

# THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY COMPACT

## College Degree Attainment in Spartanburg County

Spartanburg County faces a crisis. It is serious. The Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce has concluded that this crisis is the number one limitation on the future of the County's economic development capacity. Other community organizations have identified this crisis as the root cause of innumerable challenges ranging across the spectrum of social pathologies.

It is a crisis in educational attainment.

This crisis can be measured in many ways. The most telling single measurement, however – the metric that ranges far below competitor counties' averages, and the metric encompassing all other educational metrics along the birth-through-college continuum – is the rate of baccalaureate degree achievement in Spartanburg County ... 19.18% among adults twenty-five years of age and older.

Baccalaureate degree achievement is a measurement that will require a generation to turn around. Its turning will be as big a challenge as any Spartanburg County has faced in recent history. Its accomplishment will require the collaboration of schools, colleges, agencies, leaders and families across the County. In short, it will require a collective commitment to a demanding vision.

### A Vision for Spartanburg County

The scriptural proverb is well known: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." It is a text that has inspired innumerable aspirations ... personal, familial, corporate and civic.

Re-written for a community, the proverb might read: "Where there is no vision, a community fades into inconsequence."

Where there is no community vision, goals cannot be readily defined, progress cannot be measured, partnerships cannot be meaningfully engaged, public policy cannot be targeted, energies will be duplicated, resources will be expended with little return on investment, opportunities will be lost for lack of shared objectives ... and other communities will gain.

Without question, compelling visions are held by enterprises all across Spartanburg County. No single vision, however, encompasses them all. Can there be such a vision?

All the pieces of the puzzle are on the table. The County is brimming with colleges and educators. It is home to Michelin, to the Milliken Corporation and to the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System. It has good schools. It has strong leadership. It has developers and investors standing at the ready.

**THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY COMPACT**  
**College Degree Attainment in**  
**Spartanburg County**  
**South Carolina**

**REPORT OF THE**  
**TASK FORCE ON COLLEGE DEGREE ATTAINMENT**

**APPOINTED AND CHARGED BY THE**  
**SPARTANBURG AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
Spartanburg, South Carolina

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*--replaces all earlier drafts--*

## Task Force Members

John Stockwell, Chair

Chancellor, USC Upstate

Gary Barnard  
Clarence Batts  
Cyndi Beacham  
Tony Bell  
Bill Brasington  
Karen Calhoun  
Mark Chmiel  
David Cordeau  
Ben Davis  
Chris Dorrance  
Tom Faulkenbury  
Chuck Gordon  
Ben Graves  
Patsy Hammett  
Deryle Hope  
Rob Hrubala  
Rhonda Lockhart  
Sheldon Mitchell  
Darryl Owings  
Danny Philbeck  
Greg Postage  
Jim Ritchie  
Martha Rogers  
Donette Stewart  
Brand Stille  
Scott Talley  
Dan Terhune  
Mary Thomas  
Sheryl Turner-Watts  
Susan Vasquez  
Jim Walker  
Bubba Wolf

Broome High School  
BASF  
Charles Lea Center  
Spartanburg County  
Adult Learning Center  
McMillan Smith & Partners  
Denny's Corporation  
Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce  
SC Employment Security Division  
Spartanburg Day School  
Converse College  
Boiling Springs High School  
Johnson Development  
Milliken & Company  
USC Upstate  
Palmetto Bank  
JM Smith  
Urban League of the Upstate  
Spartanburg District 6  
Spartanburg Methodist College  
Cintas  
State Senate District 13  
Converse College  
USC Upstate  
Wofford College  
State House District 34  
Spartanburg Community College  
Spartanburg County Foundation  
USC Upstate  
Landrum High School  
Spartanburg Regional Healthcare  
Spartanburg District 7

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spartanburg County faces a serious challenge to its economic and social development: low levels of educational attainment. The most telling measurement – the single metric that ranges far below other counties’ averages, and the metric encompassing all other educational metrics along the birth-through-college continuum – is the rate of baccalaureate degree achievement in Spartanburg County ... 19.18% among adults twenty-five years of age and older.

This document proposes a vision: ***Spartanburg County will become the best educated county in the State with a national reputation for its commitment to education at all levels culminating in the achievement of high levels of baccalaureate degree attainment; and it will be recognized nationally for its ability to develop local talent and to generate and attract investment because of that talent.***

The Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has come to the firm belief that a highly educated citizenry is essential to success in economic development, and that a significantly improved rate of higher education attainment must be the County’s number one economic development goal in the coming years. The Task Force on Degree Attainment has developed the following report in support of that belief.

Though Spartanburg County adults 25 years and older have completed some college or have completed an associates degree in roughly the same proportion as state, regional and national averages, the bachelors degree holding rate of 19.18% is far below the national average of 27%, and farther below Richland/Charleston/Mecklenburg averages of 35%, and very far below the 50%+ averages of such communities as Seattle, Austin, Boise and other economic development high fliers.

Spartanburg’s public schools are spending every effort to assist students in their college degree attainment goals. Foundations, too, are investing heavily in efforts all along the education continuum, from pre-birth to college scholarships, designed to support progress toward educational success.

***It is inescapably clear, however, that in spite of these efforts, our county’s bachelors degree completion rate is dragging bottom; and, in so doing, is holding down our citizens’ earning power, limiting their economic class mobility and, most importantly, threatening the County’s economic development potential.***

The Task Force offers a dozen recommendations in support of major improvements in bachelors degree attainment in Spartanburg County. Each recommendation is supported in the full report by substantial justification and operational detail.

Recommendation #1 is the most important and overarching. The others are means to the end of its achievement.

**1. Adopt “The 40/30 Challenge.”** The Task Force urges that Spartanburg County adopt this challenge: 40% of our population aged 25 and above holding bachelors degrees by the year 2030;

and that the leadership of our county at all levels be signatory to an agreement declaring the intention to meet this challenge.

- 2. Define and Measure Upstream Achievement.** Develop and set intermediate and long-term targets for a series of upstream educational achievements all leading toward accomplishment of “The 40/30 Challenge.”
- 3. Establish “The College Hub,”** a physical place and a structural entity focused on “The 40/30 Challenge” and on sustained advocacy for its achievement.
- 4. Intensify Emphasis on College in Schools.** Redouble the message that college is not only possible, it is essential. Underscore this emphasis by expanding dual enrollment opportunities and other strategies.
- 5. Market an Education Culture.** Launch a long-term, county-wide information campaign emphasizing the critical importance of higher education and focused on “The 40/30 Challenge.”
- 6. Influence Parental and Social Expectations.** Carry the campaign message beyond the schools into critical social settings such as churches and workplaces.
- 7. Develop Return-to-Learn Opportunities.** Consistent with their missions, Spartanburg’s colleges should work together with employers and others to greatly enhance the opportunities and the motivation for bachelor degree “non-completers” to become bachelor degree “completers.” Expand transfer agreements among the two and four-year College Town institutions and provide incentives to ease the continued pursuit of the bachelors degree.
- 8. Expand College Success Programs** including, for example the “Student Success Center” program model at USC Upstate and similar programs on other college campuses in the County.
- 9. Secure Financial Resources to Assure Institutional Capacity for Growth.** Key leaders in Spartanburg County should join SCC and USC Upstate leadership in lobbying for equitable funding in their operating budgets.
- 10. Adopt “The Spartanburg County Compact.”** As other communities have done, the Task Force recommends the adoption of “The Spartanburg County Compact” designed to assure that all Spartanburg County high school graduates who have attended County schools from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade forward, who have met the terms and conditions of the “foundational agreement,” and who demonstrate financial need will be guaranteed tuition/fee funding to attend college at a Spartanburg County institution.

