

Cuyahoga County Equity Commission Meeting
February 20, 2025, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Cuyahoga County Administrative Building – Room 5-006
2079 East Ninth Street, 5th Floor
Cleveland, OH 44115

Cuyahoga County Equity Commission		
Last Name	First Name	Agency
Lockett	Lenora	Equity & Inclusion
Merriman	David	Health and Human Services
Nemastil	Sarah	Human Resources
Smialek	Jill	Public Safety and Justice Services
Johnson	Vaughn	Development
Herdeg	Paul	Development
Guests		
Gallagher	Kathrine	Executive
Assad	Awatef	Law
Murdock	Jamillah	Equity & Inclusion
Slayton	Shaunna	Equity & Inclusion
Horvath	Vincent	Equity & Inclusion
Garber	Julia	Clerk of Courts
Penick	Erica	PenWill Group
Williams	Karan	PenWill Group
Townsend	Felicia	Penwill Group
Rife	Madeline	College Now (virtual)

- I. Welcome
- II. Call to Order (10:03 am) – David Merriman, Chair
 - i. Roll call completed; previous minutes reviewed.
 - ii. Call for Review & Approval of Minutes made by David Merriman.
 - Minutes approved: Motion to approve made by Sarah Nemastil, seconded by Jill Smialek.
- III. Public Comment
 - There was no public comment.
- IV. Opening Remarks from Equity Commission Members
 - i. Paul Herdeg-The Department of Development remains firmly committed to working towards equity.

- ii. Vaughn Johnson-For the first time in many years, maybe a decade, we have a project in process that was approved for a minority developer on a mixed-use project. This project is about \$9 million. From May of 2024 to the end of December, we assisted around 700 small businesses. 75% of those are Minority and/or Women owned businesses. Also, I'm pleased to share, 10 businesses through our Capital Partners have all been approved for small business loans.
- iii. Jill Smialek-We are continuing to work towards our goals programmatically. We have seen an increased need for interpreters across all our programs, we will continue to watch trends as they happen. We now have a Program Officer who is doing great with assisting in our diversity program in Public Safety Careers. The program is available to young people coming out of high school, educational or vocational programs, as well as college.
- iv. David Merriman-Last year was a very difficult year for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) skimming. People's benefits were stolen off their card. In December, there were 6000 cases. The fix must occur at the state and federal level. It has a disproportionate impact. It's something that needs to be a priority. It needs to be addressed at the federal and state level. Until that happens, we are simply being defensive. Several organizations approached me asking for assistance to try to understand how they could become involved with contracting and programming with the county. Under most of those circumstances, the individuals that approached me were former foster care youth that had aged out. I want to acknowledge how much I appreciated being able to refer them to Lenora and Vaughn.
- v. Sarah Nemastil-In 2023, Human Resources did engage a consultant to conduct a pay equity study for our non-bargaining classified employees. I'm pleased to report, the consultants completed their study and recommended pay adjustments toward the end of last year. Those pay adjustments were implemented before year end in 2024. The next step in our initiative is reviewing pay for unclassified employees. Also, we have contracted with a vendor to help HR reset its compensation philosophy and our policies and processes used to set pay. This is to ensure our compensation decisions are made in a fair, equitable, and transparent manner. We are continuing to strive to increase participation in the tuition reimbursement program. The Civility Training Initiatives will continue. Mentoring initiatives will also continue.
- vi. Lenora Lockett- We are continuing our work on improving the culture with the County. We want to make sure we are attracting, recruiting, hiring, promoting, developing, and retaining a broad pool of qualified employees. We are in the midst of doing our Leadership Training which is for newly hired and promoted leaders. March is our What's Next kickoff. April will be our all-staff DEI training for all newly hired staff.
- vii. Awatef Assad- The Law Department continues to collaborate with our local partners of the law school's affinity bar associations and other community

partners to advance equity and inclusion. Consistent with our strategic plan, we are planning an economic inclusion panel discussion on March 26, 2025, at 1:00 PM. We will discuss the economic and legal challenges facing NE Ohio and the necessary steps to achieve full economic inclusion and opportunity for everyone.

