

MICHAEL TRUE

The Future of Internships

Internships, apprenticeships and cooperative education will continue to grow and deepen their impact on business, government, and academia. Those who embrace them embrace the future.



THIS REPORT AIMS TO FUNCTION AS A CONVERSATION-STARTER AND WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN THE DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATIVE GLOBAL RESEARCH EFFORT AT [FUTURETALENTCOUNCIL.ORG/INTERNSHIPS](https://futuretalentcouncil.org/internships)

01 —

Welcome

The foundational mission of Future Talent Council is to help improve human capabilities and opportunities around the world. At our Regional Talent Roundtable event in Toronto, Canada in January 2020, hosted by York University, more than 60 talent leaders from employers, educators, and government agencies gathered to collaborate on work-integrated-learning practices for the future. This report is another step in the same walk.

To innovate on internships and its contextual siblings seems a straightforward endeavor. Give students an earlier, more effective access to the job market and inner workings of professional life. And vice versa. But it deeply touches the nerves on how we look at the role of education, work, and personal development during the most formative years of our lives.

Is the primary role of an educator to prepare students for professional life? What is the appropriate involvement of employers in a student's curriculum and life on campus? What is providing value and preparation to a young individual of our society, and what is exploitation?

Two decades after I first started out as an unpaid journalism intern myself, I still to this day, and on a daily basis, utilize the skills I learned during that experience. Institutions and organizations such as yours now have the insights and the capabilities of offering, curating, and operating far more thought-thru and deliberate experiences than the one I had. I was a mere ugly duckling looking at the door, knowing I had to do whatever I could to get in.

Point is anyone who, like me, has experienced the power of an internship first-hand needs no convincing. Internships can be transformative. The format deserves our attention and global collaboration as it evolves into new technological territories, and adapts to new paradigms on a different-looking job market.

On behalf of the Future Talent Council ecosystem, I would like to welcome the author of this report, Mr. Michael True.

Mr. True has been involved in operating and developing internships in the United States for 28 years until he retired in July 2019. We secretly hope to see more of him in our hallways from now on and I hope that this report can become a conversation-starter, the first step of as we start to accumulate experiences, insights, toolkits, and data from successful internship programs from around the world.

Over to you. Thank you.



Daniel Kjellsson
Managing Director, Future Talent Council



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Introduction by the author

Predicting the future can, at times, be a simple extrapolation of current systems, products, and processes. However, the future can quickly change our world in ways we never imagined. It forces us to re-imagine what we knew previously.

The impact of the COVID-19 virus is an example. Future scenarios can also be seen by certain individuals with keen imagination and vivid dreams. Their “world of tomorrow” often manifests itself only after many years.

The best way to predict the future is to create it, as best we can. In other words, if we want certain outcomes, we need to contribute the appropriate inputs. The predicted outcomes I present here are intended for the growth and development of human beings and for the betterment of business, government, non-profit organizations, and academia.

These outcomes will need the wisdom of the reader to provide appropriate inputs and the means to integrate them into their own world, as they relate to experiential learning.



Michael True
July 3, 2020
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, US

03

Why this matters now

Pathways for practical experience



There are several forms of experiential learning including job shadowing, micro-experiences, apprenticeships, internships, cooperative education, study abroad, research, clinicals, and more.

→ For this article I am focusing on the cluster of apprenticeships, internships, and co-op (AIC).

These three also fall under the umbrella of work-based learning. The future of this cluster is strong. Its strength comes from adherence to best practices required by educational institutions and from the ever-growing need of a skilled workforce by industry. The loci of these experiences in the future will be physical and virtual, with technology bridging them both.

Whether physical or virtual, AICs offer a host of benefits for employers. Students in AICs...

- bring new perspectives to old problems
- offer increased visibility of an organization on campus and on social media
- are quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions and projects
- provide freedom for professional staff to pursue more creative projects
- are a flexible work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment
- are a proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
- serve as a shining example of the contribution of an organization's expertise to the educational enterprise and workforce development in the local and global community

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Physical versus virtual



The ideal environment for any AIC experience is in-person and hands-on. The full range of senses are employed – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and (depending on the position) tasting.

The student's mind processes and reflects on a multitude of sensory stimuli. Their interactions with supervisors and co-workers yield rich benefits. If the AIC is in an international location, cultural immersion and language acquisition are two significant aspects which promote enhancement of global/intercultural fluency.

Virtual AIC experiences were around prior to the COVID-19 virus, which crippled so many of the world's economies. But they skyrocketed during and after its appearance, as organizations of all sizes closed or downsized physical facilities. Those who quickly made the flip from physical to virtual have a head start over others as they gain insight into how to improve and refine remote work. Employers who initially balked at virtual AIC experiences will re-examine them and integrate them into their overall growth strategy.

