

HIGHER EDUCATION'S CHALLENGE TO CHANGE

Dan Merica is a political producer for CNN, a job that brings him into daily contact with the reporters and political players who shape the country's policies. By 2015, he was covering politics and religion from Washington DC, and later he left to cover the presidential candidates in Iowa, New Hampshire, and around the country. The surprising thing about Merica is that he didn't go to college thinking he'd be a journalist. While a student at Bentley University, he took business courses and majored in the arts and sciences-based global studies before going on to earn a master's degree in public affairs at American University. Global studies and public affairs, and then journalism, constitute an unusual career path for a business school graduate, but Dan Merica is a great example of the adaptability of today's students. Like many of his peers, Merica had the passion, energy, and courage to follow an untraditional path from education to career.

Isabel Hirama lived in many countries as a child, because her parents worked in the foreign service. As a teenager, she had summer internships at US embassies. She studied psychology and philosophy at the College of William & Mary, but didn't have any idea what she wanted to do when she graduated in 2014. She ran marketing programs for an international tech start-up and then returned to William & Mary in 2016 to study

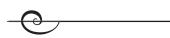
business analytics. What school experiences gave Hirama the most insight into building the career she has today? She says, “Running the salsa club and changing a service trip from Christian-only to an interfaith learning experience.” Her best advice to today’s students: “Learn to create something out of nothing.”

Brian Schuster went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His nontraditional combination of business major and creative writing minor prepared him in unexpected ways for his job today: solutions architect at a technology firm. He says, “When you’re in business school, there’s a lot of focus on tools and case studies that hope to give you something marketable after college. It’s useful, but it misses one of the major points of business—that you’re often trying to convince people why your product or service is better than the rest. It’s not about your product but how people *perceive* you and your business. In its truest sense, you’re telling a story.” For all the quantitative analysis he learned, his most valuable business skills for his job today came from a creative writing class. He’s a storyteller—with data.

Dan Merica, Isabel Hirama, and Brian Schuster embody the new reality of higher education: The most fruitful experiences of their college and early work years were about crossing boundaries rather than following a traditional path of study and a traditional career beginning. They threw themselves into passionate interests and turned those into marketable skills. And they are today pursuing careers that also transcend traditional job descriptions. Their stories are three examples of “hybrid learning” leading to “hybrid work”—and higher education needs to pay attention. The change from traditional paths of study to hybrid learning is not going to happen in the future: it’s already here today.

Higher Education at a Turning Point

If you or someone you care about is thinking about pursuing higher education, you face a national and global outlook dramatically different from that of twenty years ago. College has never been more expensive; the job outlook and “hot jobs” lists change year by year; everything from manufacturing to entertainment to economics is globalized; and only the fabled “1 percent” of families seems secure.



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Adding to these economic challenges, higher education itself is in the middle of a great transition from its 150-year-old model to something else—and it seems nobody can guarantee precisely what that something else will be ten

years from now. Various experts have weighed in on the value of new educational ventures such as online learning and for-profit colleges. Surveys have crunched income data to determine the lifelong monetary value of a degree. Analysts and think tanks have tried to understand the lifelong impact of graduating with huge student loan debts. And policymakers have proposed plans to help students and their families, but then have struggled through the all-too-common political problems of turning ideas into action.

At the confluence of all these big issues lies the simple question, “How *should* a young adult today best prepare for work and life in the coming decades?”

Anyone considering the value of a college education has to ask that question. And even though data prove that higher education remains key to higher earnings,¹ the current generation of students is right to ask, “In addition to higher earning potential, how will college teach me to manage the changes sure to come?”

A further complication facing students and families is that many of today’s real-world careers aren’t mapped out in advance. Even doctors and lawyers often begin with undergraduate majors in the humanities or arts before pursuing degrees in their field of choice.² Dan Merica, Isabel Hiram, and Brian Schuster are just three examples of people whose careers have gone in unexpected directions.

So when we are trying to determine the value of an education, the question quickly turns to *what sort* of preparation is optimal for each individual to take his or her place as an economic and social actor.