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And, if inspiration is required, one can consider the unique and profound singularity of purpose embodied in its “Spartan” namesakes, both in antiquity and more recently; or consider its historic stature as the “Hub City.” Consider its literary and cultural richness. Consider its ethnic diversity. Consider the vast fabric of faith communities and non-profit organizations that bind it together and give it strength. Consider its people.

Yet it remains that, in the modern era, the pieces of the puzzle have yet to be assembled into the whole ... into a vision of what Spartanburg County may look like in the future.

Thus, we begin by proposing a long-term, challenging, realistic and worthwhile vision ... a community compact.

***Spartanburg County will become the best educated county in the State with a national reputation for commitment to educational achievement at all levels, especially to high levels of baccalaureate degree attainment; and, as a consequence, Spartanburg County will be recognized nationally for its ability to develop its own human capacity and to generate and attract investment because of that capacity.***

Long-term? Yes. Such a vision will require twenty years – a generation – to accomplish.

Challenging? Without a doubt. It will require nothing less than a reconsideration of the County’s self-concept and identity.

Realistic? Yes. The puzzle pieces are on the table. Assembly is required – assembly of purpose, determination and resources.

Worthwhile? Most certainly. The communities that flourish in the knowledge economy will be those communities determined to achieve just such a vision.

The proposal that follows is targeted on the accomplishment this vision.

### **Spartanburg’s Concern for Education**

For the past several years various organizations in Spartanburg County have published successive installments of “community indicators” documents. The first, known as *Critical Indicators* published in 1989, has led to five successive editions, the most recent published in 2005 by the Spartanburg County Foundation and the United Way of the Piedmont, titled *Community Indicators VI: Strategic Spartanburg*.<sup>1</sup> This remarkable series has been extremely useful in community, city, county, foundation, agency and school district planning

All through those years, the concern for “education” has been among the highest on the list of critical indicators. Indeed, in the latest 2005 edition, the first two of ten strategic goals for Spartanburg County are again concerned with “education.”

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<sup>1</sup> United Way of the Piedmont and The Spartanburg County Foundation. *Community Indicators VI: Strategic Spartanburg*. Spartanburg, South Carolina, 2005, pp. 1-9.

Goal #1 states that “our children and youth will excel academically.” Goal #2 states that “our citizens will have access to the education and training needed to compete in a global business environment.”

The language of Goal #2 continues: “At each level of post-secondary education, from technical college to advanced degrees, we must provide a supportive environment that encourages each student to achieve at his or her potential.”

This is a critically important statement. Over the years, the historic predisposition has been to focus on levels of educational attainment sufficient to run the engine of the County’s considerable low tech manufacturing economy. Though this predisposition may have advanced the region’s economy in earlier times, it has limited the potential of individual citizens; and, at present, to continue such a focus will yield totally inadequate preparation for competing effectively in the global knowledge or manufacturing economies of the twenty-first century.

The Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce has come to the firm belief that a highly educated citizenry is essential to success in future economic development, and that significantly improved rates of higher education degree attainment must be the County’s number one economic development goal in the coming years.

As a result, it has appointed the Task Force on College Degree Attainment to both study this challenge and recommend courses of action to meet it. Our report and recommendations follow.

### Spartanburg County’s Higher Education Gap

At the bachelor’s degree level, the college degree attainment gap in Spartanburg County among adults ages 25 and older is formidable.<sup>2</sup>

Spartanburg County	18.76% some college	8.97% associate’s	<b>19.18% bachelor’s+<sup>3</sup></b>
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By contrast, college rates are notably higher statewide and nationwide, and in many of Spartanburg’s regional competitor counties.

State	18.05% some college	7.87% associate’s	<b>22.74% bachelor’s+</b>
Nation	19.48% some college	7.39% associate’s	<b>26.98% bachelor’s+</b>
Greenville	18.56% some college	7.38% associate’s	<b>27.06% bachelor’s+</b>
Richland	19.29% some college	7.51% associate’s	<b>35.48% bachelor’s+</b>
Charleston	17.73% some college	7.03% associate’s	<b>36.06% bachelor’s+</b>
Mecklenburg	19.52% some college	7.95% associate’s	<b>38.04% bachelor’s+</b>

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<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey, 2006. [www.census.gov/acs/www.sbasics/what/what1.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www.sbasics/what/what1.htm).

<sup>3</sup> “Some college” indicates “no degree” though individuals may have few or several courses or years of study or may have completed a “certificate” course of study. “Associate’s” indicates the completion of an associate’s degree. “Bachelor’s+” indicates the completion of a bachelor’s degree or higher, including graduate and professional degrees.

Cities experiencing truly outstanding economic development (Seattle, Austin, Boise and others) have bachelor's degree attainment rates exceeding 50% among adults 25 years of age and older.

Spartanburg County cannot compete with a bachelor's degree completion rate hovering at 19%.

Going to college costs time and money, and our young people and families too often conclude it is worth neither. The Task Force believes that Spartanburg County has been complicit in this conclusion by failing to encourage, to push, to insist on the highest possible level of educational attainment education for our citizens; in short, by failing to recognize the human resource implications of the knowledge economy and the pressures of the global marketplace for higher education.

As a consequence, thirteen years following a landmark study<sup>4</sup> that praised the Upstate's economy for the technical readiness of its workforce as the reason for the Upstate's global competitiveness, that same workforce in Spartanburg County risks turning into an impediment to competitiveness in a "knowledge economy" requiring knowledge-ready workers.<sup>5</sup>

College degree attainment is the key driver in per capita and family income, economic development and quality of life; and Spartanburg County is coming up short on this most important dimension.

### **Steps in the Right Direction**

There is hope. Many have recognized the importance of college degree attainment in Spartanburg County, and are acting upon that recognition.

Many non-profits are spending every effort to assist in the college degree achievement goal: the Spartanburg County Foundation, the Urban League of the Upstate, the Workforce Investment Board, Wofford College's Math Academy at Cleveland Elementary and similar efforts by the County's other five colleges.

The Spartanburg County Foundation has been most persistent. Over the years since 1946, it has committed \$2.4 million to over a thousand County residents attending County colleges. In addition to the Foundation's own support, many families through the Foundation have established scholarship funds to support students in the community. Last year, one out of every four County residents attending colleges received a scholarship through the Spartanburg County Foundation.

More must be done.

### **Public School Initiatives**

Often recommendations for improving educational outcomes are made by well-meaning persons and groups without knowledge or appreciation of the initiatives in which the public schools are

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<sup>4</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter. *World Class ... Thriving Locally in the Global Economy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Breen. Newly released scorecard cites work force issues. *GSA Business*, 11.4. March 3, 2008, p.1.

already deeply engaged. Such recommendations are at worst counter-productive or more often offer only marginal opportunities for improvement.

