Building a Diverse, Future Ready Talent Pool
How Industry and Higher Education Can Close the Skills Gap
The nation is facing a looming worker shortage, particularly in occupations requiring advanced education and skill sets. The world of work has changed dramatically. Technological advances and an increasingly global economy and labor market are disrupting the workplace and changing how and where work gets done. Many of the occupations and skill sets in high demand today didn’t exist just a decade ago. In addition, today’s college graduates are joining a global workforce where they are expected to collaborate and work with peers from different countries, cultures and perspectives. Inclusive leadership, cultural competency and the ability to collaborate and work effectively across a range of differences have become essential components of a student’s employability profile.

As the demand for highly educated and highly skilled workers increases, so does the urgency to improve the retention and degree completion rates of marginalized student populations, as well as their retention and advancement rates once they are in the workplace. Approximately 42 percent of U.S. college students come from communities of color; 18 percent are non-native English speakers, and 52 percent are the first in their families to attend college. However, increased student diversity has not translated to equitable outcomes across student populations, and disparities in higher education enrollment, degree attainment, hiring and career advancement continue to persist for communities of color.

According to a Programme for International Student Assessment report, the quality of education U.S. students receive in K-12 varies widely, depending on the ethnic and socioeconomic profile of the local school system. Many students from low-income families don’t receive the high-quality education they need to prepare for college, or develop the study skills they need to keep pace with a rigorous college curriculum. In addition to inadequate academic preparation, low income and first-generation college students often lack a support network of mentors, role models and advisors they can rely upon for advice about college.

Although bachelor’s degree attainment for Hispanic, black, white, and Asian adults has risen over time, the attainment gap has more than doubled between White students and Black and Hispanic students. A 2017 New York Times analysis found that Black and Hispanic students are more underrepresented at the nation’s top colleges and universities today than they were 35 years ago. According to the Graduate Management Admission Council, underrepresented populations account for only 16 percent of the U.S. graduate management education pipeline. These disparities continue into the working world, where gaps in employment and earnings are strongly correlated with both college completion and race and ethnicity. Although minorities are well represented in the nation’s workforce, they remain disproportionately underrepresented in positions of leadership across corporate America. In 2017, just 10 percent of men and three percent of women in the U.S. corporate C-Suite were people of color. In 2018, people of color represented just 16 percent of Fortune 500 Board members.

Student retention rates also pose challenges for many colleges and universities. Each year a significant number of college students fall short of completing their degree. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that among
first-time, full-time students who started work toward a four-year degree in 2008, only 60 percent graduate within six years. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 30 percent of students who entered college in the fall of 2014 did not return the next year. Those students that do not complete their degree are primarily low income students, students of color, and first-generation college students. The First Generation Foundation estimates that first generation college students drop out during their first year at four times the rate of higher income second generation college students.

Higher education institutions and corporations alike have critical roles to play in preparing the workforce of the future, and the opportunities for collaboration to ensure that these challenges are addressed are numerous. Throughout this paper we highlight some of the innovative approaches both higher education institutions and corporations are employing to tackle these issues, and ways some are collaborating to do so.

**Infusing Diversity and Inclusion in the Campus Environment**

Creating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive student experience to address disparities and improve persistence and completion rates of diverse and underrepresented students has become a top priority for many colleges and universities. There is also a clear role corporations can play to create an equitable student experience, including ensuring diverse and underrepresented students have access to internships and pre-employment work opportunities, requesting diverse candidate slates during campus recruitment events, and sharing best practice approaches and strategies for implementing diversity and inclusion strategies across the organization.

Today, many colleges and universities have established diversity and inclusion strategies and are building student cultural competencies by infusing concepts of equity and inclusion into interdisciplinary studies and curriculum; requiring incoming students to participate in diversity and inclusion orientation and training sessions, and convening courageous conversations about race, bias and discrimination. However, there is still work to be done. A survey conducted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities found that only 34 percent of its member institutions require students to participate in diversity studies and experiences; 53 percent offer them as optional.

Creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive learning environment requires campus-wide commitment and building relationships with campus stakeholders - HR, admissions, student services, academic programs, marketing and communications, finance and IT. It requires a dedicated executive level position with responsibility for leading diversity and inclusion efforts, and a clear and measurable business plan for diversity and inclusion that links to the institution’s strategic plan.

**Building an Effective Campus Diversity and Inclusion Plan**

- Collect self-reported information on race, ethnicity, and nationality for faculty, students, and staff
- Identify representation gaps and set diversity targets
- Establish metrics to assess progress
- Provide campus stakeholders a voice in shaping diversity goals
- Communicate the plan widely to students, faculty, and staff, and externally to stakeholders
- Increase the cultural competency of leadership, faculty, staff and students
- Create opportunities for faculty and students to participate in diversity and inclusion training and lead diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Establish accountability by linking diversity and inclusion goals to performance goals
In 2016, Brown University launched an ambitious diversity and inclusion action plan – Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion - to create a more diverse and inclusive academic community. The University committed significant resources to fund the plan, including $50 million that was dedicated to hiring faculty from underrepresented groups; nearly $42 million to support specific diversity and inclusion initiatives in the plan, and an additional $7 million to increase diversity in fellowships and the University’s visiting professors program. In the two years following the launch of the plan, Brown increased the number of faculty from historically underrepresented groups, grew the pipeline of young scholars on track for tenured positions, and significantly expanded the number of incoming graduate students from underrepresented populations. Across the Brown campus, academic departments have held retreats on inclusive teaching practices, organized open forums to engage students, faculty and staff in the effort, and worked to embed a more intentional focus on diversity in their communities and course offerings.

Ensure an Inclusive Campus Climate

Many universities collect data on diversity recruitment and retention; these are important diversity measures. However, it is equally important to gather input from faculty and students to better understand campus culture and climate, which is at the core of inclusion. This requires ongoing assessments to collect input from campus stakeholders, and underrepresented and marginalized student groups in particular. Establishing cultural and socio-emotional support systems including personal mentoring and coaching, and multicultural directed resources and centers are also important, particularly for those students who do not comprise a racial or ethnic majority.

Today’s students are also taking a more active role to organize and bring attention to bias, discrimination and inequity on the college campus. A number of colleges and universities are providing support to these students by offering more advanced diversity and inclusion training and education; providing professional development opportunities and leadership roles within the campus community, and recognizing them for their knowledge, skills and contributions. These types of support are critical to developing inclusive leadership skills and competencies that students can bring with them into the workplace.

Building diversity in the higher education workforce also plays an important role in achieving an equitable and inclusive campus environment. For example, the pedagogy and curricular choices of faculty, and how they interact with individual students, can either foster or impede developing an inclusive classroom and campus culture. In addition, students report that it is important for them to see themselves reflected in the faculty and coursework to which they are exposed. However, according to the American Council on Education, in 2016, people of color held only 21 percent of full-time faculty positions, and faculty of color were less likely than White faculty to hold full professorships. Only 17 percent of college and university presidents were people of color.

Columbia University developed a detailed, 44-page handbook, Guide to Best Practices for Faculty Search and Hiring, to ensure fair and equitable searches and create the foundation for attracting a diverse candidate pool. The University aspires to be the ‘go-to institution for the world’s greatest scholars’ and recognizes it can not achieve this without a sustained focus on recruiting, hiring, promoting and retaining a diverse and well-qualified faculty.

