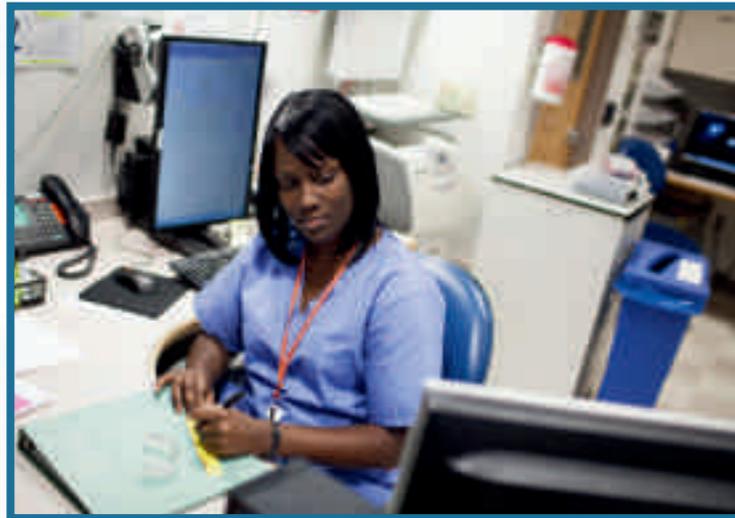


# *West Philadelphia Skills Initiative*

## Impact Report



University City District

2014

# Forever Changing Lives

Dear Friend,

Since 1997, University City District (UCD) has helped lead the way for a vibrant and prosperous University City. A partnership of world-renowned anchor institutions, small businesses and residents, UCD extended its mission of neighborhood revitalization and economic vitality to include human capital and, in 2010, launched the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI).

Four years ago, we imagined a bold way to blend the boundless opportunity in University City with the natural affinity of our institutions to serve their community. We formed WPSI to connect employers seeking talent with West Philadelphians seeking opportunity. We've gone institution by institution, department by department, laboratory by laboratory to identify entry level positions of high need and high advancement opportunity, and in just four years we've forever changed the lives and career trajectories of hundreds of formerly unemployed West Philadelphians, connecting them to jobs and careers and new possibilities.

Sincerely,



Matt Bergheiser  
Executive Director,  
University City District



Sheila Ireland  
Director,  
West Philadelphia Skills Initiative,  
University City District

**The mission of University City District's West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) is to connect West Philadelphia employers seeking talent to West Philadelphians seeking opportunity in order to build local workforce capacity and to support people in realizing their full economic potential. By working within an employer-driven, jobs-first model, we create programming that effectively connects people to work.**

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# West Philadelphia: Opportunities and Challenges



**31%** of West Philadelphians live below the poverty level with unemployment at **15%** (vs. an 11% unemployment rate citywide).

**45%** of households have incomes below \$25,000 per year

Only **21%** of the adult population aged 25 or older has a bachelor's degree



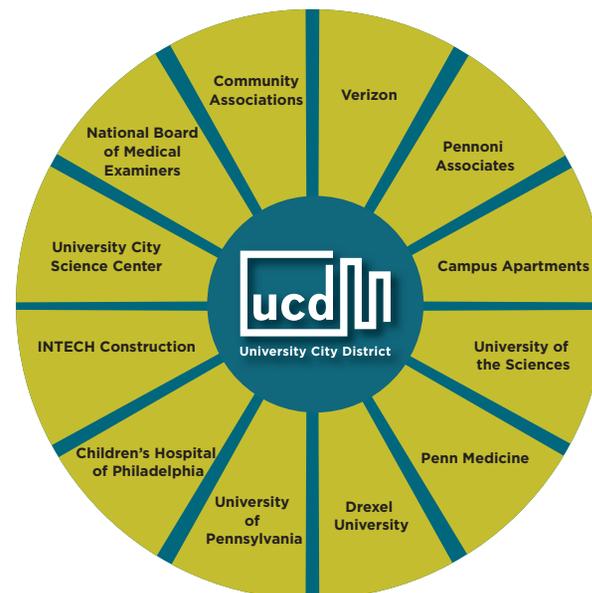
An economic powerhouse with nearly **72,000** jobs, University City is home to more than 10% of the total employment base in Philadelphia.

