

Perspectives

Community College
Leadership for the
21st Century

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Workforce development is taking on greater importance as employers are once again hiring but they are still having difficulty finding applicants with needed skills ... creating dialogue around America's "skills gap."

- John Ebersole

Community colleges are viewed as an essential, if not the most essential, resource in addressing the economic and workforce development needs of many regions and communities across the country.

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Changed Labor Market Demands New Education Model

John C. Austin, MPA

President, Michigan State Board of Education
Director, Michigan Economic Center at Prima Civitas
Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

For many years the blessings of the auto and industrial economy in Michigan – where one could earn a good living without a postsecondary education degree, or other credential — created an environment where higher education was desirable, but not essential. All that has changed, with huge implications for the education, skills, and preparation most relevant for individuals to succeed in the labor market.

Postsecondary Credentials Required: An "All of the Above" Strategy

Today, for people to thrive economically they need post-high school degrees, certificates, or other valuable credentials that equip them with the tools and skills not only to get a job, but to navigate a fast-changing economy and become the entrepreneurs and job creators of tomorrow. Increasingly community colleges are being looked to as a high-quality, low cost, "first-step" to a degree, or the place to get a workforce-valued postsecondary credential.

The economic payoffs from traditional degrees, including associate, bachelor's, and professional degrees, continue to grow, relative to those with only a high school education. In addition, research shows wage and labor market benefits for a host of other valuable post-high school credentials, such as technical and occupational certificates, certifications, and apprenticeships.

In 2013 median weekly earnings were \$150 greater for those with an associate degree versus just a high school diploma. With a bachelor's degree, individuals earned over \$400 more, or almost double the earnings in a year. Recent research also shows a strong economic payoff above high school education for certificate earners — particularly those of one year or more; and for a host of other employer-valued occupation and skill certifications (Carnevale, 2013).

People also make more with a degree or postsecondary credential than without one, even if they are working in an occupation that does not require an advanced degree. Why? Whether a construction worker, police officer, plumber, retail sales person, or a secretary, higher levels of education help people do higher-skilled work, get a job with a better-paying company, and increases the likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur and opening their own business (Leonhardt, 2011).

Postsecondary credentials are what employers expect and that jobs require, today and increasingly in the

future. According to the 2013 report "Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020" (Carnevale, 2013), 70% of Michigan jobs in 2020 will require some level of education beyond high school. The State estimates there are also 70,000 good jobs going begging today in Michigan that aren't met by individuals with the right skills and postsecondary credentials.

There are additional payoffs for postsecondary education as better educated and trained citizens are more likely to create new businesses and jobs. Communities with better postsecondary education attainment rates are also the communities that see more entrepreneurial growth (Motoyama, 2013).

Postsecondary credentials are what employers expect and that jobs require, today and increasingly in the future.

Knowledge work redefines "labor readiness"

In the economy of yesterday, an employer's most valuable commodity was the expensive equipment in the plant, or the expensive land they owned. They kept the factory and office under lock and key, paid people who showed up and turned the screws or manned the phones, and replaced them easily if they didn't.

In today's workplace, the most valuable commodity an employer has is the people in the organization, what they know, what they can do, and who they know. As Peter Drucker who coined the terms 'knowledge work' and 'knowledge worker' put it, "In the knowledge society, the employees, that is the knowledge workers, own the tools of production" (Drucker, 1994, p.71). In this new reality, you give your employees the key to the office and pray they will show up tomorrow, not leave you.

In this economy credentials become assets that help you not to climb up predictable career ladders, but to "rock-climb", moving from position to position, to take advantage of new opportunities, armed with new skills and credentials, and empowered by social networks and contacts you develop along the way. Labor markets today are almost totally contingent – employees are free agents on their own behalf. There is no such thing as guaranteed and lifetime employment, corporate or individual loyalty, or expectations of longevity.

