

Student Success for Life: How Colleges Prepare Graduates for Careers



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Introduction

Student success has for years now been a key for administrators and professors, and that remains the case. Colleges are striving to improve programs to place students in the courses that will help them advance their goals. The goal is course completion and graduation.

For many students and their families, however, completion is necessary but not sufficient for success. They want to find jobs – and careers – that will lead to economic success. And they want colleges to prepare them for such life success.

The articles in this compilation look at some of the issues involved in student success for life – for completing college and preparing for career success.

Inside Higher Ed will continue to track these issues. We welcome your ideas on this compilation and your ideas for future coverage.

--The Editors

editor@insidehighered.com



Empowering Institutions to Prepare Students for Lifelong Career Success

When students and their families make a financial investment in higher education, they want to ensure that they start to receive a return on their investment immediately after graduation. And, according to [The Future of Jobs Report](#), “65% of children entering primary schools today will ultimately work in new job types and functions that currently do not yet exist.” It’s astounding to consider that most future jobs don’t exist today and will require a workforce that has skills and competencies that have not yet been defined.

Colleges and universities have a challenging role to play in preparing students for future jobs. We have seen institutions tackle this challenge in a variety of ways. Institutions like [Greenville Technical College](#), a growing tech hub for training future manufacturing employees about robotics, automation and other technical subjects, are partnering with local businesses and other institutions to tap into the labor needs of the community and offer competency-based education for specific skill sets.

Institutions are also determining what jobs will be available in the future with predictive analytics and demand forecasting. [Lancaster Bible College](#), an innovative private institution, is using a workforce analytics tool to align their academic programs with the needs of the marketplace. With real-time data analytics built into their institution’s student information systems, and with intuitive dashboards, students can not only ensure that the courses they are taking will lead to graduation, but also their desired career.

Delivering and encouraging perpetual education models is another tactic that institutions are exploring to reskill alumni in the workforce. [University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business](#) has implemented a subscription-based continuing education program for its graduate students. In the program’s first year in 2015, 40 students returned to learn new skills.

As technology continues to accelerate and alter the required skill sets in the workforce, institutions are rapidly transforming to meet those needs. This challenge has created an exciting period of innovation for the higher education market.

Finding the right technology partner to enable new, innovative business strategies is one of the most important investment decisions institutions can make today. On behalf of the Campus Management community, we hope you will [learn more](#) about the ways we are supporting our partners as they tackle education’s toughest challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Milton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Milton
CEO, Campus Management

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair laughing heartily, her eyes closed and mouth wide open. A young girl with blonde hair is leaning against her, also smiling and laughing. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

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Paying for Students to Move

The largest technical college in Kansas is paying relocation and housing costs for students to move to the area, many from other states, to deal with a work-force shortage in the local aviation industry.

By [Ashley A. Smith](#) // May 10, 2019



WSU Tech

When Romar Tallie saw the Wichita Promise Move advertisement on Instagram last year, he thought the program was too good to be true.

The Hattiesburg, Miss., resident read the Promise Move website and learned that WSU Tech in Kansas would pay his tuition, fees and moving expenses to Wichita if he enrolled in one of the college's aviation manufacturing programs. Tallie applied for the scholarship immediately and then encouraged his brother, Robert, and mother, Mardavi Howard, to apply.

"After I finished my application, I woke up my brother and told him, 'This is our chance,'" he said in a written statement.

The three family members received the scholarship and moved their lives from Mississippi to Kansas.

"It just all fell into place. It was amazing," Tallie said in a promotional video for the program (see below). "Great move."

A work-force shortage in the aviation manufacturing industry was the driver of the technical college's experiment with paying potential students to move from across the country to enroll at the two-year institution.

Wichita is known as the Air Capital of the World because of the number of aircraft manufacturing companies that have facilities there, including Textron Aviation,

Learjet, Airbus and Spirit AeroSystems. But local colleges aren't producing enough graduates with the certification and training needed by these companies. According to [Boeing](#), North America will need 189,000 aircraft maintenance technicians over the next two decades.

WSU Tech, the largest technical college in Kansas, created the Wichita Promise Move last year to help address the problem. Like most college promise programs across the country, [Wichita Promise Move](#) is a last-dollar scholarship that covers tuition and fees beyond what federal aid covers. But the program also pays for relocation and housing expenses for students who move to the Wichita

Paying for Students to Move

area from more than 50 miles from the campus.

"There are all kinds of opportunities in manufacturing and aviation here," said Sheree Utash, WSU Tech's president.

The college, with the help of a one-time \$500,000 grant from the Wichita Community Foundation, wanted to test whether people would move to the area if nearly all the financial barriers to relocation and enrolling were eliminated.

Last year, after receiving more than 1,000 applications, WSU Tech offered the Promise Move scholarship to 50 individuals from 20 states. Only nine of those students were from Kansas. This year, using internal funding from the college, WSU Tech offered the scholarship to 47 students from 15 states. Some of the students are from Massachusetts, California, Florida, New York and Washington, said Mandy Fouse, a spokeswoman for WSU Tech.

"This program has been amazing for me," said Matt Salyer, 26, a Promise Move recipient from Garden City, Kans. "Everything was taken care of and set up so that any doubts I had were taken care of ... I have no doubt that in two months I'll be in a job I love and know what to do."

Salyer is part of the second group of 47 students to receive the scholarship. His hometown is about three hours from WSU Tech. Before seeing the scholarship ad on Facebook, he was working up to 30 hours per week in two minimum-wage jobs. He's now enrolled in the college's six-week aviation

sheet-metal assembly program. The eight-week process mechanic program also is eligible for the scholarship. Students can earn a technical certificate in both programs.

Besides tuition, fees and moving expenses, students receive a weekly stipend that can help them pay for other living costs such as gas or daycare. The college provides a shuttle to help students get to classes, as well as housing and furniture for new students.

The program costs the college on average about \$8,000 per student, Utash said.

"If this concept proves to be successful, a relocation package of about \$8,000 a person to put a person in your work force is pretty reasonable, and it's a great return on investment for the students taking advantage of the program," she said.

The Promise Move scholarship also comes with a guaranteed job interview with Spirit and Textron. Every student who received the scholarship last year was hired by one of the companies, Utash said.

"Our success is predicated on having an educated work force," said Rachel Williams, a spokeswoman for Textron. "This gives us a more knowledgeable group of employees who have been through very specific training."

Textron, a general aviation company, is known for manufacturing Beechcraft, Cessna and Hawker aircraft. The company works with WSU Tech to be sure the classroom training students receive matches the production and maintenance

work Textron needs. Williams said recent graduates the company hires come in better prepared for the additional training they receive from the company.

"Everybody doesn't need to go to a four-year college, and if everybody does, we would continue to have a massive shortage of employees," she said. "That's why we did programs like this to make sure we're pulling people into the industry."

Textron announced last week that it will attempt to hire at least 1,000 people this year, the same number it hired last year. And Spirit announced in December that it needed 1,400 new employees, Utash said.

"The number of people that are flying is increasing," Williams said. "But fewer people are going into specific programs for production and maintenance of those aircraft when we need them more than ever."

The Promise Move scholarship is expensive for the college, Utash said. And WSU Tech is seeking to raise funds for it to continue. College administrators also want to collect more data on the success of graduates once they are placed in these jobs so they can show potential funders the program's worth.

Utash said that despite the funding challenge, WSU Tech has big plans for the scholarship, saying the goal is to "put together a program we could scale and maybe create a national model to encourage people to gravitate toward markets where this is an industry need." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/05/10/technical-college-kansas-pays-students-relocate-and-study-aviation-manufacturing>

Purpose as Well as Paycheck

A new report from Gallup and Bates College shows most students want to find a sense of purpose in their work, but they aren't always succeeding.

By **Jeremy Bauer-Wolf** // April 11, 2019



Recent college graduates want “purpose” in their jobs, but they aren't always finding it, according to a new survey.

The report, “[Forging Pathways to Purposeful Work](#),” from Gallup and Bates College, found that 95 percent of four-year college graduates nationally considered a sense of purpose at least moderately important in their work. (Note: Gallup conducts some surveys for *Inside Higher Ed*, but this publication was uninvolved in this study.)

But of the graduates who strongly felt that a purpose was important, only 40 percent said they had found a meaningful career. Only 34 percent indicated they were deeply interested in their work, and 26 percent reported that they liked what they were doing on a daily basis.

