

Transcript

FedTalk: Closing the Essential Skills Gap: Preparing the Newest Generation in the Workforce
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Presentation

Moderator:

- Samantha Tyler – Outreach Coordinator, Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity (ODEIO), Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland Cincinnati Branch

Speakers:

- Julianne Dunn – Principal and Senior Regional Officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland Cincinnati Branch
- John Hambrick – Work-Based Learning Coordinator for the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio
- Aziah Kado – Manager of Work-Base Learning for the Greater Cleveland Career Consortium
- Dr. Kathy Humphrey – President of Carlow University and member of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland Pittsburgh Branch Board of Directors

Samantha Tyler:

Afternoon. Thank you for joining us and welcome to today's *FedTalk*. I am Samantha Tyler, Education Outreach Coordinator at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. It is my pleasure to kick off today's *FedTalk* session titled, Closing the Essential Skills Gap, Preparing the Newest Generation in the Workforce. *FedTalk* is the Cleveland Fed speaker series in which we share research that is relevant to our community. Past events have covered such subjects as the racial wealth gap, access to the labor market and financial literacy. All of our events can be found on our website clevelandfed.org or on our [YouTube](#) channel. According to a December, 2023 survey, by [intelligent.com](https://www.intelligent.com) of 800 U.S managers, directors, and executives who are involved in hiring, recent college graduates are struggling with many aspects of professional life, making them less desirable hires.

Here are some statistics. 38% of employers avoid hiring recent college graduates in favor of older employees. One in five employers have had a recent college graduate bring a parent to a job interview. 58% say recent college graduates are unprepared for the workforce and nearly half of employers have had to fire a recent college graduate. These alarming findings left us questioning if new hires aren't prepared for the workforce, how can we help them? Our panelists today are prepared to discuss this very topic and I look forward to hearing their insights and expertise. A few housekeeping items before we begin, during this event your microphone and camera are disabled. Please type and submit your questions to our panelists in the chat box. In case the Zoom meeting drops. Please use the dial in information provided in the invitation to join the call. And now I have the pleasure today of introducing our four panelists. The views they

share are their own and not necessarily those of the Federal Reserve Banks or the Federal Reserve System.

Julianne Dunn is a principal and senior regional officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland Cincinnati Branch. John Hambrick is the work-based learning coordinator for the educational service center of Central Ohio. Dr. Kathy Humphrey is the president of Carlo University and member of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Pittsburgh Branch Board of Directors, and Aziah Kado is the manager of work-based learning for the Greater Cleveland Career Consortium. Thank you all so much for joining us today and we are really excited. I'm going to start with a question for all of our panelists. If you could, please share about your role and the role of your institution's involvement in the development of essential skills in the next generation of the future workforce. And to level set we are defining essential skills as professional skills that make one successful in a job and are transferable from job to job, including professional presence, networking, communication, adaptability, agility, collaboration, et cetera. Julianne, do you want to kick us off?

Julianne Dunn:

Sure. So as Sam mentioned, I'm the senior regional officer overseeing the Cleveland Fed Cincinnati branch, but I am an economist by training and really spend most of my time with business and community leaders across our district building relationships, gathering information on economic conditions. So we talk about workforce a lot, as you can imagine. I think that's really the value that I can bring to this conversation is really the perspective from employers that I've spoken with. In terms of the broader Federal Reserve role those insights that I gather really help inform our economic research agenda. We publish them in the [beige book](#). If you're interested in reading more about some of the things we hear from our business contacts, we really just kind of try to understand the U.S economy and how it's evolving. So happy to be here and excited to hear from our other panelists.

Samantha Tyler:

Aziah, do you want to go next?

Aziah Kado:

Hi, yes, good afternoon everyone. I work for the Greater Cleveland Career Consortium, and one thing that's unique about our organization is that we are a collective impact organization and what that means, we have multi-sector partners, which include youth serving nonprofits, nonprofits, employers, foundations, and school districts working together to create aligning resources and working together to create a career pathway system that scales our planning and career exploration framework, also known as PACE across Greater Cleveland. And we do this through the K-12 school districts working with grades six through 12 right now with our PACE framework. And one thing that's really unique about our PACE framework is that the lessons that are being delivered in the classroom are by professionals, whether they employers, youth serving nonprofits or volunteers that really highlights those durable skills that we are talking about today.

We are hoping that through our PACE framework, students are more aware of themselves, have a greater understanding of the skills needed, such as networking, that is actually one of our lessons is networking. And then from there, once the students, these lessons are being delivered,

students are able to reflect on these lessons and see how they can use them in their future within their workforce or within their work-based learning. So that's just a foundation of the PACE framework that we have. And with this framework, it really does highlight those skills and we are hoping that students once they graduate, can transfer those, whether it's to a four-year institution, two-year institution, or straight into an apprenticeship or career.