What are the skills this "knowledge worker" needs? Drucker (1994) describes the movement from the blue-collar industrial worker to a growing class of "technologists" (computer technicians, medical technicians, engineers, market researchers) with facility for "flexible specialization" – the ability to learn, and apply highly

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EMERGING LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

Community colleges have a shared responsibility for addressing a significant component of the nation's ongoing skills gap. In fact, the demand for community colleges to train workers to be immediately productive has never been more critical than in today's continuously changing world economies. As a result, colleges need to make sure that all students gain the requisite workforce skills. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders; their answers appear below:

Glenn Cerny, MBA

Vice President, Chief Financial Officer,
Schoolcraft College
Livonia, Michigan

High performing organizations have always emphasized education and training for their staff to be successful. With a rapidly changing marketplace due to global competition and technology improvements, it has become increasingly critical for such organizations to continue to make those investments. During the 1970-80s, the nation saw experienced companies providing on-the-job apprenticeships for employees. As financial pressures hit companies, internal training programs received heavy cuts, resulting in training being provided from the outside world or relying on whatever education and experience workers brought with them.

Although the number of college graduates continues to rise, a major disconnect still exists for employers trying to find highly-skilled employees (Roelofs, 2014). Community colleges need to play a major role in bridging the gap to address this core issue. The old methodology of colleges partnering with industry periodically to develop curriculum is no longer working. Industry is largely unaware of the capacity of focused community colleges to provide highly-skilled, highly-qualified workers, which could eliminate the skilled workforce shortage that is greatly affecting the United States economy.

Current paradigms need to change. Top college leaders need to build long-term relationships with businesses and aggressively set in motion strategic plans to engage industry and make major investments toward the goal of addressing the gaps in educating students and placing qualified workers. This is a major effort, requiring both time and interaction with industry to truly understand their business model and workforce needs. When a college leverages all of its assets to provide value-add proposals, businesses will take the time to listen. However, such initiatives must be presented from college staff at the highest levels.

Essential to any business relationship is the goal of gaining a clear understanding of the individual business operations so effective collaborations – beneficial for both the student and the college – can occur in the future. Businesses often operate on different time frames than colleges; they continuously will be providing input for months at a time and then go dark. Important investments in networking and developing long-term partners in the business world are critical before any significant collaboration to benefit students can occur. Relationships will outlast the momentary disconnects that historically occur in business communications. Community college leaders need to get out of their offices and create partnerships with the business community to start the process of being an effective value-added organization, which will benefit students, and make graduates more employable.

Roelofs, T. (2014, July 15). Education system "missing the boat" with more than 70,000 well-paying jobs on the table in Michigan. *Bridge Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.mlive.com/business/index.ssf/2014/07/help_wanted_yes_there_really_a.html

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What actions can community colleges take to ensure that all students have the skills needed to enter the workforce?

Mara Jevera Fulmer, EdD

Faculty Director, Center for Teaching & Learning
Mott Community College
Flint, Michigan

Workforce training is a key factor for many students choosing community college, and serves as a vital resource for local and regional industry. As the skills gap persists between industry needs and education, community colleges can strengthen the odds of our graduates' success by framing programs with these

five factors in mind.

Think beyond geography. Workforce training should not be constrained to the needs of our own back yard. What is local today, may be global tomorrow. What is trending in California, may soon end up in Michigan. Community colleges must prepare graduates for jobs that are not bound by traditional notions of geography.

Anticipate future needs. Train not just for current skills which are often out of date before graduation. Community colleges must anticipate, lead, and prepare students to be flexible enough to stay current, adapting to the ever-changing needs of our economy. Empower students to become self-learners knowing that, once they graduate, their education begins in earnest in the real world.

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Train for balance. Hard skills such as technical skills, practical knowledge, and their application are vital. But these must be balanced with soft skills - critical and creative thinking, and an understanding of the larger picture where their work fits in. With the focus on hard skills, not enough attention is paid to higher-thinking skills that will help a graduate continue to succeed beyond the first year.