As a key feature on Stanford University’s website, more than 20 diverse faculty members share their life experiences, the challenges they have overcome, and their experience as part of the Stanford learning community. By sharing their stories, the faculty members send the message to potential job seekers that the campus is inclusive and they will have opportunities to advance and succeed. The profiles also showcase a diverse workforce to prospective students.
CASE STUDIES

Through the interdisciplinary Diversity and Inclusion Leadership M.A. program at Tufts University, students learn scholarly theories including understanding the social contexts and psychological processes that result in implicit bias, discrimination, and marginalization, and develop skills needed to lead organizations through sustainable transformation to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Race Inclusion Initiative (RII) at UC Berkley Haas is a student-led research effort to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in the MBA program. Through the initiative, students analyzed admissions and student profile data, and conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups to identify areas of the student experience that created barriers for diverse students. A key finding of RII research was that while nearly 90 percent of MBA students said understanding racial dynamics is critical to being an effective leader, less than half were comfortable talking about race. In response to the finding, RII launched a Hot Topics discussion series and an ongoing forum for students to discuss hot-button issues, in addition to a diversity newsletter, blog and podcast.

Building Student College-to-Career Readiness

Shift in Focus to ‘Soft Skills”

To compete in the 21st century global economy, today’s graduates must leave college with a range of new skills and competencies, including agility and adaptability. The World Economic Forum estimates the average college graduate can expect to have more than 11 distinct jobs before the age of 50, many of which do not yet exist. According to 2018 LinkedIn research, 57 percent of senior leaders today say soft skills are more important than hard skills. An Accenture study that analyzed the evolution of more than 100 abilities, skills, tasks, and working styles in the U.S. over the last decade found today’s jobs require 50 percent higher levels of creativity, 45 percent more complex reasoning, and 35 percent higher level socio-emotional skills.

In the Higher Education-Industry Coalition survey, (a collaborative effort co-led by Diversity Best Practices, INSIGHT Into Diversity Magazine, Johns Hopkins University and NYU), both corporate respondents and higher education respondents ranked critical thinking/problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork, and professional communication skills among the most important skill sets needed by graduates entering the workforce. Although professional communication skills and emotional intelligence were identified among the most critical skill areas, they were also reported as generally lacking by industry respondents. In the 2018 Bloomberg Next study, 40 percent of corporations and nearly half of academic institutions reported recent college graduates lack the ‘soft skills’ needed in the workforce including emotional intelligence, complex reasoning, and negotiation and persuasion.

Higher education will play a critical role in helping students develop relevant content knowledge, and as importantly, transferable soft skills including critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and communication, across all majors and disciplines. Jobs of the future will demand and depend upon these competencies. Some institutions are experimenting with microcredentials to accelerate development of soft skills and demonstrate progress toward a degree, or as an added layer of qualification.

The Education Design Lab is focused on developing higher education models that improve opportunities for historically underserved learners.

The Lab engaged administrators, faculty, students and employers in the design of 21st century skills badges in eight skills areas (initiative, collaboration, creative problem-solving, critical thinking, intercultural fluency, empathy, oral communication and resilience).

To earn a badge, students go through an intentional and rigorous experience to develop the skills, build their network and portfolio of work in their field, and learn about their blindspots through 360 degree assessment and peer feedback.

Boise State is one of seven institutions participating in the pilot rollout of the skills badges. Three 21st Century Skills Badges are embedded into the school’s Community & Environmental Health B.S. program. All students who graduate with the degree are required to develop these skills and earn the badges as an extra layer of qualification.
CASE STUDY

In 2017, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation formed the Every Learner Everywhere network to help colleges and universities use adaptive learning technology to improve teaching and learning, with a focus on increasing the success rates of first-generation students, low-income students, and students of color. Adaptive courseware uses technology to personalize classroom instruction based on how students respond. The expectation is that racial and income-based equity gaps will decrease, especially in gateway math and English courses, and retention and graduation rates will increase. The technology allows students to move through an individually customized path of course material based on their skills and knowledge. Adaptive technology also provides instructors access to a more complete picture of their students, including real-time study habits, engagement with course material, and patterns of errors, empowering them to design more targeted instruction and remediation. By working collaboratively as a network, partner organizations will be able to learn from each other and present a unified voice to help close disparities in education on a national scale.

Student-centered Support

According to a 2018 national survey, 66 percent of college seniors felt they were not well prepared to succeed in a job search, and three-quarters said they didn’t know which jobs were an appropriate fit. College-bound students often make decisions about a major without a clear understanding of how those majors align with potential career options. This lack of knowledge can lead them to accumulate excess credits, extend time to degree attainment, or lose motivation and confidence and drop out completely. Underrepresented students and first-generation college students are primarily affected by uninformed career choices as a result of not having the social capital to make informed decisions.