University City institutions invest **\$1 billion** per year in research and development

University City is home to **\$4 billion** in new or recently completed construction projects



## UCD: Uniquely Positioned for Impact





UCD's long-standing track record of mutual trust and effective partnership with many of Philadelphia's most prominent anchor institutions uniquely positions us to extend these relationships to transform human capital.

## *The Solution: West Philadelphia Skills Initiative*

WPSI seeks to provide an innovative solution to a complex economic challenge. There are too many unfilled or high turnover jobs at some of Philadelphia's largest employers and too many unemployed West Philadelphians with identifiable skills gaps. WPSI aims to connect local employers seeking talent with local residents seeking opportunity.

Building on close partnerships with University City anchor institutions that include Penn Medicine, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and Drexel University's College of Medicine, WPSI provides employer-driven training programs designed to help West Philadelphians succeed in positions traditionally plagued by high turnover. WPSI works closely with neighborhood institutions to identify and respond to the "talent mismatch" between the skills of the unemployed and those demanded by employers.

### Why Employers Love WPSI

#### Mitigating Risk

Our rigorous selection process and talent development methodologies greatly reduce risks inherent in any external hire.

#### Bridging Communities

WPSI builds a bridge between institutional employers and West Philadelphia residents, connecting institutions to local talent.

#### Translating Culture

WPSI designs training programs to help new employees understand expected workplace behavior and standards and how to adapt to succeed.

### The WPSI Difference

Because we take a jobs-first approach, WPSI provides employer-driven talent development programs that are designed to meet two goals:

- 1) Provide employers with individuals that immediately add value to their organizations, and**
- 2) Provide job seekers with the skills to effectively gain and retain employment.**

## How WPSI Works



## WPSI is Responding to Employer and Participant Needs

We understand that each employer is unique, so WPSI helps to identify hiring challenges and transform them into opportunities. Together, we customize a recruitment, selection, and assessment strategy. Because we build our programs in the context of employer needs, WPSI is able to effectively align our services to participants, assuring sustained success.



*“[WPSI] reactivated something we all have within ourselves. I always knew I had these powers, but now I feel like I can uplift myself.”*

*–Shaunte Collins*

# Our Stories

## Connecting to Success

### EMPLOYER ISSUE

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) has a vision to become the safest pediatric hospital in the world. CHOP created the Patient Sitter position to provide one-on-one observations of critically ill patients. However, finding people who are able to become key members of the clinical team proved to be a challenge.

### WPSI RESPONSE

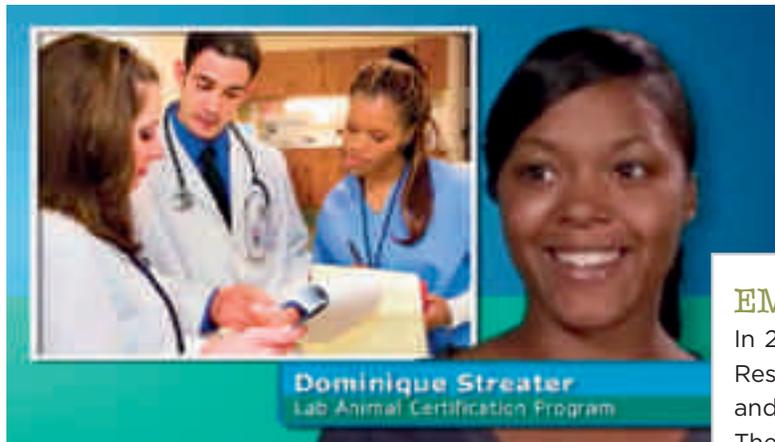
Design a program to facilitate rapid attachment to work. Through an innovative four-week training structure, participants were coached on managing emotional intelligence, developing support networks, understanding organizational structures, and navigating an extensive entry process.

### WPSI RESULTS



*“The Skills Initiative helped push out the confidence that was already within me.”*

**Joyce Bacon** is a 2013 WPSI graduate. She received a job offer from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the nation's leading pediatric hospital, within 24 hours of completing the program and was promoted within six months.



