

# Career Education Review

*A Publication of CECU, the Voice of Career Education*

*Graduate of  
Interactive  
College of  
Technology*

**PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS:  
THE ROLE OF  
POSTSECONDARY  
CAREER EDUCATION**

Spring 2024



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A Publication of CECU, the Voice of Career Education

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Career Education Review (CER), a publication of CECU, the Voice of Career Education, is dedicated to providing top management, owners, sector leaders, and other stakeholders with the in-depth information required to operate a successful educational institution. With more than 95 years in circulation, CER is a trusted ally in the admission, retention, placement, and education of millions of prospective students every year. CER serves as the daily pulse of the career education community — bringing a snapshot of the news, trends, research, and upcoming events.

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A low-angle photograph of a graduation ceremony. Numerous black mortarboard caps are suspended in the air, having just been thrown by graduates. The graduates' hands and arms, some wearing black gowns with colored cuffs (yellow, purple, white), are visible reaching upwards. The background is a clear blue sky with light, wispy clouds.

# Pathways to Success: The Role of Postsecondary Career Education

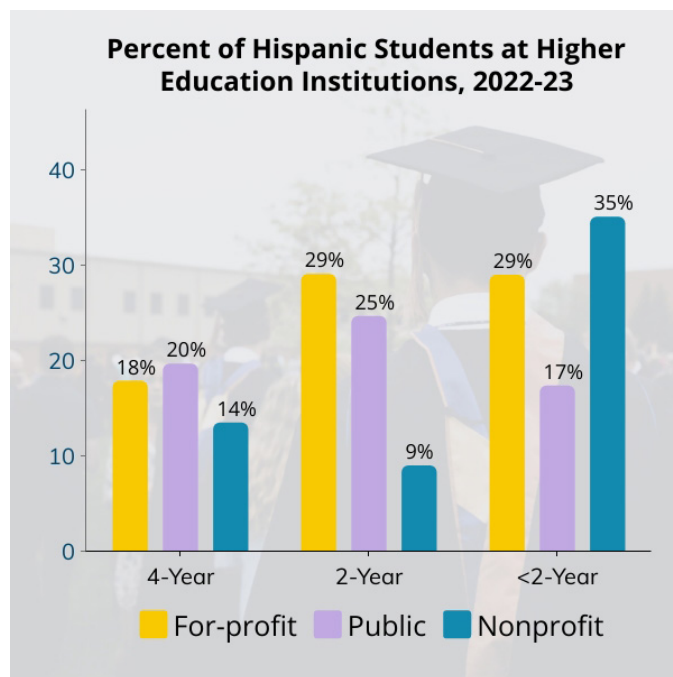
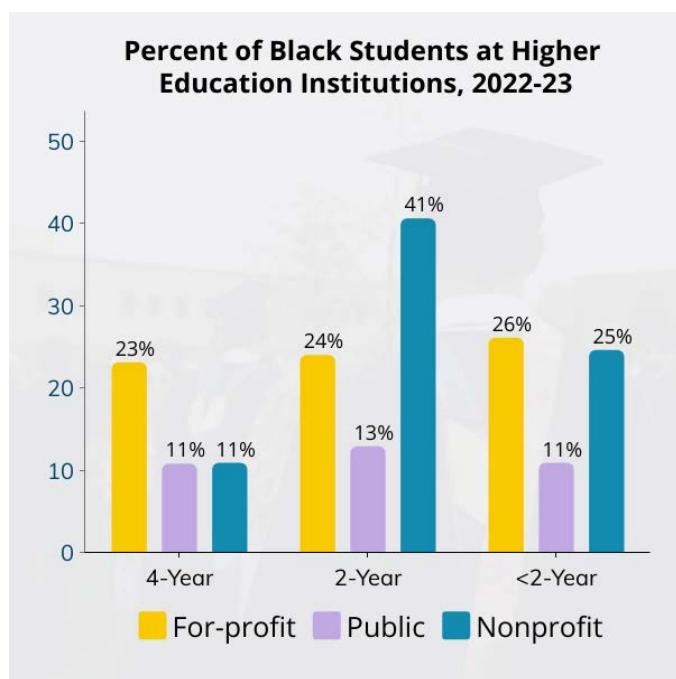
*By Jenny Faubert, Vice President of Communications, Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU)*

Over the past few years, confidence in traditional education has decreased, while there has been a surge in interest in career and trade institutions. Nontraditional and younger generations are interested in accelerating their career paths, preferring a more direct educational route. This trend is evident in the choice of over 1 million part-time and full-time students opting to attend for-profit career schools in the academic year 2022-23. The choice to enroll in career schools is driven by flexibility, accessibility, accelerated pathways, and robust student support services.

### Diverse Student Body

Career schools offer a welcoming environment to underserved students including women, students of color, adult learners, veterans, those from low-income backgrounds, and first-generation students. Boasting a student population where 67% are students of color, 74% are adult learners, 66% are women, and 62% are first-generation students, for-profit career schools exhibit a remarkably diverse student body.

In most cases, career schools cater to a larger proportion of students of color than other sectors of higher education. At the four-year level 41% of students at a career school are Black or Hispanic, compared to 31% at public and 24% at nonprofit institutions. Similarly, at the two-year level, career schools enroll 53% of students who are Black or Hispanic, compared to 38% at public institutions and 50% at nonprofit institutions.



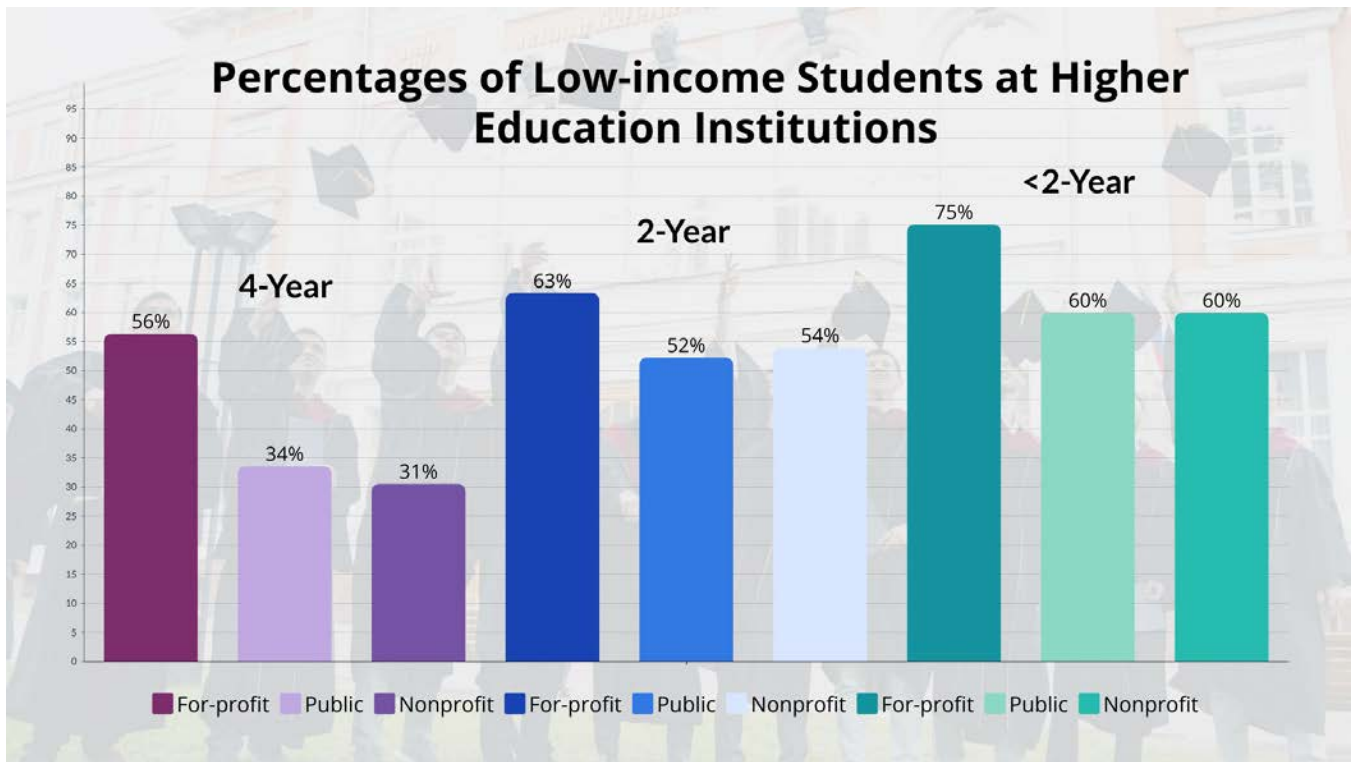
It is a common trend to find adult learners, typically aged 25 and above, among students attending career schools. In fact, 80% of students at four-year for-profit career schools fall into this category, whereas only 26% and 38% of adult learners are enrolled at public and nonprofit institutions. At the two-year level, nonprofit institutions cater to 61% of adult students, closely followed by for-profit career schools at 55%, while public institutions serve 29% of this demographic.

Career schools stand out for their higher enrollment of female students compared to other sectors of higher education. At the less-than-two-year level, 73% of students at career schools are female, surpassing 48% at public and 52% at nonprofit institutions. Similarly, at the four-year level, career schools lead with 67% female students, in contrast to 57% at public and 59% at nonprofit four-year institutions.

The experiences of individuals such as Marlo and Shana Williford-Johnson, along with Shana's two brothers, who all completed their education at Lincoln Tech in Melrose Park, IL, exemplify the types of students that career schools serve. Marlo successfully transitioned from a tumultuous sales career to a stable managerial role at Johnson Controls, crediting his achievement to the technical skills he acquired at Lincoln Tech. Likewise, Shana's progression from a medical assistant to a critical care registered nurse highlights her career advancement. Devin, who graduated in Collision Repair & Refinishing, discovered his entrepreneurial drive and now thrives as a self-employed professional. Marcus, a graduate in Electronic Systems Technology, utilizes his expertise as a supervisor at Comcast.

For-profit career schools enroll the largest proportion of low-income students across all educational levels. At the





four-year level, career schools serve 56%, exceeding 34% at public and 31% at nonprofit institutions. Moreover, 75% of students at career schools pursuing less-than-two-year programs come from low-income backgrounds, with a similar trend observed at two-year career schools, where 63% of students are classified as low-income.

