



SK LAUNCH helps bridge gap between education, employment

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“With hands-on sessions that allowed students to practice tying tourniquets, pilot a virtual reality simulator to control a construction site excavator and unfasten lug nuts with an impact wrench, this year’s Southcentral Kentucky LAUNCH Experience took on the air of a carnival,” Aaron Mudd explained in last Saturday’s Daily News.

“More than 3,000 eighth graders from Bowling Green and the surrounding region cycled through Knicely Conference Center during the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce’s fourth career expo, which stands for Learning About Unique and New Careers Here.”

Kudos to everyone responsible for, or associated with, this exceptional event. The world is changing in complicated and unprecedented ways that previous generations could not have imagined – and these changes have profound implications for the occupational landscape.

The number of students retained to graduation does not signify whether colleges and universities are productively meeting their obligation to society. Whether or not those students are able to acquire and succeed in jobs related to their majors once they graduate is the only real measure of effectiveness.

There are only two ways to ultimately gauge the efficacy of higher education. First, institutions must be able to demonstrate conclusively that those who earn a degree in a given field can perform the duties and responsibilities associated with jobs requiring that credential.

Second, employers who hire an institution’s graduates must appreciate the knowledge and skills they have acquired and be willing to compensate them in a way that is commensurate with the investment they made to acquire those competencies. Most lenders expect their loans to be repaid.

Ultimately, there must be greater alignment between the programs offered by college and universities and the competencies needed by those who employ their graduates.

Events like the Southcentral Kentucky LAUNCH Experience help to bridge the gap between these two worlds.

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