It is important to understand and to appreciate that the Spartanburg County School Districts are inventing and implementing numerous initiatives to move students from pre-school to high school graduation, and to prepare them for college level achievement.

To begin with, County high school graduation rates are somewhat stronger than we often assume. Though the formula used to calculate graduation rates is confusing, rates by county for 2007, which tracks 9<sup>th</sup> graders through on-time graduation from high school, place Spartanburg somewhat ahead of many other comparison counties.<sup>6</sup>

Spartanburg County	76.11% <sup>7</sup>	and counties with similar wealth	
Charleston County	61.30%	York County	71.15%
Greenville County	69.60%	Aiken County	73.30%
Richland County	71.05%	Lexington County	80.18%

Further, public schools in Spartanburg County are aggressively engaged in initiatives designed to encourage college. Each district plans and implements numerous programs focused on counselor interviews with seniors, college application processes, parental orientation to application and financial aid processes, career opportunity information, shadowing, reminders of scholarship and related deadlines, access to career and college major internet sites. With the recent advent of “Individual Graduation Plans” (IGP’s) statewide, each student completes four-year academic plans during their registration process at all grade levels.

The state of South Carolina recently provided recurring funding for the addition of a substantial number of guidance counselors in high schools across the state, most of whom in Spartanburg County schools are focused on “college facilitation.” It will be most informative to track the gains in college application rates growing out of this recent investment in college readiness advisors.<sup>8</sup>

College and career readiness programs are supplemented by an even more expansive list of data-driven and research-based initiatives designed to prevent dropping out: single gender English classes; class-size reduction; intense individualized reading instruction for at risk students in grades K-5 by specially trained teachers; elementary, middle school and high school literacy coaches; parent literacy coordinators; after-school child care at select elementary schools; flexible grouping in reading; and early intervention classes for 3 and 4 year olds. The list of such interventions is impressive.

Any critic of the public schools’ efforts to improve graduation rates is well advised to survey the dropout prevention initiatives currently in place, to examine the research on which these initiatives

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<sup>6</sup> SC Department of Education, 2007. [www.ed.sc.gov/](http://www.ed.sc.gov/).

<sup>7</sup> There is, however, a wide variance among on-time high school graduation rates among Spartanburg County’s seven school districts for the year 2007, ranging from 65.8% to 89.4%.

<sup>8</sup> Recently, Austin, Texas adopted the “College Readiness Advisor” program in its school district. These dedicated “college facilitators” resulted in a one year improvement from 50% to 79% of students applying to at least one college. See [www.msdf.org/mediacenter/Release.aspx?ID=73](http://www.msdf.org/mediacenter/Release.aspx?ID=73). Spartanburg County schools students now have similar support.

are grounded, and to observe the constant experimentation in which the school districts engage to improve the odds that students will succeed.

### Why Must the Spartanburg County Do More?

There are three fundamental reasons why Spartanburg County must push beyond its current efforts.

**Personal and family economic stability.** In the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy, individuals' earning capacities are directly related to educational attainment. With a high school diploma, an individual is at best an employment commodity, perhaps getting a steady job, but without advancement opportunity, without health and retirement benefits, and without security from layoffs accompanied by little notice or option.

Individual income producing capacity varies directly and markedly with an individual's level of educational attainment. Looking at 2004 national data for males, for example:

- a high school dropout can expect to earn ... \$20,000 annually
- a high school graduate ... \$29,000 annually
- a high school graduate with some college ... \$38,000 annually
- a bachelor's degree holder ... \$52,000 annually<sup>9</sup>

Spartanburg County can never hope to see average personal incomes increase to any significant degree without substantially increasing the percent of its citizens holding the bachelor's degrees.

The most significant financial rewards come with a four-year college degree. Over a lifetime a four-year investment in a bachelor's degree will increase earning capacity by upwards of \$1 million.

**Economic class mobility.** A recent Brookings Institution study<sup>10</sup> points out that African Americans and Hispanics are falling behind Caucasians and Asians in earning college degrees. If this trend continues, the gap separating the "haves" and the "have-notes" will widen, and will do so along racial and other traditional economic fault lines.

The good news, however, is the role that college plays in helping people change their stations in life. A person born into a family in the lowest fifth of income earners who graduates from college has a 19% chance of joining the highest fifth of earners in adulthood, and a 62% chance of joining the middle class or better. A college degree is the single most important key to moving out of what has been termed the "working poor" and into the American middle-class. The bad news is that 11% of children from the poorest families earn college degrees, compared with 53% of children from the top fifth.<sup>11</sup>

With its high poverty and minority group membership rates, economic immobility by class in Spartanburg County as a consequence of low educational attainment poses a serious threat; and this threat will worsen without significant and creative intervention to see that minority group members and those in poverty situations get access to college.

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<sup>9</sup> *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY*. Illinois State University, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Erik Eckholm. Higher Education Gap May Slow Economic Mobility. *New York Times*, February 20, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Eckholm.

The economic class mobility stakes are high in Spartanburg County where, in 2006, nearly 10% of families lived below the poverty line, and where 25% are African American and Hispanic.<sup>12</sup>

**Economic development potential.** There was a time in Spartanburg County when economic development meant recruiting new manufacturing jobs and matching new investments to the capacity of the existing workforce. No longer. Now, Spartanburg County and regions similar to it are recognizing that economic development capacity lies in the “knowledge capacity” of citizens, much more so than in plant, location, or even quality of life amenities.

Technology has eroded demand for workers who do routine tasks in factories and offices. Employers require more skills and more education, and those employers seeking to relocate will consider only those communities whose people are well-educated.

### The Spartanburg County Challenge

It is clear that Spartanburg County schools are doing as well as, or better than schools in peer counties on most measures.<sup>13</sup> It is equally clear that significant efforts are underway in Spartanburg County schools to further improve graduation rates and – more directly related to this report – to enhance the preparation of students for college degree attainment. For this, Spartanburg County should be both thankful and encouraging of even greater efforts.

It is equally clear that large numbers of Spartanburg County residents have completed some college, and that – relative to peer counties, to the state and to the nation – residents are completing associate degrees at rates somewhat higher than average. For this, too, Spartanburg County should congratulate Spartanburg Community College and Spartanburg Methodist College, and encourage even greater associate degree attainment numbers.

It is inescapably clear, however, that our County’s bachelor’s degree completion rate is dragging bottom; and, in so doing, is holding down citizens’ earning capacity, limiting their economic class mobility, and threatening the County’s economic development potential.

Fewer than 20% of adult citizens with bachelor’s degrees represents a crisis situation. Spartanburg County can no longer make excuses for being last. The challenge must be to substantially improve bachelor’s degree holding rates.

In setting forth such a challenge, we in Spartanburg County must think and plan long-term. We must make a commitment as a community to a goal we intend to achieve through persistent effort over a protracted period of time ... two decades or more. It is with this in mind that this report makes its first and most important recommendation.

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<sup>12</sup> American Community Survey. 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Brady. *An Evaluation of Community Indicators Goal 1*. Metropolitan Studies Institute. USC Upstate. April 2008, draft p. 32.

