The Rise of the Non-Traditional Student: Implications for Economic Workforce Development

by Shari Garmise, Ph.D.

In the age of ubiquitous information, competitiveness emerges from the talents of the workforce, particularly the ability to take information and innovatively apply it to improve existing products and services and create whole new ones — even create whole new industries! But the workforce itself is changing; no longer is talent generated from just 18-24 year-olds entering and exiting universities in a four-year period to clear-cut career pathways and enduring industries. Rather, we are seeing the rise of the non-traditional student with long-term implications for planning and economic development.

Over a decade ago, a study (http://tinyurl.com/kxsjk6b) by the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that 73 percent of all students in post-secondary education could be classified as “non-traditional.” Also known as adult or re-entry students, they are, according (continued on page 3)
Do you see yourself as a planner first and economic development professional second? Or is it the other way around? The Economic Development Division had the opportunity to host another Facilitated Discussion at the Virginia APA Chapter Conference — hot on the heels from our fantastic discussion in Chicago. Talking economic development and planning with professionals working in one state — as opposed to the cross-section in Chicago — provided a different dynamic. But no less fascinating! Many in the audience viewed themselves as “conveners” to help facilitate economic development with a holistic view of their respective communities. However, many see room for improvement. One example discussed was ensuring that comprehensive plans include economic development plans and market analyses and conversely, broadening economic development plans to include more typical planning topics such as housing.

We have had several discussions with Division members from across the country actively planning similar Facilitated Discussions at State Chapter Conferences in the coming months. We look forward to continuing the discussions and dialogue! If you are in attendance at one of these discussions, we ask you to please share your thoughts, comments, feedback with us via (email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). Even better — write a blurb or article for the next newsletter!

We are actively planning for the 2014 National Planning Conference in Atlanta. We’ll have a Division “by-right” session and another facilitated discussion — many more details to follow. And we will host our annual reception and business meeting as usual. Please contact me or any of the leadership team if you are interested in helping out at any of the Division events at the conference — or have ideas for other events.

We also are planning for the upcoming year. We will be hosting two more webinars before the end of...
to NCES, the fastest growing segment of the student population and are defined as having one or more of the following characteristics:

- over the age of 25;
- work to finance their education;
- struggle to balance work and family life;
- delay entry to post-secondary education;
- are financially independent (e.g., do not rely on parents);
- attend part-time; and
- do not have a high school degree (often have a GED instead).

Non-traditional students often face a series of additional barriers that make access to education and training difficult, such as:

- taking care of older parents;
- lack of comfort with technology;
- intimidated by younger students;
- lack sufficient academic preparation and study skills; and
- particular financial challenges as they do not always have access to the same funding opportunities as traditional students.¹

Recently, the NCES study was updated for the 2007-2008 year. Although the percentage of those with one or more non-traditional characteristics declined slightly from 73 to 70 percent, the trend toward non-traditional students as the majority remains strong. Moreover, there has been a steady increase in the number of students attending higher education, so even if the percentages declined, the raw numbers are growing.

So the student body is changing. What does this mean for regions? In a nutshell, to maximize talent and the workforce, regions will need to create new, more complex types of partnerships, rethink some of the goals and strategies of workforce and economic development, and reassess regional infrastructure through a new lens.

**Build New Partnerships and Frameworks for Cooperative Action**

To build talent across the spectrum of the workforce, city-university partnerships centered on building overall community capacity to create resilient, flexible and competitive workers, businesses, neighborhoods, and institutions are key. Not the piecemeal, project-based, disparate partnerships of the past, though, or at least not just those. Rather, the need is for system-centered, long-term, complex networks that connect up the partnerships and efforts that fix up individual components of complex problems. Take education, the key infrastructure of a strong workforce: Programs abound from pre-K to elementary school to secondary to post-secondary to assist in academic, social, behavioral and other issues. So even if a community has the best pre-K readiness program or a world-renowned elementary school reading program, there are still many, many places that students may fall off. To deal with education and the workforce, all those pieces have to function, and function well.

That means thinking from a systemic perspective — a network that aligns and coordinates all activities related to education and workforce development from pre-K to the first post-secondary certification or degree and beyond to include training, reskilling and full-scale new career building.