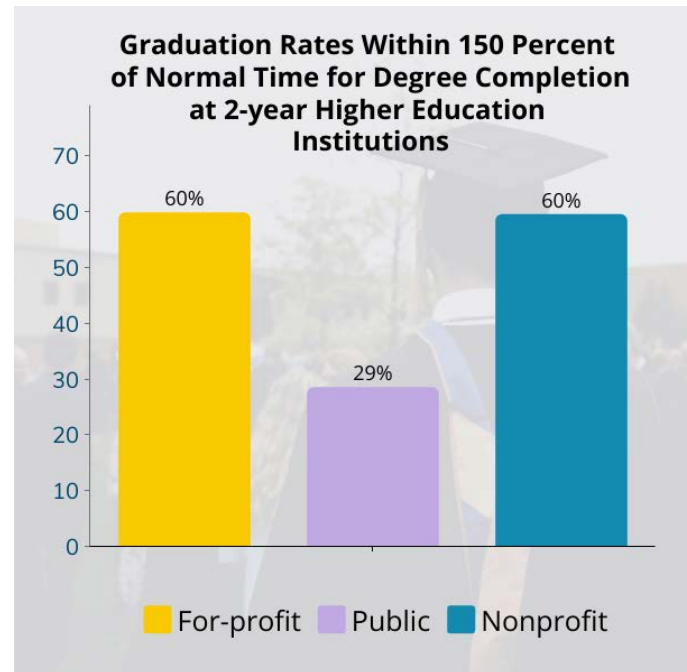
Career schools play a vital role in providing access to education for underserved populations, including women, students of color, adult learners, veterans, those from low-income backgrounds, and first-generation students. With their diverse student bodies, career schools foster an inclusive environment where individuals from various backgrounds can thrive.

#### Retention and Completion Rates

Numerous students attending for-profit career schools have explored alternative education routes before turning to career schools. Students often view these schools as their sole option for advancing their education, as evidenced by the notably lower transfer rates compared to public and nonprofit institutions, with only 17% transferring out at the four-year level (compared to 22% at public and 26% at nonprofit institutions), and a significant difference at the two-year level, where only 5% transfer out from for-profit career schools (compared to 15% at public and 25% at nonprofit institutions).

The median completion rate is similar among for-profit and nonprofit two-year institutions, with public institutions lagging behind. The median completion rate for the 2021-22 academic year for two-year institutions saw a 60% completion rate at for-profit and nonprofit

institutions and 30% at public institutions. Among Pell Grant recipients, both two-year for-profit and nonprofit colleges exhibit the highest graduation rates at 60% each, while public institutions have the lowest rate at 29%.



One possible explanation for the high completion rates could be the higher retention rates observed in two-year for-profit institutions, with rates of 69% compared to 44% at public institutions and 49% at nonprofit institutions.



Additionally, at the less-than-two-year level, for-profit career schools exhibit a higher retention rate of 73% compared to the public rate of 65%.

Many students seeking expedited entry into their chosen fields opt for enrollment in for-profit schools. These institutions are responsible for conferring the majority of less-than-two-year completions across all sectors, representing almost 80% of all such degrees/certificates awarded. Moreover, career schools confer a significant portion of less-than-two-year degrees/certificates awarded to Black and Hispanic students, comprising 86% of all conferrals.

### High-Growth High-Demand Careers

Many industries, like healthcare and the trades, are experiencing staffing shortages. Career schools specialize in awarding degrees tailored to prepare students for the workforce, many in high-growth fields. For-profit career schools award more degrees in fields with expected occupation gaps and high projected growth, such as management, computer science, and healthcare-related occupations.

Nearly half of the associate's degrees and 34% of certificates conferred by for-profit institutions are in the healthcare field. Specifically, for-profit schools conferred 73% of medical/clinical assistant degrees, 48% of medical record technician degrees, and 19% of nursing degrees.

For-profit career schools also account for a significant share of certifications/degrees in various fields, with over 80% in massage therapy, 76% in cosmetology, 63% in dental assistance, and more than half of all truck driving certificates/degrees awarded.

Career schools play a pivotal role in meeting the educational and workforce needs of underserved populations while also addressing critical gaps in the job market. As the demand for skilled professionals continues to grow, the contributions of for-profit career schools in preparing students for success in high-growth fields cannot be overstated.

Career schools serve as crucial gateways to education for a diverse range of individuals, including women, students of color, adult learners, veterans, those from low-income backgrounds, and first-generation students. With their notably diverse student bodies, these schools foster inclusivity and provide opportunities for individuals from various backgrounds to excel. Additionally, they play a vital role in addressing workforce shortages, particularly in high-demand fields such as healthcare and the trades.

Profession	Percentage of Degrees/Certificates Awarded by For-Profit Schools
Massage Therapists	82%
Cosmetologists	76%
Medical/Clinical Assistants	73%
Dental Assistants	63%
Truck and Bus Drivers	54%
Medical Record Technicians	48%
HVAC Installers and Mechanics	42%
Aircraft Mechanics/Technicians	41%
Electricians	36%
Chef/Culinary Specialists	35%
Audiovisual Technicians	33%
Phlebotomists	30%
Auto Mechanics/Technicians	29%
Plumbers	28%
Welders	22%
Respiratory Care Therapy and Assisting	20%
Nurses	19%
Network Security	13%

#### Resource:

CECU. (2024) Career Education in the States. <https://www.career.org/web/web/Resources/Career-Education-in-the-United-States.aspx?hkey=65127441-6aef-4057-84cb-d8a02bc35339>



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# Changing Lives

*By David S. Cohen, Director of Marketing, Interactive College of Technology (ICT)*



*Interactive College of Technology Students*

The only constant is CHANGE is a well-known saying. Yet, change does not come easily. Our students come to our career colleges to gain the knowledge they need to change their lives for the better. However, students often need training beyond lessons in the classrooms or the HVAC labs. When they come from immigrant families or families where there was no example of how to act in an unfamiliar setting, they need help in how to seek a different life.

Some of these skills can be taught by an Employment Assistance Coordinator or Employment Office. Employment Assistance professionals often teach “soft skills,” such as customer service, professional dress, interview techniques, and resume building. At our institution, Interactive College of Technology, our Employment Assistance Office has a closet of professional clothes that students can borrow for interviews. They also tutor students on how to act in different professional settings.

But change goes beyond an interview or a different career. Technical programs, associate and bachelor's degrees are known for giving students a launching pad for a new life, however other factors can hold a student back from accomplishing their goals.

When researching how people actually change their lives, a postsecondary education is often a given and doesn't enter the conversation. Research shows that habits, mindset, and lifestyle are greater determinants regarding whether a person reaches their goals. Expert psychiatrists and researchers provide considerable advice on the subject; however, a few suggestions seem to be on the majority of lists.

### 1. Change of routine

Most of what we do, we do from habit. Most of our daily habits are good ones: brushing our teeth, eating a good breakfast, and calling mom. Other habits pull us back, such as not making eye contact, arriving late, or dressing slovenly. Teaching students to change small behaviors like these for the better can mean a huge difference.

Studies suggest a formula for making these changes. According to University of California professor Ronald E. Dahl, it takes 66 days to establish a new habit. In the book, "The Power of Habit," Charles Duhigg sets a road map for creating or changing habits. First, you need a cue, such as a reminder on your phone or alarm clock. Then a Routine, which is the activity you are used to performing when faced with a particular cue,

for example, brushing your teeth before getting into bed. Finally, you get a Reward, the feeling of success, a smile from your partner, or when brushing your teeth, a minty-fresh sensation in your mouth.

Here are some other hints we can share with students:

- Start small. Even minor changes can change their direction and little changes add up.
- Create a reminder that will force them to both think about the habit and provide a reward for achieving it.
- Ask if what they are doing is helping them reach their goals. If the answer is “no” then change routines.

### 2. Write down your goals

You cannot know if you are going in the right direction if you do not know your destination. A 1953 Yale study and a 1979 Harvard study surveyed MBA students and their goal setting. The Harvard study found that 87% of students made no goals for after graduation; 13% made goals and wrote them down; while only 3% of the class had both written down their goals and planned to achieve their goal. Ten years later, the 13% that had written out goals were making double the salary of those that made no goals. The 3% of the class that both wrote out their goals and their plan to achieve them were making 10 times that of their other classmates.

Of course, Harvard MBAs are going to be more driven than many other populations. However, the study has been repeated over and over, with similar results. A study by Statistic Brain found that only 8% of those that make resolutions around New Year's Day succeed. Yet of the 8% that keep their resolutions, 62% wrote them down.



Graduates of Interactive College of Technology



Goal setting is not just an exercise, it is a skill that can be taught. Colleges can teach students to:

- Not just think about what they want to achieve, write it down, and put it somewhere they will see it.
- Set up a goal and then backtrack to decide what steps they will need to follow.
- Think about their lifestyle and what they will change to meet their goals.

### 3. Improve your relationships

Research by Harvard Psychologist Dr. David McClelland showed that the friends that a person associates with most will determine 95% of their success or failure in life. A person's reference group has a powerful psychological effect on a person. There are many theories for why this is:

1. The people a person surrounds themselves with often leads to a change in aspirations. If you play baseball with people who want to go to the pros, you are more likely to desire the same destiny.
2. People take on the traits of those they see. If a strong



Graduate of Interactive College of Technology

work ethic or an insatiable curiosity is modeled for us, we are more likely to take on the same habits.

3. Role models and mentors can offer valuable advice on situations that they have already faced, which limits stumbling blocks.
4. A competitive spirit can materialize between groups of friends or adversaries that inspire people to work harder and push toward a goal.

One or all of the above may be true, even in a broader sense. The public can easily see Bill Gates' impact when challenging other wealthy individuals to give away 90% of their assets in their lifetime. At networking events, colleagues are encouraged to discuss business issues and find solutions together. Professional associations or unions also may serve this role.

College, in a very real sense, exemplifies this suggestion. Students who are grouped into a class have similar goals of learning the materials and doing well in the course. Study groups form, usually with students of similar study habits, where they help each other succeed. Group projects help students to push each other. Even if a student does not have peers to inspire them, instructors, advisors, and administrators can serve as support for the student. These individuals can:

- Teach social skills that are important for meeting new associates.
- Use internships, externships, or apprenticeships as ways to make connections within a chosen industry.
- Promote memberships in professional organizations and networking groups.

One of the great joys of working in our field is the ability to change people's lives for the better. Expanding a student's knowledge, helping them earn certifications, and helping place them in a lucrative position is admirable. If we can promote better habits, goals, and social abilities, we also give them street know-how and social skills as well as textbook knowledge so they can continue to adapt and navigate their future.

