

Future-Ready Learning:

Five trends reshaping the economy and what higher education needs to do in response.

A presentation for the Illinois Board of Higher Education
Future of Work and Future of Learning Workgroup


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COMPETENCY-BASED
EDUCATION NETWORK 

The logo for the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) consists of the text "COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION NETWORK" in a blue, sans-serif font, followed by a graphic of three horizontal yellow lines of increasing length.



Trend 1: COVID-19 and Automation

- Unprecedented job loss, uneven distribution
- Hardest hit: Young people, women and people of color
- A significant part of the “recovery” so far has been driven by people leaving the labor market.
- Long-term trend – disengagement from the labor market
- Many families impacted by Great Recession are also impacted today – 10 years of lost economic productivity and growth.
- COVID is accelerating automation, particularly in hard-hit sectors.
- Remote work will continue, although unevenly.

COVID-19's Impact on Higher Education

- Pre-pandemic, 36M Americans have some college but no degree
- During pandemic, 28M Americans cancelled education plans
 - Disproportionately low income, Black, and Latino or Hispanic learners
- ACE estimates \$120B impact on higher ed institutions alone
- U.S. higher ed model endured dramatic change, upheaval and uncertainty
 - ACE President's Survey showed pressing issues were mental health of students (53%) and faculty/staff (42%), long-term viability (43%), enrollment numbers (39%) and sustaining online environment (30%)





- What will higher education look like post-pandemic?
 - Greater efficiencies & automation of many functions to enable increased human touch
 - Online learning here to stay but there is a need to verify quality
 - May need to win some faculty and learners back after rush to remote learning
 - Institutions looking for differentiators and “next big thing”
 - Increased awareness of need to (and hopefully commitment to) align to labor market demands
 - Commitment to intentionally work on eliminating inequities with new models

Trend 2: Credentialing

- There are 1M unique credentials in the United States.
- More than half of all credentials are produced by non-academic institutions
- 40% of credentials are badges
- **This reflects a supply strategy; it is not driven by employer demand.**
- New Approaches (Google IT)
- The growth in credentials is accelerating. New strategies are needed.
- To move forward focus on:
 1. **Quality** - Transparency, Outcomes, Access/Equity and Cost.
 2. **Data Capacity**
 3. **Common language and infrastructure**

Higher Ed Response to Credentialing

- Modularize credentials allowing for on-ramps and off-ramps
- Compete and compare by transparently sharing credential composition and outcomes
- Mechanism to acknowledge and count learning from non-accredited postsecondary credentials
- Role as validators of learning when receiving external credentials



Must Encourage and Enable Change

- Tension between status quo and responsible innovation
 - Modernize systems to reflect changing conditions
 - Regulatory and statutory system
 - Outdated and arbitrary measures of learning
 - Time is the enemy of the poor
 - Accreditation system should move from inputs to outcomes
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Institutional and System Enhancements

- “Uniqueness” comes from places other than language and infrastructure
 - Look to use open source taxonomies
 - Focus on UX/LX Design, use of cutting-edge technology
 - Adaptive learning, AI/ML learning, XR (extended reality) applications
 - Academic freedom balanced against efficient operations
 - Personalized and differentiated supports for key learner personas
 - Automation of student supports and services
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Trend 3: Skills

- Growing acceptance of and sophistication around skills as a common currency.
- Skills = Data = Jobs
- Skills-based hiring
- HR-focused/employment initiatives around common skills language (JDX, T3)
- New Players
 - Bootcamps and non-traditional providers
 - Registries
 - Skills platforms and Portfolios
 - Badging companies
 - Labor Market Information Providers

Higher Ed's Resistance to "Skills"

- *"Is a degree worth the cost?"*
 - Bachelor's degree yields on average \$570,000 earnings over a lifetime
 - Depends on field of study
- Higher ed struggles to articulate graduate outcomes
 - What are the claims institutions make for learners?
 - How do institutions know these claims are true for each learner?



Shift to Competencies
as Currency of
Learning

- What are your claims? “We graduate critical thinkers...”
 - Define and describe what it looks like
 - Determine how to assess performance
 - Teach to desired level of performance

Performance-Focused, Behaviorally-Based

- Raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret information, effectively comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
- Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

Higher Ed Response to Skills Movement

- Adopt competency-based methods, even if not building full CBE programs
- Clearly articulate claims and measure outcomes using performance-focused, behaviorally-based measures validated by employer partners
- Look for opportunities to connect to national efforts by using common taxonomies
- Examine credentials across the system to see where you can find greater efficiencies, encouraging cross-institutional collaboration
- Align to labor market data and ask institutions to verify relevance of all programs on a regular basis
- Use badges, registries, and LERs/CLRs

