviewed responded by describing the magnitude of the **loss of 20<sup>th</sup> century manufacturing jobs** and its profound impact on this community. As one leader commented, “We haven’t acknowledged that we have moved from a highly intensive, heavy industry manufacturing community to a community that is going to have to find new economies, whether it be stem cell research or another area — a knowledge economy basis.” He continued:

- ♦ “Up to through the 1950s, through the 1970s, nearly 50% of our economy was supported by heavy manufacturing, manufacturing goods and everything else and that has dropped back to 10%...Remember, the transition and migrations of ethnically diverse cultures and groups—whether it was the Irish or the Polish, whether it was the blacks or others who gravitated to Milwaukee. In particular, the black migration really centered around coming in the 1950s, when these low skilled, high wage jobs were available and protected by unions. If you lost your job on Tuesday morning by Tuesday afternoon you had another job, with which you could support a family.”

Several leaders juxtaposed the reality of no longer having an economy that offers low skilled, high wage jobs, with anticipated workforce shortages, as the population ages. For example:


- ♦ “...The economy is at a point in time and the demographics changes are at a point of time that by 2012, for every two people that turn 65 in Milwaukee, you have one coming into the workforce. That is creating a huge opportunity in the skilled trades and plant floor manufacturing where you are talking about wages in the \$60,000 to \$90,000 a year range in some cases.... We are not seeing young people move into these fields, maybe for similar reasons of exposure into those career paths either, so it isn’t just isolated to college.”

As they examined today’s employment environment, the 31 community leaders, again and again, focused on key factors that were limiting Milwaukee’s capacity to create a strong workforce now and into the future. These included:

- ♦ Poor and inadequate academic preparation, particularly among students in the Milwaukee Public Schools;
- ♦ The lack of rigor in the Milwaukee Public Schools;
- ♦ Limited connections between education and workforce development;
- ♦ Lack of “soft employment skills” among many who are entering the workforce;
- ♦ An education system too often tied to 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century, jobs;
- ♦ Insufficient focus on trades, apprenticeships, and technical education as other viable pathways for post-secondary education;
- ♦ Insufficient knowledge among city residents about available pre-college/pre-workforce related opportunities.

Consistently, **poor and inadequate academic preparation** was viewed as the primary cause of an insufficiently prepared workforce: High school graduation rates in the Milwaukee Public Schools are unacceptably low. At the same time, too few students are completing school with a level of preparedness that can meet employers’ needs. Respondents felt that students lacked the essentials that they needed; they lacked the math and reading skills they needed, as well as life skills and experiences:

- ♦ “There are not enough people completing school successfully, and there are not enough people who are completing it with a level of preparedness that is meeting employers’ needs. I don’t think that the answer is that simple to say if everyone would do these two things — It is an extraordinarily complex problem—but I think every employer around talks about the difficulty of finding people ready to perform and to perform at a high level, regardless of whether we are talking about the hourly workforce, administrative, or even professional.
- ♦ “What I hear from employers over and over and over—without any specific blame being placed on anyone—is that there is a high volume of high school graduates who don’t meet basic requirements in communication skills, writing skills, reading skills, math skills and so on. So there really is a lack of prepared young adults.... What is missing—I look at it as the educational environment is partly responsible. There are familial responsibilities, a lack of partnerships between families and schools. I am not putting blame on any one particular school system or curriculum. It just seems that, somehow, there are a lot of youth that are falling through the cracks. The highest



achieving kids get a lot of attention and the most needy get a lot of attention and there are a whole bunch of kids in the middle that just aren't supported as well. I see that in public schools and private schools. It is everywhere."

- ♦ "What worries me is the degree to which I hear complaints about the graduates of MPS. I am particularly worried about students in those schools and about their futures. We need to apply considerable attention to understanding the underlying problems that exist in MPS. We must work collaboratively with teachers and K-12 administrators. I'm sick and tired of blaming students instead of the system. We blame students for things that they have no control over. Grown people are responsible for institutions."

Several of those interviewed emphasized the compelling need for a **more rigorous educational system**, one that would have higher expectations of its students. For example, one respondent described a recent experience on a site visit to an MPS high school:

- ♦ "I stood outside a math classroom and talked to the math teacher who was a really nice guy and he was giving a test. Most of the kids weren't even taking the test, not even reading it and he showed me a copy of the test. Now this is December and these kids are freshmen almost half way through the first semester of freshmen algebra. From my point of view, it was so elementary. It should have been a first of October test, not a first of December test. What went through my head is that these kids graduate from high school—if they do graduate from high school—and on their transcripts it says that they have had algebra, but what do they know? Do they know anything? So what happens when they get into college or an apprenticeship program where algebra is essential and you don't get into the apprenticeship programs without algebra. They are not going to be able to do it and they are going to feel like they have failed before they started. I'm not blaming anybody. If I knew where to put the blame I would do it and make some money, but I'm not blaming anybody."

The lack of rigor in the Milwaukee Public Schools was noted by others who were interviewed:

- ♦ "We need to have a rigorous academic system. We can't create a façade of achievement. There must be real rigor and real achievement. We need to look at elementary, middle school, and high school—the entire chain. The Department of Public Instruction and the teachers' union must be involved. I'm tired of all the finger pointing. Meanwhile, we have hundreds, if not thousands of students who are suffering the consequences."
- ♦ "What is missing? What is missing right now in many of our junior high programs and even some of the elementary programs? We don't have a level of rigor. We are working on it. I don't mean to say that we haven't recognized this, because we certainly have.... We need to push our students forward and interest them in post-secondary education and career options and provide them with the tools to be able to select an option after graduation and pursue it. We should have required three or four years of science in our high schools. We are just now pushing a three-year math requirement."

Many community leaders commented on the **lack of "soft employment skills"** among young people. For example:

- ♦ "The biggest problem that employers are faced with is the lack of soft skills and applied skills. You have to be on the job—show up to the job from Monday through Friday, be on time, punctuality, attitude, working with groups, developing those leadership skills and taking initiative—everything at once. It's a struggle. Getting employers to work with young people—that we can always do. It is the soft skills part."

Several community leaders felt there was an **insufficient focus on trades, apprenticeships, and technical education, as another path for post-secondary education**. They felt particularly strongly about this, given Milwaukee's longstanding tradition of strong unions, trades, apprenticeships, and technical college opportunities.

Others talked about how **education is currently tied to 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century, jobs**. As one leader said:

- ♦ "With the changes in the demographics, with the emergence of the new economies, we are still preparing students for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. There hasn't been that transformation to the 21<sup>st</sup> century concepts, particularly centering around the fact that we don't know what the students are going to need. We need to change how we are going about that preparation model and we don't have a good handle on the way we see businesses and skills moving to the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

- ◆ “Milwaukee—where it is now in terms of jobs and the types of industries that are here now—is going to change dramatically in the next two decades, so I think it is a question of are we preparing students for the jobs that will be here in the future? Unfortunately, I think it is a question that is much more difficult to get your hands on—what are the jobs? We have to determine what the jobs are going to be and then what we need to do to prepare students for them.”

As a corollary, some leaders noted that the **connections between education and workforce development, particularly with regard to 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs, were not strong enough.** *For example:*

- ◆ “I think Milwaukee is preparing a workforce for the future, but not adequately. What is missing? I think a direct link between the needs of business in our region with a priority of those needs on the academic side, without steering students into a field that they may not want. I think you have to look at the ethical piece along with the workforce needs.... There is this mismatch between what the employers want and what we produce as students. You can’t steer students. Everyone has their passion that they would like to live, but at least if you can put opportunities in front of them, there might be opportunities they hadn’t thought about.”
- ◆ “My dad and grandfather got eighth grade educations, but they had a good financial life. As generations press and pass, with changes in the economy, kids will have to have a highly defined skill set and be cross-trained. My grandfather worked as a molder. His company took care of him when he couldn’t do that work any more and he became the night watchman. That won’t work for our kids. As we look to college access, I hope the university system will step back and make kids specifically trained in certification. Learning new skills sets is essential.”

At the same time, those programs that did exist were neither well-known nor well-coordinated.

- ◆ “I think that there is a lot of confusion and I don’t think there is a good clearinghouse of information on workforce development or a coordination of existing programs. I think that there is a lot of programming that people don’t know about and a tremendous amount of competition between like-minded programs.”

## POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE

*How can Milwaukee do a better job of preparing the workforce of the present and of the future?* During their interviews, community leaders talked passionately about the possibilities of change—of creating a Milwaukee community where many more youth would attain the education and skills they needed to thrive in the workforce—now and into the future.

They talked about many community strengths that would serve as the foundation for change: Milwaukee’s youth themselves, some outstanding examples of public and private schools at all levels, as well as many excellent pre-college and other programs.

These leaders recognized the importance of addressing the community’s social issues; they talked again and again about three changes that were essential to significantly altering Milwaukee’s economic environment:

- ◆ Creating a rigorous academic system, one that expects a great deal from all students, teachers, and parents and from the community at large, including the business community;
- ◆ Identifying 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and jobs and tying education to them; and
- ◆ Adapting a broader definition of post-secondary education, one which encompasses the liberal arts, but also includes technical training, the trades, apprenticeships and other possibilities.

One respondent captured the viewpoints of many leaders:

- ◆ “It’s about priorities. If we really want a healthy workforce here, we have to invest in it ahead of time. It is not just going to appear out of thin air. It is about priorities and it is about putting our money where our mouth is. We can complain all day long about how we don’t have a healthy workforce here and we don’t have enough people, but if we invest in that we can have that.... We know what works from the time of early childhood education all the way through college graduation. We know those things that have been successful, so why don’t we do more to invest in them?”



## B. The Milwaukee Context

*Question 5. Changes in the surrounding community can influence a program's capacity and effectiveness. In regard to Milwaukee's "community context," would you say that there have been changes in the past few years that affect college access? If so, in what ways?*

*Question 6. Do you feel that local pre-college programs need to adjust program content or organizational strategy because of these changes? If so, how?*

### KEY POINTS

- ♦ Community leaders praised several Milwaukee colleges and universities for their **expanded commitment to first generation college students**, in spite of budgetary constraints.\* They specifically mentioned UW-Milwaukee, Alverno, Cardinal Stritch, Mount Mary, and Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) as schools that are reaching out more into the community.\* Some leaders also spoke of the Wisconsin Covenant as a positive change that would affect rates of college enrollment.
- ♦ Although these interviews were conducted prior to the economic crisis of 2008, many of the responses to this question focused on the **profound job losses** in the Milwaukee community and their negative impact on college access.\* Many leaders explicitly commented on the correlation between a non-college educated workforce and the difficulties of promoting college access in families.\*
- ♦ Several leaders lamented that there were **fewer resources available in the schools**\* and specifically noted the negative consequences of **cutbacks in the number of MPS school counselors**.\*
- ♦ These community leaders focused on interrelated issues that have plagued Milwaukee for several years: **continued low high school graduation rates and high levels of community violence**.\* They also cited several national trends as deterrents to college access and success, such as rising college costs, a growing need for remedial coursework, increased demands for and expectations of technological skills, federal education policies and budget cutbacks, and transportation issues.
- ♦ While acknowledging the strengths of local pre-college programming, community leaders suggested a number of strategies for responding to these identified changes in community context. The three most commonly mentioned were **to have high expectations of youth**;\* **to start pre-college programming with middle school, rather than high school, students**;\* and **to have a broad recruitment policy, seeking youth who are not high achieving in school**.\*

### DETAILED FINDINGS

Asked to identify recent changes in Milwaukee that had affected rates of college access, community leaders suggested some positive, but mostly negative, trends. Some of these trends were national in scope; others were specific to Milwaukee.