Samantha Tyler:

Wonderful. Thank you. Dr. Humphrey, you're on mute. Dr. Humphrey.

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

Sorry about that. So I'm Kathy Humphrey and I serve as the president of Carlow University. And as I look at this topic, I find it very concerning because this is the work that we are trying to do every single day is to prepare the next workforce that is coming all of our ways. Unfortunately, some of the very things that you have highlighted in the survey are some of the things that we are talking about. For example, during period orientation for many years now, I have said, parents, you must promise me that you will not go on the interview. I've literally said that, and I think it's interesting because we think about this all from the standpoint of the student coming into the workforce, but it's really not just the student.

I really want us to think about the entire ecosystem around the student, how we've created this generation. And we are eating some of our own pie here because we kind of created this generation to think as they think. And so some of the work that we have to do now is to kind of help the entire community. And so it's not just what are we doing with students to make them better, but it's what are we doing as a greater society to make sure that we are setting the expectation for recent graduates about what is the workplace supposed to be? And I'll talk about that more later, but that's what I'm doing every single day, is hoping that I am helping students create that platform that they're really going to be able to thrive and really be successful in our greater world.

And the last thing I would say as introductory, this generation moves into this multi-generational environment, probably more multi-generation than most of people my age ever moved in. You kind of moved into an environment where people were somewhat similar background and experience that you had growing up. That's not their story, that's not their song. And so how is that interplaying into this preparation for the workplace and people are staying in the workplace longer. And because I am a baby boomer, I understand that their value systems are different from ours. So there's a little bit of clashing of that going on as well. So I hope we can talk about this topic today as an ecosystem and not just those terrible young people.

Samantha Tyler:

Absolutely. And I'm excited that we have such a diverse panel that we'll be able to talk about that. Last, John, if you want to answer that first question and then we'll get into our discussion a little bit further.

John Hambrick:

Fantastic. Thank you Sam. And Dr. Humphrey, I agree with you that we have an incredibly rich ecosystem in our workforce today, and I tell you our most experienced are learning from our least and our least are learning from our most and what a dynamic situation we have. So thanks

again for having me here, Sam. I work for the educational service center of central Ohio. The state of Ohio has over 50 ESCs, I serve here in central Ohio, over 30 plus school districts in our footprint serving over 225,000 students making us the largest serving ESC in the state of Ohio. The job title they gave me is Work-Based Learning Coordinator. But the last 20 years I've been in workforce development, so I really fancy myself as a workforce instigator, really kind of getting into those conversations to help students better learn our educators, be more aware, our business and industry partners to be better prepared for our workforce and what does that take.

And then what does it look like when we meld those together as Dr. Humphrey mentioned into that ecosystem where we've got student, educator, business and community partner working together to then become a more rich workforce that we have. I think what's interesting is that in my day to day, I work a lot with high school students, high school educators and business and industry to get that high school junior or senior in that readiness component for their next, whether that's a job, whether that's entrepreneurialism, whether that's certificate credentialing, two year, four year or military, whatever that next looks like. But I have to share though that that work really does start at the elementary. This work we're doing on a regular basis of that educational awareness for our elementary students.

And we see that a lot in the classrooms. They've given the name of social emotional learning and these skillsets that we want our learners to have much what you mentioned earlier, self-awareness, self-management, responsibility, decision-making, relationship skills. But all of that not only starts at the elementary, then it transitions into the middle grades where they start renaming it, they call it portrait of a graduate, whether that's done at a statewide level or a school district level of they're reinforcing it. The terminology changes a little bit, respectful citizen collaborator, responsible learner, self-aware. But that momentum though continues and I think one of the focuses now is not just on the skill set that our students are learning and living with, but how we're reinforcing that with our educators so they keep that momentum with that learner from elementary, middle, high school and post. So I'm super excited for the conversation. Thanks for having me here.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you so much, John. I'm going to start with our first, or I shouldn't say our first, but our next question for Dr. Humphrey. Can you talk about what training and career exposure the students at your university are seeking from their college experience? And can you speak to how that has changed over time? Has it affected the majors that students are choosing to pursue?

