

# The INSTITUTE for

## Public Policy & Economic Development at Wilkes University

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*A partnership among Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Commonwealth Medical College, University of Scranton & Wilkes University*



### INDICATORS REGISTRATION IS NOW ONLINE

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Our registration for the 2016 Indicators Forum is now online. The event will be held on May 12 at 8am at Mohegan Sun Pocono. Click on the link to register. Seating is limited so make your reservation early!

[Click Here to Register](#)

At this event, we will unveil changes in economic trends relating to various indicators in Luzerne and Lackawanna County. In addition, our task force members have been working diligently to provide you with strategic priorities relating to the topics below:

Housing  
Education and Workforce Development  
Jobs, Economy, and Economic Development  
Planning, Land use, Transportation, and Infrastructure  
Health and Health Care  
Energy  
Public Safety

**Committed to  
research  
and analysis  
leading to  
revitalization and sus-  
tainability for private,  
public, and non-profit  
organizations**

# INDICATORS 2016 SPONSORS

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# 2016 INDICATORS PREVIEW

Though no one questions that there is a relationship between low socioeconomic status and educational success, the **Education and Workforce Development Task Force** has been working on understanding why this is true by looking at socioeconomic characteristics of school districts and the performance of schools.

First responders in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties have begun to carry naloxone, a synthetic drug that blocks opiate receptors in the nervous system, which can reverse the effects of an overdose. Heroin and other opioid addictions (including prescription medicines) are increasing throughout the country and it's evident in the two-county region as well. The **Health and Healthcare Task Force** has been working on developing a report that discusses the scope of the regional problem and current availability of healthcare and addiction treatment.

Sustainability has been a common theme in for past **Planning, Land use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Task Force** reports and we are continuing the trend again this year. The task force has developed four toolkits relating to Practices for Local Government, Green Building, Sustainable Transportation, and Recycling.

These reports and our others including Housing, Energy, Public Safety, and Jobs, Economy, and Economic Development reports will be presented at the Indicators Forum on May 12<sup>th</sup> at Mohegan Sun Pocono.

## SPRING 2016 INTERNS

This spring, The Institute is hosting eight interns from five of our member schools. These students were the top eight of the 20+ applications The Institute received.

**Marywood University**

Duncan Mayer

**King's College**

Sarah Demace

**Misericordia University**

Nathanael Bague

**Wilkes University**

Kavan Rai

Beth Gilbert

Catherine Conte

**University of Scranton**

Erin McCormick

Matthew Salzarulo

The Institute offers credited internships to students of the member institutions. Non-credit internships are also available to students outside our member schools (based upon availability). If you are interested in the internship program, please contact Nimita Patel at The Institute for eligibility criteria at [patel@institutepea.org](mailto:patel@institutepea.org) or via phone at 570-408-9850 or visit our

[Student Internships](#) page.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STUDENT POLL

In October-November 2015, The Institute distributed a poll to approximately 28,000 college and university students enrolled in our 10 higher education consortium and over 2,000 of these students responded to the poll. Using this information, we were able to gather valuable information regarding students' civic engagement and their thoughts regarding important state and federal public policy issues. The findings show some interesting data such as students believe that the cost of education and other issues relating to education is the most important national and state level public policy issue.

In general, students believe that the country and the state are not moving in the right direction, but they may hope to make a difference using their voting power because most students show promise with regards to their likelihood to vote in the 2016 Presidential Election.

The primary source of information about current events is the television, news websites and blogs, social media, and word of mouth. Civic engagement throughout the community is strong with students' volunteering their time for off-campus, non-profit organizations as well as political causes or candidates.

