Twenty-five executives, with newly sharpened skills that advocate regionalism to improve valley quality of life, comprise the latest class of graduates from Pattern For Progress' Fellows Leadership Program.

The program, which culminated its 10th anniversary year with its June 22 graduation, marries professional responsibilities with a mindset that urges thinking beyond the enclosures of a municipal border, all to strengthen the valley's attractiveness to residents and businesses. The program has had more than 240 graduates. At the ceremony, the Fellows presented an audience of 120 with results of year-long projects in three areas: sustainability, police/community relations and education/business partnerships. Their solutions-driven research was undertaken with collaboration at its heart, seeking out and promoting best practices and suggesting innovative ideas to further the "public good" of such efforts.

The graduation featured an address from Chris Gibson, who led thousands of troops into combat during a distinguished 24-year United States Army career, before he spent six years in Congress. Currently a visiting professor of leadership studies at Williams College in Massachusetts, Gibson called for bipartisan collaboration to end political disputes and advocated numerous principles of leadership while blending his career with insights on contemporary politics.

Sponsors were D.J. Consulting, Inc. and the State University of New York at New Paltz. Pattern is accepting applications for the next Fellows program, which begins in the fall. Call (845) 565-4900 for information.

Pattern seeks to aid Hispanic business growth as population grows

As part of its Urban Action Agenda, Pattern For Progress is helping Hispanic business owners and entrepreneurs learn about resources and funding that's potentially available to grow their business.

The outreach has resulted in community meetings in Spanish in Brewster, Middletown, Liberty, Monticello, Newburgh and Poughkeepsie. It is sponsored by New York State Electric and Gas and the federal Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, with support from Community Capital of New York.

The Hispanic population of the 25 communities comprising Pattern's UAA jumped 66,000, or 50 percent, from 2000 to 2015, going from 131,671 to 198,361. But many new or aspiring Hispanic business owners do not know how to access government or nonprofit services or funding that might be available to them. Pattern seeks to bridge those gaps. Efforts will include development of a guide to local and regional business resources, creation of Hispanic and Latino small-business directories, and creation of strategies for better integrating Hispanic and Latino business communities into existing business organizations, agencies and programs. The ultimate goal is to grow the economic potential of these businesses as an integral component of local economies.

Emily Hamilton, deputy director of the Center For Housing Solutions and Urban Initiatives, coordinates the sessions for Pattern. Attendees have included Poughkeepsie Mayor Rob Rolison, Newburgh Councilwoman Karen Mejia and the Orange County Industrial Development Agency.

Roundtable insights identify next steps on infrastructure

The framework of a potential Pattern For Progress action plan to fortify and encourage investment in the valley's infrastructure emerged from a roundtable discussion June 12 with engineering companies, architects and construction firms.

The meeting followed Pattern's April release of a research report, "Rebuilding Our Infrastructure: Got a Spare Billion?" The report detailed how infrastructure needs far outstrip dollars available, and provided 63 recommendations to reach and maintain a state of good repair for roads, bridges, water and wastewater systems.

The 18 participants, brought together to offer input from the "front lines" of infrastructure, fully agreed on the need for more dollar investment. They also reached consensus on the following priorities:

Top projects:
- Adding a lane on I-84 and Rt.17; regional smart-traffic infrastructure; and water/wastewater system improvements.

Potential systematic streamlining:
- Creating a faster, streamlined mechanism for obtaining regulatory approval of smaller projects; providing funding directly to municipalities, similar to how Consolidated Highway Improvement Program money is distributed; and petitioning the NYS Comptroller's Office to broaden municipal audits to include infrastructure needs and ongoing progress.

Legislative or funding strategies:
- Getting infrastructure improvements exempted from the tax cap; support of public-private partnerships and privatization as alternatives not requiring special legislation; and creation of a separate capital budget by the state.

The roundtable was underwritten by Suez Water New York. Pattern later provided a presentation for Suez officials and contractors to update them on how Pattern advocates for improved infrastructure.
Why are you, and your business, based in the Hudson Valley?
Our campus evolved from an academy that began in New Paltz in 1828, became a state “normal school” in 1884, and was a founding school of SUNY in 1948. SUNY New Paltz is soundly anchored in the Hudson Valley.

How does your business help quality of life in the valley?
We provide high-quality public education to prepare the next generation of citizens, including students who transferred to us from Hudson Valley community colleges. SUNY New Paltz is one of the largest employers in Ulster County, and a regional cultural “hub.”

What initiative helped your business grow in the past year?
In the last seven to eight years, the number of New Paltz students studying STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) has nearly doubled. We’ve added new programs like biochemistry, mechanical engineering and 3D printing. Our new $48 million science building opened this year.

The valley is constantly changing. What best practice would you share to make the most of that evolution?
The Hudson Valley is home to many natural, historic, cultural and human assets. A priority at SUNY New Paltz is to build partnerships that bring such assets together to build a different realization of “community” in the Hudson Valley.

Briefly describe the Hudson Valley in five years, 2022.
Technology enterprises, the arts and other creative endeavors, and the interface between the arts and technology, will have grown. Communities will continue to safeguard natural and historic assets that sustain high quality of life and attract and retain talent.

In addition to "work," "play" counts, too. Something fun folks should know about you or your business?
I was a biology professor for many years before I became a university administrator, teaching courses and conducting research on animal ecology and physiology. I lived and worked in Minnesota, Montana and Wisconsin before moving to NY.

Your advice on how to ensure a strong workforce?
Hire and train to suit your needs. Train workforce so it has the skills that others will want. Treat them well so they stay.

What was your first job?
Management trainee on the Brooklyn Docks.

Why have you chosen to support Pattern for Progress?
Pattern For Progress is the premier think tank for the Hudson Valley. It has great leadership and a staff who are always thinking.

Why are you, and your business, based in the Hudson Valley?
We operate Stewart International Airport, located here in Orange County, N.Y.

How does your business help quality of life in the valley?
Stewart, including the Air National Guard, is the second largest employer in Orange County.

What new initiative helped your business grow in the past year?
Norwegian Airlines has announced service from Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Shannon and Bergen, Norway. The first flight was June 15.

The valley is constantly changing. What best practice would you share to make the most of that evolution?
Embrace change and adapt your business model to ever-changing markets -- and THINK globally.

Briefly describe the Hudson Valley in five years, 2022.
Craft beer, distilled spirits, culinary farm-to-table offerings, Legos and New York’s low-cost gateway to the world, Stewart International Airport.

Your advice on how to ensure a strong workforce?
Hire and train to suit your needs. Train workforce so it has the skills that others will want. Treat them well so they stay.

What was your first job?
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