**Hoffman, N. & Collins, M. L. (Eds.) (2020).** *Teaching students about the world of work: A challenge to postsecondary educators.* **Harvard Education Press.**

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Five years ago, I had the honor of serving as a K-12 Supervisor for College Career Readiness in a private school where career awareness experiences begin in kindergarten and continue through high school. Students begin to formulate career aspirations during their early stages of life while in the classroom and outside class, in their after-school programs, while on field trips, or in summer enrichment programs. Not many schools are able to provide this kind of service but for those who can, it would be helpful for students to start learning about labor market systems while still enrolled in high school. Learning on the job, internships, and experiential learning opportunities are high impact practices, which are very beneficial to students (Kuh, 2008). They demand that students devote considerable time and effort to deepen their desire and practical knowledge.
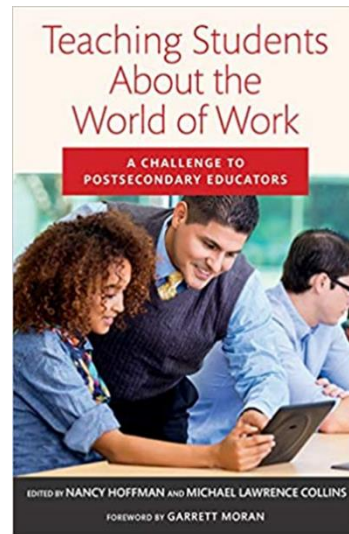
In *Teaching Students about the World of Work,* all nine chapters address critical information students must be aware of before they graduate college – information educators must share with their students. The book exposes the inequalities students from low-income backgrounds and other minorities face in their bid to earn a degree and highlights the important work community colleges do in preparing students for the future work. Inadequate academic preparation and financial constraints, even in community colleges, hinder successful transition and completion as well as college mobility.

This book spotlights particular cracks in the foundation, such as omissions from the college mobility narrative and policies that need revision to improve students' prospects. Arguing that community colleges play a pivotal role in

providing a pathway to upward economic mobility because of their ability to reach a large population of low-income and minority students, the authors point out, "for college to pay off, low-income students and students of color need to make smart investments with their limited resources" (p. 31). They also note that community colleges are less expensive and have many options for students to obtain the education and training they need to pursue their career goals and contribute to the economy. Therefore, it is important for all colleges to invest in innovative, evidence-based solutions to enable students to complete postsecondary educations, and ultimately help them achieve their academic and career goals through internships.

As discussed in the book, there is little doubt that internships have a positive effect on many careers. Internships and experiential learning programs provide a supervised schedule of practical work experience that helps students explore various career fields and learn how to apply classroom principles to real-world situations. A key part of internships and experiential learning is the opportunity for students to reflect on their involvement to understand course content of the discipline and its value to society (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Internships may confirm personal strengths and weaknesses associated with the field, which then may lead to rethinking career choices and majors, which ultimately saves time and money for students. Compared with career assessment, internships are important because of the physical presence and hands on learning involved. Indeed, experiential learning approaches can incorporate a vast spectrum of activities that provide hands-on experience and learning both inside and outside a classroom setting.

The authors of this volume support a world of work curriculum that complements the academic curriculum to prepare and support students (especially students from minority groups). Useful to all types of colleges and to anyone who works with students, this college curriculum needs to have components of practicability, including career-related case studies and workplace-imitated scenarios if students cannot be placed in internships. Using this approach, professors can help by creating scenarios where students model the workplace depending on the content being taught.

Indeed, application to practice could have been the focus of an entire chapter. When students make the transition to professional work, they must do so with professionalism to gain acceptance and respect in a work environment. As Wood & Solomonides (2008) propose, while preparing students for the transition to higher education, more emphasis needs to be placed on the work environment and what is needed for career success. Unfortunately, the authors overlooked a discussion of how students can apply theory to practice. The knowledge gained through years of schooling is good, but not knowing how to use it effectively can slow down the transition into the world of work.

To address the transition into labor markets, the authors discuss Guttman Community College's ethnographies of work (EoW) framework, which aims to help students learn the meaning of labor markets and the nuances of the workplace. Students understanding this framework will be equipped to tackle the challenges that come with race, social class, and background while proudly

embracing their identity (Kessler & Low, 2021). The framework is explicitly designed to emphasize the development of social capital and connections for students who have limited connections and role models. In the US and other parts of the world, career success and progression often depends on who you know. All institutions of higher learning could replicate this framework to help students make connections throughout college and also understand labor markets in terms of expectations and readiness.

Educators, particularly academic advisors and other support professionals, understand the critical need of sharing information with students and keep abreast of current best practices concerning careers. The chapter on job categories and the opportunities associated with them is a great resource for educators working with students preparing to launch into their careers. Career services personnel can work collaboratively with academic advisors for better student outcomes. For example, during advising and career sessions, academic advisors and career advisors can cover such topics as resources for career preparation, key labor markets information, and the new changes in the labor market. First year seminar instructors can incorporate this information into instructional materials or give students this volume as a reference.