**David Cohen** is the Director of Marketing for Interactive College of Technology (ICT). He has more than 24 years of marketing experience. Starting as a Copywriter and Creative Director at agencies like McCann Erickson's Austin Kelley Advertising, J. Walter Thompson, and Focus Brands, he then moved over to the strategy side working with Crawford & Company, JELF student loans, and now leads the marketing team at Interactive College of Technology, a two-year college with seven campuses located in Texas, Georgia, and Kentucky.



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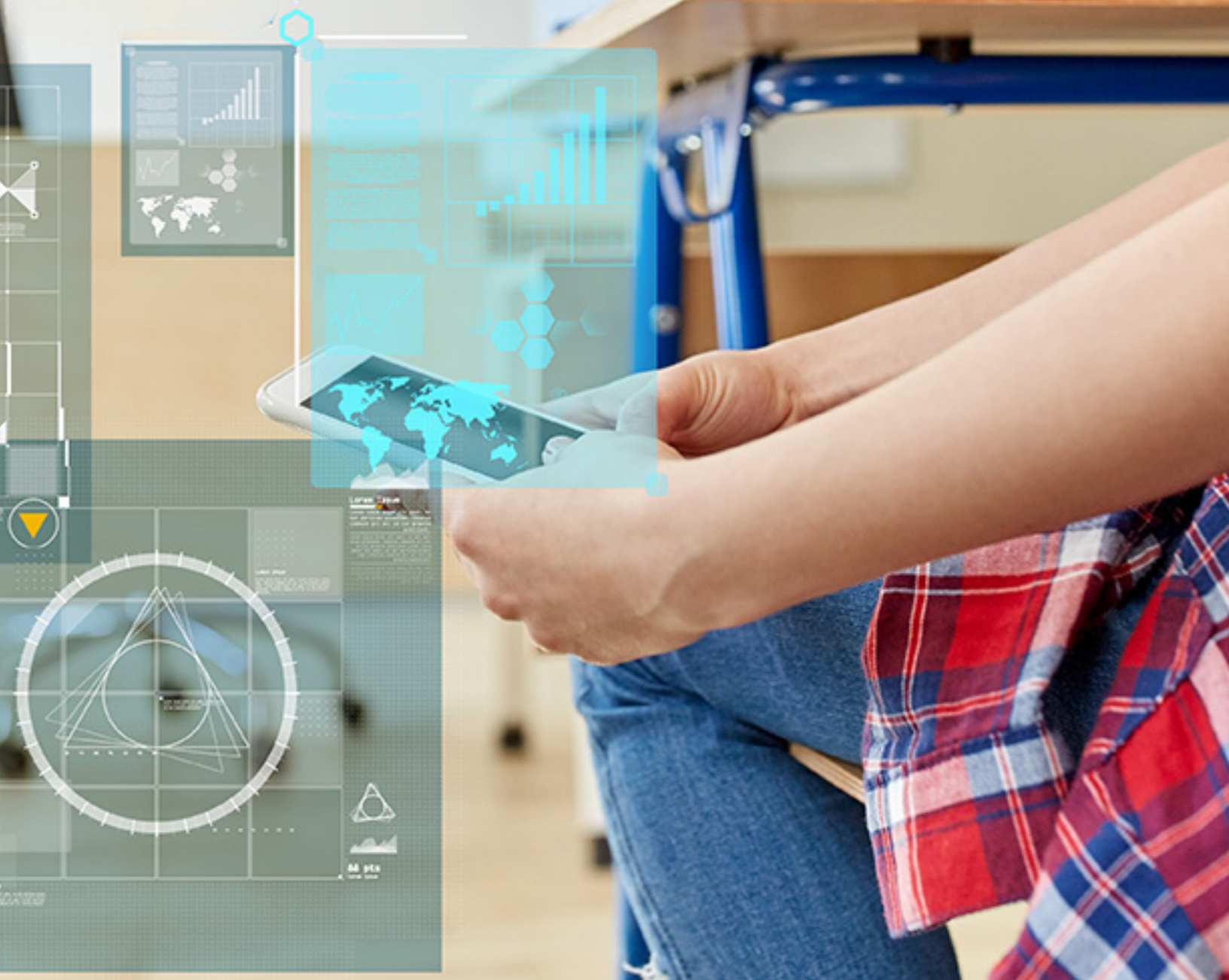
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# AI is Challenging the Business Models of Higher Education Institutions

*By Stephen Murgatroyd, PhD, CEO, Collaborative Media Group Inc, Canada*



While debate rages over the inappropriate uses of AI, what is not being talked about enough are the opportunities that next-generation AI tools create for rethinking teaching, learning, and assessment at a fundamental level. How might AI transform the business models used in career colleges in North America?

Five key elements of this transformation, described by EdTech imagineers like Sam Altman (CEO OpenAI)<sup>1</sup> and change advocates such as Crow<sup>2</sup>, Seldon and Adiboye,<sup>3</sup> and Winnick<sup>4</sup> are:

1. **An end to “batch” teaching.** Instead of working with cohorts of learners in grades or classes, individual learning agendas are developed based on an assessment of the skills, competencies, and capabilities the learner already has as well as ongoing conversations about the purpose of the learning. Where does the student want the learning to take them? AI systems, coupled with coaching, mentoring and some instruction and peer support networks, then ensure the learner is supported on a carefully mapped learning journey. Teaching can still take place: Students challenged with a set of related issues can be brought together for a boot camp or focused period of instruction before returning to their individualized study activities.
2. **An end to “time” as a learning metric.** Currently, undergraduate courses are described in terms of credit hours. Learning and assessment on demand, fast-tracking or slow tracking using adaptive assessment, and modular learning when the student is ready liberates learners from the time-based metric.
3. **An end to exams as we know them.** Exams are an efficient way to judge the output of batch teaching but are not good indicators of learner knowledge, skills and capabilities. With AI-enabled assessment generation, automated marking and assessment on demand, exams are no longer needed. More authentic assessments that are project-based, team challenges, work-based learning activities, and student self-directed projects can become the norm.
4. **Increased feedback and advising.** AI systems do not have “office hours.” They are available 24/7 and never tire of finding new ways of responding to student queries and needs. Subject-focused chatbots that have been “fed” all necessary information about a subject will do an excellent job of subject-matter advising and teaching. Analytics suggest that some students need to be supported by teachers or others with unique skills, such as writing coaches, statistical support workers and numeracy advisors. The aim will be to ensure every learner follows and is successful in the learning journey they have contracted to complete.
5. **Greater accessibility.** Higher education systems

are organized around blocks of time: semesters or terms. There is no longer good reason for this. Students should be able to begin their learning at any time and be assessed when they are ready. A four-year undergraduate degree could easily be completed in 16 months by a diligent student, for example, or in even less time by someone arriving in the program with substantial life and work experience. AI systems can also leverage technologies to ensure the resources and supports for learners reflect who they are (culture, language, experience and skill) and what challenges they face (disabilities, learning styles, etc.).

This is the kind of “fantasy of the future” behind the educational components of ChatGPT-5 and several other AI educational products and services.

These ideas challenge the current business models and processes of education institutions and may lead to the arrival of new entrants to the market. The organizational change and transformation agenda they represent is likely to scare away existing institutions rather than attract them. Nonetheless, the conversation has begun, and these are some of the elements of that conversation.

### Why Transformation is Unlikely

The five elements of the change bundle just outlined are not going to happen for seven key reasons:

1. **They are too disruptive of the current revenue streams, organizational structures and contracts of employment that exist in school, college and university systems.** What is being described above is the prescription for new entrants into the market. The existing providers will not leap to a different future.
2. **They would lead to governments struggling to regulate such a complex system.** Governments seek simplicity in how they approach regulatory control and funding. A system based on individual learning journeys would require a fundamental rethink of what outcomes were, what costs were and where the public interest lay. Governments will not want to do the demanding work such a system requires.
3. **Unions would oppose these developments.** Teacher unions are already concerned that AI will cost jobs and they will resist changes that require a major shift in roles, responsibilities and scope of practice. Such developments as outlined here would also require significant investments in professional development and a reimagining of teacher education.
4. **It would require new infrastructure and costs.** Education budgets, especially for higher education, have been reducing per capita over time. The



developments outlined here would require substantial broadband investments, significantly enhanced access to affordable technology for all students, not just some, as well as significant investment in maintaining support services for all users. Most educational systems are strained already. The long-term impact of the widespread use of AI on electricity systems and water systems (used for cooling servers) is a cause of serious concern.

5. **The understanding of “quality” would need to be reimaged.**
6. **Students' levels of digital fluency are not adequate for the imagined transformation,** nor are the skills of self-management and self-direction.
7. **Employers are already struggling to understand the education systems' “products”** – this will confuse them even more.

We are about to enter a time of change. It is more likely to be incremental and continuous rather than transformative unless new entrants come along with new business models and approaches to certification. We should keep a close eye on edX, Coursera, Udemy and FutureLearn – all major MOOC providers – to see how they embrace the possibilities AI affords.

Meanwhile, all should explore, experiment, assess and leverage AI to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Get past the concerns about academic misconduct (concerns that have been evident since the Ming Dynasty) and start to see opportunities rather than threats. AI is here to stay.

## Resources

1. Listen to an interview at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAGQY9\\_2Heo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAGQY9_2Heo)
2. Crow, M. (2020) *The Fifth Wave: The Evolution of American Higher Education*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.
3. Seldon, A. with Abidoye, O. (2018) *The Fourth Educational Revolution: Will Artificial Intelligence Liberate or Infantilise Humanity*. Buckingham, UK: University of Buckingham Press.
4. Winnick, A. (2023) *The Generative Age: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Education*. New York: ConnectEDD Publishing.



**Stephen Murgatroyd, PhD**, is the former Dean of Athabasca University's Faculty of Business and founder of the world's first fully online MBA. He has been an innovative pioneer of technology-enabled, flexible learning since he began his career at The Open University

UK. Since he left full-time work at the university, Stephen has worked extensively in the private sector as CEO of a large UK human resource consultancy and then, back in Canada, as an entrepreneur leading consulting, technology, and publishing companies. He has consulted for governments across Canada and worldwide on technology innovation, higher education, organizational change, and transformation. He is the CEO of the Collaborative Media Group Inc. and an in-demand keynote speaker. He has published over forty books, four hundred papers, articles, and book chapters.

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# Adapting Programs for Emerging Industries

*Market demand signals opportunities for expansion and evolution of traditional career education programs*

*By Mary Claire Salmon, EdTech Writer, Lightcast*





Postsecondary proprietary institutions can be powerful economic engines, often delivering a compelling return on investment for graduates,<sup>1</sup> as well as the communities in which they operate. But this impact is not automatic. It comes from maintaining strong market alignment and a high level of responsiveness to employer needs.