#### *Positive Changes*

Most leaders mentioned **positive changes at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and at other local universities and colleges**.\* Many believed that the institutional commitment to local first generation college prospects had deepened and expanded over the past several years, at UWM and at other local schools, in spite of budgetary constraints.

For example:

- ♦ "One of the changes is UWM. People are understanding the possibilities there. Ten years ago, we didn't know what was available. People are more aware of the resources we have available here. A lot of that is a result of the work [former chancellor] Nancy Zimpher did. UWM offers students a lot of flexibility and they can live at home. Alverno is another treasure as are Cardinal Stritch and Mount Mary. We have a wealth of choices here. We need to tout our opportunities more. Students don't have to go to Madison or to the Ivys to get a first rate education. This community has so many good schools. Students need to know that."

- ♦ “I see that some of the local colleges now have summer programs — Stritch, Mount Mary, Alverno, UWM all are reaching out more into the community. There is more advertising.”
- ♦ “I really praise the schools around the area. I listen to some students say I don’t want to go to UWM or MATC because that is where dumb kids go and my response is, ‘Excuse me.’ I have to commend those schools for reacting to the reality that there is an educational equality and saying we believe that there is talent. We are going to give you access.”
- ♦ “Cardinal Stritch, UW-Milwaukee, MATC, Alverno, and Mount Mary all have expanded access. They do a good job. The college presidents want to reach out to the community.”

At the state level, some interviewees cited the **development of the Wisconsin Covenant**, introduced in January 2006 by Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle. According to information on the State’s website<sup>3</sup>, the Wisconsin Covenant is:

- ♦ “...a program created to inspire young people to plan early for a successful high-school career that will lead to higher education. Eighth graders in Wisconsin are invited to sign the Wisconsin Covenant Pledge, a promise that they will:
  - ♦ Earn a high-school diploma.
  - ♦ Maintain at least a “B” average in high school.
  - ♦ Complete the classes they need to prepare them for higher education.
  - ♦ Demonstrate good citizenship and participate in their community.
  - ♦ Apply for state and federal financial aid in a timely manner.
  - ♦ Take the necessary steps to gain admission to a University of Wisconsin System institution, a Wisconsin Technical College, and/or a Wisconsin private college or university.


In return for meeting these goals and keeping the pledge, a Wisconsin Covenant Student will be recognized as a Wisconsin Covenant Scholar, earn a place within our partnered systems of higher education, and receive a financial aid package, based on their family’s financial need, to help make college affordable.”

### *Negative Changes*

Although these interviews were conducted prior to the economic crisis of 2008, many of the responses to this question focused on the **profound job losses** in the community and their direct impact on college access.\* As one leader said, “The door that is closed here in Milwaukee, by and large, is the good alarm clock, strong back job. That avenue to a family-supporting job is really closing, if not closed.” Others agreed:

- ♦ “Loss of jobs. If you want to solve most of Milwaukee’s problems, put 30,000 jobs along 30th Street that pay an average wage of \$20-22 an hour. Kids would do well in school. I would have parents coming to parent-teacher conferences; kids would have great role models at home. Nobody would be rich either, that is \$40,000 a year and nobody would get really rich, but they would be stable families with an employed parent coming home every night. A kid would understand the whole concept that you don’t understand if somebody doesn’t go to work. The parents focus on the children, you get a whole different dynamic going on.... Here we have the basic jobs, a lot of people moved here for them and then the jobs disappeared. People have no other skills, you haven’t built that middle class—there is no wealth at all.”
- ♦ “I think college access is affected by household composition and income. About ten years ago is really when the manufacturing industry was probably near the end of its total collapse, probably within the last 15 years in Milwaukee. The manufacturing industry just took a nosedive. From a community context, the families of those individuals are seeing the results of that demise of jobs now. A lot of those families were mid-to-late 40s and they had young people at home and an inability to pay bills, inability to have any extra dollars for things such as, maybe, summer programming. What it has done is that it has really affected the middle class. A lot of those individuals who were low income moved into the middle class because they were hired at A. O. Smith and Briggs & Stratton and other places. Without those jobs being available, they don’t qualify for some of the higher end jobs that are out now without training. It is a lot more difficult to retrain at 50 than at 30. That has really affected college and even education in a household.

<sup>3</sup> <http://wisconsin covenant.wi.gov/>

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- ♦ “I think from a community standpoint that has been an issue. I don’t think the migration of people out has been so large that it has really affected college access for us. But I think the change in composition really has affected young people from either seeing that they can go to college or they are going to try some minimal basic skills and see if they keep a job for life. The group between 40 and 50 probably still had teenagers at home. It affects the entire family and it affects you for years when there is a lack of generational transfer of any assets. If you bring it down to the actual level of people, it has had a devastating effect.”

Others explicitly commented on the correlation between a non-college educated workforce and the difficulties of promoting college access in families.\*

- ♦ “Certainly the fact that we do not have a tradition here in Milwaukee of having a workforce that is a college educated workforce and has a lot of connections out there to college. We have a workforce—we have 100,000+ workers here that only have a high school education and it has served them well in the past, but it is not going to serve them well in the future. If your parents or your uncle or your extended family don’t talk to you about college, who does? That is part of the problem. You have to have schools talking to you and raising the expectations.”
- ♦ “As the middle class disappears we tend to have a society of haves and have nots and it is harder, in my opinion, to find those gateways or doors of access when you are coming from a lower socio-economic status or not having parents who have gone through the experience.”
- ♦ “We continue to see a city that has a large percentage of families that live in poverty. That certainly affects the thought of college access and it also affects whether or not a lot of kids stay in school to get through to graduation to where college is even a possibility.”

At the same time, several leaders lamented, there were fewer resources available in the schools.\*

- ♦ “The more the Milwaukee Public Schools have become a minority/majority district, the less support they have really had in terms of state funding in the community, etc. I think at heart there is a real racial divide still in our state and city.”
- ♦ “When kids are resource poor, schools are poorly resourced. Problems are cumulative and they compound each other. That’s what we’re experiencing.”


A number of leaders specifically identified cutbacks in the number of school counselors,\* as well as changes in their roles, as a critical negative consequence of budgetary constraints.

- ♦ “My personal belief is our high school system and our school counselors do not do an adequate job. There just isn’t the support for parents and, again, our high school counselor ratios run typically across the Milwaukee area one counselor to 350 students and the question is, ‘Are they going to change what counselors do?’ Then we need to make a significant change. Otherwise, it is really a waste of resources. Counselors used to have what we called the ‘social worker heart of gold’ where basically they do have a mission, they do want to help people and that is why they got into the profession and so on... Yet, they have become the assistants to the assistant principals, so they end up doing everything from therapy to hand-holding. They have very little time to do the major lifting in terms of providing services and support for families and kids particularly in the economic side.”

The leaders we interviewed also focused on interrelated issues that have plagued Milwaukee for several years: continued low high school graduation rates and high levels of community violence:\*

- ♦ “I think that the violence and the level of violence that students are experiencing has made many students of color feel a sense of hopelessness about their future and I think that when they are thinking about their future they probably are not thinking about college. They are probably thinking about surviving.”





In response to this question, community leaders cited several national trends as deterrents to college access and success, including:

- ◆ Rising college costs;
- ◆ The growing need for remedial coursework at the college level;
- ◆ Increased demands for and expectations of technological skills in both schools and the workplace;
- ◆ Federal education policies such as “No Child Left Behind;”
- ◆ Cutbacks in federal and state funding for education;
- ◆ Transportation issues, including increases in public transportation costs and reductions in routes.

While acknowledging the strengths of local pre-college programming, community leaders suggested a number of strategies for responding to these identified changes in community context. These included:

- ◆ Have high expectations of youth.\*
  - ◆ “Some students are just not challenged. Students live down to low expectations and stop trying. This happens especially with low income students and students of color early on.”
- ◆ Start pre-college programming with middle school, rather than high school students.\*
  - ◆ “If we think about pre-college as starting with middle school at sixth grade, it really makes a difference in how one thinks. A sixth grader who goes to a pre-college program is much more likely to finish high school.”
- ◆ Have a broad recruitment policy, seeking youth who are not high achieving in school.\*
  - ◆ “We talked about not having restrictions in terms of who is admitted to the program, understanding that a 3.4 is not the only way to determine someone is serious about going to school.”
- ◆ Rethink how we ‘do business’ in pre-college, in acknowledgement of differences in this generation from past generations.
  - ◆ “It is a business. How do you keep a returning customer? Customer service. Maybe we should rethink how we do business in pre-college. They are not the same generation of young people as when we were going to college. Their thoughts are different; the way they strategize, their thinking is different. They have less loyalty and they are used to a culture of movement, so you really have to keep trying to bribe and get them into staying continuously linked to anything. Your pre-college is such an asset.”
- ◆ Continue to work on parent engagement; work with the whole family, not just the individual youth.
  - ◆ “What I think they need to do is come back to the college piece and say to the school, ‘Introduce me to parents that you feel would help with educating your student to become a better person.’ Because you can’t help but educate that parent and do what they need to do for the parent to get educated because once that school, that high school gets your child into college that high school is done. You still need that parent to keep that child in college. You need that parent to make sure that paperwork is turned in for the financial aid, but also need to make sure they can get a bus ticket home when he wants to come, come to Parents Day, make sure they come and watch them be on the Debate Team or if you are in the arts, choir. We need that parent to call all the relatives and tell them to make sure you send Johnny a card for his birthday, to give him encouragement. We have to go back to making sure that the pre-college programs understand the person you need to work with and keep contact with is the person that has given love and life to their child.”

