

Does Higher Education Provide the Necessary Skills and Competencies to Succeed in the Job Market and Life?

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There is a crisis in higher education. One troublesome issue is the sharp drop in higher education enrollments as well as the decline in the number of colleges in the United States. There is evidence that some college degrees are not worth the time and the money, and students would have earned more had they joined the workforce immediately after graduating high school. The authors discuss some of the problems and posit that some higher education institutions in the United States have done a poor job of teaching crucial skills, including critical thinking, ethical thinking, collaboration skills, and character development. The most vital competency of all might be inculcating in students a passion for lifelong learning, which is necessary to develop the ability to adapt swiftly to changing business conditions. Without these skills, it should be no surprise that there has been a disconnect between higher education and employability.

Keywords: higher education, value of college degree, stopping out, critical thinking, ethical thinking, organizational agility

INTRODUCTION

The skills needed to succeed in the future workplace have dramatically changed in the last ten years. There was a time when the skill set acquired in college might have been sufficient for one's entire working career. Of course, this is no longer the case. Indeed, the typical employee remains with their employer for slightly more than four years. Moreover, the average person will change jobs about 12 times during a working career (Kolmar, 2022).

About 73% of employers in the United States assert that they have difficulty finding college graduates with crucial soft skills that include critical thinking, communication, and the ability to listen (Wilkie, 2019). Most Americans believe that higher education is heading in the wrong direction and agree that "Students are not getting the skills they need to succeed in the workplace" (Jaschik, 2018; Nelson, 2021). According to a recent survey, American confidence in the ability of higher education to lead the country in a positive direction has dropped precipitously in recent years, falling 14 percentage points since 2020 (from 69% in

2020 to 55% in 2022) (Greenberg, 2022). The way things are going, we should expect this trend to continue. Another serious issue is the decline of 17% in black undergraduate enrollment. On more than 500 campuses, the drop has been more than 50% (Adedoyin, 2022).

According to the 2021 AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) survey, “Six in 10 employers said that college graduates possess the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in *entry-level* positions” (Flaherty, 2021, para. 21). This is nothing of which to be proud. After four years of college (sadly, less than 50% of college students graduate on time; many need six years to graduate), 40% of graduates do not possess the skills for an entry-level job! What percentage of high school graduates who have taken an internship will have the skills necessary to succeed in entry-level positions? The answer might be more than 60%.

Wingard (2022), President of Temple University, has also declared that it will die if higher education refuses to change. One of the critical problems he highlights is that employers do not believe that a college degree guarantees that prospective employees will have the necessary skills to do the job. Many prefer hiring high school students willing to obtain career certificates and attend boot camps.

On the surface, it makes sense. Who needs a four-year marketing degree graduate to run social media when you can instead hire someone fresh out of high school and sign them up for HootSuite’s Academy’s social media certification course? Why pay for a six-figure education when HootSuite can get you some of the same skills in just six hours and for less than \$200?

We all know that a \$200 certificate program does not remotely equate to a four-year education from a best-in-class institution like Temple University, but perception is everything. And the reality is that the perceived value proposition that was once a constant for institutions of higher education becomes cloudier day by day, with just six in 10 Americans recently surveyed saying college is worth the time and money (Wingard, 2022, paras. 11-12).

A recent study by the Third Way, a prominent think tank, found that many college degrees are not worth the time and money. Students would be better off entering the workforce immediately after high school rather than spending four or more years obtaining a college degree. The following is what the Third Way, which combined the data for all higher education institutions, learned:

[A]t 52 percent of the schools, more than half of the enrollees were not earning more than the typical high school graduate six years after they began their studies. After 10 years, the figure was still 29 percent (Lieber, 2022, para. 5).

Hansen (2021) underscores that there are 15 million unemployed or underemployed Americans when there is a significant labor shortage because of the “disconnect between education and employability.” Another disturbing trend that may be related is the sharp drop in higher education enrollments —down by 1 million — since the start of the coronavirus pandemic (Marcus, 2022). The number of colleges continues to decline. There are now 6,063 institutions of higher learning in the United States (down from 6,642 in 2017-2018). Of course, not all of this is due to closures; some of the decreases is due to mergers or consolidations of several public institutions into one (Lederman, 2021). Fischer (2022a) makes the point that even before the pandemic, the decline in enrollments hurt the financial stability of one-third of American colleges.