“This ‘purpose gap’ is a glaring problem for the younger work force,

as millennials place a higher priority on purpose in their lives than previous generations, and they look to work more than other sources to find it,” A. Clayton Spencer, president of Bates, said in a statement. “The purpose gap is also a challenge for employers because of a strong correlation between employees’ purpose and engagement and an organization’s bottom line.”

Gallup conducted the online survey of more than 2,200 recent college graduates, 637 hiring managers and 1,037 parents of college students last year. The group also conducted multiple focus groups.

The study came about because of Bates’s interest in purposeful work. The college hosts a Center for Purposeful Work, which was created after the president instructed a group

FIGURE 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF PURPOSE IN WORK TO COLLEGE GRADUATES

How important is it for you to derive a sense of purpose in your work?

● Extremely important ● Very important ● Moderately important ● Slightly important ● Not at all important



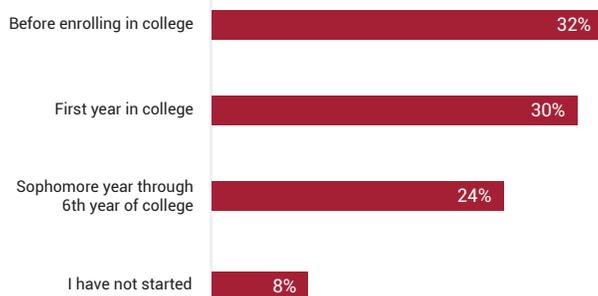
Four out of five responding college graduates say it is very important or extremely important to have a sense of purpose in their work.

Purpose as Well as Paycheck

FIGURE 5: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONSET OF SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING WORK AND PURPOSE IN WORK

When did you start thinking seriously about how your skills and interests might align with your future work?

% Of graduates with high purpose in work



of students and professors to study the concept nearly five years ago. The center helps link students' passions to their career paths by finding them internships or other opportunities.

"Importantly, we learned that although nearly all college graduates believe finding purpose in one's work is extremely or very important, less than half have found that purpose," Stephanie Marken, executive director of education research at Gallup, wrote in an email. "Fortunately, we also identified a series of activities that higher education institutions can engage in to increase the odds their graduates find purposeful work -- having an applied job or internship, having someone who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, being given realistic expectations for their postgraduation employment opportunities, and participating in a program that helps them think about finding meaning in their work."

Bates wanted to know whether certain experiences during students' undergraduate careers helped them later in their work lives. About 56 percent of students said they secured an internship that allowed them to apply what they were learning in their classes, and 39 percent said they found someone who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.

About 31 percent of the students who had just one internship reported a high level of purpose in their job. And 34 percent of students who had two or more internships had purpose in their jobs.

Hiring managers in the focus groups said they felt that internships should be required -- they both help students find a job later and figure out what they enjoy.

"These findings lead to the conclusion that colleges and universities need to be more intentional in promoting these experiences to prepare undergraduates," the report states.

Students reported, too, that many of them didn't think about how their skills and interests would align to their future work.

Of the students who indicated they had a high level of purpose in their job, about 32 percent started considering what their talents were before they enrolled in college. Another 30 percent began thinking about their skills in terms of their future careers during their first year on campus.

"Students who wait until senior year to have an applied learning experience may miss the opportunity to change their major or set their sights on further education as they realign their career goals and aspirations," the report states.

Having a sense of purpose at work can affect a graduate's overall sense of well-being, too. About 59 percent of graduates who reported purpose in their jobs said they had a high sense of well-being. Only 6 percent of students who had a low purpose at work said they had great well-being.

The survey also examined employers' attitudes about the liberal arts. Other studies have confirmed that employers do tend to value these "soft skills," and in this survey, hiring managers said they felt that colleges should be teaching students critical thinking skills and to communicate effectively.

The managers said that when they're considering hiring a candidate, they prioritize critical thinking and communication. ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/04/11/gallup-bates-report-shows-graduates-want-sense-purpose-careers>

Selecting Courses for Students

A California community college is picking course schedules for students to encourage them to enroll full-time and reach graduation quicker.

By Ashley A. Smith // May 2, 2019



High schools across the country provide preassigned class schedules to their students that often match those students' career and education interests.

Administrators at Cosumnes River College, a community college located in Sacramento, want to continue that practice for its first-time, full-time students. This fall, Cosumnes plans to create and give each student a 15-credit course schedule based on their major. As a result, instead of students registering and scheduling courses on their own, the college is doing it for them.

"College isn't something that you should figure out on your own," said Ed Bush, president of Cosumnes River. "We're just matching the experience they're accustomed to at the high school level and provid-

ing them with the first courses they need, not just in English and math, but based on their academic interests."

Community colleges typically ask students to plan their courses each semester. If problems arise, students can add or drop classes by a specific date. CRC flips that tradition with premade schedules. If students have a conflict or a problem with the courses that were selected for them, they now must opt out of those courses.

"Many students who desire to be full-time have great difficulty in being full-time, and some students that are full-time were put in a class that didn't match their educational goal, but they wanted to be full-time," Bush said.

The college expects that under

this new scheduling system, students will not only complete college quicker because they are taking 15 credits a semester, but also won't end up with an excessive amount of credits that aren't relevant to their degree programs or don't eventually transfer to a four-year institution. Nationwide, community college students on average take 22 more credits than are needed for an associate degree, according to a 2017 report from Complete College America.

Last fall, 13.1 percent of CRC's first-year recent high school graduates took at least 15 credits. About 73 percent of this group enrolled in fewer than 12 credits their first term. And among the college's full enrollment last year of more than 14,100 students, 26.2 percent at-

Selecting Courses for Students

tended full-time, or took more than 12 credits a semester, according to data from the college. While nonrecent high school graduates in their first year will be able to sign up for the 15-credit scheduling program, the college said about 1,000 recent high school graduates will participate this fall. Bush said that's about 80 percent of the college's freshman class.

Some groups, such as the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, have been critical of the state's efforts to encourage students to pursue full-time course loads instead of investing more resources to help adult learners or students who have no choice but to go part-time because of work and family responsibilities.

State Grants for Full-Time Status

Bush said he expects the college to eventually have premade schedules beyond just the first semester and to eventually include part-time students.

CRC administrators were eager to try the new scheduling system after realizing that high-demand courses at the college, such as math and English, tend to fill up quickly. The college didn't have a good system in place to meet the high demand of students wanting those courses or that could provide the right counseling to students.

California's new [Student Success Completion Grant](#) provides a financial incentive to CRC students who take the full-time credit load. The grant, which expanded two existing programs last year, awards students \$2,000 a year if they take more than 15 credits each semester. Students who enroll in 12 or more credits qualify for \$1,000 a year.

"The difference between taking 12 units or 15 units is signifi-

cant," said Tadael Emiru, CRC's interim vice president of student services. That financial incentive also is a "wake-up call" to high school and college counselors.

CRC counselors and support staff have been visiting Sacramento-area high schools over the past few months to meet with students who will be attending the college this fall, to have one-on-one conversations with them about their academic and career interests. The college's new scheduling plan requires that college counselors know earlier than is typical for a two-year institution what major or program path students want to pursue so schedules can be built that will meet the students' availability. CRC's opt-out scheduling plan relies on so-called [guided pathways](#) as a structure for mapping out students' program paths in any particular major.

"The key here is knowing which courses students will be registered for -- that was the most difficult thing to figure out," Emiru said. He said the college's counselors already have built first-semester schedules for every current academic program the college offers.

"Once we got past that stage, the remaining part was to make sure we had enough folks around to pro-

vide that one-on-one support for students, [to] sit down with them and identify which particular schedule they'll register for," he said.

CRC's ratio of students to counselors is 900 to one, which Bush admits is not ideal. The American School Counselor Association recommends a student-counselor ratio of no more than 250 to one. The National Academic Advising Association found that the national average for community colleges is 441 to one.

Teresa Aldredge, a CRC counselor, said the college is hiring three counselors this summer to help with the new system. The college also is hiring two full-time faculty members in math and two full-time instructors for English because the new scheduling system will increase demand for those courses, Emiru said.

"We made this promise to students that these are the classes they'll be able to take," Aldredge said. "If I give a first-time college student a schedule and I guarantee English and math in the first semester, then the administration has to ensure there are enough English and math classes."

Kay McClenney, a senior adviser to the American Association of



We're just matching the experience they're accustomed to at the high school level and providing them with the first courses they need, not just in English and math, but based on their academic interests.



Selecting Courses for Students

Community Colleges and former director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement, views CRC's scheduling efforts as the natural next step in developing guided pathways initiatives at colleges across the country.