- ♦ Promote a holistic curriculum in pre-college programs.
  - ✦ “We need to create learning experiences that provide social development and enrichment learning. I hate to have them limited just to academics. Programs should also enrich lives.”
  - ✦ “I would certainly hope that we would have a holistic curriculum that addresses the person as a whole—not just again how to study.”
- ♦ Strengthen ties between pre-college programs and schools.
  - ✦ “I know they [a pre-college program] have identified particular schools to get kids from, but I am not sure whether they have had any influence on those schools. Too often, programs are side by side but not mutually influencing.”
- ♦ Examine the way pre-college resources are utilized from school to school.
  - ✦ “I think we need to, if we haven’t as a community around pre-college, look at pre-college opportunities in every school, making sure that we don’t have 60 students from one school and zero students from another. Spread it out, recruiting out over the city.”
- ♦ Continue to provide youth with role models from their community.
  - ✦ “Really providing kids with role models or access to people who, like them, come from a lower income background, but who have gone through and made choices that now they are successful.”
- ♦ Focus more on connections between education and occupations.
  - ✦ “I would like to see pre-college programs focus a little more on our occupational landscape. For instance, the State of Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Seven region is very heavily dominated by a lot of jobs in the STEM fields and I think that needs to be reflected in our pre-college work. Not just engineering, but pharmacy technicians, phlebotomists, and automotive technicians.”
  - ✦ “I hope they get kids into the workforce, too, and let them see or shadow. Some of these kids don’t have a clue about what a job is like. Even if they could think about what they would like to do—and see what it might be like.”
- ♦ Include more information about the trades, apprenticeships, and technical education in pre-college programming.
  - ✦ “I would like to see some pre-college programs not just focusing on 4-year institutions necessarily. I think 4-year institutions are wonderful. I support them but sometimes I think you have to think within the young person and figure out what their dreams, goals and destinies are and begin to work on bringing out the gifts and the talents and the potentials inside them and that pathway. You talk about pre-college, but a lot of times you leave out the trades. You leave out the apprenticeships—which is education but it is not the traditional norms.... I think we are not preparing kids for those kinds of careers—we are preparing them not to be in the marketplace but to be in the work place—not to be working for somebody, to ultimately control their own future. That is one of the things we want to do here. Working hands on while they learn—like an apprenticeship.”
- ♦ Consider including a diagnostic process in pre-college programming.
  - ✦ “Maybe content isn’t where you start. Maybe you start with a diagnostic process.... I think every program that says it is there to help people has to figure out how that helps for those clients. What does help look like for those clients?”

- ♦ Offer youth weeklong programs during the summer in order to accommodate work, vacation, and other potential scheduling conflicts.
  - ♦ “If somebody said to me and I had a son or daughter I was trying to motivate him or her to go to college and I want you to do some work over the summer, let’s compromise. ‘Go to this program for one week, get the exposure and then I am going to let you enjoy the rest of your summer vacation.’ What I have done is I have gotten my way in terms of exposing him to some pre-collegiate, ongoing work, but I didn’t have to take up the entire summer to do it.”
- ♦ Work to maximize existing resources.
  - ♦ “I don’t think we as an institution have done enough to know and avail ourselves of resources that exist in the community and I also don’t think they have reached out to us. There are some really wonderful kids who could use services in the Catholic and private schools, and we also should not try to reinvent the wheel.”

Finally, one interviewee suggested that these questions be asked of the youth themselves:

- ♦ “It would be interesting to ask that question to middle school students and find out from them what do they need in high school to help them become successful in high school, to help them become successful in college.”

### C. Community Capacity and Assets

*Question 2. In your view, what does this community do well when it comes to assisting low-income and/or first generation college prospects in preparing for college?*

*Question 3. When you think of successful programs or policies that help low-income and/or first generation college prospects to prepare for college, what efforts come to mind?*

*Questions 3.a. & 3.b. What common elements do these programs or policies share that contribute to their success? Why do you think these programs work, when so many other efforts have not been successful?*

#### KEY POINTS

- ♦ The Milwaukee community successfully **offers a wide variety of small and large scale programs** aimed at preparing under-represented students for post-secondary education.\* Though the number of programs available was generally agreed to be high, it was also noted that the market for pre-college programs could not be “saturated” because of the strong need for these services.
- ♦ According to interviewees, **many sources of financial support are available** to low-income and first generation college prospects in the Milwaukee community.\* Though community leaders believed that financial resources were available, it was acknowledged that too often, available scholarships went unused because students were unaware of them, or needed assistance in completing applications.
- ♦ A few interviewees mentioned the **success of some Milwaukee-area schools**, particularly schools that used innovative education models and focused specifically on preparing students for post-secondary education.
- ♦ **Milwaukee students benefit from the presence of colleges and universities within or nearby the city**, said several community leaders. These institutions often host their own programming efforts for low-income students and first generation college prospects, but also collaborate with Milwaukee elementary and secondary schools.
- ♦ The community **understands the importance of a college-going message**. A few community leaders noted that the Milwaukee community is acutely aware of disparity between the college-going rates of different groups of students, and is conveying a message of high-expectations to all students.



## DETAILED FINDINGS

Community leaders listed a variety of ways in which they believed Milwaukee was successfully supporting low-income and first generation college prospects in preparing for college. Those interviewed described program approaches that they felt had been particularly effective, and named core program elements that had been most critical for success.

Asked what they believed the **Milwaukee community had been doing well** when it comes to preparing low-income and first generation students for college, community leaders were most likely to note the existence of a wide variety of large and small scale programs available to students. They also reported that some community schools had been particularly successful in preparing low-income and first generation students for college. Several of those interviewed felt that the community was doing well in making financial resources available to these students, and others listed the Milwaukee community's unique approaches to the problem of college access and strong collaborations between various stakeholders.

Community leaders mentioned **numerous programs and services available** to low-income and first generation students. Repeatedly, interviewees named a few formalized, federally funded pre-college programs, such as TRIO Programs and Upward Bound, as well as local efforts including COMPASS Guide, College Readiness 21 and Sponsor-A-Scholar. They also mentioned the importance of smaller scale efforts housed in various non-profit or community-based organizations.

While interviewees frequently mentioned the number of programs and services available as one of the Milwaukee community's strengths, several leaders added caveats. It is necessary to understand how programs work in order to bring effective programs to scale. Often, those interviewed reported that existing programs suffered from a lack of coordination and consistency. Others added that, too often, students and families were not aware of program offerings. As one community leader stated:

- ♦ “There are lots of programs but the consistency and the reaching systematically I don't think we have that or we would have more kids finishing school.”

Though the number of programs available was generally agreed to be high, one community leader emphasized that the need for these programs was ever-present:

- ♦ “Lots of programs are out there—but you cannot saturate that market!”

Community leaders also reported that the Milwaukee community does well in making financial resources available for low-income and first generation college prospects. These scholarships can help students to continue their educations more quickly, and without debt. Several leaders mentioned that many scholarships are available to would-be college students, and that too often these scholarships go unused. As one interviewee noted, having resources available for students is not in itself sufficient:

- ♦ “This community does ‘finding funds’ very well. It does very poorly on executing funds. There are \$1 million scholarships no one takes.”

Several of those interviewed mentioned that some schools in the Milwaukee community had been successfully preparing low-income and first generation students for college. Some schools benefit from the use of innovative education models, particularly when they carefully match students' specific needs and concentrate on preparing students for success in college. Interviewees noted that schools with adequate numbers of guidance counselors were better able to serve students' needs in preparing for college, and that many Milwaukee schools did not have sufficient guidance staff.

Community leaders believed Milwaukee was successful at assisting low-income and first generation college prospects, in part, because of the presence of colleges and universities within the city itself. Several of these colleges sponsor programs that support low-income and first generation students, and collaborations between the colleges and the public schools are also in place.

Also, leaders believed that the connection between occupational landscapes and education were critical to Milwaukee's successful support of first generation and low-income students. Interviewees reported the importance of ensuring that student preparation matches job opportunities and having a close tie to industry.

Community leaders said that various programmatic approaches were successfully preparing students. A few leaders felt that the Milwaukee community successfully communicates to students the importance of education, that it provides

many programs supporting personal preparation, “soft-skills,” and self-esteem.

One leader noted that Milwaukee is successful in having high expectations for students, and another said the city is very aware of the challenges that exist around college access:

- ♦ “I think first of all the community understands that there is a problem and from my understanding in other communities there is a tendency to not understand that there is a problem. Maybe because it is such a huge problem that we trip on it all the time... Milwaukee also has people that are equally committed. I think people really, really are committed to fixing the problem.”

Community leaders explained that successful programs for low-income and first generation college prospects were unique in their approaches, their content, and their goals.

The community leaders described various successful **approaches to college preparation efforts**, including the following:

- ♦ Recruit young students and/or focus on early childhood;
- ♦ Recognize the importance of collaborations that serve students across the entire “pipeline;”
- ♦ Continue to serve students over time as they progress from stage to stage, including middle school, high school, and into post-secondary education;
- ♦ Involve schools, community based agencies, colleges, families and others and understand that no one entity is the single best provider of these services;
- ♦ Focus on developing parental involvement and awareness so that parents can be better advocates for their students;
- ♦ Making sure students’ basic needs, including food, transportation, and basic medical care, are met is a critical part of pre-college programming; this can involve providing meals, transportation, and basic health care to students;
- ♦ Help students to develop financial literacy, and support students through the financial aid application process.

Interviewees described **program content areas** that they believed had been successful. Interviewees noted that programs should serve the “whole student” by allowing students to develop their own strengths, passions and self-understanding. Programs should help students learn academics including literacy and mathematics, but should also focus on “soft skills” like relationship building and decision making. Several leaders noted the importance of peer mentors and role models, specifically those who share similar backgrounds. Other community leaders emphasized the importance of providing programming to prepare students for careers in specific fields including nursing and engineering, or to provide students with opportunities for tangible, integrated, project-based learning and rewards like compensation or employment.


Many of the community leaders who were interviewed agreed that successful programs for low-income and first generation college prospects needed to help students to become comfortable with the idea of pursuing post-secondary education. Several leaders said it was critical to express high expectations for students. As one interviewee commented:

- ♦ “The efforts that come to mind is how they make you feel that you are going to be the one. You are going to be the one to pull up that generation and it is because your upbringing made you understand that when you get there you are going there for us. You are going there for your grandfather, your great-great grandmother.”

Also, several of those interviewed highlighted the importance not only of having high expectations for students, but teaching students to have high expectations for themselves. Too many students, they said, have difficulty visualizing themselves as college students. One community leader described the importance of allowing students to “see themselves” as college students:

- ♦ “The thing that pops into my mind is to get a young person early on into high school on college campuses to see what college life is about. I think that they have to be able to envision being there—not just for academic and career reasons they have to think this would be really cool or this looks like fun. A lot of things that we got excited about going to college had nothing to do with being XYZ and getting great grades—it was kind of expected but it was also something you understood and you looked forward to.”





Community leaders also valued programs that taught students perseverance, leadership, and resiliency. They promoted programming that reinforces students' images as successful and capable. One community leader explained:

- ♦ “So many of our young adolescents by the time they are in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade are perceiving themselves as not successful, can't do the work and so on... pretty soon the kids give up and by 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade they are not mastering skills and not seeing success and it comes down to that equation about how many of us as adults would go to work every day if we didn't get paid. When you look at it from a student perspective, that happens and there are so many kids that aren't.”

Leaders recognized that this process was not simple, and they underlined the importance of continually finding new and fresh ways to encourage, support, and assist low-income and first generation college prospects.