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

So yes, before I do that, let me give you just a little bit of background and then talk to you a little bit about when I talk about the ecosystem. So I want you to think for a minute about what this generation of students have been doing before they get to the workplace. They've shared very little. We are right now experiencing something called the demographic cliff because there are very few 18-year-olds, which means they didn't have a lot of brothers and sisters that they had to share with, so they didn't learn all of the necessities of sharing at home. Many of them had their own bathrooms, I mean never really having to wait. Then we have this whole notion that they played on little league teams where everybody was a winner and then we moved from that to don't run up the score. And we moved from that to your life is so important and you are the

center of the universe to you should be an entrepreneur. And you are so smart and so brilliant because these are all things that we have tooled them with throughout their lives at this point.

And then we try to adjust some of that when they get to college and then they move to the workforce with all of those ideas. And so one of the things what we're trying to do is first, we would like for every student to have an experiential learning opportunity so that they have the opportunity to really get in the workforce before they go to the workforce. The problem sometimes with that is they don't get the real experience of what it's really like to be an employee of that operation because they are treated oftentimes in those internships as guests as opposed to real employees. So they haven't had the opportunity to practice what it means to be an employee. As I listened to your list, I thought, boy, we don't talk about what does sick time really mean. I unfortunately have experienced this firsthand. I am the mother of this generation and I've done some of this to them and I am also, I have 110 nieces and nephews. So I see a lot of this from the personal side and the notion for me is just sick time. What does it mean?

An employee of ours yesterday, my generation, we were saying we haven't taken one day of sick this year. Sick means something different to this generation than it does to us. And so some of this is helping us to communicate cross-generational, and that's what I was saying earlier, I don't think we're doing a good job of that. I think we could do a better job of doing some cross-generational education from that standpoint because for me, a headache is not sick. A headache means take some Tylenol. A younger generation is, my head is hurting, I'm sick, ice took me off. And that might be too crude, but it's close right to what I'm saying about the miscommunication of it. But here's a few things that we are trying to do.

First of all, we're really trying to talk to students from the moment our students come in, we start talking to them about their calling so that they don't end up in jobs that they really don't want to be and places where they don't want to be. And the difference between you can do something to the difference between you should be doing something because this is giving you fulfillment, this is giving you joy for your life. Because we know that if you enjoy it that you will do it longer, harder, and better than most people will do it if they're just doing it because they can. Resiliency is something that we talk about as well because we find that this is something that this generation needs some support in is how to bounce back up, how to get back up, how to rethink, how to not give up just because you don't intellectually have the tools.

Just the other day I go to the dining, oh, I swear I'm in real sad quick here. I go to the dining halls once a week here just to sit with random students to keep myself in tune and learning about what they're saying. And I said to one of them who was struggling in our neurobiology class, and I said to them, "Have you considered downloading the lecture into AI, taking the notes from the lecture from AI?" So even the tools that they have available for them, they are not accustomed to using the tools, and that's a habit I need them to get into before they go out there. It's not as simply always what you thought, but how do you use new technology so that you can better learn? Because that is what is king now. Information is not so much king because everybody can get it. What do you do with the information, how you apply it and how you manipulate it and use it is what we need to make sure that they are well aware of. I'm going to stop you there. I can go on and on.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you so much. I think that leads really well into the next question I have for Julianne, which is how do the workforce readiness skills of recent young professionals compare to the

skills of young hires from past generations and how are companies supporting the development of these individuals like Dr. Humphrey talked about, how are they contributing to this ecosystem?

Julianne Dunn:

Yeah, absolutely. And I feel like Dr. Humphrey already covered many of the things that I hear. I think it's probably always been true that there's a tendency for older generations to complain about younger generations. So there's certainly some filtering that has to happen in some of these conversations that I have. But some things that I do hear pretty frequently are that younger workers would rather type than talk. They don't like to put their phones down, and they don't really value that interpersonal in-person interaction to the same extent that older workers do or that previous generations did. They're also less likely to want to work with their hands and more likely to want to work remotely. At the same time, I feel like younger workers are actually very used to being constantly connected, and that's kind of what drives them to not want to put their phones down.

So even though they don't necessarily want to be in the office, they're kind of used to having that kind of constant connection, which drives then a desire for a lot of reassurance and really detailed instruction as well as a desire really to know that their employer cares about them, cares about the things that they care about, and is willing to invest in their longer-term well-being. That all leads to a lot requests for frequent promotions that sometimes surprises business leaders. But I do think that you are, to the second part of your question, you are starting to see some employers looking more at building career paths and building in work-life balance in a more intentional way than they might have in the past.

