



Community Colleges and 21st Century Skills: Skills Panels to Assist Student Career Success

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The global economy is in the midst of a massive, transformational shift. Currently, one in three Americans is an independent contractor. These freelancers work as entrepreneurs providing services to bigger companies on a temporary basis. It is expected by the year 2020, 50% of the workforce will be freelance. There are several reasons for this shift, including technology that makes it easier to connect with the world, a rapidly changing marketplace that puts new pressure on employers to consider the long-term commitment of a full-time permanent hire, and individual desires for freedom within a work-life balance. While it is apparent the students of today will be the solopreneurs of tomorrow, what skills do they need to possess in order to succeed in the changing jobs market?

Feather River College posed this question in 2013, when it conducted a series of Skills Panels, which included successful entrepreneurs, human resources professionals, K-12 and college educators, and even the students themselves. The results of these discussions revealed agreement on the types of skills and traits students should attain to be ready for the new world of work. No matter their career or technical training, the art of work attainment and the flow of the workplace are changing rapidly and will look vastly different from the workplaces of prior generations. Gone are the days of the 40-year career with a guaranteed pension. The workplace of today and tomorrow is not necessarily a place at all. It is a virtual matrix of collaborators across the globe with varied projects; requiring different skill sets at different times. Tomorrow's workers will need to be agile, financially savvy, entrepreneurial in their approach to work and how to market themselves to the world, resilient, and comfortable in their own self-understanding.

From the series of Skills Panels, Feather River College's New World of Work identified the Top Ten 21st Century Skills, including Self-Awareness, Social/Diversity Awareness, Resilience, Empathy, Communication, Adaptability, Collaboration, Digital Literacy, Entrepreneurial Mindset, and Analysis/Solution Mindset. These are not content-based "hard skills," but rather nuanced "soft skills" learned through a combination of facilitated classroom activities and experiential learning. For Feather River College, the Top Ten 21st Century Skills list has been a driving force in curriculum development and pedagogical methodologies to prepare students for the workforce they are entering.

To learn more about 21st Century Skills, how to conduct Skills Panels, and integrating these skills into educational settings, please see the full report at:

<http://www.newworldofwork.org>