

# **Reviving the American Dream by Using Career Development To Prepare All Young Adults for Career Success**

**Summary of the National Convening Held at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation  
February 22, 2016**

## **I. Why We Convened a Meeting on Career Development**

In late 2015, 13 of the nation's most prominent business and education organizations gathered at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to plan a national convening on career development. While our nation has spent hundreds of billions of dollars on education reform, we have devoted virtually no resources to career development: the process that helps individuals decide what career they are best suited for, and to then discover the best pathway to that career. Career development has become the black hole in the paradigm that governs our approach to education.

The costs of this neglect are staggering – both for young adults, many of whom end up unemployed or underemployed, and for American businesses, who are so often constrained by shortages of skilled workers. This coalition of 13 organizations agreed that if the U.S. made high-quality career development a central priority, we could make great progress on addressing these huge problems, and create a more effective education and workforce development system.

Elevating career development would mean placing far more emphasis on the relevance of education, and its ultimate purpose – not just to pass a test or earn a degree, but to prepare students for career success. It would also mean adopting a new educational paradigm. The existing paradigm promotes the idea that there is “one road to heaven,” in which graduation from a four-year college is the gateway to success. While this unquestionably works well for some, it is hardly a comprehensive solution in a country where two-thirds of adults never earn a four-year degree. Meanwhile, it has fostered an educational elitism in which such alternatives as community colleges and CTE are often denigrated. A similar elitism has infected our view of the labor market. Careers that pay middle-class wages and require advanced skills, but not a four-year degree, are often demeaned, discouraging young adults from promising careers. Ultimately, this has helped extinguish the hope embodied in the American Dream – that all adults have the opportunity to achieve economic independence.

The national convening was designed to answer two fundamental questions. The first was whether we should make career development a central priority in education. And second, if so, how can we take quality career development to scale? The goal would be that all young adults, and especially those who are most vulnerable, become “career literate,” equipped with a skill that is fundamental to success in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The steering committee included the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the Global Pathways Institute at Arizona State University, which took the lead in planning. Together, we invited a total of 250 prominent leaders from business, education, government and the non-profit sector, many of whom have devoted their careers to education and workforce development. (See the end of this document for a full list of organizations attending the convening).

## II. Morning Sessions: Making the Case for Career Development

The meeting began with keynote speeches from Governor John Engler, President of the Business Roundtable, and Chip Blankenship, CEO of GE Appliances. William Symonds, Director of the Global Pathways Institute, provided an overview of the issues. Their remarks underscored the urgency of the issue. Nearly one million high school students fail to graduate with their class every year, and one-in-seven young adults, 16 to 24, are disengaged from school and work. Our higher education system is even more wasteful of human and financial capital. While student debt has spiked to \$1.3 trillion, many students lack a clear career focus, the U.S. has the world's highest college dropout rate, and even many graduates end up underemployed.

Governor Engler noted that over 90% of CEOs say they are facing skills shortages, which impede the ability of their companies to thrive. Blankenship reported that while G.E. Appliances invested \$1 billion to “reshore” manufacturing from abroad to Kentucky, some 90% of the people who apply for its production jobs are unqualified. The speakers agreed that high-quality career development would help close the skills gap by increasing awareness of career opportunities, and engaging business in mentoring, work-based learning and other efforts to help prepare students for success. Career development would also address the lack of relevance that is the main reason so many students drop out of high school, while helping college students find viable career pathways. Ultimately, all this could greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our education and workforce development system, saving billions of dollars.

The morning sessions also featured two panels. The first focused on the role of education, and was moderated by Scott Solberg, Professor at Boston University's School of Education. The second examined “how business can help lead the way,” and was moderated by Jeannine Kunz, director of professional development at SME. The panels enforced the consensus that career development is critical, and provided powerful evidence that support is growing. For example:

- Wisconsin Superintendent Tony Evers explained how the state is engaging educators and business to help meet the mandate that students develop Academic and Career Plans. Wisconsin is one of 42 states that now embrace so-called Individualized Learning Plans.
- Innovations in educational technology are producing significant improvements in the resources available to counselors, teachers and students. There have been advances in everything from e-portfolios to career assessments and labor market information.
- Some of the nation's most important business organizations and companies are recognizing the importance of career development. The convening included presentations from the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, the Siemens Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, all of which have impressive initiatives.

Our morning sessions closed with keynote remarks from Mrs. Alma Powell, Chair of America's Promise Alliance, which has led the Grad Nation initiative that has helped raise the on-time high school graduation rate to a record high of 81%. “But today a high school diploma does not guarantee success,” she said. “Students must be prepared for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” If we want to help these young adults discover economic opportunities, we must recruit millions of “caring adults” who can serve as mentors to them. “Every child in this country should have a chance to succeed,” Mrs. Powell said, “and every adult has a responsibility to make it happen.”