One exciting model is the cradle to career framework launched in 2006 in Cincinnati, OH and Northern Kentucky. Regional stakeholders (education, municipal, business, economic development, foundation, community) came together to collectively launch the “Strive Partnership” [www.strivenetwork.org](http://www.strivenetwork.org) to improve student performance from pre-K to graduation and beyond through collaborative action centered on shared data and common goals. Known as a collective impact framework, Strive has made measurable progress along the spectrum of objectives including pre-K readiness, fourth grade reading and eight grade math proficiency, and high school and post-secondary completion rates. Strive has worked to develop the partnership in other communities including Houston, TX, East Bay, CA, Portland, OR, Richmond, VA, Seattle, WA, and Boston, MA.

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Rethink Economic and Workforce Development

If most students are non-traditional, many are also local. Talent recruiting does not have to be trips to Silicon Valley, but finding ways to reach deeper into the community and build it regionally. In fact, this is one lesson to take away from Silicon Valley. The number one supplier of engineering and computer science to the Valley is San Jose State University (http://tinyurl.com/7jtfj4h), the local urban university.

Here are a few creative approaches to building the talent pool:

One easy idea is to provide direct financing to support talent development. This may be as important as supporting business to keep the economy resilient, nimble, and competitive. Phillips County Economic Development in Phillipsburg, KS offers scholarships (http://tinyurl.com/n24xyaw) to support non-traditional students to upgrade their skills.

Another low hanging fruit for talent development are older students with some college who may only be credits away from achieving a degree. Some regions are finding ways to reach them and support their completion of post-secondary education. Higher education institutions are your key partners. Portland State University in Portland, OR implemented a Last Mile (http://tinyurl.com/l36kaqz) program to identify undergraduate students who dropped out within a term or two of finishing their degrees. They use a range of social media tools to find these individuals and then help them manage financial, curricular, and other challenges that inhibit their ability to graduate.

A more complicated but incredibly important strategy is to find ways to reskill and upskill talent to new uses. One highly successful example is the New Americans in Nursing program at Florida International University in Miami, FL which trains foreign-born doctors to become practicing nurses in an accelerated Bachelor of Science program in partnership with regional hospitals facing acute nursing shortages (see video http://tinyurl.com/maj8a2y). The program has received grant funding from the President’s High Growth Job Training Initiative (http://tinyurl.com/nyq3psu) to expand to additional locations.

Reassess Infrastructure

One of the remaining challenges to building a strong workforce remains access to educational opportunities. While this is complex issue, there are several basic infrastructure issues that come into play, including (but not limited to):

• Transportation: Local adult students are often commuters. What is the transportation access for those who need education and training to where it’s offered? Are students spending hours in a car when they should be studying, working or taking care of their family? What are parking options when they get there?

• Access to High-Speed Internet: Online and hybrid (part online, part in the classroom) options often meet the timing needs of those working or raising families (or both). If people don’t have access to high-speed Internet, these options are not available and may reduce a region’s ability to nurture talent.

In sum, if you haven’t started to engage in education, it’s time to start. To grow and sustain a skilled workforce when everyone is a student or a potential student requires it.

Footnotes

1 In some cases, specific financing may be available to support transitioning workers due to industry shifts and government policy, but those are specific to circumstances and not widely available for the regular and persistent cultivation of talent and workforce skills.

Shari Garmise, Ph.D. (sgarmise@aplu.org) is Vice President, USU/APLU Office of Urban Initiatives in Washington, D.C.
Diversification Key to Retiree Influx

by Dave Nutter and Whitney Bonham

America is getting older. Today 40 million people in the United States are 65 years or older; by 2050, this population is anticipated to more than double — reaching an estimated 89 million.

Just as the out-migration of younger workers creates many implications for communities, so too does the in-migration of an aging, retiree population. While many localities across the United States have benefited from the influx of retirees during the last three to four decades, most retiree in-migration has largely taken place in large metropolitan communities. States like Florida and Arizona have benefited from this migration, but the influx has been tempered in a more diversified economy. For rural communities, the in-migration of a retiree population coupled with the out-migration of younger workers raises notable challenges for maintenance of a diversified and stable economic base.

Recently, the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development (OED) conducted a SWOT analysis and updated the Northern Neck Economic Development District’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (http://tinyurl.com/kotpnev). Through this process, OED discovered the Northern Neck region experienced the phenomena of both younger worker out-migration and an in-migration of an aging and retiree population. With an emphasis on the in-migration of a retiree population, this article highlights both the positive and challenging aspects related to retiree in-migration and economic and community diversification.

