



31st Annual Emerging Issues Forum **FutureWork**

Leadership Hackathon: Education Technology

Priorities for Action from Day Two (Feb. 9, 2016) of the FutureWork Forum

Note: Forum participants came together to explore challenges to job creation and workforce development in the “Education Technology” sector, and to identify key action priorities to position our state for future success in this area of the economy. A panel of sector experts opened the session with thoughts on key challenges and priorities for action. Participants then broke into self-selected small groups to explore strategy options. Each group then reported out on the impact each strategy was likely to have, what resources and assets were needed and available, threats to implementation and existing models for success. Each participant then voted for three top priorities among the strategies. This document summarizes key elements of the hackathon.

Sector Context

Education technology is an exploding sector and it is projected to have high growth, but there is major disruptive potential (for established institutions). This disruption means change, changes to the workforce of traditional institutions, and the as yet unknown potential for job growth in Ed Tech startups. A growing number of educational providers are incorporating Ed Tech into their classrooms, and an emerging market is also fueling this growth – corporate America, firms like McAfee and Aetna representative of U.S. companies that invest more than \$162 billion in training. The majority of this funding goes toward technology.

How can our educational providers prepare for the rapidly changing landscape of workforce education that is increasingly digitized? And how do we foster the growth of tomorrow’s education technology jobs?

Panel Discussion:

Scott Aaron, President & Chief Operating Officer, New Horizons Education NC

Abbie Brown, Professor, Instructional Design / Technology, East Carolina University

Karl Rectanus, CEO, Lea(R)n

Saundra Williams, Senior Vice President & Chief of Technology, NC Community College System

Responding to a series of questions addressing the disruption to traditional institution models, new delivery mechanisms, and emerging technologies, the panelists were in agreement that technology “does not equal computers and digital tools.” Technology is the applied tool that teachers use to achieve the goal of learning. Without an understanding of how to incorporate new technologies and delivery mechanisms, the teacher is no more innovative than they would be without the new tools.

Panelists reiterated that every job we do today and will do in the future will require some level of technological competence. In addition, all sectors rely on the education community to prepare their future workforce. Thus teachers must not only be trained on and embrace new technologies, they must have an awareness of industry needs.

The panel conversation resulted in room consensus on a priority to focus on (1) teacher preparation and support, (2) a system of educational equity of students, teachers, faculty, and administrators, and (3) a need to engage business and industry in the training of teachers and students.

Priorities for Action

1. Lead, Follow, and Get Out of the Way

Teachers are tasked with preparing our state’s future workforce, no matter the sector. We must set them up for success. Beginning teachers are experiencing the highest levels of turnover and are the most vulnerable assets in the education system. This initiative would extend the contract of 1st – 3rd year teachers to 11 months. The additional month will be spent working with experienced educators in experiential learning and other professional development opportunities to provide early career educators a host of assets and supports to help them to succeed in the classroom.

Assets include many programs / organizations that could serve as models or potential partners, such as the Beginning Teacher Network, UNC Learning Technology Commons, VIF online, Kenan Fellows Program, and NCCAT. Additionally, industry partners and Schools of Education could serve as partners. **Success** would include an increase in teacher recruitment and retention (including out of state recruitment) and improved student outcomes.

2. Increase Education System Equity

Within five years, state leaders, including the legislature, cabinet, and Governor's office, should develop a comprehensive plan to increase education system equity. This plan must support the development of a fully representative (race, gender, age) workforce that possesses the skills and talents desired by tomorrow's industries. The plan should address accessibility of education from pre-K to higher education; diversity in participation across the system; resource allocation; and the achievement gap.

Assets to build upon include local partners such as YMCAs, civic clubs, churches, and hospitals. These groups, in addition to business partners, could be tapped to serve as local "career centers" offering a multitude of courses and levels (Honors / AP) to all students. **Success** would look like an education system where all students see all possibilities.

3. Enhanced Career Pathways Initiative

Within five years, the North Carolina Department of Commerce, education system (from K-12 through higher education), workforce and economic development groups, Chambers of Commerce, and non-profits should work together to create an enhanced Career Pathways Initiative. The initiative should encompass the life course of the individual, beginning with pre-K programming. Individual life course plans should identify student interests and take inventory of possible career exploration activities.

These activities can be developed regionally via collaboration by industry and community colleges, or through non-profits serving as brokers between students and industry.

Assets: North Carolina has several programs established to support such an initiative including College Tech Prep in NC (<http://www.ctpnc.org/>), Career and College Promise (CCP), the WIOA Youth Programs, and STEMersion. **Success** would consist of a system / initiative with multiple entry and exit points along the continuum, work-based opportunities with college credits, and ultimately full employment.

4. Project Based Learning

Employers should provide students with project-based learning opportunities that extend beyond the current NC curriculum. Experiential opportunities such as these to learn outside the classroom and in the workplace would be beneficial to both students and teachers / faculty.

Our greatest **assets** are the program models currently in operation across our state including NC New Schools, several STEM based magnet schools / charter schools, Elon University's internship requirement, and the First Vote Program as part of Kids Voting NC.

Additionally, the University of Georgia has mandated experiential learning, and their successful program is one we could potentially replicate. **Success** would manifest in increased student engagement, lower dropout rates, and increased employment for students in high wage / high demand jobs.