One anecdote that I found really striking was someone in an industry that in her words, glorifies overwork, she finds that newer employees just aren't willing to work those 60, 70, 80-hour work weeks. And so what that does is then force the firm to find every opportunity to get more efficient, which is really better for everyone. And then maybe finally to the last point that Kathy was making as well, I do hear some positive feedback about how tech savvy younger employees are, so they bring more expertise at the onset and then a lot more willing and able to really adopt new processes and technologies than older workers are, which is kind of helping firms innovate and grow in a new way.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you so much for those insights, Julianne. John, could you elaborate a little bit more on what exactly work-based learning is and the effects you've observed on high school students entering the workforce? I know you also talked a little bit about elementary and middle, if you want to throw that in there too. And could you share some context about the role that companies play in work-based learning?

John Hambrick:

Well, the context for employers and business and industry partners is invaluable when it comes to meaningful work-based learning experiences, and I use that word intentionally because not all experiences between student and employer is work-based learning. Here in the state of Ohio, we're really big fans of having that be meaningful, whether that's through a career technical education, a plan pathway, or just even in the comprehensive schools, regular high school where

students, they've committed to taking a series of classes and that to help them better understand the competencies involved, they have an on-the-job site work-based learning experience. And that can really take place in a lot of different places. Yes, at the workplace. So you think of a traditional internship, a pre-apprenticeship. In our healthcare pathways clinical, where students are actually in the hospitals or in our senior living care centers, engaging with patients, utilizing the skills that they've learned.

We also know here in the state we are growing to be big fans of entrepreneurship. It's been kind of a slow road, but it's gaining traction. And then with that, we also see with inside of school districts a meaningful work-based learning, a school enterprise. So students are trying to figure out, hey, if I want to get a message across, do I print stickers? Do I print out T-shirts? Do I print out letterhead? How do I then take that to business, to the student population, to our parents? I love going to a high school football game and seeing the big heads of students, and that's often done through a school enterprise and that goes towards credit for that student and their pathway and their ability then to graduate with key competencies. But I think a big difference though between that meaningful work-based learning experience and then employer engagement.

But again, to the last point of your question, Sam, it's really the employer partnership, having employers engage at the elementary. Holy cow, how often do you see at elementary schools, our police officers, our fire departments, our nurses go in and start doing that early career awareness? And then in the middle grades a little bit more exploration. So job site visits, right? Having those business and industry partners say, "Hey, we will open the doors to 15, 20, 30 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, set a pretty cool program for them and they can learn about something they didn't know about because we do know the phrase that what they don't know, they don't know." And so until we can provide that experience and that employer partnership, then they're going to continue not to know. But as we continue into our high school grades for that employer engagement, holy cow, where would we be if we didn't have professionals coming in and doing mock interviews?

Where would we be if we didn't have professionals coming in and doing portfolio reviews, whether that's on the digital media side these days or the traditional graphic design? We absolutely crave that partnership. And I think one of the big things here in the state of Ohio that's gaining additional traction are our industry sector partnerships. So whether that's through Ohio Manufacturing Association, through any one of the smaller industry sector partnerships, through construction, healthcare, information technology, all of these employers are coming together. They've clearly identified that they will be able to better engage with the middle schoolers and high schoolers and family to help influence what that engagement would look like in the schools and then post-school.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you so much, John. I think this leads very well into the question I have for Aziah because working with industry is so invaluable for students, Aziah, how do you and your role demonstrate that value of work-based learning to the companies you work with, and what are some hesitations you might've observed from industries in trying to facilitate that partnership?

Aziah Kado:

Thank you, Sam for that. I've been working with community partners and employers for the last eight to nine years, and I will say it is a difficult task to really show the value of a work-based

learning experience to employers because some of their hesitation is around how do I build capacity within my organization to even host a work-based learning opportunity? And then that one question that they have will take them off of the table. And so I like to come in with the mindset of showing this is an organization, whether it's an employer such as Highland that works with students on a regular basis and provide work-based learning opportunities to show other employers how to do it. I definitely believe if industry start talking to one another about their successes within the schools and with work-based learning, then we'll have more employers coming to the table to be able to facilitate these opportunities.

Another reason, another let's say hesitation that employers have is, well, if my employers are constantly working on work-based learning opportunities, then how are they going to be able to do their day-to-day tasks? Again, this should be something that's a social responsibility for all employers to get involved in what is happening in the K-12 space when it comes to career exploration and readiness. And so that is where I typically come in is being that bridge between the school districts and the employers and showing them how to foster this relationship. One of the key areas that I think is big is if we can bring employers to the table around curriculum development when it comes to work-based learning. One of the things that the GCCC is currently doing is we are bringing employers and employer intermediaries to the table to develop a competency model for their industry. And then once they create this competency model, after that, we are bringing them to the table again to develop work-based learning opportunities that are specific for their industry and their organizations.