**Dominique Streater**  
Lab Animal Certification Program

*“... to say the program is valuable is an understatement.”*

**Dominique Streater's** unique career shows that reaching one's goals can take many paths. As a 2011 WPSI-placed animal lab technician, Dominique learned the value of professionalism, dedication, and creative vision.

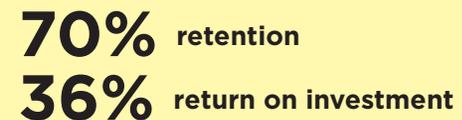
### EMPLOYER ISSUE

In 2011, Penn's University Laboratory Animal Resources acquired additional laboratories and needed to fill dozens of new positions. These new hires not only needed to come up to speed quickly, they had to seamlessly integrate with existing team members.

### WPSI RESPONSE

Customize a 12-week earn-and-learn program and incumbent worker training program.

### WPSI RESULTS



## Closing the Skills Gap for Youth

### EMPLOYER ISSUE

Creating pathways and support for West Philadelphia high school students to finish high school and go on to college and/or internship opportunities with Penn Medicine.

### WPSI RESPONSE

Provide 20 hours per week of wage subsidy supports allowing students to receive full time wages for part time work and unlocking tuition remission benefits. WPSI also provided career development workshops and supports that increased the student's readiness for college and careers.



*“What I like about the program is that it gave me a head start in college and the workplace, and it made me realize what I want to do. I met so many great people—I got a mentor, I got connections.”*

**Ashley Mason** came to WPSI while a junior at Paul Robeson High School for Health and Human Services. Through several internship placements at Penn Medicine, she developed a detailed career plan that helped her identify her goal of being a health system administrator. Ashley is preparing to start a bachelor's program at Drexel University while continuing to provide patient services at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.



*“I came home with stories every day . . . I definitely want to be in the medical field. I want to be able to help others.”*

**Drake McCoy**, a West Philadelphia high school student, mapped out his career goals over two summers with WPSI, first for a project focused on teen sexual health and then as a professional intern in CHOP's Department of Nursing.

### EMPLOYER ISSUE

High school graduates are unprepared to succeed in the world of work.

### WPSI RESPONSE

Develop a summer internship model for juniors and seniors to gain on-the-job experience with institutions such as the National Board of Medical Examiners, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the Law School at the University of Pennsylvania, and International House Philadelphia. WPSI also established a professional development curriculum that exposed students to the fundamentals of career planning and underscored the connection between college and career success.

### WPSI RESULTS

**Recognition in 2012 and 2013  
by the Philadelphia Youth Network  
for outstanding projects**

**55**  
**Paid internships for  
students each summer**

## Creating Job Pipelines

### EMPLOYER ISSUE

Highly-ranked Drexel University's College of Medicine (DUCOM) trains one in every 73 physicians in the United States, but front-line clinical staff did not consistently exhibit the same high-quality customer service that patients expect from DUCOM.

### WPSI RESPONSE

Customize a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) program that includes:

- ▶ Developing a six month earn-and-learn program with targeted attrition and wage increases that reflect the structure of a permanent position
- ▶ Supporting employees through the onboarding process after an intensive initial training period, allowing Drexel to ensure that each program participant is a good fit
- ▶ Training and assessing interpersonal and technical skills required by employer
- ▶ Six months of personal coaching to support high retention rates

### WPSI RESULTS



*“Before my future was just a dream. But with WPSI, it has become a reality. I can actually see the goals I set for myself becoming achieved.”*

In 2011, WPSI prepared and connected **Myna Whitney** to employment at Drexel College of Medicine. She now works at Drexel's Gastroenterology department, where her commitment to customer service, technical proficiency, and professional excellence make first-time patients repeat customers.

**92%**  
retention rate

**CMA's earn on average \$13 per hour, but the average hourly wage cost to the employer over six months of training and onboarding was \$6.05 per hour**

**94%**  
training attendance

**Over two years, Drexel's CMA turnover rate dropped from 28% to 16%**



### EMPLOYER ISSUE

Penn Medicine's Information Technology Analyst position requires a bachelor's degree and two years of experience. Because of increased workflows, however, talented employees often spent hours on entry-level troubleshooting and were not working to the top of their license.

