The Association Role in the New Education Paradigm

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The Perfect Storm

> "*All great changes are preceded by chaos.*"
> Deepak Chopra

A crisis is brewing in the global education-to-employment system, and it is reaching an inflection point in the United States and in the international sphere. Educators, employers, students, and their families are caught in a complex web of challenges.

- In the United States, students graduate from college with an average debt load of nearly $29,000.[1]
- Total student debt in the U.S. is $1.23 trillion and rising.[2]
- Forty-four percent of college-educated workers under 25 work in jobs that do not require a college degree.[3]
- Worldwide, 73.3 million people under the age of 25 are unemployed, representing 36.7 percent of total global unemployment.[4]
- In the United States in 2015, 32 percent of employers reported struggling to find qualified workers. This is the highest figure reported since before the global economic recession in 2008.[5]
- By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the United States will require some form of postsecondary education or training.[6]
- By 2020, the shortfall of postsecondary-educated Americans will approach 20 million.[7]
- Forty-seven percent of jobs in the United States will be significantly impacted or replaced by artificial intelligence and automation within the next decade. [8]

1. http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2014.pdf, pg. 2
2. https://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/news/research/2016/rp160212
3. http://www.careerbuildercommunications.com/pdf/skills-gap-2014.pdf, pg. 7
4. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_412015.pdf, pg. 1
5. http://www.manpowergroup.com/wps/wcm/connect/408f7067-ba9c-4c98-b0ec-dca74403a802/2015_Talent_Shortage_Survey-lo_res.pdf?MOD=AJPERES, pg. 7
6. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_.Web_.pdf, pg. 15
7. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_.Web_.pdf, pg. 21
8. http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf, pg. 38

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This data tells a complex and contradictory story. Students and recent graduates are drowning in debt and questioning the value of the degree. Worldwide, there are millions of unemployed youth alongside millions of jobs that can't be filled. Employers are frustrated because they can't find skilled workers. The "Fourth Industrial Revolution" is driving demand for highly educated workers,[9] and our economic and societal stability, both at home and in the larger global community, is threatened by the challenges we face producing them.

This meets the classic definition of a "wicked problem." Coined by Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber (University of California at Berkeley) in their 1973 paper, *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning*,[10] what makes a problem "wicked" is that it's so complex as to defy easy solutions. As John C. Camillus wrote in a May 2008 *Harvard Business Review* article, "Strategy as a Wicked Problem":

> "Wicked problems often crop up when organizations have to face constant change or unprecedented challenges. They occur in a social context; the greater the disagreement among stakeholders, the more wicked the problem. In fact, **it's the social complexity of wicked problems as much as their technical difficulties that make them tough to manage.** (emphasis added)"[11]

You would be hard-pressed to find a topic more infused with social complexity than the education-to-employment system. Obviously, we won't completely solve this wicked problem in the next 38 pages. However, we believe we've identified a critical element missing in most of the current debates: the necessity of a collective, collaborative response from the association community. Our thesis is that the association community has a vital role to fill in addressing the needs of both workers and employers in the coming decades, in helping to bridge the gap from education to employment.

This whitepaper will describe the current state of affairs in both education and employment, make a moral case for association involvement, detail our profession's particular advantages in addressing this issue, share the stories of some associations that are innovating in this mission, and challenge you to see associations as powerful change agents uniquely positioned to contribute to solving this wicked problem.

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9. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf

10. http://www.uctc.net/mwebber/Rittel+Webber+Dilemmas+General_Theory_of_Planning.pdf

11. https://hbr.org/2008/05/strategy-as-a-wicked-problem

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Distress in the Current Educational System

> **"The fact is that, given the challenges we face,
> education doesn't need to be reformed—it needs to be transformed."**
>
> Sir Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*

Disruptions in K-12

Although associations' ability to impact kindergarten through 12th-grade education (K-12) is limited, understanding the dramatic changes taking place there is important for context.

K-12 educators are in an increasingly challenging situation. School districts are being tasked with overhauling K-12 education to incorporate the tools, technologies, and innovative learning environments befitting the 21st century, while operating in an environment shaped by decreasing funding, increasing class sizes, and high-stakes testing.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

- "At least 31 states provided less state funding per student in the 2014 school year (that is, the school year ending in 2014) than in the 2008 school year, before the recession took hold. In at least 15 states, the cuts exceeded 10 percent."
- "In at least 18 states, *local* government funding per student fell over the same period. In at least 27 states, local funding rose, but those increases rarely made up for cuts in state support. Total local funding nationally—for the states where comparable data exist—*declined* between 2008 and 2014, adding to the damage from state funding cuts."
- "Most states raised 'general' funding per student slightly this year, but 12 states imposed new cuts, even as the national economy continues to improve. Some of these states, including Oklahoma, Arizona, and Wisconsin, already were among the deepest-cutting states since the recession hit."

- "While the number of public K-12 teachers and other school workers has fallen by 297,000 since 2008, the number of students has risen by about 804,000."[12]

Regarding high-stakes testing, studies have cast doubt on the assumption that as test scores go up, so do cognitive abilities. In fact, a growing body of evidence says the opposite may be true. The rigidity imposed by "Scantron bubble" tests leaves little room for exploration, learning, analysis, and synthesis—all, as we will see below, skills that are in high demand in the workforce. (For more on this, see *The Test: Why our Schools are Obsessed with Standardized Testing—But You Don't Have to Be*, by Anya Kamenetz.)

Some parents are responding to these pressures by opting out of traditional K-12 public education. According to the U.S. Department of Education:

> "Over the past 2 decades, the range of options that parents have for the education of their children has expanded. Private schools have been a traditional alternative to public school education, but there are now more options for parents to choose public charter schools, and more parents are also homeschooling their children."[13]

The bottom line is, students are pursuing increasingly diversified educational options at the elementary and secondary level, which may be the forerunner of permanent, large-scale transformation in K-12 education. We in associations need to begin to think about how we plan to help young people transition from these alternative K-12 pathways to the appropriate postsecondary or adult-education programs and move into the employment system.

12. http://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/most-states-have-cut-school-funding-and-some-continue-cutting
13. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016006.pdf, pg. 69

Decreasing Public Funding for Higher Education

Since the recession of 2008, public funding for higher education has been particularly hard hit. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

"Deep state funding cuts have had major consequences for public colleges and universities. States (and to a lesser extent localities) provide roughly 53 percent of the revenue that can be used to support instruction at these schools. When this funding is cut, colleges and universities look to make up the difference with higher tuition levels, cuts to educational or other services, or both."[14]

States like Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, and Louisiana have seen state college and university tuition hikes ranging from 60 to 80 percent. These costs have been largely pushed onto students and their families. State university systems are also cutting costs by firing faculty, eliminating classes or entire courses of study, closing computer labs, and reducing student support services. (More specifics can be found at: **https://bryanalexander.org/?s=queens+sacrifice**.)

As described by Bryan Alexander, Ph.D., futurist and educational researcher:

"Disinvestment in higher education has happened for reasons and it's happened over time. States in particular are attempting to balance increasing costs that are 'baked into' their general budgets, including pensions, healthcare, funding for law enforcement, etc. Often cuts to higher education are deemed more palatable, as it is assumed state colleges and universities will 'find endowments' or 'raise tuition,' or worse the oft-repeated refrain, that higher education would be fine if 'they just managed their finances better,' 'cut programs,' or 'appealed to market solutions.'"[15]

Additionally, the downward spiral in higher education funding may be the result of much longer-term trends, and not only might funding never return to 2008 levels, but it may disappear entirely in some states. According to the American Council on Education:

"Based on trends since 1980, average state fiscal support for higher education will reach zero by 2059, although it could happen much sooner in some states and later in others. Public higher education is gradually being privatized."[16]

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14. http://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/years-of-cuts-threaten-to-put-college-out-of-reach-for-more-students

15. Interview conducted by authors on April 8, 2016

16. http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/state-funding-a-race-to-the-bottom.aspx

Increasing Student Debt

Unsurprisingly, decreasing funding for postsecondary education has led to rising student debt. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, as of the fourth quarter of 2015, 43.3 million Americans owe a total of $1.23 trillion in educational debt.[17] As a reminder, outstanding debt on subprime mortgages stood at $1.3 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2007. In fact, student loan debt is the only source of debt that increased during the Great Recession, is second only to mortgage debt in total dollars owed, and, unlike mortgage debt, is not dischargeable due to bankruptcy. Almost 70 percent of college students graduate with debt, and they graduate owing an average of almost $29,000. [18]

Furthermore, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:

> "The student-loan market continues to show elevated levels of distress relative to other types of consumer debt, despite recent improvements in the labor market and the near-universal availability of income-driven repayment plans for borrowers with federal student loans experiencing financial hardship. The Bureau estimates that more than 1-in-4 student loan borrowers are now delinquent or in default on a student loan."[19]

Rising student debt isn't just a factor of inflation, as demonstrated by this chart based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data:[20]
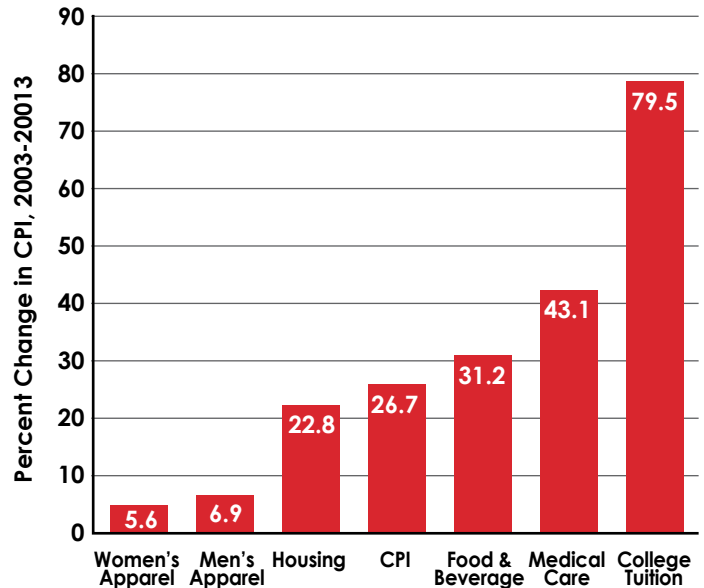
Decreasing On-Time Graduation Rates

Perhaps the most disturbing trend in higher education has to do with graduation rates. According to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics:

> "Among first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2007, the 6-year graduation rate was 58 percent at public institutions, 65 percent at private nonprofit institutions, and 32 percent at private for-profit institutions."[21]

17. https://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/news/research/2016/rp160212
18. http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2014.pdf, pg. 2
19. http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201509_cfpb_student-loan-servicing-report.pdf, pg. 3
20. http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUUR0000SEEB01?output_view=pct_12mths
21. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40

In other words, not everybody who enters college manages to graduate with a four-year degree. This is particularly pernicious, as students who acquire debt but do not finish their degrees still owe that money but face an uphill battle securing the type of employment that will allow them to pay it back. According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, students who borrowed money to attend college but are unable to finish their degrees are ten times as likely to default on their loans as those who receive their degrees, and they often end up worse off economically than if they had never attended college in the first place.[22]

Relatedly, time to graduation is now commonly estimated to average six years for purportedly a "four-year" degree, which of course means that some students take even longer.[23] This increases costs and delays full participation in the workforce, further contributing to student failure, potentially dropping out, and sliding backwards on the economic ladder.