Students are looking to graduate successfully from institutions of higher education and become gainfully employed. The authors encourage students to ponder "what makes a good job" and ask questions during interview and job offer processes to understand what a career environment might look like. For example, does the possible employer have opportunities for professional development or mobility? What benefits, and job security are there? Is the job the right fit based on equity and diversity? Unfortunately, employees have lost jobs or quit because they were not the right fit for the job, or the employer was not the right fit for the employee. Teaching students to ask career questions is important because basic discussion points are sometimes assumed and or not part of interview discussions.

The psychology of working theory (PWT), as discussed by the authors, has the potential to transform how we prepare students for the world of work. This theory explains important elements in the process of securing work with job satisfaction, suitable wages, and opportunities for the growth. A workplace has many dynamics, but job satisfaction is central to career success. The authors are to be commended for including this topic because is important for students, especially career-seekers from underrepresented backgrounds, to realize early on how working with supportive colleagues leads to satisfaction, work fulfillment, and wellbeing. Educators from all walks of life can use the tenets of the PWT in individual or group interventions to explain career expectations and the dynamics of working environments – critical components of career preparation. Students need to know that the right career has the potential to fulfill fundamental human needs –survival and power, social connections, and self-determination and resilience.

People face challenges even after they obtain jobs. Workplace barriers and institutional challenges exist, even more so for minorities and people of color. The lack of access to jobs in general, and good jobs in particular, are barriers that exacerbate the financial challenges for minority groups. The authors discuss structural and institutional barriers which may derail students even when they are

equipped with information about labor market outcomes. In the workplace, racial discrimination may manifest itself in the assignments given to minority workers and the ways their performance is judged and rewarded, which sometimes hampers career progression. While economic forces clearly favors workers who have higher levels of education and earn higher wages, unfortunately, more education shrinks the wage gap but does not close it. Minority workers in particular struggle to find their footing in the labor market and lack exposure to careers through internships. They face systemic barriers rooted racism and inequality such as unequal pay and biased promotion practices, or microaggressions, stigmatization, and labeling. Institutional barriers include policies, procedures, or situations, which can cause a more significant disadvantage for underrepresented populations (Ashcraft, 2009). The authors of this volume aptly expose these historically unjust barriers that hinder dreams from being realized and are demoralizing to anyone who encounters them.

The authors also highlight the significance of "implicit skills," that is, skill acquired from complex multiple sources that distinguish someone as one who can reason and self-regulate. Students need to hear that career success does not come through what we have learned in school but through other skills that we have acquired over time. As the authors explain, other skills needed for career success include character, persistence, integrity, professionalism, and dependability. Implicit skills are wisdom nuggets that help in knowing when to keep quiet and when to talk, or when to do the right thing without being told. Implicit skills are not taught, but come from exposure to people who challenge and correct with the intention of helping someone better themselves. Some students lack these skills and as educators, we must do everything we can to teach them. Like implicit skills, team skills, communication skills, and organizational skills are also required in the workplace, as well as in all phases of life, and help employees to improve the working atmosphere to everybody`s advantage.

Social capital and the social construction of skills are incredibly important for career advancement at all levels, as evidenced in this book. It is through social connections that we learn of opportunities. The people we know are our support system and whom we rely on for consultation to write recommendations for jobs or and advise us based on their experiences. As the authors note, educators can encourage students to join clubs and organizations so they can begin building their social networks and connections. Network-based social capital is particularly important for college students, who can accumulate more social capital and an advantage over their peers (Harper, 2008). The authors highlight how people from minority groups generally have fewer social connections and networks compared to others, and that educators can intentionally create programs that encourage students to network and connect with others people. Exposure to people opens doors for being connected and it is empowering.

One final note: I would have preferred to see a chapter that addresses the power of mentoring in the workplace. It is not easy to start a new job as a recent graduate and feel left alone to learn on the job. Mentoring is critically important and can encourage new employees to stay with the employer depending on mentor/mentee relations (Ghosh & Reio, 2013). In times of transition, such as

from high school to college or from college to first career, peer mentors may provide support that improves the transition experience and chances of success in the new environment (Foster & Hill, 2019). Peer mentors can be sourced from many places, including from within or outside the organization, to share what they learned when they underwent similar transitions. In addition, students can be paired with potential mentors, such as faculty members, on-campus administrators, or advisors. Pairing can also be made through college mentorship programs. Mentoring should start while the student is still enrolled in college, particularly for those who major in the humanities or social sciences, because many of these students graduate without having an idea of how some of these majors translate to the real world.

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