Some programs, reported community leaders, have been able to succeed where others have failed because they have in common some elements related to program content. According to community leaders, these successful programs support students by:

- ♦ Including a diagnostic element in order to gauge students' skills and abilities and tailor support appropriately;
- ♦ Focusing on individual student skills in communication and critical thinking;
- ♦ Providing one-on-one attention and support;
- ♦ Giving timely information about the college process, including applications, standardized testing, etc.;
- ♦ Making sure students are aware of the things they need to know and do throughout high school to be on track;
- ♦ Being convenient and approachable to students, by recruiting them where they are—in schools or neighborhoods;
- ♦ Helping students understand what college is like;
- ♦ Setting expectations and communicate them.

Community leaders reported that successful programs also provide specific types of relevant, hands-on programming to students including:

- ♦ Involving business people, exposing students to new careers and mentors who work in those careers;
- ♦ Providing tangible benefits like compensation, internships, etc.;
- ♦ Helping students understand what college life is really like.

Community leaders believed that the most successful programs had identified and retained staff members who had strong rapport with participating students and who represented the communities served. These programs also had in common committed leadership open to new ideas and long-term support from donors and the community they served. These successful programs were seen as stable and built on a foundation and reputation of success.

Many of the interviewees expressed the need to target programming carefully—making sure to recruit low-income and first generation college prospects and to involve these students, whenever possible, as advocates of the program going forward.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of treating students as individuals and recognizing their unique capabilities and needs. It is essential to have high expectations for students, to treat them with respect and understanding, and to believe in their potential, and also to adapt programming to fit students' abilities, skills and learning-styles. Treating students as individuals can mean giving students second chances, building their trust, and understanding their “context.” Programming, according to community leaders, will be most successful if it responds to students' needs instead of expecting the reverse.

Finally, the community leaders believed that successful programs share the following ideas about their roles:

- ♦ They set a specific goal to increase the number of students who graduate from high school and who are college-ready;

- ◆ They share a clear vision about their purpose and methods;
- ◆ They are proactive rather than remedial;
- ◆ They recognize that increasing college access for low-income and/or first generation students requires a multi-faceted approach.

## D. Shortcomings and Gaps in Support of Students

*Question 4: What do you think are the greatest shortcomings or gaps in support of these students?*

### KEY POINTS

- ◆ Interviewees were most likely to report that schools **and school districts were falling short of providing adequate instruction** and support for students.\* Many interviewees felt that curriculum should be more challenging and engaging, and that students needed additional support from guidance counselors and teachers.
- ◆ The group viewed **community programs** as essential supplements to the work of schools and families, but they identified several common shortcomings in these programs. Most frequently, interviewees reported that these essential programs and services **did not sufficiently coordinate their efforts**.\* Other interviewees felt that programs must be better promoted, sustained, evaluated, and broadened to serve greater numbers of students.
- ◆ Frequently, interviewees reported that students faced gaps in **awareness, expectations, and other types of social support**.\* Community leaders believed that students too often lacked understanding of the attainability of post-secondary education. They also noted the critical importance, and perennial challenge, of involving families in college preparation efforts.
- ◆ Several of those interviewed mentioned the **gaps in financial support** for students. Interviewees noted the need to strengthen grant programs, financial aid availability, and the availability of scholarships. Others mentioned the need to change students' perceptions about the affordability of a post-secondary education.


### DETAILED FINDINGS

Community leaders named a number of shortcomings and gaps that they felt existed in the current support available to students. Their responses fell into four broad categories:

- ◆ Shortcomings related to schools and systems of education;
- ◆ Gaps in services provided by programs;
- ◆ Gaps and shortcomings related to social supports for students; and
- ◆ Gaps in financial support available to students.

Many of the community leaders interviewed reported that **schools and school districts** were falling short of providing students with much-needed support in multiple areas. Several believed that instructional practices needed improvement, noting the need to infuse education with new, research-based understandings of students' learning styles. Interviewee comments about gaps in educational systems included:

- ◆ "Students are not properly stimulated. There is inadequate instruction even if they want to go. We really have to look at K-16 education and reexamine, reconstruct and reform pedagogy. If we spent our energy on working collaboratively and looking at assets, we could redirect our energies and could redirect with positive outcomes."
- ◆ "When they are in a school that is just meeting their basic needs and trying to get them to get through high school without thinking in larger terms about the possibilities of what they could do to help these kids even further. Every school knows that children lose about a month's worth of learning in the summer, because of that long summer break.... Unless a school tries to make those opportunities possible who does it? The parents can't do it, they are working or they are doing something else and they are mainly worried about their kids' safety...."



Families can't do it themselves, somebody has to help them get access to that and we think schools are the natural portal to the bigger world for those families."

- ♦ "Not all the high school options are good and not all the high schools are really supporting kids in getting what they need. It is really hard because a lot of principals and teachers can't visualize it being different. If they kept up on the literature, we know a great deal about how to work with kids. We know how, in cognitive science, we know how to teach things today that we didn't know how to do in the past."

Schools also fall short, according to those interviewed, because of the lack of adequate numbers of guidance counselors. Guidance counselors are often too stretched to provide individualized attention that is so necessary for students, and sometimes do not present the full range of options available to their students. Interviewees made the following comments on the capacity and role of guidance counselors:

- ♦ "One of the other things I think that is a shortfall is that our high school counselors are so overburdened with their caseload that often they can't do anything except put up fliers and they don't know enough about a range of educational opportunities."
- ♦ "A lot of the MPS schools don't have guidance counselors now and the teachers are required to wear many hats where their role is no longer just an instructional teacher. It is being a career counselor and a professional counselor too as well because some schools don't have social workers either."

Teachers, too, are stretched beyond capacity and are working to serve not only an instructional role, but also to act as counselors, social workers, and career advisors. Community leaders also noted the importance of beginning solid academic foundations, and preparation for post-secondary education, at an early age.

Those interviewed were quick to mention that schools alone could not provide sufficient support for students—that **community programs and services** were essential in providing support that supplements the work of schools and families. The most frequently mentioned shortcoming regarding these programs was a lack of collaboration and coordination of services. Several community leaders noted that programs often operate in isolation, unaware of other initiatives, efforts, and services available. The community, they felt, lacks a systematic approach to serving students—too often it is chance that brings a student to a particular program or service. One interviewee commented on the need for more strategic marketing and coordination of pre-college services:

- ♦ "The coordination of efforts so that it isn't just sort of luck that an urban teen would know about these opportunities, a coincidence that [a student] would have a guidance counselor or have a friend who was in the program so maybe a more systematic approach to publicizing these opportunities and having some way to make them better known in the community."

Interviewees also mentioned the need to sustain program efforts for the long term with consistent leadership and funding, and constructive evaluation practices. It is necessary to better promote and publicize the various programs that are available to students. A few community leaders believed that there were gaps in services targeted to average achievers, and encouraged programs to continue to serve this group of students. One interviewee mentioned the need for programs to provide specific services; including assisting students in completing FAFSA forms and completing standardized tests at the appropriate times.

Many interviewees felt that additional gaps in service for students existed beyond schools or community programs. Students, they reported, face many challenges that stem from a lack of **social support**, including a lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of post-secondary education, the negative effect of low expectations, and the need for increased support and involvement of parents and other family members. One community leader commented about the perennial need to use new strategies to boost family involvement:

- ♦ "No one has gotten the solution for this but parents to commit. It is so frustrating. Parents are ultimately the most influential part of academic support. I have been doing a lot of reading on parental involvement and there was a study—private versus public schools and Catholic schools in particular—and the number one thing that resulted in academic success was parent involvement, and the most problematic piece was getting parents involved so—no one has really gotten a handle on how to do that and it is the key."



Students too often lack, as several community leaders noted, a sense of hope and a sense of the potential that exists for their futures. One interviewee remarked:

- ♦ “I think the shortcomings really don’t have anything to do with the financial—it is how we are connecting, the structures, the cycle of poverty, the cycle of crime, it is the hopelessness and despair that rolls out of generational poverty. This has happened to my brother, my uncle, they are not able—in the old days the immigrants would come in, education was seen as a clear path and you weren’t held down because you were Irish or Lithuanian or Russian or whatever. You had access to public education to have a better life for your family. People in the Milwaukee area have not been able to prove that true so in terms of support—it is really those interventions that we need to be assisting with and helping with families in terms of breaking cycles because every kid we say starts a new family. We can make kids economically viable.”

Several of those interviewed mentioned the gaps in **financial support** for students. They noted the need to strengthen grant programs, financial aid availability, and the availability of scholarships. One noted that students and their parents often see post-secondary education as unaffordable, and stressed the need to address that perception.

- ♦ “I think for many of them it is probably money to start with. They think they can’t afford it.”
- ♦ “We need to improve and increase financial aid funding—we need more money for low income scholarships, from the community we need more of an effort to actually get them there.”

## E. Significant Barriers and Pressing Issues

*Question 7: In your opinion, what are the primary barriers to a college education for low-income students and first generation college prospects?*

*Question 8: What do you think are the most pressing issues related to increasing the college-going rate for low-income students and students who are the first in their families to go to college?*


*Question 9: What do you think are the most pressing issues related to helping these students succeed in, and graduate from, college?*

### KEY POINTS

- ♦ According to interviewees, low-income students and first generation college prospects too often do not believe they are capable of going on to college.\* They face **barriers of self-doubt**, but also sometimes **lack support, encouragement, and reinforcement of a college-going message** from others in their lives.\* Students not only need to believe they can achieve a college education, but must be able to visualize themselves as “fitting in” once they are college students.
- ♦ The **high costs of a college education**, as well as a lack of financial aid, were seen as primary barriers for these groups of students.\* Students and parents need to understand that a college education can be a sound financial investment, and need increased awareness of the various types of available financial aid.
- ♦ **Improving school performance, and therefore, student learning**, was seen as a pressing issue. Community leaders mentioned the need to update curriculum, to focus on improvement in core academic subjects, and to promote strong school leadership.
- ♦ According to many of the community leaders who were interviewed, a primary barrier to college education is a **lack of knowledge about the process of going to college**. Students and their families must understand the steps of preparing for, applying to, and enrolling in post-secondary education.

### DETAILED FINDINGS

Community leaders described the issues that they saw as most pressing for increasing the college-going rate of low-income students and first generation college prospects. They also considered the range of specific barriers to college education that these students face. The group’s remarks about these topics were consistent—the barriers to college



faced by students and the most pressing issues related to increasing college enrollment and success fell into three main categories. Issues surrounding social support were mentioned most frequently, including the need to change students' perceptions about the attainability of a college education, the need for individualized support for students, and the need to address other social issues related to poverty and class that affect students' likelihood to attend college. The group of community leaders also referred to financial and academic barriers and issues, as well as issues related to knowledge gaps that exist for students and parents about the process of preparing for college.

### ISSUES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Many of the community leaders felt that issues of belief and expectation were primary barriers to college for low-income and first generation students. Community leaders repeatedly stated that too often, low-income students and first generation college prospects do not believe that they are capable of going to college, and do not receive adequate encouragement, support, and reinforcement of a college-going message. Students need to believe that they can be accepted to college, that they can afford a college education, and that post-secondary education can affect their lives in a meaningful way. They need to know that, despite setbacks and challenges, college is a real option.

