

This is Eastern Michigan University's Career Corner. Welcome to Season Three, Major Choices and Career Decisions.

Welcome back to the Career Corner podcast. We have another fantastic episode planned today. This continues on our amazing series devoted to Major Choices and Career Decisions. And I'm especially excited about this one. This is Brad Mensen here once again with my co-host for today, Barb Garing. How are you doing Barb?

Hi Brad. I'm doing great. I am so excited as well about this episode. It's going to be some really wonderful information for both us and our listeners. And we're going to just learn so much from our guest speaker today.

Today's episode, I'm so excited about, we have an amazing topic and even better guest. Today's episode is all about careers of the future. You know, it's so important for our students to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving world of work, and understand really what the trends are, and what careers are going to be impacted, but more importantly, how they can prepare for the turbulent times ahead. Our guest today is Jenna Collins. She is coming to us live from Syracuse University in New York where she is the Associate Director of Alumni and Professional Outreach. She's a career coach, a leadership trainer, future of work in technology enthusiast, lifelong learner, and a native Michigander. Welcome Jenna.

Hi Brad, Barb, thank you so much for having me.

So Jenna, we know that there are so many careers that our students might be interested in in the future that haven't even been created yet. With that in mind, what do you feel are some of the most important things that college students can do to prepare for careers that don't even exist?

Great question Barb. And it's an age old question I think I think even before these turbulent times with the pandemic, thinking about future careers and what's to come, and how to best prepare is the purpose of college. It's the purpose of learning. So it's definitely relevant today as we have experienced some of the biggest shake-ups in our history. The best thing that students can do is to be prepared to keep learning. You've developed a solid foundation with your college education, but that's not the end. Whether you go on to learn in another formal capacity and earn a graduate degree or a terminal degree, or you continue learning on the job and reskilling and upskilling as you go, both of those avenues are going to be extremely important.

Another thing I want to mention for college students is to prepare for careers that might be remote. They might require a lot of autonomy. Be prepared to take the initiative with those. And with that of course, there's always going to be the importance of learning new technologies, and staying up on the trends in the industries that they're a part of so that they can keep evolving, as the times move very, very rapidly, and as their industries evolve very, very rapidly.

Love those points Jenna. Thank you so much. And I think one of the major takeaways here is just reminding our students that you're going to obviously prepare really well for your career through your studies and through the coursework that you take here at Eastern Michigan, but you're learning does not stop on graduation day. In fact, you're probably going to need to up the game a little bit more to prepare for those jobs of the future. So now with all of that in mind, what do you see as maybe being some of those top maybe critical or transferable skills that students need to develop while working towards their degree?

Absolutely. A lot of students are probably already doing some of these things and not even thinking that it's building those transferable skills that they'll need to be successful. But thinking of the future of work and where the future of these careers that they're preparing for are going to go, some things that come to mind in terms of critical and transferable skills, especially from employers and things that they're mentioning as very important to their candidates as they're seeking to fill positions, things like agility, flexibility, adaptability, being able to take things that might be thrown at them and they might not be prepared for, and run with it. The pandemic definitely put that onto a lot of the current workers in the world of work. Continuing to learn again, going back to that learning mindset of being an active learner and promoting curiosity within their industry and their careers.

Communication skills are very, very important, even in non-traditional formats, and ways that we didn't use to communicate all the time, now we're always on video chats. That was something that was probably here and there and sporadic in the world before the pandemic. And now it's something that's always around. So these things that sometimes come at us that we don't expect are what is building these transferable skills. And students are already probably doing some of that alongside while they're completing their studies.

Leadership, communication skills. Creative problem solving is very important. One of the most important discussions in understanding the future of work and what employers are going to be looking for is some of that interdisciplinary thinking. So even though they might have one specific focus related to their major, what are some things that they're doing in extracurriculars or elective

courses that are going to help them integrate some of those interdisciplinary thinking models? That sparks creativity. It helps with critical thinking and problem solving that they're definitely going to need as part of that transferable skill base as they transition into the world of work.

Those are some excellent points that you're making. And I like hearing that some of them are already in place for students. Those are expected in the previous work world that we were in. And then with the pandemic, I do think we were jarred into an alternate, universe to some extent. And so the points of being very flexible, pliable, creative in how you get your job done because the jobs of the future may not really have any kind of benchmark set for them. So those are some really great points that you make about the skills that they need to bring. And I just I love the idea of lifelong learning. You don't want to get stale in your field. So it's always good to keep present, see where you need extra additional training, and pursue it. And that's where the act of moving forward on your own and taking initiative also comes into play I think. So what are some of the career paths that students may not know about that you're excited about, and see as being in demand in the future that may not be there now?

Sure. Obviously top of mind things related to technology always comes up. Technology is not going away, and there's technology in any role these days. So thinking to the traditional software development, computer science areas is definitely going to continue on that increasing trend. I think they'll evolve a little bit. We've seen that with the initial technology boom, with the internet and things, and then moving into the world of apps and mobile devices. Now I think some of that next step in the technology realm is definitely going to be related to cybersecurity, and some of the smart products, the internet of things, of the things that we're talking to, and telling to do specific things for us all the time is becoming so intertwined in our everyday life.