In today’s technology-driven world, this adaptability is more important than ever. Lightcast research shows<sup>2</sup> that 37% of the top 20 skills requested for the average U.S. job have changed since 2016, and as reported in a World Economic Forum survey,<sup>3</sup> employers anticipate a 23% “labor market churn” in the next five years as new jobs emerge and some become obsolete. (The groundbreaking arrival of ChatGPT in 2022 serves as one example of just how quickly new technology can affect the economic landscape.)

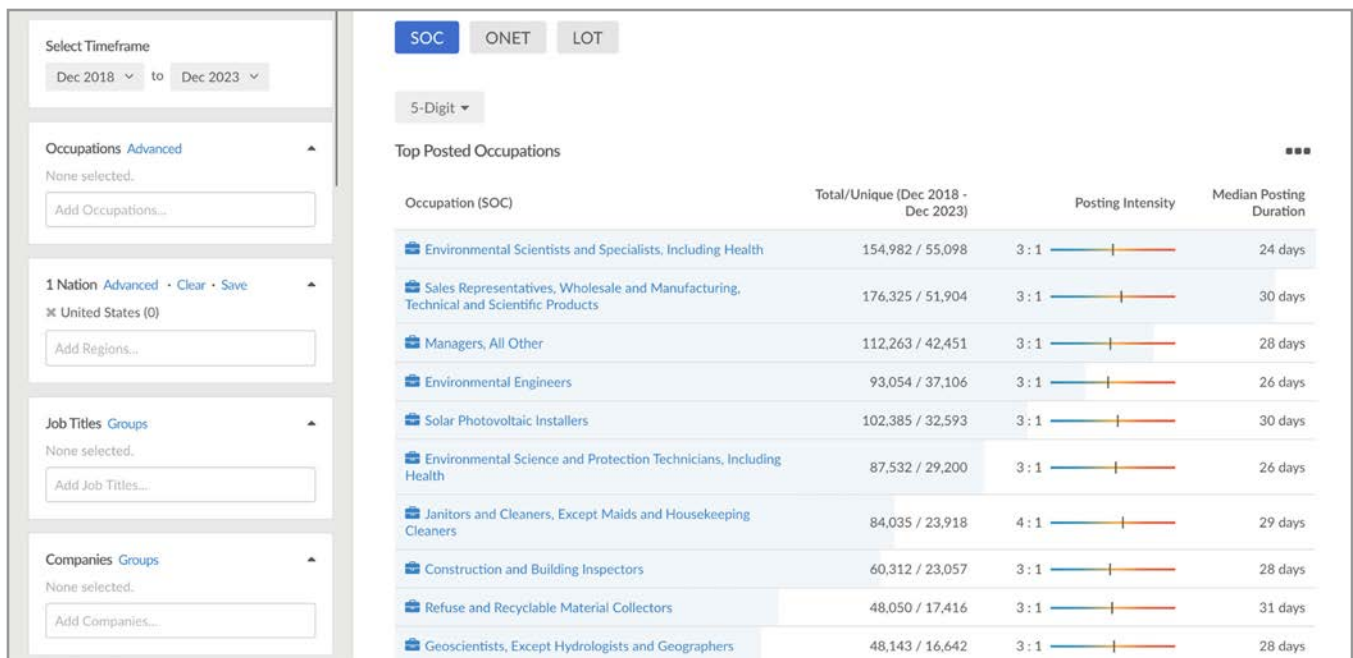
In these shifting tides, proprietary institutions are well-positioned to prepare learners for the future of work. However, success in this area will require an ongoing commitment to career-relevant curricula and data-driven decision-making. In particular, academic leaders can use real-time job posting data to spot emerging roles and skills in the labor market. This insight can then enable institutions to update existing programs so that they better align with the requirements of new or evolving occupations.

In this article, we will look at two specific examples: Adapting electrical programs for the green jobs revolution, and adapting computer science programs for the boom in cybersecurity demand.

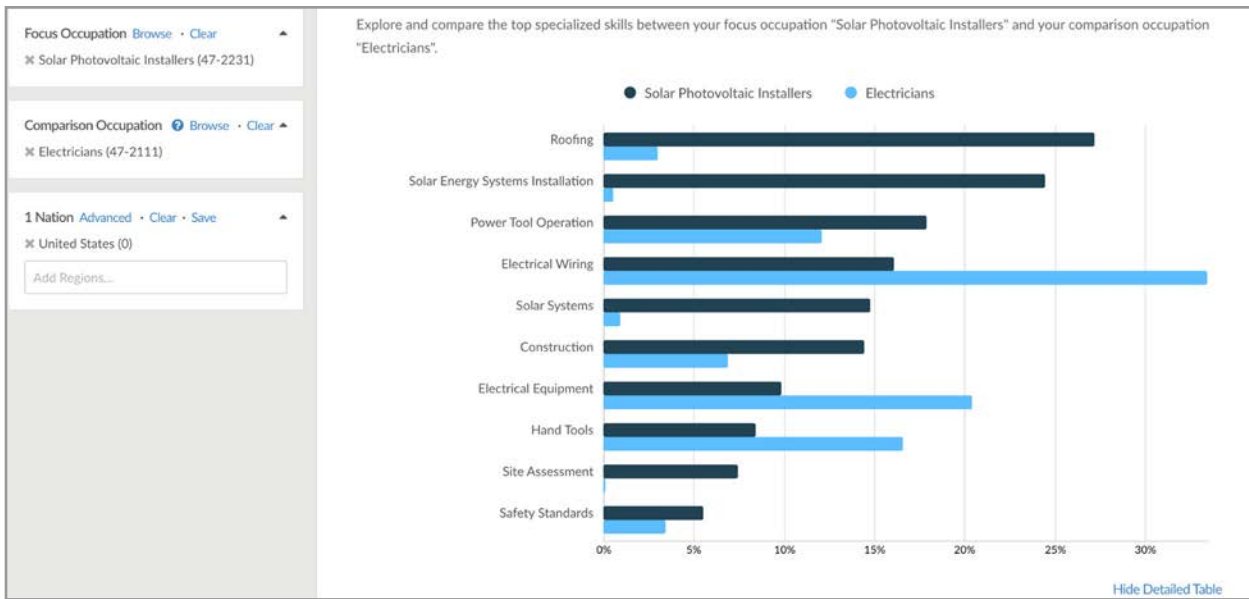
## Adapting Electrician Education for the Green Sector

One of the most common vocations that career schools prepare students for is that of an electrician, and for good reason. An ever-in-demand profession, the number of electrician jobs has long held steady in the U.S., even experiencing 8% growth in the past five years, according to Lightcast jobs data. Further more, the median salary for electricians in the U.S. is roughly \$60,000 a year – a strong sum for a profession in which only 2% of job postings require a bachelor’s degree. However, almost half of electricians *do* have some college or associate degree, and many proprietary institutions are at the front lines when it comes to equipping students for this profession. There is another strength to electrician programs, however: institutions with strong programs in this field have a unique opportunity to expand to meet the needs of an emerging sector – green jobs.

Lightcast data revealed a notable increase of over 50% in the demand for green jobs<sup>5</sup> in the U.S. from 2019 to 2023, reflecting the rise of social concern and public policy around environmental sustainability in recent years. One of the most in-demand jobs in the green sector is solar photovoltaic installation, an occupation that has grown by roughly 250% in the past five years. If you compare job posting data for solar photovoltaic installers and electricians, you can easily see the overlapping skills required in both fields – such as electrical wiring, electrical equipment, power tool operation, and construction.



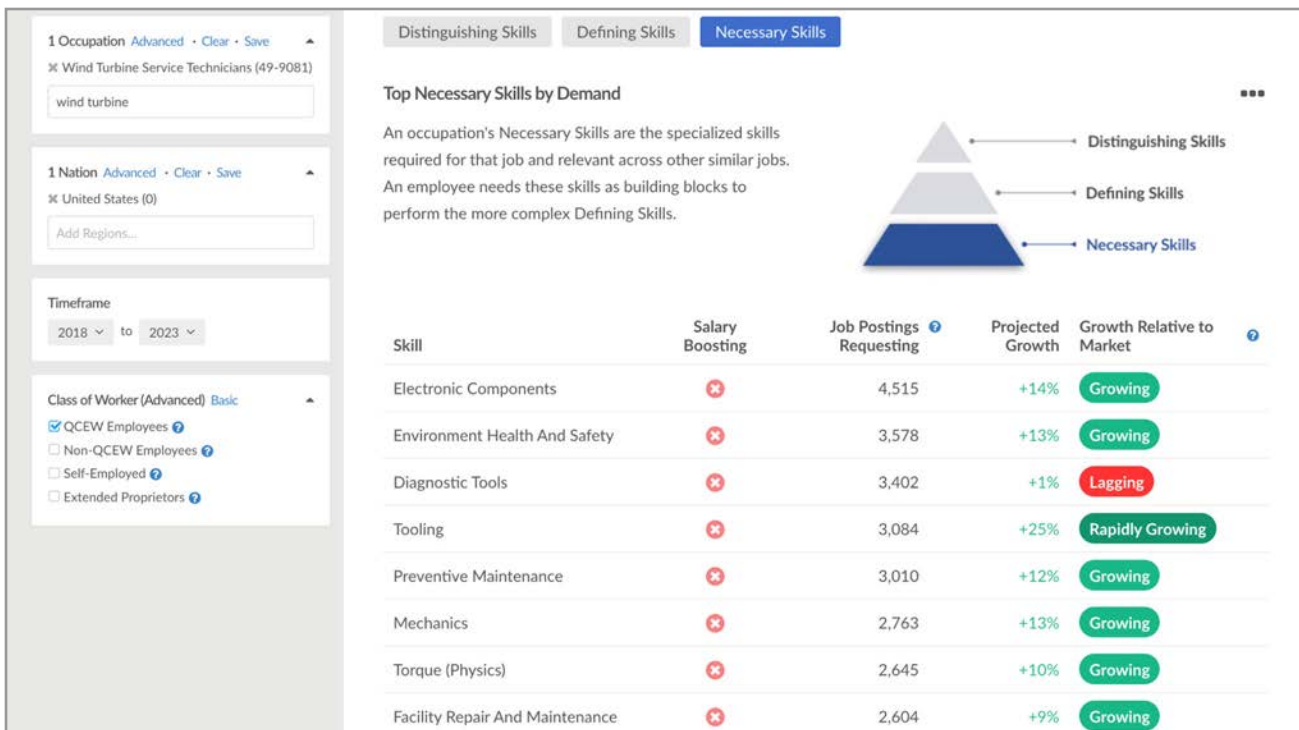
The top growing occupations in the green sector, as seen through Lightcast Sectors in the Analyst<sup>4</sup> platform.



