

## *Goal is a Continuity of Data and Effort*

On Monday, December 7, 2020, 55,000 Degrees delivered its [final report](#), produced by Washington D.C.-based Higher Ed Insights, on education attainment. The report states that, over the 10 years of the 55K multi-sector partnership, Louisville increased the number of working-age adults with an associate degree or higher by 8 percentage points, from 38% to 46%, adding 40,000 degrees to the count.

“The numbers, though not quite what we targeted, represent tangible progress that positively impacts our economy and the futures of real people in our community,” said Mary Gwen Wheeler, 55K’s Executive Director. “As the 55K initiative comes to a close, it is important to continue regular and transparent community-level review of our education data to keep us motivated, accountable and focused as a community.”

In an effort not to lose the important work and data collected by 55,000, the Greater Louisville Project has moved [the 55,000 Degree Education Data Dashboard and reports to its website](#). The GLP is also coordinating with other local nonprofits to find homes where some of the data and website content could be a better fit.

## **The Story of 55,000 Degrees**

In 2003, our community was at a crossroads as city and county governments merged to form Louisville Metro Government. With unity came a community consensus to take stock of our city’s strengths and our challenges. Whether the issue was attracting new jobs or improving quality of life for all residents, [education was a common priority](#).

The Greater Louisville Project, which has benchmarked the city’s progress since the merger, released the [first education pipeline report in 2008](#). The main finding was that of the 10,000 children born in Jefferson County in a typical year, nearly one-third would not graduate high school, and only 25% would earn a postsecondary degree. This, along with other community conversations, led Mayor Jerry Abramson to invite school superintendents, college and university presidents, business and civic leaders to a new Education Roundtable in late 2008. In May 2010, the members of the Roundtable, which included the Business Leaders for Education, signed the historic [Greater Louisville Education Commitment](#) pledging to increase educational attainment and access. By October 2010, 55,000 Degrees was launched to carry out that mission.

Over the next decade, 55,000 Degrees brought together disparate stakeholders to close “leakage” points and create “hand-offs” along the education pipeline, brokered partnerships between employers and education providers to help adult learners upskill, and led the community conversation about the rising costs of education. Between 2008 and 2019, the

percentage of working-age Louisville residents with degrees increased from 38% to 46%, a gain of 40,000 degrees.

As 2020 approached, 55,000 Degrees began to pave the way for further progress to be made.

## What's Next

While Louisville's stats did increase, the fact that we have not yet reached our goal reinforces the importance of tracking our progress. The Greater Louisville Project remains dedicated to sharing fair and equitable data that can be leveraged to catalyze positive change in Louisville. For that reason, the GLP has migrated much of the data and content previously housed on the [55,000 Degrees website](#) for continued access. On this page you will find links to the education data dashboard as well as past reports. In addition, you can find additional data on the status of Louisville's education pipeline.

GLP Project Director and 3 time "Tallest Nerd in Louisville" winner Ben Reno-Weber said, "55,000 Degrees was born out of an analysis done by the Greater Louisville Project, so it is fitting that as it sunsets, GLP supports its data legacy."

In addition to continued monitoring of the data, the efforts of 55,000 Degrees will continue through Evolve502 and other collaborations focused on equitable attainment of degrees and credentials that lead to a liveable wage and quality of life. As announced in August, 2020, [Evolve502](#) has committed to raise the funds in order to guarantee every JCPS graduate the opportunity for a tuition-free, two-year college degree, certificate or training, starting with the class of 2021.