So keeping on trend for all of the products that we're using every day, and how they are going to continue to evolve in the future are the technology jobs of the future. So that is a big component. I wanted to mention that first because that's the top of mind for everyone is technology jobs and software development. Coding and that stuff is definitely probably number one. But one thing that I do think is important that doesn't get talked about as much, but is anything related to sustainability jobs. This could be things from scientific backgrounds, so that might not be in the tech world. And so students that are studying in those areas right now, that's still going to be very relevant in the future. How they play into the role of these new and evolving sustainability jobs is probably what's the unknown. But I do think that there's going to be a big place for that.

Number three, I think data jobs. Any industry or in all of the work that we all do together, it's all about

the data, and tracking and understanding these metrics, and how they can continue to shape the work that we do, and evolve the work that we do. So anything related to data is going to be really important. I think learning about the data related knowledge within your industry is really important to do alongside any learning that you're doing. But just knowing that data jobs overall are going to be a top priority for the future of work.

A couple of things that don't get mentioned a lot that I also think are very important is sales. So obviously for economies to evolve and businesses to succeed, there's some sort of sales capacity going on. And we don't talk about it as much. But we've seen a lot of growth with specific titles related to things like growth hacking. So always thinking about sales, obviously marketing is intertwined with that. We know that attention spans are getting shorter and shorter and shorter. So continuously evolving how to get customers attention in the world of marketing is very important as well.

And I do want to mention this, and it's something that's very important, but honestly anything in the trades. So they might know about the careers and the trades. But how can what they're studying right now apply to that world as well, and help them be successful, and continue to evolve the trade world?

Wow, that was absolutely incredible. I mean, you really, really highlighted so many different things in there. And I think one of the things that really resonated with me is that that convergence of technology and how that integration kind of fits in so many different areas in our life. And businesses today are always working on safer, faster, more efficient, easier, more convenience, and all of those different things, and how technology plays a role in doing that I think is really important. And then obviously having data to support your efforts, to know that what you're doing is as effective and creating an impact in people's lives. So I think it's really cool.

So let me just kind of ask you, and this might be a little bit difficult to answer, but we know that those technologies are going to be very important that students stay current with and they stay up to date with. And that it will vary a little bit, depending on their industry. But are there certain technologies that maybe you feel like would be advantageous for any student to be able to learn a little bit more, dive into?

Absolutely. And it's a really funny question like you said. It can be difficult to answer. How can students continue to prepare themselves, especially related to emerging technologies, where we sometimes as professionals feel like the students are driving some of the emerging technologies. So social media trends. We look to the students to keep up to date with that stuff. So they are some of

the leaders in that capacity already. However, how those technologies are integrating into whatever career they're preparing for is what's important.

So I mentioned this earlier with the technology jobs, and the software development, but coding is going to continue to be really important. There's a lot of easy ways to build websites and things like that today without that coding aspect. But if you have that ability to learn it at a basic level, it might be relevant for your career. Same thing with anything related to artificial intelligence or machine learning. We're continuously evolving in that space in all of the industries, and figuring out how that can make all of us be more efficient in our work overall. So students should keep that in mind and figure out how that plays a role in their industry.

And I mentioned this earlier with the technology jobs as well, but voice effects and how that plays a role too. We talk about user experience and things like that related to the internet, and to the website, and to the social media and apps, but also the voice coding which plays a role in the AI and machine learning area as well. But just that that's going to be a big piece of the future as we talk literally to everything today to do something. And getting that voice understanding is pretty important. I think they'll be the drivers for all of these things. And they're going to be the change that we see in these worlds. But seeing how they integrate into their current learning paths is very important.

That is absolutely fascinating. And I notice myself seeing in students the need, as you were mentioning earlier, to be flexible, and adjustable, and attention span's going down. That being said, when we see things like resumes being produced, we find it very essential to ensure that the technology knowledge that they bring is noted and only for what they're looking for. So we try to make sure that they streamline that and don't list everything, just the things relatable to what they're applying to.

So that aligns with the attention span, keeping things-- we work with a system called Quinnia that is artificial intelligence in that it reads what other systems look for in automated tracking systems. So we're introducing some of AI to students. We learn it as they learn it. And they're building a lot of it. So it's going to be more new to us than them. So it's an interesting, little bit upside down world that we're in, but absolutely fascinating too. So we just need to help them find their way through that, and ensure that they're able to be aware, and present themselves as qualified with those skill sets.

So I have a question about demand for future employment. Are there any particular areas that you might encourage a student to sort of stay away from, or be leery of because the demand is going to

go down for employment, or have disruptions in the demand?

Great question, Barb. I think the disruption piece of what you just said, it sparked something in my mind because we never know fully when a disruption is going to happen. And I don't want to steer students away from things that they're passionate about, because I do think for the most part, everything that is being taught in schools today is being taught for a reason. There is a reason to have that knowledge. So they're learning things that are going to be relevant in some capacity. It's how they apply them to whatever that future career path is or their career goals are.