Despite the challenges, there is reason for great optimism, both in the new outlook of today’s generation of college-age students and in new models of higher education. Higher education institutions are reconsidering how young people can best prepare for career, citizenship, and life in the twenty-first century. Bentley University, where I serve as president, is one school where new practices are in place. It’s happening in big, well-known schools like the Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management and the Haas School of Business at the University of California. It’s happening at smaller schools like Olin College, the Alamo Colleges, and Southern New Hampshire University. In one sentence, Gallup’s Valerie Calderon sums up what leaders in those and other institutions have learned: “*How* you go to college matters more than *where* you go to college.”³

Recent surveys by such organizations as Gallup and the Pew Research Center show that students with a certain set of experiences and behaviors thrive when it comes to career and life satisfaction after graduation, and that these experiences and behaviors can be nurtured at a wide range of college types.

How you go to school is the missing question in the debate about the value and return on investment (ROI) of a college education.⁴

<p>—</p> <p><i>How</i> you go to school is the difference between a successful college experience and an unsuccessful one—whether you judge success by income, job satisfaction, or overall happiness.</p> <p>—</p>	<p><i>How</i> you go to school is the difference between a successful college experience and an unsuccessful one—whether you judge success by income, job satisfaction, or overall happiness. It is a critical question for anyone trying to improve the quality of his or her college experience.</p>
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How is a critical question for students and parents that should precede the question of *where* to go to college. What kind of learning suits an individual's intellect, temperament, and values?

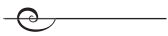
New York Times columnist Frank Bruni, in his excellent book *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be*, points out that the corner offices of Fortune 500 companies are occupied more often by graduates of "second-tier" institutions than name-brand universities.⁵

The undergraduate majors of former big-company CEOs like Boeing's James McNerney (American studies), Bank of America's Brian Thomas Moynihan (history), and Starbucks's

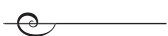
Howard Schultz (communications) show that a liberal arts degree isn't a one-way ticket to underemployment. The same is true in nonbusiness professions like politics and the arts.⁶

Until recently, individual success after college was most often attributed to a student's personal traits, such as perseverance or work ethic. Those are significant, but recent research also establishes that learning methods, habits, and environments help develop both the skills needed in today's workforce and the ability to combine those skills in new ways. By integrating what matters after graduation into the college experience, rather than just measuring GPA or postgraduation income, schools at every level of prestige are learning to do their jobs better.

A recent Bentley University study found that “hybrid jobs”—jobs that combine hard technical skills like computer science with soft “people” skills like empathy and communication—are among the fastest-growing categories of employment today. *Hybrid* describes the mix of skills you'll find in managers at tech companies where engineers and designers mix and combine development responsibilities for a new product. Web managers, for example, need a bit of everything: software coding skills, design skills, and that combination of data orientation and creative empathy that's necessary for understanding “user experience.”



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The need for people who can thrive in hybrid jobs is growing because the old lines between one kind of work and another are blurring. In the past, a corporate financial manager would

be expert in accounting, tax, and other financial disciplines, with perhaps a smattering of legal knowledge. Today she needs to know all that *and* the fundamentals of sustainability, global trade, data analysis, corporate responsibility, and more. Every important financial decision has to consider those issues because they impact financial outcomes.

Today, a marketing manager needs to know how to ask data analysts the right questions. He has to develop the capacity to separate the signal from the noise when examining huge amounts of data. Nurses and nurses' aides, whose great strengths might be in communication and caring, have to operate ever more sophisticated technology.

To prepare for today's workforce, students must practice crossing traditional boundaries *before* they arrive in the workplace. Crossing boundaries takes certain skills and also qualities like adaptability and a willingness to proceed even in an ambiguous situation. These qualities, which I'll detail later, can only be learned by practice. That's one of the key *hows* of higher education today—hybrid jobs require hybrid learning.



How you go to college is also about more than acquiring information. Anyone with a web browser and a minimal investment of time and money can find the raw information taught in most classrooms. Many high-level skills can be learned by the proverbial kid with a laptop in the parents' basement. American business lore is full of self-taught strivers, from Abraham Lincoln reading by the fire to the dropout millionaires of Silicon Valley. But for all the fact that we love that image, these people are rare. In most cases, a college education still happens at college.

How means learning to apply information in real-world situations, with consequences that are higher than a grade. *How* means learning to become engaged in all the issues that

might surround a decision. In the old days, you might approach a business situation with the goal of maximizing profit, and that's a fairly straightforward mathematical problem. Now, the emphasis would include the triple bottom line of profit, people (management), and the planet (making the world a better place or at a minimum doing no harm). It's a problem that blurs the old lines separating disciplines.