"I am hoping that Cosumnes intends to expand this practice to include part-time students who typically need guidance and clarity about their paths even more than full-time students," she said, adding that some colleges have considered prebuilding students' class schedules for a full year to accommodate their work schedules.

Still, the move by the college and similar ones elsewhere will be controversial, with concerns about the potential to "track" students into specific courses and programs.

"We expect we'll have a number of students come to us and say, 'I signed up to take all these classes but ... I have to take more hours at work,'" Emiru said. "We have to deal with those situations on a case-by-case basis. What we don't want to do, and we've been consistent in saying this to students, we're not going to present it as an option to go part-time."

Davis Jenkins, a senior research scholar at the Community College Research Center at Columbia University's Teachers College, said students want this type of scheduling and program guidance. He said students typically want to know the financial and long-term benefits of taking 15 credits a semester or 30 credits a year.

"As it is, most community college

students get little support to explore options and interests and develop a direction," Jenkins said. "To put in place this policy, Cosumnes is redesigning a new student experience to help students with this exploration process from the start."

And this level of guidance already happens for first-time students who attend selective universities, he said.

"First-time students at UCLA and Berkeley get all sorts of support to develop education and career plans," Jenkins said. "Why should we let community college students, who are less likely than students at selective institutions to have family members and friends who can guide them in their decisions, figure out a path on their own?" ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/05/02/community-college-picks-courses-students-bid-boost-completion>

Feeling Ready for a Career

Annual survey of student engagement finds that students feel confident in their postgraduation plans. Other recent reports have suggested otherwise.

By **Jeremy Bauer-Wolf** // November 29, 2018

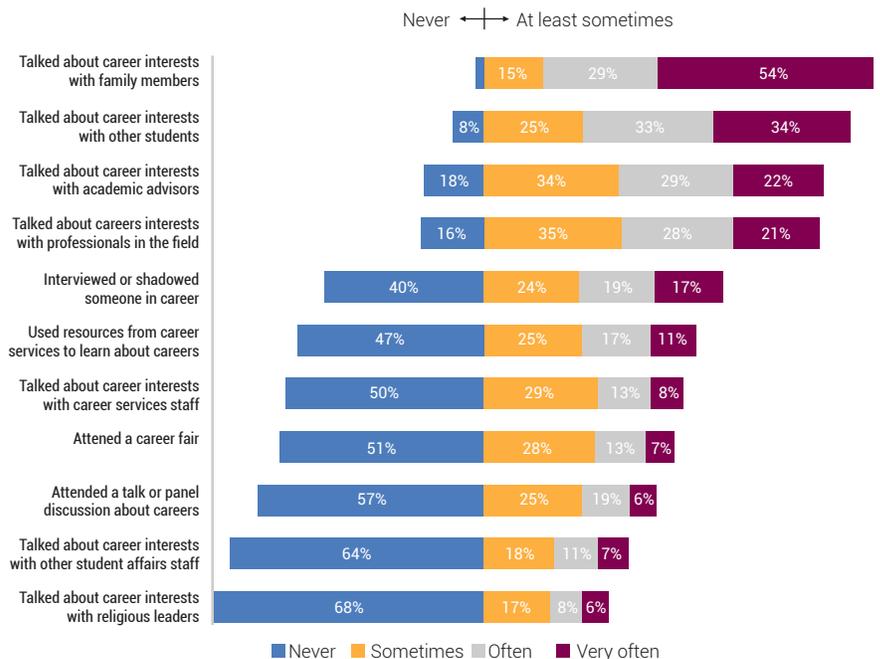


SOURCE: GETTY IMAGES

A vast majority of college seniors believe what they're learning is relevant to their career paths, and they feel relatively confident in their plans after graduation, according to findings by the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#), released today.

About nine in 10 seniors who participated in the annual survey believe that what they learn in class will be relevant to their career plans. This data point strikes a more optimistic note than previous studies, namely one by [Gallup and Strada Education Network](#) earlier this year that indicated students feel ill prepared and unconfident before entering the work force. Only about 34 percent of students surveyed for that report indicated they believed they would graduate with the knowledge to be prepared for a career.

FIGURE 2: Senior Participation in Career-Related Activities



About 3,700 seniors from 38 four-year institutions answered questions on career preparation in the survey. This was part of the NSSE, which is administered to a limited number of institutions and

Feeling Ready for a Career

changes every year depending on what officials find most topical. Last year's NSSE focused on whether students were learning about different cultures and diversity in the classroom.

Over all, 289,867 students from nearly 500 institutions (almost all American) responded to the broad-based survey.

NSSE director Alexander McCormick said that with the public so focused on the value of higher education and whether students are truly benefiting from college with the amount of money they spend, the researchers wanted to emphasize career prep.

"It's important and very much on the mind of students," McCormick said.

About 85 percent of seniors in professional fields, including business, communications, public relations, engineering and health and social services, said they knew what they'd like to do postgraduation and had a specific career in mind. Roughly 80 percent of seniors in arts and science-related fields indicated the same.

A little more than half of the seniors indicated that sometime in their final year in college they had used their institution's career services department to learn about their field. About half of the seniors attended a career fair, and 60 percent or so of them had interviewed or shadowed a professional in their chosen field. About 40 percent of students in the Gallup/Strada survey said they had used their career center at all.

McCormick pointed out that the question only asked students whether they had done that type of the career prep work in their senior year, meaning many of them may have laid the groundwork earlier in

college. He also said that the Gallup poll was designed differently than NSSE, and that Gallup's survey was provided a "neutral" response while NSSE did not, meaning that some students would have been drawn away from the two ends of the response frame. He also said that Gallup's survey only highlighted the students who answered "strongly agree" on the survey questions, while NSSE combined both "agree" and "strongly agree."

Only about half the seniors talked to career services staffers about their career interests, but almost all of them had discussed their plans with a family member (98 percent) or another student (94 percent).

While research shows students are still visiting traditional career centers, not as many find them particularly helpful -- another Gallup study showed that only 17 percent of recent graduates considered their interactions with career services "very helpful."

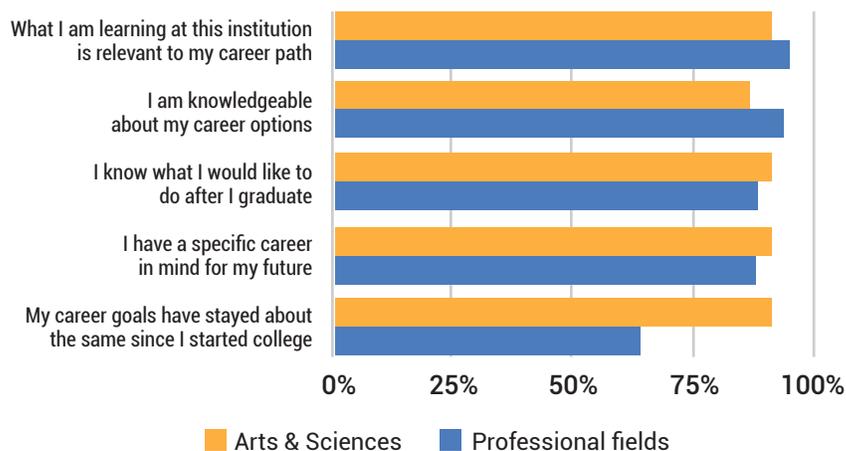
Student services such as career centers generally struggle with attracting their clientele, McCormick said. But he suggested that institutions examine how they're connecting students and perhaps consider outreach -- a focus group, or a campus-based survey -- on how to bring in students to the centers.

"It only takes a couple students to have a bad experience to damage the whole operation, sometimes unfairly," McCormick said.

The NSSE researchers also studied career preparation for first-year students -- 484 of them -- at seven historically black colleges and universities, and compared them to 346 African American freshmen attending predominantly white institutions.

Students at the HBCUs reported using career services much more than their counterparts -- nearly 50 percent of the first-year HBCU students took advantage of resources from career services versus more

FIGURE 3: Senior Career-Related Beliefs^a by Major Type



Note: Arts & Sciences includes arts & humanities, biological sciences, agriculture, natural resources, physical sciences, mathematics, computer science, and social sciences (n=1,203); Professional fields includes business, communications, media, public relations, education, engineering, health professions, and social service professions (n=2,329). To view specific majors within those categories, visit nsse.indiana.edu/html/major_field_categories.cfm. All item mean difference were statistically significant (p < 01).

a. Percentage responding "Strongly agree" or "Agree"

Feeling Ready for a Career

than 25 percent of students at the predominantly white universities.

"It suggests that the HBCUs are being a lot more intentional about drawing students in early in career preparation," McCormick said.