**Recommendation #1**  
**ADOPT THE 40/30 CHALLENGE**

**The Task Force urges that Spartanburg County adopt *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* ... 40% of our population aged 25 and above holding bachelor's degrees by the year 2030; and that the leadership of our county at all levels be signatory to an agreement declaring the intention to meet this challenge.**

The Task Force envisions the creation of a document declaring Spartanburg County's intention to achieve *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* by means similar to the recommendations outlined in the balance of this report, to be signed by superintendents, college presidents, political leaders, chamber leaders, business leaders, media leaders, foundation leaders, leaders of faith communities and others.

*THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* will require Spartanburg County's sustained efforts over a two-decade long agenda to integrate and capitalize upon the numerous pre-birth to college degree initiatives underway in the County, all aimed at *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* end point.

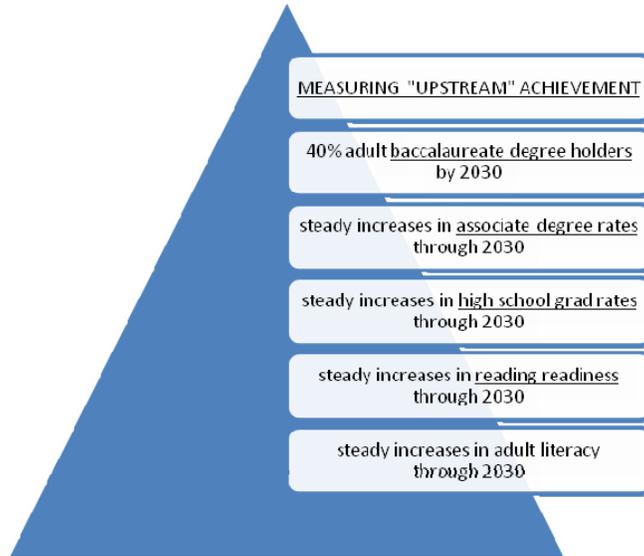
Some of the challenges Spartanburg County faces with regard to college degree attainment exist far "upstream" in the educational enterprise. Ultimately reflected in low rates of college degree attainment, these upstream challenges have their earliest manifestations in pre-birth maternal health issues, in pre-K reading and math readiness, and at various critical intervals throughout the elementary and middle school years, leading to failures to graduate from high school.

Although the recommendations of the Task Force focus on baccalaureate degree attainment, these recommendations should take their place among the wide range of action steps already underway among Spartanburg County school districts, agencies and foundations. All these action steps should be well understood, completely integrated, fully funded, carefully monitored and widely disseminated. We believe that the ultimate target and metric for these action steps should be the accomplishment of *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*, as illustrated in the graphic below.

It is important that Spartanburg County understands, appreciates and takes credit for the numerous actions that are currently being taken, all addressing the upstream challenges at various intervals along the pre-K-through-baccalaureate journey.

The bad news is that no one fully understands the range of these efforts, let alone their collective impact; and there is little understanding of which are among these efforts should be emphasized, de-emphasized, supplemented, replicated or abandoned.

The good news is that, were this range of efforts to be understood, integrated and aimed toward the single core 40/30 benchmark as illustrated by the simple graphic below, Spartanburg County itself could aim toward becoming the "education county" in South Carolina.



We believe that our starting point should be to identify the multitude of current efforts to address the education continuum and to identify and set targets for a simple series of “upstream metrics” all aimed ultimately at *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*.

We believe such a cohesive commitment will be worthy of significant foundation or governmental funding consideration.

**Recommendation #2**  
**DEFINE AND MEASURE UPSTREAM ACHIEVEMENT**

**Develop and set intermediate and long-term targets for a series of upstream educational achievements all leading toward accomplishment of *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*.**

At the earliest possible opportunity, it is suggested that the Spartanburg County Foundation play a leadership role, in collaboration with the County’s district superintendents and other key upstream educational service providers, in undertaking the following:

- a) identify a clear and simple set of metrics measuring progress at every educational level,
- b) set targets at increasingly higher levels leading to *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*,
- c) identify and remediate any upstream educational programming gaps, and
- d) continuously measure and report accomplishments.

The aim of this effort should be a County-wide integrated plan assuring that the scaffolding is in place to achieve *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*, and to create the likelihood of securing substantial foundation or other funding to support the goal. The definition and measurement effort could be facilitated under the auspices of the Community Indicators project.

## Ownership of *THE CHALLENGE*

In order to sustain the pursuit of a goal with such magnitude and longevity, not only must ownership be widely shared, but the goal must also be highly focused and clearly visible. Though *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* must be owned by all the leadership identified in Recommendations #1 and 2, it must also have a home, an anchorage, a base of operation, a center of gravity.

For this reason – and for reasons that will become evident in implementing the recommendations to follow – the Task Force recommends creation of a physical center for *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* ... a center with strong governance and high visibility in Spartanburg County.

### **Recommendation #3 ESTABLISH “THE COLLEGE HUB”**

**Establish the “The College Hub,”<sup>14</sup> a physical place and a structural entity focused on *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*, and on sustained advocacy for its achievement.**

The Task Force envisions The College Hub as managed by a full-time executive director, governed by a high level board of directors and having at least three broad functions.<sup>15</sup>

**First, advocacy for *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* ....** The College Hub should become the gathering point for those with a stake in accomplishing *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* and its numerous upstream benchmarks. The College Hub should become a clearinghouse for best practices and a powerful lobby for legislation and resources, and play a significant role in scholarship fundraising referenced in Recommendation #12. The College Hub should serve as the focal point for implementation of all successive recommendations in this report.

**Second, advocacy for college-bound and college students ....** The College Hub may become a gathering place for students and potential students, perhaps a trendy spot for high school students with an appropriate hook and lots of pro-education material and resources; a kind of “student union” having the look and feel of a college experience. It should provide critical information about college attendance, financing and career benefits including resources related to career opportunities and educational prerequisites and requirements.<sup>16</sup>

The College Hub may also have a virtual dimension, hosting career databases that allow students, families and others to search and explore information on hundreds of career options and their educational requirements and compensation ranges.

**Third, advocacy for college-returning students ....** The College Hub should also make direct and active contacts with “non-completers” in the community and workplace, challenging them to return and complete degrees. School districts report that tracking data on high school graduates who have not gone on to college would be available for use by The College Hub in making direct contacts about returning to college.

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<sup>14</sup> “The College Hub” is only one of a number of naming possibilities, providing a nice play on the “Hub City” heritage.

<sup>15</sup>The functions of The College Hub may be similar to “The College Access Center” supporting the “Graduate! Philadelphia” program described in [www.graduatephiladelphia.org/](http://www.graduatephiladelphia.org/).

<sup>16</sup>With regard to functions #2 and 3, a partnership may be forged between The College Hub and the recently established “Regional Education and Career Advisory Board,” presently housed at Spartanburg Community College.

## Near-Term Increases in Degree Attainment

*THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* is long-term, and it will take long-term sustained commitment to make it happen. In the meantime, there are very important steps that can be taken to lead to near-term increases in college degree attainment rates.