Overlapping skills between Solar Photovoltaic Installers and Electricians, as seen in the Career Pathways report in Analyst.<sup>6</sup>

By utilizing existing courses that already equip students with these skills, and then supplementing them with a new credential in solar energy or solar installation, institutions with an electrician program already in place can expand to meet the needs of this growing field. And, since the barrier to entry for solar photovoltaic installers is not as high as those for electricians, a new program or certificate in this area would likely appeal to a pool of students who would not have the time or resources to attain all the training required for a career as an electrician.

Many of these same skills can be found in another hot job in the green sector. According to Lightcast data, in the past five years the number of wind turbine service technicians in the U.S. has increased by 117%, and is predicted to keep growing. Given that the median salary for this occupation is \$57,325, and that only 5% of the job postings for it require a bachelor's degree, a program or certification that sets students up for success in this field is likely to have a strong appeal.



Some of the frequently requested skills in job postings for wind turbine service technicians, as seen through the occupations report in Lightcast's Analyst<sup>7</sup> platform.

A look at the job posting data for this occupation reveals that skills such as power tool operation, preventative maintenance, and electronic components are often required for these roles. Again, these are skills that are already taught in many electrician programs, as well as HVAC programs, another area in which proprietary institutions often make major contributions to the regional workforce. The next step, then, would be to identify key skills not already taught in existing courses – such as voltage testers, hydraulic accumulators, or wind-farming – and create new courses or microcredentials that can teach students the essential knowledge in these areas.

**A Window of Opportunity in the Cybersecurity Shortage**

The green sector is not the only one on the rise. In recent years, cybersecurity has seen explosive growth. In 2022, the number of postings for cybersecurity jobs increased by over twice as much as the rest of the labor market, and in the following year it grew by another 9%. Given the aggressive speed of this growth, it is not surprising that the industry is in desperate need of more workers.<sup>8</sup> In 2023, the global demand for more cybersecurity professionals was around 4 million, meaning that the workforce would have to almost double its size to meet this need.

This gap indicates a window of opportunity for career-focused colleges and universities. While it is true that the minimum required education is quite high for many jobs in this sector, research from the Burning Glass Institute and Harvard Business School<sup>9</sup> has shown that many of these roles can be filled by individuals with a set of specific transferable skills and qualifications, rather

than a four-year-degree – and, given the severe shortage of cybersecurity workers, many employers will find it beneficial to agree.

For instance, according to Lightcast jobs data, the number of Information Security Analysts in the U.S. has grown 116% in the past 10 years. This job has a hefty median salary of \$112,000, and while the majority of people in this field have a bachelor’s degree or higher, a quarter of the workers in these positions have either some college or an associate degree. When you zoom in on the data to look at completions at the state or regional level, it becomes clear that there are many career-focused schools equipping workers for this field. For example, in North Carolina (a hot spot for this profession), CECU member MyComputerCareer in Raleigh is the top school graduating students from information technology-related programs in the state.

As with the electrician-green jobs example, institutions can use job posting trends to inform how they modify or pivot their programs. “Sought skills”<sup>10</sup> from employer job postings can be compared with “taught skills” in academic programs to uncover opportunities for greater market alignment. These adjustments can help institutions keep pace with the fast-growing cybersecurity industry and position graduates for jobs in a lucrative field hungry for talent.

**Conclusion**

Proprietary institutions play a crucial role in both improving students' employment prospects, and meeting evolving marketplace needs. In a time when occupations

Top Schools	Completions (2022)
MyComputerCareer at Raleigh	1,504
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	1,240
Wake Technical Community College	908
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	576
North Carolina State University at Raleigh	541
East Carolina University	501
Fayetteville Technical Community College	436
Duke University	429
Appalachian State University	342
Guilford Technical Community College	335

*The top 10 schools graduating students from IT-related programs in North Carolina. Source: Lightcast Analyst / Program Overview report*



can easily appear, disappear, or transform in the span of just a few years, these market-aligned schools are well-positioned to prepare new workers for sectors on the rise. Those institutions that can discover the areas of overlap between their existing strengths and the emerging needs of the marketplace will find it possible to evolve sustainably alongside the labor market, and find themselves at the frontier of preparing students for a new world of work.

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# The Tail and Dog of Institutional Transformation

By Anthony Bieda, Co-Founder, Transformation Collaborative®

Abundant data from diverse and cooperative sources has encouraged some with authority to create new, bold ways of evaluating effectiveness at postsecondary institutions. Striking while political conditions remain favorable, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced new Gainful Employment (GE) and Financial Value Transparency (FVT) requirements that will become effective July 1, 2024, for career colleges and some non-degree programs offered by community colleges and nonprofit institutions. The “novel” and labor-market-based accountability metrics mine Department of Labor and Department of Commerce data sources to establish “earnings premium, debt-to-income and affordability” standards whose non-attainment carries existential financial consequences.

Un-novel to the exercise is the liberty taken by ED to forge proxies for institutional effectiveness from whole cloth, using readily available data sources that may have some, little, or no direct relevance to institutional performance. ED does so because of its authority to regulate “programs that prepare students for gainful employment,” and that labor market outcomes are “central” to the mission of the subject institutions. Also, ED does so because it can absent pronounced political pressure. Data science that undermines or negates the validity of these new proxies will not likely mitigate their enforcement by ED in the short term.

Regardless of ED’s motives, the latest GE and FVT metrics are now compulsory in the performance dashboard of every career college in the U.S. that participates in federal student aid programs. Those metrics join a substantial array of gauges that help institutional leaders navigate stormy waters replete with declining enrollment demand, diminished public esteem, obsolescent program content and shrinking market relevance. Corrosive demographic and economic forces eroding the foundations of postsecondary education before the pandemic have become malignant since 2020.

Some minor upticks in undergraduate enrollment

growth in 2023 were more than offset by a stunning 3.6 percent decline in freshmen enrollments, reversing fall 2022 gains. Total undergraduate enrollment in the U.S. is now a scant 0.8 percent above fall 2021 enrollment. “Almost all the freshmen declines occurred in bachelor’s programs at public and private nonprofit four-year institutions (-6.9 percent and -4.7 percent, respectively), reversing their gains from 2022.” (*National Student Clearinghouse*, October 2023).

After exhausting COVID-19 Relief funds and resuming performance requirements that were suspended under the pandemic’s federal temporary and emergency provisions, many colleges and schools have confronted and obscured their flat or declining enrollments through the inconspicuous mechanism of tuition discounts and shifts to lower revenue students.

This phenomenon is verified by a new higher education data entrepreneur resource, The College Viability App. Developed by Dr. Gary Stocker of St. Louis, the app uses IPEDS data to compare the financial health and viability of public and private colleges in the U.S. The app tracks the last eight reported years across as many as 30 different IPEDS reports. Stocker makes the argument that it is the trend that matters, and not any individual data points. He suggests that turning the college ‘ship’ is a slow process that should be monitored with trends, not just single, timed data points.

Furthermore, the app illustrates that cannibalizing one’s primary source of revenue through discounts and lower revenue enrollments provides only temporary relief; the damage to financial viability likely will be more enduring.

If the overabundance of data crashing against the institutional bow was not challenging enough, their pilots now confront a confounding array of performance indicators that measure diverse factors, some complimentary but many contradictory. The factors fall into three broad categories: ED driven, accreditor driven, and market driven. The first two consequential from a compliance perspective, the third consequential from a market relevance perspective.



**Figure 1: Gainful Employment\* v. Accreditor v. Market Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness**

	Indicator Category:	Indicator Elements:	ED/GE Regulation:	Sanction:	Accreditation Standard:	Sanction:	Market:	Sanction:
IE1	Institutional Effectiveness	Success with respect to student achievement in relation to mission	Program completion licensure achievement, and job placement at rates set by accreditor and state approval entity.	Defers to accreditation standards.	Defined by institution with respect to stated mission and purpose, including student learning, completion and post-grad employment or continuing education.	Show-cause directive leading to loss of accreditation.	Student learning is abstraction of little value to typical student prospect; completion and post-grad employment rates are more tangible and of interest.	Minimal suppression of enrollment demand.
IE2	Institutional Effectiveness	Advancement of academic quality and continuous improvement	Negligible.	None.	Advances academic quality based on quantitative and/or qualitative measures; autonomy of program regarding academic quality; resources sufficient to ensure student preparation, health and safety; implementation of innovation.	Show-cause directive leading to loss of accreditation.	Academic and institutional quality are functions of branding efforts and difficult to objectively measure, verify or test.	Some suppression of enrollment demand.
IE3	Institutional Effectiveness	Published mission alignment	None.	Defers to accreditor.	Published mission aligns with operations, resources, organization, programs, student outcomes.	Deferral of accrediting decision	Little or no interest by consumers making enrollment decisions.	None.
IE4	Institutional Effectiveness	Access to feedback and guidance from employers, students, graduates	None.	None.	Integrate stakeholder guidance into planning for improvements to curriculum, facilities, equipment, and graduation, licensure and placement rates.	Deferral of accrediting decision	No direct interest by prospective students.	None.
IE5	Institutional Effectiveness	Rates of graduation, licensure and placement by program.	As established and enforced effectively by accreditor.	Loss of T4	Annual student data at program level subject to minimum quantitative standards, including rate of placement in job or field related to program of study.	Show-cause directive leading to loss of accreditation.	Aspect of cost/value proposition that is of interest to prospective students if presented in accessible, simple, direct way.	Some suppression of enrollment demand.
IE6	Institutional Effectiveness	Rates of complaints from students	Proxy for quality but no numeric or objective standard as to "excessive" or "acceptable" rates of student complaints.	Conditioned participation leading to loss of T4	Written, formal process for resolving student complaints with evidence of implementation. Excessive student complaints are proxy for quality issues.	Show-cause directive leading to loss of accreditation.	Most salient content of word of mouth information about institution's cost/value proposition.	Suppression of enrollment demand.

The integration and rationalization of these dispersed data sets, and the derivation of meaning necessary to arrive at informed management decisions, requires special leadership capacity. At a minimum, that capacity entails a deliberate awareness of the areas of complement and contradiction among quantitative metrics. Also, it requires a dispassionate, strategic analysis of where the institution is today, where it must be tomorrow, and how to develop a robust program of transformation to ensure safe passage.