Time Spent on Academics vs. Outside the Class

Outside of the focus on career prep, the NSSE included its standard questions on students' academics and how they allotted their time.

About 23 percent of first-year students -- as well seniors -- estimated they spent between six and 10 hours per week preparing for class, which would include studying, reading or writing, or doing lab or other course work.

Only about 6 percent of the freshmen indicated they spent more than 30 hours on this type

of academic work, compared to 8 percent of seniors.

Roughly 33 percent of first-year students didn't participate in any sort of activity on campus such as student government, a club or a fraternity or sorority, while 44 percent of seniors didn't devote any time to extracurriculars.

About 30 percent of seniors said they spent between one and five hours a week relaxing or socializing -- spending time with friends, watching TV or videos, or going online. Fewer first-year students (21 percent) reported spending one to five hours on recreational time. About 26 percent of first-year students said they spent between six and 10 hours socializing or relaxing.

Civic Engagement

Freshmen and seniors seem to discuss issues both on campus

and off -- at the state, national and global level -- more than they act to change them.

About 45 percent of first-year students and 43 percent of seniors indicated they "sometimes" talk about local or campus issues with others. And 41 percent of freshmen and 37 percent of seniors reported "sometimes" discussing national or world issues.

But 64 to 65 percent of freshmen reported they had never organized with others to work on either local problems or state, national or global issues. And 63 percent of seniors had never done any advocacy work around either campus issues or beyond.

Only about 4 percent of first-year students said they "very often" organized to work on any issues, campus or otherwise, versus about 5 percent of seniors. ■

[Read Original Article](#) ▶▶

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/02/27/mobile-devices-transform-classroom-experiences-and>

Keeping Close Tabs on the Local Job Market

St. Louis Community College's annual employer study finds openings for middle-skilled employees but also concerns about applicants' skills and training.

By **Ashley A. Smith** // September 20, 2017



St. Louis Community College

Every year St. Louis Community College [surveys the region's employers](#) to get a better picture of the area's work-force needs.

A growing number of colleges have bulked up their job-market research amid pressure from the public and policy makers for institutions [to do more to improve wages and opportunities](#) for working-class people. Community colleges in particular are feeling this scrutiny.

Administrators at St. Louis Community College view the report as one part of how it seeks to stand out as a leader in work-force development.

"The fact is the community college has its pulse on the economy and the job market," said Steve Long, associate vice chancellor of work-force solutions for SLCC. "In a larger sense, part of the value of this report is in communication with the employer community,

job-training community, the federal network of training programs, and government and community-based organizations, that we need to work together to solve these issues."

The 2017 report found that 42 percent of responding employers anticipate increasing the number of employees, while only 2 percent expect to decrease their staffs. But nearly 60 percent of employers reported shortcomings in the applications they receive for open positions. In particular, employers complained about inadequate soft skills of job candidates, including interpersonal skills, critical thinking, problem solving, work ethic and teamwork.

The college surveyed more than 1,000 employers in the St. Louis region and compiled the information with federal labor market data.

Middle-skills jobs, or those that require more than a high school

degree but less than a four-year degree, are important in eastern Missouri. According to the National Skills Coalition, 53 percent of all jobs in the state in 2015 were of the middle-skill variety. These jobs also account for slightly more than half of openings nationally.

These professions include skilled trades, industrial maintenance, precision machining, health care and nursing, all of which require some form of college-issued credential. Yet nearly half of people over the age of 25 in the St. Louis region have a high school diploma but no college degree, according to the report.

However, the report also revealed that 70 percent of employers have jobs open that require only short-term training, or training that could be completed within six months of finishing high school.

"Students come into these short-term accelerated programs, and

Keeping Close Tabs on the Local Job Market

they ask how quickly can they get a job," Long said. "We have to counsel them that you have to get the skills before you get the job, and some students choose to not go forward."

For those students who do choose to stay, the college has worked on integrating soft skills into the curriculum to address employers' concerns about problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork.

"We try to embed those in our short-term accelerated programs," Long said, "and we try to talk to the faculty of degree and certificate programs about doing the same."

The National Skills Coalition has been advocating for [changes in program eligibility for federal Pell Grant](#) funding so short-term programs can qualify for financial aid, the lack of which can be a barrier for some students who seek to become certified in a skilled trade.

"A lot of these short-term occupational programs have smaller class sizes and need more equipment, so it's expensive," said Ker-

mit Kaleba, federal policy director for the National Skills Coalition. "It's not like running another section of English compositions, so we think it's important from a financial aid perspective to make these programs more accessible."

Despite the work-force needs of St. Louis-area employers, the unemployment rate in the region is particularly low -- 4.2 percent as of May -- which means recruiting students to apply for middle-skilled jobs isn't easy. Potential students may feel it's too risky to leave their current employment for a middle-skills job or go to college to pursue a credential.

"In Missouri, the unemployment rate you usually hear about is 4 percent, but when you look at the larger unemployment rate or the rate for people who are working part-time for economic conditions, but want to work full-time, it's 9 percent," Long said. "There is a whole generation of young people, by income and race, who really have not been fully attached to the labor market."

That trend appears nationally, as well, with the unemployment rate at 4.3 percent as of July.

"We see people are making a set of choices based on their need to work and feed their families," Kaleba said. "They're making the choice between an available job that pays less, but [that] they can start right away, or going and enrolling in a community college program where you may get to a higher wage and have, longer term, better outcomes, but it's three months, six months, or 12 months down the line."

And colleges are going to have to be creative if they want to reach out to those young people, Long said.

"The middle-skill labor market and training market is not well advertised and communicated for a lot of job seekers," Kaleba said. "There are a lot of pathways with community colleges, union-run programs, apprenticeship programs, and there is confusion about the pathways to get the training and education. We don't talk about those job opportunities as much as we should." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/20/community-colleges-job-market-study-highlights-need-middle-skills-despite-low>



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Work-Force Training in an Anti-College Climate

Community colleges stress their role in providing work-force opportunities amid doubts from some working-class people that college won't benefit them or their children.

By **Ashley A. Smith** // August 16, 2017



Monroe Community College student Vincent Owens assembling a tool holder for a drill with his instructor, Anthony McCollough.

As the country divides more fervently across partisan lines, skepticism about the benefits of college is growing among some segments.

As a result, colleges, particularly those in the two-year sector, are feeling the pressure to prove that their institutions can deliver better work-force outcomes.

In recent weeks, surveys have shown that skepticism about the value of college is [high not only with Republican voters](#) but also among [white working-class voters from all political affiliations](#). For instance, a poll commissioned by a Democratic political action committee found that 83 percent of white working-class voters said a college degree was "no longer any guarantee of success in America."

The survey of white working-class voters also found strong

support for job-training programs, just like the sort that community colleges offer.

[Research shows](#) that jobs in the new economy tend to go to people with at least some college education or an associate's degree, instead of to workers who hold just high school diplomas. And that's why some critics feel community colleges should be working harder to advertise and market the career and technical programs they offer.

Wisconsin, for instance, has a broad public education system, between the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Technical College systems. But for decades, residents could graduate from high school, go directly into the work force and have a family-sustaining career, said Morna Foy, president of the technical system.

But that has changed dramatically, she said.

"We've done a lot and our employers in the state have done a lot to change that narrative," Foy said. "Maybe there are some people who don't like that reality, but we don't talk about it that much anymore as a reality."

One way the technical college system works to eliminate the disconnect some people may have between college and the work force is by publishing reports that make the connection clear to the public, in the form of how much their graduates make at least six months after graduation.

Between 86 percent and 98 percent of graduates get a job in their field depending on the academic program, Foy said, and the system makes sure to market and promote

Work-Force Training in an Anti-College Climate

that information for the public and for policy makers.

Industries like manufacturing didn't completely go away, Foy said, but instead transformed into advanced manufacturing, where unskilled workers previously would operate an assembly line, but now they're using robotics and smart technology.

Today there are about 30 million "good" jobs available for people who don't have a bachelor's degree and where workers can earn on average about \$55,000 a year, according to a recently [released report](#) from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce.

Some community and technical colleges, however, are focusing on building work-force partnerships and confronting the narrative that their programs don't lead to job opportunities.

"When we talk about college or with people outside of higher education, they think of residential liberal arts colleges or research universities -- they don't think of a two-year degree or a one-year certificate," said Anne Kress, president of Monroe Community College in the State University of New York system. "We work closely with employers and we know they're looking for a fully trained employee who can walk in on day one and start work, because they don't have the capacity to do a lot of professional development."