Interviewees also noted the importance of social expectations—saying that students need to know that others in their lives expect them to continue their educations, that, as one interviewee said, “*College is something that we do.*” As a corollary, several interviewees mentioned that these groups of students can sometimes have difficulty “seeing themselves” as college students. When low-income students and first generation college prospects are exposed to college campuses, too often they do not see college students who look like they do, or who share their backgrounds. Interviewees saw this as another barrier that can pull students further from believing that they will “fit in” in college.

Two interviewees made the following comments:


- ♦ “The belief that they can do it. I think that needs to be a message infused within their education when they start school. I believe you are going to be successful—whether it is a 4-year college or a training program or job opportunities and there is a lot more post high school opportunities than just 4-year college degree and I look at my definition of college as any educational training after high school. Instill the belief from the beginning and not letting up on that. I think that is a huge piece.”
- ♦ “So the most pressing issues for low-income students and students who are first generation I don't think it is because they are first generation. I think there is so much out there that you don't see yourself in college, you don't see people that look like you.”

A related barrier to college frequently mentioned by interviewees was a lack of individualized attention and assistance for students. Many of the community leaders reported that students needed access to and continued support from individuals in a one-on-one setting. This support can come from mentors, guidance counselors, coaches, teachers, program staff members, parents, or other family members. Interviewees noted that it is particularly useful when these supporters are available on students' schedules, when they are knowledgeable about the process of college preparation, and when they share similar life experiences with students; e.g., having overcome challenges and barriers to continue their own education.

Several community leaders felt that the primary barriers faced by low-income and first generation college prospects were problems like racism, poverty, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, crime, abusive relationships, and lack of parental support. Issues such as these, community leaders noted, can make students' already challenging paths towards college much more difficult to navigate. Initiatives to improve the college-going rate must address these types of challenges that can directly or indirectly affect a student's chances of college enrollment.

### FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Often, community leaders cited the costs of post-secondary education and lack of financial resources as primary barriers for low-income and first generation college prospects. Interviewees believed a lack of financial resources, combined with the high cost of college, created a pressing issue that needed to be addressed. It was suggested that students and their families needed support in learning money management strategies, understanding financial aid and the application process, and a better awareness of scholarships and other tools that students could use to finance their education. The need for parents to make education a financial priority was mentioned, along with the need to reinforce to students and



families that college is a sound investment and an important priority. While many interviewees felt that financial barriers were very significant, others noted that available scholarships and other means of financial support are often unused because of a lack of candidates; students need to be more aware of the financial support that is available. One community leader commented:

- ♦ “The money. The average student gets out of school with such debt and if I have a choice of getting a job at 18 because I need the money, because you usually can’t see what 50 looks like when you are 18 and what may look good to you meaning I have a job that is paying me \$12 an hour, 40 hours a week and I’m single with no children, still live at home, I can help my sisters and brothers buy clothes and school supplies for them—help a little bit on buying food—it doesn’t look bad. I think a primary barrier for low-income, first generation people who aren’t used to a culture of attending college because everyone else around them is college educated—a barrier is immediate gratification. That waving of jobs and opportunities that really aren’t. Those are barriers that are wrapped up with a bow on them but they are still barriers.”

## ACADEMIC BARRIERS

Improving academic success is an important part of increasing students’ chances of college enrollment. Improving school performance, therefore, is a pressing issue. Leaders noted the need to focus on graduation rates and school effectiveness, and listed several barriers and issues related to academic performance.

Many community leaders said school effectiveness was a barrier to success. They noted the need to strengthen student learning on core academic subjects and to measure progress against benchmarks. They suggested longer school days, improving curriculum to match students’ learning styles, and incorporating new technology and other innovations to keep students interested and engaged. As one leader noted:

- ♦ “Review how we are teaching, the way we are teaching. If young people are different and they learn differently—teenagers quit their jobs because of boredom because they are in a high-stimulation world and don’t know how to deal with boredom...As long as people like me are designing the curriculum and approaches I am doing it by what I understand not by the way that you learn. They are not going to have the reading skills if they are not reading—so read! I don’t care what! Teach in a way that is more engaging and incorporates the changes in the culture and society that is rapidly changing. I don’t want to reduce the standards but sometimes the way is archaic.”

One mentioned the need to focus curriculum in order to specifically prepare students for standardized tests. Improving school performance, and therefore student learning, was seen as a pressing issue.


Schools could also be improved, said community leaders, through adjustments in staffing and leadership. Recruiting and retaining strong principals was seen as a pressing issue, as was keeping energetic, talented teachers in schools. Some interviewees also believed that schools would better serve students if they had additional guidance counselors on staff.

Improved schools would likely produce a larger pool of graduates who would be better-prepared to move on to post-secondary education. It was noted by several interviewees that, too often, students perform well enough to graduate from high school, but are still not academically prepared to enter post-secondary education. These students need remedial coursework, which takes additional time and adds to the cost of college.

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

According to many of the community leaders who were interviewed, a primary barrier to college education is a lack of knowledge about the college process. As one leader said, “*Knowledge is the ticket.*” Students and their families need to understand the steps of preparing for, applying to, and enrolling in post-secondary education. They must understand the options and to know how to find information when they need it.

Community leaders felt that many students and families needed additional understanding of the importance of a college education. Some leaders had encountered students who preferred immediate (if low paying) employment over the longer term investment in college education. Some felt that students were hesitant to go into debt in order to get an education. Interviewees believed these attitudes and lack of awareness were important barriers for students.



Also, students and families need information about the ideal timelines for the college application process. They need to know about choosing colleges, taking standardized tests, applying to colleges, applying for financial aid, and other important tasks.

Interviewees also mentioned the knowledge that students need about the ways to prepare for college in high school and before. It is critical that students understand the importance of having solid grades, but also important that they understand that imperfect grades will not disqualify them from post-secondary education. Community leaders also mentioned the importance of fully understanding the courses that students need to complete in high school in order to be accepted in their chosen colleges. Too often, noted a few interviewees, students' high schools have coursework requirements that are less stringent than colleges.

## OTHER BARRIERS AND ISSUES

A few of the issues and barriers that community leaders discussed focused on extracurricular pre-college programming for students, including the targeting, content, and scope of that programming.

Community leaders mentioned the need to target pre-college programming to specific groups of students. Several emphasized the importance of targeting younger students, particularly middle school students. Others mentioned the importance of supporting students who are academically average instead of focusing only on high achievers. Still others felt it was important to target males, who are typically underrepresented in pre-college programming. A few mentioned the need to serve undocumented students and students for whom English is not a first language. Many, many students go without the additional support of pre-college programming, and interviewees felt that reaching more students with these types of programming was a pressing issue. An interviewee commented about targeting extracurricular programming:

- ♦ “I look at mostly the 80% in the middle—those are the kids I am concerned about and I don’t think there is enough programming for the 80% in the middle. I think there is programming that is aimed for kids that are falling behind and programs for kids who excel. The kids who are in the middle we have to really think seriously because those kids are all about our future. Those are the kids that will run and make and do all the things in our society. Some of them will fall down in the bottom and some of them will go up to the top at different times but they are the kids we have to reach, the average kids, and I don’t think we think about that enough.”

Community leaders believed that strengthening pre-college programming was a pressing issue for improving the college-going rate of low-income and first generation college prospects. They made several comments about the content and strategy of programming, including the need to serve students over a longer term, to keep students involved in a “pipeline” of support throughout their educational careers (including during post-secondary education). They also suggested that programming should be designed to provide information to students in practical, relevant, and digestible ways. While academic support is important, interviewees noted, other types of knowledge and skills are equally vital for student success.

Community leaders noted that multiple sectors within the Milwaukee community should be involved in boosting college enrollment for low-income students and first generation college prospects. Schools, businesses, non-profits, and government each have roles to play. Asked about the most pressing issues related to increasing the college-going rate for low-income and first generation college students, one interviewee commented:

- ♦ “If you asked me that question five or six years ago I would have said you just do it project by project, school by school, strengthen their capacity to help these kids by forming partnerships and doing this and that. I still think that is a realistic objective and that more kids have a chance to go to college. But now I see more that there is so much non-profits can do, so much schools can do that there is also much more the business and government can do. I really think it takes a whole community and a number of voices giving out realistic messages that are hopeful and encouraging to kids. I would love to see the Mayor and aldermen beating the drum for Milwaukee as a place that is going to support families but also never let down on our enthusiasm and support for higher education so kids can go to college and come back and work here and raise their families here.”

Several interviewees mentioned the state’s Wisconsin Covenant as an example of government demonstrating a real commitment to improving college enrollment, and had high hopes for the covenant’s success.



## F. Promoting College Success: COMPASS Guide and PCAS (The Partnership for College Access and Success)

*Question 10. Do you have any comments about COMPASS Guide that you would like to add?*

*Question 11. Do you have any comments about the Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS) that you would like to add?*

### KEY POINTS

- ♦ Community leaders had **positive impressions of the COMPASS Guide program**. Interviewees believed the program produced quality materials and useful services that were well-targeted to students and their families.
- ♦ Community leaders valued the **collaborative nature of COMPASS Guide** and its ability to bring together distinct groups and individuals to work towards shared goals.
- ♦ Some interviewees noted that COMPASS Guide had established itself as a **community hub**—an organization that can channel students to find needed services and support, while also helping programs themselves to connect with new groups of students.

### DETAILED FINDINGS

Community leaders added their impressions of the COMPASS Guide program and services, as well as about the Partnership for College Access and Success.

Interviewees felt that COMPASS Guide provides useful services and activities to students, parents, and others. Specifically, respondents noted the usefulness of the COMPASS Guide website, which was said to contain “wonderful resources” that allow students to learn about and access scholarships. The COMPASS Guide calendar was also seen as a useful tool, particularly because it was so widely distributed. Other respondents mentioned COMPASS Guide sponsored college fairs and networking opportunities as valuable services for students.

Overall, respondents had positive impressions of the COMPASS Guide program. Interviewees believed the program produced quality materials that were well-targeted to students and their families. Related comments included:


- ♦ “COMPASS Guide has fast facts, readable materials and helps students be well-prepared.”
- ♦ “It is a super good tool and I love the fact that there is a link to it for kids who really need it. You don’t have families who can give them this information, and there are many... it is a great resource for kids who don’t really have a lot of other people in their lives to give them information about careers and so on.”

Interviewees saw COMPASS Guide as an innovative program that was always seeking to respond to students’ needs. As one interviewee commented:

- ♦ “COMPASS Guide has always been instrumental in bringing up very, very innovative programs... I see where COMPASS Guide continues to try to get ideas that they see people do and they try to make it better... I think if they keep that focus, they will always be on the cutting edge of educating children and getting them better prepared for college.”

Community leaders valued the collaborative nature of COMPASS Guide and its ability to bring together distinct groups and individuals to work towards shared goals. Several interviewees made comments along these lines:

- ♦ “I like the fact that people are bringing a variety of individuals to the table to work together which is something I focused on right off the bat. I think that is one of the things that I think is very valuable of COMPASS Guide and PCAS.”
- ♦ “What I like most about it is the ethics—they try to bring the people from the pre-college community within Milwaukee together to see how we can collaborate with one another.”