Cultivate industry partnerships. With an eye towards including diverse sectors of the industry, including alums as key partners, advisory committees can be invaluable resources. Again, think beyond the local industry and look to partners who have a vision for the future.

Emphasize collaboration. The workforce is changing and often requires collaboration and problem-solving in team settings not bound by time-zones and geography. Verbal and written communications, organizational and time management skills are all vital to success for our graduates.

Building on these five factors, we can shift from a local mindset to one that examines workforce training existing within a larger environment. Whether they enter the job market direct from the community college, or after transfer, our graduates must be trained with a comprehensive education that prepares them for a continuously shifting global economy.

Glenn Cerny, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at Schoolcraft College, Livonia, Michigan, is responsible for the college's \$75 million budget. Having spent nearly his entire career in higher education business services, he previously worked at North Central Michigan College, Western Governors University, Lansing Community College, and the University of Michigan. He earned his M.B.A. from Eastern Michigan University and is currently a doctoral candidate in the Ferris DCCL program.



Mara Jevera Fulmer is the Faculty Director for the Center for Teaching & Learning at Mott Community College. With nearly 30 years in higher education, Mara previously served as Program Coordinator in Graphic Design at Mott, and as Art Director for the University of the South Pacific (Fiji), and SUNY-Albany. She was chosen as a Fulbright Senior Specialist to Ekaterinburg, Russia in 2012. Mara earned her MA from Syracuse University, an MFA from Michigan State University, and her EdD from Ferris State University's DCCL program.



NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

Community colleges have a shared responsibility for addressing a significant component of the nation's ongoing skills gap. In fact, the demand for community colleges to train workers to be immediately productive has never been more critical than in today's continuously changing world economies. As a result, colleges need to make sure that all students gain the requisite workforce skills. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders; their answers appear below:

Community Colleges Drive Workforce Development

James O. Sawyer IV, EdD

Provost and Senior Vice President
Macomb Community College
Warren, Michigan

Community colleges play an important role in today's education continuum. Our charge is to work with secondary and university partners, as well as employers, to develop education and career pathways that benefit students and prepare them for success in the workforce. That task becomes particularly challenging considering that the jobs needed ten years from now will be different than those needed today.

The early community college charge to make higher education available to everyone and to provide seamless transfer to universities continues to be essential. The importance of developing effective university transfer relationships is clear since the majority of the jobs in the future will require at least a baccalaureate degree. Even those students who begin their careers with associate degrees or certificates will benefit by accruing credits that ultimately can transfer toward a baccalaureate degree.

It is important to recognize that community colleges are educating workers for jobs that do not yet exist.

Career and technical education (CTE) programs emerged to educate students with the skills needed for the workplace and can provide both the requisite workforce skills and transfer pathways to baccalaureate degrees. The need also surfaced for shorter-term, more focused training programs since employers with immediate training needs could not wait for students to complete two or more years of education. Colleges answered this challenge by developing customized workforce programs.

It is important to recognize that community colleges are educating workers for jobs that do not yet exist. As a result, employers are more focused on what employees can do. This emphasizes the importance of providing strong foundational skills while helping students learn how to learn. Students undoubtedly will have to learn new skills throughout their careers; therefore it is crucial that colleges help them cultivate their ability to learn.

To effectively support local workforce and economic development, college leaders must understand the needs of employers and create an environment conducive to meeting those needs. Faculty and staff also must be actively involved with employers and the community. Through these employer and community connections, colleges are able to assess employer needs and become better positioned to address them.

Community colleges have the responsibility to ensure students who complete programs develop the skills necessary to function effectively in the workplace. Students must have a future educational pathway and also meet employers' expectations. Leaders play a vital role in ensuring colleges are positioned to educate their students effectively and to prepare them for success. Below are key leadership skills to help achieve these goals:

Listen. Undoubtedly the most important skill for any leader is listening. To help provide a skilled workforce, leaders must listen to employers.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What actions can community colleges take to ensure that all students have the skills needed to enter the workforce?

