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**First Graduating Class Receives Diplomas and Career Certificates through  
Innovative Program at Los Angeles Public Library  
Tues. Jan. 26, 11 a.m.**

**LAPL is nation's first public library to offer Career Online High School;  
Mayor Garcetti helps confer degrees**

**Los Angeles, Jan. 26, 2016** —The first graduating class of 28 students received their high school diplomas through Career Online High School (COHS), an innovative program offered through the Los Angeles Public Library. The ceremony was held today at the Central Library and was officiated by L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti, City Librarian John F. Szabo, Board of Library Commissioners President Bich Ngoc Cao, and State Librarian of California Greg Lucas. Los Angeles



Public Library is the first public library in the nation to offer adults the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certificate online through COHS.

"L.A. is a city of second chances — and our libraries are a vital resource to help level the playing field of opportunity," said Mayor Eric Garcetti. "As today's graduates complete their secondary education through the Career Online High School, we are inspired by the power of these types of programs to transform the lives of Angelenos."

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**Peter Persic**, Public Relations & Marketing Director

The 28 graduates range in age from their 20s to their 50s. Currently, 124 adult learners are enrolled in the program through Los Angeles Public Library. The library launched the program in 2014 to re-engage adults into the education system and prepare them for entry into post-secondary education or the workplace. COHS has now expanded to more than 30 public libraries across the state of California.

"Having earned their high school diplomas, these graduates are now better prepared to find a job, advance in their career or continue their education," said City Librarian John F. Szabo. "This innovative program is the latest example of how the library changes lives in a very big way."

Los Angeles has among the nation's highest high school dropout rates, with upwards of 25 percent of adult residents lacking a high school diploma, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics. In some areas of the city, as many as 60 percent of adults do not have a high school diploma. Nationally, the dropout crisis has reached epidemic proportions: the U.S. Department of Education states that another student gives up on school every 26 seconds, resulting in more than one million American dropouts a year, or 7,000 every day.

"All of us have different reasons why we didn't complete our high school diploma, whether it was taking care of our families, having to work multiple jobs, or something else that prevented us from finishing," said Angie Velasquez, one of the COHS student graduates. "But there is one thing that we all have in common and that is determination. If it were not for COHS, I wouldn't be working where I am now."

The library offers a limited number of grants to Los Angeles at no cost. COHS is administered through Gale, a leading library resource provider, which is part of Cengage Learning, along with partner Smart Horizons Career Online Education. There is no cost to students for the program, but enrollment is limited and demand is high.

"Los Angeles Public Library and the state of California have been pioneers in offering the Career Online High School program to residents, and the results are tremendous," said Paul Gazzolo, senior vice president and general manager for Gale. "Today's ceremony is a powerful example of how libraries have evolved as education institutions and how they are changing lives."

The application process includes an online self-assessment, pre-requisite course and in-person interview at a local library. Once a student is enrolled, COHS pairs each with an academic coach, who provides the student with an individual career path, offers ongoing guidance, evaluates

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performance and connects the student with the resources needed to master the courses. Students are given up to 18 months to complete the program.

Funding for COHS is provided by the Library Foundation of Los Angeles, the Clinton Global Initiative Scholarship Matching Program and the California State Library.

For more information about the COHS program, including the qualification requirements and application process, visit the Los Angeles Public Library website at [www.lapl.org/cohs](http://www.lapl.org/cohs).

### **About Los Angeles Public Library**

A 2015 recipient of the nation's highest honor for library service—the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. Its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, collection of more than 6 million books, state-of-the-art technology accessible at [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org), and more than 18,000 public programs a year provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for life-long learning.

### **About Career Online High School**

Career Online High School was developed in 2012 through a partnership by Cengage Learning and Smart Horizons Career Online Education in an effort to provide affordable, career-based online education opportunities for the millions of adults in the United States without high school diplomas. In 2014, the program was adapted for the public library market by Gale, a division of Cengage Learning. Since its launch, Career Online High School has been recognized as part of a Commitment to Action by the Clinton Global Initiative and acknowledged at the White House College Opportunity Summit.

### **About Cengage Learning and Gale**

Cengage Learning is a leading educational content, technology, and services company for the higher education and K-12, professional and library markets worldwide. Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, has been a global provider of research resources for libraries and businesses for more than 60 years. Gale is passionate about supporting the continued innovation and evolution of libraries by providing the content, tools, and services libraries need to promote information discovery, enable learning, and support economic, cultural, and intellectual growth in their communities. For more information, visit [www.cengage.com](http://www.cengage.com) or [www.gale.com](http://www.gale.com).