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- ♦ “We aren’t in competition with each other—there are too many kids out here for us to be in competition with each other.”
  - ♦ “They understand the concept of collaboration.”

As a corollary, a few interviewees went on to note that COMPASS Guide had established itself as a community hub—an organization that can channel students to find needed services and support while also helping programs themselves to connect with new groups of students. This was seen as an important function, as one interviewee commented:

- ♦ “Seeing it from my point of view, it is a group that can bring several strands together and make them work much better because more people know about them. So many high schools don’t have the capacity and there are so many fragmented college access programs. This makes a lot of sense.”

A few interviewees provided suggestions for COMPASS Guide, mainly about promotion of the program’s services. One interviewee felt that the calendars should be distributed not only to students, but to parents as well. Several others reported that increased marketing of COMPASS Guide services and activities would allow more students to benefit. As one community leader stated:

- ♦ “My reaction is if it has been around for a while, why am I learning about it now . . . . I have been looking at the site quite a bit lately and there is a lot of stuff there.”

One interviewee highlighted the importance of college-access issues to the Milwaukee community and beyond, noting the availability of resources and support for students as well as the pressing need to reach greater numbers with a college-going message:

- ♦ “Few big issues rise to the top of what is really going to be critical for the future of Milwaukee, the country, the world and I see college access as one of those key issues. You don’t have to be brilliant and it is available to so many people who might not think that it is. I guess it is hopeful and frustrating at the same time—if we figure out a way to better inform these students we could have much more of an impact. There are the resources—it could be much worse.”

## SUMMARY QUOTES

- ♦ “The glass is still half full because I think we are very fortunate again that we have pre-college programs in Milwaukee. Some cities are not as lucky with their programs as we are so overall a lot of our programs still have funding, they are still working—I think that is the good side.

My hope would be that we would truly understand the importance of pre-college. It is the door opener, whatever term you want to use—but it really can help make the difference between a sixth grader saying, ‘OK, I am ready to check out of this school business stuff, I’ll go when I feel like it or when I can but I am not doing homework, I’m never doing what I know I should be doing because there is no reason for me to because I don’t really see or think that I am capable of doing it.’

I think our pre-college programs still are the best way to help change that thinking for them. It is a concerted effort. I would hope that our programs would stay long-term, follow students through, connect with other support programs.”

- ♦ “How do we build that vision with college access, post-secondary education being but one of the pieces? How do we build with kids who see many people in their environment unemployed or into drugs and alcohol, many struggling to put food on the table or sense of hopelessness? How do we begin to work with them to develop the skills that they will need to have an effective career when they don’t know what that looks like?”

## PART IV. NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS

As we reviewed the transcripts of the interviews, several comments struck us as particularly insightful. We thought it would be helpful to highlight some of these comments in order to capture the tone and the richness of the interviews.

### PREPARING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

- ♦ *Bringing schools into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.* “Our kids can perform. I suggest that kids are smarter, better, faster, quicker than they have ever been and there is lots of evidence and data that most people don’t want to look at....We also think that measurement systems are antiquated — pencil/paper tests, multiple choice tests that measure lower levels of knowledge. We are not measuring what kids know... As a result of the research in terms of brain research, which has exploded, we know more about how people learn. We know that schools are not set up to teach people based on what we know about how people actually learn. Yet we are still doing 20<sup>th</sup> century screening and testing. What are the skills and jobs going to be for the 21<sup>st</sup> century? We do not have an economy any more with low skilled high wage jobs.”
- ♦ *Matching education with available jobs.* “This is the pipeline that every community needs—individuals with opportunity at the front end and, at the back end, you have employers with jobs. You have early childhood education, K-12, skilled trades, trades, technical, and college. On the bottom we have family, poverty, teen pregnancy, and crime. So what we are talking about are the cracks in the pipeline that end up with the broken homes, the dropouts, the mismatched skills, and incarceration. So if we look at this visually as a flow of talent through this pipeline we have too many cracks and too many leaks that are drawing down that volume of talent that employers need.”
- ♦ *Concerns about graduates of MPS.* “What worries me is the degree to which I hear complaints about the graduates of MPS. I am particularly worried about students in those schools and about their futures.”

### THE MILWAUKEE CONTEXT

- ♦ *Lack of a tradition of a college educated workforce.* “Certainly the fact that we do not have a tradition here in Milwaukee of having a workforce that is a college educated workforce and has a lot of connections out there to colleges. We have a workforce. We have a 100,000+ workers here that only have a high school education and it has served them well in the past, but it is not going to serve them well in the future.”
- ♦ *Disappearance of industrial jobs.* “Milwaukee has changed.... Before when you could get a job the places that were available are now gone. There is no A.O. Smith, no Allen-Bradley, no Globe Union where you could get a job and still make it even though you didn’t have college.”
- ♦ *Racial divides and their impact on MPS.* “The more the Milwaukee Public Schools have become a minority/majority district, the less support they have really had in terms of state funding in the community etc. I think at heart there is a real racial divide still in our state and city and that affects stuff negatively.”
- ♦ *Level of violence and its impact.* “I think that the violence and the level of violence that students are experiencing have made many students of color feel a sense of hopelessness about their future and I think that when they are thinking about their future, they probably are not thinking about college. They are probably thinking about surviving.”
- ♦ *The availability of a quality college/university education in Milwaukee.* “One of the changes is the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). People are understanding the possibilities there. Ten years ago, we didn’t know what was available. People are more aware of the resources we have available here... UWM offers students a lot of flexibility and they can live at home. Alverno is another treasure, as are Cardinal Stritch and Mount Mary. We have a wealth of choices here. We need to tout our opportunities more. Students don’t have to go to Madison or to the Ivys to get a first rate education. This community has so many good schools. Students need to know that.”

## COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND ASSETS

- ♦ *College and university resources.* “I think the opportunity of having the Milwaukee School of Engineering, UW-Milwaukee, Alverno, Cardinal Stritch, Carroll College, Marquette—having these colleges and universities within the city is good. A few of them do have pre-collegiate programs that are out in the schools, promoting post-secondary education as an option.”
- ♦ *Quality of existing agencies and programs.* “We have a lot of good pieces in place and we are starting to work together better every year, so I am pretty optimistic that those agencies that target that population are getting better and better at serving that population. The schools themselves probably could not do it.”
- ♦ *Growing numbers of programs.* “I think these programs keep cropping up. People are aware of the needs and are trying to do something about it. You cannot saturate that market—you just cannot. The need will always be there because people cannot just go through K-12, K-16, K-20—life intervenes. Life is not a test, it is a reality.”
- ♦ *Successes of existing programs in meeting basic needs and in providing role models.* “When the basic needs, transportation, meals are provided—I think that is a draw. Maybe that is their meal for the day that they get from that program. I think that successful programs also provide positive role models to youth of the same gender, ethnicity, social class—whatever it is—people who have been successful in learning, successful in work, who can promote social growth. I think those are some elements that are really, really important.”

## SHORTCOMINGS AND GAPS IN SUPPORT OF STUDENTS

- ♦ *Insufficient parental support.* “The kids are on their own out there and they don’t have the parental help.... There are some programs out there—there are some scholarships out there that have been given...I hear [Governor] Doyle talking about the Milwaukee [sic] Covenant, I don’t know how many kids know about that.”
- ♦ *Nature of instruction.* “Students are not properly stimulated. There is inadequate instruction even if they want to go. We really have to look at K-16 education and reexamine, reconstruct and reform pedagogy.”
- ♦ *Gearing programs to higher achieving students.* “Another issue of concern I have in the area of pre-college is that pre-college programs are pretty much geared for students who have advanced academic skills. So we now are left with the lost population who are academically deficient that could utilize the same type of programming that pre-college offers. They may have to tweak it a little bit to serve that group of students that aren’t the 3.0 or the 3.5 or 4.0 GPA students, but still have that dream of going to college as well.”
- ♦ *Waiting too long to draw youth to pre-college programs.* “Part of it is early identification. Sometimes I think waiting until the end of middle school or high school to start drawing them in is almost too late. When looking at educational research where educational motivation or academic motivation begins to wane at 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, it is not catching them early enough and enticing them into learning and supporting it somehow. It seems like you are missing out on a huge group of youth.”
- ♦ *Poor academic instruction.* “It is a heartbreak when you have a kid where you realize that the academic preparation that they have had prior to age 14 has been so inadequate that the gaps are really enormous. I’m sure... in any educational environment educators think, ‘How do we fill in?’”
- ♦ *Limited counseling resources.* “One of the other things I think that is a shortfall is that our high school counselors are so overburdened with their caseload that often they can’t do anything except put up fliers and they don’t know enough about the range of educational opportunities.... Whoever is training them is not giving them the kind of information they need. Some of this stuff that is on the COMPASS Guide, if they would take the time to read it, would be very helpful to them, one might think.”
- ♦ *Limited focus on retention.* “I think one of the biggest things that is often overlooked is what happens once they walk in the door. That is something that people don’t talk about. They talk about how to get them there, but we don’t talk about retention as much as we should and it is difficult.”



## SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS AND PRESSING ISSUES

- ♦ *Differences in educational systems, depending on economic situations.* “I would argue that we have an educational system in this community in this country that is so radically different depending on your economic situation. If you are from an affluent school district, there are services that a parent would assume are just routine. The parents that are able to do it for their children don’t have to do it for their children because they have guidance counselors, AP classes, expectations, colleges are coming to the schools,... so the ‘haves’ have and the ‘have nots’ are struggling.”
- ♦ *Low expectations of youth of color.* “We should never hear a teacher ever say to a kid like they used to say to Malcolm X and other African Americans back then, ‘Oh, no you are not going to go to college, you need to consider becoming a busboy.’ That should never come out of a teacher’s mouth. When a kid says they want to go to college, we should be saying, ‘That is an admirable goal, what college? What can we do to help?’”
- ♦ *A sense of hopelessness.* “I think that if we can do anything to help low income and first generation kids, especially those students who are poor, minority students, it is to instill a sense of hope. We talked about the hope that we have for our future, our own future and for the hope that we have for our children.... I think in some ways we lose hope and when you lose hope your world becomes very, very small and it is very difficult to have any aspirations for anything when your world is very, very small—when your world is all about self-preservation. That is probably of no help because it is hard to build a solution around.”
- ♦ *Lack of an early understanding of the importance of college.* “You have to understand the importance of college. You have to understand the importance of higher education and so we need to be stressing in our schools, in our communities at a higher level the importance of going to college, starting there so young people can begin to formulate in their minds early on this is something that is not optional.”