### III. Afternoon Sessions: Developing Bold Ideas for Moving Forward

A major purpose of the convening was to ask the leaders who attended how we could take high-quality career development to scale. The 250 participants were divided into 25 tables and asked to address prepared questions. Each table was asked to develop “bold ideas” that addressed their assigned questions. The dialogue produced nearly 40 pages of suggestions. For this summary, the suggestions were distilled into eight major themes:

#### 1. **Launch a national communications campaign to create commitment to career development.**

The paradigm we are advocating would involve a fundamental change in the culture of education and work, and that will require an extensive communications effort. Examples of what might be involved:

- Stress that there are myriad forms of economic opportunity, rather than over-emphasizing the four-year degree, “one road to heaven” approach. Possible tagline: “There is a pathway to success for *every* student.” Address the stigma that currently devalues manufacturing, construction and similar careers, and encourage youth to pursue the most cost-efficient post-secondary route to their goals.
- Recruit national figures to champion this agenda; use PSAs during major events.

#### 2. **Provide career development to *all* young adults by embracing a systemic approach.**

Adopt policies and procedures that will make career development a central focus of our education system. Ideas for advancing this goal:

- In K-12, rebrand Individual Learning Plans as Personal Career Plans to better signal the ultimate goal. Begin career development in elementary school, and require high school students to develop clear next steps before graduation.
- Embed career readiness in state accountability systems, as Kentucky has done. Expand work-based learning that enables students to acquire workforce readiness skills, and encourage students to earn stackable, industry-recognized credentials.
- Measure and reward post-secondary institutions for their success in equipping students with critical competencies and credentials, and in placing graduates in jobs related to their majors. Require institutions receiving Pell Grants to help all incoming students develop personalized career management plans.

#### 3. **Work with the Chambers and workforce boards to expand business and industry engagement.**

Business engagement is critical to success, but our only hope of moving to scale is to work with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Workforce Boards and their local networks. What they might do:

- Help create and fund a new cadre of career development coordinators to serve as liaisons between employers and schools, and facilitate mentoring, internship, and work-based learning opportunities for all students.
- Work with state governments to recognize companies leading the way and create incentives like tax credits that encourage more companies to get involved.

- 4. Professionalize career development by improving training and credentialing for counselors, career coordinators and educators.** Possible solutions for today's lack of professionalization:
  - Develop nationally recognized credentials that would be required of specialists, including counselors, college career advisers, and career coordinators.
  - Incorporate career development into teacher preparation programs, and greatly expand professional development for existing teachers and administrators.
  
- 5. Harness the power of technology to transform career development.** To date, career development has received little of the billions invested in the technology revolution. More funding is needed to:
  - Use social media to introduce young people to career options, career pathways, mentors and companies providing work-based learning.
  - Launch a national effort to elevate the quality of labor market information.
  - Improve the quality and portability of e-portfolios for communicating competencies.
  - Develop online toolkits to guide Chambers, Workforce Development Boards and families in this work.
  
- 6. Expand the supply of “caring adults’ by engaging the broader community in this effort.** Many speakers stressed that a “caring adult” is vital to successful career development. How we might meet the need:
  - Work with AARP, AmeriCorps and others to recruit/train retirees and other volunteers. Push PTAs to get involved.
  - Encourage districts to embrace a “whole-school” approach, so that career development becomes the job of every teacher and administrator.
  - Use the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to help youth organizations provide career development to Opportunity Youth.
  
- 7. Expand research into high-quality career development.** Research has been badly underfunded. Priorities for action:
  - Describe the ROI, including economic and life-impacts, of quality career development programs.
  - Examine the best ways to measure soft skills and which skills are most likely to be needed, including for jobs that have not yet been created.
  
- 8. Form a broad cross-sector Career Development Coalition to advance this agenda.** Business, education, government and the non-profit sector must come together if we are to achieve this vision. The coalition would help oversee the above agenda and align efforts by member organizations. Initial priorities would also include:
  - Develop a unified definition of career development.
  - Establish the metrics for measuring high-quality career development.
  - Insure that this effort serves all young adults, including those of color, the low income, and the most vulnerable.