The Task Force has observed that there are three component categories of individuals who should be considered in seeking near-term improvements in rates bachelor degree attainment:

- a) non-attenders ... those who graduate from high school but choose not to go on to college;
- b) non-completers ... those working adults in the community who have some college but who, for various reasons, have not completed an associate's or bachelor's degree; and,
- c) non-persisters ... those who begin college but do not persist to graduation, often dropping out at the end of the freshmen year.

In the vernacular, these categories represent “low hanging fruit,” individuals whose near-term degree attainment could jump-start the County's momentum toward *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*.

In examining these three categories carefully, and in exploring benchmark practices elsewhere, the Task Force has proposed Recommendations #4-9, focused on near-term gains in degree attainment.

### College Non-Attenders

Among high school graduates in Spartanburg County, 39.15% choose not to go on to college. Some few are undoubtedly not capable of college level work. Others, however, are capable of pursuing a technical, associate's or even bachelor's degree, but simply choose not to do so. Why?

The Task Force explored several possible circumstances that may predispose this choice. To gain further insight, high school student surveys were undertaken by the Task Force working through Spartanburg County school personnel in order to learn first-hand from students.

Some reasons for college non-attendance are embedded in regional cultural norms: a historical low-tech manufacturing economy in which there was no need for college; a cultural orientation devaluing the importance of higher learning; no real knowledge of the increased earning potential of a college degree; the mysterious nature of “college” and a fear of the unknown; and, short-term thinking and first job orientation.

Other reasons for college non-attendance are related to parenting: limited parental education offering poor role models; the high correlation nationally between family and child college attendance; disinterest in higher learning; work demands leaving no time to provide support; and, family instability and high divorce rates.

Additional reasons for college non-attendance reflect lack of knowledge related to “how to go about it”: no sense of how to “access” colleges and universities; lack of understanding about where to start in exploring possibilities; and fear of appearing ignorant or uninformed.

Still others' reasons for college non-attendance are related to cost: unaffordable tuition rates; high correlation between family income and college attendance; no knowledge of available financial aid; and, too little need-based scholarship support.

Finally, many young people and their family members possess little to no understanding of the benefits of a college degree: little understanding of its life-long earning potential; little conceptual linkage between college and career opportunities; and, no appreciation of the quality of life benefits.

An understanding of these cost/benefit relationships is of critical importance, not only to students from middle school onward through high school graduation, but to parents, to adults who have never gone to college or who have failed to graduate, to out-of-work adults, and to career-changers.

Again, Spartanburg's schools have many initiatives in place to assist students with college admissions and financial aid information. However, an even more concentrated approach in the schools is envisioned by the Task Force.

**Recommendation #4**  
**INTENSIFY EMPHASIS ON COLLEGE IN SCHOOLS**

**Redouble the message in the schools that college is not only possible, it is essential.**

Young people in schools, from the elementary years onward, must be imbued with an overwhelming sense of the importance of higher education in today's world. Technical college, community college and university options must be regularly presented as the only assurance for engagement in the emerging knowledge economy. As students approach high school, it should be with an assumption that all will be going on to college ... technical, two-year or four-year.

Curriculum Coordinators in the schools and Chief Academic Officers in the colleges should confer systematically and purposefully on high school curricula most suitable to prepare students for the college experience.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, two specific initiatives are recommended for consideration by the colleges.

- 1) The "Upward Bound" program presently housed on the USC Upstate campus, should become a large and robust collaborative enterprise supported by all the colleges in the County, increasing many fold the numbers of disadvantaged young people prepared for the challenges of higher education.
- 2) Dual enrollment opportunities should be expanded, allowing high school seniors to take courses for college credit.

Of great importance, the Task Force is of the firm belief that a protracted public information campaign must be undertaken, attacking very directly the historic cultural assumptions that have long minimized the importance of college degree attainment for an older economy favoring work force readiness ... emphasizing, rather, that workforce readiness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands college degree attainment.

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<sup>17</sup> For other recommended best practices, see *Practices With Promise: a collection of working solutions for college opportunity*. Campaign for College Opportunity. California. 2007. [www.collegecampaign.org](http://www.collegecampaign.org).

**Recommendation #5**  
**MARKET AN EDUCATION CULTURE**

**Launch a long-term, county-wide information campaign emphasizing the critical importance of higher education and focused upon *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*.**

Develop a marketing theme or slogan or brand emphasizing college degree completion, a simple and compelling message that can undergird all near-term and long-term efforts to increase college degree attainment in Spartanburg County. This message should be evident in media across the County and used in conjunction with all efforts, pre-K-through-baccalaureate. It must express in shorthand a powerful assault aimed at a cultural change in expectations regarding higher education achievement. Over time the message will evolve, but the effort must be sustained. The message itself must become central to our identity as a Chamber, City and County.

The importance of college degree attainment is a message that must be delivered repeatedly and over time to parents and guardians. The public schools are in the best position to deliver this message. And they are taking direct approaches in doing so now and must be encouraged to continue and intensify those efforts.

The Task Force also believes, however, that the larger community can be helpful in reinforcing the message to parents through social settings such as churches and workplaces and related environments. The message promulgated in middle schools and high schools around Spartanburg County should be replicated and reinforced in an inviting and non-threatening environment beyond the schools as well.

**Recommendation #6**  
**INFLUENCE PARENTAL and SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS**

**Carry the campaign message beyond the schools into critical social settings such as churches and workplaces.**

Specialized materials, outlines and talking points should be developed for use in churches, workplace environments, and community organizations. These materials should elaborate on the marketing theme emphasizing the importance and attainability of a college degree. They should emphasize the direct linkages between education and good jobs, careers and professions. They should help the public understand the nature of economic progress and the role education plays in it. They should emphasize the correlation of degree attainment with reduced crime, with quality of life, with healthy civic and family life. The message should be persuasive in nature, with a clear emphasis on where to turn to get further information.

These activities should be coordinated by The College Hub, making use of “footsoldiers in the community” ... cadres of college students, service club members and others in such settings as churches and youth groups; or Chamber members, human resource officers or other volunteers in workplace settings or at “lunch and learns.” Publications and e-mails should be regularly delivered to employees addressing the need for their children’s higher education. Such efforts as these must be updated and sustained over a protracted period of time ... years. They will require direction and coordination.

## **College Non-Completers**

As noted earlier, 18.76% of Spartanburg County's population ages 25+ having some college, but have not completed a bachelor's degree.<sup>18</sup> The number of such individuals in the County is an astonishing 34,000. The potential exists for Spartanburg County to double the number of adults in its work force who hold bachelor's degrees if these former students were to return.

Numerous communities, regions and states around the country are waking up to this huge untapped potential. Kentucky has launched its "Kentucky Adult Learner Initiative" with an immediate goal to lure back 11,000 adults who completed 90 or more credit hours. Ohio University and Kent State University in Ohio operate a joint program for adult students in eastern Ohio called "Complete to Compete." At the University of New Mexico, the "Graduation Project" has been helping adult learners return to and graduate from college for more than a decade. The University of Utah recently started the "Returning to the U" program, and have received private funds to offer \$50,000 in scholarships to the state's estimated 3,000 adults who have completed 90 or more credit hours. Michigan has its annual "Return to Learn Month," designed to attract that state's workers back to campuses to finish degrees.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education has selected three of its member states to participate in "Nontraditional No More," a program funded by the Lumina Foundation to help identify adults who are just shy of earning their degrees and enabling them to take the final steps toward the diploma.