So we are creating a space for them as well as providing them the resources and tools to be able to facilitate these work-based learning opportunities. I think it's crucial that if we bring employers to the table around this employer development around work-based learning, then they will see the value that this is important. I definitely believe that if employers do not step up, then one, they cannot talk about the skill set of the workforce that is lacking. I definitely believe if they show up a little bit more eager to want to be involved and if they do not know how, reach out to organizations, whether it's at educational service center, whether it's at the GCCC or whether it's at career centers or their peers, how do we create these work baseline opportunities that can be authentic for students because we have a social responsibility? If we want to continue to employ these young adults that are coming from out of college, school, wherever they're coming from, we need to play a part in that.

And so I think it's really just important to show that you are valued, this is how you can get it done, and showing them their peer that doing it well and maybe make modifications within their system. I definitely think that employers need more support than we give them in this space to create these work-based learning opportunities for students. And I also just want to highlight that oftentimes it's not easy to put on a work-based learning opportunity because sometimes districts have constraints too. And so we have to provide resources for those districts that may not be able to facilitate or have students participate in work-based learning opportunities. There are a lot of barriers that prevent certain students from getting involved in internships, getting involved in apprenticeships. One because maybe the resources are not within those school districts or because of other barriers such as transportation, how our students are really getting to these internships and these work-based learning opportunities.

This is another area where employers can step up and help provide their resources from their companies to really provide authentic work-based learning opportunities for students. That way they can have those experiences before they leave high school. And I just want to note one more

time to John's and Kathy's point that it does not start in college, it does not start junior year. It actually starts in elementary. I just left the South by Southwest educational conference and the American Service Association, they did a study that said middle school students, by the time they get to middle school, they're less engaged than they were at the elementary school level. But they have shown that once students are exposed to career opportunities, career readiness, that they are more engaged. If employers are coming at that sixth, seventh grade level, they are more ready to enter high school knowing that, hey, I need to be focused on my schoolwork, extracurricular opportunities as well as career readiness opportunities that can potentially land me a job. So I think there's value, we just have to continue to have employers at the tables when we are having these discussions.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you so much, Aziah. I think that's an excellent point and I really appreciate your passion for the work that you do, all of you. Those were wonderful, thoughtful responses and those were all questions that we developed. But I want to, for the sake of time, move into some of the questions that our audience submitted ahead of time. And this question is for everyone. So whoever is interested in answering this first. Could you share a real world example of a successful partnership between educational institutions and businesses that are effectively addressing this skills gap? So anyone who is ready to answer that question.

John Hambrick:

I could give a quick example. Just here in central Ohio, we have the Central Ohio Healthcare Sector partnership. Our four hospital systems, our two provider systems, all six came together and said, "We have an issue." And they have partnered together, identified key occupations across all six institutions and then start engaging with schools. And we just held an event, interactive, hands-on, get into not a human lung but a pig's lung, get into taking temperature, taking pulse, over 1100 freshmen. I mean, what an incredibly rich example of business and industry saying we need to be in with our schools.

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

One of the things that we are doing here is we are partnering with corporations and nonprofits as often as we can to upskill. And so for example, with Highmark core care, we've created a certificate. And what we did was we asked them, what do you need your employees to know and how can we help you create that certificate around courses that you want them to have and you want them to know? And can you reward the employee if they finish that certificate, not only help them with tuition, but can you reward the employer in some kind of way to demonstrate exactly what Julianne is saying that you care about them, that you're interested in their upward mobility, that you are interested in them upskilling?

And so all of this program says all of that to the employee that they currently have. And I think that's one of the partnerships that we've created where we've worked together to get the company what they needed and in doing so the student, what they needed in their space and at their time so that we really are helping them to sustain their employees but provide them more essential skills to be successful in their positions.

Samantha Tyler:

Aziah, I saw you come off mute if you wanted to share an example as well.

Aziah Kado:

Yeah. So one of our intermediary partners up here with manufacturing is Magnet. And I just love how Magnet operates in Northeast Ohio, specifically around our students. So one of our opportunities for students to engage with employers, we do it through site visits. And so Magnet has just took it to a whole other level instead of just students just coming in, hearing from employers, maybe asking some questions, seeing the building and then going home, they actually bring the students in, give them a foundation of learning about manufacturing, show them the space where manufacturing is happening. Meaning it's not a lot of heavy steel work is going on, but a prototype what a sensor looks like. And then students go into a classroom, learn a little bit more, talk to employers, and then they're actually tasked with building something within the manufacturing space. So they are learning those skills, how to interact with one another, how to collaborate in the team to build a specific type of prototype, and then they go home.