V. College Now Mentoring Program- Power Point attached.

VI. PenWill Group- Power Point attached.

VII. Closing Remarks

VIII. Adjourn (11:02 am)

The recording of this meeting can be found on YouTube- 2025.02.20 Equity Commission Meeting

Next Scheduled Meeting: May 15, 2025 @ 10:00am



THE COLLEGE NOW MENTORING PROGRAM

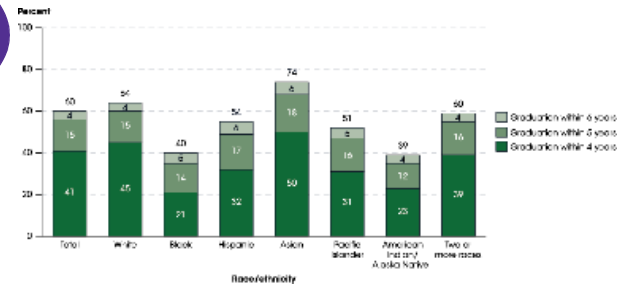
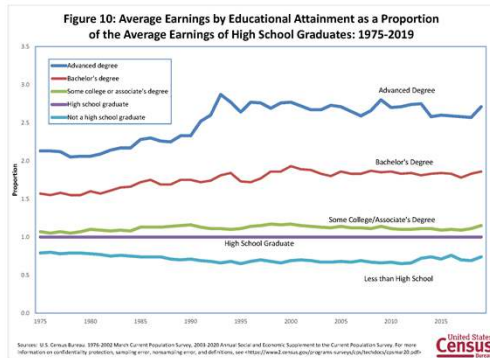
ABOUT COLLEGE NOW

College Now's mission is to increase postsecondary educational attainment through college and career advising, financial aid counseling, and scholarship and mentoring services.



COLLEGE: NECESSARY, BUT ACCESSIBLE?

POST-SECONDARY INCREASES EARNINGS....



...BUT FEWER BIPOC STUDENTS GRADUATE

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CHANGING THE CALCULUS

 **Say
Yes!
Cleveland**



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MENTORING TO GRADUATION

On-Time Graduation Rate

Overall Graduation Rate
Any Background

62%

For Pell Grant Eligible Students

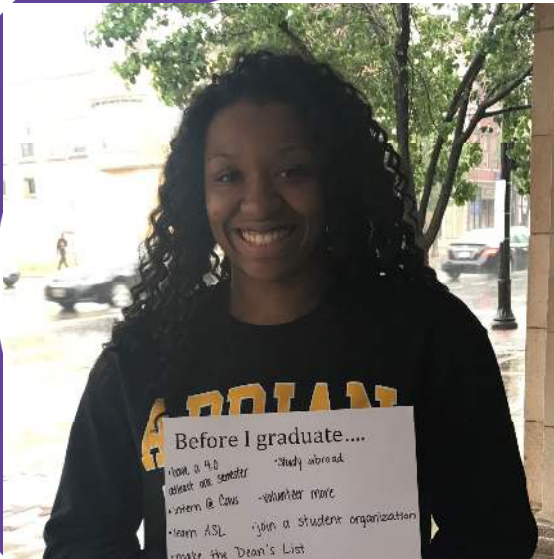
45%

71%



College Now Mentoring
Program

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WHY MENTORING?

- Questions on finances and academics
- Social and emotional support
- Guidance on professional development

HOW IT WORKS

Structure of the Program

- 1,700 pairs
- Onboard between 500-600 students annually
- Support from College Now Staff
- Multi-year match



Your Commitment

- Matched with **ONE** student
- Messaging: **two messages per month** via online platform
- Meetings: pairs meet **three times per academic year**



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Student success

71% of students who were mentored **graduated on-time**

Regional impacts

NEO is the real winner



Mentor development

Improve your **skills** and expand your **network**, while **paying it forward**



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QUOTES FROM 1ST YEAR MENTORS

The College Now folks do a great job of pairing mentors and mentees with common interests – *Mary Lynn*

This is the first year I have participated in the program and I am so impressed with how organized it is and how much support I receive as a mentor. As with most volunteer opportunities, I feel like I am getting so much more than I'm giving. - *Kari*



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QUOTES FROM STUDENTS

"He helped me know that . . . everyone has [challenges] and that it's ok to struggle in times like these. That **we may need to take more time to achieve our goals and that that's ok.**"

– *Devlin, 3rd year student*

"My mentor present[ed] me with great opportunities to talk to people she knew that had experience in the field that I'm interested in. She also did a wonderful job of checking in with me throughout, she was very supportive and made it known that I could talk to her about anything I needed to." – *Rose, 3rd year student*



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PARTNER WITH US

APPLY TO MENTOR!



