

Per Scholas Trains the IT Workforce of the Future

Over the past decade, the United States has seen a large increase in the number of information technology (IT) sector jobs. However, as in other industry sectors, the skills gap also affects IT. Nonprofit organization Per Scholas is closing the IT skills gap by providing a skills-based education combined with industry feedback. Originating as a bridge to the digital world for local communities, Per Scholas has become a leader in national workforce development.

Founded in 1995, Per Scholas operates nationally in Cincinnati, Columbus, Dallas, the National Capital Region (the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia) and New York City where it originated. Nationally, more than 30% of Per Scholas students are young adults ages 18–25. It has trained more than 5,000 students to date.

Per Scholas encourages local partnerships by inviting members of the community to serve on an advisory board, working closely with local chambers of commerce, and partnering with local employers. Per Scholas' partners perform a variety of roles, ranging from engagement in the classroom to professional mentoring. Partners also organize site visits, service days, and lectures for participants. In return, Per Scholas' partners are given access to a skilled pool of applicants who have the technical skills and

certifications necessary for entry-level jobs, saving businesses time and money during the onboarding process. More than 80% of Per Scholas graduates are hired for positions following training.

Per Scholas has begun targeting lower literacy, disconnected 18–25 year olds through its TechBridge pilot program in partnership with The Door, a youth services organization. Designed as a bridge program to prepare lower-literacy young adults for the rigorous Per Scholas IT Support training track, TechBridge recruits and selectively admits young adults specifically interested in the IT sector. The program provides intensive literacy and numeracy training contextualized to IT as well as essential workplace skills training. Successful completers of the program immediately matriculate to Per Scholas. Following a detailed assessment of participant outcomes, the TechBridge pilot will likely become a permanent program in late 2016.

Per Scholas acts as a pipeline, training prospective workers and funneling talent directly to businesses—creating a win-win for students and employers alike. It effectively combines intensive training and tutoring with employer feedback and engagement to ensure the creation of skilled professionals in the IT sector.

For more information on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's work on youth employment, visit uschamberfoundation.org/CEW.



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION
Center for Education and Workforce