What foundational and technical skills do students need? What type of education program will best meet those needs? Leaders must fully understand employer needs to create the appropriate structures and programs to properly educate the workforce.

Respond. Higher education has been criticized as slow to change. However, community colleges are by far the most adaptive and responsive of the higher education providers, continuously assessing programs for relevance. Are students getting jobs? Are employers satisfied with the

entry-level skills of graduates? Are incumbent workers being trained properly? If these fundamental questions are not answered affirmatively, swift changes must occur.

Innovate. College leaders must become innovative to prepare students for success and address the needs of employers and the community. They may change the institutional culture to be more responsive to constituents or implement curricular or program changes to ensure relevancy. Leaders must be willing to experiment and take risks in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Lead. Community colleges, like all organizations, need effective leadership to fulfill their missions. Leaders should be aware of what is happening with employers and the community to help assess how well the college is fulfilling its mission. Leaders must stay abreast of emerging trends such as increased accountability, more prescriptive pathways, or the re-emergence of competency-based education programs. Leaders need to synthesize input from a variety of sources to create education programs, both short- and long-term, designed to address workforce needs.

Community colleges have the responsibility to ensure students who complete programs develop the skills necessary to function effectively in the workplace.

Ensuring that all students gain the education and skills necessary to be successful in the workplace is a core mission of community colleges. Leaders must cultivate an educational environment that promotes student success, while faculty and staff must be empowered to do whatever is needed for students to reach their full potential. Since students tend to remain in local communities, most likely they will contribute to the economic vitality of those communities. A continued focus on student success will pave the way for preparing our future workforce and ultimately, satisfy the needs of employers, the community, and our nation.



Dr. Jim Sawyer serves as Provost, Learning Unit and Senior Vice President at Macomb Community College in Warren, Michigan. Prior to this role, he served as the Dean of Engineering and Advanced Technology and as Vice Provost for Career Programs. Jim has been the principle investigator on two successful NSF grants and has led numerous student success initiatives. He currently serves on the boards of Leadership Macomb, St. John Providence Health System - Eastern Region, and the asbe Foundation.

QUICK TAKES
Highlights
from the Field

Postcollege Workforce Outcomes Measures
by Christopher M. Mullin

The author notes the impact of college on workforce outcomes has become a central issue in the ongoing debate about the role of postsecondary education in the American economy and society, with community colleges as a focus of the national attention. This article shines a light on the core issues impacting workforce data collection and the challenges of tracking students – including completers, employment, and earnings – after they complete a postsecondary education program. Read the complete study at:

<http://bit.ly/1G0AoJz>

A Review of College-Employer Partnerships and Initiatives,
by EARN

Today's competitive global economy requires job seekers to acquire at least some postsecondary education, with community colleges being seen as the backbone of the public workforce system, providing uniquely valuable services to their students, local employers, and communities. Training and education must reflect the needs of employers to enable students and job seekers to connect with and keep jobs. This report reviews recent efforts to nurture dedicated and deliberate community college partnerships with employers. Read the complete study at:

<http://bit.ly/1Fa0DhX>

To receive a copy of this publication, please send your email address to:
thoman13@ferris.edu



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specialized skills rapidly to move from one job to another—from market research into management, from nursing into hospital administration.

The best preparation for this economy includes a very good deal of formal education (the more the better). The kind of skills often associated with a liberal arts education — critical thinking, problem solving, and communications skills, the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge on an ongoing basis, a habit of continuous learning, and ability to develop and apply it in new situations — is shown to pay off in the labor market. For example, with the growing ability of states to match an individual's postsecondary education with later wages and labor market outcomes, we know history majors do well in the labor market. They don't work as "historians", but do work in all sorts of other occupations (sales and marketing, HR, education administration) where their education and skills allow them to "flexibly specialize".