## PROMOTING COLLEGE SUCCESS: COMPASS GUIDE AND PCAS<sup>4</sup>

- ♦ *Commitment to innovation in programming.* “COMPASS Guide has always been instrumental in bringing up very, very innovative programs. You make it and we’ll make it better. I see where COMPASS Guide continues to try to get ideas that they see people do and they try to make it better. I think with that piece of information and them being a partnership with the colleges and the community I think if they keep that focus, they will always be on the cutting edge of educating children and getting them better prepared for college.”
- ♦ *Success in creating partnerships focused on college access.* “COMPASS Guide truly has that vision that they have extended a hand to try to bring in some of those partners who are working on this access issue, but it could be that COMPASS Guide could be the catalyst for their partnership.”
- ♦ *Availability of a one-stop shop of college access related resources.* “COMPASS Guide provides resources that I can go to. It is a one-stop shop where I can get the information that I need so that I can make the transition, but I still need a mentor or individual not only inspiring me but also helping me make that transition. It is part of the solution but it is not the entire solution.”
- ♦ *COMPASS Guide as a hub of pre-college programming.* “Seeing it from my point of view [COMPASS Guide]... is a group that can bring several strands together and make them work much better because more people know about them. The niche that each fills is clearer and the kind of organizational rationale for such organization is very clear to me. So many high schools don’t have the capacity we talked about it. There are so many fragmented college access programs so this makes a lot of sense.”
- ♦ *Role of PCAS in bringing people and organizations together to maximize pre-college opportunities and resources.* “What I like most about PCAS is the ethics. They try to bring the people from the pre-college community within Milwaukee together to see how we can collaborate.... There are too many kids out here for us to be in competition with each other.... Again, how we collaborate—that is what I like most about PCAS at this point. It has brought us together to sit around a table and have these discussions about what we can do to promote pre-college and how do we get out there and how do we take advantage of the pre-college opportunities to recruit students for our various programs.”

<sup>4</sup> Partnership for College Access and Success

## PART V. RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>5</sup>

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Supporting Students:

1. On a daily basis, find ways to demonstrate trust, respect and high expectations for youth.
2. Every day, communicate consistent, supportive messages to youth about the value of post-secondary education.\*

#### Supporting Parents:

3. Always pay attention to the unique and essential role that parents play in encouraging their children to pursue their life goals; use evidence-based practices and promising approaches to successfully engage parents.\*
4. Provide parents with support for their own education. Consider their own development and challenge them in a different way.

#### Strengthening Programs and Institutions:

##### *Developing New Academic Approaches*

5. Change curriculum and instruction to better mesh with the interests of 21<sup>st</sup> century students.
6. Consider every school to be a school for the college bound.\*


##### *Mobilizing Educational and Community Resources*

7. Look to leadership for change.\*
8. Recognize the importance of offering information and resources about the whole range of post-high school learning opportunities, including four-year colleges and universities, two-year community colleges, technical schools, and the trades and apprenticeships.\*
9. As a corollary, create new, expanded ways to expose young people to the vast array of career opportunities that are available to them.
10. Recognize and utilize the interactive effects of multiple settings—partnerships between public and private and between elementary/secondary and higher education.
11. Bring effective programs to scale.\*
12. Develop a community-wide, comprehensive, coordinated, data driven approach to pre-college education in order to have a long-lasting impact.\*
13. Make a long-term commitment to programs and services, coupling this commitment with constructive evaluation; evaluate for solutions, rather than simply eliminating programs that are struggling, understanding that it takes time to see results.

#### Changing Policies:

14. Bolster long-term public funding for early childhood education.
15. At the state and local levels, in both public and private spheres, root educational strategies in an understanding of Wisconsin's 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce needs. Explore opportunities to provide young people with specific skills, training, and certifications that allow them to fill shortages in the Wisconsin workforce. This approach supports our state's economy, while preparing students for successful, secure careers.
16. Explore the possibility of increasing linkages between PreK-12 and post-secondary system.

<sup>5</sup> An asterisk designates a general consensus on a recommendation among three-quarters or more of the interviewees.



These guiding principles and recommendations are gleaned from the community leader interviews. They represent recurring, interrelated themes suggested by several respondents. They are designed to create change at the individual, program, institutional, and policy levels.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ◆ Significant increases in Milwaukee’s rates of college access and success are both possible and necessary. There is a compelling need for change.
- ◆ There must be high expectations of youth, parents, institutions, and the community. We must build a culture of expectations that students will succeed.
- ◆ Significant change will only result through a collaborative effort among involved parents, dedicated educators, and a supportive community.
- ◆ Building the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce requires a profoundly different approach. In this time of dramatic changes in technology and in the world of work, students need new knowledge and skills that we can only imagine.
- ◆ The impact of strategies that are fragmented, short-term, and undertaken in the absence of an overall plan, is limited. A comprehensive, coordinated, data driven approach about pre-college education is necessary for a long-lasting impact.

## RECOMMENDATIONS


Several broad categories of recommendations emerged during the interviews with community leaders. The recommendations that are included below are designed to:

- ◆ support students;
- ◆ support parents;
- ◆ strengthen programs and institutions; and
- ◆ change policies

Recommendations, along with representative quotes, are summarized below.

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS

1. On a daily basis, find ways to demonstrate trust, respect, and high expectations for youth.
  - ◆ “One of the things that we haven’t talked about which I think is critical is having very, very high expectations for kids. I have to mention that I was not a strong student in school. I was not a bad kid, but I was not very focused and I was not at all a smart student. Had I been in another family and different situation, I more than likely would not have gone to college and so I think it is important that I mention to have high expectations for students is critical.”
  - ◆ “Students live down to low expectations and stop trying. This happens especially with low-income students and students of color early on. When a teacher becomes disenchanted, he or she gravitates toward what is easy. Teachers are influenced by negative stereotypes. They assign behaviors that are not even there. Part of it is the denial; people find it difficult to believe they are doing that. Getting over that hurdle is the first step in changing outcomes.”
2. Every day communicate consistent, supportive messages to youth about the value of post-secondary education.
  - ◆ “I wish that we could convince all the schools to do this. It would be nice if all of the teachers could put outside of their doors and the principals could put outside of their door their college degree, so kids automatically know this person went to college. They went to a college they might never have heard of. It is a subliminal message that is being sent to the kids every single day they walk into a classroom. If you had a question about college you could



say, 'Hey, where did you go to school and what was college like?' You know what their profession is because they are in front of the classroom teaching. That would be something that the schools could do."

- ♦ "The hardest part is trying to convey to the student and the parent, like the website says, 'Know How to Go' to college. One of the first things it says in its recommendations for going to college is to be a pain. Let everybody you know, let every adult you come in contact with know that you want to go to college. Say, 'Can you help me?' and keep nagging and nagging. Every opportunity you get, tell somebody and when somebody says to you, 'What is your career goal?' you say 'I want to go to college.'"

## SUPPORTING PARENTS

3. Always pay attention to the unique and essential role that parents play in encouraging their children to pursue their life goals; use evidence-based practices and promising approaches to successfully engage parents.
  - ♦ "We fail to give parents credit...because you can't help but educate that parent and do what they need to do for the parent to get educated, because once that school, that high school gets your child into college, that high school is done. You still need that parent to keep that child in college. You need that parent to make sure that paperwork is turned in for the financial aid, but also need to make sure they can get him a bus ticket home when he wants to come, come to Parents' Day, make sure they come and watch him be on the Debate Team, or if he is in the arts, choir. We need that parent to call all the relatives and tell them to make sure you send Johnny a card for his birthday, to give him encouragement. We have to go back to making sure that the pre-college programs understand the person you need to work with and keep contact with is the person that has given the love and the life to their child."
  - ♦ "Parents are ultimately the most influential part of academic support. I have been doing a lot of reading on parental involvement and there was a study—private versus public schools and Catholic schools in particular. The number one thing that resulted in academic success was parent involvement and the most problematic piece was getting parents involved. No one has really gotten a handle on how to do that and it is the key."
4. Provide parents with support for their own education. Consider their own development and challenge them in a different way.
  - ♦ "Winning over the trust of people for whom education has not been a successful or a good experience for them—it has been a bad experience and I heard [former MPS Superintendent] Spence Korte tell the story about the first PTA meeting he went to and nobody showed up. He looked into it and what he found out was he was dealing with children that were the third generation of people who had not been successful in school, so they didn't urge their children to stay in school, they said if you don't like it—quit. You can always get a job. So what he did was ask his teachers if they would be willing to—because he knew there was a lot of unemployment in the neighborhood—if they would start an evening adult school, and they did. He was into technology so they taught them computer skills. These things happen because there are good people who think about how you help your society and there are pockets of those. It goes by word of mouth."

## STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS

### *Strengthening Programs and Institutions: Developing New Academic Approaches*

5. Change curriculum and instruction to better mesh with the interests of 21<sup>st</sup> century students.
  - ♦ "The existing curriculum and instruction has a disconnect with the students. The type of literature books they are expected to read are not something they want to read. We have to spark their interest and have some type of motivation to want to pick up that book or magazine or journal or paper and be able to analyze it and think. It has to change!! This generation is moving at a very fast pace."
  - ♦ "Teach in a way that is more engaging and incorporates the changes in the culture and society that is rapidly changing."

6. Consider every school to be a school for the college bound.

- ♦ “I wish that we didn’t have specialty schools, meaning that I wish Rufus King wasn’t the only school that is considered to be the school for the college bound—that if you wanted to be a math or science teacher or go into a math or science career field, Bay View is the school for you to go to because that is the math/science school. All of the schools in and of themselves should be considered preparing kids for the next stage in their lives, whether it be post-secondary education, whether it be the military service, or whether it be entering directly into the workforce.”

### STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS: MOBILIZING EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

7. Look to leadership for change.

- ♦ “You have to have very committed visionary leaders who are open to new ideas and that are open to change.”
- ♦ “I really think it takes a whole community and a number of voices giving out realistic messages that are hopeful and encouraging to kids. I would love to see the Mayor and aldermen beating the drum for Milwaukee as a place that is going to support families, but also never let down on our enthusiasm and support for higher education so kids can go to college and come back and work here and raise their families here.”
- ♦ “It takes leadership at the city level, state level and commitment by the community that is committed to all these kids. You can’t just be committed to your own kids.”
- ♦ “We need to apply considerable attention to understanding the underlying problems that exist in MPS. We must work collaboratively with teachers and K-12 administrators. I am sick and tired of blaming students instead of the system. We blame students for things that they have no control over. Grown people are responsible for institutions, not the students. Our great university system needs to provide leadership for this work. We have to engage folks on the ground. How can we contribute to correcting these problems?”


8. Recognize the importance of offering information and resources about the whole range of post-high school learning opportunities, including four-year colleges and universities, two-year community colleges, technical schools, the trades, and apprenticeships.

- ♦ “One of my absolutely favorite things to say is that everybody only knows what they know, so consequently people at universities know about going to K-12 and going to universities, and teachers tend to know about going to K-12, going to the university, and teaching, so everybody knows what they know. So unless you actually step back and look at data it is hard to know what that landscape is and so, consequently, we prepare—it is nothing against UWM—I am very fond of it—but in the Milwaukee Seven region 49% of our jobs do not require a four-year degree but require more than a high school degree. That is a very significant statistic for me when I am talking about workforce preparedness for young people. That is data from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I think the data is from 2006. It is extremely telling because we all only know what we know and so opportunity is viewed as a four-year college.”
- ♦ “It used to be you became something and it was a career; young people now might change their career three or four times. You can’t stagnate because careers aren’t standing still—not that they ever totally stood still, but I think the work experiences are radically different from when I graduated from high school in 1973. It was just a different place and a different time. Ultimately, that kind of idea that your career is going to evolve and your education is going to continue well beyond traditional four year and so it is kind of a mindset. Not everybody is going to have their first entrée into school be a four-year program.”