Private, for-profit higher education is often posed as the solution to high debt loads and low on-time graduation rates, particularly for "nontraditional" (older, minority, working class, single parent, or English language learner) students. But the data clearly shows these institutions actually perform worse across a wide variety of key indicators. Not only does their on-time graduation rate lag both public and private nonprofit higher education significantly (see previous paragraph), but the average debt load for students at private, for-profit institutions was $39,950, nearly 40 percent higher than the overall average student debt.[24]

Skills Gaps and The Value of a Degree

Rising levels of student debt indicate that students realize they need more education and are willing to go to great lengths to acquire it, but is the education they get worth the price they pay for it? Increasingly, both students and employers say no. According to the McKinsey Center for Government:

"Employers, education providers, and youth live in parallel universes. To put it another way, they have fundamentally different understandings of the same situation. Fewer than half of youth and employers, for example, believe that new graduates are adequately prepared for entry-level positions. Education providers, however, are much more optimistic: 72 percent of them believe new graduates are ready to work."[25]

22. http://www.highereducation.org/reports/borrowing/borrowers.pdf, pg. 8
23. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/02/education/most-college-students-dont-earn-degree-in-4-years-study-finds.html
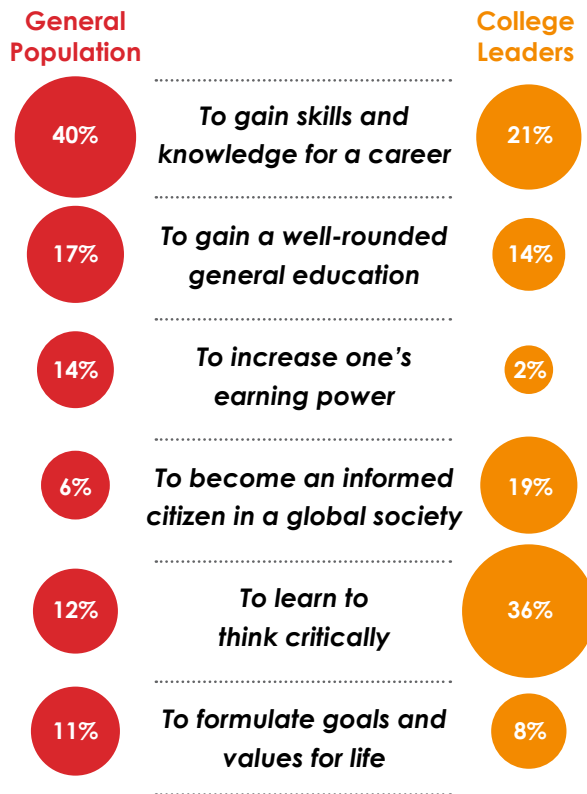24. http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/pub/Debt_Facts_and_Sources.pdf
25. http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Education-to-Employment_FINAL.pdf, pg. 18

Relatedly, a 2012 *Time*/Carnegie poll demonstrates a significant disconnect on the purpose of higher education: While 40 percent of the general public thinks that the most important reason to go to college is to "gain skills and knowledge for a career," only 21 percent of college administrators agree. On the other hand, 36 percent of college administrators think that the primary reason to go to college is to "learn to think critically," and only 12 percent of the general public agrees. We have a fundamental disagreement about what the goal of our $1.23 trillion investment in education is in the first place.

The Value of Higher Education[26]

What is the most important reason people should go to college?

General Population		College Leaders
40%	To gain skills and knowledge for a career	21%
17%	To gain a well-rounded general education	14%
14%	To increase one's earning power	2%
6%	To become an informed citizen in a global society	19%
12%	To learn to think critically	36%
11%	To formulate goals and values for life	8%

Excerpt: Competency-based Education & Assessment: The Excelsior Experience[27]

"For those of us who educate adult, post-traditional, or other students outside of the 18-22-year-old sector, CBE [Competency-Based Education] is technically not new. It is true, though, that the CBE movement has gained visibility and momentum over the past few years. Due to several factors, the need for quality assessment has snowballed. The first is the increasing irrelevance of the credit hour as a metric. As Amy Laitinen of the New America Foundation noted in her eye-opening 2012 critique, *Cracking the Credit Hour,* the credit hour may be needed for financial aid administration, but it is little more than a surrogate for time in a seat. It doesn't measure outcomes of any type and is not suited to the many forms of alternative instructional delivery that exist today. In contrast, CBE, if it involves rigorous assessment methods, provides some assurance of both learning and the ability to apply it.

The second has come from the Obama Administration and its attempts to see more working adults complete their degrees, thus contributing to our country's economic competitiveness. By recognizing the legitimacy of knowledge gained from experiences outside of a traditional classroom, post-traditional students are incentivized through the CBE process by reducing both the cost and the time needed to achieve a degree. A win-win.
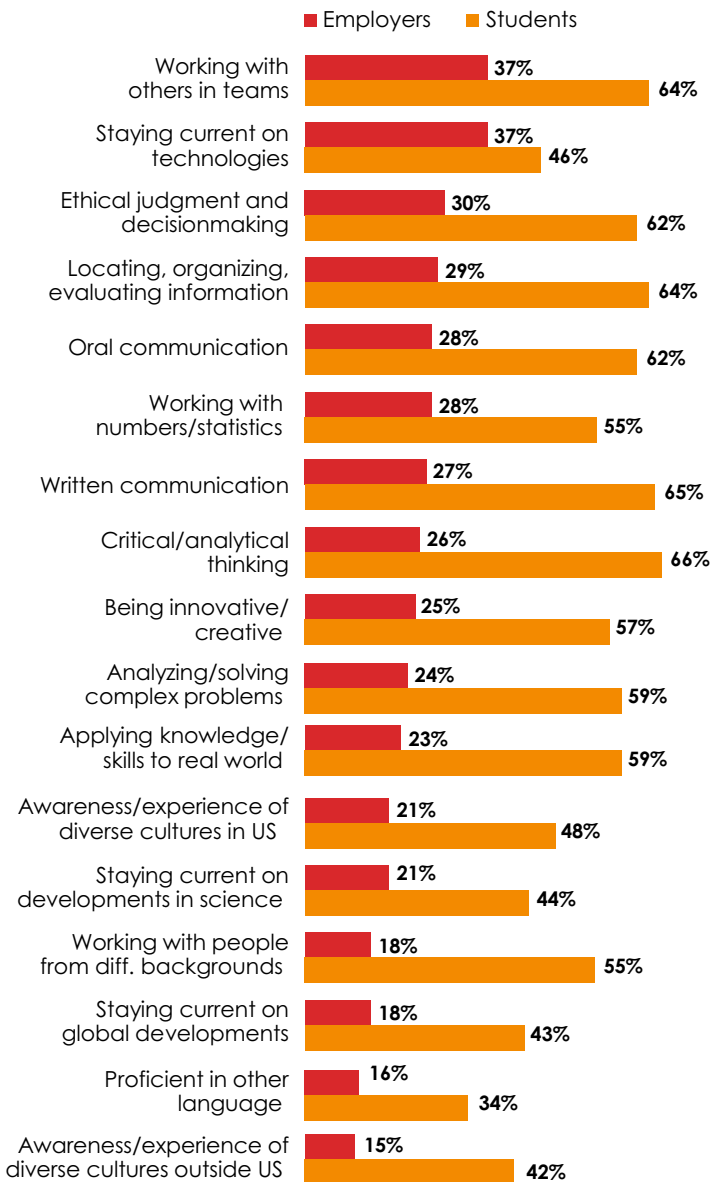
The third, and arguably the most important reason for the growth of CBE, is the increasing dissatisfaction of employers with the typical college graduate. The lengthening period between graduation and employment that many students experience can be attributed partially to the practice of employers seeking a more capable alternative before settling on a recent graduate. If we can demonstrate to ourselves and to employers that it is producing "competent" entrants to the workforce, it is not just the new hire, their alma mater, and the employer who win; we all do."

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26. http://nation.time.com/2012/10/18/higher-education-poll/
27. Excerpt from *Competency-based Education & Assessment: The Excelsior Experience,* edited by Tina Goodyear (Hudson Whitman/Excelsior College Press; June 2016). Reproduced by permission.

Students feel more prepared across learning outcomes than employers think recent graduates are.[28]

Proportions saying they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area*

■ Employers ■ Students

Area	Employers	Students
Working with others in teams	37%	64%
Staying current on technologies	37%	46%
Ethical judgment and decisionmaking	30%	62%
Locating, organizing, evaluating information	29%	64%
Oral communication	28%	62%
Working with numbers/statistics	28%	55%
Written communication	27%	65%
Critical/analytical thinking	26%	66%
Being innovative/creative	25%	57%
Analyzing/solving complex problems	24%	59%
Applying knowledge/skills to real world	23%	59%
Awareness/experience of diverse cultures in US	21%	48%
Staying current on developments in science	21%	44%
Working with people from diff. backgrounds	18%	55%
Staying current on global developments	18%	43%
Proficient in other language	16%	34%
Awareness/experience of diverse cultures outside US	15%	42%

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale

The good news is that students and employers are largely in agreement about the skills required to be successful in the workplace: critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communications, teamwork, ethical conduct, decision-making, and the ability to apply knowledge.[29] The problem lies in assessments of readiness of those same skills.