CASE STUDY

Georgia State University (GSU)’s Quality Enhancement Plan, College to Career, is a campus-wide effort to get students to recognize the career competencies that they are acquiring through their curricular and co-curricular activities, to document these competencies in a robust fashion through archiving textual, video and audio evidence in faculty and peer-reviewed e-portfolios, and to articulate the competencies through resumes, cover letters and oral discourse. All undergraduates are on-boarded on career-pathway-based learning communities in their first semester. Faculty and departmental grants are awarded to encourage instructors to integrate assignments highlighting career competencies into both lower-level and capstone courses. All students are provided with e-portfolios upon matriculation. In 2018, GSU students posted more than 700,000 artifacts (evidence of their career competencies) to their e-portfolios. All students completed a first resume as part of their first-semester orientation courses. In 2018, Georgia State became the first university to partner with RoadTrip Nation to create a searchable video archive of the careers of GSU alumni.

The initiative has helped to build equity across student populations. GSU has eliminated the achievement gap among its student populations – one of the only public universities in the nation to achieve this goal. African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students all graduate at rates at or above those of the student body overall.

Johns Hopkins University launched a series of initiatives to integrate career and life design into the student experience, with a goal of providing equitable access for all students, in particular underrepresented students who often lack networks and resources. For example, the University’s newly redesigned Life Design career center enables staff members to work directly with faculty, train student leaders, and design events with program alumni. Specially trained Life Design staff receive major- and department-specific training giving them the skills and knowledge necessary to directly connect students with career programs and alumni employers, provide job-specific skills training, and develop individualized career-support programs for each major and each student. The Life Design initiative was informed by input gathered through a year of 90-day student listening tours, student-attended Life Design dinners, focus groups and faculty retreats.
Industry Insight Into Curriculum Design

Preparing college students for the world of work requires the cultivation of relationships with industry partners to align curriculum and course design with the skills and competencies needed in today’s workforce. According to research by Harvard Business Review, 56 percent of industry and academic leaders agree collaboration is necessary during higher education curriculum development. There is a strong foundation already in place to support cross-sector collaboration, and significant research has been conducted to identify the high priority skill sets that are needed and that appear to be missing in many new entrants.

Suggested strategies for engaging industry partners include:

• creating flexible and intellectual learning space in the classroom and curriculum
• rewarding faculty who develop innovative partnerships and experiment to include industry perspectives
• engaging industry partners as co-educators, mentors and sponsors; and
• developing opportunities for faculty to spend time on sabbatical at companies to gain first-hand insights into industry needs.

CASE STUDIES

The Pharmacists Across Boehringer Ingelheim (PhaB) business resource group includes close to 100 members, representing all areas of the company’s business, including medical, R&D and commercial functions. PhaB partners with schools of pharmacy across the U.S. to develop a strong talent pipeline and educate students on career opportunities in the industry. At one academic center, the BRG’s members teach an elective course introducing students to the work that is done within the industry to bring medications from discovery to development to patient use - and the critical role of the pharmacist in the process. Members also mentor or precept pharmacy students from other academic centers during their externship rotations. Rotations take place over a four to eight-week period and provide students with new insight as they weigh career options. In addition to providing a learning experience for students, PhaB members serving as preceptors develop new skill sets, including mentoring, coaching and providing performance feedback.

New York University’s Center for Sustainable Business at the Stern School of Business has forged numerous collaborative partnerships with industry to inform instruction in the classroom and provide students with hands-on work opportunities. An advisory board including C-suite corporate leaders and advisors from the middle-management ranks representing different industry sectors provides business insight to ensure the work of the Center is current and relevant, and the Center hosts sessions with business leaders who share sustainability strategies and relevant business cases. The Center also conducts joint research projects with industry and connects students with experiential learning opportunities to develop experience in sustainable business practices and prepare them for leadership roles in business.