The Task Force heard a presentation about the "Converse II Program," an initiative with a long history offered by Spartanburg's Converse College targeting returning adult students. Providing careful advising and financial assistance, its focus is on degree completion.

Perhaps the most systematic, promising and comprehensive model is "Graduate! Philadelphia ... The Challenge to Complete" (see [www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org](http://www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org)). The Pennsylvania Economic League, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, and the United Way of Southeastern PA form the managing partnership of "Graduate! Philadelphia," by the Knight Foundation and the City of Philadelphia. The partnership teams with employers, labor, community-based organizations, colleges, foundations, government agencies and others to turn Philadelphia's 80,000 college non-completers into "comebackers"; recognizing the significant economic and social benefits college degrees offer individuals, the city and its businesses.

South Carolina's Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education has argued that "higher education needs a 'new front door'."<sup>19</sup> In editorials and appearances around the State, Dr. Garrison Walters is calling for "radical, powerful change in the education levels of adults." He notes that adults with little or no college lack confidence in their abilities, were generally poor students in high school, are working and have family responsibilities and limited resources, and are unwilling to

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<sup>18</sup> This number includes the 8.97% of the County's adult population who have completed the associate degree plus others who may have completed a technical certificate program, as well as those who have taken some college work but earned no two or four-year certificate or diploma.

<sup>19</sup> Garrison Walters. "Higher Education Needs a "New Front Door." Commission on Higher Education Update, vol 3, issue 2, July 2008.

take the risk in the absence of perceived near-term relevance. Walters' solution is a call for a "certificate system" providing credit for existing knowledge that is no-fail, flexibly scheduled, low cost and content-relevant.

Dr. Walters' is a powerful call for collaboration among the Commission, the Technical College System, the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce and others to pull adults back into higher education and, thereby, to advance the State of South Carolina.

**Recommendation #7  
DEVELOP RETURN-TO-LEARN OPPORTUNITIES**

**Consistent with their missions, Spartanburg's colleges should work together with employers and others to greatly enhance the opportunities and the motivation for bachelor degree "non-completers" to become bachelor degree "completers."**

Spartanburg's higher education institutions should consider means of providing substantially more enrollment fluidity across institutions, evening and weekend scheduling possibilities, web-based and on-location instruction, and other strategies to accomplish this agenda. They should consider the possibility of piloting Garrison's "new front door" proposal.

Employers should be encouraged to build bachelor degree incentives into their promotion policies and tuition reimbursement plans. The Task Force urges that these strategies be pursued within the framework of *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* and marketed extensively by The College Hub as part of Recommendations #5 and 6.

The Task Force urges the expansion of transfer agreements among the two and four-year College Town institutions and provide incentives to ease the continued pursuit of (or the return to pursue) the bachelor's degree. Transfer or "articulation" agreements already exist among the two and four-year colleges and their expansion, development and marketing are encouraged. The Task Force also encourages the institutions to make the agreements as seamless as possible. Doing so makes it possible for students and families to consider "packaging" an associate and a bachelor's degree in the interests of saving costs.

**College Non-Persisters**

In addition to the "Non-Attendees" and the "Non-Completers, there are among the "low hanging fruit" the "Non-Persisters," students who begin the freshman year but drop out.

Among college students matriculating as freshmen at USC Upstate, for example, 30% do not persist into their sophomore year. Though this is better than average among the State's teaching sector universities, it is an unfortunate loss of about 300 students per year to the bachelor's degree track. If students successfully complete their freshman year and re-enroll as sophomores, the odds that they will graduate from college in four years are extremely high. Though persistence rates at Wofford and Converse are higher, the impact of college freshmen drop-out numbers county-wide is notable.

Why do students drop out during their freshmen year? Task Force discussions, confirmed through surveys of freshmen students, identified numerous circumstances that predispose college students to drop out during or at the end of the first year.

Most reasons have cultural/behavioral linkages well-known to college student affairs officers: difficulty adjusting to college life and the academic culture, inability to handle the freedom, drugs or alcohol, excessively active social life, relationship problems, a sense of being overwhelmed, excessive commitments to extra-curricular activities, poor study habits and the like.

Other reasons relate to parenting or home environment: lack of support and encouragement, parental divorce, challenges managing their own household.

Some reasons relate, simply, to the desire to transfer to another institution for degree programs not available locally or for a variety of personal reasons.

The Task Force believes that every effort should be invested to assist college students in successfully completing their freshman year and advancing to the completion of their degree.

**Recommendation #8**  
**EXPAND COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAMS**

**Expand the “Student Success Center” program model at USC Upstate and, as necessary, similar programs on other college campuses in the County.**

The Task Force urges the expansion of programs that target the success of freshmen in their persistence into the sophomore year. USC Upstate’s Student Success Center places emphasis on the provision of academic support for all students who choose to participate in the University 101 course; and on supplemental instruction (SI) delivered by successful junior and senior level students to freshmen and sophomores in particularly challenging courses. The Task Force urges the expansion of University 101 to all freshmen and new transfer students and the expansion of the SI program as well, both demonstrating significant rates of success for students who participate. Similar initiatives at other Spartanburg County colleges are also encouraged.

Many, perhaps most freshmen drop out of college for reasons related to cost. “Life happens” factors intrude ranging from family emergencies to broken down cars. Employment options or work schedules crowd out study time. Tuition and fees become unmanageable. Lottery scholarships are lost as grade point averages slip

This last issue – the loss of the lottery scholarship – is the most challenging to freshmen students’ persistence into the sophomore year. Students who achieve a 3.00 grade point average in high school qualify for the merit-based lottery funded LIFE (Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence) Scholarship, which may be used toward the cost of attendance at any of the State’s public and private colleges for up to eight terms based on the student’s initial college enrollment date. A student must earn a cumulative 3.0 GPA by academic year’s end in order to retain eligibility.

Earning a 3.0 in high school and retaining a 3.0 in college are often two very different propositions. When eligibility is lost at the end of the college freshman year, students often do not return for the

sophomore year. The legislation needs to be reconsidered to provide students with more time to adjust to the academic norms of college study.

### Increasing Institutional Capacities

Spartanburg County is one of those rarest of communities with a full spectrum of higher education institutions ... a major public university (USC Upstate), a private co-educational liberal arts college (Wofford), a private women's liberal arts college (Converse), a large community college (Spartanburg Community College), a private junior college (Spartanburg Methodist College), and a special focus professional college (Sherman College). Each has a unique mission and market niche.

Indeed, Spartanburg County has more higher education institutions per capita than any in the state; and the ratio of college students to county population totals is far richer than most. Further, the combined economic impact of higher education in Spartanburg County exceeds \$250,000,000 annually. In short, with higher education as Spartanburg County's biggest "industry," it is hard to believe that the County cannot do it!

Does Spartanburg County have the capacity to meet the challenge?

Its two public institutions – Spartanburg Community College and The University of South Carolina Upstate – are substantially under-funded. Without additional funding, their capacity cannot be increased. With adequate funding, both institutions could double enrollments over the coming decade. Each funding inequity is different in character, however, and may be generally described as follows.