Obviously, we have a problem. This chart clearly demonstrates the cause of the paradox we outlined in the introduction: College graduates are desperate for work at the same time employers are desperate for skilled workers, and yet those same recent graduates are suffering from record unemployment. The educational system, including associations, must develop a far more accurate picture of what students need to be learning and connect those learning outcomes to the world of employment, or we will continue to trap thousands of students in the modern day equivalent of indentured servitude to their student loan servicers. As CareerBuilder puts it in *The Shocking Truth About the Skills Gap:*

> "The skills gap is particularly difficult for recent college grads. Forty-four percent of college-educated workers under 25 have jobs that do not require a college degree—and, in many cases, they have little choice. With student debt payments looming, graduates opt into these jobs, which are often much more available than jobs within the field they studied. With a mountain of debt already a consideration, 61 percent say the expense of paying for school is the biggest barrier when it comes to looking for further training."[30]

28. http://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2015StudentSurveyReport.pdf, pg. 19

29. http://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2015StudentSurveyReport.pdf, pg.3

30. http://www.careerbuildercommunications.com/pdf/skills-gap-2014.pdf, pg. 7

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Get to Know Competency-Based Education

by Tracy Petrillo, EdD, CAE, Chief Learning Officer, EDUCAUSE

Competency-based education (CBE) allows learners to acquire knowledge and demonstrate that knowledge in actionable formats beyond traditional assessments and testing. Students drive their own pace of completion through a program's curricular courses or modules by demonstrating competencies through learning exercises, activities, and engaging experiences. CBE creates opportunities for digital badges, certification, and micro-credentials to visually demonstrate ongoing growth and professional development for adult learners who seek career opportunities and advancement without waiting for completion of a terminal degree as the only signal of qualifications for employment.

CBE models challenge the foundational pillars of the credit hour, minimum grade point average, financial aid, and semester or quarter time restrictions. However, because these self-directed learning programs improve student success and program completion for both traditional and nontraditional students, there is increasing support for CBE within higher education.

Within a CBE framework, faculty and subject matter experts move away from "sage on the stage" information givers and become true facilitators and guides. Through facilitation, the focus is shifted to the learner and how she uses and applies knowledge, skills, and abilities into truly transformational learning. Students move from regurgitating memorized facts for an exam toward developing critical thinking, knowledge analysis, and problem-solving skills.

CBE offers the flexibility that could bridge the job-skills gap between employers and those who seek employment in professions that are rapidly evolving. Because the learning can occur in varied settings and forms, individuals are not restricted by course schedules and access to programs. New business models are emerging, focused on making CBE programs affordable and on filling needs that are not currently well served through traditional postsecondary models.

Program providers who develop CBE programs should use research, data, and forecasting to determine the competencies that really matter and credibly assess learner outcomes. Motivated learners can complete programs quickly, receiving guidance and support, while also determining how to demonstrate their knowledge in the workplace.

CBE represents a tremendous opportunity to form partnerships between higher education, industries, corporations, nonprofit and trade associations, and education technology providers to strengthen the lifelong learning pathway, support the evolution of tomorrow's workforce, and create new, viable streams of revenue. CBE is not a replacement for degrees, industry certifications, or traditional continuing professional education. Rather, it is an extension of learning that reduces anxiety in nontraditional students and supports personalization in lifelong learning.

"For those of us who educate adult, post-traditional, or other students outside of the 18-22-year-old sector, CBE [Competency-Based Education] is technically not new. It is true, though, that the CBE movement has gained visibility and momentum over the past few years. Due to several factors, the need for quality assessment has snowballed. The first is the increasing irrelevance of the credit hour as a metric. As Amy Laitinen of the New America Foundation noted in her eye-opening 2012 critique, *Cracking the Credit Hour,* the credit hour may be needed for financial aid administration, but it is little more than a surrogate for time in a seat. It doesn't measure outcomes of any type and is not suited to the many forms of alternative instructional delivery that exist today. In contrast, CBE, if it involves rigorous assessment methods, provides some assurance of both learning and the ability to apply it.

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The third, and arguably the most important reason for the growth of CBE, is the increasing dissatisfaction of employers with the typical college graduate. The lengthening period between graduation and employment that many students experience can be attributed partially to the practice of employers seeking a more capable alternative before settling on a recent graduate. If we can demonstrate to ourselves and to employers that it is producing "competent" entrants to the workforce, it is not just the new hire, their alma mater, and the employer who win; we all do."

The Future of Employment

"The speed of disruption is about to become brutal."

John Chambers, President and CEO Cisco Systems, 2015 World Economic Forum

The data is clear: a fundamental reordering of the U.S. (and global) employment market is currently underway. Advances in automation and artificial intelligence are poised to transform white-collar professions just as they did blue-collar professions in the late 20th century, with, as we mentioned in the introduction, 47 percent of jobs in the United States expected to be significantly impacted or replaced by artificial intelligence and automation within the next decade. The jobs most at risk are middle-skill jobs, such as telemarketers, tax preparers, insurance underwriters, loan officers, and title examiners.[31]

According to an even more recent study, *Technology At Work v. 2.0*, published in January 2016:

> "Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael Osborne's original study on employment suggested 47% of US jobs were at risk of computerisation. In the chapter 'How Susceptible are Countries Worldwide?', we use data from the World Bank to show that the risks of automation are actually higher in many other countries—for example in the OECD the data shows on average 57% of jobs [worldwide] are susceptible to automation, [and] this number rises to 69% in India and 77% in China."[32]

The pace at which new careers are emerging is also causing significant disruption. In some cases, positions emerge, change, and disappear before a degree could even be completed, much less a curriculum designed, marketed, and launched. This kind of speed, coupled with a need for specialized lifelong learning as industries and professions continue to evolve rapidly, is calling the traditional college experience into question at every level. In the book The Future of Business: Critical Insights into a Rapidly Changing World from 60 Futurists, Anne Boysen reimagines education in this manner:

> "In 2030, we are likely to see an increasingly diversely educated workforce— encompassing entrepreneurs who developed their own brands of expertise by means of various hacker approaches, along with apprenticeships, online courses and peer-to-peer arrangements. In this emerging skills universe, traditional university degrees could become a thing of the past, or a rare symbol of exclusivity for the upper class—similar to designer brands and luxury cars."

The traditional paths to education, employment, and adulthood are being upended in all quarters. Associations must be at the forefront of these changes to prepare our members and other stakeholders for the future, putting infrastructure in place to rapidly educate newcomers to our industries and professions and ensuring our legislative and regulatory frameworks can appropriately adjust to rapidly emerging fields.

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31. http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf, pg. 72
32. http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/reports/Citi_GPS_Technology_Work_2.pdf, pg. 7

In the United States we have a peculiar obsession with what is known as the "Horatio Alger myth."

Horatio Alger penned formulaic stories in the late 1800's that relied heavily on the "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" ethos that was already deeply embedded in our cultural consciousness. It may be that Alger actually believed his morality plays depicted the "real promise" of America. However, we are relatively sure Alger himself could never have predicted his stories would become an integral part of one of the most powerful allegories of modern times. We have come to equate "Horatio Alger stories" with the quintessential story of the "American dream": With hard work, dedication, and virtue, anyone can strike it rich in America. It remains one of the underlying causes of political battles over how much educational or employment assistance should be provided to individuals, as the main requirement for success is still perceived to be "hard work."

In practice, this simply isn't true. Institutional inequality and lack of opportunity affects everyone, worldwide. The reality, according to the World Bank, is that 200 million people are unemployed worldwide, and **nearly 75 million of those unemployed are under the age of 25.** [33] The McKinsey Center for Government study referenced earlier points to two interconnected global crises: "high levels of youth unemployment and a shortage of people with critical job skills. Leaders everywhere are aware of the possible consequences, in the form of social and economic distress, when too many young people believe that their future is compromised." [34]

In fact,

> "The global youth unemployment rate has reached 13.1 per cent, which is almost three times as high as the adult unemployment rate. Indeed, the youth-to-adult unemployment ratio has reached a historical peak. It is particularly high in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and Southern Europe." [35]

What does that point about "social and economic distress" mean? Numerous studies have demonstrated the tie between poverty or lack of economic opportunity and attraction to violent extremism, religious radicalism, and terrorism (see, for example, "Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States," [36] "Fighting Radicalism, not 'Terrorism': Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined," [37] "The Relationship Between Youth Unemployment and Terrorism," [38] "Unemployment and Participation in Violence" [39] and the bibliographies accompanying each). Is the relationship fully causal? It's not clear, because the factors that lead to violent extremism are complex, but there is, at minimum, a strong correlation.

