

Campus757

A Talent Development Initiative of the Hampton Roads Workforce Council

In 2019, the Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC) commissioned a study of regional workforce and talent, one that delivered resultant Talent Alignment Strategy reports. The reports stated, among their many findings, that Hampton Roads has a “growing labor shortage” owing to the economic state of full employment, competition for high-demand occupations, and other factors. The report states, “The supply of labor is stressed even further as regional gains in employment (+30,000 jobs in five years) substantially outpaced growth in the working age population (+9,600 people).”

More specifically: “Economic and population trends drive the need for enhanced talent attraction and retention efforts. High school and college graduates leaving the region represent a source of talent that is not currently being utilized to its full potential. Capitalizing on this pipeline of talent requires efforts to retain local college graduates and encourage boomerangers, those that leave but return.”

As the HRWC has strategized to solve this growing problem, we have identified a series of tactics that we will implement to combat the labor shortage and develop, attract, and retain the talent needed today and into the future. One that has proven to be successful in the pursuit of college graduate retention is a project launched in Philadelphia called Campus Philly. That organization, incorporated in 2004 with a mission of keeping regional college graduates in the area post-graduation, has helped effect meaningful change: between 2000 and 2017, the population of degree-holders in Philadelphia ages 25 to 34 grew by 115 percent, according to a Campus Philly report in 2017.

In Richmond, the Chamber of Commerce, with the help of a GO Virginia grant, is currently following suit after consultation with Campus Philly. Cleveland and Greensboro have done the same. **Campus757** is our local take on the same concept, as helmed by the Hampton Roads Workforce Council.

The goals are as outlined:

1. Promote the 757 as a welcoming, vibrant, and accessible place for young professionals and college graduates to make an impact.
2. Develop a marketplace, both online and offline, of internships and open jobs to facilitate the matching of employers and potential employees.

3. Help students move and assimilate into Hampton Roads — for example, help them find a place to live, identify needed services, and connect them with their peers and organizations in the region.

4. Help identify regionwide gaps in the workforce and develop plans with organizations to close those gaps.

Campus757 aims to help facilitate students' attachment to and participation in our region. By helping students fall in love with Hampton Roads and launch their careers here after graduation, Campus757 will help grow a skilled, diverse workforce for local businesses, which in turn will fuel economic growth and opportunity across the region.

Campus757

The program has several facets. They include, at a high level:

Promote the region as a welcoming vibrant, and accessible place for young professionals and college graduates to make an impact.

- Campus757 will sponsor a variety of live on-campus events to engage with students and employers.
- Campus757 will also develop and promote live events in the region to showcase the broader Hampton Roads region.
- In addition to these events, Campus757 will develop a robust online presence to promote the area at targeted schools.

Develop a marketplace, both online and offline, of internships and open jobs to facilitate the matching of employers and potential employees.

- Campus757 will sponsor a comprehensive series of events and house sophisticated job matching tools — modeled after insights gained from other regions and prior research — designed to help students and employers connect with each other.
- The Campus757 website will also contain comprehensive job and internship listings for the Hampton Roads area that would be of interest to students. Companies and organizations that support Campus757 activities will post internships, as well as part-time and full-time positions, on the website, which would be available to any student who registers on the site. In addition, companies would be able to search for students who register on the site and reach out if there is interest in their background and skill set.
- In addition to providing information about Hampton Roads and available jobs, the Campus757 website will also provide comprehensive information about the local job market to students and other prospective employees.
- In addition, Campus757 will recruit young professionals who recently graduated and chose to launch their careers in the 757 to serve as mentors, navigators, and coaches.

Help students move and assimilate into the 757.

- The most important features of this program objective are to ensure that people find a place to live, create meaningful connections with peers and others, and learn about the rich variety of social, recreational and community activities in our region.
- Campus757 would also offer a 757 immersion program to orient people to the city and all it has to offer.
- Finally, Campus757 will offer a navigator program for young professionals launching their careers.

Quantify economic impact from the work, help identify regionwide gaps in the workforce, and develop plans with organizations to close those gaps.

- Our team plans to develop a robust set of metrics to track the impact of the Campus757 initiative on the region's economy.
- We plan to produce principal data sets focused on the program's impact on the workforce and economy; the program's impact on students and employers; the perception of Hampton Roads among students; and the projected entry-level employment needs for the region for the principal sectors, including projected salaries for those sectors and the types and number of degrees awarded against these sectors.

Why this project is a priority for the region:

The 2019 Talent Alignment Strategy painted a landscape of the Virginia business economy and workforce that demonstrated a series of critical gaps. Talent shortages exist in more than a few industry clusters, and the overall working age population in Hampton Roads is failing to grow at the rates that our peers in the Commonwealth and in MSA's across the nation are growing. The study identified a series of issues we face; one key area was in the insufficient number of college graduates staying in Hampton Roads or returning to it after time residing elsewhere.