Finally, accurate and responsive instruments are needed to detect deviation from course, identify milestones and track incremental progress. The pilots of the enterprise will have to identify performance metrics that appropriately evaluate forward motion toward relevance, vitality, and excellence. Those performance indicators become the priority and focus, the dog of our analogy. The others are the tail, expressing positive outcomes as a function of the primary enterprises of the institution, not despite them.

Best case circumstances require disparate indicators to align closely. Ideally, the interests of the primary institutional funding source (ED) would support and fortify the assurance of program quality and integrity (accreditors), which in turn would organically serve the

best interests of the largest non-institutional funding source (the marketplace). **In reality, a reasonable side-by-side comparison of the assorted metrics shows only a minimal overlap: of 17 discrete financial, consumer information and institutional effectiveness metrics, only four hold value for all three stakeholders.**

Two indicators hold value with ED and accreditors exclusively, and only one holds value with accreditors and the market. But six strong factors that energize and animate the marketplace are absent from the provinces of ED and accreditors altogether. (See Figure 2 on the next page).

Compounding the tension derived from disparate and competing performance indicators is a wide variance in the currency of the underlying data. If the metrics are assumed to be valid response variables in every case, the explanatory data must be as current as possible. Instead, some of the independent variables are captured for analysis five, seven or ten years back (earnings premium and debt to earnings ratios, for example) while others are contemporary (feedback from employers, students, graduates; licensure exam pass rates; student complaints).

Collecting and analyzing imperfect, lagging data for purposes of scholarly inquiry is acceptable. Expanding

Overlap of Quality and Integrity performance indicators

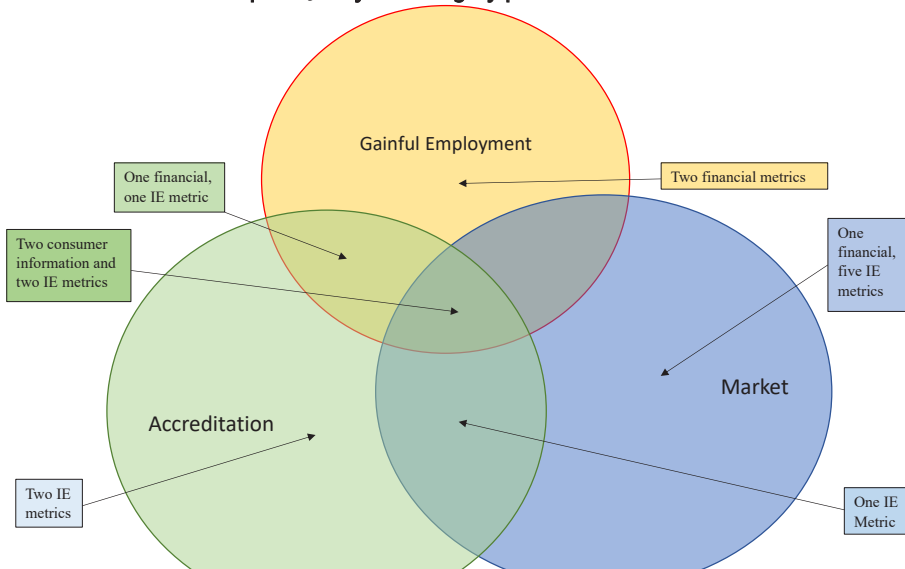


Figure 2: Of 17 incumbent indicators, only four are shared by all three stakeholder groups, and most of the market-based metrics are of no interest to quality assurance or federal government sources.

knowledge through rigorous, stochastic methods applied to available data sets provides solid baselines from which insights, discoveries and breakthroughs may be derived. Applying the same type of information to rubrics that open and close gates to sources of student financial aid is less admirable, if not indefensible.

Applying data to the operation and transformation of postsecondary education institutions is necessary in the contemporary ecosystem of human and digital analytics. The complexity and incongruity of data from disparate sources may be reconciled effectively through AI-driven platforms. Source data from multiple digital platforms constitute a rich resource typically accessible at little or no cost. The decision-making value (assuming sophisticated and appropriate integration and analysis) is great.

The dysfunctional relationships between the 17 performance indicators reviewed in this study must not be the basis for marginalizing data-driven transformation; rather, the dysfunction should serve as a point of reference for building better, more closely aligned programs of

analytics. Room for improvement is of ballroom proportions.

A more immediate imperative is to establish the key metrics that will assess forward progress in a transformation project. The incumbent indicators assembled in a single dashboard provide a valuable starting point for this analysis (See Figure 3 below).

The relationship between the financial, consumer information, and institutional effectiveness categories share some important things in common: they are proxies for institutional and program-level effectiveness, not direct measures. They all attempt to measure outcomes that are deemed important by policymakers, accreditors, and other stakeholders. When indicating negative performance, they all can impose some level of accountability.

What they all lack are rigorous tests of accuracy and objectivity. Further, as previously mentioned, too many are based on data that lags current performance by months or years. Finally, none are based on the most fundamental unit of data necessary for credible social sciences research: data at the individual student level. Student unit record data uses the individual's demographic, geographic, economic and pre-enrollment education experience as explanatory for rates of learning, completion, graduation, licensure, and economic success at a statistically valid level. Student unit

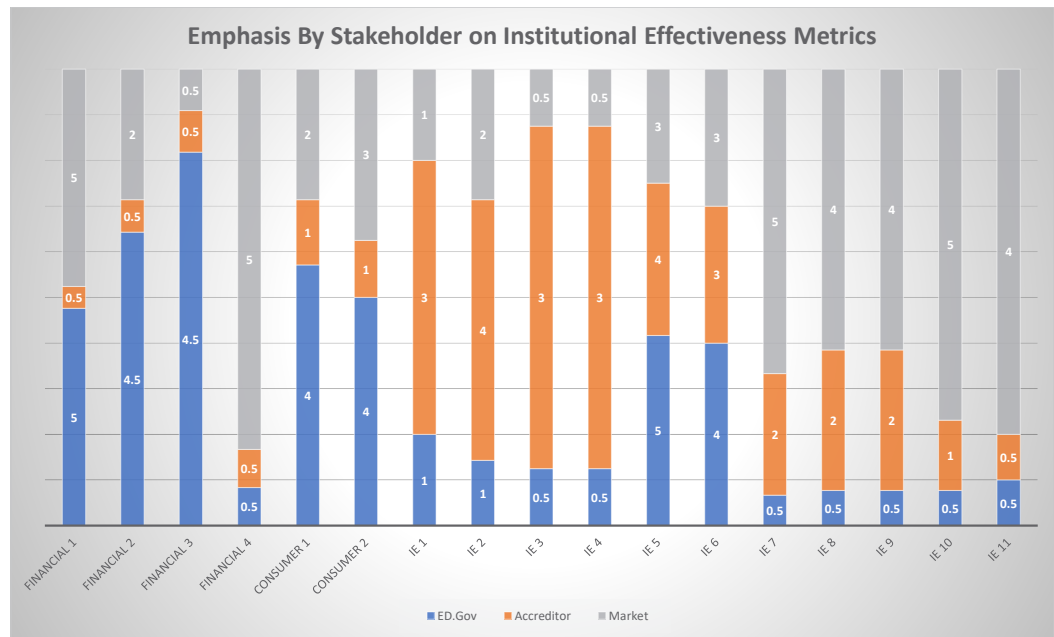


FIGURE 3: The indicators of institutional effectiveness most important to ED (blue) are Financials 1 through 3 and Consumer 1 and 2. Likewise, Accreditors (orange) place greatest emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness indicators 1 thru 6. But the Market's (gray) primary interests are reflected in indicator F4 and IEs 7 through 11. To be effective, an institution must track all 17 indicators (and probably several more), and must decide which of these operational areas merit the greatest emphasis (the dog) and which merit fewer resources and attention (the tail). An effective Program of Transformation aligns institutional priorities to the vision and design of the transformed enterprise, ensuring the dog is always wagging the tail.

record data is not collected by ED, however, as a matter of federal law, and is generally unavailable through public sources. As such, these data sets provide no context for where an individual student starts and where he/she ends up as a result of an education.

Without objective, accurate explanatory data at the individual student level, it is folly to rely on program-level or institutional-level outcomes as solely indicative of quality and effectiveness. Programs and institutions that primarily serve students of economic disadvantage or from K-12 education deserts will underperform those who serve students of economic privilege who attended private prep schools, irrespective of ethnicity, geography, or gender. The financial indicators imposed on career colleges and schools, in particular, fail to acknowledge that the best explanation of economic well-being post-completion is to have entered the program with economic well-being.

A few of these shortcomings will be resolved soon through reformed public policy. However, nothing prevents institutions from collecting student-level data for their own purposes. Applicable federal privacy laws require scrupulous protection of student identities, but the linkage between personal identifier and student unit record has no relevance to the analytic algorithms of data analysis or performance metrics. The linkage should be hidden from the time of inception and made available to no one ever other than a single senior officer.

In addition to collecting data at the student unit level, institutional dashboards should contemplate new and more relevant effectiveness indicators that are proprietary. An important aspiration for any successful institution is to know its current and prospective students better than anyone else. It follows that developing and applying better ways to measure student learning, student achievement, student well-being, and student engagement is the highest and best use of data analytics resources.

Furthermore, the organizational capacity to capture, analyze, and apply the information derived from the dashboard to the transformation project must reside at the leadership level, at minimum. The parties developing and implementing a transformative initiative must be conversant with and responsible for some or all the performance indicators resident on the dashboard. In most organizations, those parties occupy the C-suite.

The relationship and interaction between various incumbent performance metrics are at the core of this study. Interpreting the data and extrapolating trends involves a reasonable series of questions about which indicators:

1. Best to predict and avert catastrophe.
2. Respond first to changes in operations and which lag.
3. Move in tandem as explanatory variables change and which move in contrast or fail to move.
4. Most reliably reflect outcomes that matter to students.
5. Merit the highest monitoring levels, sensitivity

calibration, recurring accuracy confirmation.

In essence, a sophisticated and deliberate application of data analytics to transformation requires discernment of dog from tail, not just prioritization. That discernment guides IT and financial resource allocation, management prerogatives, organizational structure, product design, and leadership culture. The aggregated indicators or organizational dashboard is customized not only based on the forces and requirements of the external environment, but also based on the feedback from the marketplace. Feedback from employers, the workforce and economic development ecosystem, prospective students, and graduates, should be attenuated with great sensitivity, monitored with strong diligence, and routinely integrated into the decision-making process for institutional effectiveness.