## IV. Participating Organizations

### A. Members of the Steering Committee

ACT, Inc.  
Association for Career and Technical Education  
Advance CTE  
America's Promise Alliance  
Council of Chief State School Officers  
Global Pathways Institute at Arizona State University  
Manufacturing Skill Standards Council  
National Career Development Association  
National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth  
National Governors Association  
School of Education, Boston University  
SME  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

### B. Other Organizations Represented

AchieveTexas College & Career Initiative	Carus Corporation	Gallup Education
ACT Foundation	CCRS Center	Gateway Technical College, WI.
Adams 12 Five Star Schools, CO.	Center School District, CO.	GE Appliances
AdvancePath Academics, Inc.	Citi Foundation	George Washington University
Aerospace Industries Association	City and County of Honolulu	Global Skills Exchange Corporation
Alcoa Foundation	Department of Community Services	GPS Education Partners
Amatrol, Inc.	City of Scottsburg, IN.	Grads of Life
American Federation of Teachers	Colorado Community College System	Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce, AZ.
American Institutes for Research	Colorado Department of Education	Greater Phoenix Leadership, Inc.
American Youth Policy Forum	Colorado State University	IMS International
ANSI	Columbia University Teachers College	Independent Lubricant Manufacturers Association
Apollo Education Group	Committee on Education and the Workforce	Indiana Chamber of Commerce
Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Corporate Education Consulting.	Innovate+Educate
Arizona Department of Education	Council for a Strong America	Institute for Educational Leadership
Arizona Governor's Office	The Council of State Government	International Telementor Program
Arizona State University	Department of Labor	Ivy Tech Community College, IN.
Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions OYIF	Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation, OK.	Jefferson Education Accelerator
Association for Manufacturing Excellence	Duncan Public Schools, OK.	Jobs for America's Graduates
Auburn Career Center	Eadgyth Business Solutions (EBS)	Jobs for the Future
Automation Federation	Education Projects & Partnerships	JP Morgan Chase Foundation
AVID Center	Education Strategy Group	KentuckianaWorks
Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District, MA.	Envision	Kentucky Department of Education
Bray Strategies	Expect More Arizona	KIPP DC
Business Roundtable	Florida State University	Kuder, Inc.
Career Cruising	Ford Next Generation Learning	Labor Institute for Training, Inc.

LinkedIn  
Lockheed Martin  
The Manufacturing Institute  
Markle Foundation  
Meridian Technology Center, OK.  
Michigan Department of Education  
Mid-America Science Park  
Minnesota Department of Education  
Monthey Associates  
Morrison Institute for Public Policy  
at Arizona State University  
MSSC  
MyVerse.com  
NASBE  
National Alliance for Partnerships  
in Equity  
National Association of Secondary  
School Principals  
National Association of Workforce  
Boards  
National Association of Workforce  
Development Professionals  
National Center for College and  
Career Transitions  
National Center on Education and  
the Economy  
National Conference of State  
Legislatures  
National Council for Advanced  
Manufacturing  
National Council for Community  
and Education Partnerships  
National Network of Business and  
Industry Associations  
National Restaurant Association

National Restaurant Association  
Education Foundation  
National School Boards Association  
National Skills Coalition  
NC3  
NCCER  
NOCTI/NBS  
North Carolina Department of  
Public Instruction  
Office of Disability Employment  
Policy  
Ohio Association of Career-  
Technical Superintendents  
Ohio Department of Education  
Opportunity America  
Opportunity Nation  
Oregon Department of Education  
Parthenon/EY  
Partners for a Competitive  
Workforce  
Pearson  
The Philanthropy Roundtable  
Poudre High School, CO.  
Rennie Center for Education  
Research and Policy  
Responsive Education Solutions  
The Ritz-Carlton  
South Carolina Department of  
Commerce  
Senate HELP Committee  
Sheboygan South High School, WI.  
Siemens Foundation  
SkillsUSA  
Snap-on, Inc.  
Society for Vocational Psychology

SOCMA  
South Central College, MN.  
Southern Regional Education Board  
State University of New York at  
Buffalo  
Stratasy  
SWORWIB  
Tennessee Department of Education  
Terrell Independent School District  
Texas State Technical College  
Toyota Motor Manufacturing  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Education  
Universal Technical Institute  
University of Cincinnati  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
University of Minnesota - College  
of Liberal Arts  
University of Missouri - St. Louis  
University of Oregon  
U.S. House of Representatives  
USA Funds  
Utah State Office of Education  
Virginia Advanced Study Strategies  
WestEd  
Window & Door Manufacturers  
Association  
Wisconsin Department of Public  
Instruction  
Workcred  
Workforce Solutions for North  
Central Texas  
Worldwide Interactive Network,  
Inc.  
YouScience

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Supplementary materials from the convening, including agenda, prepared questions and full notes are available at [www.globalpathwaysinstitute.org](http://www.globalpathwaysinstitute.org).