Business and higher education, wanting to continue with AICs, even during the pandemic, sought the help of third-party providers. One provider of virtual international internships, [Virtual Internships](#), was well-prepared for this moment in history, as they capitalized on their time-tested program which was rolled out in 2018. They pointed the way to the future.

Virtual internships can help students by leveling the playing field and providing access to those who, due to finances, transportation, or relocation problems, cannot do an in-person internship, whether in their own country or internationally.

These opportunities have their own implications, since now students are competing against other students from around the world, not just their local environs. The pool of potential interns globally has expanded exponentially, which is a boon to organizations. But universities will need to make sure students are well-prepared and coached, so their students may present themselves in the best possible light.

05 —————

What technology can do

Here is where we can have a bit of fun extrapolating and envisioning how technology will impact AIC experiences, as well as the workplace in general. Consider this simple starter list. Students will:

- Use virtual reality to job shadow and do virtual tour pre-visits to AIC sites, permitting the unknown to become known and lessening anxiety. University alumni already employed at various organizations would be the perfect initial contacts.
- Campus-based artificial intelligence (AI) coaches/advisors will be chosen by the student from a screen of avatars. The range of possibilities will include one who looks and sounds like them. The student will provide information such as an application, resume' and personality inventory. The AI system will analyze all appropriate factors and deliver the results and guidance. Aspects of this are nascent in the software by [ivy.ai](#). A system like this would be similar to AI-powered retail chat bots. Allowing the more common and mundane questions and information dispersal to be handled by AI will allow human coaches/advisors to deal with more creative and complex issues the student may have.
- Be interviewed and attend meetings using holographic projection from miniaturized devices. Think Star Wars and Princess Leia's message to Obi-Wan Kenobi through the droid, R2-D2. CNN already uses holographic equipment to beam distant reporters into their studio. Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston holographic musical concerts have already been presented to audiences. [EchoPixel](#) is using this technology to create interactive holograms for surgical training of doctors.
- Fill out forms using voice-activated software.
- Be supervised by an artificially intelligent avatar, which will teach them an international language and the culture of the organization and country, including virtual tours of nearby sites of interest. It will be done through a wearable, American football-style quarterback wristband and augmented reality glasses. The wristband will also constantly monitor health issues while the glasses monitor risk issues. The AI "supervisor" will relieve the human supervisor of several mundane responsibilities, permitting them to go into greater depth, and offering subtle nuances, on topics.
- Have work hours, and tasks completed, recorded automatically through various wearable devices.
- Conduct research with VR in virtual libraries and compose portfolios of completed work there.
- Remotely upload design plans, print in 3D, and run robotic machinery
- Manage robotic entities and help to pioneer a new branch of human resources – Human and Machine Resources (HMR)
- Be assessed in globalized categories set forth by the combined surveying and analysis completed by bodies such as the World Economic Forum, Deloitte, and McKinsey, among others.
- Have assessed weaknesses addressed by AI, which will provide teaching modules and guidance on how to improve select competencies.

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Credentials



Less emphasis will be placed on a four-year undergraduate or master's degree. New forms of competency-based learning such as certifications and badges will increasingly be accepted. These will constitute a new type of guild system, which first came into existence in the Middle Ages.



Students, and their cost-conscious parents, welcome the growing opportunities for their daughters and sons to receive excellent training at a significantly reduced cost, as compared to a four-year university education. They are increasingly looking at the return on investment (ROI). Just a few examples of companies providing competency-based learning are [LinkedIn Learning](#), [Udacity](#), and [Udemy](#).

As an example of credentialing, [Microsoft](#) offers courses in data analytics, AI, and network administration among others. If the student wishes to earn their certification, indicating they have successfully completed the training, they can opt to take an exam. And certifications are stackable, moving from fundamental, to associate, to expert. IBM now indicates 15% of their positions no longer require an undergraduate degree. In the United States previous workforce references would mention white or blue-collar jobs. With these new positions, IBM is adding the term "[New Collar](#)" to the mix.

Assessing competencies is integral to the future workforce. Students need to evaluate themselves and be evaluated by their supervisors in competencies such as critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism, and qualities vital to remote work. A quantitative and qualitative report based on these evaluations should then be made available to the student to affirm strengths and point out areas for improvement. Higher education institutions should also be able to see how a particular student compares to others from their institution, as well as to those AIC students at other universities. An excellent tool which integrates all these components is [SkillSurvey's Career Readiness Project](#).

07

Skills

LinkedIn searched through 20+ million jobs in their global system and identified the top hard and soft skills employers want in 2020. Creativity, a uniquely human contribution, is at the top of this year's list, as it was in 2019. Other soft skills include persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. The top five hard skills in order of preference are blockchain, cloud computing, analytical reasoning, artificial intelligence, and UX design.