More directly, the design of the dashboard for transformation will not likely resemble the array of performance indicators used in the past. Applying marginally relevant, lagging, or contradictory metrics to the journey toward a better, stronger, and more relevant institution will undermine the initiative and waste resources and suppress a spirit of renewal.

Building a transformation dashboard with new or substantially modified performance metrics and AI-driven analytics establishes a better foundation for weekly and monthly decisions that can be mapped to the transformational topography.

The task of creating that array of metrics is daunting and may stretch resources. But most organizations have the capacity to engage in transformation if they have the discipline to dedicate focus and resources to activities that matter, while limiting or ending efforts that may have a long history but add no value. With support and encouragement, often from external resources, transformation is achievable, while also meeting compliance requirements. Institutions that could most benefit from programmed transformation may only lack the will to do so.

**Anthony S. Bieda** is an authority on applying transformational change to institutions and organizations he has led and directed in the postsecondary education sector and other industries such as government relations, natural resources, local government and public relations. He is the founder and CEO of [asb34PolicyResources LLC](https://www.asb34policyresources.com) and is a frequent contributor to professional journals focused on effective, accountable, and transformational performance.

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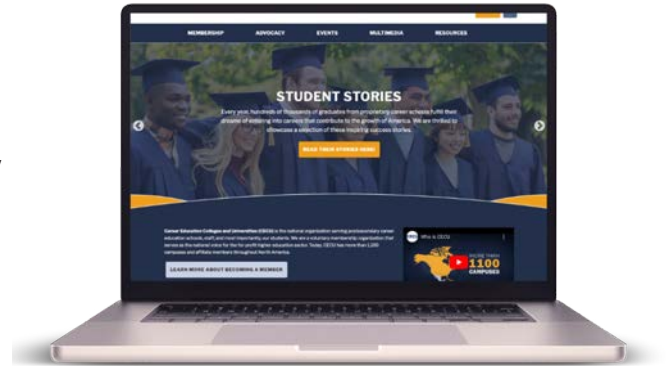
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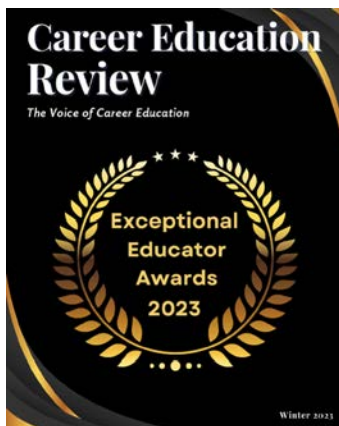
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# Deliver an Impactful Student Experience Across the Student Journey with a Full-Funnel Marketing Approach

*By Tracy Kreikemeier, Chief Relationship Officer, EducationDynamics*





Technological advancements have significantly impacted prospective students' media consumption habits and has further complicated the student journey. With the constant stream of information and advertisements crowding the marketplace, schools need to realign their current marketing and enrollment strategies with a view on the entirety of the student journey to enrollment and beyond.

If you want to stand out in a noisy marketing environment, it is imperative that you optimize your strategies for engagement at multiple touchpoints across digital, traditional, and emerging media platforms. This is particularly important for awareness, given that students are now more likely to limit their consideration. To join and maintain your presence in a prospective students' consideration set, schools must focus on the interconnected nature of the student journey with messaging that not only explains the value of the program but also communicates the value of higher education in general. Below, we outline a few of the key elements to a successful full-funnel marketing approach.

### Website

A school's website plays a critical role in the student journey. According to our research, more than 69% of prospective students visit the school website when starting their school selection process and 68% of the students begin the process with Google search. And, 22% of prospective students who were looking for information about a program's availability and costs were also seeking value-focused information such as program curriculum, accreditation, or career outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

The school's website is not only the first point of contact for prospective students, but also serves as a valuable resource throughout their decision-making process. As such, it is essential for schools to optimize their websites for an optimal user experience while also appealing to search engines. High-quality content that employs relevant keywords and phrases will accomplish both goals of providing the data students seek most while also increasing the likelihood of appearing higher in the search engine results.

Throughout the student journey, prospective students might repeatedly visit the school's website to gather information and compare it with other schools. Your website is a vehicle for informing prospective students and must also serve as an invitation for engagement. We found that prospective students who inquired on a school website delivered the highest contact rates at 61% compared to those delivered by paid search at 42%.<sup>2</sup>

### Awareness Marketing

Although digital media continues to dominate education advertisers' media mix, accounting for 75% of total advertising spend by higher education institutions.

Television accounts for the second-largest media spend at 16%.<sup>3</sup> Overall, education advertising spend has increased in five categories: Advertising-based Video On Demand (AVOD), Mobile Web Video, Network TV, Mobile Apps, and Cable TV.<sup>4</sup> According to the ComScore 2023 State of Streaming study, the number of streaming services climbed from four services per household in 2019 to six services per household in 2023 and 73% of all U.S. homes use streaming services.

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**As subscription costs for streaming services increase, more viewers are engaging with Free Ad-supported Streaming Television (FAST) services such as The Roku Channel and Pluto TV. FAST is becoming the quickest-growing category of streaming, with 47% of households stating they watch one or more FAST services weekly.<sup>5</sup>**

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Incorporating AVOD and streaming services into awareness marketing strategies can provide a targeted way to reach prospective students. Schools can use this opportunity to showcase program highlights, career outcomes, and student testimonials to create brand awareness and generate interest in their programs.

Additionally, schools can launch retargeting ads on streaming platforms to continue to engage with prospective students who have previously visited the school's website or engaged with their social media posts.

### Micro-Conversion Tracking

As prospective students progress through the student journey, it is important for schools to track their engagement at various touchpoints to gain insights into their interests and preferences.

These micro-conversions are the small actions that prospective students take when interacting with a school's website or social media pages. These actions might include requesting information, scheduling a campus visit, following the school's social media accounts, or signing up for a newsletter.

Actively tracking and managing micro-conversions can take time and expertise, but by identifying the actions that result in successful enrollment, schools can refine their strategies and invest in channel campaigns that drive prospective students toward the next step in the enrollment process. This not only improves overall marketing effectiveness but also maximizes the school's ability to engage and enroll students.

## Multi-Channel Nurturing

With the increasing use of technology worldwide, students are interacting with schools across multiple channels. This includes but is not limited to email, social media, SMS messaging, and online chat. Developing a multi-channel relationship-building approach can allow schools to connect and engage with prospective students through their preferred communication methods.

Recognizing that students have different preferences when it comes to how they want to be communicated with, schools should capitalize on this as an opportunity to personalize their messages. Segmenting prospective students into differing groups based on factors or behaviors such as location, program of interests, starting an application, or requesting more information will allow schools to tailor communication and content that better resonates with each group and increases the chances of them converting into enrolled students. Today's marketing technology platforms allow for greater audience segmentation and personalized messaging that is more likely to resonate with prospective students.

EducationDynamics' partners experienced a 5%-9% lift in enrollments when leveraging a multi-channel nurturing strategy, and a quarter of new students who had started a program had previously engaged with nurturing campaign content.<sup>4</sup> This highlights the importance of maintaining an active and personalized presence across multiple channels throughout the student journey.

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**Multi-channel nurturing allows schools to build a relationship with prospective students beyond the initial point of inquiry. By providing valuable content and maintaining communication, schools can continue to nurture relationships even after enrollment, ultimately leading to higher retention rates and a stronger alumni network.**

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## Making Full-Funnel Marketing Work for You

Successful marketing and enrollment growth strategy requires a full-funnel approach that focuses on student experiences and acknowledges the interconnectedness of the student journey. Understanding the complexities of the student journey, schools can develop personalized and targeted marketing tactics that will set them apart and attract more students who are seeking education aligned with their career goals.

Adapting to the changing landscape of media consumption and utilizing various touchpoints throughout

the student journey, schools can effectively market themselves and thrive in a competitive landscape while ensuring prospective students have a successful educational journey. With the increase in technology use and access to various media channels, schools must adapt their marketing strategies to align with these trends.

## Resources

1. EducationDynamics Online College Students Survey 2023
2. EducationDynamics Marketing and Enrollment Management Benchmarks Report 2024
3. Vivvix fna Kantar Media Intelligence 11/2022-10/2023
4. EducationDynamics Marketing and Enrollment Management Benchmarks Report 2024
5. EducationDynamics Marketing and Enrollment Management Benchmarks Report 2024

**Tracy Kreikemeier** serves as the Chief Relationship Officer for EducationDynamics. She works closely with EducationDynamics' team of experts and college and university partners to develop customized strategies that drive enrollment growth and exceed enrollment goals. With over 20 years of education marketing experience, Tracy has been an integral part of the continued evolution of education marketing strategy. She's passionate about sharing what she has learned with the higher education community.

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# From Addiction to Redemption: Graduate of InterCoast Colleges Gets a Second Chance at Life

Xavier Perez's story begins with him sharing with us his teenage years. Xavier was a healthy, young, athletic teenager, but by the time he was 15, he was exposed to drugs. From the very first time he tried Oxycodone, he knew he was immediately hooked. He felt that the drug took away the stress and turmoil from athletic, academic and social pressures. It did not take long before he was a full-blown addict while slowly losing everything he had and facing homelessness.

He was tired of being broke, homeless, and all his family and friends judging him because they didn't understand addiction or the internal pain he was suffering from. He found himself as an outsider with nowhere to turn to. It was difficult because he believed nobody wanted to be around him, that he was the problem and he rebelled constantly trying to fight people, all while believing he could not live without drugs.

The path and cycle of destruction led him to the ultimate decision to join the Army infantry. The military was a path he initially felt was the answer for him to have a fresh start. The rugged lifestyle appealed to him, being around a lot of people just like himself. He went into the military hurt and broken, his life kept swirling in chaos.

When he returned from overseas in 2020, his life fell apart and he became hooked on opiates once again. The mother of his child was urging him to get help, but he did not acknowledge that he had a problem because he was in complete denial until she left and told him he wasn't allowed to see his child. Once again, he looked at himself in the mirror and realized there was a problem.

On January 11, 2021, he decided to surrender to God, his higher power and found treatment services. Xavier was once again back on the journey of sobriety. This time it was different. His eyes were opened. While in treatment, he found his passion to be a Drug and Alcohol counselor. He found that there are people who truly cared that treatment does work and that there is empathy and 24/7 care. These people believed in him when no one else would, including himself.

