

ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Geography of Indiana's Creative Class: Student Place Preferences and Alumni Migration Patterns

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With numerous local economies previously driven by manufacturing, Indiana was strongly affected by the economic downturn from 2007 until 2009. One suggestion to facilitate economic growth has been Richard Florida's "creative class" theory, which asserts that talented and educated people choose to live in creative places. College graduates represent one part of Florida's "creative class." Current students at Ball State University were surveyed to understand the importance of place-related factors for where students wanted to live after they graduated. The survey responses indicated that students are most concerned with income potential, cost of living, and distance to family. Alumni residence data from Ball State and three other Indiana universities were also mapped and compared to county-level measures of income, housing, distance from home, and creativity index. This analysis supports the survey findings that economic factors and family connections are likely motivating factors in where graduates have chosen to live and stands in contrast to the overall logic of the creative place theory of development.