How also includes life outside the classroom, from residential life to playing sports to teaching kids reading in a local school. These are essential experiences as a student matures and explores her strengths and interests.

The bottom line for how you go to college is this: A successful college career means practicing, over and over, the hands-on work of crossing those boundaries. It demands that you get out of the comfort zone of your natural skills and temperament and embrace the unfamiliar. Because that's exactly what work—and life—is going to demand from you.

<p>—</p> <p>As a practical reality, <i>where</i> students go to college strongly influences <i>how</i> they go.</p> <p>—</p>	<p>As a practical reality, <i>where</i> students go to college strongly influences <i>how</i> they go. Colleges and universities have unique cultures, just like organizations in busi-</p>
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ness, government, and society. Bentley University is very different from Vassar, where I went to undergraduate school, and both are different from the University of Virginia, where I studied law. Colleges have different worldviews, purposes, and—to use the marketing term—value propositions. Ohio State (OSU) has about fifty-six thousand students—almost ten times as many as Bentley. You can learn the same accounting or

writing skills at Bentley and OSU, but the two promise very different college experiences.

What Really Prepares Students for Success

The key factors that make a college education successful these days are coming more and more into focus. Recent reports by the Gallup Organization and Purdue University, supported by the Lumina Foundation, focused closely on these factors. The reports, titled *Great Jobs, Great Lives: The Gallup-Purdue Index Report*, presented results and analysis of information provided by more than thirty thousand college graduates across the United States. (The report is an ongoing project, with results first published in 2014, and I will quote from several editions in this book.) The 2014 Gallup-Purdue report compared schools of all kinds—public and private, small and large, very selective and not very selective. The report's executive summary notes its key finding: "The data presented in this report suggest . . . that [establishing value is found] in thinking about things that are more lasting than selectivity of an institution or any of the traditional measures of college. Instead, the answers may lie in *what* students are doing in college and *how* they are experiencing it. Those elements—more than any others—have a profound relationship to a person's life and career."⁷

Gallup-Purdue found six factors in the undergraduate experience that made a measureable difference in people's well-being after college:⁸

- A professor who made them excited about learning
- Professors who cared about them as a person

- A mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams
- Work on a project that took a semester or more to complete
- An internship that allowed for applying what they were learning in the classroom
- Participation in extracurricular activities and organizations in college

How many graduates surveyed said that they had experienced all six of these factors?

Three percent.

Three percent, including students from all kinds of schools, all kinds of backgrounds and interests, and all over the United States!

Okay, we've got some work to do.



The six success factors are best achieved in the context of place-based education—that is, on a campus.



The six success factors are best achieved in the context of place-based education—that is, on a campus. The good news is that some colleges have been experimenting and refining their educational offerings for years, and many are focused on improving the experience of college along these lines. In chapter 4, I'll explore how one-to-one relationships, hands-on learning, and extracurricular activities such as those described in the report enable students to cross intellectual

boundaries and grow in both their capabilities and personal vision.

This book intends to add to the conversation by describing a hybrid model of higher education that has proven effective in preparing both business-focused and liberal arts students for life after graduation. Four broad principles shape my case:

1. The innovation economy needs a new graduate.

This is why business education models must adapt to the changing workplace and macroeconomic realities. For families, understanding the changes that the innovation economy has made to the workplace is the starting point when considering the question, “How is my kid going to get a job?” For educators, understanding the nature of hybrid work confirms the need to combine traditional left-brain and right-brain skills to prepare students for careers after graduation.

2. Students need a new college experience.

What does it mean to be prepared for career and life? Sources like Bentley’s surveys and the Gallup-Purdue Index point to better measures validating a college education, and why how you go to college matters more than where you go to college.

3. A new model must embrace the total college experience.

The hybrid model breaks traditional barriers between business and liberal arts education, in response to the breaking down of those barriers in the workplace. In particular, I’ll show how the components of hybrid learning operate in the four venues of learning (classroom,

cohort, community, corporation) in a young person's life before and after graduation.

4. The model must reflect generational change in and out of the workplace.

This means addressing values and challenges of the oft-maligned Millennials and of Generation Z that followed them (see “The Hybrid Generations” in chapter 3), today's students and young adults shaping the world of work, and the education that best prepares them to face it.