33. http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/04/27/working-together-for-jobs

34. http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Education-to-Employment_FINAL.pdf, pg. 11

35. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_233953.pdf, pg. 11

36. http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2010/3/confronting-poverty-graff/2010_confronting_poverty.pdf

37. http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/articles/2009/9/summer%20fall%20radicalism%20taspinar/summer_fall_radicalism_taspinar.pdf

38. https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/709858

39. http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01306/web/pdf/wdr%20background%20paper%20-%20cramer.pdf

Or, as the McKinsey report referenced earlier puts it:

"If young people who have worked hard to graduate from school and university cannot secure decent jobs and the sense of respect that comes with them, society will have to be prepared for outbreaks of anger or even violence. The evidence is in the protests that have recently occurred in Chile, Egypt, Greece, Italy, South Africa, Spain, and the United States (to name but a few countries)."[40]

According to UNICEF:

"…this class of [unemployed and underemployed] people could produce new instabilities in societies worldwide. They are increasingly frustrated and dangerous because they have no voice, and, hence, they are vulnerable to the siren calls of extreme political parties."[41]

Indeed, unemployment and underemployment are linked to a whole range of negative outcomes, including "hunger and malnutrition, illness, lower educational outcomes, children being left alone and even abandoned, and increased vulnerability to ongoing and future shocks."[42]

One of the major impacts of the Great Recession is that the jobs employers shed were low-skill, and the jobs that are being added in the recovery are not. "Recessions accelerate the trend to eliminate low-wage, low-skills jobs … and those jobs don't come back."[43] In other words, those without postsecondary education (or even many of those who do have it but don't have the right skill set) who were laid off in the Great Recession will not be rehired, ever, without retraining. Or, as the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University reports: "The ability of individuals to connect education, training, and careers has become key to employability and to attaining and maintaining middle class status."[44]

This problem is not just affecting older workers. As the Urban Institute reports in a study examining the longer-term impact of the Great Recession:

"Today, those in Gen X and Gen Y have accumulated less wealth than their parents did at that age over a quarter-century ago. Their average wealth in 2010 was 7 percent below that of those in their 20s and 30s in 1983. Even before the Great Recession, younger Americans were on a strikingly different trajectory. Now, stagnant wages, diminishing job opportunities, and lost home values may be merging to paint a vastly different future for Gen X and Gen Y. Despite their relative youth, they may not be able to make up the lost ground."[45]

40. http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Education-to-Employment_FINAL.pdf, pg.11
41. http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Global_Crisis_and_Youth_Bulge_FINAL_web.pdf, pg. 5
42. http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Global_Crisis_and_Youth_Bulge_FINAL_web.pdf, pg.16
43. ASTD report, Bridging the Skills Gap, published in 2010, pg. 4
44. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/fullreport.pdf, pg. 1
45. http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412766-Lost-Generations-Wealth-Building-among-Young-Americans.pdf

We know there's a skills gap for young workers that colleges and universities seem unable, and employers seem unwilling, to bridge. Ignoring it has serious consequences for the health of national and world economies, the ability of individual humans to thrive, and the overall safety of our societies. Education has repeatedly been demonstrated to be the key to socioeconomic mobility,[46] but if higher education is increasingly financially out of the reach of those who don't already have means, it falls to associations to step into the breach. This is a critical role for associations, but are we filling it?

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46. http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/06/13-facts-higher-education

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The Association Advantage

"Lack of government funding is pushing the quality of public education down and costs up. In fact, young people today are caught in the transition between these two worlds—the world of institutional production and the new world of learning. … this world is characterized by four key elements: easy, individualized, and highly contextual learning experiences; ubiquitous free content; community as a driver and enabler of learning; [and] intrinsic rewards and meaningful learning currencies. These forces are undermining the dominance of institutional education…"

Marina Gorbis, Executive Director, Institute for the Future
The Nature of the Future: Dispatches from the Socialstructed World

Associations are well known as advocates for our industries and professions. Less well known, but potentially even more important in today's world, associations create standards, define boundaries between professional spheres, and identify competencies needed in the employment world. We create educational programming designed to fill needs unmet by more traditional educational institutions and foster social connections and professional opportunity through networking. Where conventional educational curricula come up short, associations provide industry-specific bodies of knowledge. Where diplomas fail to demonstrate specific competencies, credible and well-designed credentialing and certification efforts can fill the gap.

Our associations rarely get the credit they deserve for undertaking these educational activities, in part because we inhabit the highly independent "Wild West" of adult education, and because many of our efforts are volunteer generated and conducted. This leads to a lack of structure, which the formal educational system has, until now, tended to frown upon. Because we focus our programs on meeting member needs, there's an immense amount of variation in what we provide, from informal "knowledge-sharing opportunities" to formal credentialing programs designed to meet regulatory or licensing requirements and everything in between.

In short, what we've been doing, by necessity or instinct, is patching over the cracks in the foundation of classical formal education itself. Those cracks are becoming increasingly hard to hide, and the changes and disruptions we've noted above present a tremendous opportunity for associations to create permanent, life-changing value for our audiences, if we can rise to the occasion.

Let's take a deeper look at some of the advantages we enjoy.

Direct Connection to Employers

Because of our role representing professions and industries, associations already have deep connections with both the people doing the hiring and the people trying to acquire the skills and credentials they need in order to be hired. We have first-hand, insider access to employers to learn what particular skills they need from their workforces. This is particularly the case for "middle skills" jobs, which don't necessarily require a Bachelor's degree, but where employers have defaulted to using a degree as a proxy "resume filter" due to a lack of better options. We have trusted relationships that can allow us to work with employers to create effective skills acquisition systems.

As the McKinsey report puts it:

> "Two features stand out among all the successful programs we reviewed. First, education providers and employers actively step into one another's worlds. Employers might help to design curricula and offer their employees as faculty, for example, while education providers may have students spend half their time on a job site and secure them hiring guarantees.
>
> Second, in the best programs, employers and education providers work with their students early and intensely. Instead of three distinct intersections occurring in a linear sequence (enrollment leads to skills, which lead to a job), the education-to-employment journey is treated as a continuum in which employers commit to hire youth before they are enrolled in a program to build their skills."[47]

This is the most significant advantage we have. We are already part of the world of the employers we serve. We can rapidly build professional development programs that directly address the specific needs of our industries and professions and create a pipeline of qualified candidates. This also provides a tremendous incentive for students and young professionals to come to our organizations as the first step in their careers: programs that focus exclusively on the precise skills they need to be immediately employable. The employers, the employees, and the association all benefit. We're doing good while doing well.

Experience with Certification and Credentialing

Solid data supports the idea that a college education will lead to higher earnings over a lifetime. We don't dispute that, but we question if that's caused by the degree itself or by the skills people develop in pursuit of that degree. As a study from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce demonstrates, depending on the occupation, licenses and certifications sometimes outperform BOTH Associates' and Bachelors' degrees in lifetime earnings.

- 43 percent of licenses and certificates earn more than an Associate's degree
- 27 percent of licenses and certificates earn more than a Bachelor's degree
- 31 percent of Associate's degrees earn more than a Bachelor's degree[48]

It is also instructive to consider employer perceptions of what constitutes a good hire. While hiring managers certainly ask about degrees, and a variety of studies indicate they are required for many jobs, actual data on what employers are looking for in candidates disagrees. According to a Gallup poll conducted on behalf of the Lumina Foundation, the actual degree or institution the degree was received from is far less important to prospective employers than actual knowledge and experience in the field.

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47. http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Education-to-Employment_FINAL.pdf, pg. 20
48. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/fullreport.pdf, pg.106

For Business Leaders: *Please tell me if each of the following factors are very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to managers making hiring decisions for organizations. How about…?*[49]

	% Very Important	% Somewhat Important	% Not Very Important	% Not at All Important
Amount of knowledge the candidate has in the field	84	14	2	0
Candidate's applied skills in the field	79	16	2	2
Candidate's college or university major	28	42	22	8
Where the candidate received his or her college degree	9	37	40	14

Source: 2013 Gallup-Lumina Foundation Business Leaders Poll on Higher Education

According to Georgetown University:

"Industry-based certifications address several problems that postsecondary credentials currently face: **relevance, accountability, consistency, and portability.** Because IBCs are more flexible than traditional degrees, they better reflect current industry standards and competencies, which are in constant flux. Traditional degrees also sometimes are criticized because it is difficult to compare them across institutions. A Bachelor's degree from an Ivy League university means something quite different than one from a second-tier state university. Similarly, rampant grade inflation across postsecondary institutions has made it difficult for employers to assess the meaning of differences in grade point averages of job applicants. IBCs overcome these challenges as they are based on a third-party testing protocol that is standardized across certification candidates."[50]

Not only do many associations already run certification or credentialing programs, but our industry also has existing relationships with third-party organizations like the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and the International Organization for Standards (ISO), all of which we commonly use to provide a guarantee of quality and meeting standards. Their work to establish procedures to follow that confer credibility on our certification efforts has been vital to our success. With our credible, tested precertification, certification, and credentialing programs, associations can exploit this hiring trend and get members into jobs faster.

49. http://www.gallup.com/poll/167546/business-leaders-say-knowledge-trumps-college-pedigree.aspx
50. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CTE.FiveWays.FullReport.pdf, pg. 20

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Speed and Flexibility

We know, associations aren't historically known for speed and flexibility. We in associations routinely face criticism, from without and within, about how we are slow to act, get bogged down in consensus processes, and become sidetracked by arguments within our memberships about current conditions in the workforce, organizational direction, what training is needed and what standards are appropriate, and so on.

That being said, as slow as we think we are, we are still faster than other institutions that are adapting even more slowly. Associations, composed of employers and employees who see changes in the workplace faster than the educational system, can move more quickly than the formal educational system. Clay Shirky tells a terrific story about the origins of one of associations' signature products in his TEDTalk "How the Internet Will (one day) Transform Government:"

> "'Philosophical Transactions' [was] the first scientific journal ever published in English, in the middle of the 1600s, and it was created by a group of people who had been calling themselves 'The Invisible College,' a group of natural philosophers who only later would call themselves scientists, and they wanted to improve the way natural philosophers argued with each other, and they needed to do two things for this. They needed openness. They needed to create a norm which said, when you do an experiment, you have to publish not just your claims but how you did the experiment. If you don't tell us how you did it, we won't trust you. But the other thing they needed was speed. They had to quickly synchronize what other natural

> philosophers knew. Otherwise, you couldn't get the right kind of argument going. The printing press was clearly the right medium for this, but the book was the wrong tool. It was too slow. And so they invented the scientific journal as a way of synchronizing the argument across the community of natural scientists. The scientific revolution wasn't created by the printing press. It was created by scientists, but it couldn't have been created if they didn't have a printing press as a tool."[51]

This looks very familiar to associations: Groups of practitioners got together and decided they needed two things, better arguments and faster speed. Today's employment sphere needs the same things, but, where our predecessors were restricted to the printing press, we have access to advanced global communications technologies.

Market Opportunity and Nonprofit Status

Adult education is one of the hottest current investment markets. Although estimates of the size of the market vary, there are two key indicators of interest for our purposes. Postsecondary institutions, government agencies, and employers spend $1.1 trillion annually on formal and informal higher education and training in the United States alone, $47 billion of which is related to certifications, apprenticeships, and other workforce training.[52] And venture capitalists are starting to pay attention. It is no accident that we are seeing a sharp rise in the number of venture capital firms acquiring association management systems, which often include learning management components and association-specific job boards.