A further troubling trend is that many students are “stopping out.” American Community colleges have lost about 827,000 students since March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic began. Because of the hot labor market resulting in good salaries, students are placing their education on hold and are working (Barron, 2022). The hope is that they will return, but this might not happen if employers are more concerned about skills than degrees. Approximately 50% of American college graduates who have majored in the

humanities and liberal arts regret their choice. This may explain why the number of majors in those areas continues to shrink (Van Dam, 2022).

A recent survey found a 14% drop in the number of American teenagers planning to enroll in 4-year higher education institutions compared to before the pandemic. Spring 2022 enrollments were 11.7 million. A 14% decline would mean approximately 1.6 million fewer high school students opting for higher education (Kristof and Ritter, 2022). High schoolers gave several reasons for their lack of interest in pursuing higher education.

Over a quarter (28%) of teens who explained why they changed their mind about attending college said they had matured over the last two years, learned about other options, shifted their interests, or had experienced some other form of self-discovery. About one in seven (14%) of these teenagers were concerned about where they would be located, expressing a greater desire to remain close to family or to live in a new area, or citing a change in life circumstances, such as a need to take care of family members (Kristof and Ritter, 2022, para. 9).

The future of higher education is not bright. Higher education revenues are expected to plunge, and one scholar predicts that half of the colleges and universities in the United States will be bankrupt within the next few decades (Hess, 2017); that was before the appearance of the coronavirus. Because of the coronavirus, Moody's, the rating agency, downgraded the higher education sector from stable to negative. Higher education revenues were expected to decline by \$23 billion in the following year. This is why 64% of university presidents stated that their biggest problem today is ensuring their institutions' long-term survival. This may mean laying off staff, furloughs, and/or eliminating programs (Ferozhar, 2020).

Recently, Bloomfield College, a liberal arts institution in New Jersey, saw enrollments drop from 2,044 students in the Fall of 2012 to 1,153 in the Fall of 2022. This is happening to many small liberal arts colleges. The college merged with Montclair State, a public research university, to survive (Moody, 2022).

We are in a crisis moment, and institutions better wake up (Fischer, 2022a). What, if anything, should higher education institutions do to improve? The first step is recognizing that colleges and universities must adapt to the changing environment. The new normal in education includes such measures as more reliance on technology in teaching and online learning. The merger of departments, schools, and even colleges may be necessary for survival. Perhaps the most critical change will be to stop using the term "vocational" as a pejorative.

One of the primary objectives of higher education is to provide students with the competencies needed to succeed in the job market (as well as in life). This is especially true in the Information Age, where organizational resilience is vital because every business is vulnerable to obsolescence that might suddenly appear because of evolving technology and/or globalization. Agile organizations need nimble employees who are willing and able to adapt swiftly to changing business conditions. Vocational skills may be essential, but this does not mean colleges and universities should ignore other goals, such as acquiring a philosophy of life, intellectual/cognitive stimulation, and attaining values, morals, and ethics (Brooks, 2014).

According to the Strada Education Network's 2021 Alumni Survey, most students claimed they attended college "to qualify for a good job, be successful at work, make money, learn new things and grow as a person" (Mintz, 2021). Many educators, especially those from liberal arts backgrounds, might be unhappy with these results because they appear too materialistic and self-centered. Regardless, there is no reason that college courses cannot deliver practical skills that can also serve a much higher purpose than simply making more money.

There is no reason that students majoring in, say, the accounting will not appreciate taking courses that will actualize their potential. As indicated above, many people change careers when they get older, so possessing transferable skills will always be a big plus. Being an expert in a narrow discipline might be an unwise move in the age of disruption, where digitization, artificial intelligence, and globalization make every job vulnerable to obsolescence. Many firms are offshoring all kinds of jobs to India. Machine learning

may change how various tasks are performed in a few years. There are predictions that 40% of workers will be replaced by machines within 15 to 25 years (Pospisil, 2021). Radiologists are worried that machines will make them obsolete (Bassett, 2021).