Kress said the college has been intentional in how it works with community-based organizations to raise awareness about what the college can provide.

"If we sit here and wait for them to come to us and find what we offer, it's not going to happen," she said.

In Wisconsin, administrators in the technical college system spend time educating people on the value of a technical credential, Foy said.

"There's a pretty good understanding in this state that you can improve your economic condition by going to a technical college," she said, adding that they don't limit outreach on that value to associate degrees, also promoting stackable credentials, short-term programs and apprenticeships that appeal to older students who still want to work and attend classes part-time.

But Foy said people generally are aware of the work-force programs the colleges have to offer.

"There's always going to be someone who says, 'Why should I go back to college to get a job I used to have,' and it can be a lack of finances, a lack of awareness of how accessible it can be to get the credential that has value," she said, adding that investing two or more years as an adult student can seem daunting. "You have to get them over that hump of thinking, 'I've been out of school so long I don't remember any math I took in high school,' or thinking everyone will be younger than them, or they don't know how to use a smartphone

or they don't have a smartphone. Those are real-life barriers."

Comments from people questioning the need for college aren't uncommon in Tennessee. But that state has found some success in creating a college-going culture.

"That's not accidental," said Mike Krause, executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. "Tennessee faces a situation, not unlike virtually every Southern state and Appalachian state, and that is connecting our residents to an understanding of all the college has to offer."

While traveling across the state to promote the much-heralded Tennessee Promise program, Krause said a significant concern he heard from parents was that their children would go to college and never return home. So state officials turned to data that could be translated into "kitchen table conversations" and presented them to families.

"The single most powerful piece of data is what happens in real time to students who didn't go to college in Tennessee," he said. "If you don't go to college in Tennessee right now, you're making \$9,000 and have an 84 percent chance of earning minimum wage. That's not a



We've done a lot and our employers in the state have done a lot to change that narrative. Maybe there are some people who don't like that reality, but we don't talk about it that much anymore as a reality.



Work-Force Training in an Anti-College Climate

common piece of data people share publicly, and I don't think it's somewhere higher education starts, but for us it's been pivotal to tell and share with parents because no parent hears that and thinks they want their child to just make \$9,000."

Economic Realities

Seventy-five percent of "good jobs" in the 1980s required less than a bachelor's degree, but that number has decreased to 55 percent today, said Anthony Carnevale, a research professor and director of Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce.

"You can't move forward by looking in the rearview mirror," he said. "There is a lower quantity of those jobs ... there is still a certain number who can make it without postsecondary education, but they do need postsecondary education."

The current political climate seems focused mostly on white men, but working-class black and

Latino men have been just as affected by the loss of jobs that could be filled by high school graduates alone, Carnevale said.

"We lost a ton of them in manufacturing, construction, farming, fishing, forestry ... since the 1980s, but there has been growth in these jobs in the skilled-service sector, computers and health care," Carnevale said, adding that women have done well in those latter professions.

Some educators, particularly at [community colleges](#), have argued that [Pell Grant funding for short-term](#) programs that lead to a technical certificate would help more working-class people find new or better employment.

"We know we can offer short-term programs to connect our students to employment, but those very same students can't go to college without financial aid," Kress said.

Foy said colleges could do a better job of marketing their work-force programs.

"Higher education needs to do a better job of making the case for why it's important," she said. "We have to tell people and be honest about job prospects, the pay, the likelihood of placement, and it's not enough to say 'we're colleges and universities so you should want to come to us.'"

Foy said she's noticed some regional universities have started moving in this direction by the promotion of their graduates' outcomes, similar to the way the Wisconsin technical system does.

"Even justifying why someone should come to university is a new way to think, especially for four-year schools," she said. "But for transfer-based community colleges -- and we already do -- we have to market ourselves as having value." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/08/16/community-colleges-push-work-force-agenda-amid-doubts-about-college-working-class>

Q&A: How to Develop 'Program Architecture'

Kacey Thorne, director of program architecture at Western Governors University, explains her role and lays out plans for developing underlying competencies that inform online programs.

By **Mark Lieberman** // March 27, 2019



Kacey Thorne



The rapid evolution of digital technology, and its role in the ongoing transformation of higher education, has a tendency to breed title confusion. "Inside Digital Learning" previously explored the wide range of responsibilities held by [digital learning administrators](#), the role of a [manager of online program quality](#) and the origin and meaning of the term "digital learning" itself.

The title director of program architecture, a relatively new role at [Western Governors University](#), caught our eye. We talked to Kacey Thorne, who has held the position since last fall, to explain what she's working on, why WGU hired her to do it and how her work will change the academic experience at one of the nation's largest online universities.

Q: Are you the first person to hold this position at WGU?

A: This role is new to WGU as

of September, and I am the first to hold the position. Prior to assuming this role as director of program architecture, I served as the director of assessment design and development. As the assessment director, I led the strategy and vision for assessment development at WGU. This included leading cross-functional teams in our academic programs department to design, develop and attend to the psychometric health of all WGU assessments.

My background is in secondary and postsecondary education. I was a high school health science teacher for six years and really enjoyed that work. When I heard about WGU, I was immediately drawn to them because of the university's mission to serve students, improve lives and make higher education more accessible to all individuals, especially those traditionally un-

derserved by higher education. I've had the pleasure of working for WGU for the last six years.

Q: How do you define "program architecture"?

A: Architecture deals with the complex or carefully designed structure of something. In the case of program architecture, that complex and carefully designed structure is what we refer to as a skills map. It is a comprehensive network of competencies and skills that are aligned to careers and industry needs. By identifying what those underlying skills and competencies are for specific careers in industry, and by mapping relationships between those elements, we create a foundational map on which all of our program offerings are built. This is what we are focused on creating in program architecture.

The potential of what we are able to do with this mapping effort is

Q&A: How to Develop 'Program Architecture'

endless, and that is why I was so eager to take on this new role. The insights we will be able to surface to students and the ability to help them connect their educational experience to work-force-valued skills is something I am extremely passionate about.

Q: What prompted the university to decide your position was necessary to its long-term mission?

A: At WGU the heart of everything that we do and every decision that we make is focused on our students. We're constantly asking ourselves what we can be doing to better serve our students. Ultimately, the need to serve them more effectively and meet their changing needs is why this position and effort is necessary and part of our long-term mission and strategy. Our goal is to establish the vision, tools, partnerships, technologies and methodologies for skills mapping that can help us deliver on our commitment to students. We want to provide them with a relevant education that is intentionally and thoughtfully designed and aligned to the skills needed in industry. Whatever your stance is on the "skills gap," one thing is clear: there is a call to action for higher education to do things differently, to better meet the needs of both students and employers. Our hope for this effort at WGU is to do just that.

Q: How big is your team?

A: We are small but mighty right now. There's seven of us, but we will be growing shortly to a team of nine. The team is made up of program architects who are responsible for the research, design, tools and technology necessary to build out our skills maps. Our job really boils down to being master collaborators. We have to work across

many organizations and stakeholder groups to complete the skills mapping we intend to achieve at scale.

Q: What does having that map allow the institution -- and its students -- to do?

A: The value in skills mapping for students exists in what I refer to as the three Cs: contextualized learning, career relevance and credential clarity and communication.

Skills mapping allows us to offer students a more personalized approach through contextualized learning. With an underlying skills framework, we are able to surface learning experiences to students through any contextual lens, which allows us to tailor learning based on student goals and interests. For example, if we have an underlying skill in written communication, how we might surface that to a student in our business management program may look very different from how we would surface that to a prelicensure nursing student. Fundamentally, the proficiency expectation related to written communication stays the same, but the way we contextualize that skill to the student, both in their learning experience and assessment, can change. This allows us to make the learning for the student more relevant by letting them engage with that skill through the context that is most applicable to their goals and interests.

Skills mapping also allows us to make career-relevant connections for our students. These connections allow us to help students identify the skills that they need for the jobs and career pathways they are interested in. By having an underlying skills map for every program offering at WGU, we can surface career insights to students

including the skills that they need for a particular job or career pathway, the outlook and earning potential for particular job roles, and various program pathway options the student has available to reach their goals.

Finally, skills mapping allows us to provide students and employers with a shared understanding of the credentials students earn and the skills students demonstrate. One of the ongoing challenges in higher education and the credentialing space is the lack of clarity and a common language around credentials and what they represent. Our goal is that the connection between credential and skills can be shared between student and employer through a comprehensive learner record that reflects skills, certifications and other credentials. Skills are powerful currency in the employment space, and we want to help students and employers communicate more effectively with each other about skills.