Features of Hybrid Learning

Hybrid learning is particularly relevant to the current generation of students. Hybrid is not unique to Bentley; similar curriculum designs are being practiced at the University of Michigan's Stephen M. Ross School of Business, New York University's Stern School of Business, and others. It's inspiring new ways of learning at Olin College, a selective engineering school. Columbia Business School offers its Program on Social Intelligence, and St. Lawrence University's curriculum offerings include a major for business in the liberal arts.⁹



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Drawing from educational research, the practices of other colleges and universities, and, most important, the experience of our students, we at Bentley have created a checklist of features that characterize

hybrid learning. Throughout this book, I will show how these features operate in higher education. They are not independent of one another; for example, the blend of classroom and hands-on learning noted in item 1 is part and parcel of our model of four-year career education, item 7. Mentoring, item 6, applies to faculty but also to business professionals, item 10. The features do not dictate a single model of hybrid learning, but I believe that, taken together, they form a foundation for the kind of education we need in order to prepare today's students for work and life:

1. Colleges should blend classroom teaching and hands-on learning.
2. Students in all majors should be required to take at least one business course.
3. All students, including business majors, should be required to take liberal arts courses.
4. All students, regardless of major, must learn to apply new information technologies to their fields, now and in the future.
5. Schools should connect cocurricular activities to the course of study, applying both left-brain and right-brain skills outside the classroom.
6. Professors and students should be trained in the practices and responsibilities of mentoring and sponsorship.
7. Career services should begin freshman year and continue through graduation, integrated with a student's course of study.
8. Internships should be mandatory for all students, regardless of major.

9. Business professionals should be connected to the classroom, interacting with students in both lectures and real-world problem solving.
10. Businesses should work closely with colleges to shape the schools' career service offerings and inform the curriculum.

The move to hybrid learning addresses issues that are particular passions of mine:

- The radical changes in employment—hiring, getting a job, and working in business—caused by technology and globalization
- Innovations in curriculum that merge traditionally separate domains of learning (vocational vs. liberal arts, hard vs. soft skills, left-brain vs. right-brain thinking)
- The diversity of teaching and learning models, trending toward a more individualized experience
- The particular needs and interests of Millennials, Generation Z, and women in business education today

The young people who inspired me back in 2006 to become more involved in higher education seem uniquely willing and able to embrace these changes. Their common desire to redefine success along a triple bottom line of financial, social, and environmental progress makes them ready as a generation to create permanent change.

Because Bentley is a business university, our model is naturally focused on preparing for the world of work, but we are not limited to that alone; we believe with many others that there are four common components of a hybrid education that prepare one for work and life outside of work.

1. The fusion of business and liberal arts study
2. Study paired with real-world experience in the form of internships, corporate immersion classes, study abroad, and/or service-learning
3. A detailed process of career planning and career management skills training, beginning in freshman year
4. Ongoing training in technology skills



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My belief in these four components is informed by extensive research, especially the ongoing research done by the Gallup organization and its partners, including *Great Jobs*, *Great Lives*, and by Bentley's PreparedU project and its surveys, which are ongoing studies dedicated to identifying the most effective methods for preparing students for work and life after graduation.

In these pages, you'll meet people who don't fit the stereotypical image of a business community. You'll meet professor Tim Anderson, an honorary member of the Crow Nation, who uses a traditional talking stick in his sociology class to teach the importance of authenticity. You'll hear from serial entrepreneur Woody Benson as he and his teaching partner Perry Lowe turn a class into a real-life consulting firm for a start-up.

You'll meet current students like Usama Salim, who is studying business and liberal arts while preparing for a medical career, and graduates like Will Markow, who started out as a professional boxer but ended up studying quantitative analysis.

You will also meet professional educators from across the country who are leading a revolution in how we prepare students for career and life. People like Dr. Paul J. LeBlanc, president of Southern New Hampshire University and champion of competency-based education, a new model for lifelong learning. People like Dr. Bruce Leslie, who is changing the culture of five colleges in Texas through a deep intellectual partnership with Franklin Covey Company's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People program. And people like John Colborn of the Aspen Institute, who is rethinking the ways that employers, students, and colleges can work together to make business education deliver what business needs.

All of them embody a new way of making the most out of higher education, with a new vision of *how* to prepare for the postgraduation reality of constant change, merging disciplines, and the blurring lines between work and life.