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51. https://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_the_internet_will_one_day_transform_government/transcript?language=en
52. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Trillion-Dollar-Training-System-.pdf

Secondly, in April 2015 LinkedIn acquired online learning company Lynda.com for $1.5 billion. Bobby Owsinski, a contributor to *Forbes,* had the following to say following the announcement:

> "And this is where the fit with LinkedIn comes in. For LinkedIn users that want to learn a new skill, become certified or re-certified, or even retrain for a new job or career, the exposure and access to the Lynda.com courses should be a major benefit for using the network. If LinkedIn was looking for a way to offer more value for its paying subscribers, then it hit a home run.
>
> While universities everywhere are looking to MOOCs (Massively Open Online Courses) as the future of education (not to mention their bottom lines), Lynda.com courses instead utilize a high-tech version of a method that has worked well for a few thousand years—mentor and apprentice."[53]

Although this move came as a surprise to many in the technology world, it should not have come as a surprise to the association community. LinkedIn has been positioning itself to compete with associations for many years. LinkedIn groups are just one example of the many tactics it has used to attempt to capture the mindshare of our members. Now, with this aggressive move into the professional-development space, it is clear LinkedIn believes its killer app will be linking individuals to career-specific education and then fostering social connections between people to facilitate hiring.

In a recent development, on June 13, 2016 Microsoft announced that it would acquire LinkedIn for $26.2 billion.[54] Although technology watchers are still trying to predict exactly what Microsoft aims to accomplish as a result of this merger, securing the backing of one of the largest technology firms in the world indicates that LinkedIn will continue to present a formidable challenge to the association community.

This should worry us. An entire for-profit market is positioning itself to, if not replace us, certainly take as much of our market share as possible. The most ironic aspect of this is that these competitors are setting up e-learning structures that will also focus on mentoring. LinkedIn knows it is missing the social connection so important for learning and career advancement. And that's where associations have a major advantage.

Anecdotally, there has recently been a tendency in the association world to denigrate our nonprofit status, as if it were a competitive disadvantage. We would argue that, in reality, our nonprofit status may be more important than ever. Although education and professional development can be profitable, the motive for providing them should not be profit.

There is a long history of for-profit educational institutions operating in the United States. They have rapidly proliferated over the past decade, however, and, as we've discussed earlier, the behavior of many of the largest has been less than exemplary. In May 2015, one of the largest for-profit colleges, Corinthian College, abruptly filed for bankruptcy and shut down completely, leaving 16,000 students scrambling.[55] In November 2015, Education Management Corporation was fined $95.5 million by the U.S. government for enrolling students through illegal means.[56]

53. http://www.forbes.com/sites/bobbyowsinski/2015/04/13/why-linkedins-purchase-of-lynda-com-is-the-best-money-it-will-ever-spend/#3b2031411606
54. http://news.microsoft.com/2016/06/13/microsoft-to-acquire-linkedin/#sm.0001o25c1xaicf4bqjs2iniqfojo9
55. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/04/corinthian-colleges-bankruptcy_n_7205344.html
56. http://qz.com/551427/charged-with-fraud-and-deceit-one-of-the-uss-biggest-for-profit-colleges-is-paying-out-95-

Public trust in for-profit postsecondary education has been profoundly shaken. This is a perfect opportunity for associations to provide quality, career-enhancing education to new populations who see our nonprofit status as a symbol of quality and public service. Although we may never have considered ourselves potential competitors with higher education or technology companies, we have a tremendous opportunity to both diversify and expand our revenue streams while also providing a critical service to the next generation of workers (and members), presenting us with another opportunity to do good while doing well.

Experience With Nontraditional Students

Increasingly, discussions in the education-to-employment system have been focused on the needs of nontraditional students. For-profit institutions have touted their appeal to this population as one of the main reasons for their entry into the marketplace. What is important to understand is that the number of students who qualify as "nontraditional" has reached approximately 73 percent of total postsecondary enrollment.[57]

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the following characteristics are found in this population of students:

> "What makes an undergraduate student "traditional" or "nontraditional"? While definitions vary, researchers generally consider nontraditional students to have the following characteristics: being independent for financial aid purposes, having one or more dependents, being a single caregiver, not having a traditional high school diploma, delaying postsecondary enrollment, attending school part time, and being employed full time ..."[58]

It is precisely these characteristics (having dependents, being a single caregiver, lacking a traditional educational background, attending school part time while being employed full time) that put nontraditional students at risk of not being able to find or complete appropriate courses of study.

Unlike traditional postsecondary education, association professional development programs have been designed from the beginning to be completed by people who are working full time and who have significant other responsibilities. Associations don't expect our audiences to put their entire lives on hold for multiple years while they attend in-person classes for months at a time. We build collaborative learning that allows our members to learn from, teach, and interact with their peers. Our programs are specifically designed to address the needs of nontraditional students, and we have extensive experience creating the types of learning environments that are well-suited for this population.

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57. https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/research-adult-learners-supporting-needs-student-population-no
58. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015025.pdf, pg. 1

Gaps In Our Knowledge:
The Role of Associations In Workforce Development
By Polly Siobhan Karpowicz, MBA, CAE, ASAE Research Committee

You may be wondering what we currently know about how associations are navigating workforce development needs and addressing skills gaps. The short answer is "not enough"; however, a forthcoming ASAE study will provide much-needed insight.

According to ASAE's Power of A Campaign, associations are "the largest provider of post-college education in the U.S." In 2015, the ASAE Research Committee decided to investigate this claim and discover how valued and valuable our workforce development efforts actually are.

The Research Committee taskforce started with a literature review, seeking data on the role associations play in providing training in industry-specific, general, and "soft" skills and on the strategies we use to provide quality, timely, and accessible training to the industries and professions we serve. They also looked for evidence of associations addressing the same alarming education-to-employment barriers, skills gaps, and social-decline trends reported elsewhere in this whitepaper.

The preliminary research found a notable lack of hard evidence of associations assessing their training systematically from employers' perspective as well as little evidence of strategies to identify skills gaps, assessments of training related to employee needs and constraints, and specific examples, case studies, and strategies related to these issues for associations to follow. However, the taskforce did find stories of associations innovating with technology and new methods such as digital badges, learning through gaming, and supporting a broad range of offerings, including instructor-led training, conferences, mentoring, informal coursework, supervised work, and academic degree programs. The conclusion was that the association community lacks empirical and comprehensive data, best practices, and models to help associations develop training tied to workforce development needs.

In response, the ASAE Foundation approved and recently launched a new study, The Role of Associations in Workforce Development, to gain a comprehensive, data-supported understanding of the role associations already play and the new opportunities we have to support workforce development. The research agenda will cover five core areas:

1. environmental scan of the full training market and emerging trends
2. unique characteristics of association-sponsored workforce development programs
3. employers' consumer behavior and perceptions about association-sponsored training
4. employees' and learners' consumer behavior and perceptions of association training
5. methods of tracking and adapting to skills gaps and emerging skills

As taskforce chair, I can say that we have received a lot of interest and positive feedback about the study. The foundational study will highlight what's working, where we currently stand as an industry, and what we could do differently and in partnership with the educational, government, and business sectors to prepare the American workforce for current and future jobs. The taskforce made a strong case for associations being an active voice in the national conversation around filling skills gaps and ensuring that the American workforce is adequately prepared for jobs that employers offer now and in the future.

The state of workforce development is a mission-critical issue for all of us and spans all industries. We have an ethical obligation to our industries to ensure that we are getting workforce development 'right' by providing accessible, on-target, high-value training. This may be the single most important issue facing associations and our economy.

The research phase of study will kick off in early summer 2016, and the results will be shared widely in the association community as the project develops and research findings are analyzed. The taskforce hopes this study will serve as a baseline for ongoing research into the training market and associations' place in it. Anticipated outcomes include benchmarking data, a maturity model, case studies and best practices, and series of community-based dialogues about the results.

For more information on the project visit *http://bit.ly/ASAE-workforcestudy*.

CASE STUDY
HR Certification Institute:
Certifying New Professionals

> **"***This field is growing. It's an exciting time to be in HR because we have more responsibilities than we've ever had and more chances to have a significant impact on the success of organizations.***"**
>
> Linda Anguish, SPHR, GPHR, Director, Certification Products, HR Certification Institute

Human resources (HR) is, as you might already know, a broad field of employment, encompassing professionals with a wide range of duties and responsibilities, such as:

- an office manager who takes on HR functions in a small business
- a line manager in a retail store with significant personnel authority (e.g., hiring, compensation, scheduling)
- a military HR specialist with responsibility for the overall readiness, health, and welfare of soldiers deployed across the world
- a full-time HR staff person with one or more areas of specialization in a mid-sized company
- a director of HR for a nonprofit, who manages a small team and has additional operational responsibilities
- a high-level HR professional in a large organization serving as part of the CEO's senior strategic management team

The career path is equally diverse. According to Linda Anguish, SPHR, GPHR, director, certification products, at the HR Certification Institute (HRCI), "In the past, HR professionals weren't able to major in HR. You might have done a community college program. You might have a bachelor's degree in business with a minor or concentration in HR. You might have had the opportunity for an HR-focused internship. You could have a graduate degree. Or you might have none of those things. An HR professional may start out as a specialist in one particular area of HR, like recruiting, and then broaden to practice additional functions, like compensation and benefits, or training and development. Over time you might progress to more senior levels, where you become a key business leader, supporting the strategic goals of the organization. Our certification path includes a total of seven credentials designed to fit different types of experiences, career stages, and locations around the world."

HRCI's family of credentials has been relatively "traditional" in that there are both educational and experience requirements to sit for the exams. But the sphere of career preparation is changing. It is now the case that students, at the associate's or bachelor's level, can major specifically in human resources. Self-directed learners are piecing together their own educational pathways, which may not include formal degrees. Office managers perform HR functions without official titles. Veterans end their tours of duty in the armed forces and need to find civilian employment. Many professionals have more than one career over the sum of their working lives. What if you're a new HR professional who needs to be able to differentiate yourself?