And so that is just showing engagement at a different level because it's memorable. They're using their hands, they are talking, they're seeing how area works. So that's just another way of showing an industry partner just taking hold of one of our core areas when it comes to work-based learning. I know our organization is proud to partner with Magnet, but I'm extremely excited every time that I know there's a Magnet site visit coming because I just want to show up and just see how it goes and see how the students are really impacted by their work.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you guys for sharing those successful partnerships. This next question I'm going to pose to Julianne and also Dr. Humphrey, do you see a shift away from employers relying on degrees and looking at other ways to measure and validate skill attainment and job readiness?

Julianne Dunn:

Yeah, I would say definitely yes. I definitely see employers that are so hungry for workers that they're more willing to hire you even if you don't have the piece of paper, but also because there are cases where an applicant maybe has the piece of paper but not the skills. And so I've definitely heard a lot of examples of we have now a test that you have to take when you come in to actually prove that you can do the work and that maybe being a bigger factor than whether or not you have the stated degree and experience. And I think particularly, we can't have a conversation these days without talking about AI, but I think particularly as we have a need to upskill the current workforce to learn some of those new skills, I think you're likely to see more things like that where it's really a skills-based test of do you have what we need to move the company forward? But I'll let Dr. Humphrey jump in as well.

Samantha Tyler:

Oh, you are on mute. Dr. Humphrey.

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

There is a lot of conversation right now in the country about whether or not you need a degree or not. So we're looking at that in two ways. One way is that we are creating more certificates, more certificates that speak directly to what they need one way. The other way is that I think

what I'm concerned about is are we creating another class of people? And I say that because oftentimes for people of color, education has been the credential that they needed in order to gain opportunity, and is that going to be the case? I find alarming, Julianne don't kill me, but I find alarming of this whole notion of test-taking because it means that if you weren't in an environment that taught you how to take a test, you're not going to get the employment. And that's one of the dangers that we may see. However, I do understand it, but the other piece of that is that these other skills that have to be learned.

I worry that we are creating a society where we're teaching people to do one thing and they don't know how to do anything else. And what a college education is supposed to do is to help you be a learner, help you think critically, help you analyze, help you pull apart data and create answers as opposed to this is always the answer, this is how you always do it. And so I'm a little concerned about that, especially in a world where technology is becoming king. So I say yes. Yes, am I hearing that there are a lot of people who are downplaying the need for a college education. And what I find most interesting about that is oftentimes some of those people that you hear saying that are still sending their children to college, I find that interesting.

But then the other piece of that is that we have to be responsive in higher education. We are constantly working to change our curriculum. The curriculum today is not the curriculum that existed when I was in school. The communication major is not what a communication major is then. If you're not talking about social media, digital media and the communication, you don't have the right kind of curriculum for this generation. And so I do think our industry is transitioning and we are transposing what we currently think of as a college curriculum to something that's very different, that's responding to what is needed for today.

Julianne Dunn:

Can I just respond really quick so I absolutely hear you, and I wanted to make sure that I was clear. I actually think that some of the employers that I've talked to that have gone away from looking at the piece of paper to here, let's bring someone in and see what they can do. It actually is very in line with what you're saying is I need someone that can come in and put together this thing, not necessarily someone that can recite to me all of these five things. And so I just wanted to clarify that I actually think that there's kind of both of those things going on.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you both. This next question, again submitted by a registrant I think is for mostly John and Aziah, but anyone's welcome to answer. Could you share an example of how work-based learning has been awarded credit in the traditional public school system and maybe a success metric of what that looks like in that area?

John Hambrick:

Aziah, feel free, then I'll go next.

Aziah Kado:

I think, John, you hit it on the point earlier. One of the ways that work-based learning has been given credit is really through the career tech education that some of the schools have, the CTE. And so those pathways, a lot of those students begin either at some sophomore depending on where the student is at age-wise, but a lot of those opportunities begin junior and seniors. And

then that really entails classes that the students take. So for instance, if students are interested in maybe cosmetology for instance, they will take specific classes that align to cosmetology. Also, they have to do, John, correct me if I'm wrong, but I want to say it's about 250 hours of work-based learning experiences to get that either seal or that credential for cosmetology or any type of work-based learning experience, it's about 250 hours that students have to complete. So I just want to highlight that it's really essential if we want to prepare our students in advance that we need those employers, we need more employers to get involved in those CTE pathways. That way more students can take advantage of those opportunities.

John Hambrick:

And I'll add on to that. And really too, the crux of so much of this conversation today is the participation of our business partners. And I think that not only as we continue to grow work-based learning, we are also integrating quite nicely into our curriculum, whether in their regular high school and middle school and our career textbook education schools, our industry recognized credentials. I think these industry recognized credentials for some instances provide a very rich path for students that can go directly into the workforce and then continue their education. And it is not a stop gap. It's not a, hey, you didn't really do well academically, so we're going to get you this industry recognized credential. That's not the case. It is rich, it is robust, and it is often done in partnership with an employer to ensure that that student has the competencies of that industry recognized credential.

