Learning to Earning | Higher Education and the Changing Job Market
Session Summary

Civic Ballroom
Sheraton Centre Toronto
123 Queen Street West, Toronto, M5H 2M9

Thanks to Ian Hartlen and Adrian Philp, recent graduates from the Master of Public Policy Program at the University of Toronto, for their work in summarizing the conference.

Day Two | Friday, November 2, 2012

Session 7A | Skill development and succeeding in the labour market

Facilitator: Joe McDonald, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Jon Bellum, Colorado State University

Introduced the Colorado State University Global Campus. The problem: many people have had some PSE but did complete and earn a degree. This issue is of special concern to Colorado, which is a net importer of PSE students and has one of the lowest domestic participation rates in the US. Colorado does very well in recruiting educated workers, but does poorly when it comes to educating its own citizens. Thus, the Global Campus focuses on completion.

Underlined the continuing value of a PSE degree. It must be kept in mind, however, that degrees are not enough. Both skills and credentials are important. Therefore, certification is built into the degree program.

Higher education can meet the changing needs of students by linking learning with theory and industry needs, continuously assessing skills and knowledge to determine efficacy, developing student retention systems, and developing career transition centers for working adults.

The average debt of a university student in the United States is around USD $26,000. In Canada the number is around CDN $25,000. This is a serious issue. Too much debt can counteract the positive impacts of degree attainment and lessen return on investment. This issue will be of increasing importance as graduates compete in an increasingly global marketplace. Online education can help because it maximizes educational potential while at the same time, minimizing debt.

Higher Education
Quality Council
of Ontario

Conseil ontarien
de la qualité de
l'enseignement supérieur

An Agency of the Government of Ontario

Celia Popovic, York University and Ruth Lawton, Birmingham City University
Higher ed and the changing job market

Introduces the "Creating future-proof graduates" project at Birmingham City University.

There is a gap between what employers want and what graduates have. There is a disconnect between the results and expectations for employers, students and faculty. All three sides must be analyzed. The solution is to identify the areas where new and recent graduates lack skills or confidence and then create new resources within the curriculum to address these deficiencies.

Once the skills gaps were identified and the resources created, students were surveyed before and after they used the resources to find out whether the desired learning outcome had been achieved.

Findings include that students who engage with technology perform better.

Norman Rowen, Essential Skills Ontario

Puts forward 10 propositions for people most in need of education.

There is a pending skills shortage. It will be necessary to either import or train more skilled labourers. As a result, skills training becomes more important, especially to those lacking a high school diploma. This skills shortage is partly due to technological advances, partly to processes. High level skills are increasingly required at all levels of employment. Entry level jobs are "menial no more."

Literacy in essential skills must be redefined more broadly. Examples of this include complex communication and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Enhanced literacy in essential skills must be part of integrated skills training. It must be sector specific and developed through an "industry shared" approach.

Integrated programs need to be attached to more traditional college programs with industry-recognized credentials. "Assured quality" is needed.

These efforts need to be community-based and local, as well as part of a broader system. Programs must also be sector specific.

Recommends that we go ahead and start! Rather than waiting for new government policy to catch up with changing needs, we should learn by doing.