

The shifting value propositions about education and work



There are seismic shifts underway in the worlds of education and work.

We hear about the "Great Resignation," where people are quitting their jobs in record rates. Some are in search of opportunities with more flexibility and quality of life potential; some are choosing avenues ranging from staying home to entrepreneurship.

There is a changing "value proposition" about work and careers – where an individual's perception of a job or career is evaluated on a really different set of factors than before the pandemic.

We also hear about the steep decline in higher education enrollments – a completely unexpected trend that emerged in the pandemic and runs

contrary to what we experienced during the Great Recession in 2008.

Here, too, we see a changing “value proposition” about the perceived benefits of higher education.

A new report called “Question the Quo,” produced by the ECMC Group, shines a light on this shift underway in the minds of 14-18 year olds in Generation Z. ECMC Group is “a nonprofit corporation focused on helping students succeed by creating, providing, and investing in innovative educational opportunities.”

Read more: [Moving toward blurring systems to remove barriers](#)

The group surveyed a set of students in February and May 2020 and January and September 2021. Over time, the survey revealed big changes were underway in the way students thought about their futures. For example, between May 2020 and September 2021, there was a 23% drop in the number of students who wanted to pursue a four-year degree.

Worries about the cost of college and how they would pay for it were held by a majority of students. “A majority (63%) of teens wish their high school provided more information about the variety of postsecondary opportunities available. Most (89%) say higher education needs to make career preparedness changes.” Forty-four percent ranked “not getting a job” in their top three concerns, and 40% are concerned that they’re not ready for a career after graduation.

What emerged in the report is that students are looking for the EXACT same things we’ve been working on at The Bridge of Southern New Mexico and through the Workforce Talent Collaborative.

Students want direct connections from education to careers, aka

“pathways.” They want to know what specific jobs are available when they complete a credential/degree program. They want more on-the-job opportunities. And what was very encouraging – the majority (62%) already have a career in mind, so they are ready for the information, educational programs, and preparation that can get them there.

Now, here’s where the disconnect between education and career really showed up – Career and Technical Education. While the majority of students indicated they wanted direct career paths, the majority of them were not clear about what CTE even is. So, if they don’t understand CTE, they not taking advantage of programs already available in their high schools that can get them where they are trying to go.

More: [Changing expectations are the key to economic recovery](#)

The students want skills, and 1/3rd would be willing to attend a CTE high school, if it helped them better connect to careers. More than half (57%) would attend a CTE college if they could do so with free tuition.

These are precisely the opportunities we have available to students in Doña Ana County. With some of the best CTE programs in the state, and stronger partnerships and connections between our school districts and Doña Ana Community College, our students are perfectly positioned to choose and complete career pathways.

Our job: build awareness of opportunities, provide exploration of careers, offer preparation in training and skills, and connect with employers who value our high-quality programs and build direct relationships with educators and students so they can hire directly from our talent pipeline. That’s exactly why [NewMexicoTrueTalent.org](#) exists.

It’s all here. We are ahead of this curve...and because we are, so are our

students. The future is theirs for the taking.

Tracey Bryan is president/CEO of the Bridge of Southern New Mexico.

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