

The INSTITUTE for

Public Policy & Economic Development at Wilkes University

Volume 12 Issue 1

Fall 2015

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



SAVE THE DATE—INDICATORS 2016

MAY 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Save the Date for the 2016 Lackawanna and Luzerne County Indicators Forum!

When: May 12, 2016

Where: Mohegan Sun Casino

What: Some topics that will be discussed this year can be found [here](#)

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

FALL 2015 INTERNS

This fall, The Institute hosted five interns from three of our member institutions including King's College, The University of Scranton, and Marywood University.

King's College.

Lauren Martinez
Terria Pettus

Marywood University

Abdullah Alrabiah
Taghreed Faydi

The University of Scranton

Erin McCormick

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 or via phone at 570-408-9850 or visit our [Student Internships](#) page.

STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In early fall, more than 2,500 students from 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 and Wilkes University participated in a poll which was used to assess students' opinions about the importance of certain public policy issues and their level of civic engagement.

Public Policy Issues

The questions included various national and state public policy issues such as the cost of college education, health care, taxes, the efficiency of government, and more. Across the board, the two issues that most students thought to be the most important to were the cost of college education and jobs/the economy. Policies related to marijuana followed by policies related to immigration were considered to be not at all important by the most students as well.

Direction of Progress

When the students were asked if they felt the United States was moving in the right or wrong direction, just below 45% of the students thought the U.S. was moving in the wrong direction. The poll asked the same question about the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the responses showed that over 60% of the students were not sure or thought PA was moving in neither the right nor the wrong direction.

Voting in Elections

Over 60% of the students stated that they were either somewhat likely or very likely to vote in the local general election last month and 85% of the students said they were somewhat likely or very likely to vote in the presidential election in November 2016.

The full report for this poll will be available on our website in early 2016. You can access this report and previous reports at this [link](#).

FALL 2015 QUARTERLY ECONOMY TRACKER

The Fall 2015 publication of our Quarterly Economy Tracker is now available on our website [here](#). It discussed topics including small businesses making big contributions, the labor force participation rate, PA businesses, the property tax burden in the region, other select indicators, and more.

Small Business Contribution

Almost 4,000 small businesses in Lackawanna County have fewer than 10 employees and just over 5,000 small business in Luzerne County have fewer than 10 employees. Despite their small size, these business have a big impact on the economy. Across the state, businesses, with an average of 4.4 employees each, accounted for over \$5 billion in employee payroll in 2013. In order to maximize the economic benefits of small businesses, a region must cultivate entrepreneurship including lowering barriers to starting and running a business, ensuring adequate support systems for start-ups, and promoting creativity and entrepreneurial thinking among the youth.

Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate is a measure of the ratio of individuals in the labor force (employed or unemployed) to the total working age population. In comparison to the past ten years, the labor force participation rate has decreased by 3-4 percentage points in both counties. There are many causes for this occurrence. First, some long-term employed individuals have remained out of the labor force after giving up looking for work. Another cause of this is related to the demographics of the region. The baby-boomer population is leaving the labor force and retired workers live longer, the number of individuals who are not in the labor force because they are retired will almost certainly increase. This means that the “new normal” for the labor force participation rate will likely be lower than in past decades.

You can read more about these titles and more on our website!

2016 INDICATORS PREVIEW

The Education and Workforce Development Task Force is preparing a report explaining the impact of socioeconomic factors on developing communication skills, learning, academic performance, and drop outs.

The Health and Healthcare Task Force is preparing a white paper on the scope and extent of opioid issues in the region, resources, and gaps in resources.

The Jobs, Economy, and Economic Development Task Force is developing a report to assess knowledge of personal finance topics and management habits of the adult population in NEPA.

The Planning, Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Task Force is producing various community toolkits on sustainability topics. These strategies within a community are crucial for its development and prosperity, and it is extremely important for local governments to implement policies that support the concept for long term livability .

COST OF LIVING INDEX

The Institute recently paired with The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) to assist in the production of the Cost of Living Index to provide a useful and accurate measure of living cost differences among urban areas. The Index reflects cost differentials for professional and executive households in the top income quintile. The index is based on six component categories: housing, utilities, grocery items, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services. Each category is weighted based on the demographic represented. Other regions participating in the study throughout the state of Pennsylvania include Erie, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and York County.

Scranton has a composite index of 102.2 and Wilkes-Barre of 102.5. The composite index is nearly identical. Further proof of the strength of the economic relationship between the two communities.

The region with the highest composite index was Philadelphia followed by Wilkes-Barre, Erie, and then Scranton. The region with the lowest composite index was Pittsburgh, PA. Wilkes-Barre and Scranton were similar with regards to composite index, however, grocery items and housing is greater in cost in Wilkes-Barre and transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services is greater in Scranton.

WHO WE ARE

The **INSTITUTE** for
Public Policy & Economic Development
at Wilkes University

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, and Wilkes University.

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 nine 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.

If you or your firm is interested in becoming our next client, please contact us at info@institutepea.org.

Client List

Arts & Culture

Luzerne County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Luzerne County Cultural Council

Corporate

Borton Lawson
Facility Design & Development, Ltd.
Williams—Transcontinental Pipeline Company, LLC
Ufberg Law
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 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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**Locations in Scranton
& Wilkes-Barre, PA**

*Mailing address:
85 South Main Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701*

The Institute provides research, technical assistance, and facilitation and convening services to the non-profits, institutional, private and public sector to develop:

- market and feasibility studies
- community/health assessments
- impact reports
- economic and community development plans
- strategy development planning and collaborative processes
- Industry studies
- social science research and survey design
- program and grant evaluations
- education and workforce studies
- tourism marketing plans

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