RESULTS GUARANTEED

Trend 4: Work-Based Learning

- \$516 Billion spent annually by employers on training and training wages
- Just under 1M new apprentices in the last 3 years.
- The end of IRAP?
- Market shifts – new entrants (Salesforce, Prologis, Calbright, WGU)
- Value prop = risk reduction for employers, better outcomes for students
- **But who pays?**
- Lifelong learning
- Data-sharing agreements with employers

What's Needed for a Work-Learn Model



AGILE WORK-LEARN MODEL



Student Supports



Learner Journey



Interoperable Systems



Assessment Repository



Credentialing Strategy



Engaged Employers



Shared Language

METHOD FOR GAINING COMPETENCIES



Prior Learning Assessment



Military-Based Learning



Civic Engagement



Work-Based Learning



Microcredential



Stackable Certificate




Non-Accredited Training



Higher Ed Learning

Higher Ed's Response to Work-Based Learning

- Wholeheartedly embrace it
- Develop acumen in leveraging work-based learning for:
 - Competency identification
 - Short-term, stackable credentials – Just in time learning
 - Prior learning assessments
 - Enhancing relevance of program content and assessment
- Be a strategic partner
 - Embed in work environments as extension of T&D function
 - Create customized, white label content
 - Co-create training and academic programs, share assessment tools and assessors
 - Securely exchange learning records



Trend 5: Linked Data and Outcomes Tracking

- New data, tools and methodologies are creating much richer pictures of jobs and careers.
- Now possible to track student outcomes (employment status, wages, career trajectory) AND project what credentials and skills have the most predictive power for future jobs and careers.
- New efforts are underway:
 - Private/Public links (National student clearinghouse/NAM)
 - Skills datasets (Emsi)
 - Supply/demand trackers (Emsi)
 - Data trusts (BrightHive)
 - Outcomes-focused (O4OI)
 - Outcomes-learning (AdeptID)
 - State investments (VA OEE)



Higher Ed Response to Linked Data & Outcomes

- Invest in data collection – all the way down to the competency/module level
 - Who do you serve? Who do you not serve well? Who would you want to serve? What would it take to serve these learners?
 - Prepare to publicly report for each credential
 - Employability scores
 - Career readiness from graduate and employer perspectives
 - Value when comparing cost of acquisition to wage earnings at certain points
 - Leverage data available in design and continuous improvement of programs
 - Make evidence-based decisions such as when to begin, alter, or close programs
 - Hold programs accountable for outcomes achieved
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Lifelong Engagement

- Overcoming the one and done mentality
 - Use of level of mastery shows need for continued growth post completion
- Support graduates with transition to career
 - Workflow learning post-graduation

Effective performers are adaptable. They embrace needed change and modify their behavior when appropriate to achieve organizational objectives. They are effective in the face of ambiguity. They understand and use change management techniques to help ensure smooth transitions.

Level	Performance Indicators and Behavioral Examples
4 Master / Guru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiates or authorizes needed major organizational change; is an expert at change management (e.g., motivates organization toward needed change by constantly communicating vision of the preferred future that the change promises). • Is sought out to lead major change initiatives; successfully drives major change initiatives through the organization. • Understands the importance of managing transitions; establishes transition teams to successfully realize needed change.
3 Exceptional / Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is considered a valuable resource during organizational transitions; often serves on transition teams. • Consistently tests the temperature of organization/team/individual during transitions to ensure immediate action can take place; identifies those needing additional guidance and counsels them on how to effectively implement change. • Recognizes that change is often a positive opportunity for those involved, uses change as a growth opportunity through coaching staff, and even generates recommendations for change to help with organization and team growth. • Proactively presents opportunities for change; seeks innovative ways to operate, enjoys challenges. • Likes to reshuffle the deck toward more positive results.
2 Proficient Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is seen by team as a 'change agent' and leader when change occurs; influences others to see the benefits of change and possible positive outcomes. • Understands the leadership responsibility in publicly supporting needed change. • Skillfully manages the human side of functional change (e.g., involves others, frequently communicates preferred future, develops transition plans, celebrates milestones, etc.). • Employs basic change techniques (e.g., involves others, introduces change at right pace, honors past contributions, etc.).
1 Basic / Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptable; recognizes that change is necessary; has the ability to "roll with it." • Handles organizational change smoothly; visibly supports organizational change initiatives; saves any criticism for behind closed doors with higher authority. • Personally models required change; does not take change personally; remains calm, supportive and productive during change. • Is positive and optimistic about change; has a "glass half full" philosophy that allows persistent enthusiasm during change.
0 Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is unskilled at change management; doesn't understand basic change management techniques, introduces change too quickly, doesn't manage transition well, or makes change for the sake of change alone. • Lacks emotional control during change; is uncomfortable with ambiguity; displays apprehension about suggested change. • Resists or is unable to adjust to change; inflexible, too rigid, reinforces the status quo, wants things the way they used to be, "this isn't how we used to do it." • Undermines change efforts; ignores, avoids, blocks, complains, etc.; speaks negatively or gossips about change but does not speak to those in authority.

Questions?

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