Just as an example, kind of fun, drones. Holy cow, the future of drones is now. And that industry recognized credential in working with drones is not just for bridge inspection through a whole department of transportation, but also to the point earlier, it's multimedia. It's so much right now for being a certified drone operator to get you into an engineering firm, a construction firm, Ohio Department of Transportation, as I mentioned earlier, so many different ways. And in our great state of Ohio, fortunately, the state recognizes that if a student earns a particular type of industry recognized credential, they call it on the IWIP list, and if the employer is associated in getting that student that IRC, that they provide an incentive, \$1000 incentive for the business partner, and then they incentivize the school and will pay the school \$1,250 for each industry recognized credential that's on that list. And those are the in demand areas, engineering, technology, construction, modern manufacturing. I think in this case, the state is putting their money where their mouth is to help our workforce be as skilled as they can be at a high school age.

Aziah Kado:

And if I can just note on one of the things that John said, I definitely think it's important that we need to find ways to be able to incentivize employers as well. Like state wise, if states are going to in their policymaking include career readiness opportunities and work-based learning opportunities, there has to be a census for employers to get on board because we know that there's not a lot of employers that are engaged and business partners engaged in a work-based learning opportunities at schools, and we need more of them. And so how can we incentivize them to continue doing the great work that they are doing because we know, like I said, it's hard for them to build capacity within their organization. It may be a new paid position. And so how can we incentivize employers within their companies to continue the work of work-based learning for our schools and our school district, especially in public education.

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

One of the things I'd add to this conversation is one of the things we're trying to do is really look at the skills that individuals are learning on the job. And we are trying to take those skills and equate them to credit hours so that those individuals who want to get a degree, they don't have to start from zero. We can take and examine the work experience that they've had in their career and say, if you've done this much work in finance, you may not need finance 101, you may not need business 101 if you've been running a business for X amount of years. And so we're going to give you X amount of credit for that to encourage you to continue to upskill and to get more of what you might need to get to a higher level.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you all for that insight. I think Dr. Humphrey, the comment you just made really plays into this question that just came in through the chat and you and Julianne would probably best be able to answer this question. What are some ways we might increase the skill sets of the youth slash younger generation that are already in the workforce?

Julianne Dunn:

I can talk a little bit about what I've been hearing. I do think that as businesses are growing and changing and the world that we live in is changing, I think there is a recognition that we're going to kind of prepare the workforce for the next step. And so, one of the things that I feel like I'm hearing with increasing frequency is programs where you can come in and start maybe in one job, but we're going to be paying for you to go to school to get that next step up. So we talked a little bit about how care earlier, but that's certainly a place where some of those entry-level health aids bedside positions don't really require a lot of credentials and could be filled by someone coming right out of high school while the hospital system then pays for them to get the associates or their bachelors or whatever it is.

And so building in, I think it addresses several things. It addresses some of the things I talked about at the beginning where younger workers, this generation really needs to know that they have that progression coming and that they're going to have that feedback from their employer. But then I think just really taking a broader look at what are the skills that my business is going to need and how do I look across my workforce and figure out, can I get this person who's doing this thing a little bit more exposure to this so that they're ready when we need to launch this new product or whatever it is.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you.

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

Definitely. I think that the first response that I gave really speaks to that a lot is that how can we really reward people for the experiences that they do have, the knowledge that they do have so that they're not paying to get information that they already have. And then how can we work closer with employers as well to make sure that we are providing them the kind of information that they need when they go out? I see in the chat soft skills, but we haven't really talked about

those soft skills. And those soft skills are really what I think most concerns are about are those soft skills, the ability to network, the ability to connect, the ability to work in a team, the ability to stay with it even when it gets difficult. The ability to bounce up against others' negative thoughts or negative actions and to be resilient.

And I think these are all areas that we have to work on while they're with us, but I think the employer also can't be blind to this human being who's coming into your environment has not been in the workforce before, so you can't act as if they have been in the workforce before. And so onboarding should include some of those soft skills that you're expecting. I think the worst thing that has happened to us is this whole COVID issue because what we lose with people staying at home and young people demanding to work hybrid or demanding to work from home is we lose that networking ability.

We lose that crossing all of the business that happens when you are just walking down the hallway. All that is lost and the networks, and something that I keep saying to young people is how will people know you other than the people that you're working with if you're just talking to the people that you're working with every day? I'm real concerned about that because they're not building professional networks and that's going to be crucial for their career. Maybe not for this job, but for their career, that network is going to be important.