9. As a corollary, create new, expanded ways to expose young people to the vast array of career opportunities that are available to them.

- ♦ “It is a challenge for us as parents and as workers and as workforce development staff to know how to get a young person to understand what those jobs are. Exposure is really critical to the vast array of options and opportunities that are out there for them. When we work with young people a lot of times you ask them what they want to do. It is like five or six things and everybody says the same thing and I don’t think it is because they





lack imagination, I think they lack exposure. Someone knows what a doctor does, someone knows what a teacher does, and someone knows what a basketball player does, so I asked, 'How many people want to be a pediatrician?' They know what a pediatrician is so, if ultimately you take that as an example and show interest in medical health care careers, you expose students to a wide array. They can envision what those other jobs mean and have a clearer idea of what it means to get those jobs and what they need to do, so that they are preparing for them in a way that is appropriate.... I think we have a long way to go."

- ♦ "If I were teaching 6<sup>th</sup> grade, we would be talking about careers and their futures."

10. Recognize and utilize the interactive effects of multiple settings—partnerships between public and private and between elementary/secondary and higher education.

- ♦ "The schools that try to do everything itself, be everything to all the kids—they are never going to have enough enrichment, but if they have partnerships like with COMPASS Guide and other programs, then they can bring in so much more—so it is their ability to form partnerships and to invite people in to do more than they can do themselves."

- ♦ "The [successful] efforts that come to mind are the places where we are recognizing that neither one provider nor one institution can provide the pathways for them to succeed. You need to have families because even if we had a school that we go from K-3 to grade 12 beyond that you need to have the colleges. All of these places need to be integrated into that pathway."

11. Bring effective programs to scale.

- ♦ "How do you go to scale on something like this? ...Are there certain things that we could look at and go to scale with? I would suggest yes. How do we in a sense begin to work with kids in focus groups or in other ways in high school to have the conversations about going to college, their fears about it – How do we begin to have those conversations?"

- ♦ "We really need to have a more macro level approach to investing in our kids and investing in their ability to go to college. We have to prioritize. If we really want a community where we have a diverse, bubbling, successful workforce we have to give these folks access to college and until we commit to that we are going to continue to see a lot of the challenges that we see in this community because we are not investing in what really matters. I think that putting our money where our mouth is I guess is one of the things we haven't done that we need to do better if we really want to have a significant increase in the number of people that attend higher education."

12. Develop a community-wide, comprehensive, coordinated, data driven approach to pre-college education in order to have a long-lasting impact.

- ♦ "We have lots of pockets of positive things happening. It is just not systematic enough. There are pre-college prep programs.... There are lots of programs, but the consistency and the reaching systematically, I don't think we have that or we would have more kids finishing school. We have philanthropy, we have church groups—they will try to tutor, try to expose, mentor—we have lots of good people doing good things in the community, but it is not organized."

- ♦ "Certainly that vision is multi-faceted and deals with more than just access to college or post-secondary education, but, in a sense, it is getting everybody on board, understanding that this is the future of our community. They can define who we are in Milwaukee for years to come. How do we build that vision with college access, post-secondary education being but one of the pieces?"

- ♦ "When programs put the benefit of the youth ahead of their own benefit or their own goals and work together and that is the bottom line. You can't work in isolation. You can have a little impact, but to have a big impact there is no one program that is going to solve this problem."

- ♦ "Shortcomings are a lack of collaboration. Different groups and organizations move on their own. Foundations give money: What are the outcomes? Where are the partnerships?"

- ♦ "I think there are a lot of local grassroots programs that are assisting high school students, so I think that perhaps by coordinating these programs. If there were some way to have a central group or some office that would coordinate opportunities, we could maybe be more effective."

- ♦ “The coordination of efforts so that it isn’t just sort of luck that an urban teen would know about these opportunities, a coincidence that they would have a guidance counselor or have a friend who was in the program —so maybe a more systematic approach to publicizing these opportunities and having some way to make them better known in the community.”

13. Make a long-term commitment to programs and services, coupling this commitment with constructive evaluation; evaluate for solutions, rather than simply eliminating programs that are struggling, understanding that it takes time to see results.

- ♦ “It needs to be a long-term commitment for them [foundations] to have some knowledge as to how the program is going. When they invest in something, obviously—most likely in the beginning—you are not going to have any results, but you are going to see how the program moves from that point forward. There needs to be a long-term commitment to go from where you start to having improvements. If you invest the money and have vision and you see results.”
- ♦ “Lack of sustainable programs, money is gone— there goes the program. Sustaining means committed people, but it means money too. One shot deals or programs that were supported to begin with and then aren’t able to get more funding.

## CHANGING POLICIES

14. Bolster long-term public funding for early childhood education.

- ♦ “The earlier we start, the better off we are. In our school, we started K-3. In two more years we will demonstrate that all of these children that we took a year ago, when they go to first grade, they will be at a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level and they will be model students regardless of their background, capacity or anything.”
- ♦ “What happens to these bright-eyed bushytailed five- and six-year olds who can’t wait to get to school, who love learning, who are just ready to roll? About third grade, everything comes down and they are totally non-involved. What goes on? We have to get to the one-year old or maybe even earlier. We have to instill a love of learning and keep it there.”

15. At the state and local levels, in both public and private spheres, root educational strategies in an understanding of Wisconsin’s 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce needs. Explore opportunities to provide young people with specific skills, training, and certifications that allow them to fill shortages in the Wisconsin workforce. This approach supports our state’s economy, while preparing students for successful, secure careers.

- ♦ “When I think of things that are successful - and even in adult workforce development—some of the most successful programs are ones where the employer is at the table saying you complete this and at the end of it I have a job for you. You get an integrated package. We have a program we do that is very successful with middle school kids. They go to an afterschool program where they learn to take computers apart and put the motherboard in. They learn how to use Microsoft Office software and they learn basic Internet usage. If they pass this 40-hour class, we give them a re-refurbished Dell computer to take home and Microsoft Office Suite and our district provides free Internet access for the kids —500 kids a year. We are in our 2<sup>nd</sup> year.”
- ♦ “For the future, I don’t see a college diploma as the ticket punch. My dad and grandfather got an eighth grade education, but they had a good financial life. As generations pass, with changes in the economy, kids will have to have a highly defined skill set and be cross-trained. My grandfather worked as a molder. His company took care of him when he couldn’t do that work anymore and he became the night watchman. That won’t work for our kids. As we look to college access, I hope the university system will step back and make kids specifically trained in certification. Learning new skill sets is essential.”

16. Explore the possibility of increasing linkages between PreK-12 and post-secondary system

- ♦ “We need to have a rigorous academic system. We can’t create a façade of achievement. There must be real rigor and real achievement. We need to look at elementary, middle school, and high school—the entire chain. DPI and the teachers’ union must be involved.”

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

### COMPASS GUIDE/PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS (PCAS) COLLEGE ACCESS INTERVIEW LIST<sup>6</sup>

Lauren Baker	Coordinator, Career and Technical Education, Milwaukee Public Schools
Ellen Bartel	President, Divine Savior Holy Angels High School
Hugo Cardona	President and CEO, La Causa, Inc. (Retired)
Bruce Connolly	Director, Center for Education Innovation and Regional Economic Development CESA #1
Alberta Darling	State Senator, Wisconsin 8 <sup>th</sup> Senate District
Mary Diez	Professor of Education and Dean of Graduate Studies, Alverno College
Joe Donovan	President, Donovan Group, LLC
Kathryn Dunn	Community Investment Officer, Helen Bader Foundation
Susan Frieber	Education Consultant, Milwaukee Teacher Education Center
Tamara Grigsby	State Assemblywoman, Wisconsin 18 <sup>th</sup> Assembly District
Bama Grice	Paraprofessional Education Assistant, Metcalf School, Milwaukee Public Schools
Kevin Ingram	Educational Administrative Director, Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs (WEOP), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
William Jenkins	President, Jenkins and Associates, LLC
Judy Jorgensen	Community Volunteer
Mary Kellner	President, Kelben Foundation
Daniel McKinley	President/CEO, PAVE
Linda Mellows	Community Volunteer
Therese Palazzari	Director of Foundation and Government Grants, Milwaukee Art Museum
Linda Post	Chairperson, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Joan Prince	Vice Chancellor, Partnerships and Innovations, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Roger Pulliam	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Support Services, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Sister Joel Read	President Emerita, Alverno College
Pastor Steve Robertson	Executive Director, Destiny High School
Esteban Romero	Supervisor, Wisconsin Education Opportunity Program (WEOP)
Eileen Schwalbach	President, Mount Mary College
Tim Sheehy	President, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Carrie Smith King	Director of Student Services/Guidance, Divine Savior Holy Angels High School
Devon Turner	Vice President of Urban Affairs, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Vicki C. Washington	Interim Assistant Vice President for Academic Diversity and Development, University of Wisconsin System
Elmer Winter (deceased)	Founder and CEO, Manpower
Ronny Yang	Technical Assistance Monitor, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board

<sup>6</sup> Title represents most recent professional affiliation.



## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



### COMPASS GUIDE/PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

#### INTERVIEW FORMAT

##### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY...

1. Is Milwaukee adequately preparing the workforce of the future? If not, what is missing?

##### ABOUT COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS...

2. In your view, what does this community do well when it comes to assisting low-income and first generation college prospects in preparing for college?
3. When you think of successful programs or policies that help low-income and/or first generation college prospects to prepare for college, what efforts come to mind?
  - a. What common elements do these programs or policies share that contribute to their success?
  - b. Why do you think these programs work, when so many other efforts have not been successful?
4. What do you think are the greatest shortcomings or gaps in the support available to these students?
5. Changes in the surrounding community can influence a program's capacity and effectiveness. In regard to Milwaukee's "community context," would you say that there have been changes in the past few years that affect college access? If so, in what ways?
6. Do you feel that local pre-college programs need to adjust program content or organizational strategy because of these changes? If so, how?
7. In your opinion, what are the primary barriers to a college education for low-income students and first generation college prospects?
8. What do you think are the most pressing issues related to increasing the college-going rate for low-income students and students who are the first in their families to go to college?
9. What do you think are the most pressing issues related to helping these students succeed in, and graduate from, college?

##### COMMENTS ABOUT COMPASS GUIDE AND/OR PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS (FOR THOSE FAMILIAR WITH THE WORK)...OR GENERAL COMMENTS.

10. Do you have any comments about **COMPASS Guide** that you would like to add?
11. Do you have any comments about the **Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS)** that you would like to add?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add about college access in Milwaukee?
13. Are there others with whom you think we should speak?



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