In Talent Alignment Strategy Report 3, a goal of Talent Attraction and Retention includes a strategy:

- "The regional talent pool is grown through coordinated talent attraction and retention efforts. Enhance efforts to retain local college graduates and encourage boomerangers to return."

The report goes on to state that "college graduates leaving the region represent a source of talent that is not currently being utilized to its full potential. Capitalizing on this pipeline of talent requires a coordinated effort to showcase opportunities in the region for local college graduates."

Finally, the Supporting Tactic offered to stem the outbound flow of talent in this area and benefit from having such young, promising talent already located in the 757 is:

“Expand outreach efforts to current students in local education institutions. Create/scale mentoring programs that connect students to recent college graduates and experienced professionals in the region. Explore regional approaches to expand and strengthen ties between students and local employers/career opportunities.”

At this point, anyone involved in economic development, workforce development, or simply business here in the 757 understands that **Talent** or a lack thereof is a primary indicator of success or failure. There have been countless studies performed that generate the same conclusion: Hampton Roads is clearly behind in the quest for and development of the kind of talent quality and quantity that can keep business engines revving in 2020 and for years to come.

A key cog in these engines is the influx of young, trained, certified, qualified talent. We rely upon our institutions of higher education to instill in their students the kind of educational arsenal that will seamlessly translate into 757 employee hires. Where we continue to see shortfalls are, to put it in an oversimplified status:

1. Too many graduates from higher education institutions of all kinds leave the region upon completion.
2. There aren't nearly enough coordinated internship/mentorship programs creating the connections that could, in part, mitigate the first item.
3. There isn't a dedicated, region-wide effort to showcase the 757 to college students beyond any college campus perimeters.

Hampton Roads is far from the only region in and out of Virginia to face this dilemma. The Philadelphia market identified the same issue in 2000 and began taking steps to alleviate it. One of the principal initiatives to emanate from that movement was Campus Philly. Over the next decade and a half, Campus Philly launched, grew, and honed a system of connecting college students to the greater metropolitan area in a way that propagated a resurgent interest in remaining there post-graduation.

At this point, their numbers impress. According to an article in The Philadelphia Inquirer from July of 2019:

“Between 2000 and 2017, the population of degree-holders in Philadelphia, ages 25 to 34, grew by 115 percent, Campus Philly said in a report last month. The group cited information compiled by Econsult Solutions and gleaned from census data, that showed 128,400 degree-holders in that age group in 2017, up from 59,700 in 2000.”

Cleveland, Greensboro, and most pertinently Richmond have taken a page from Campus Philly. The Richmond contingent have forged what is currently called CampusRVA, and they are recent recipients of a GO Virginia Per Capita grant in Region 2. The Hampton Roads Workforce Council met with the group there (led by the Richmond Chamber); they have shown a willingness not only to share their findings, business plan, and path forward, but also to eventually collaborate in the vein of the mega-region model.

Around the same time, in September of 2019, Kurt Krause and VisitNorfolk spearheaded an effort locally to learn more about the program and its viability in the 757. Deborah Diamond, CEO of Campus Philly, came to Norfolk for a couple of days and imparted details of how their program began and how it has thrived. Mr. Krause successfully recruited five local colleges (Old Dominion, Virginia Wesleyan, Norfolk State, Tidewater Community College, and Eastern Virginia Medical School) to participate in the initial investigation of the concept and sign onto the project.

Over a year later, after a great deal of work and the securing of funds to launch, the Hampton Roads Workforce Council is now leading a unified, thoroughly regional initiative working to include educational institutions to include but not limited to:

- Centura College
- Christopher Newport University
- The College of William and Mary
- Eastern Shore Community College
- Eastern Virginia Medical School
- ECPI University
- Hampton University
- Norfolk State University
- Old Dominion University
- Paul D. Camp Community College
- Rappahannock Community College
- Regent University
- Thomas Nelson Community College
- Tidewater Community College
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- Virginia Wesleyan University

At this point, there is an array of best practices and many lessons learned from those who have embarked upon the Campus program before us. There is a virtual playbook blueprint from which to draw. That said, we still need to execute a project design process similar to what those other regions initially performed. The consultations with key stakeholders, the community meetings, the buy-in we will engender from both businesses and higher education: these are the steps to be taken before fully launching Campus757, and the GO Virginia enhanced capacity building grant is helping this team generate the forward progress to make Campus757 a resounding victory from the outset.

[Please Note: this overview was written in January 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of employment and college alike, but we are moving forward with this program. We believe the principles outlined within remain fundamentally relevant and that this work is desperately – perhaps even increasingly – needed even with many changes afoot.]