

Article Series
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How does education benefit a person, a family, and a region? The evidence is irrefutable—the better your educational level of attainment, the better the quality of life for you, for your family, and for your community. A recent study reported that college graduates are more likely to be employed than high school graduates, even in difficult economic times—and at higher compensation.

Georgetown University released a report, “The College Advantage: Weathering the Economic Storm.” It revealed that the unemployment rate for four-year college graduates is 4.5 percent, and 6.8 percent for recent college grads. That is not wonderful in my mind, but it is much better than the 24 percent unemployment for recent high school grads. Even in traditional blue-collar fields, the report demonstrated that education makes employees more competitive and more able to be flexible in the changing job market.

The economy continues to change rapidly. The Southcoast needs workers who can adjust to that change. Sadly, the days when someone with some high school education or a high school diploma can get a job that is stable and pays enough to support his or her family are gone. Hard work is no longer enough. If our region is going to grow in the new economy, we need to make sure our residents have the tools they need to be successful, to adapt, and to be nimble in this changing economy.

Unfortunately, education is not a quick fix for the Southcoast. Strengthening levels of educational attainment cannot be accomplished overnight; it takes a community of business and elected officials and families and individuals all working together to create a preK-16 (or even beyond, into graduate school) that will address every child’s need and challenge them to be all they can be. Through this broadly-based collaborative partnership, we can create a Southcoast that is vibrant and strong and able to weather the economic storms that for too long have buffeted our region.

At Bristol Community College, we find ourselves at the epicenter of the swirling forces that have taken us into the new century. As president, I see our graduates juggling many priorities to achieve their goal of earning a college degree. They manage studying at college,

raising children, working, and caring for family members while putting one foot in front of the other to attain the prize of a college degree. For example, I always refer to the Loved Ones and supporters of our BCC students as extended members of our BCC Family. Students, as well as our region, deserve a world-class education. It is up to all of us not only to make it a priority but also to make that dream come true.