The Lake Area Technical Institute (LATI) offers approximately 30 two-year programs to its students, including programs customized to a company’s specific parameters. For example, a curriculum designed for a local manufacturer of medical supplies and food safety products includes several courses in electronics, welding, lean, torque certification, robotics/programmable logic controllers, precision machining, and management. More than 300 businesses work with LATI program staff, consulting on and overseeing curriculum; providing internships, training aids, and equipment, and most importantly mentoring and hiring students. Such industry partnerships have contributed to high outcomes: 74 percent of first-time, full-time students graduate or transfer to a four-year institution within three years (compared with 39 percent of community college students nationally), and 99 percent are employed after graduation. LATI graduates also have 27 percent higher average earnings when entering the workforce than other new hires in the region.
Pre-employment Work Experience

According to Harvard Business Review, 71 percent of corporate recruiters indicated that finding applicants with sufficient practical experience is their greatest challenge when recruiting from higher education. In the Higher Education-Industry Coalition survey, just 41 percent of higher education career services respondents report their institution is very effective at providing students opportunities to gain real-time, hands-on work experience; 35 percent say their institution is only moderately effective in this regard. Twenty-four percent of respondents reported it can be difficult to find industry/business partners to provide hands-on work experience opportunities for students: geographic location of their institution (rural with no industry partners in proximity) was identified as the greatest barrier to developing partnerships with industry.

The 2018 McGraw-Hill Education survey found that only 40 percent of college students feel very or extremely prepared for their future careers. Over half of students participating in the survey believe professional experience and internships would better prepare them for the workforce. However, many students are unable to commit to an internship due to time or financial constraints. Today, 30 percent of students attend college part-time and 26 percent work full-time.

Paid internships can expand opportunities for students that would benefit most by the experience to participate. The benefits of paid internships flow both ways: they enable students to gain formative work experience while earning money, and also enable host companies to connect with candidates they can train and develop according to their business needs and priorities. The NACE 2019 Internship Survey reports the offer rate for interns is 70 percent, the acceptance rate is nearly 80 percent, and the conversion rate is 56 percent. The one-year retention rate for intern hires with internal experience is 71 percent, and 59 percent for those with external internship experience. Work experiences with lower barriers to entry, such as job shadowing, can also provide a realistic understanding of work environments and job demands without requiring students to forego a semester of classes for unpaid or low-pay work.

CASE STUDY

GlaxoSmithKline provides internship opportunities to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including a paid summer internship for PharmD candidates to intern within the company’s R&D program. Interns learn about regulations governing the industry, are introduced to leaders across multiple business areas, conduct research and deliver a capstone presentation. The success of the program has led to the implementation of a fellowship program between GSK, Howard University and the FDA.

CONNECTING WITH PURPOSE

4 out of 5 college graduates say it is very important or extremely important to have a sense of purpose in their work.

Providing students with exposure to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through internships, apprenticeships and other on-the-job experiences can help students from diverse backgrounds become familiar with corporate culture, develop important relationships, and hone their skills and abilities. Additionally, candidates who are passionate about CSR programs during these experiences are likely to become CSR advocates and change agents in the future.
Mentorships

The importance of mentorships and how those relationships influence student learning and sense of belonging is significant. Mentoring relationships are particularly strong when both individuals relate to one another across shared characteristics. Shared characteristics provide emotional support and allow the mentee to effectively envision themselves in the position of the mentor in the future.

The first year of college is crucial in establishing mentoring relationships that can positively influence students’ time in college. In the Elon University Poll, 60 percent of graduates reported meeting their most influential faculty or staff mentors during their first year. The Poll also found that students who are the first in their family to attend college often don’t have as strong of a mentoring constellation as those with at least one parent who attended college. Significantly, 15 percent of first-generation graduates reported zero influential relationships with faculty or staff while in college, as compared to only six percent of those with a college-educated parent.