The anti-higher education battles started by Scott Walker, former Governor of Wisconsin, approximately a decade ago, are spreading to other states. Politicians, especially conservative ones, are using higher education as a wedge issue. Many feel that it does not provide social or economic benefits and plays a significant role in attacking cherished values. “Only 37 percent of Republicans in a New America survey released this summer said colleges had a positive effect on the country. Just two years ago, 61 percent of GOP voters had a favorable view of higher education.” (Fischer, 2022b, para. 7).

IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS

Given the importance of organizational resilience, there should be an emphasis on transversal skills (also known as transferable skills). These are non-specific competencies unrelated to a particular position and can be applied to various settings and jobs. Some examples include critical thinking, information literacy, problem-solving, creativity, interpersonal skills (e.g., communication skills and ability to work in teams), intrapersonal skills (e.g., persistence), global citizenship (respect for diversity and tolerance for others), and quantitative reasoning (Care and Luo, 2016). These skills are valued by employers and may be taught in liberal arts as well as business classes. According to the American Management Association, the four essential skills to succeed in the workplace and college are communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking—the 4 Cs (AMA, 2012). The National Education Association (NEA) proposed the same four and wants to ensure that K-12 education stresses these vital skills (NEA, n.d.).

Nelson (2021) underscores the problem with higher education today and why it fails at preparing graduates for the workplace. Ideally, a college degree should provide skills including critical thinking, communication, collaborating with others, and problem-solving. These skills are valuable regardless of the kind of work one does; unfortunately, this is not how higher education institutions are structured.

A traditional university’s curriculum often centers on the distinct subject matter taught through siloed academic disciplines. Yet we all know that our complex world’s challenges do not fit neatly into said disciplines (Nelson, 2021, para. 2).

More and more politicians are inveighing against college majors that they feel are of little value in the job market. This trend may have started with Ronald Reagan, then Governor of California, who asserted that taxpayers should not subsidize majors that he believed were there to satisfy intellectual curiosities but did not provide practical skills (Berrett, 2015).

A study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that students graduating with majors that are occupation-specific and in demand, such as nursing and civil engineering, had the lowest unemployment rates (2% and 2.8%, respectively), whereas those with majors that are more general such as mass media had the highest unemployment rates (over 8%). Students graduating with liberal arts majors that focus on skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and communication, have unemployment rates in the center at around 5.8% (Bernard, 2016). Perhaps the time has come for academics to stop disparaging majors they consider vocational — accounting is often derided as not belonging to a college or university — and criticize courses and majors that do not provide valuable skills.

The proportion of employees at Google, IBM, Ernst & Young, and Apple without any college degree keeps increasing, even for positions that require exceptional skills. Employers are looking at applicants with skills-based certifications rather than traditional four-year college degrees (Smith, 2020). Interestingly, Google competes directly with colleges and offers professional courses that teach foundation skills in project management, data analysis, and UX design. Students will not have to spend four or more years in college, rack up massive amounts of debt, and then have trouble finding a decent job. These programs — called Google Career Certificates — are designed to be completed in approximately six months, are in areas where demand is high, and are considerably more affordable than college (Bariso, 2020). Many students

opt for short-term, work-related certificates, a type of “stackable credential” that constitutes a simple and relatively inexpensive way to demonstrate that one possesses skills (Mangan, 2015). Saylor Academy (Saylor.org) is a nonprofit that offers free, online courses to people who wish to enhance their skills. Thus, one may take a course to learn Python or software engineering and receive a certificate.

Several major companies are rethinking their hiring requirements because they have prevented numerous workers from obtaining good jobs that are a stepping stone to the middle class. These workers have not been able to get better jobs despite having the necessary skills because they do not possess college degrees, a requirement for various positions. This has significantly impacted millions of workers, especially Blacks and Latinos (about 2/3 of American workers do not have college degrees). OneTen, a nonprofit, has convinced many companies to drop screening by college degree and instead adopt skills-based hiring. Suppose the choice is between hiring employees with the appropriate skills without a degree or employing people with no useful skills but college graduates. It makes sense for firms to choose the former, especially if diversity is also a desired preference (Lohr, 2022).