HRCI's solution was to create a new credential, the Associate Professional in Human Resources™ (aPHR™) designed for people just starting out in HR. Candidates are required to have at least a high school diploma (or global equivalent) and obviously need knowledge of a broad range of topical areas in HR to pass the rigorous exam, but there is no "years of experience in the field" requirement to sit for the exam. Because of this, it's well-suited to recent graduates, people making career transitions, and people who perform HR functions as part of their jobs. "We're also very concerned about the high unemployment rate of veterans, and we think we can

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help," noted Anguish. "This is designed to be a stepping-stone credential that provides early career, knowledge-based certification and creates a bridge towards later competency–based certifications as HR professionals progress in their careers and gain experience. Our goal is to create a family of certifications that support HR practitioners from their first job all the way through the most senior positions."

Anguish also said, "We have a strong focus on making employers aware of the value of our certification." HRCI conducts ongoing quantitative and qualitative research into the value of its credentials, including studies that clearly demonstrate that HRCI-certified professionals enjoy higher compensation and better job prospects and provide their employers with better performance and greater expertise.[59] "We can prove to the employer community that our certificate holders tend to be the best candidates." In developing both the credentials themselves and the certifying exams, "we work in partnership with the field. We emphasize that all these credentials are created by HR practitioners for HR practitioners."

To learn more about the aPHR™, see the recent Associations Now article *"Could an Early-Career Certification Be Right for Your Association?"* [60] or visit the dedicated aPHR™ page on the **HRCI website**.

About HRCI

HR Certification Institute (HRCI) is the premier professional credentialing organization for the worldwide human resources profession. Founded in 1976 and headquartered in the United States, HRCI is celebrating 40 years of setting the standard for HR mastery and excellence around the globe. An independent nonprofit organization, HRCI is dedicated to advancing the HR profession through developing and administering best-in-class certifications including the NCCA-accredited Professional in Human Resources® (PHR®) and Senior Professional in Human Resources® (SPHR®). All of HRCI's credentials are recognized as the most rigorous, meaningful, and grounded professional certifications demonstrating competency, real-world practical skills and knowledge in the field. Together with HRCI-certified professionals in 100 countries around the globe, HRCI ensures, strengthens, and advances the strategic value and impact of HR.

59. https://www.hrci.org/docs/default-source/web-files/humrroreporthrci-vocwhitepaper.pdf
60. http://associationsnow.com/2016/01/could-an-early-career-certification-be-right-for-your-association/

CASE STUDY
Maryland Association of CPAs and Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants: Innovating for the Future

> **"We've discovered that it's lack of 'soft skills,' not lack of technical competency, that holds our members back professionally, so we're developing new programs, products, and services in collaboration with our members to address that."**
>
> Scott Wiley, CAE, President & CEO, Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants

Accounting is a very popular profession. It remains in the top 10 majors by popularity for college students,[61] and that makes sense when you consider Bureau of Labor Statistics data about median salary and projected growth of the profession, with more than 140,000 new accounting jobs expected to be created by 2024.[62]

However, it's also a highly regulated profession, with a relatively high barrier to entry: for instance, in Ohio (and it does vary by state), to become a CPA, you must have a bachelor's degree (although it doesn't have to be in accounting), you must pass the rigorous licensing exam, and then you must acquire 120 hours of continuing education every three years.

In addition, the profession has a bit of an image problem. "It's more than just accounting. Being a CPA involves providing consultative and advisory services to help your clients understand data and analytics, explaining the causes and influences behind their financial statements, and contributing to their overall business success and growth. It's not just about math and 100 hour weeks during tax season," said Scott Wiley, CAE, president and CEO of the Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants.

In looking at trends in the profession, OSCPA discovered a few things. "One, although there are plenty of accounting graduates, the number that sit for the CPA exam is decreasing. Employers are realizing you don't necessarily need all your staff accountants to be CPAs," said Wiley. "While our graduates are technically skilled and competent, there are gaps in 'soft skills,' like client communications, professional judgment, the ability to distill financial information into actionable items, etc. So, we decided we needed to focus on the 'CPA sphere of influence,' which includes both allied finance professionals who are not CPAs but need CPA-type education and CPAs who need training outside the traditional regulatory updates."

To meet these needs, OSCPA has been working on building its portfolio of programs. One particular innovation involves the use of new learning technologies. "One of the biggest professional challenges CPAs face is how frequently the regulations that govern our profession change," noted Wiley. "For example, one of the micro-learning products we created to keep our members up to date on Financial Accounting Standards Board activities provides an overview of any newly issued standard, who it applies to, and when it becomes effective, so members can easily assess whether they need more in-depth training. We're also experimenting with flipped and blended learning, working with our members so they can do virtual self-study on concepts prior to in-person events, then come in and apply their knowledge under the guidance and facilitation of expert instructors."

61. http://college.usatoday.com/2014/10/26/same-as-it-ever-was-top-10-most-popular-college-majors/

62. http://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/accountants-and-auditors.htm

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OSCPA is also addressing the soft-skills gap. "For example, we are currently working with an IPA Top 300 member accounting firm to develop a coaching program," Wiley said. "They had been offering mentoring to young professionals, but they saw the need for something more formal and structured. Together, we've created a pilot program to train their supervisors to do a better job welcoming and orienting new employees. Once we have our proof of concept, we'll begin offering additional human capital-focused services to our members."

According to Tom Hood, CEO of the Maryland Association of CPAs, "there's so much technical content required to become an accountant that college programs are missing the success skills that are increasingly required earlier in young professionals' careers. Younger professionals don't want to 'pay their dues' doing rote number crunching for years anymore, and, due to computerization and automation, they don't need to. The skills they actually need are the ability to understand, analyze, and explain what the numbers mean; the ability to collaborate;, and the ability to think strategically. And they need those skills right now."

MACPA's response was to create a Student Leadership Academy. To understand where it came from, we have to go back to the 1990s, when the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) led a nationwide project to envision the strategic future of the profession as a whole. The report, titled *Horizons 2011* (recently updated to *Horizons 2025*[63]), addressed many aspects of the future of accounting, including core competencies. Interestingly, none of them had to do with the technical side of accounting; they focused instead on things like leadership, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration.

MACPA saw this as an opportunity to provide training beyond its more typical technical training on topics like regulatory changes. That led to the creation of the Business Learning Institute (BLI) as a for-profit subsidiary. Through the BLI, MACPA offers training in technical, strategic, and leadership skills to CPAs nationwide. Several years later, when AICPA was looking to create formal professional development training for young professionals in soft skills, MACPA submitted a program based on the BLI curriculum and won out over competitors including Harvard University. "That was our 'we beat Harvard!' moment, and we're still pretty proud of it," said Rebekah Brown, CPA, manager, membership development and engagement, at MACPA.

Brown said she saw an additional opportunity for MACPA: "I benefitted so much from the Leadership Academy, I thought 'Why wait until young professionals have graduated? Why not start introducing some of this valuable content and skills development to them while they're still in school, to help them differentiate themselves as professionals and to begin developing a relationship with them that we hope will continue throughout their careers and into retirement?'" That led to the creation of MACPA's Student Leadership Academy, with 2015 marking the inaugural class.

"We've always had student members," Hood said, "but we didn't have a lot of engagement with them. By creating the Student Leadership Academy and a suite of accompanying programs, products, and services, we're developing loyalty. Some professors give course credit just for joining MACPA, which is free for students. But we're trying to transition from joining 'just to get the credit' to providing real value for those memberships."

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63. http://www.aicpa.org/Research/CPAHorizons2025/DownloadableDocuments/cpa-horizons-report-web.pdf

The Student Leadership Academy is the first step in a professional development path that supports accountants through their transition from student to young professional to CPA to manager or supervisor and helps them continue to acquire the skills they'll need to advance professionally. "Our ultimate goal is to make today's and tomorrow's member CPAs future-ready, because the true differentiator is those future skills," said Hood.

To learn more, check out the **MACPA.TV video** on the Student Leadership Academy.

About Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants

The Ohio Society of CPAs (OSCPA), established in 1908, represents the diverse interests of 20,000 CPAs and accounting professionals working in business, education, government and public accounting. OSCPA leverages strong relationships with state and federal legislators and regulators to advocate for CPAs and the public interest.

OSCPA promotes greater awareness for CPAs and their financial expertise through public financial literacy campaigns and other initiatives that lower the tax burden and benefit businesses and all Ohioans.

About Maryland Association of CPAs

The Maryland Association of CPAs (MACPA) is the only professional organization serving the exclusive needs of Maryland CPAs. MACPA strives to be a "community of success" that helps CPAs thrive. MACPA connects members to each other, to the business community, and to leaders in the profession in Maryland and worldwide. MACPA protects and promotes the CPA brand at the State Board of Accountancy, at the state capital, and nationwide. MACPA helps members achieve success through technical excellence, thought leadership, best-in-class professional development, and being their trusted filter for information.

CASE STUDY
National Association of
Licensed Practical Nurses: Earing While Learning

"Our entire goal is to help our LPNs develop as professionals."

Ottamissiah Moore, Director and Immediate Past President,
National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses

We're all familiar with nursing as a profession. As with most medical professions, though, there are a wide variety of ways to specialize within the nursing profession. Some relate to areas of practice, like oncology, emergency, or neonatal. Others have to do with level of skill, experience, education, and responsibility. Most of us think of registered nurses (RNs) when we think about nursing. Being an RN requires at least an associate's degree (although a bachelor's degree is more common) from an accredited nursing school, passing a licensure exam, and meeting scope-of-practice requirements that are generally determined at the state level. But one can also be a licensed practical or vocational nurse (LPN), which is an entry-level license with a more limited range of responsibility than an RN or nurse practitioner.

While demand is increasing for all types of healthcare workers, as in many professions, the LPN is undergoing change. "In the past, LPNs generally came into the profession through vocational training programs that didn't involve college courses or credit," said Ottamissiah Moore, director and immediate past president at the National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (NALPN). "And nurses might remain at the LPN level for their entire careers."