Initiatives like Elon University’s Odyssey Scholars program for first-generation students put faculty, staff and peer mentors in place from the start of college. The program saw an 89 percent four-year graduation rate for the two most recent groups of scholars participating in the program. This rate exceeds the rate for the student body as a whole. Similarly, but at a much bigger institution, the Texas Interdisciplinary Plan (TIP) at the University of Texas at Austin provides peer mentoring and expert advising to at-risk incoming students. Due in part to these relationships, more TIP students have GPAs above 3.0 than their non-TIP peers.

CASE STUDIES

Hopkins Connect taps into a network of 220,000 Johns Hopkins University alumni to engage them in mentoring and career guidance for students. The effort creates career advancement resources and programs for alumni, and includes plans for a university-wide digital mentoring platform that will connect students, faculty, staff, and alumni in mentor/mentee relationships.

The Ball Corporation has a longstanding history of collaboration with the University of Colorado, School of Engineering. To help the Dean reach gender parity within the program the Ball Sisters program was created by the company’s Women’s Business Resource Group (WBRG) to provide support, mentoring, and insight from female STEM professionals to female engineering students. The WBRG provides topics related to women in STEM each month for the pairs to work on. The program doubled in its second year and many Ball Sisters have moved into internship positions with the company – all have stayed in the School of Engineering.

Developing Networking Opportunities and Social Capital

Work-based learning experiences help students develop real-time knowledge and skills, but also provide access to much needed networking exposure to build social capital. These opportunities are particularly important for students of color and first-generation college students who often lack social networks. In the Higher Education-Industry Coalition surveys, 93 percent of colleges and universities and 84 percent of companies agreed that underrepresented students have more difficulty or experience more barriers in attaining a job placement. Both groups also agreed that the top barrier diverse students face is a lack of networks and ‘who you know’.

CASE STUDY

Howard University’s Executive Leadership Honors Program helps diverse students build their portfolio and develop their brand. Students complete honors level business classes and seminars designed to promote networking opportunities and exposure to corporate leaders. Through a series of networking dinners, panel discussions and corporate training, students interact and build their social capital with corporate sponsors, executive leaders and prominent alumni. The program includes a study abroad experience, completion of two- to-three internships, and work on multidisciplinary teams around case analysis and problem-solving.
Coordinated Recruitment

Among respondents to a Forbes Insight survey of executives of multinational corporations, 65 percent have programs specifically designed to recruit diverse employees; 52 percent look to university/graduate school diversity associations to find diverse talent. In the Higher Education-Industry Coalition surveys, 78 percent of industry respondents report their company has a strategy to partner with institutions of higher education to recruit diverse student candidates. However, 40 percent of industry respondents report they have five or fewer such partnerships. Sixty-one percent of higher education career services respondents reported their institution has formal partnerships with more than 20 corporations with the purposes of increasing recruitment options for students, but just 11 percent say their institution provides diverse student candidate slates to corporate recruiters for all job posts; 17 percent reported their institution provides diverse slates for some job posts.

Companies take a variety of tactics to engage the kinds of diverse populations they hope to bring on board. Many organizations enlist their employee resource groups to act as company ambassadors. These groups reach out to prospective talent by attending external job fairs, conferences, and community events. As an example, Bank of America’s HOLA employee resource group (ERG) leads efforts to align recruiting and student rush strategies in targeted Hispanic Serving Institutions and Hispanic Latino colleges near the companies top 10 markets, providing a high touch Hispanic/Latinx connection with high potential candidates, including networking and advocacy. Members of the ERG are able to communicate important information about company culture and commitment to diversity, and what the employee experience is like at Bank of America.

There are a wide range of organizations in the marketplace that can help employers, colleges and universities, and diverse students connect with pre-employment work experience and job opportunities. Door of Clubs is just one of many organizations set up to connect diverse students with career opportunities with top companies. The organization has 3,000 clubs representing more than 50,000 students from 350 schools on its platform. Hundreds of companies – from startups to Fortune 100 companies – use the subscription service to connect with diverse student clubs and their members. Employers are able to pinpoint their student search opportunities and share opportunities – jobs, events, webinars, hackathons, etc. – directly with student club members. Corporate partners also help Door of Clubs build a pool of funding they are able to allocate to student clubs, with $250,000 (and growing) in sponsorships provided to clubs thus far.

