

# What the future holds: Changing job market challenges colleges, students

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Students head to class at the University of California, Berkeley. Photo by: Marcio Jose Sanchez/AP Photo

Eighty-five percent of the jobs that people will do in 2030 don't exist yet, the Institute for the Future has predicted.

That might seem like a high number to reach in only 11 years. Think about the careers that did not exist just a handful of years ago, though, such as social media manager or app developer.

Even if that 85 percent is ultimately smaller, the number raises some important questions about how the workforce is preparing for the future, starting in the classroom. What role should colleges and universities play? How should they prepare students for a workplace that is constantly changing?

Educational institutions are trying to answer that question, largely by adapting their programs to better suit an ever-shifting work landscape. Here are some of the approaches they're taking.

## What Should Colleges Teach?

There's often a disconnect between what you learned in college and what you do in the workforce. In 2013, a researcher found that 27 percent of college graduates were working in jobs that matched their college majors. However, 38 percent were in jobs that didn't require a college degree at all.

That is not to say that college degrees — and the knowledge that comes with them — are not worth earning. By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require at least some education beyond a high school degree.

Many colleges have struggled with whether to focus on cutting-edge technical skills in their programs.

In the 1800s and earlier, colleges were largely focused on teaching a broad swath of liberal arts. Students took courses in ancient languages, religion and philosophy. That tradition continued even as colleges shifted toward more specialized and job-focused education.

Today, about 12.5 million high school and college students are enrolled in at least one career and technical education course. The problem is many of those programs train people only for the jobs that exist today. The skills they teach could be useless within several years.

Some universities are embracing the technical skills model. Others see an opportunity to stand out as institutions that teach students "soft skills," such as problem-solving. These skills are useful not only for the jobs of today but also for whatever the future might bring.

### **Rethinking The Four-Year Learning Model**

Those who study education and the future of work say the four-year learning model needs to be rethought in a big way. They say education can no longer be seen as something that stops when a person graduates from college.

Jonathan Blake Huer is an education professional who consults with colleges to address the needs of the changing workforce. He imagines a world where college is not four consecutive years at all.

Instead, he'd like to see an education system where students could take a year or two of school, get a job and then return to school a few years later. This kind of system would be better at adapting to changing technology.

So the solution to training people for the jobs of the future? Don't, at least to a point.

"We can't possibly prepare people for all of the jobs that are ahead," said Brandon Busted. He is the president of Kaplan University Partners, which helps U.S. colleges adapt to the changing world. Busted says we need to create a world "where people are constantly being educated and retooled to stay relevant in their jobs."

Fewer employers are willing to train people on the job than they were 50 years ago. A government report found employer-sponsored training fell 42 percent between 1996 and 2008.

### **Internships And Add-On Programs**

Internships appear to be the new kind of training program. However, Busted said colleges could do more to make them part of a student's graduation requirements.

At the University of Utah, the new Degree Plus program seeks to fill the job skills gap. It offers eight-week courses intended as an add-on to a student's main degree. The courses include data analysis, web design and digital marketing.

It is additional work, and an additional cost, but many students find the added value is worth it. The skills could give them a leg up when looking for jobs or getting a promotion.

Other institutions are trying to mimic the workplace within the traditional classroom.

### **Bringing Companies Into College Classrooms**

Several public colleges have partnered with private companies to integrate their products into the classroom. One of these companies is Adobe, which makes computer software.

Professors are encouraged to use the products for unusual assignments, such as reinterpreting poems using video. Students at the University of Central Florida have used Adobe software to design 3-D-printed limbs.

The University of California, Berkeley, is another school that is trying to foster student-driven pursuits. Students there can design their own courses, such as "Impact of AI," a class on artificial intelligence.

"We're not just about preparing kids for work," said Jenn Stringer, the chief academic technology officer at the University of California, Berkeley. "We hope we are preparing them to have a huge impact on society in some way."

That way, she said, they will not only be prepared for whatever the job market looks like in 10, 20 or 50 years. They will be the ones shaping it.

## Quiz

- 1 Which statement would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) Careers such as social media manager and app developer did not exist five years ago.
  - (B) Colleges are adapting in different ways to prepare students for an ever-changing job market.
  - (C) It is impossible for educational institutions to prepare students for all possible jobs of the future.
  - (D) The University of Central Florida has students use Adobe software to design 3-D printed limbs.
- 2 Which answer choices describes two CENTRAL ideas in the article?
- (A) There is great uncertainty in the future of the job market; colleges and universities should be changing their roles to keep up with the ever-changing job market.
  - (B) Many career and technical education courses do not train students for the jobs of the future; some universities are focusing on teaching students problem-solving skills.
  - (C) The four-year learning model of college needs to be reimaged; education should become a lifelong pursuit for all students.
  - (D) Most of the jobs of the future do not currently exist; educational institutions are changing to prepare students to participate in future job markets.
- 3 According to the article, WHY do students participate in the University of Utah's Degree Plus program?
- (A) Students believe it helps them to advance their careers.
  - (B) Students believe a college degree is important.
  - (C) It is a part of the students' graduation requirements.
  - (D) It teaches them Web design skills using Adobe.
- 4 According to the article, WHY does Brandon Busteed think people need to constantly be educated?
- (A) to contribute to society in positive ways
  - (B) to help shape the future job market
  - (C) to learn how to develop new technology
  - (D) to be prepared for the ever-changing job market