Being "ready" for the knowledge economy means having skills valued today, along with the skills that give one the ability to adapt to new situations tomorrow. Community colleges are uniquely equipped to provide this education for the knowledge worker, as they can merge education in a range of formal disciplines (math, communications, science), and combine and often integrate these skills into a host of specialized, occupationally-grounded programs.

You Have to "Complete" - New "Success" Strategies

Certificates, associate degrees, and employer certifications are all valuable as real proxies for skills mastered and competencies learned. Without them, no employer will take a chance on you. And while there is some evidence taking classes and getting new skills increase earnings, the job of community colleges and all postsecondary institutions is to make sure learners complete a program—and get that valuable credential.

For too long higher education institutions generally, including community colleges, were designed for access versus success, offering learners too many choices, too little counseling and guidance, and unclear paths to a goal. Many learners get lost in a maze, waste time and money, and never finish a credential. Recent research shows that it is those who don't complete a degree or credential, often racking up high debt burdens, who don't realize the real long-term economic return on investment gained by those who do complete (Kelly, 2014). And adult learners, a large and growing share of all learners, face particular obstacles to success. Many of these students, approximately 40%, in addition to taking classes, are working full time (Shaffer, 2014). In addition, 40% of adult low-income students are single parents who must not only work, but care for their families, creating difficulty in not only completing work, but also in finding time in their schedules to attend class (AASCU, 2006). And these are the folks that show up at our community colleges.

In recent years, a set of institutional and success strategies have been developed and implemented that demonstrate clearly the ability to improve student success, as seen in the increase of 8% over five years of Michigan community college students graduating with

a degree or successful transfer to a four-year institution. These success strategies include guided pathways, which move students more quickly to programs of study with meta-majors in topics like business and health, and integrated student supports. Other strategies include much clearer roadmaps and guidance to success and completion, including since winter 2013, 342 students who have earned credentials through Michigan Pathways to Credentials, designed to create better career pathway programs, helping low-skilled adults address basic-skill needs and earn "stackable" credentials as they progress to credit-bearing courses.

Being ready for today's workforce means having a marketable skill set and a postsecondary credential to vouch for that.

Additional demonstrated high-impact success strategies such as accelerated or fast-track developmental education, student success courses, supplemental instruction, structured group learning experiences, enhanced advising, and goal-setting and planning among others, have been implemented by institutions in Michigan and across the country. As demonstrated by the success of Michigan's own community colleges in raising completion rates and the experience of leading higher education institutions around the country such as Arizona State, Georgia Tech, and City Colleges of Chicago, these proven practices pay high-returns, particularly for adults, minorities, and other learners historically unsuccessful in earning credentials. These practices need robust institutional support, strategic investment (that can pay a significant return), and a policy environment and support structure that foster implementation at scale.

The "New Education"

Being ready for today's workforce means having a marketable skill set and a postsecondary credential to vouch for that. It also means having the ability to continuously navigate the contingent labor market, spot the next handhold on the rock face, get the new skills and the next credential, and as things change, to keep moving.

Read the full article with references here: <http://bit.ly/1KY8RZm>

John Austin is the elected President of the Michigan State Board of Education, Director of the Michigan Economic Center, a non-Resident Senior Fellow with the Brookings Institution, and is a Lecturer on the Economy at the University of Michigan. He created the Great Lakes Economic Initiative with Brookings and authored key reports on Great Lakes Economy. As head of the Detroit New Economy Initiative, he created Global Detroit to welcome immigrants, and more recently coined and created the Michigan Blue Economy Initiative to grow Michigan's water and water-innovation-based economy. Austin has twice led state Commissions for the Governor on the economic role and future of higher education in Michigan—the Cherry Commission appointed by Governor Granholm in 2005, and a more recent Michigan Postsecondary Credential Attainment workgroup reporting out to Governor Snyder in May of 2015. Mr. Austin holds a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