Q: When is the competency map most valuable to students -- as they're laying out their program, as they're going through it, at the end?

A: I think it's all of the above and then some. Even from the initial point of interest, when a student is exploring what program they are interested in at WGU, being able to see the connection between programs and potential career pathways is valuable.

As a student, being able to earn competencies and skills along the way has value as immediate educational currency. An underlying skills framework for our programs allows us to offer students immediate returns on their educational investment by earning skills along the way as they work toward com-

Q&A: How to Develop 'Program Architecture'

pletion. There is no reason that the value of an education should exist solely in the final credential or degree. We can do better for students by giving them immediate value-add by way of skills.

The value of a skills map also exists at the end of a student's program, because learning is a lifelong endeavor that doesn't really end. We want to help students stay current and refresh their skills or build new ones across the lifetime of their career. Skills mapping allows us to do this.

Q: What's the most difficult or complicated part of this process?

A: I would say the biggest challenge right now is determining how to speak a shared language between employers, higher ed and students. We frequently hear about a skills gap that exists and that employers are reporting students aren't leaving higher ed with the skills they need to be successful. But really pinning down what that means is a challenge. Through our efforts, we are hoping to bring a shared understanding to skills and what they actually mean in the context of jobs in the employment sector. The other challenge to all of this is that it is extremely complex work, and finding ways to support this kind of mapping through tools and technologies is a daunting yet exciting part of this process. When you think about the kind of mapping an effort like this requires, you find very quickly that the skills map is multilayered and multidimensional. Our challenge is being able

to think in 3-D and represent skills and all of the relevant connections through a very intricate map.

Q: What's the timeline for getting some of this work done?

A: We are working very aggressively. Since September, we have been able to establish a general framework and methodology for how we will build out the skills map to its full potential. We've spent the last six months figuring out how to tackle the job, and we are ready to really start chipping away at it at full speed. By the end of this fiscal year, we intend to have the beginnings of a robust skills map for each of our colleges within WGU. These maps will ultimately intersect into one holistic skills map, but breaking it out into smaller blocks is how it will be managed. You have to tackle a big initiative like this one piece at a time. In order to get a mile wide and a mile deep, we are building an inch at a time. We are taking incremental steps with tremendous impact.

Additionally, we are in the process of working with our registrar to conceptualize early prototypes for a skills-based transcript that we will use to surface the skills students have demonstrated in a meaningful way. This will be the first tangible value-add of our skills mapping effort for students. It will provide them with the clarity to see the skills their credentials represent as well as a way to communicate it to employers.

Q: Are you aware of other institutions taking similar approaches? How closely do you track the com-

petition?

A: What we are trying to achieve in terms of skills mapping of this nature is definitely unique to WGU. The problem that we are trying to solve with this effort is a problem that many institutions are talking about and trying to solve for. However, I believe we have a unique take on how to address the problem and create a solution for it at the scale. It's definitely something that higher education is talking about, but it goes well beyond just the higher ed sector. We are keeping the pulse on the conversation across sectors and other organizations like IMS Global and Credential Engine who are also trying to solve for this problem from other, and equally as important, directions.

I would also say that we don't really think about it in terms of competition. We are interested in collaborating with others who are invested in trying to solve the same problem. We feel a tremendous sense of responsibility to better serve students in higher education, and partnerships are a key component to being able to do that with big impact. Ultimately, we want this to be something that not only helps WGU and our students, but has the potential to inform and transform higher education. We need to find different ways to serve students to meet the demands of the future of work. This is our approach, and we are excited about the potential of these contributions to our students, employers and higher education. ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/03/27/director-program-architecture-western-governors-university-plans>

Rethinking Career and Technical Education

Gregory Seaton explains how he came to support his daughter's choice to participate in such a program and why college administrators and others should, too.

By [Gregory Seaton](#) // May 1, 2019



In the fall my 13-year-old daughter began high school, where she is enrolled in a career and technical education program -- or a CTE program, formerly known as vocational education or voc-ed. She is interested in the sciences and loves mysteries. Her program has projects that blend forensics, chemistry, physics and biology. If all goes as planned, she will graduate from high school with a certification as a laboratory technician and some college credit from dual-enrollment courses, as well as her high school diploma.

When she graduates, Layla will immediately be able to earn about [\\$40,000 a year as a lab technician](#). She will be positioned to join the labor market, complete an associate's degree or pursue a four-

year degree. She will require fewer courses (less cash out of my pockets) and will be able to compete with other college students for coveted lab or research opportunities. Not a bad deal.

As an African American, first-generation college graduate, I have slowly come to recognize the competitive advantage that a lab tech CTE program will provide my daughter. I had my reservations, based on the history of African Americans and vocational education, but could not argue with the outcomes or options. I believe the time has come for black students and college administrators to reconsider the value of CTE as a viable career pathway and untapped source of diverse students, respectively.

Many minority communities are leery of vocational education and the pathways message -- and for good reason. Vocational education was once used as an instrument for tracking by "ability." It was considered the dumping ground for students that were believed to be unsuited for academic course work. It should come as no surprise, that men, black youth, youth of color and immigrant youth were overrepresented in voc-ed. In many respects, this stigmatized perception is also held by many of my higher education colleagues. If the negative perception of CTE does not change, both parents of minority youth and college administrators could be missing out on an amazing opportunity.

Here are four points that I would

Rethinking Career and Technical Education

like to share with faculty members and colleges that are concerned with increasing the representation of minorities, particularly African Americans in STEM majors:

- CTE is an underutilized tool by parents and four-year colleges to promote diversity in the STEM fields. There is need for greater engagement of four-year colleges in planning career pathway options.

- The dichotomy of CTE versus a more liberal arts education is deeply rooted in the post-enslavement quest for equality. Due to changes in technology and the labor market, this division is becoming increasingly artificial and arguably a barrier to career readiness.

- CTE programs may offer a viable recruitment opportunity for underrepresented minorities, particularly in STEM fields.

- CTE programs present a distinct opportunity to support faculty research and faculty-student collaboration.

The framing of college versus high school agricultural and technical education has a long history in the black community directly connected both to racism and the struggle for equality. Two prominent black intellectuals were at odds regarding which type of education would lead to the civil and equal treatment of the formerly enslaved people and their descendants.

Booker T. Washington was born into slavery and emerged as a prominent American voice after enslaved African Americans were freed. (My grandfather and uncle were named after him.) Washington believed that black people would gain white acceptance through industry, self-reliance and entrepreneurship. With the help of philanthropists, Washington es-

tablished the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The institute educated students in basic reading and math, farming techniques, and the trades. After graduation, students would return to their hometowns, primarily in the rural South, and work as teachers in the trades and agriculture.

By contrast, William E. B. Du Bois embraced a strategic approach to address racism. He argued that black equality would require a liberal arts education that focused on critical thinking to develop a black leadership class: the “Talented Tenth.” This elite group of black American men would use their intellectual acumen to strategize for integration and social equality.

A Sea Change in Education

A recent [study](#) of CTE graduates in Arkansas found three key results. First, completion of high school CTE courses was associated with higher two-year college admission, lower unemployment and higher salaries. Second, graduates of CTE programs were just as likely to attend four-year colleges as traditional high school graduates. Last and definitely not least, the students that benefited most from CTE belong to groups that are often described as those at risk for poor academic outcomes: men and low-income students. Ironically, however, many of the communities that are taking advantage of vocational opportunities are not members of low-income underrepresented minority groups, but rather white and middle class.

Part of the historical misunderstanding over technical and liberal arts education is that they don't mix. That is an artificial barrier that will become even more artificial as the nature of work evolves. Reading, writing and math will remain

important, but at the same time, other skills like problem solving, communication, collaboration and emotional intelligence will become more crucial.

Further, career and technical education and traditional classroom teaching practices are converging across the K-16 landscape. Problem-based learning, work-based learning and apprenticeships are built upon the idea that, with such experience, young people learn by doing, taking risks and applying knowledge in safe, supportive environments. Both CTE and the traditional college classroom are actively engaged in making the learning experience more student centered.

Educators, at all levels, need to be able to clearly demonstrate how CTE pathways open up opportunities for minorities to participate in career fields in which they are traditionally underrepresented. Information on how CTE concentrations are aligned with two- or four-year postsecondary degree programs and the labor market can also help.

Part of the challenge is that many minority youth do not have access to the social networks that can make STEM career possibilities and pathways clear. This is where CTE educators and college administrators can support a decision-making and planning process. Youth and families will appreciate knowing that, with an industry certification like the one I hope my daughter earns, their children will be able to earn a living and go on to a four-year degree should they want to.