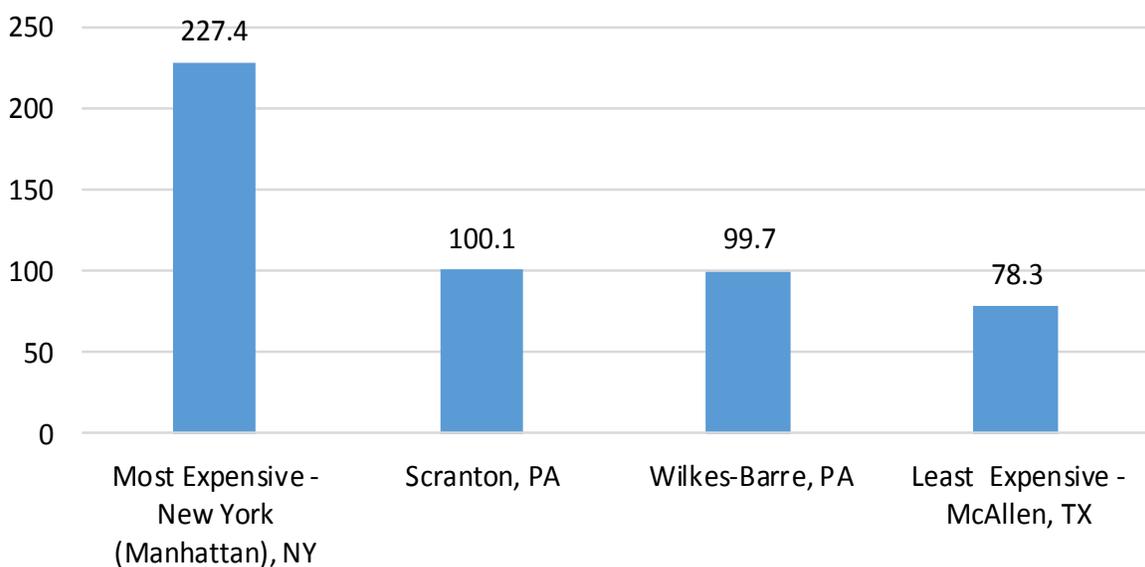
Look for future announcements regarding the release of the results to occur in early March.

# COST OF LIVING INDEX

The Cost of Living Index (COLI) is designed to show relative price levels in an area over a specific amount of time. Essentially, COLI seeks to show how different areas compare in the cost of maintaining standard living appropriate for moderately affluent professional managerial households. This year, COLI compared data from 273 urban areas. In Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, the price of groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, healthcare, and miscellaneous goods and services were all collected and generally fit the average of all costs. The data is read as a percentage, and that percentage indicates the degree to which any given area reaches the average cost of COLI rates for all the data collected. Overall, Scranton's living costs are 100.1 percent of the average for all of the areas collected; this means the city is .1 percent higher than the average. Wilkes-Barre, however, has an average of 99.7 percent of the average – thus, Wilkes-Barre is slightly lower.

For grocery item prices, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre are largely comparable. Their percentages are 103.6 and 103.0, respectively. Housing costs are overall cheaper in Scranton at 91.2 percent of the average. In Wilkes-Barre, however, the cost of housing is 101.2 percent, which is above the average. Both cities have higher rate for utilities, at 116.5 percent of the average. Transportation costs are also higher. For Scranton, it is 107.7 percent of the average, and for Wilkes-Barre, it is 107.5 percent. Healthcare rates are lower than the average, but more so for Wilkes-Barre – in Scranton, 90.0 percent of the average, and in Wilkes-Barre, it is just 78.6 percent. Finally, miscellaneous goods and services, which include things like shampoo, clothes, toothpaste, etc., are slightly below average for both cities. In Scranton, they are 99.8 percent of the average, and for Wilkes-Barre, they are 92.1 percent. Overall, while Scranton and Wilkes-Barre do not stray from the averages of the collected data, it is clear that the average is considerably low when compared to the largest index recorded.

Percentage Comparison: Scranton/Wilkes-Barre vs Highest and Lowest Costs



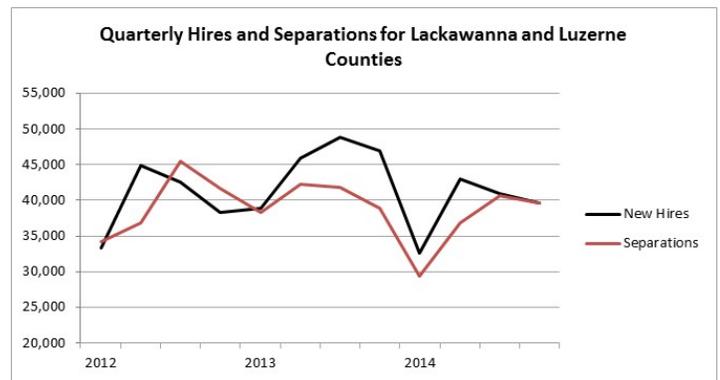
## SELECTED 2015 OUTCOMES

- **Happenings Magazine** completed a feature on The Institute.
- **Northeast Pennsylvania Business Journal** dedicated an issue to the Indicators Initiative.
- Selected to participate as part of **The Scranton Times Annual Economic Forum** — Outlook 2015.
- Efforts to form a **Regional Transportation Authority**, per The Institute's 2012 policy paper on the topic, are underway.
- **Lackawanna College** joined The Institute's consortium of higher education institutions.
- The Luzerne County **SHINE Program**, an evidence-based afterschool program housed within Wilkes University, became operation in 2015. This is an outcome of several years of research of the Public Safety Task Force and its Operation Gang Up initiative.
- The Institute's **Energy Economic Development** strategy moved to implementation with several regional economic development agencies working together to begin marketing the region to attract energy intensive manufacturing. These organizations were joined by entities within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that will work to advance the strategy in 2016. In addition, The Institute's higher education partners are working to develop programming as identified in the education and workforce sections of the study.
- The **Education & Workforce Development Task Force** report on **Comprehensive Career Readiness** was presented to Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- The Institute began a **polling program** to assess opinions and perceptions of the region's college students.