But the nursing landscape has shifted. The American Nurses Credentialing Center runs the "magnet" program for hospitals. "Magnet" hospitals are accredited by ANCC as having met certain criteria related to the strength and quality of that hospital's nursing care. However, a component of magnet status is a preference for RNs versus LPNs. The result, according to Moore, is that "LPNs are coming out of hospitals and moving into other settings."

With that shift, and to maximize their long-term career prospects, many nursing students are coming to see the LPN as a temporary stepping stone along their nursing career trajectory. "Because of the shift in job opportunities, nursing students are starting to get licensed as LPNs while they're still in school, which allows them to earn in their field of study while learning on the way to an associate's or bachelor's degree," said Moore. "And, as baby boomers age, there's a market for those skills, particularly in the areas of long-term and outpatient care."

In response to that, NALPN has created certification programs in topics like IV Therapy and Gerontology and has partnered with other organizations to offer certification in topics like End-of-Life Care and Mental Health First Aid. In fact, according to Moore, "the theme of our upcoming conference this year is 'Let's Get Certified.' We'll be providing three days of training to help our LPNs get ready to sit for the exams. These additional certifications, which demonstrate competency and advanced education in these specialty areas, may not actually get someone an immediate raise or promotion, but they will help her resume rise to the top of the pile."

About the National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses

The National Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (NALPN) is the professional organization for licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses and practical or vocational nursing students in the United States. NALPN's mission is to foster high standards of nursing care and promote continued competence through education, certification, and lifelong learning, with a focus on public protection. NALPN is committed to quality and professionalism in the delivery of nursing care, working with other organizations and groups in a cooperative progressive spirit to build strong professional and public relationships.

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Where Do We Start?

"The place of the association in the professional life of the learners reflects good news—and likely a sound foundation for building increasingly relevant programs. Respondents rate professional development and education second only to access to up-to-date information as the most important role the association plays in their industry or profession.
Further, learners report high satisfaction with their association's performance in delivering those offerings they deem most important."

Lillie R. Albert, Ph.D. and Monica Dignam, *The Decision to Learn*

With an educational system that is being disrupted, college students graduating with degrees that fail to provide them practical job skills, and more adult and nontraditional learners than ever, associations stand at a crossroads. There are enormous needs we can meet: creating high-quality, competency based education; fostering social learning; and providing clear pathways to employment for students, the long-term unemployed, returning veterans, or those individuals who are about to see their jobs significantly affected by the rise of automation and artificial intelligence. It's a big opportunity—and a big challenge. In what follows, we offer some practical advice about how to start meeting it.

Adopt a Strategic Approach

Associations must begin to take a more strategic approach to the long-term viability of the industries and professions we represent. It is one thing to provide "value for today," but that is a short-term approach. "Value for tomorrow" is a critical shift we and our boards of directors need to make to move beyond being "nice to have" and instead become vital partners in our audiences' personal and professional success, helping them achieve their most important desired outcomes.

We've identified seven keys to this shift.

1. **Adopt a Global Perspective.** Workforce concerns no longer correspond to arbitrary lines drawn on a map. We are citizens of the world, and business and employment are increasingly global in nature.

2. **Dedicate Resources.** Your association must become a learning organization. Start with this paper, but conduct your own research, and quickly. We have provided a list of resources at the end of this paper to help you get started. You also need to dig into the specifics of what's going on in your particular profession or industry as soon as possible.

3. **Review the Oxford University Report, "The Future of Employment."**[64] It's long, but it contains critical information about occupations and their probability of being affected by automation. We have provided a searchable Google spreadsheet for you to refer to at **http://bit.ly/22907rT**. Locate your members' job titles and look at their odds. Act accordingly.

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64. http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf

4. **Be Entrepreneurial.** There is a large market opportunity and profit to be made, and venture capitalists know this. Exploit association-specific advantages: access to employers, credibility and experience around credentialing, deep understanding of career pathways and the skills required to navigate them, and experience with adult and nontraditional learners. There is more nondues revenue than you can imagine in this market, and few things are as effective at generating long-term loyalty than helping people find employment.

5. **Break Silos.** We're not just talking about within your own association, although it's past time to do that, too. We need to collaborate across organizations. Pay attention to and develop relationships with associations representing occupations your members may be able to advance or pivot into if their occupations begin to erode or vanish outright.

6. **Solve Problems.** Providing training to your audiences in how to be professionally successful today is helpful and important. But think how valuable you would be to them if they are having trouble finding the right hires and you figure out how to train their next-generation workforce for them. If you have sister associations that provide professional development for a membership composed mainly of your members' potential employees, form partnerships focused on defining and providing training on the skills that are most in demand.

7. **Expand Your Thinking.** Your audience extends far beyond your current paying membership base. Although it's important to provide direct value to your members, your association exists to serve the needs of your entire profession or industry. Ask yourself: "Does someone have to be a paying member in order to be part of our community?" Whether you realize it or not, the answer is no. Think about how you can be a vital partner in success to every person in your profession and every node on the network of your industry.

Conduct Ongoing In-Depth Workforce Analysis

Many associations may already have at least some of this data on hand. Others may need to implement an ongoing data collection program in order to discover supply and demand trends in their industries and professions. It isn't enough to conduct a member survey, although that might be the place to start. In order to ensure you have the best information, you need to look at your industry or profession as a whole: remember, your audience extends far beyond your current paying membership base.

Keys to a solid workforce analysis include:

1. **Perform Ongoing Environmental Scanning.** Conduct ongoing environmental scans that include social, technological, economic, and political trends that may impact workforce supply and demand in your industry or profession.

2. **Quantify the Pipeline.** Define actual requirements to enter or advance in your industry or profession. Figure out where your workforce is, where it is coming from, and where it is going.

3. **Describe the Current Employment Environment.** This could include, but is not necessarily limited to, demographics, diversity and inclusion, geographic concentrations, employment settings, activities, average time employees remain in positions, salaries, benefits and other compensation, and satisfaction levels with career choice.

4. **Estimate Future Demand.** Assess the impact of artificial intelligence, automation, big data, and other trends on your industry or profession. Predict what changes are on the horizon in terms of education, relocation, and supply and demand.

(In any data gathering effort, please remember that information about salaries should be confidential, published in the aggregate, and at least one economic quarter old to avoid legal concerns.)

Clearly Define Actual Competencies Needed, Including Soft Skills

Associations have a chance to reverse engineer the education-to-employment system. That is, we're in a unique position to start with end of the system, with employers and their needs, and work our way backward to what that means for students and their career preparation. In fact, we can create viable, affordable, nontraditional pathways that we know will deliver the core competencies employers in our professions and industries need. We can create an end-run around the traditional educational system and reap the benefits of long-term loyalty from people who get jobs and prepare for meaningful careers because of what we provide.

If you represent an association in a declining field, you can begin to scan the environment and help your members retrain into new careers where the skills they've acquired in your particular field will translate. And you can retool your vision and mission to represent the field as it changes and be ready to move with your audiences as the field shifts.

If you aren't sure how to define the competencies required for your field, a good place to start is the U.S. Department of Labor's **O*NET database**. You can look up occupations of all types by name or Standard Occupational Classification code and get a listing of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and common tasks associated with that occupation that you to build upon and modify as necessary.

Clearly Define Career Pathways

Students, the long-term unemployed, returning veterans, and others are increasingly confused about what they do or do not need to do to get a good job in a career they like. Associations can develop and promote career maps that provide guidance on what skills and competencies are needed, where students can find affordable options, and what career-advancement opportunities exist in your industry or profession.

Consider Alternative Delivery Methods and New Technologies

Delivery methods need to be diverse and well suited for both the content conveyed and the needs of the learner at the moment of learning. Associations are already skilled in conferences, meetings, and events. Many of us have instituted synchronous and asynchronous online learning experiences ranging from "virtual lunches" to fully online programs and everything in between.

The next frontiers in education are going to include virtual and augmented reality, just-in-time mobile micro-learning platforms, virtual presence technology allowing for remote onsite participation during educational events, and the incorporation of blockchain technology that will link learners to their permanent, portable, verifiable educational attainment records. As forward-thinking as you believe your educational department is, you need to continue to invest resources in experimental learning technologies to keep up with the rapidly evolving expectations of a more sophisticated educational consumer.

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Micro-Credentialing and Badging

Career paths are no longer linear and simple, with students earning a degree in a particular subject, getting a job in that field, progressing smoothly up a defined career ladder at one company, and retiring with the proverbial gold watch after 40 years. Resumes can't be linear, either, anymore. Qualifications are now about competencies that can be mixed and matched as necessary to meet employer or licensing requirements. Micro-credentialing and badging were created specifically to address this new way of acquiring and demonstrating skills. For more information on these technologies and what associations are doing with them, see the **2015 Association Learning+Technology Report** from Tagoras and YourMembership.com.

Blended Learning Environments

Traditional postsecondary education is starting to move into the realms of online learning, social learning, and apprenticeship models. Associations already have a great deal of experience with these more holistic learning environments. Our professional development programs blend knowledge acquisition with practical experience in a socially supportive environment. We need become even more strategic about what kinds of content are delivered best in particular settings and how we measure competencies.

Be Specific and Strategic When Deciding on Delivery Mechanisms

Associations have a large array of tools at their disposal: in person events like conferences, workshops, and symposiums; synchronous and asynchronous online learning; hybrid and virtual events; publications; and informal networking. New technologies, like holographic 3-D and advances in just-in-time mobile content delivery, are just around the corner. It's easy to get distracted by new, shiny technology, and now is not the time to pull back on experimenting with as wide a variety

of educational approaches as possible, but we need to remember that, as ASAE's 2010 *Decision to Learn* demonstrated, people, even millennials, still prefer to learn in person[65] The association "secret sauce" is the community and networking we provide that is difficult to deliver in any other setting.

Professionalize Content Development and Delivery

Investing in our members should also mean investing in the volunteers who lead many of our educational efforts. Institute good train-the-trainer programs to ensure that your educational programs are led by people who embrace the larger educational mission of the association, who have cutting-edge skills, and who are ready to provide top-notch experiences that help their colleagues advance.