Virginia’s Northern Neck

Virginia’s Northern Neck, comprised of the counties of Richmond, Westmoreland, Northumberland and Lancaster, borders the Chesapeake Bay and is the birthplace of George Washington and Robert E. Lee. The region’s flat terrain and rich soil provided the perfect locale for farming while the abundant resources of the bay

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provided watermen a way of life for over a century.

The tranquil setting, easy water access and temperate climate also made the Neck the perfect retirement destination. Proximity to Virginia’s Tidewater and National Capital regions made this area especially attractive to retiring government employees. From 1990 to 2010, the total population in the region increased by 12.5 percent, while during the same period Virginia’s population increased 11.5 percent and the nation grew at only 8.9 percent.

The in-migration of retirees did not affect the four counties equally. From 2000 to 2010, the percent of population 65 and older increased to 31.2 percent in Lancaster and to 30.1 percent in Northumberland. During the same period, Richmond and Westmoreland counties 65 and older age group increased by 18.2 and 20.9 percent respectively.

In recent years, while in-migration has slowed, the retiree make-up has not. In 2011, 45.5 percent of the individuals moving into Lancaster County were age 55 and above, and in Northumberland County the rate was 33.6 percent. In Richmond and Westmoreland counties, the rate for persons aged 55 and above was 14.9 and 17.1 percent, respectively.

Today the towns of Irvington and Kilmarnock in Lancaster County have the first and fourth highest median age population for towns with 500 residents or more in Virginia at 62.80 and 52.50, respectively.

The region boasts a slightly higher concentration of veterans above the state average, but it is the concentration of veterans by periods of service and locality that is the most interesting. World War II veterans make up 20.7 percent of the population in Lancaster, 13.3 percent in Westmoreland, and 11.4 percent in Northumberland, compared to the state rate of 7.1 percent.

The influx of these new residents had a strong economic stimulus to the region’s economy, particularly as employment in the traditional industries of agriculture and seafood declined.

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Diversification, cont. from p. 6

Providing housing for the “come here’s” as they are called, stimulated a three-way self-perpetuating economic engine. Between 2001 and 2009, there were 4,261 residential housing starts across the region. Employment in real estate rose 42.1 percent from 2001 to 2009. The new housing starts drove demand in the building trades and financial services.

Professional service employment saw a significant increase during the same period as the banking and financial services sector grew to accommodate the upper income retirees. This sector saw employment rise 47.23 percent during the last decade. This rapid growth also helped make Kilmarnock-headquartered Chesapeake Bank the number one community bank in Virginia in 2012, according to U.S. Banker magazine.

Building construction saw significant increases in employment from 2001 to 2008. Employment in the sector was on track to increase by over 32 percent. As the recession kicked-in during 2009, employment in the building trades sector fell, leveling out for the entire 2001-2009 period to 10.72 percent.

The new residents generated increased demand for retail and service sector employment. Food service sector saw an 8.34 percent increase during the 2001–2009 time frame as new restaurants opened. That stimulated additional tourism dollars as communities like Kilmarnock became destination locations for regional travelers and created a boutique feel for the town.

But this influx of new residents also accelerated the bifurcation in the community that largely reflected retiree settlement patterns with Lancaster and Northumberland representing one-half and Westmoreland and Richmond representing the other. This is reflected in the per capita income of the region. Lancaster had the highest per capita income level at $48,607 and Richmond was the lowest at $26,941.

The percentage of residents below the poverty level in 2011 was not statistically significant across the four communities with Lancaster the highest at 10.8 percent and Westmoreland the lowest at 10.1 percent. Paradoxically, Lancaster had the highest percentage of children under the age of 18 living below the poverty index at 20.7 percent, Northumberland at 16.3 percent, Westmoreland at 9.2 percent and Richmond at 8.6 percent.

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Staffing patterns show that 58.3 percent of the workforce is employed in five industry sectors: real estate, health care and social assistance, accommodations and food service, and agriculture, forestry and fishing. Over one-third (38.4%) of the citizens work in occupations that earn less that $11 an hour, and fully 20.7 percent of residents age 25 and above did not have a high school diploma.

The new residents were also anxious to preserve the quality of life in their new community and tensions have strained as urban attitudes have bumped into rural life. Efforts to increase local funding for public education and or attract new industry has generated citizen backlash at county board meetings. The presence of a large fish processing plant that employs several hundred has run afoul of residents over its air emissions.

The in-migration is now well into 20+ years and those who came to the region in their 60s are now seeing the need for advanced medical care and demand for assisted living facilities is increasing. From 2007 to 2012, employment in the health care and social assistance category increased by 32 percent. The only other employment category to gain at this level was in the financial services category, which increased 21 percent.