Julianne Dunn:

And I'm so glad you mentioned that-

John Hambrick:

If I could just add in, just hosted a student high school panel of IT, interns. And this young lady said, "Look, you know what you did not prepare me for meetings. Meetings, meetings, meetings. You didn't prepare me for that." It was just the truest comment that was shared with that panel. Sorry, Sam, I wanted to just put that in there.

Samantha Tyler:

No, thank you. Thank you so much. Julianne, did you want to add?

Julianne Dunn:

Yeah. I just really wanted to raise up the piece about being seen. I think that's one of the things that a lot of the employers that I've spoken to, they raise concerns about as we're talking about this kind of return to office hybrid work type thing. And you do see a subset and it's across generations of people that really are, I just want to work from home, but the ability even for the people that you work with every day to evaluate your skills, and so you have these folks that are saying, I really think I'm ready for a promotion, but they're never in the office and so that you don't really get to see them as a person. You just see maybe their team's chats or the work that they put out. And I think particularly as you think about growing folks into leadership, all of those other things are really important.

Samantha Tyler:

Thank you so much for all of those insights. We are getting close to time, but I just wanted to give each panelist an opportunity just kind of as a closing remark. Dr. Humphrey, you actually

kind of answered this question already, but so given everything that we've shared today, how do you think these different sectors, high school, community, industry, higher ed, is there anything else that you haven't mentioned that you want to touch on about how we can come together to ensure that the future workforce is prepared from an essential skills perspective?

Dr. Kathy Humphrey:

To give people some time, I'll just reiterate, I really believe that we all have to work together. And it's not just one group, but it's everybody working together to create the system around this new professional. That first of all, we remember they are new professionals and that we don't assume that what we think they know, they already know. Then I think because of who they are, developing those systems that Julianne is talking about is here's how you're going to get promoted, because that's what they have been in a system of. Their entire lives have been in about how do I climb to the next rung? And so how will they climb to the next rung? And can you connect the rewards of growing as a professional in your organization?

Two, can you connect the two together so that you are getting and they're getting at the same time, they're growing and you are growing because you're moving in the same direction? And then how do you continue to make lifelong learning a part of their existence? And how do you reward that lifelong learning that you're not done, that you can't possibly know everything yet? And so how do you get them to the point where you are doing that in a way that is positive and does not feel condescending to them? And how do you just build in to work with who they are as opposed to insisting on simply being who you are, but trying to find a nice balance between the two of them?

Aziah Kado:

I'll go. Thank you Dr. Humphrey for that. I just want to echo those sentiments. Here at the GCCC, we are a collective impact organization, so we have higher head institutions, employers, non-profits, school districts continue to work together on the systems changing work. We know that this cannot happen overnight, but we want to make sure that everyone, and when we come to the table that we are preparing our scholars. It does not start at the university level and this does not start at 18. It starts at the K-12 level. And so I just want everyone to continue to come together with this system changing work that we are all collectively doing in our organizations, so that the students can be prepared to go to Dr. Humphrey's institution. That they are ready for Julianne and Sam at the Federal Reserve.

And so we want to make sure that the scholars are developing those skills and the way that they can do that is through exposure and experience. And we need those professionals to be at the door. We need everyone that's on this call, everyone that's listening to really show up in the K-12 space and help our scholars and prepare them. And I think they can get that through first-hand knowledge from professionals. And so I really hope that moving forward more people are willing to volunteer in those spaces for our scholars. Thank you.

John Hambrick:

And to continue Aziah's stream of thought here is business advisory councils are rich and robust in K-12 environments. Business advisory councils are going to include whether it's at a school district, a high school, or an ESC level, all areas of education, all areas of education, business and industry partners, community partners, higher ed partners, all for the betterment of our

student learners getting into the workforce. So to Aziah's point, if you haven't found a business advisory council near you, it's pretty attainable. You could one, go to the Ohio Department of Education Workforce and Google Business Advisory Council, and you'll find one. There are hundreds throughout our great state that are looking, as Aziah mentioned, they're looking for business professionals, community professionals, parents. They're looking for everyone to contribute to the skill sets for our learners. So that's one area I would certainly reinforce.

Samantha Tyler:

All right. Well thank you all for this incredibly informative discussion. Information about today's program will be sent in a follow-up email and the recording of the event will also be posted on clevelandfed.org. Please join us on May 14th at 3:00 P.M. for our next *FedTalk* on the Federal Reserve supervision function. And thank you so much for joining us today. We hope you have a great day.