

JAX CHAMBER NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JAX CHAMBER, JAXUSA PARTNERSHIP AND REGIONAL EDUCATION PARTNERS ANNOUNCE “EARN UP”

JACKSONVILLE, FL (Dec. 1, 2014) – Local business and educational leaders today announced the launch of “Earn Up,” an ambitious higher education initiative with a goal of having 60 percent of adults with training certificates or college degrees by 2025.

The initiative is promoting “higher earning through higher learning,” based on research that shows the single greatest predictor of economic success in a community is the number of degreed and industry-certified people who live there. Of the working age population in Northeast Florida, 36 percent have a two- or four-year degree. That ranks 72nd among the 100-most populated metro areas in the country.

“This isn’t just an education issue. It’s an economic development issue.” said Daniel Davis, president and CEO of JAX Chamber. “We know when companies are looking to invest and expand, they need to know there’s a trained, educated workforce there to step into jobs. Making progress to this 60 percent goal not only helps us in the eyes of employers, it absolutely improves the quality of life in our community.”

Earn Up is a result of six months of collaboration and work by leaders of the region’s private colleges and public universities, K-12 school districts, local governments, business communities and nonprofit organizations.

“We are fortunate to have a diverse range of outstanding higher education options in Northeast Florida and, by working together and making it easier for people to take advantage of them, we can significantly increase in the number of residents with education beyond high school,” said John Delaney, president of the University of North Florida and the incoming chair of the JAX Chamber Board of Directors.

To reach that 60 percent goal, Earn Up will look for improvement in three key areas:

- Improving how high school students are moved into college certificate and degree programs. Advanced Placement and dual enrollment are part of the solution, as is Mayor Alvin Brown’s Learn 2 Earn program, which allows students aspiring to be first-generation college students to spend a week on campus and learn about being a college student.
- Looking at ways to help remove some of the common roadblocks adults face to complete their degree – or pursue a new field. That could be by giving a closer look at accepting credit for prior learning, adding more online courses or providing more support service for working students.
- Making it easier for military veterans who retire or end their service in Northeast Florida to obtain a certification or degree to pursue a second career.

“Currently, we have too many people entering the workforce with no college, or some college and college debt but no degree to show for it,” said Dr. Cynthia Bioteau, president of Florida State College at Jacksonville. “As college presidents, we need to broaden and deepen our emphasis from getting students in, to getting students through and out.”

Part of the funding comes from Lumina Foundation, a national organization focused on improving post-secondary education access and outcomes. This summer, Northeast Florida was one of 35 communities nationally chosen for grant funding to bolster the efforts and execute planning that was already underway leading to Earn Up. Local funders include Vistakon, the Community Foundation of Northeast Florida and CareerSource Northeast Florida.

“For us to move the needle on educational attainment as a community, it’s going to take all levels of education working together with the student in mind,” said Gary Chartrand, a local business leader and chair of the Florida Board of Education. “Earn Up is a great start in that direction and I look forward to the collaboration necessary to strengthen partnership and evolve as we work toward the 60 percent goal.”

For more information, please visit the [Earn Up](#) website.

About JAX Chamber

The [JAX Chamber](#) is the business membership organization dedicated to driving quality economic growth in Northeast Florida to make this region the best place to live, work and play. Membership provides the opportunity to connect with and buy from other Chamber members. The connections result in business growth and a more prosperous economy.

About JAXUSA Partnership

[JAXUSA Partnership](#) is the regional economic development organization comprised of 165 top private sector investors in Northeast Florida, including the Jacksonville Office of Economic Development, JEA, JAXPORT, JAA, JTA, CareerSource Northeast Florida and the regional county partners – Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties. A division of the JAX Chamber, its purpose is to facilitate the creation and retention of quality jobs and significant capital investment, resulting in a higher standard of living and better quality of life in Northeast Florida.