He never really embraced the true meaning of love and to see love in other people really opened his eyes. Xavier



Xavier Perez is a graduate of InterCoast Colleges

wanted to help his other friends from the military dealing with addiction and that is when he learned the true meaning of giving back.

That same year, Xavier decided to use his VA military training benefits and find a school that would train him to become an alcohol and drug counselor. That is when he found InterCoast Colleges.

From the very beginning he felt accepted from the institution and appreciated all the support services InterCoast Colleges offered. Xavier was confident that not only did he find the right career path, but InterCoast was the vehicle to help him start his educational journey and career goals to truly change his life!

Xavier reflects that when he was a kid parents wouldn't let their children hang out around him. He was a bad influencer. Now the table has turned and parents will call

him pleading for help with their children with addiction. Xavier has become a role model. During his journey in the field, he has been able to save thousands of lives from the grip of addiction, chaos, pain, jail, and even death.

While Xavier admits that he barely graduated high school, now with his new motivation, career direction, and the financial resources he earned in the military, he graduated InterCoast Colleges Addiction Studies certificate program with honors. He continued his education with InterCoast Colleges Associates Program (AAS) program and is currently enrolled with InterCoast Colleges Bachelor of Addiction studies program. He has found that he CAN be a role model and his past does not define him but makes him stronger.

His biggest motivation was his daughter, the love of his life. The thought of losing her was frightening him.

He could not believe it got to the point where he would not be allowed to see his daughter. The first reason he chose sobriety was to make sure nothing ever got in the way of his ability to be with his daughter. When he got to rehab he learned to remain sober for HIMSELF, and learned self-care. One thing Xavier is most proud of in his recovery is that he and the mother of his child are able to co-parent their daughter. She can now trust him. He feels that is one of his major victories. He went to parent classes, did project fatherhood, did everything he could to make sure he would be able to be in his daughters' life. He completed anger management classes and went to therapy through

the Veterans Administration and volunteered for random drug tests.

After working in the field and obtaining his Associate's degree at ICC, he wanted to try something new. Xavier actually obtained employment at the same facility where he went to rehab. That is another victory that he is very proud of. Finally, he ended up working at Kern Valley prison helping those inside the prison walls with the message of hope, faith, and perseverance. His story is of hope, faith, and courage. It is no longer about loss, pain and trauma. His life at 29 years old has meaning and a purpose. Moving forward, he knows it is about the love for his daughter and knowing that he would do anything for her and he is grateful to InterCoast Colleges, the Veterans Administration, his family, friends, and his second chance!

Xavier chooses to be the example and not the statistic. He chooses life, parenthood and goodwill for others and not living in the grips of his past pain and addiction. InterCoast Colleges applauds Xavier. Not only does he represent our country as a Veteran, but Xavier has proven that life is a choice, that we CAN give back to others by leading by example as a parent, son, addiction counselor, and role model.

When we believe in ourselves, others will believe in us too. Xavier is proud of his decision to attend InterCoast Colleges. Xavier represents InterCoast Colleges students and Alumni extremely well.

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# A Dream Realized: NAA Alumni Adimil Martinez Soars in Dubai

Understanding that an individual is in control of his or her destiny is powerful. Once a person takes note of this, every little thing becomes important. Daily activities are suddenly decisions toward a brighter future rather than insignificant motions. Adimil Martinez knew he was destined for a career in aviation from a young age. What is more, he recognized that it was up to him to make his dream a reality. He pursued his passion, and has since landed a job in one of the most lavish, exclusive destinations in the world: Dubai.

Adimil returned to National Aviation Academy's (NAA) Tampa Bay halls brimming with excitement. He was ecstatic about how the campus has grown and ready to share his accomplishments since graduating in 2011. In a conversation last September, he talked about all things from being young in his native Puerto Rico to his time at NAA, career, and plans for the future.

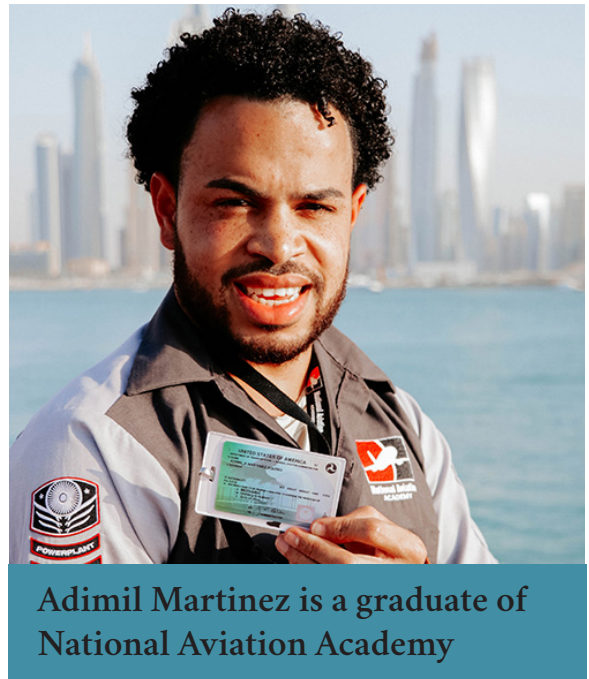
One of nine children, Adimil forged his own way. "My family is strict," he started. "I grew up in sports. I was taught that they were a way to get an education and stay out of the streets. It was also a way to keep going forward in the environment in Puerto Rico – which was not so great. I think everybody has a situation in their way ... but I made it."

Adimil had always intended to work in aviation. "Everything back then was about airplanes," he said. "My grandmother, Olga, used to take me to the airpark at the international airport where I saw all types of aircraft taking off and landing. I was excited every time I saw one fly."

Adimil began avionics training in Puerto Rico, but soon realized that opportunities on the island were scarce. Rather than resign himself to the life he had always known, he enrolled at NAA to obtain his Aircraft and Powerplant (A&P) certifications and start his career. He moved to Florida knowing no English but was determined to make his mark.

Adimil completed his training at NAA, became fluent in English, and graduated assured that it was only the beginning. He spent time working with FedEx, Boeing, Sikorsky, and Augusta Aviation before receiving the ultimate offer to work as an avionics engineer on VIP helicopters in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Though he couldn't give details about specific jobs or clients, Adimil spoke about loving the fast-paced



Adimil Martinez is a graduate of National Aviation Academy

environment, excitement, and variety involved in his work. He plans to remain in Dubai for some time, as his job offers him the ability to see the world, save money, invest in his future and even get his pilot's license. In addition to his occupational success, Adimil has also started a family. He proudly mentioned, "my son, who is only two years old, already knows how to identify basic parts of aircraft. We go to buy toys and he always wants an airplane. We give him Legos and he starts building little planes. He's the future, just like I was."

Opportunities after graduating from NAA span the industry and the globe for those who are willing to seek them. Adimil's story demonstrates that with hard work, dedication, and drive come the most extraordinary rewards. As the conversation came to a close, he reflected, "I come from the very bottom ... and even though I'm doing well now, I always go back to where it began. This is my first time back to NAA in five years, but I feel like this is home. This is where everything started."

# Finding Her Voice Through Skincare

By Shaira Barnette, Marketing Manager, Bellus Academy

Think about Women’s History Month, and what comes to mind? Suffragette campaigners working tirelessly for the vote? Me Too marchers saying enough is enough? Often, it’s a quiet voice that changes the lives of individuals and those in the world around them.

MaryRose Leivas, an educator at Bellus Academy in Poway, CA (IG @RosieCheeksPoway) and licensed esthetician who has worked at one of the world’s most elite spas found her calling and her voice – not by speaking out, but through the power of touch! Growing up, MaryRose was so shy her family nicknamed her “Mouse.” But despite her shyness, MaryRose had a powerful desire to find her voice and help others. She just didn’t know how to go about making her voice heard.

After attending community college, MaryRose was uncertain about what path she would take in pursuing a career. But look around and listen long enough to that inner voice; eventually, you’ll have that “aha” moment. In MaryRose’s case, she looked at the powerful example set by another woman – a former boyfriend’s mother. This woman, an immigrant from Eastern Europe, had built a powerful skincare business and crafted her own American success story. MaryRose was intrigued and decided to take a tour of Bellus Academy, where she had an “aha” moment.

“I remember walking around the school and seeing all the students so engaged in their program,” says MaryRose. “I wanted to learn everything I could about skin, and having struggled with cystic acne, I wanted to help other people feel good in their own skin.” Although she’d never had a facial or visited a spa, MaryRose sensed that the esthetic area was the safe space place where she could find her voice and fulfill her purpose. “We always say that beauty changes lives, and that tour of Bellus Academy helped change my life,” she says.

Flash forward ten years, and MaryRose is an educator at the very school that changed her life. She’s working alongside some of the educators who changed her career trajectory. The desire to give back to the next generation of estheticians was inspired by the generosity of mentors who coached her as an esthetics student. “I owe so much to Miss Larissa and Miss Olga, who continue to inspire me and challenge me to help the next generation of estheticians help their clients – whether it’s issues with pigmentation, acne, anti-aging- etc.,” MaryRose says.

While the esthetic space may be the quietest area in a salon or spa, MaryRose heard a clear calling that she could make a real difference through the power of connection. “Esthetics is all about trust and relationships,” she says. “When I’m giving someone a facial, I’m not just infusing their skin with a treatment; I’m helping them feel safe, connected, and celebrating all they are.”



MaryRose Leivas is a graduate and educator at Bellus Academy

Since finishing her esthetics program, MaryRose’s career has enriched her life in ways that range from the quiet joy of spirituality to the fun of interacting with celebrities at globally renowned spas. Early in her career, she served as a lead esthetician at Massage Envy before being hired at the world-renowned Golden Door Spa, where she learned more about the integration that exists between body, mind, and soul. Coming out of the pandemic period, MaryRose wanted to find a way to give back and help others who had been through so much trauma and grief. She opened a boutique esthetics business and returned to pay her success forward as an educator at Bellus Academy.

But MaryRose says the greatest reward comes from making a difference in the lives of her students. “Seeing my beautiful students smiling back at me continually makes me want to transfer what I’ve learned to others,” she says. “In the classroom, I feel so engaged, so connected, and with a sense of child-like joy.”

Life is a process of continued growth and change. Considering her future, MaryRose is excited to take her career to the next level by earning the CIDESO license – a renowned standard in skincare. And where will that license take this California girl? “I’ve traveled to Ireland and would love to spend more time in that beautiful country,” she says. “But first, I’ll need to make sure I can trade in California weather for a much colder climate!”



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