Enhancing Higher Education by Focusing on Skills

What should higher education institutions do so that they do not become irrelevant? The solution is straightforward: Ensure that every course offered provides skills and modify or eliminate those solely concerned with indoctrinating students. Even majors seen as primarily “vocational,” such as accounting and business should incorporate these skills into their courses. It is not inconceivable that so-called practical narrow majors could become obsolete because of technology and artificial intelligence/machine learning.

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving

According to Dyer (2011, p. 2), “critical thinking is an approach to reading, thinking, and learning that involves asking questions, examining our assumptions, and weighing the validity of arguments.” Critical thinkers are “self-aware, curious, and independent. They introspect on their thinking processes; they work at knowing their own biases and can name the strategies they are using when they make judgments (self-aware).” It can be taught in courses ranging from literature, history, philosophy to mathematics, accounting, and statistics, etc. There is no one discipline that “owns” critical thinking (Ennis, 1997; Friedman, Frankel, & Friedman, 2016). It can be taught to enhance problem-solving and reasoning skills, regardless of major. Given how technology is becoming more complex and sophisticated, employees need to have the ability to produce innovative solutions to complex problems. Admittedly, some believe that it is not clear that critical thinking is a skill that can be taught (Schlueter, 2016). In any case, it should probably not be a separate course but part of every course. Academics talk about ethics across the curriculum; the same should be done for critical thinking, and it should be spread over the entire curriculum.

More and more firms are looking for individuals with quantitative skills that include an understanding of data and analytics. Big data analytics aims to examine large data sets and find hidden patterns and correlations that enable one to make good decisions. Analytics is a tool that allows a firm to use the massive amounts of information it already has about its customers/clients to understand its customers' needs better and increase customer loyalty.

The push towards diversity in education rarely includes a diversity of ideas and thus runs counter to critical thinking. Courses that should encourage independent thought often serve to indoctrinate students to conform to the instructor's opinions and ideas. Such classes may be harmful. Critical thinking is not about what to think but how to think. A recent study found that 63.5 % of students believe “the climate on my campus prevents some people from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive” (Burt, 2022, para. 3). A national poll found that “Fifty-five percent of respondents said that they had held their tongue over the past year because they were concerned about retaliation or harsh criticism” (The Editorial Board, 2022, para 17). The authors posit:

A society that values freedom of speech can benefit from the full diversity of its people and their ideas. At the individual level, human beings cannot flourish without the confidence to take risks, pursue ideas and express thoughts that others might reject (para. 6).

Freedom of speech is being suppressed or limited on many campuses because the cancel culture has become widespread. Even professors are afraid of expressing opinions that are not seen as “woke” because they might be fired. Thanks to social media, it has become relatively easy to find out if someone articulates a viewpoint that might be inconsistent with the woke establishment.

Jonathan Haidt co-founded Heterodox Academy to push for “viewpoint diversity” on campus (Goldstein, 2017). Haidt believes that the new moral culture prevalent on many college campuses encourages a hypersensitive mindset on the part of students, promotes victimization, suppresses dissent, and distorts scholarship. The result will be a society where people do not get along in the workplace or community. According to Haidt, about 70% to 75% of America is now in a protected group. It is challenging to be a candid, truthful social scientist when “you have to try to explain social problems without saying anything that casts any blame on any protected group member. None of these groups can have done anything that led to their victimization or marginalization” (Leo, 2016, para. 34).

Ethical Reasoning

There is no reason that ethical reasoning should only be discussed in a philosophy course; this is why “ethics across the curriculum” has become popular at many institutions. It is difficult to think of a discipline that does not have ethical questions that must be addressed. Ethical questions arise in accounting, robotics, physical education, art, and gender studies. Ethical thinking must be taught in the context of critical thinking. Paul (1988, para. 7) has the following to say about the danger of teaching morality and ethics that is not in conjunction with critical thinking: “How can we cultivate morality and character in our students without indoctrinating them, without systematically rewarding them merely because they express our moral beliefs and espouse our moral perspective?”

