The objective of our project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh (TIP) program in reducing recidivism among program graduates. Due to data restrictions, we could only evaluate criminal justice outcomes for TIP classes up to September 2018. We conducted two main analyses. The first compared TIP program graduates to nongraduates, defined as those individuals who started but did not finish the TIP program, and considered both causal and signaling effects. Our second analysis looked at TIP program graduates who had at least one prior offense, and our comparison group was a matched group made up of individuals in the general Allegheny County population. Here, we only considered signaling effects, though we conducted linear regression robustness checks. In both analyses, we saw no statistically significant evidence that TIP acts as a signaling mechanism or that it causes reductions in recidivism risk. However, we want to acknowledge the limitations of our analysis that stem from our restricted dataset and small sample sizes. We also recognize the complexity of criminal behavior, which extends beyond employment (as is TIP’s focus) and which is influenced by various personal, social, and economic factors.

From our literature review and conversations with TIP and our advisory board, we posit the following recommendations for TIP:

1. Conduct analyses that include more recent versions of the program to assess if recent programming changes have had an impact.
2. Qualitatively investigate why graduates recidivate after completing the TIP program.
3. Continue checking in on graduates post-graduation to provide support.
4. Incorporate services into programming that focus on risk factors for recidivism outside employment.
5. Target services for reducing recidivism to those with the highest risk of recidivism.