A graduation ceremony was held to celebrate the completion of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence at the University of Pittsburgh's pilot prison reentry program, which provides counseling and training for individuals with a criminal record in developing a business idea and turning it into a new venture.

There was over seven months of classes, educational forums and one-on-one counseling sessions in which the participants developed the knowledge and essentials business skills needed to either run a successful business or succeed in today's job market.

The first graduates of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence's Entrepreneurial Mindset prison re-entry program, family members, friends and program leaders from the Institute, Heinz Endowments and the Mon Valley Initiative were on hand July 20 at Lowe's Club Restaurant in West Homestead.

The program, funded by Heinz Endowments and created in partnership with the Mon Valley Initiative, provided individuals with criminal records the opportunity to develop their skills and talents within a business context and prepare for reentry into the workforce.

By learning to identify priorities and common goals, program participants grow as individuals, as family members, as spouses, as friends and as business professionals, and are better able to function as an integral part of the workforce and economic vitality. The Entrepreneurial Mindset provides a fresh start and a new chance to grow, learn and establish a promising future to its participants.