Special FutureWork Q&A w/ Dr. Hope Williams!

I talked recently with Dr. Hope Williams, President of North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU), about the education sector and the future of work. We’re just two weeks out from the 2016 Emerging Issues Forum, FutureWork (Feb. 8-9, 2016, Raleigh), where we’ll gather to determine the best responses in key sectors like education to ensure that North Carolina wins the global battle for good future jobs.

Register Now!
FutureWork Forum Tix Almost Gone!

Register now for IEI’s 2016 Forum. Help shape educational responses to the FutureWork challenge!

Featured Educator

This month’s featured educator, Audra Slavin, believes in helping students "learn to grow outside of the traditional classroom."

Q&As with North Carolina Leaders

Check out our other Q&As with top North Carolina sector experts:

Healthcare: Brad Wilson of Blue Cross Blue Shield NC

Banking & Finance: Lew Ebert of the NC Chamber of Commerce
I wanted to get Dr. Williams’ thoughts on how higher education is responding to shifting workforce development needs as two big trends converge: automation is increasingly eliminating jobs (a global phenomenon), and in North Carolina, our population is graying and browning very rapidly.

At the Forum, national experts and hundreds of leaders from across our state will work together to identify our smartest responses. Education is one of five sectors getting special attention through innovative “policy hackathons” with sector experts and lots of robust give-and-take (the other sectors are Banking & Finance; Energy; Healthcare; and Government/Smart Communities).

Here’s my exchange with Dr. Williams:

**Kendall Hageman: As you look across the broad education sector, how are you already seeing the tech automation and demography trends in motion?**

Hope Williams: Technology increasingly affects all aspects of higher education. New advances in scientific equipment enable researchers to glean information never before possible. Professors are developing entirely new presentation approaches for class. They’re also using virtual feedback from students to identify areas that need more focus and discussion in class. These innovations and increased flexibility in teaching modes are especially important for an increasingly diverse student population, whether for nontraditional students enrolled in online or blended year-round programs with a cohort setting or for traditional students in a classroom setting or blended online/classroom setting.

**KH: Within the higher education sector, how are trends in automation and demography reshaping your workforce development needs and forecasts?**

HW: Students and faculty expect state-of-the-art technology in laboratories -- for teaching, and for students’ access for use in assignments and projects. The pace of change and constant evolution in technology presents challenges to colleges and universities, just as they do to families and private companies. Everyone must determine how often to update and to refresh technology and equipment.

Colleges and universities work hard to be diverse and representative of their students and overall constituencies. One challenge all colleges are facing is the retirement of significant numbers of faculty and staff as baby boomers continue to reach retirement age.
KH: What advice do you have for young people today about the skill sets needed to succeed in tomorrow’s education workforce?

HW: Every college graduate should understand and be able to use technology and be able to adapt quickly to technological changes. It is equally important to businesses, government, and non-profits that graduates be able to communicate well and, especially, to think critically. Companies will orient the students they hire to the specific nature of the organization. Graduates need to be innovative and entrepreneurial in their thinking so that they are ready for jobs and careers using technology that hasn’t yet been invented.

For more on the future of work in the education sector and across the wider North Carolina economy, be sure to grab your Forum ticket and add your voice to the critical discussion. Help determine what we must do now to refocus our educational and workforce development systems, and public policy choices to drive job creation.

The 2016 FutureWork Forum: Amazing speakers, sector-focused planning hackathons, and unparalleled networking with hundreds of leaders from across the state. Plus, for the first time ever, we’ll be broadcasting the Forum’s Day 1 on live statewide TV. Come see and be seen!

We’ve only got a few tickets remaining, so register now (special discounted rates for educators/nonprofit/government). I’ll see you at the Forum!

Best,
Kendall

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