On-boarding and Immersion Experiences

Effective on-boarding immerses new employees in the company’s culture and brand, and helps them establish the social connections needed to become productive team members. There is much room for improvement in many companies. A recent study by Gallup found only 12 percent of employees strongly agree their organization does a great job on-boarding new employees. The result of a poor on-boarding experience is turnover within the first year of employment, and low engagement among employees who remain. The cost of finding, hiring and training replacements is high. Some estimates calculate it can cost a company up to two times an employee’s annual salary to identify and on-board a replacement.

Leveraging Technology and Social Media to Connect with Students

Studies have found that just 20 percent of jobs are filled via job boards and newspaper ads. And of that 20 percent, the majority of the time the hiring manager knows who they want to hire before the post is advertised. The best chance employers have of attracting today’s college student is to connect with them through the technology and social platforms that they use in their daily lives, including Twitter, Facebook, Glassdoor, Pinterest, Quora, and LinkedIn.

Video job posts that provide insight about the company are also emerging as effective recruitment tools. One study found that job postings on Facebook that feature videos receive 36 percent more applications.

Gaming and simulation have shifted recruitment focus from checking credentials to assessing skills. Nearly a third of global business leaders are using games to assess potential candidates by simulating tasks they would do on the job.

Mobile platforms can increase access to new talent. A recent survey found that 50 percent of individuals check their phones 25 times per day, while 10 percent check more than 100 times per day.
**CASE STUDIES**

**Intel’s Rotation Engineers Program (REP)** moves recent college graduates hired as engineers through three, six-month-long rotations that allow them to gain deep technical knowledge from multiple areas within the company. The program allows the new engineers to forge their own career paths and build networks across a variety of groups and teams within Intel. The unique experience that REP provides has helped the company recruit top diverse talent while also strengthening Intel’s leadership pipeline.

**Merck’s Early Emerging Talent Rotation (ETR)** program provides recent college graduates a chance to experience different areas of IT and develop critical technical, business, and leadership skill sets. Each participant is partnered with a buddy, a coach and an executive mentor that help with workplace acculturation and career planning. The program also has a strong alumni engagement and sponsorship cohort. ETR participants rotate through three distinct assignments over the course of two and a half years. Rotations are assigned based on the individual’s interests, with input from their coach. During the program, ETRs participate in facility tours, speaker series, social and networking activities, and training and development courses. They learn directly from top managers and receive mentoring from senior executives throughout the program. At the conclusion, ETRs work with program and business leaders to identify long-term career opportunities at Merck.

**Conclusion**

As the demand for highly educated and highly skilled workers increases, so does the urgency to improve the retention and degree completion rates of marginalized student populations, as well as their retention and employment outcomes once they enter the workforce. Disparities in access to higher education and degree attainment persist for communities of color in the U.S. These disparities continue into the working world and gaps in employment and earnings are strongly correlated with both college completion and race and ethnicity. Eliminating disparities and advancing equity is an investment in the future. The looming skills and talent shortfall threatens the nation’s long-term economic competitiveness in the global marketplace. Collaborating and working in partnership across business and higher education is critical to eliminating historical and continuing inequities and disparities, and developing a diverse and highly skilled workforce that can complete and lead in the 21st Century economy.

Diversity Best Practices, Johns Hopkins University, INSIGHT Into Diversity Magazine, NYU and Rice are leading a higher education industry coalition to look into these issues. For more information, please contact karen.dahms@workingmother.com
References

"Our Opportunities and Our Challenges”. First Generation Foundation, 2019.
Kroth, Maya. "More Than a Major”. Georgia State University, 2019.
"Intern Acceptance Rate Up; Offer, Conversion Rates Fall". NACE, 30 Apr. 2018.
"Elon University Poll”. Elon University, 2019.