

Some Not-So-Good News

In the 1980s, the Greater Houston Partnership indicated that top-quality institutions of higher education would be a prerequisite for our region's future growth and prosperity. Twenty years later, Houston finds itself surprisingly below standard in educational attainment. Houston, we have a problem.

Ignoring for a moment all the other responsibilities of the University of Houston System, providing higher education services to the people of our region constitutes a significant challenge. With a population of 5 million and 55,000 high school graduates annually, Houston has enormous higher education needs. And given the dramatic ascendancy of the high-tech sector and its importance to our economic future, we find our city in serious competition nationally for a limited pool of educated workers.

In 1990, the educational attainment of Houston's population ranked average among 10 cities considered our competition in the regional growth game. By 2000 the gap between Houston and the other cities had widened, with the percent of Houstonians holding bachelor's and master's degrees more than a full percentage point below the average.

To simply maintain our position in the next five years, Houston must add 38,869 bachelor's degrees, 12,612 master's degrees, and 2,515 Ph.Ds annually. In other words, Houston must add educational capacity equivalent to a 75 percent increase in graduates per year at the University of Houston, University of Houston-Downtown, and University of Houston-Clear Lake, plus an entirely new university producing the same level of graduates as the University of Houston – all while importing educated workers at the record levels of the 1990s.

HOUSTON'S EDUCATED LABOR FORCE GROWS AT BELOW-AVERAGE RATES

Between 1990 and 2000, Houston's percentages for all degree categories grew substantially, but not as rapidly as the increases seen in other cities. While most of these statistics, on their own, are not particularly alarming, they do tarnish Houston's reputation. If we want to compete for the new high-tech industries that will be the major sources of growth in the future, we can't continue to lag behind cities such as Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Denver, and Seattle.

Degree	Comparison of Educational Attainment Among Selected Urban Areas					
	1990			2000		
	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.Ds	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.Ds
PMSA or MSA						
Atlanta MSA	11.7%	3.5%	0.5%	21.6%	7.2%	1.0%
Boston	13.0%	5.1%	1.2%	22.6%	11.3%	2.3%
Chicago	10.1%	3.7%	0.5%	19.0%	7.6%	1.0%
Dallas	12.0%	3.6%	0.5%	20.5%	6.7%	0.9%
Denver	12.8%	4.0%	0.6%	23.0%	7.9%	1.0%
Detroit	7.2%	2.8%	0.3%	14.3%	6.1%	0.6%
Houston	10.4%	3.1%	0.5%	18.2%	5.8%	1.0%
Los Angeles	9.0%	3.0%	0.5%	16.1%	5.3%	1.0%
Orlando MSA	9.8%	2.7%	0.3%	17.1%	5.2%	0.7%
Seattle	13.9%	3.9%	0.7%	24.2%	7.8%	1.3%
St. Louis MSA	8.7%	3.1%	0.4%	16.1%	6.5%	0.9%
Average	10.8%	3.5%	0.5%	19.3%	7.0%	1.1%
Comparative	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	1.1%	1.2%	0.1%



Reducing Houston's Education Shortfall

In the 1990s, Houston gained more than a quarter-million individuals holding bachelor's degrees, 85,000 with master's degrees and more than 15,000 with Ph.Ds. But the cities in our competitive set added degree holders much faster. On average, our 10 competitors experienced an 80 percent increase in the percentage of their populations with at least a bachelor's degree. Houston fell far short.

The fact is, in the next five years there is no way for Houston to catch up – and we can't afford to fall farther behind. We will have to fill our shortfall over a longer period. We can do it, but only with a city-wide commitment to, and significant new investment in, educating more of our own.

The Atlanta Regional Council of Higher Education recently compared the nation's 60 largest metropolitan areas in terms of their commitment to local higher education. In terms of college enrollment per capita, Houston ranks 59th out of 60. In terms of per capita degrees, locally conferred, we rank 57th. For the sake of our future, and our children, we want these numbers to change.

However large and excellent the University of Houston System is today, the future of our region demands that we make it even bigger and better.



THE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

The UH System is, by far, the region's largest awarder of degrees and educational services.

- Creates an "opportunity escalator" for students and families
- Generates knowledge that benefits Houston and Texas
- Serves Houstonians as well as students from 126 countries, making UH the most ethnically diverse major research institution in the nation.