Without scrupulous care, we merely pass on to students our moral blindness, moral distortions, and close-mindedness. Certainly, many who trumpet most loudly for ethics and morality in the schools merely want students to adopt their ethical beliefs and their ethical perspectives, regardless of the fusion of insight and prejudice those beliefs and perspectives doubtless represent. They take themselves to have the Truth in their pockets. They take their perspective to be exemplary of all morality rightly conceived. On the other hand, what these same people fear most is someone else’s moral perspective taught as the truth: conservatives afraid of liberals being in charge, liberals or conservatives, theists of non-theists, and non-theists of theists (Paul, 1988, para. 5).

Teamwork/Collaboration Skills/Respect for Diversity

The ability to work in teams is crucial in the Information Age. It can be taught in all kinds of courses, including physical education – baseball, football, basketball, and many other team sports require working well with others. Respect for inclusion and diversity is crucial because the workforce consists of ethnically and culturally diverse individuals.

Duarte *et al.* (2015) maintain: “Psychologists have demonstrated the value of diversity – particularly the diversity of viewpoints – for enhancing creativity, discovery, and problem-solving.” Encouraging ethnic, gender, and other kinds of diversity is one way to ensure a variety of viewpoints. A board consisting of only white males will not have the different mindsets, approaches, and backgrounds to make good decisions. In fact, according to research by McKinsey, organizations that had more diverse executive boards outperformed industry medians. In addition, diverse teams beat other teams 87% of the time (Zalis, 2017). Unfortunately, not all colleges and universities strive to ensure diversity of opinion (admittedly, many do).

In today’s global economy, there are few jobs where people work alone. Therefore, people must learn how to work in teams and share knowledge. A silo mentality occurs when groups or departments in an organization refuse to share knowledge, making it difficult for a firm to be innovative. This is why good corporate leaders engage in silo-busting (Tett, 2015). Indeed, organizations that get too large often find themselves in rigid silos and consumed with turf battles.

Academic departments are frequently silos that promote disciplinary or even sub-disciplinary elitism. Academic departments may encourage the erroneous belief that one discipline is superior to others and can provide all the answers. This attitude interferes with critical thinking and is a cognitive bias known as *déformation professionnelle* — the tendency to see things narrowly, i.e., from the point of view of one's discipline or profession (Friedman, 2017). The turf battles in academia have become legendary (e.g., economics vs. sociology or liberal arts vs. business). It is doubtful that students will learn to respect and work with individuals from other disciplines from their professors whose loyalty is to their department, not the institution.

Communication/Active Listening

Organizations require individuals who can effectively express ideas and suggestions. Communication skills include written and oral communication and using social media and other computer technologies (email, PowerPoint, Twitter, Zoom, etc.) to get a message across. It is almost impossible to think of a course that cannot be used to teach people communication skills. Computer-assisted presentations have indeed been implemented in many colleges and universities to improve the communication abilities of students.

To become innovative and nimble, many companies are becoming learning organizations (Argyris and Schoen 1996; Senge 1990). Peter M. Senge popularized the “learning organization” in his influential 1990 book *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge 1990). Friedman et al. (2005) summarize what one should expect to see in a learning organization. First and foremost is the belief in continuous and collective learning, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and a commitment to lifelong learning. The organization must be nimble and develop the ability to adapt to changing business conditions and have the ability to renew and revitalize itself quickly. There must be a concern for people and respect (and empowerment) for employees. Diversity is required since it allows for new ideas. The ability and willingness to communicate are necessary for people who want to work in learning organizations. Ironically, colleges and universities have been criticized for not being learning organizations. This is not surprising given that academic departments serve as silos and are reluctant to share knowledge with other areas. Academics show greater loyalty to their departments than colleges or universities (Friedman et al., 2005).

There is evidence that a successful leader or manager must possess active listening skills, a talent rarely taught in leadership programs. This is the ability to pay attention to what others say. It indicates respect for what others think and is needed for effective communication. Unfortunately, few possess this skill and are likely to be distracted with their smartphone, look around, or fidget with some object rather than focus on what someone else says (Schwantes, 2022). President Woodrow Wilson once said: “I not only use all the brains that I have but all that I can borrow.” Overconfident managers tend to be know-it-alls and do not admit they can learn from others; this is one reason they are poor listeners. This can be a problematic trait for a leader, especially in the digital age.