The lack of higher wage employment has caused more than half of the employed residents to travel outside the region for work. The lack of well-paying jobs and the need to travel outside the region for significant employment opportunities precipitated a (16.26 percent) decline in residents in the 30 to 49 age group. Correspondingly, employment for elementary and middle school teachers declined by seven percent from 2007-2011.

While the influx of new residents has had a strong stimulative effect on certain sectors of the economy, it has also masked the lack of diversification important to sustaining an entire community at a living wage level. The recession has slowed housing sales in the urban areas, which in turn has slowed new construction into the Northern Neck community. While the housing market has begun to improve, the need to create more jobs that will provide livable incomes for the rest of the community is crucial. An economy built only on the service sector for retirees will not be able to sustain itself over time.

Dave Nutter (dnutter@vt.edu) and Whitney Bonham (wbonh06@vt.edu) are economic development specialists with the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development.
Whither Senior Travelers?
The Senior Market for Travelers: Their Needs and Expectations

by Barbara & Hugh Barton

The fishing boat set off from western Ireland’s Derrynane Harbor and plowed through waves to the foot of Skellig Michael. (First inhabited c. 6th century, a monastery was established there c. 8th century, where the monks lived in supremely isolated conditions.) The boat bobbed alongside the dock and six stalwart American tourists scrambled out and set off up the 680 slippery stone steps to the top to spend time amongst the tiny stone beehive huts. One of the swiftest to the top was a 75-year-old woman visitor from Vermont, clearly exultant and looking for adventures to add to her previous trips in India, Greece, & many parts of Europe.

Not unusual nowadays. Current seniors and the rising class of boomers are seeking new experiences in the U.S. and abroad. According to Department of Commerce statistics the numbers of seniors traveling down I-95 from northern locations to Florida in the winter is not increasing as was forecast 10 years ago. Where are they going? They are not only going to western Ireland and India, but they are eager to find affordable, interesting destinations right here in the United States. How to plan for them, find them and attract them to your properties? If they are not already working with their local Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), municipal economic developers will want to contact CVBs in their area for data showing the makeup of the visitors currently arriving and visitors they are seeking to attract. This data will include information such as places of origin, method of transportation, desired lodging, attractions, and activities, and other motivating factors. In urban regions, visitors are concerned with availability and ease of using public transportation. Some CVBs are trying to increase leisure business for the weekends for hotels that are busy with business/convention business during the week. Some are trying to attract more business/convention traffic and may need help with providing meeting space and municipally-funded attractions. And many are marketing to the international visitor.

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So you, as an economic developer, with help from your CVB, have determined the general goals of your community regarding attracting desired visitors. Now to specifics: seniors have issues, most of which are not really different from all travelers.

Here's a short list of areas to examine: legible and un-obscured street and attraction signage (this senior, attending a meeting in a Virginia city last week, was almost late because of poor and often non-existing road signage), municipal parking, and safety. Proximity to efficient and clearly-signed public transportation can be a deciding factor in choosing a destination or lodging. Other amenities which will attract seniors to your locality include websites that link to local tourism sites quickly and smoothly (these are often seen in hotel lobbies now), pedestrian malls such as in Charlottesville, VA, and, it is hoped, a thorough knowledge by hotel staff of local attractions, festivals and special events. Though it may not seem to be a developer issue, hotel staff members should be thoroughly familiar with local highlights. Downtown ambassadors such as those in Washington D.C. can be very helpful to any visitor.

Many travelers, when making a hotel reservation, are increasingly looking for “green” facilities. Examples of such lodging can be found at www.virginiagreen.org, a site getting more and more hits from prospective travelers to that state. Florida and California also have made significant advances in the “green” provision of both public and private facilities.

Most American hotels have either built or remodeled facilities to accommodate the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, in some areas the accommodations are less than complete. As an example, we had a client who admired the wide doorways, ease of unlocking the door, wheelchair access to the toilet, and other amenities at her hotel, but then encountered a bathroom faucet without lever handles — difficult for anyone (not just seniors) with a disability to use.

These are all areas that can be addressed by municipal developers with cooperation from the private sector. Partnerships are paramount to success in this atmosphere of budget cutbacks and shortfalls.