In the case of Spartanburg Community College, the entire State Technical College System suffers from a lack of parity in state funding compared with the other two public higher education sectors in the state (the teaching sector institutions and the research sector institutions). Each institution in the Technical College sector is under funded; though, because of the Technical College System's capacity to redistribute state allocations proportionate to enrollment and related factors among its institutions, the funding (or under-funding) is "equitable" across the System's seventeen institutions. Consequently, it is practically impossible for local interests to lobby effectively for an increase in SCC's state funding without arguing for an across the board increase for the entire Technical College System, which would be a substantial cost item paying only marginal dividends to SCC.

In USC Upstate's case, the institution suffers from a lack of parity in state funding *among* other teaching sector institutions;<sup>20</sup> and, given the fact that there is no controlling governing body over teaching sector institutions as with the Technical College System, there is no authority willing to redistribute state allocations across those institutions proportionate to enrollment and related factors. The process is a purely political one; and the consequence is that – over time as USC Upstate has outgrown many others without commensurate adjustments in state allocations – it has suffered greatly in state allocations per South Carolina student enrollee relative to other teaching sector institutions. To illustrate this parity problem: for each \$1 in annual state operating funds

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<sup>20</sup> The ten teaching sector institutions in order of enrollment size: College of Charleston, Coastal Carolina, Winthrop, **USC Upstate**, South Carolina State, Citadel, Francis Marion, USC Aiken, Lander and USC Beaufort.

USC Upstate receives per South Carolina resident attending, other teaching sector institutions receive as much as \$2. Upstate lags the average funding of other institutions by nearly \$6 million.

Capacity for significant enrollment growth depends on adequate funding, particularly of the public institutions, which can expect to experience substantial growth in response to *The 40/30 Challenge*.

It is imperative that the Chamber and other Spartanburg leadership join the leadership of SCC and USC Upstate in seeking remedies.

**Recommendation #9**  
**SECURE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO ASSURE**  
**INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR GROWTH**

**The Chamber and other key leaders in Spartanburg County should join SCC leadership in lobbying the County Council for an increase in County millage funding to expand its annual operating budget; and join USC Upstate leadership in lobbying the Legislature for a parity adjustment in its annual operating budget.**

Typically, across the country, community colleges are most directly funded by the county or counties within which they operate. Spartanburg County currently provides a millage to Spartanburg Community College. The Task Force believes that associate degree completion is an absolutely crucial component of the degree attainment agenda in Spartanburg County; and, given that SCC's service boundaries are the boundaries of the County, consideration should be given to increasing SCC's capacity by increasing the County's commitment.

Funding support for USC Upstate is the responsibility of the state, together with tuition and fee revenues, as with other teaching sector institutions. It is patently unfair for significant inequities in that funding to exist among institutions with very similar missions and cost structures. USC Upstate's tuition is at the average of tuition charges by the ten teaching sector institutions; but with funding per South Carolina resident student ranging as low as half that of others, USC Upstate is put at a profound financial disadvantage in serving Spartanburg County students. The impact is significant on the University's ability to grow, to create flexible scheduling, to add new programs, to pay adequate faculty and staff salaries, and on and on. Lobbying support is urgently needed.

**If They Can Do It, We Can Do It!**

Around the nation, there are a few cities and counties that are entering into "community compacts" in support of funding their children's costs of higher education. These "compacts" assure school students that, if they complete an appropriate high school curriculum successfully, their costs for higher education will be covered. Two models have captured the attention of the Task Force.

**Kalamazoo, Michigan**

Kalamazoo has recently taken action to become "The Education Community." In doing so, it has the total commitment of Kalamazoo's economic development agency, "Southwest Michigan First." The agency is developing a plan called "The 2020 Vision," a blueprint of what Kalamazoo County could become by 2020, along with a strategy on how to get there.

Of course, there is money also. “The Kalamazoo Promise” has gained attention nationwide for the financial commitment made by the Upjohn Foundation and others to provide each Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) graduate with the financial resources to attend post-secondary education with funding up to a 100% tuition scholarship.<sup>21</sup>

The “Kalamazoo Promise” specifies that all students who graduate from KPS and reside in the district and have been KPS students four years or more may enroll in any Michigan public university or community college; and – if they make regular progress toward a degree and maintain a 2.0 GPA on a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester – tuition benefits will be pro-rated to them on the basis of length of attendance in the KPS system. The “Promise” covers tuition and mandatory fees (not housing), and may extend to ten years beyond high school graduation.

Michigan’s governor suggests that if the people want to see what the future of education can look like in Michigan, people should look at Kalamazoo. The “Kalamazoo Promise” put the city on the national radar in education innovation, and it triggered a nationwide interest, if not a movement, in the development of community scholarship plans.

Kalamazoo has a list of higher education assets similar to Spartanburg’s. Its university (Western Michigan University), its private college (Kalamazoo College), and its community college (Kalamazoo Valley Community College) are regarded as among the finest in their state. Each hosts a few academic programs of singular excellence. Most compelling, however, is the uncompromising focus among these institutions and their leadership on working together to become “The Education Community.”

The Task Force was struck in reviewing Kalamazoo’s higher education assets and – in reading the Kalamazoo formula for becoming the “education community” – by the deep similarity to Spartanburg County: to its higher education assets, to the innovations and initiatives underway in its public schools and foundations, to the commitments of its foundations.

### **San Diego, California**

San Diego’s “The Compact for Success”<sup>22</sup> has also struck a responsive chord with the Task Force, for somewhat different reasons. Eight years ago, San Diego’s school district – the largest and most diverse in California – teamed with San Diego State University to develop “The Compact for Success,” a strategic partnership designed to assure the preparation for college of the district’s 42,000 students, with a particular focus on those with financial need.<sup>23</sup>

San Diego State and the school district have partnered to create foundational agreements designed to assure college entrance readiness of “Compact” students and guaranteeing admission to SDSU, including ...

- rigorous standard based curriculum with end of course exams;

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<sup>21</sup> [www.kalamazoopromise.com](http://www.kalamazoopromise.com).

<sup>22</sup> All information in this section is drawn from the “Compact for Success” website: <http://coe.sdsu.edu/compact/>.

<sup>23</sup> There are 45,350 students in Spartanburg’s seven districts.

- alignment of curriculum to external exams (core subjects);
- cornerstone courses in 12<sup>th</sup> grade preparing students for college rigor (Rhetoric & Writing and Finite Math); and,
- enrolled in the school district by the 9<sup>th</sup> grade;
- attain a 3.0 gpa and maintain through the senior year;
- complete all course requirements specified by the foundational agreement;
- satisfy the Entry Level Math Placement Test;
- satisfy the Entry Level English Placement Test; and,
- have taken the SAT or ACT test.

During the high school years, numerous **core** activities engage “Compact” scholars as they prepare for college. They include ...

- 6<sup>th</sup> grade outreach
- “benchmarks notification” to parents
- Compact College Advisors at middle schools
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade visit to SDSU
- 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade ... “College – Making it Happen” nights
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade four year plan
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade visits
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade assemblies
- financial aid nights
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade pre-application transcript reviews

Through its “Sweetwater Education Foundation,” the San Diego partnership assures scholarships for all students who meet the program benchmarks and submit the FAFSA (financial aid eligibility form) demonstrating financial need. Because other need-based and academic-based financial support is most often available to these students, and because the grade point average required (3.0) is relatively high, the resource demands on the “Sweetwater Education Foundation” are modest.