But staying away from things that we typically would say could be easily automated. And a lot of entry level roles that students come out of, some of these come out of school and go into, some of these will be those automated roles, thinking administrative roles, customer service roles, some of those more entry level, foot in the door type of roles. Some of that stuff will go down drastically over time, but there's still going to be a huge need for service and help in any way.

So I don't want to steer them too far from what they're studying, or what their passions are, what they're pursuing. There's probably going to be a way that they're going to be able to do that in some capacity. But just thinking about how automation is affecting their overall industry, and how technology has impacted their industry, and how something like the pandemic so looking back now hindsight is 2020 has a whole new meaning, looking back on 2020 and saying how were some industries impacted because of this brand new disruption? The disruption before was technology. That was always the disruption before. Now we've had some sort of societal, and cultural, and health crisis that was the disruption. So how were some of those industries that they're going toward right now impacted, so that they can better prepare themselves for what that future will look like in that industry, and then again, if another disruption like that comes its way.

So just staying up with their industry and what they're planning to do is important. And trying to make themselves more valuable in a humanistic way. So moving away from the automation part, but focusing on some of the human skills that they have and that they can bring to the table will continue to make them competitive for those types of roles

Such a beautiful message in there, that really repetitive tasks could easily be replaced, but it's what makes you human that can't be. And I really love the message there. The other thing that I think is just important to note, and just for students to keep in mind, is that staying up on those current trends is as easy as a click away. You can go to websites like the Bureau of Labor statistics, or your state or local employment outlook projections, and really get a handle on what the current landscape is, and

what areas maybe you need to be a little bit leery of, and maybe how to navigate those a little bit more. So just do some research ahead of time, and you can really stay prepared that way.

So to kind of close this out today, I just want to touch on one last thing, which is students unfortunately this year are going to be entering into a tough time. We talked about the Class of 2020 having a really tough go. The Class of 2021 unfortunately is not going to have it a whole lot easier. So what kind of challenges do you think that those graduates of 2021 can expect, and maybe how can they navigate those?

Absolutely. Great question. Back in 2020 when the graduates from that class were entering the world of work, we obviously knew it was going to be challenging. I think we are hoping that by the time the students from the Class of 2021 were going to be graduating it might have been ironed out a little bit and a little bit back to normal. And we just don't think that that's going to be the case. Obviously I think this is going to be something that's going to be challenging for a few years to come. However, I don't think that it's going to be impossible. I still think that students that are finishing up school in the next couple of years are going to be able to find work. And I think being open minded about what that work is is really important.

The job market is super competitive. We said that before the pandemic. It always has not just active job seekers who are unemployed out there looking, but people that are also currently employed are passively looking. And so with the competitiveness of the overall job market, I think students should be prepared to execute a proactive job search. They should start networking now, get in touch with the Career Centers, connect with alumni, connect with those already in their networks, their peer networks, their family networks, their hometown networks, et cetera. And then, expanding those networks, and connecting with people at their target companies, starting to ask questions of those who are doing the jobs that they aspire to do so that they can better prepare themselves as well.

You mentioned doing initial research, and to stay on top of the trends in their industry. This is exactly that. This is just hearing from someone actually ingrained in it. Going to LinkedIn, following the thought leaders, and connecting with people at those companies is going to be really important. And it's not going to be the passive reactive job search that really gets them going. It's going to be something very proactive that will get their foot in the door.

They also should be very comfortable communicating their story, and discussing their skills, their background, their education, their knowledge, and what they have to contribute in that role or to that company overall. I mentioned it earlier with the human component of some of the skills that

employers are looking for. That's the most important part. They're going to have a solid foundation, and their competition will have some of those similar technical skills or traditional learning outcomes that the graduates from college have. So thinking about how their human skills are going to be applicable in that world is very important.

Problem solving, self-management, especially related to resilience, stress, and flexibility. Again, and then that communication aspect of being able to articulate that easily in an interview situation is really important too. So really just trying to dive in a little deeper to their job search, their target goals, and think differently about how they approach the job search overall with that proactive mindset, targeted mindset, and being open minded to opportunities that they might not have thought of in the past.

As you were talking, I just felt really comfortable with yeah, this is not going to change. Humankind, we still need to be human beings. We are intimidated to a smidge about technology being this over taker of all jobs, and all things work. But I don't think that students have to be afraid of that. I think they just need to embrace the points that you made. Communication skills are elevating in importance I think. That point is coming through over and over, how they communicate, where they communicate, how proactive they are about those communications as well. So I think those points just all line students up for success as long as they are proactive, start early, and really just remember that communication is key too.

And we just thank you so much for all of the information that you shared with us today. It was such a pleasure. We really hope that our listeners found it insightful. I know I did. Remember, if you're struggling with your career path, and you need to know how to navigate the journey ahead, declaring a major and a career path with confidence, you can schedule an appointment with a career coach at any time. Handshake is the app in which you will do it. Its app@.joinhandshake.com. Until next time, stay safe and remember we're here for you, and we support your goals.

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