Career and technical education has experienced a renewal. This ain't your grandparents' vocational ed. There is an emphasis on growth industries, such as health

Rethinking Career and Technical Education

care and software development, beyond the traditional trades, like plumbing and carpentry. Course offerings are aligned with the jobs that are in demand. And many CTE programs provide opportunities to take dual-enrollment, AP or college courses. Parents should see this as an opportunity to complete post-secondary or certificate-aligned course work for free.

Meanwhile, colleges should see this as an opportunity to enrich their student bodies with a diverse pool of career-ready individuals who are able to meaningfully contribute to the learning environment. With theoretical knowledge, applied experience and industry certifications, CTE students represent a pool of students that possess valuable skills that can enrich both

the college learning experiences and faculty research. For example, Layla plans to attend a four-year college after completing her CTE program. As a certified lab technician, Layla will bring a different level of value and capacity to faculty research than a traditional undergraduate student.

To be clear, a four-year college is not the only path to land a job with strong middle-class earning potential. That does not mean, however, that CTE and traditional four-year college programs must be at odds. Rather, college administrators need to develop and communicate clear on-ramps for CTE graduates to matriculate through their degree programs. That will not happen in isolation. Consequently, colleges must be at the table with state and

local educational leaders as educational programs are developed. If the table does not currently exist, faculty members and administrators must create it.

Given the research and realities of pathways, I think CTE is poised to serve as a viable path to diversifying STEM fields. But I also recognize that how black youth leverage this opportunity largely depends on the leaders of our educational systems and their willingness to understand the history and reimagine the future of CTE education. The value and linkages of CTE across secondary and postsecondary institutions must be strategic and clear. That will require leadership and authentic communication. May we all be courageous for our children's sake. ■

Bio

Gregory Seaton is an associate director of JFF's Pathways to Prosperity network.

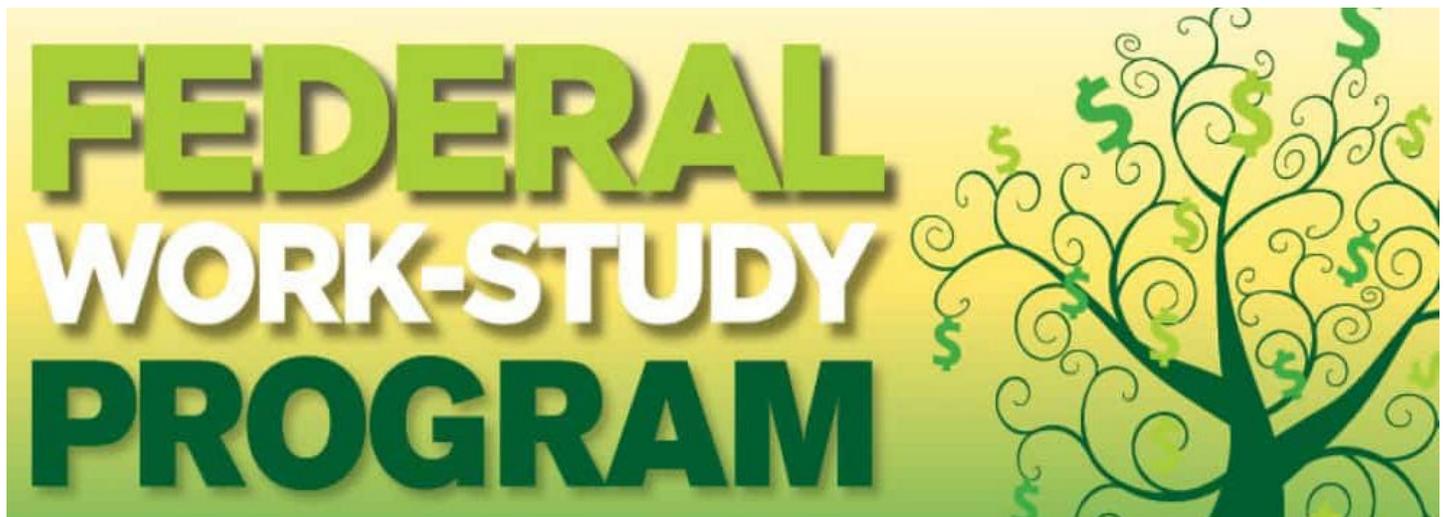
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Work-Study Doesn't Work

The debate about cleaning toilets at Harvard obscures a larger issue, Ryan Craig argues: Why don't we use federal dollars to incentivize work that actually matters?

By Ryan Craig // April 26, 2019



“

*“You're the science expert.
You have the political science degree.”*
-- Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) to
former senator and secretary of state
John Kerry

”

In an era of political lows, a recent exchange at a House committee hearing on global warming has been widely cited as the dumbest. Representative Massie attempted to undermine John Kerry's credentials on the topic by asking him about his degree:

Massie: I think we should question your credentials today. Isn't it true you have a science degree from Yale?

Kerry: Bachelor of arts degree.

Massie: Is it a political science degree?

Kerry: Yes, political science.

Massie: So how do you get a bachelor of arts, in a science?

Kerry: Well it's a liberal arts education and degree. It's a bachelor ...

Massie: OK. So it's not really science. So I think it's somewhat appropriate that someone with a pseudo-science degree is here pushing pseudo-science in front of our committee today.

I must confess that watching a global warming denier who knows better -- Massie has a two engineering degrees from MIT and a dozen patents to his name -- attempt to bait our imperious, insufferable former secretary of state (while enormously capable, Kerry has steadily maintained this reputation since college) was pseudo-fun, like when two people you don't particularly care for pick a fight.

Within days, it happened again, this time squarely in higher education. Sara Goldrick-Rab, a professor of higher education policy at

Work-Study Doesn't Work

Temple University and one of the most followed faculty on academic Twitter (and someone who once [told me](#) that aligning curricula with employer needs was not a goal she shared, and a questionable one at that), got into a delicious spat with Harvard. (Perhaps you've heard of it? The school where the [fencing coach](#) sold his house for nearly double its market value to the parent of a prospective student, who was subsequently admitted as a fencing recruit?)

As usual, Goldrick-Rab's problem relates to employment. But this time, it was a Hechinger Report [article](#) about low-income students at elite colleges and an anecdote about a Harvard student who cleaned dorms 20 hours a week. Goldrick-Rab [tweeted](#), "Low-income students at HARVARD working 20 hours a week in their first year of college cleaning goddamn dorms?? And we keep giving this wealthy place our public dollars why exactly? [#RealCollege](#) [#DormCrew](#) [#STOP](#)."

The ensuing "fiery debate," per [Inside Higher Ed](#), was whether our wealthiest universities should qualify for federal work study (FWS) funding, whether they should be using that funding to have low-income students clean toilets and whether -- according to Goldrick-Rab -- these students were taking jobs away from "professional, unionized workers."

While an interesting argument, Goldrick-Rab might have heeded her own advice to stop. Because these issues are tempests in teapots compared with an existential work-study question that Goldrick-Rab and her Harvard antagonists overlook, but which [Inside Higher Ed](#) astutely keyed in on: Why does FWS subsidize student

employment that is completely disconnected from academic programs or career goals?

Each year at 3,400 colleges and universities, about 600,000 students participate in FWS and receive approximately \$1.1 billion in wage subsidies from the federal government. The Department of Education [says](#) FWS "encourages community service work and work related to the student's course of study." Students apply through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and, for qualified jobs, FWS dollars typically fund 75 percent of student wages. And earnings from FWS are factored out of FAFSA calculations.

Sounds pseudo-good, right? Well, keep in mind that funding flows to colleges and universities (instead of directly to students) on a "base guarantee" formula that benefits incumbent institutions (the longer your tenure, the more you get) and means that community colleges -- enrolling 40 percent of all students and a much higher percentage of those who most need a leg up -- receive only 15 percent of FWS dollars. Meanwhile, four-year institutions get lots of FWS funding to subsidize jobs for wealthier students; Seton Hall's Robert Kelchen [found](#) that a quarter of FWS awards at private colleges went to non-Pell students.

More troubling is the program's complete and utter failure to incentivize colleges and universities to reach out to real employers. In fact, FWS's structure makes it much easier for schools to employ students to clean toilets on campus than to connect them with private-sector jobs.

The FWS [handbook](#) says on-campus jobs may involve "food service, cleaning, maintenance

and security." However, if you work off-campus for a "private for-profit employer ... jobs must be relevant to your course of study." The handbook goes on to helpfully suggest that "a student studying for a business administration degree could work in a bank handling customer transactions." But there's no such requirement for on-campus jobs.