### **“THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY COMPACT”**

The Kalamazoo and the San Diego models fit the challenges and resources of those locations, and they are producing the desired results. They are national models of successful community compacts.

If the citizens of our state, or perhaps even the nation, want to see what the future of education in South Carolina can look like, is it possible they may look to Spartanburg?

The Task Force proposes a model for “The Spartanburg County Compact” that combines the strengths of both the Kalamazoo and the San Diego compacts.

From our perspective, the noteworthy strength of “The Kalamazoo Promise” is its tilt in favor of providing financial assistance to all students who graduate from high school, regardless of grade point average. It recognizes that high performing students will go to college in any case, and that support must be directed to all those who graduate including the low performers.

The noteworthy strength of San Diego's Compact is its tilt in favor of students in financial need and its "foundational agreement" between schools and the college. It recognizes that families with limited financial resources are less likely to send children to college regardless of performance. And it recognizes that success in college is much more likely if the schools and colleges collaborate and agree on high school experiences and expectations that presuppose college attendance.

The key components of any "compact" proposal that Spartanburg County, urged by the Task Force, would combine the strengths of both.

1. It would favor young people and families who have lived in the County for a period of time, thus extending the benefits to Spartanburg County residents and assuring that it is the Spartanburg County culture we are changing.
2. It would guarantee college admission and tuition/fee funding for students demonstrating financial need (FAFSA defined) to attend a Spartanburg college/university for all graduates of Spartanburg County high schools who have attended from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades, and have met the terms and conditions of a "foundational agreement" to be negotiated between the school districts and the colleges/university.
3. A "foundational agreement" would outline provisions that the schools and colleges have collectively defined, which establish expectations of students from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade onward.
4. A "foundational agreement" would have the flexibility to allow all of Spartanburg's colleges/university to participate, should they choose to do so.
5. Tuition/fee benefits would be directed to all graduates who demonstrate financial need, not only to those with high grade point averages who are likely to gain financial aid in any case.

Our proposal for "The Spartanburg County Compact" follows in Recommendation #10.

**Recommendation #10**  
**THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY COMPACT**

The Task Force recommends the adoption of “The Spartanburg County Compact” designed to assure that all County high school graduates who have attended County schools from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade forward, who have met the terms and conditions of the “foundational agreement,” and who demonstrate financial need will be guaranteed tuition/fee funding to attend college at a Spartanburg County institution.

“The Spartanburg County Compact” invites and encourages Spartanburg County’s institutions of higher education to participate together in the development of a “foundational agreement” with Spartanburg County’s seven school districts. Students who meet its terms and conditions will be guaranteed admission to attend their choice of the County’s public institutions (SCC and USC Upstate), and will be guaranteed preferential consideration for admission to the County’s participating private institutions. Further, those who demonstrate financial need (FAFSA) will be guaranteed full funding of tuition and mandatory fees.

Full tuition/fee funding is to be understood as the marginal cost difference between other financial aid packaging (exclusive of loans) and the total cost of tuition and fees, for those students demonstrating financial need (FAFSA).

Guaranteed admission/preferential consideration.

- **SCC ...** Students who graduate from high school, regardless of grade point average, are assured admission to Spartanburg Community College.
- **USC Upstate ...** As a public institution, students who graduate from high school are guaranteed admission to USC Upstate if they have met the terms and conditions of the “foundational agreement” and if they meet an admission standard to be prescribed.
- **Private Colleges ...** The private colleges, including SMC, Converse and Wofford, set unique admission standards and could not be expected to “guarantee” admission, but may wish to consider guaranteeing preferential consideration for admission, given academic performance at certain levels.

Financial Underwriting. The provision for tuition/fee funding will be the default obligation of the college that accepts the student. However, the Task Force believes that a foundation should be established to receive community and corporate support for “The Spartanburg County Compact” scholarship fund.<sup>24</sup> The scholarship dollars invested in the foundation would then be re-granted to the colleges in proportion to the amount of resources each invests annually in “The Spartanburg County Compact” scholarships (dollar-for-dollar, if possible).

The Task Force would hope that, upon the establishment of “The Spartanburg County Compact,” generous personal or foundation commitments could establish an endowment to fund the scholarships in perpetuity. Were this not to be the case, or to be only partially so, “The College Hub” referenced in Recommendation #3 should regard scholarship fundraising for “The Spartanburg County Compact” as a major function.

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<sup>24</sup> These funds could also be handled through an existing foundation, such as the Spartanburg County Foundation.

## Conclusion

The Task Force is proposing a straightforward plan and one that does not require too much of any one party, but a plan that can lead to the accomplishment of *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* ... 40% of our adult population having the bachelor's degree by 2030.

- ✓ ***Community leaders*** are asked to declare the challenge (***recommendation #1***) and to help establish and fund “The College Hub” (***recommendation #3***).
- ✓ ***The Spartanburg County Foundation*** may be asked to define and track the measurement of “upstream” educational achievements leading to *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE* (***recommendation #2***) and to provide foundation services for the “Compact” (***recommendation #10***).
- ✓ ***Superintendents and the schools*** are asked to redouble schools’ emphasis on college attendance (***recommendation #4***) including the all-important roles of parental influence and the guidance and facilitation of student college readiness.
- ✓ ***College presidents and superintendents*** are asked to work together to define the terms of high school achievement assuring admission to Spartanburg’s higher education institutions and to collaborate on dual enrollment arrangements (***recommendation #4***); and to develop the “foundation agreements” that will guide college admissions under the Compact (***recommendation #10***).
- ✓ ***College presidents*** are asked to develop “return to learn” opportunities (***recommendation #7***); to expand two-to-four year transfer agreements among institutions (***recommendation #7***); to work to assure students’ persistence to graduation (***recommendation #8***); to implement the terms of the Compact including earmarking funds to assist in funding Compact scholarships (***recommendation #10***).
- ✓ ***The Chamber and community leaders*** are asked to lend their lobbying support for equitable levels of financial support for the public institutions of higher education in the County (***recommendation #9***).
- ✓ ***And “The College Hub,”*** upon its formation, will be expected to coordinate and carry forward the agenda of *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*, including advocacy (***recommendation 2***); marketing (***recommendation #5***); carrying the message into social settings and workplaces (***recommendation #6***); providing college/career access information (***recommendation #3***); and raising funds for the Compact scholarships (***recommendation #10***).

***The goal*** is the achievement of *THE 40/30 CHALLENGE*. Its accomplishment will be like the rising tide that lift all ships: academic performance will improve across the learning continuum from pre-birth to college graduation ... high school graduation rates will improve ... associate’s degree

achievement will climb ... and baccalaureate degree achievement will double among Spartanburg County's adult population.

***The vision*** is a Spartanburg County that is the best educated county in the State with a national reputation for its abilities to develop local talent and to generate and attract investment because of that talent.

***The benefits*** will be economic, yes; but perhaps most important, a changed community self-concept regarding the importance of education and the development of the human potential ... and a widely shared conviction that "what is best for my child may be best for yours as well."