



The Research Bureau

April 28, 2010

The Research Bureau's second in its breakfast series of speakers commemorating the 25th anniversary of the organization was held at Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences this morning. The audience of close to 100, made up of public officials, business and community leaders, and citizens, were treated to a lively presentation by Edward Glaeser, Professor of Economics at Harvard and Director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government and the Rappaport Institute of Greater Boston.

Professor Glaeser offered a host of insights into why cities like Boston and New York are flourishing while others such as Detroit and Buffalo are on life support. Based on extensive research, Glaeser has concluded that the single most important determinant of success is the accumulation of smart people who exchange ideas with other smart people. These exchanges invariably lead to a string of innovations and new businesses.

The surprise about Worcester, according to Glaeser, is that with all of Worcester's colleges, the share of adults with BA's is only 28.2%, almost 10% lower than the Massachusetts average as a whole. He urged Worcester to focus on ways of retaining more college graduates.

The second determinant of successful cities is the growth and abundance of small firms rather than dependence on large companies such as happened in Detroit. His recommendation again was to focus on attracting and retaining a well-educated population. To do so, Worcester should focus on quality of life issues. Good public schools and public safety topped his list to attract smart people with families; "cool stuff" such as coffee shops, interesting retail, and welcoming public spaces attract the younger set.

A third determinant of success for Worcester is connecting to Boston by rail and to the international community through its immigrants, which currently constitutes 20% of Worcester's population.

The next event in The Research Bureau's series will take place on May 18, 2010 and will feature Alan Ehrenhalt, Director of Information at the Pew Center on the States. All of these events are free and open to the public. To learn more go to www.wrrb.org