



The Future of Work Demands High-Quality Education Beyond High School

The problem

Economists, policymakers and other experts spend a great deal of time talking about the “future of work,” but in many ways, the future is already here. Profound changes are already affecting our workforce and economy, including globalization, automation, and artificial intelligence. We need to adapt to these changes by adequately investing in the education and training of our workers, because we’re far behind where we need to be.

- It’s not that robots are taking all of the jobs, it’s that we aren’t investing in people so they can develop the skills they’ll need for the jobs that are being created now.
- Consider this: By 2022, automation will create 58 million more skilled jobs than it eliminates.
- The operative word here? *Skilled* jobs. For our nation to thrive in today’s global economy and prepare for the future of work, we must help everyone, and especially low-wage workers, develop their talent so they can move up in the labor force and fill the jobs of the future.

The solution

To truly thrive in the emerging world of work, America must dramatically increase the number of people with education and skills beyond high school. That doesn’t mean everyone need attend a traditional, four-year college; in fact, we must dispel that “bachelor’s or bust” mentality. In today’s economy, there are many credentials that are valuable to employers and workers. These include not just master’s and bachelor’s degrees, but also certificates, certifications, licenses, and badges, to name a few. All credentials, including degrees, must be intentionally designed with the needs of a changing workplace in mind.

Millions more Americans will need education beyond high school so they can develop the skills they need succeed in today’s economy and thrive in tomorrow’s workplace. Here are four things that higher education, employers, and policymakers must do to help Americans win the future of work:

1. Create flexible, affordable occupational credentialing programs that lead not just to jobs, but to more opportunities to learn.
2. Forge more partnerships between companies and

education and training providers to ensure industries have enough employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to find success in work and life.

3. Build new tools that help people navigate the education, training, and career pathways available to pursue after high school.
4. Improve the quality and accessibility of information about future workforce needs, especially as demand grows for professional credentials.

Our shared responsibility

We all have a role to play in ensuring that everyone has an opportunity in today’s economy and can secure a place in the future of work. For example:

- Policymakers must stimulate investments in education and training.
- Workers must make informed choices about the skills and credentials that help them get ahead.
- Employers must better communicate what those skills and credentials are, and which ones are most valuable.
- They must also continue to increase their investments in human capital. Ongoing education and training opportunities, once reserved for the C-Suite, are increasingly available to all kinds of workers — and that is a positive sign.
- Employers should work to create innovative partnerships, ones in which firms collaborate rather than compete to build education and training programs that will fuel the talent pipeline.
- Employers and education providers must work together to build career pathways that make the system work *for* people, not against them.
- Every higher education institution — including research universities, colleges, community colleges, and training providers — must create affordable and flexible opportunities for workers to develop those skills and earn quality credentials.
- As credentials become the currency of the talent economy, we must ensure they clearly signal what workers know and can do across the career spectrum — not just for traditional students just entering the workforce.

- More transparency is needed to help consumers, employers, policymakers, and others understand how credentials and careers connect in the current and future workplace.

The research shows...

Recent research illustrates some of the challenges and opportunities the nation faces as we prepare for the future of work. For example:

- A recent survey shows that fewer than half of today's college students believe they have the skills they need to make a successful transition to the workforce. For instance, just 43% say they can construct a suitable resume. Also, few say they're prepared to perform well in a job interview (34%) or conduct a job search (31%).
- Only one-third of today's college students believe they will graduate with the skills and knowledge to be successful in the job market (34%) or in the workplace (36%). Only half (53%) believe their major will lead to a good job.
- There is a big gap between student and employer perception of workplace preparedness. While one recent survey showed 77 percent of students feel confident about their professionalism and work ethic, a separate poll of employers shows that just 43 percent see recent college graduates as proficient in these areas.

- Americans are deeply uneasy about their future in the workplace. Only 14% of adults say that, by the year 2050, the average working person in the U.S. will have more job security. About half (49%) say workers will have less job security, and 36% say jobs will be about as secure as they are now.
- When asked more specifically about employee benefits in the future, public views again skew negative. One in five adults (22%) say they expect employee benefits to improve for the average worker by 2050. About twice as many (41%) say benefits will erode, and 36% say they will be about the same.
- The vast majority of Americans see workplace automation as inevitable, and many view it negatively. In fact, 82% of those surveyed say that, by 2050, robots and computers will definitely or probably do much of the work done by humans. Roughly half (48%) say these advances have mostly hurt American workers, while only 22% say they have generally helped.
- When asked who should be most responsible over the next 30 years for ensuring that American workers have the right skills and training to get a good job, 39% of respondents point to the education system. Only 11% assign primary responsibility to employers, and the same share of respondents say government should be most responsible.

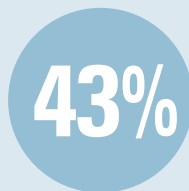
Challenges and opportunities By the numbers



of students feel they have the skills to perform well in a job interview.



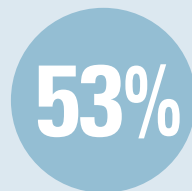
of survey respondents expect job security to increase by 2050.



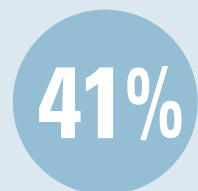
of employers have a positive view of graduates' professionalism and work ethic.



say automation has generally helped American workers.



of college students believe their major will lead to a good job.



of survey respondents expect employee benefits to erode by 2050.

To review source material for these data points, visit luminafoundation.org/FoWData