## ECONOMY TRACKER

At the end of 2014, Lackawanna County had the second highest quantity of beginning quarter employment since 2012 and the highest full quarter jobs than in any other quarter since 2012. In Luzerne County, both these statistics were higher than in any other quarter analyzed.

Also in Luzerne County, the gap between individuals being hired for a job and those being dismissed increased, favoring the new hires, though in Lackawanna County, this gap has been steadily closing with separations exceeding hires throughout the second half of 2014. The spring edition will be posted on March 1 at [www.institutepa.org](http://www.institutepa.org).



## WHO WE ARE

The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development at Wilkes University (**The Institute**) provides a full range of customized and objective economic and demographic research services to businesses, government entities, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. The Institute's extensive knowledge of regional economics and economic development, combined with a rigorous and strategic approach to research, have generated a wide range of experience conducting projects such as economic development strategies; economic impact studies; surveys and assessments; grant and program evaluation, market and feasibility analyses; industry and workforce studies; and economic and demographic profiles. The Institute supports the business community, government, and regional economic development programs by producing signature economic reports as well as providing data and analysis.

The Institute focuses on providing its clients with credible and objective research to help them make informed and strategic decisions. The Institute staff has 35 years of combined experience in regional economic development. The organization's distinctive history and structure combines practical applications with the credibility and academic expertise of a higher education institution with an applied research focus. The organization is structured as a research institute affiliated with 10 higher education institutions in northeastern Pennsylvania. Over the past 11 years, The Institute has emerged as a nationally-scoped research center having served clients in several states.

The fees earned from client work help to support the community based research The Institute produces on an annual basis. The Indicators, task force research, Quarterly Economy Tracker, and the polling program are the primary initiatives that comprise the community based research efforts. Further, funds help to support student internships at The Institute.

If you or your firm is interested in becoming our next client, please contact us at [info@institutepa.org](mailto:info@institutepa.org).

**Client List**

**Arts & Culture**

Luzerne County Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Luzerne County Cultural Council

**Corporate**

Borton Lawson  
Facility Design & Development, Ltd.  
Live Nation  
Williams—Transcontinental Pipeline Company, LLC  
Ufberg Law  
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport  
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins

**Economic Development**

Carbon County Chamber and Economic Development Corp.  
Downtown Bloomsburg, Inc.  
Forum for Pennsylvania's Heartland  
Great Valley Technology Alliance  
Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry  
South Valley Partnership  
Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce

**Education & Workforce Development**

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania  
King's College  
Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board  
Lehigh Carbon Community College SHINE  
Luzerne County Community College  
Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board  
The Commonwealth Medical College  
The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education  
University of Scranton  
Wall Street West/WIRED  
Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance

Wilkes University

**Government**

Appalachian Regional Commission  
Borough of Factoryville  
City of Nanticoke  
City of Scranton  
Civic Research Alliance  
Columbia & Montour Counties  
Lackawanna County  
Local Government Commission  
Luzerne County  
Luzerne County Municipal Cooperation Commission  
Wilkes-Barre City  
Wyoming County

**Health & Healthcare**

Healthy Northeast Pennsylvania Initiative  
Moses Taylor Hospital  
Volunteers in Medicine Clinic

**Non-Profit Organization**

Arbor Housing & Development  
Carbondale YMCA  
Central Susquehanna Community Foundation  
Commission on Equal Opportunity  
Jewish Community Center  
Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation  
Municipal Cooperation Commission  
Nicholson Heritage Association  
Pennsylvania Economy League  
United Way of Monroe County  
United Way of Susquehanna County  
United Way Wyoming Valley

**The Institute prepares the following products:**

- ⇒ Market and Feasibility Studies
  - ⇒ Indicators – Indexes
- ⇒ Community Health Assessments
  - ⇒ Housing Studies
- ⇒ Economic Development Strategies
- ⇒ Economic and Tax Impact Studies
  - ⇒ Industry Studies
  - ⇒ Workforce Studies
  - ⇒ Education Studies
- ⇒ Economic and Demographic Profiles
- ⇒ Policy Analysis
- ⇒ Grant and Program Evaluation Support
- ⇒ Research Validation and Peer Review
  - ⇒ Site Selection Research
  - ⇒ Arts & Culture Studies
  - ⇒ Tourism Strategic Plans
  - ⇒ Comprehensive Plans
    - ⇒ Asset Maps

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