Demographic trends in U.S. population show some signs that are not optimistic for domestic travel over the next 20 years:
- Percent of total: biggest gainers are the 55-65 and 65+ groups. Biggest “loser” is the 35-45 age group.
- Growth rates: largest growth from 2000 population levels are in the 55-64, 85+ and 65+ age groups. The 35-44 age rate is actually negative.*

Not to be ignored in the visitor mix, according to Department of Commerce experts, is the market for international visitors to the U.S.; it is strong and growing. The typical international visitor spends more and stays longer than the domestic visitor, making attracting that traveler a sound business goal. The U.S. is still the most-desired world destination. These visitors of all ages, including seniors, also have specific needs, which include translations of maps and brochures and hospitality industry personnel fluent in multiple languages. Being able to change their currency into U.S. dollars has been difficult although the prevalence of ATMs helps. American tipping practices are generally not understood. Often the local CVB can provide help in accommodating these and other needs of the international visitor.

Let’s also look at just one type of attraction in many communities: museums.
- Non-profits (most museums are) can be employers of choice for post-career jobs for Baby Boomers.
- There will be changes in the make-up of volunteer staff.
- Programming must be changed to adjust to the needs of (older) mothers and children to keep their

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attention in our electronic age, such as participatory displays and interpretations.

- Changes in income and economic impact on admissions, donations, pledges, endowments and government support.
- Women power: bigger numbers, more education and higher income.*

If these points are noted museums should be considered by developers as viable contributors to the economic well-being of a community. Other attractions such as sports facilities must be carefully scrutinized with these projections in mind.

The senior traveler, whatever his or her age, is generally looking for the same memorable experiences as any traveler, fun, perhaps some learning, new experiences and explorations, and the chance to build memories with friends and family. Accommodating their needs is relatively easy, but brings big dividends. *

* U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, Manufacturing & Services, Office of Travel & Tourism Industries.

Barbara and Hugh Barton are the owners of Barton & Barton Travel Consultants in Alexandria, VA.

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APA’s Young Planners Groups

by Natalie Macris

Students who are graduating and entering the professional world often find they lose touch with the network of fellow students, mentors, and other colleagues they met in planning school. Increasingly, APA’s Young Planners Groups (YPGs) are filling that gap.

The YPG movement began in 2007, when APA appointed a Young Planners Group Task Force (see www.planning.org/features/2008/pdf/youngplannersreport.pdf) to address the growing needs of young planners within APA and provide a forum for young planners to be a resource to the organization. The goals were to reach out to the next generation of planners in order to offer services to these members and cultivate a new generation of leaders.

Today, roughly half of APA’s 47 chapters have established YPGs, also known as “Emerging Planning Professionals” and other names. Activities include mentoring programs, volunteering, professional development workshops, tours, social and networking events, and outreach through social media and other means.

Interested in joining or starting a YPG? First, check to see if your chapter or section has a YPG and, if it doesn’t, contact chapter leadership to find out about starting one. Some chapter officials have taken the lead on starting YPGs, while in other cases students and new professionals have created the groups themselves, according to Monica Groh, APA’s director of early career programs.

Resources include an APA webinar on starting and maintaining a YPG. The webinar features New York Metro, Washington Puget Sound, and Georgia YPG members who talk about their experiences and offer tips and resources. Check it out at http://youtu.be/7rl5oWnaxaI.

Also, the Sacramento Valley section of APA’s California chapter — home of the first YPG in the nation — has prepared a guidebook that reviews the history, structure, and possibilities of YPGs and offers advice on starting one. Read the guidebook at www.scapa.org/YPG_Guidebook_April2009.pdf. APA is currently working on an updated version of the guidebook to incorporate the lessons we’ve learned over the years. Stay tuned!

Interested members may also contact APA’s Monica Groh at mgroh@planning.org for more information on establishing a YPG.

“YPGs are a great way of getting involved and testing out your leadership skills,” Groh says.

She suggests volunteering for a leadership position or helping to organize events. “This is one of the best things a young planner can do to grow their career,” she adds. “It creates a network of colleagues, connects you to seasoned professionals, and beefs up your resume. Especially if you are job hunting — there’s no better way to get your name out there to the people who might be hiring.”

Natalie Macris is editor of The New Planner and a planning consultant, writer, and editor based in San Francisco. She is the author of Planning in Plain English: Writing Tips for Urban and Environmental Planners and co-author of A Career Worth Planning: Starting Out and Moving Ahead in the Planning Profession, published by APA’s Planners Press. This article from APA’s online student quarterly, The New Planner, was reprinted with permission.