Researchers are discovering that the foremost predictor of success when interacting with people from different countries or cultures is cultural intelligence (CQ). It is more important than IQ or EQ (emotional intelligence). To communicate properly, people must appropriately use their body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, posture, and mannerisms (Robson, 2017). For example, many popular hand gestures acceptable in the United States (e.g., thumbs up) are insulting in some countries. Using one's left hand for everyday tasks such as eating, shaking hands, or paying bills could be a serious insult in various places in the Middle East or India (Jones, 2022).

Creative Thinking /Adaptability

Creative thinking engages the right side of the brain and is not the same as critical thinking. Creativity is not only crucial in art and music; it is a vital skill, and employers want to hire creative thinkers. One survey of 1,500 executives found that they believed that creativity was the most essential business skill in the modern world (cited in Davis, 2018). Teaching creativity is being stressed at many K-12 schools (Davis, 2018). Friedman, Friedman, and Leverton (2016) provide compelling evidence that diversity is essential for augmenting creativity, i.e., having people from various backgrounds with diverse opinions work

together on projects. In a knowledge economy, creativity requires that people possess the ability to collaborate. Great ideas arise in teams--think of the Manhattan Project.

Solutions to problems will require creative people who think outside the discipline (what is referred to as “thinking outside the box” often means outside the discipline), can work together, and are not constrained by the models and methods of a single field. It is inconceivable, but Apple came extremely close to bankruptcy in 1997. Jobs understood that the company had to be innovative, change the rules, and think outside the box if the company was going to survive. Jobs was responsible for innovations that included iMacs, iPods, iPads, iTunes Music Store, and iPhones (Shontell, 2011; Weinberger and Hartmans, 2020). Apple is arguably the most extraordinary comeback story in all of corporate history.

It is not only the organization that has to be agile. You cannot have organizational agility without employee creativity and adaptability (Friedman, 2020; Friedman and Lewis, 2021). Employees must have the ability and willingness to adapt to changing business conditions. The amount of information is increasing exponentially, mainly because of the internet and globalization. According to Lewis (2016), knowledge doubles every 12 months. Friedman and Lewis (2021) posit that organizational agility is essential for survival during the information age because firms can become rapidly outdated. Companies often have to reinvent themselves completely to survive. Some examples of firms that did so successfully include the following: IBM was founded in 1896 and manufactured punch card equipment; Sony started as a radio repair shop back in 1945; Motorola started out manufacturing car radios; and Nokia was founded as a firm with a wood pulp mill in Finland (Friedman & Friedman, 2016; Roos, 2014). The list of companies now in trouble or bankrupt because they were slow to adapt to changing realities continues to grow. It includes A&P, AOL, Blackberry, Blockbuster, Borders, Compaq, Kodak, MySpace, Netscape, Polaroid, Radio Shack, Sears, Tower Records, Toys R Us, Wang Laboratories, Xerox, and Yahoo.

Intrapersonal Skills/Character Development

Schwartz (2015) maintains that employers desperately seek students who know how to think. This requires that students be taught how to develop intellectual virtues such as a love of truth, honesty, fair-mindedness, humility, perseverance, courage, good listening, perspective-taking and empathy, the ability to admit to and learn from mistakes, embracing diversity, tolerance, valuing human dignity, and adaptability. Many higher education institutions stress research over teaching; great teachers who do not publish are unlikely to be awarded tenure. This is why many college professors are poor teachers and unable to inspire students to love learning.

The most vital competency of all might be inculcating in students a passion for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is an absolute necessity today. Students who graduate with little interest in acquiring knowledge will not be of value to corporations that must be agile to survive and thrive. Today’s economy is merciless, and, as noted above, organizations that refuse to change will not survive.

Weast (1973) postulates that if education aims to cultivate minds so that young people learn to think effectively and make appropriate decisions, tolerance and humility must be emphasized. He contends that professors generally are not known for possessing those traits: Tolerance is:

[A] commitment to having an open, receptive mind. Whatever the issue is about, no matter how contrary the view may be to one’s own (or no matter how favorable), the commitment of the professor must be to discovering, through the painstaking use of intellectual skills, whether and to what extent it is true or false (Weast, 1973, para. 9).

