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MORE COLLEGE GRADUATES COULD MEAN ONE MILLION DOLLAR PRIZE

On May 10 CEOs for Cities announced in Chicago the 57 cities and metro areas across the country competing for a \$1 million prize in the Talent Dividend Competition. Hartford is one of four New England cities among the competitors. The Talent Dividend Prize Competition, with support from The Kresge Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, will award \$1 million to the metropolitan area with the greatest increase in 2- and 4-year college degrees completed per capita during the next three years. The MetroHartford Alliance has put Hartford's hat in the ring, in collaboration with the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education.

To accelerate the development of talent in cities across the nation, CEOs for Cities launched the competition with the announcement that 57 U.S. cities—including Hartford—will vie for the million-dollar prize to put toward a national promotional campaign to further develop talent in our region. The Hartford "metropolitan statistical area" included in the competition encompasses Hartford, Middlesex and Tolland counties. In addition to the 9 public and private colleges and universities in the Consortium, Hartford's bid will include degree results from 6 other private and community colleges in the region.

Research from CEOs for Cities explains that 58 percent of any city's success can be attributed to the percentage of college graduates in its population. And, according to the Common Good Forecaster published by United Way, increasing educational attainment by one degree level in Hartford County would result in 17 percent increase in household earnings and 1.6 more years in average lifespan for its citizens. Even small gains in educational attainment can spell big economic gains for U.S. cities: increasing the four-year college attainment rate

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in each of the 51 largest metropolitan areas by just one percentage point—from its current median of 29.4 percent to 30.4 percent—would be worth an estimated \$124 billion a year in increased national earnings. These are big dollars and precisely what CEOs for Cities calls the Talent Dividend.

Hartford is in it to win it. It already is only the second city in the country to boast an adult learner program that assists “comebackers”, adults ready to return to college to finish uncompleted degrees. The Graduate! CT initiative has counseled more than 400 adults in its first year with nearly 100 adults now re-enrolled. According to Graduate! CT Executive Director John Shemo, “The region’s future prosperity is tied to the educational levels and skills of its residents. Our ability to increase the number of college graduates will be a victory for the Hartford region irrespective of winning the prize.”

Although Connecticut ranks ahead of the nation in degree holders, we can do better. The MetroHartford Alliance and Hartford Consortium for Higher Education are primed to compete on a national stage to work toward developing educational attainment and talent in our area. Working with partners like Capital Workforce Partners, the Insurance and Financial Services sector, Capital Region Education Council, Capital Region Council of Governments and major employers, the Hartford regional team intends to take home the prize in 2014. Hartford’s advisory panel for the Talent Dividend Prize includes Diane Bengston, Vice-president of Human Resources, The Travelers; Paula Gilberto, Vice-president Community Relations, United Way of Central and Northeastern CT; Sandra Johnson, Vice-president and Director of Business Development, MetroHartford Alliance; Linda Kelly, President, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; Michael Meotti, Commissioner of Higher Education; Thomas Phillips, President and CEO, Capital Workforce Partners; and Mark Scheinberg, President, Goodwin College and Chair, Hartford Consortium for Higher Education.

To learn more about the MetroHartford Alliance visit www.metrohartford.com and to learn more about the Hartford Consortium visit www.hartfordconsortium.org or call (860) 702-3800.

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