**Michael Benson** came to WPSI as a struggling college student looking for ways to get his career back on track. After completing the training program, Michael received an offer from Penn Medicine, where he currently works as an Epic Interface Analyst.

### WPSI RESPONSE

- ▶ Customized a phased six month earn-and-learn program featuring targeted attrition and wage increases that reflect the structure of a permanent position
- ▶ Oversaw employee onboarding as on-the-job training hours increase
- ▶ Trained and assess IT, interpersonal and technical skills required by the employer
- ▶ Provided six months of individualized job coaching support for program graduates

### WPSI RESULTS

**98%** completed program

**80%** are steadily employed

**30%** have moved into higher-paying positions

# The WPSI Model Works

**\$4,121,288**

total wages  
earned

**\$12.13/hour**

average wage  
paid to graduates

**13,974**

total training hours

**163**

adult training  
program participants

**124**

employees placed



*“WPSI is providing young people with a whole different understanding of what careers can be.”*

*–Fred Dedrick, Executive Director,  
National Fund for Workforce Solutions*

*“WPSI is making an incredible impact in this community. Not only do they have a reputation for outstanding work in this space, but I’ve also had the opportunity to see that work in action. Throughout Drexel’s campuses I see the faces of those who have benefited from WPSI’s training opportunities and connected to work with us. It’s mutually beneficial – they’re pleased to be back in the workforce and we’re thrilled to have them.”*

*–Sarah Steltz, Associate Director of University &  
Community Partnerships, Drexel University*



## What They're Saying



“[A] job training program getting results”

“While the [WPSI-connected] jobs help people leave poverty behind, they ensure that the new wealth created remains in their neighborhoods, helping stabilize these ... communities.”

**The New York Times**

“...taking on a responsibility to help connect the people who live in West Philadelphia to this prospering employment node.”

PHILADELPHIA  
**BUSINESS  
JOURNAL**



“Community-based training for community-based jobs”

**P**  
**Philadelphia**  
MAGAZINE

## Our Funders

*We are grateful to all those who have made our work possible since WPSI's inception.*

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Bank of America Charitable Foundation  
The Barra Foundation  
Cedar Park Neighbors  
Children's Hospital Of Philadelphia  
Citi Foundation  
Citizens Bank Foundation  
Connelly Foundation  
Drexel University  
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Lincoln Financial Foundation  
Lindy Center for Civic Engagement  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
The Patricia Kind Family Foundation  
Penn Medicine

Pew Fund for Capacity Building  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
Philadelphia Youth Network  
The Philadelphia Foundation  
SCI West  
State Farm Insurance  
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*UCD gratefully acknowledges the generous contributions of our Board of Directors, who underwrite our Clean and Safe program and provide much-needed operating support.*

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## Our Employer Partners

*Thank you to the community of partners who have supported our success.*

ACHIEVEability  
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Drexel University College of Medicine  
International House Philadelphia  
Mercy Philadelphia Hospital  
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### **Sharon Thompsonowak**

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### **John Casella**

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### **Marcia Smith**

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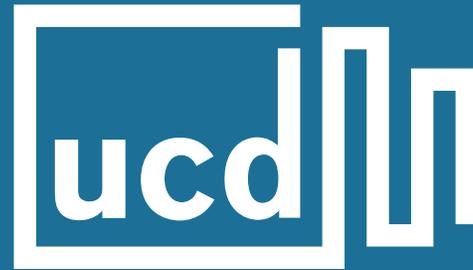
### **Lori Klein Brennan**

Marketing & Communications Director,  
University City District  
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## About University City District

University City District (UCD) was founded in 1997 by a partnership of world-renowned anchor institutions, small businesses and residents to improve economic vitality and quality of life. Our primary mission is community revitalization. We work within a place-based, data-driven framework to invest in world-class public spaces, address crime and public safety, bring life to commercial corridors, connect low-income residents to careers, and promote job growth and innovation.

**If you would like to help us grow WPSI's impact, please visit [universitycity.org/donate](http://universitycity.org/donate)**



**University City District**  
**West Philadelphia Skills Initiative**  
[www.westphiladelphiaskills.org](http://www.westphiladelphiaskills.org)

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