The **World Economic Forum** has charted skills needed by 2022. They write "creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, persuasion and negotiation will likewise retain or increase their value, as will attention to detail, resilience, flexibility and complex problem-solving. Emotional intelligence, leadership and social influence as well as service orientation are also set to see particular increase in demand relative to their current prominence today." When comparing LinkedIn's findings with these, there is general agreement on key skills required for the workforce of the future.

Talent gaps exist in these areas. What are universities and businesses doing to address these in their students and employees?

WE HAVE CREATED OUR OWN INTERPRETATION OF THAT FUTURE SKILLS MAP BELOW



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Implications



The implications for higher education are clear. They can no longer conduct business as usual. The industrial age model of education is a relic of the past.

Students want to apply their unfettered thinking to their education by putting together their own “knowledge bundles” which include easily transferred credit from one or more institutions, badges, certifications, and multiple forms of experiential learning. This Lego-like construction of knowledge will challenge established thinking in higher education.

Universities, including their experiential learning centers and services, need to start with a blank sheet and re-imagine the future. Prototyping and experimentation need to be speeded up and applied quickly to remain relevant. Buy-in from executive administration will be absolutely necessary. Many schools talk about students being career-ready, but the hard data say otherwise. As a starting point, institutions could look at the LinkedIn and World Economic Forum findings and ask themselves what they are doing to foster these skills. Seize this time to innovate!

Business, government, and non-profit organizations also need to continue to demonstrate agility, adaptability, and resilience. Those best able to weather the economic turmoil caused by the virus and which had the foresight to flip their AIC experiences from the physical to virtual have a head start on others for improving methods and processes to streamline their AIC experiences for the future.

More organizations should offer intra-company and inter-departmental AICs. These experiences would allow current employees to pursue interests they have within the organization. It would stimulate cross-pollination of ideas and development of a larger base of skills that could prove beneficial to the company in the future, similar to cross-functional training.

A growing segment of interns will be non-traditional age individuals seeking entrance into a new job or career, or who are unemployed. Employers should find ways to offer a range of experiential learning opportunities for them. Universities should expect more alumni to reach out for assistance during these transitional phases.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is not the answer for every single problem, but it can be adapted and prove very useful in complementary roles related to AIC experiences from onboarding to training and supervision to assessment. Many of its uses mentioned in this article apply equally well to current and future employees, not just students.

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Conclusions

The apprenticeship, internship, and co-op pathways, and work-based-learning in general, offer individuals rich experiences which help prepare them for the global workforce. Organizations around the world will continue to benefit from the work they perform. Apprenticeships, internships, and cooperative education will continue to grow and deepen their impact on business, government, non-profit organizations, and academia.

Those who embrace them embrace the future.

And the best way to predict the future is to create it, as best we can.

As noted previously, if we want certain outcomes, we need to contribute the appropriate inputs. I hope this introductory report will encourage you to deepen your involvement in our collaborative effort that is the future of internships, apprenticeships and co-ops around the world.

As you utilize your wisdom, experience and energy in your environment, I ask you to consider sharing your challenges and learnings with the rest of us. I promise you that however much you put into such relationship, you will receive more back.

We have the opportunity to improve at scale and positively impacting young people for generations to come. [Thank you.](#)

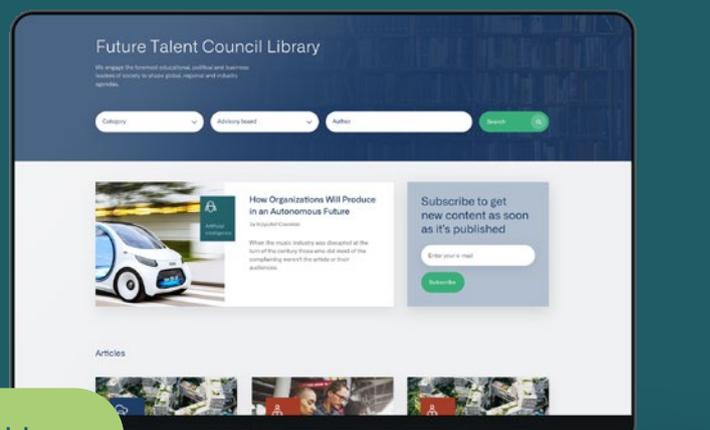
CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Future Talent Council is a global network of leaders dedicated to help improving human capabilities and opportunities around the world. The ecosystem represents a dynamic, resourceful and action-oriented group of government officials, C-Suite executives from the world's largest employers and leaders of higher educational institutions.

This report was written as a conversation-starter and we invite you to now join that dialogue.

We aim to unite experts and professionals from around the world, with cross-sector representation, and strengthen the work-based-learning opportunities for talent everywhere.

If you are working with internships or any other aspect of work-based-learning, join us at futuretalentcouncil.org/internships and let us all get to work. We are looking forward to seeing you soon.



→ futuretalentcouncil.org/internships