Intellectual humility is closely related to tolerance. People should be aware of their intellect’s limitations; listening to what others believe about a particular issue is essential. According to Van Dierendonck (2011), leaders create a safe and trusted workplace by demonstrating humility and clarifying to subordinates that they do not have all the answers. Even the military recognizes the importance of humility: “Humble leaders can be very successful in the military because they are focused on developing those they are leading while accomplishing the mission” (Farmer, 2010, para. 10).

CONCLUSION

The key to success today is quickly modifying an organization's business model in response to changing circumstances; academe is "notorious for adjusting slowly to change" (CCAP, 2014, para. 1). In the military, the expression "fighting the last war" has become shorthand to describe the stupidity of using old strategies when fighting current battles. The Industrial Revolution changed the way wars were fought. Thus, tactics such as Napoleonic charges attacking entrenched soldiers with rifles make no sense today. Future wars will probably involve cyberwarfare, drones, and possibly robots.

The academic world can learn about the importance of adaptability from the military. The military has been talking about the significance of training adaptive leaders. Adaptive leaders are agile and possess "a flexibility of mind, a tendency to anticipate or adapt to uncertain or changing situations." They must also be able to "break from habitual thought patterns, to improvise when faced with conceptual impasses, and quickly apply multiple perspectives to consider new approaches or solutions ... Agile leaders stay ahead of changing environments and incomplete planning to preempt problems" (Field Manual, 2006, 6-3, 6-4).

Educators should see their courses as a means of delivering content as well as a whole gamut of vital skills. This is the only way that higher education institutions will not find themselves like A&P, Blockbuster, and Sears, once mighty companies and now bankrupt.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has published a series of employer surveys on higher education since 2007. A key finding of the latest 2021 survey is the following:

Less than half of employers think college graduates are "very well prepared" in the same skills they view as the most important for success, including the ability to work effectively in teams (48 percent), critical thinking skills (39 percent), the ability to analyze and interpret data (41 percent), and the application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings (39 percent) (Finley, 2021, para. 10).

Three critical questions Peter Drucker posed to every business were: "What is our business/mission? Who are our customers? What do our customers value?" (Drucker, 2005). Have college presidents and chancellors asked themselves the question as to what students value?

Unfortunately, many educators are repulsed by the thought that students believe that higher education is to enhance a career and make more money. The term "vocational" major is a pejorative in higher education. Even worse are academics who feel their job is to transform students into revolutionaries who loathe capitalism and are filled with fury. The truth is that colleges and universities should be happy to focus on skills and competencies. Even academics who feel that the primary purpose of higher education is to achieve a philosophy of life, to become a better person, or acquire empathy for others, it is vital to have skills. It is not easy for somebody to develop a philosophy of life without critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills.

Much money has been wasted on administrative bloat at higher education institutions in the United States. Approximately 110,000 administrators have been added over the last decade. The ratio of undergraduate students to full-time administrators has decreased from 78 to 38 (Fischer, 2022a). This will have to change, and presidents and chancellors will have to focus on reducing waste, increasing efficiency, and improving the quality of education. The days of spending on unproductive "window dressing" activities such as creating unneeded academic departments and schools, building elaborate dorms, and hiring more administrators will have to end. Although this paper focuses mainly on colleges and universities in the United States, many of the lessons that can be learned are probably true for higher education institutions throughout the world.

Complacency is a disaster for any organization. Dinosaurs thought their immense size and power would protect them, and they did not! They disappeared because they could not adapt. Academic departments contribute to the silo mentality in higher education, which is the adversary of organizational agility (Friedman and Friedman, 2018). Faculty from different departments must collaborate and share information to succeed in today's economy. The goal should be to increase students' skills, not to build protective walls

around academic departments. Amazingly, few colleges and universities are learning organizations where knowledge is shared (Friedman and Kass-Shraibman, 2017).

Faculty and administrators should not be afraid to ask whether employers are satisfied with the preparedness of undergraduates at their college. Many institutions are doing an excellent job of providing the right skills. However, many schools have been indifferent to ensuring that a college degree offers exceptional value and is worth the cost and effort.

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