

## Generation Iowa Commission

## Working to keep young people in Iowa



BY RAGEN COTE,  
SIOUX CITY GROWTH ORGANIZATION

*"To attract, retain and engage the Next Generation of Iowans."*

This is the goal of the Generation Iowa Commission and those 15 of us, ages 18-35, selected to advise and assist the state of Iowa. My name is Ragen Cote and I am a commissioner for Generation Iowa and a resident of Sioux City. In my experience, the state of Iowa is a great place to live, a great place to work and a great place to raise my family. I learned at a young age to leave a place in better shape than when I found it. My goal in joining this commission is to assist in making a young person's decision to stay in Iowa a possibility and an attractive option for the future of our state.

The Commission produces a report annually, including findings and recommendations, regarding its efforts to attract and retain the young adult population in Iowa. The 2008 status report examines career opportunities, educational needs of young adults and the movement of the young adult population. The Generation Iowa Commission, with support from the Iowa Department of Economic Development, has worked to research historical data, investigate best practices, assist marketing efforts, explore legislative possibilities and prioritize solutions.

The Next Generation wants to stay in Iowa. We will follow economic opportunity. Then what do we need? We need the opportunity to find a high-paying job in a field that is compatible with our education and we need the cost of living to simply be affordable. We have found the most important driver in a young person's decision to stay or leave Iowa is wage related. Iowa has a surplus of qualified, college educated professionals who are making the choice right now to stay in Iowa and settle for low wages and underemployment, or leave the state. Without drastic overhaul of economic development practices, 20% of Iowa graduates will have to make this choice.

There is a section of the 2008 status report that I would like to share which may be helpful in understanding what we are working towards. Based on the Commission's analysis, in order of importance, the Iowa Legislature and Governor Culver can begin to reverse Iowa's net loss of the Next Generation—specifically, the college graduates who are the backbone of future workforce in our targeted industries. In 2009, Iowa should:

1. Provide more opportunities for the Next Generation to be involved in the state's boards and commissions, beginning with the Vision Iowa board. Civic engagement helps our young leaders put down roots in Iowa, and establishes statewide priorities that are attractive to the Next Generation. Currently, Iowa college students only rank 17th nationally with a volunteer rate of 32 percent.
2. Address Iowa's regional and national wage gap by making job creation programs more ambitious in their creation and support of high-wage, high-education jobs.
3. Expand the IDED Iowa Internship Program to create more career pathways for young Iowans in higher-educated oriented growth industries.
4. Provide broader education benefits for volunteers in AmeriCorps, a program that has enabled young Iowans to be actively involved in rebuilding disaster-ravaged communities.

For more information please visit [www.generationiowa.com](http://www.generationiowa.com) for a link to the Generation Iowa Commission, the 2008 status report, and other relative and excellent topics.

SCGO has also recently offered students the opportunity to join SCGO as student members at half the cost of regular membership (\$25.00). If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact the Sioux City Growth Organization! Visit <http://www.siouxcitygo.com/> for more information.

## SCGO LEADER FELLOWSHIP

BY WILL PRIGGE, SIOUX CITY  
GROWTH ORGANIZATION

Following up on the Iowa Commission's work to keep youth in Iowa, SCGO is offering a special deal to young people in the Siouxland area. SCGO is offering to partner with (initially) Morningside and Briar Cliff to help develop future leaders in Sioux City. We want to offer leadership opportunities by opening committee work to students, mentoring them, providing speaking engagements and developing a yearly project. It is our belief that we can achieve two goals:

- 1) Help students gain experience before they enter the workforce;
- 2) Offer students the chance to get active in their community so they will consider staying in the region.

# SCGO