Provide Quality Certification Programs

Creating a certification program is a large undertaking that is not for every association. However, according to ASAE's *Decision to Learn:*

> "…ASAE found that about one third of the associations represented in its membership offer at least one certification program, and many offer several. Certification programs are equally likely to be offered through trade and professional associations."[66]

Clearly there's room for growth, particularly given what we know about how favorably employers tend to view certifications and their impact on lifetime earning potential. If you have not previously considered this, now is the time to look into opportunities.

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65. *Decision to Learn,* pg. 44

66. *Decision to Learn,* pg. 29

If you are just starting with a certification program, or you already have one, we also urge you to consider your requirements to sit for the exams. If you currently require a degree, are you sure it's necessary, or as you just using it as a proxy qualification? Would work experience suffice? Could you offer credit for nontraditional pathways? What about allowing pre-qualification or pre-credentialing? Be conscious of the fact that creating unnecessary barriers locks potential talent out of your credentialing pathway at precisely the moment they also may be locked out of the postsecondary system.

Create Effective Alliances

Look for opportunities to create partnerships with other nonprofit and for-profit organizations, but don't give away the store. For example, during our research, we discovered an association that won a $250 million grant from the U.S. Workforce Investment Board to train people in its industry. The association then turned that money over to four community colleges to set up training programs on its behalf. Perhaps the association needed to work within the formal educational system for some reason. But we wondered: Did that association consider keeping the money and developing a global, universally accessible online learning community to impart that knowledge? Remember, you have power. Don't be afraid to think big.

A New Approach to Partnership: Ubiquity University

Trade associations and professional societies are no strangers to educational partnerships with community colleges and other postsecondary institutions. However, those partnerships tend to be limited both in scope and by geography. Community colleges are perceived as loci of vocational training, so there is often reluctance to provide more expansive educational offerings, and many programs are only offered on a single campus, limiting their potential student base to that location.

However, alternative partnership-based educational models are emerging. The leadership team at Ubiquity University (www.ubiquityuniversity.org), for example, is building a platform they believe represents the future of education for a new generation of digital-native learners who have come of age in a world full of complex challenges. In this paper, we make the case that associations could be a key player in providing the kind of educational solutions the 21st-century economy demands. Ubiquity University is another potential key player.

Ubiquity has already partnered with the U.K.-based Association of Business Executives to create a "BA Capstone Program," which gives students the option of working on two courses of study simultaneously,

one through their association and the other through Ubiquity's online degree program. Credit earned through the association is accepted as credit toward the Bachelor's degree.[67] If successful, this pilot program could serve as a model of innovation, seamlessly blending association and higher education programming.

Associations could potentially team up with Ubiquity to create customized, co-branded micro-credentialing, certificates, or full degree tracks. This could potentially radically change the relationships between associations, the industries and professions they serve, and the colleges and universities that supply their incoming workforce. With the resources of a university behind them, associations could potentially become a fully integrated part of the larger educational system.

Although we have been and continue to be critical of for-profit educational institutions, Ubiquity is incorporated as a "benefit corporation" with a commitment to providing high-quality, affordable education in a global setting. It is worth watching to see if other entities emerge with the same respectful, creative approach to working with the association community. For now, we are hopeful this is a harbinger of good things to come.

67. http://www.ubiquityuniversity.org/index.php/2013-10-19-11-37-42/ubiquity-partners/association-of-business-executives

Conclusion

There is broad, bipartisan consensus that the educational system in the United States is in crisis at the same time that rapidly evolving advancements in artificial intelligence and automation are poised to render many employment options obsolete. Concurrently, an exciting undercurrent of optimism is growing about what the future of work and education could look like in an open, mobile world.

Effectively coping with the 21st century will require all of us to collectively change our perspectives and, in particular, challenge the mental models we have built around the current education-to-employment system. There are many competing ideas on how to adjust to the coming changes, stabilize the employment sphere, and improve overall educational outcomes, but **one thing is becoming crystal clear: How we work and how we learn are both going to look radically different in the not-so-distant future.** The importance of affordable, high-quality education to the health and well-being of our global community cannot be overstated.

We see the potential for associations to become even more important players in the personal and professional lives of the individuals and institutions they serve. We in associations currently represent every industry and profession ("there's an association for everything!"), and we will continue to do so for new professions that are emerging. For every association that disappears in the next decade because the profession vanishes due to automation, others will arise to address the professional needs of thousands of individuals employed in professions that don't exist yet.

We need to collectively rethink our current and potential roles within the education-to-employment system. We represent both employers who are continually frustrated by the lack of talent they routinely encounter and workers who are concerned about the real impact the Fourth Industrial Revolution is about to have on their skill sets and livelihoods. These are real problems that we can solve. All we need is the will to do so. All systems can be hacked if you know where to apply the pressure. Who better to do it than associations?

Some believe the job of college is to teach you how to think and the job of employers is to teach you how to work. Back in the mid-20th century, that might have been true, but it is not any longer. Someone needs to fill the gap. Associations have a golden opportunity to assume that burden, provide workforce training that is robust and meaningful, and reap the rewards of doing so. Even if we only look at one feature of the new landscape—capacity—it seems obvious that no one sector will be able to handle every need. It's truly an "all hands on deck" moment in history.

The education-to-employment system in the United States didn't emerge fully formed as it currently exists. For the majority of human history, education did not take place in what we think of as the traditional classroom. Education evolved, and is continuing to evolve, in response to larger socioeconomic needs and trends and as a series of innovations that fit the time and place in which they occurred.

If we consider the establishment of our educational system as initially a creative act that responded to societal needs in the moment, it frees us to contemplate how we continue that act of creation and innovate around the ideas of learning, competency, and social connection.

Learning is a process, not a place. Some of the most compelling learning opportunities present themselves in collaborative, social settings. It is exciting to think that we may be standing on the edge of the creation of a new, more powerful era for learning. Associations may very well hold some of the keys to the learning kingdom in our hands, and we have a responsibility to use them wisely.

Questions for Reflection

- What do you know about the skills employers in your field need? How can you increase and update your knowledge?

- What are the traditional paths into careers in your profession or industry? What elements of those are actually required? Are there alternate ways people could develop and demonstrate competency in those areas? How could your association support the process of documenting and proving competency?

- What jobs in your profession or industry are at risk due to developments in artificial intelligence and automation? What is your association going to do to respond to the needs of those workers?

- What specifically can you do to assist recent graduates in finding their first job in your profession or industry? Helping young and mid-career professionals advance? Helping people retrain to enter—or exit—your profession or industry?

- What do you know about the outcomes your audiences are seeking in professional development? What about 'soft skills'? How can you increase and update your knowledge?

- What do you know about your audiences' skills and savvy? What learning technologies are they currently comfortable using? Which would they be willing to adopt?

- What is your existing inventory of professional development resources? Is it current? How can you best refresh the outdated content? Can you repackage the current content in ways such as micro-learning, badging, or gamification?

- What other organizations (nonprofit or for profit) are creating terrific professional development content in your space? Are there ways you can work with them?

- Credentialing is a major undertaking, but do you have content you could package into a simple workshop or certificate? How can you best make that available to people who may have limited time or funds (i.e., those who cannot attend your annual meeting or pay a large fee)?

- What is one thing you can do this week that will start moving your association down the path to being a vital partner in your audiences' professional success?

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About Shelly Alcorn

Shelly Alcorn, CAE, is a principal in Alcorn Associates Management Consulting and has 24 years of experience in the nonprofit sector specializing in trade associations and professional societies. Shelly stands at the intersection of technology, the education-to-employment system, and the association of the future. She conducts future-focused strategic shaping sessions and leadership and staff retreats, and is a keynote speaker focusing on critical issues faced by the association community and society at large.

Shelly served as executive director of the California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC). At the time, CAEYC was a 501(c)(3) organization with over 10,000 members in California in 37 separately incorporated affiliates. She also served as the executive director for the Automotive Service Councils of California (ASCCA), a 501(c)(6) trade organization representing the interests of over 1,200 independently owned automotive repair facilities in California. In that role she was also responsible for oversight of a for-profit subsidiary and a 501(c)(3) scholarship foundation.

Shelly has served as a staff member for organizations with diverse interests such as the California Society of Association Executives (CalSAE), California Automotive Wholesalers' Association (CAWA), and the California Peace Officers' Association (CPOA). She has extensive experience in board governance, chapter and component relations, government affairs, communications, membership, educational program design, and the execution of conferences, meetings, and events.

Previously, Shelly owned and operated her own consulting practice that provided government affairs, ballot initiative campaign work, website design, and grassroots lobbying program development for small associations. She co-authored the book 42 Rules for Engaging Members Through Gamification: Unlock the Secrets of Motivation, Community and Fun, available on amazon.com.

Shelly holds the CAE (Certified Association Executive) designation from the American Society of Association Executives. Find her at *www.alcornassociates.com* or on Twitter *@shellyalcorn*.

About Elizabeth Weaver Engel

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, M.A., CAE, CEO and chief strategist at Spark Consulting LLC, has more than 18 years of experience in association management. Although her primary focus has been in membership, marketing, and communications, her work has been wide-ranging, including corporate sponsorship and fundraising, technology planning and implementation, social media and internet strategy, budgeting, volunteer management, publications, and governance.

Spark provides strategic membership and marketing advice and assistance to associations that have the willingness and capacity at both the staff and board levels to ask themselves tough questions and take some risks in service of reaching for big goals. Forget settling for incremental growth by making minor changes to what you're doing—we're going to uncover and solve the root problems that are holding your association back!

Elizabeth combines a focus on asking the right questions and finding and implementing creative solutions with a broad understanding of the association sphere. Throughout her career, she has excelled at increasing membership, revenue, public presence, and member satisfaction while decreasing costs through a focus on the efficient and effective use of data, staff, and technology to serve organizational goals and constituents.

Prior to launching Spark, Elizabeth consulted in online campaigns and marketing and internet and social media strategy for Beaconfire Consulting and in a wide range of subject areas in association management in the not-for-profit consulting practice at RSM McGladrey, Inc. She has also served associations directly in a variety of positions, including director of member services and IT, director of marketing and sponsorship, vice president of marketing, and acting CEO.

Elizabeth is a certified association executive (CAE) and holds a master's degree in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia.