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EDUCATION

Bingham Fellows graduates create solutions to Louisville's workforce problems

By [LISA HORNING](#) | October 23, 2017 10:00 am



The graduates of the Bingham Fellows program | Courtesy Leadership Louisville

Five teams of [Bingham Fellows](#) presented their projects to a group of visitors at the Kentucky Center for the Arts Thursday night, with solutions to the problem of "Winning the Talent of the Future."

Bingham Fellows is the “leadership-in-action” arm of the [Leadership Louisville Center](#). The 40 business professionals work together in five teams for six months toward the goal of solving problems the city is facing.

The
class
included
talent



Leadership Louisville
President Cynthia Knappek
speaks to the graduating
class of Bingham Fellows
Thursday night. | Photo by
Lisa Hornung

development professionals who have decades of experience, corporate and small business leaders challenged with attracting a skilled workforce, K-12 and university educators and leaders from IT, manufacturing, human resources, nonprofit and professional service firms.

The problem with Louisville's workforce the Fellows tackled is that there are more than 30,000 open jobs in the city, and employers are having a difficult time filling positions with qualified and reliable candidates, said Tony Bohn, chief human resources officer for Norton Healthcare and a Bingham Fellow.

“We learned that we must better welcome from outside our community highly educated and skilled professionals, and we need to find a better way to embrace that attractive talent to come to Louisville,” he said.

The projects:

Connect 502 — While Louisville has thousands of available jobs, many high school students don't graduate with the skills needed to fill those jobs.

“What we learned is that our young people need more,” said Tonya Miller of GE Appliances. “They need us to guide them, encourage them and support them to stay in school and gain the skills necessary to fill these jobs and also become successful citizens in our community.”



Leadership Louisville
President Cynthia
Knapek congratulates a
graduate on her
graduation of the
Bingham Fellows. |
Photo by Lisa Hornung

The group connected with [Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Kentuckiana](#), which already has a [mentoring program](#). Connect 502 has created a digital component and added a parental buy-in to ensure the success of the students.

The pilot program has already started at Valley High School, and the team hopes to continue to recruit mentors so that more students can benefit.

Spark — Most high school students who graduate aren't valedictorians and are looking for jobs. Many human resource professionals are having trouble hiring people they can trust will actually show up.

Spark is a certification program for high school students that shows they are reliable and trustworthy so employers will have a better sense of that applicant's dependability. Similar programs are in place in Nelson and Bullitt counties, and Clark County, Ind.

Telly Sellars of Jefferson Community and Technical College said employers the group surveyed were overwhelmingly

receptive to the project. Some said they would offer Spark-certified applicants an automatic interview and might start out at a higher wage.

The applicant has to show up to school, have some academic achievement, limited disciplinary action and have a letter or form from a teacher stating that the student is reliable. When they graduate from high school, they will wear a Spark medal with their cap and gown to show their achievement.

Sellers said the program has to be selective but inclusive and diverse in order for the business leaders to buy into the program.

Connect 8 — The program would help connect workforce nonprofits, which work to help veterans, immigrants, refugees and people who have been through the justice system to find jobs, with employers with open positions. The group has partnered with Kentuckiana Works and Focus Career Center to help employers find these applicants, said Bryan Warren of Louisville Metro Government.



Todd Schmiedeler of Trilogy Health Services presents his team's project, Tek-2-Lou. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Tek-2-Lou — Kelly Schmidt of Yum! Brands discussed Louisville's effort to attract a new Amazon headquarters and said that one of the problems is that Louisville has about 1,500 open tech jobs right now. Connecting IT professionals and recent graduates of college and tech education programs to employers is a challenge.

"We need to connect the dots between supply and demand," Schmidt said.

Todd Schmiedeler, of Trilogy Health Services, said many information technology professionals and businesses are

leaving the city for other communities.

“We have to strengthen our ability to recruit great businesses and keep and retain these businesses,” he said. The program would also help set up apprenticeships, mentoring and shadowing programs for those interested in IT professions.

“We want to continue to grow and foster our entire community around technology and all the other businesses that are connected with technology,” he added.

City Champs —

Ashley Parker of Parker & Klein Real Estate said when talented prospects are offered jobs in Louisville, they want to find out more about the community to help them decide to move here.



City Champs would be an ambassador program that would help connect prospects with people who live here and can help answer their questions.

Ashley Parker of Parker & Klein Real Estate presents her team's project City Champs. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

“Cities are fighting for talent, and many have been very successful in drawing in new talent,” said Jim Ensign of Republic Bank.

“Our city champs activate and engage local citizens to create genuine connections and build trust in seeking out our community,” Parker added.

The Champs would be trained, vetted and diverse, and would be on a website for prospects to find like-minded people with whom to connect.

In recent years, Bingham Fellows have developed the West Louisville community development organization OneWest, contributed to the development of a long-term vision for the community, enhanced environmental responsibility, worked to attract and retain talent with an internship program now managed by Greater Louisville Inc., and helped form the Kentucky Indiana Exchange, a regional leadership coalition.

The impact of the Fellows goes back to the 1990s with the creation of The Housing Partnership, construction of the Presbyterian Community Center, growth of local farmers markets and more.

The 2017 program was sponsored by the [UPS Foundation](#).

LISA HORNUNG

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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