Apply: <https://cngc.org/applytomentor>

- Virtual orientation (30 min)
- Phone interview (30 minutes)
- Background check

1
1

SIGN UP FOR MORE INFORMATION

College Now Mentor Program



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CONTACT US



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[HTTP://CNGC.ORG/APPLYTOMENTOR](http://CNGC.ORG/APPLYTOMENTOR)



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THANK YOU!

Enhancing Business Capabilities and Creating Economic Impact

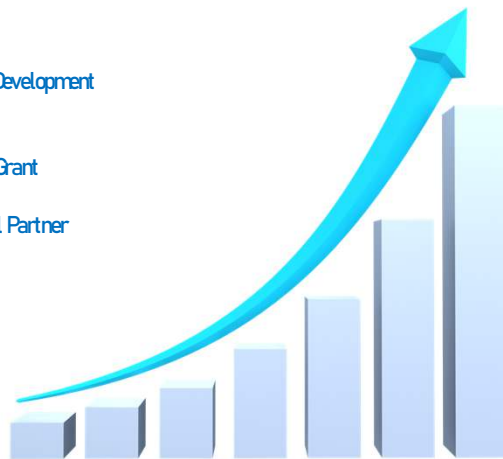


PENWILL

PenWill Group, LLC + Cuyahoga County

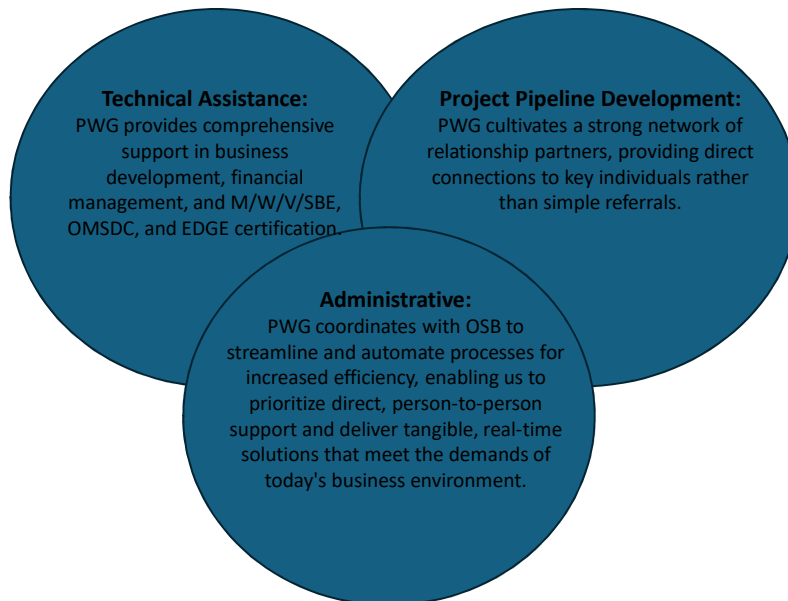
a longstanding progressive and productive relationship

- 2025 Department of Economic Development Strategic Plan
- 2023 STIMulus Small Business Grant
- Office of Small Business Capital Partner



PenWill Group, LLC

a uniquely positioned Capital Partner tasked in three areas of focus:



Client Profile

a brief description of a PWG client served

Background/Demographics

Female
Heights Suburbs
Real Estate Industry
Owns 7 Multi-Unit Properties

Wants/Goals/Desires

Acquire More Properties
Maximize Occupancy
Creative Funding

Business Service Area(s)

Business Development

Service Outcomes

- Connected as formal Housing Partner with 3 local established and well recognized organizations
- Identified a commercial connection to enter the short-term rental space
- Recommended 4 non-traditional funding sources
- Provided Access to 1 Small Business Grant (\$10k)

Measure, Reflect, Plan, Implement, Adjust, Deliver Results



Enhancing Business Capabilities and Creating Economic Impact



PENWILL