Worse, while on-campus jobs receive a subsidy of 75 percent, "for off-campus FWS jobs with private for-profit organizations, the federal share of wages paid to students is limited to 50 percent." And the topper: "A school may use no more than 25 percent of its total current year initial allocations to pay wages to students employed with private for-profit organizations."

The result of these skewed rules is entirely predictable. According to the [Department of Education](#), of the \$1.085 billion spent on FWS during the 2016-17 school year, \$996 million -- or 92 percent -- went to subsidizing on-campus jobs. Nearly all the rest went to off-campus jobs at not-for-profit or community service organizations. Of the \$1.085 billion spend, only \$726,208 -- or less than 0.1 percent -- helped students gain work experience at "private for-profit organizations," aka the United States economy.

I get why policy makers would be concerned about "private for-profit organizations" exploiting subsidized student labor in jobs unrelated to a student's program of study or career goals. I get it because FWS already builds in guardrails for funding work-study at for-profit colleges. The [handbook](#) is clear that for-profit schools may only receive federal funding to employ students in on-campus jobs "that are directly related to the FWS student's training or education" and

Work-Study Doesn't Work

that are in "student services." Jobs that "primarily benefit the school" are not student services -- e.g., facility maintenance, cleaning, purchasing, marketing, public relations or admissions.

If FWS can build in guardrails for for-profit colleges, why can't it build in similar guardrails for the millions of for-profit companies where students will seek employment once they graduate? Make it clear that off-campus jobs must benefit students as much as (or more than) the employers receiving FWS subsidies.

Then not only make the subsidy equal to the on-campus subsidy, but remove the ridiculous 25 percent cap and require participating institutions to place a much higher percentage -- I humbly suggest a majority -- of students in real, off-campus jobs. If colleges can't make that work, they shouldn't receive FWS funds, and remaining dollars could be added to Pell to directly help needy students without requiring them to clean toilets.

There are two reasons this hasn't happened yet. The first is that academic institutions are awful at es-

tablishing meaningful, sustained relationships with companies around the employment of students and graduates. Few employers have an incentive to engage at the requisite level with a single academic institution. Which is why it's crazy that a billion-dollar federal program meant to advance students' employment prospects is both crowding out private sector work and incentivizing colleges to ignore employers.

I have argued [repeatedly](#) that failure to devote real resources to engage with employers -- or more realistically, with intermediaries who maintain sustained commercial relationships with employers -- is the Achilles' heel that could bring down American higher education as we know it. It turns out that the Orwellian-named Federal Work-Study program is an apt metonym for college's wrongheaded approach to employment.

I was reminded of the second reason in reading last week's alarming *Chronicle* op-ed "[The University Is a Ticking Time Bomb](#)." The author, an English professor at Colby College, bemoans the cruel "adjunctification" of faculty, where contract

faculty can teach eight courses and make as little as \$25,000 per year. Adjuncts -- between one-third and two-thirds of faculty members, depending on the institution -- have "no claim to stable employment, health insurance, retirement benefits or even their own office."

Who benefits from adjunctification? The same colleges and universities that also benefit from cheap graduate student instructors/teaching assistants, and the very same who benefit from undergraduate student labor subsidized at a rate of 75 percent by the federal work-study program. These unsustainable practices flow dollars from higher education's have-nots to the haves -- tenured faculty and more well-paid administrators -- and free up funds for purposes unrelated to student outcomes.

FWS provides one more example why all Title IV-eligible colleges and universities should be treated with the same level of skepticism. It's time to regulate all institutions as though they're for-profit, because they sure act like they are. And anyone who says different is guilty of pseudo-science. ■

Bio

Ryan Craig is author of *College Disrupted* (2015) and *A New U: Faster + Cheaper Alternatives to College* (2018) and managing director of University Ventures.

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2019/04/26/change-federal-work-study-program-so-it-encourages-useful-work-opinion>

Supporting First-Generation Students

Alecea Standlee recommends some policies and practices that college administrators and faculty members should consider to help such students succeed.

By Alecea Standlee // April 11, 2019



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No one expected me to attend college. As a first-generation college student, I was from a desperately poor family in a rural community. I was one of only six members of my entire high school graduating class to attend a higher education institution. Today, I am a professor at a private liberal arts college and a career academic. While I am proud of my achievements, my ability to be here is the result of a lifetime of support from my family and community, as well as my academic institutions.

First-generation students today are faced with academic, financial and cultural challenges, even as a college education is ever more necessary for career achievement. College leaders and faculty members, including those who are first generation themselves, play a role in the development of policies and practices to help them deal with those challenges. I recommend

that they consider the following:

Provide appropriate supports.

Financial support is necessary for many students, and first-generation students rely heavily on grants and loans. But many first-generation students must also financially support parents, siblings and/or children. Providing access to basic health care and information and resources for self-care is important. Offering campus work opportunities, food pantries and free toiletries can also be essential to success. Encouraging the use of low-cost textbooks and providing a credit account at the bookstore can help, as well. And establishing a career clothing bank for interviews and training students on what to expect at a job interview can help them move from college to work after graduation.

Additionally, first-generation college students can't rely on advice from college-educated parents

about navigating college life. They are usually not familiar with the details of college life, academic resources and social expectations, so they can need guidance. For instance, a freshman student I knew did not understand why his professors were not in their classrooms all day, as in high school. In my own case, I didn't realize that it was possible to withdraw from a class for health reasons rather than fail. Building a mandatory introduction to college life or first-year experience element into the curriculum is very helpful to first-generation students -- and, in fact, good for all students.

Some needs are academic: first-generation students may require additional support to develop their writing and critical thinking skills. Institutions can provide such support in the form of writing centers and tutoring centers, but it is essential to build those into the

Supporting First-Generation Students

core curriculum to avoid stigmatizing first-gen students alone.

In addition, faculty members and advisers can play a huge role in the lives of all college students. For first-generation students, they may be the most significant connections that they will make when it comes to academic success.

Be transparent in the classroom.

Encourage students to develop and practice understanding written and verbal instructions. Don't assume your students know that all assignments must be typed, for example. Be clear and explicit. Express classroom norms. Model classroom discussions and provide specific -- and obvious -- details on assignments and other activities.

Teach study skills. Consider incorporating a study-skills assignment in your introductory classes or make sure you have a handy list of resources. Identify students who may lack preparation and provide resources. Referrals to college writing centers or citation websites are helpful. Turn your first-day icebreaker into an activity on time management.

Organize students into groups.

Consider putting students in study groups or incorporating group assignments in your classes, as first-generation students may struggle to make friends and to

connect with others. Be thoughtful, however, about students who may have limited time and money for activities outside class as you design your semester. It's sometimes best to organize group work in class.

Develop personal relationships.

To the degree you are comfortable, talk with first-generation students individually and encourage them to ask questions. Discuss not only the material but the culture and structure of higher education. Some students may lack family and community support. Others may struggle just to get through the day.

Engage parents. Students can often feel disconnected from their families and communities and also experience anxiety, embarrassment, shame and anger. Classroom connection is limited, but if appropriate, consider including an activity that encourages students to engage with parents or other people in their lives. I have used a budget activity, a biography activity and an intergenerational pop culture activity successfully.

Facilitate connections. Encourage students to connect with campus activities and groups. Alert them occasionally in class to events on the campus. If relevant to the course, offer them extra credit for attending.

Fight invisibility. If it's applicable to your course, consider including first-generation experiences in the material. Be aware that some first-generation students will be rightfully proud of their achievements. Invite a first-generation colleague to guest lecture, and ask them to talk about their own status before diving into class material.

Keep an open mind. First-generation students may have a wide variety of skill levels, but they are also likely to have some unusual experiences or insights that might be valuable in your classroom. Encourage them to contribute.

For first-generation students, going to college requires stepping outside their comfort zone. That can instill feelings of disconnection and even guilt in relation to family members and friends. It also requires leaving one set of social expectations behind and learning a new and at times frightening set of attitudes and behaviors. And all this can occur while trying to keep up with college-level work.

Going to college also means learning to walk between worlds, and for some, myself included, never quite fitting in to either. All that said, however, support from institutions and faculty members can have a real and positive impact on first-generation students. ■

Bio

Alecea Standlee is a first-generation college student, assistant professor of sociology at Gettysburg College and editor of [On the Borders of the Academy: Challenges and Strategies for First-Generation Graduate Students and Faculty](#), published by Syracuse University Press.

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1150 Connecticut Avenue NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

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