

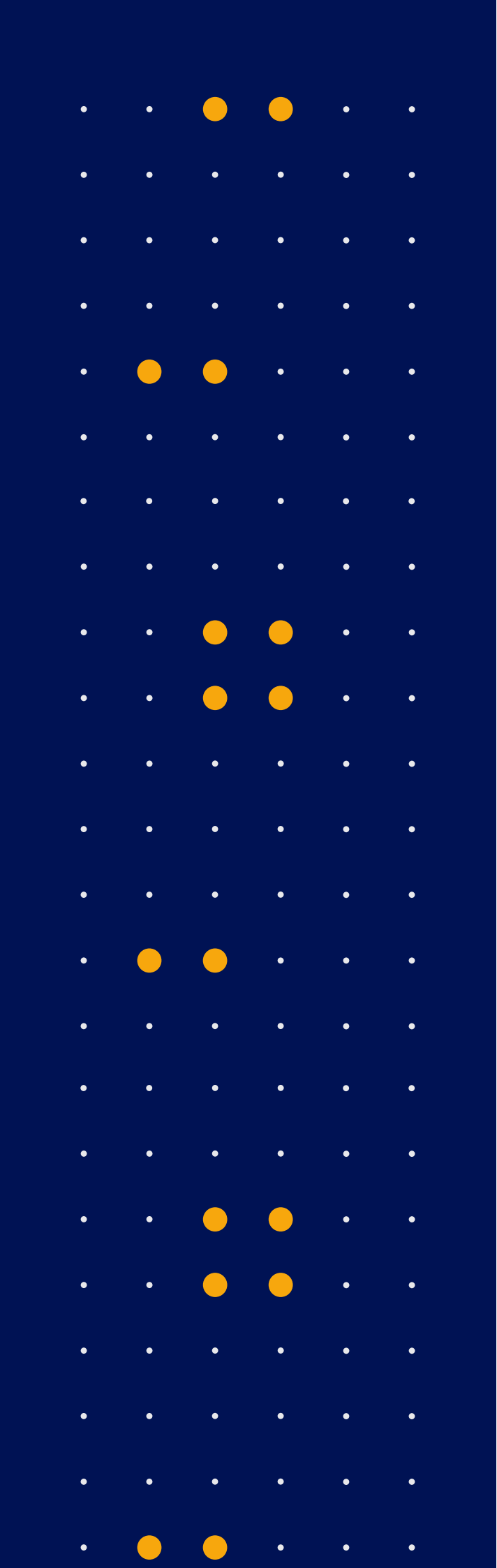


GLOBAL SKILLS WEEK

MARCH 25 - 26 2026

REPORT





Global Skills Week 2026 brought together leaders from higher education, industry, policy, and technology to examine how the global skills economy is evolving – and how institutions must respond. Held in Washington, D.C., the conference reflected a moment of significant transformation, as artificial intelligence (AI), demographic change, and economic shifts reshape both education and work.

Across the program, a clear theme emerged: the changing nature of traditional education-to-employment pathways. Degrees alone are no longer sufficient signals of readiness. Instead, institutions are being challenged to demonstrate how effectively they equip learners with adaptable, verifiable, and applied skills.

Three interconnected priorities shaped discussions throughout the event. First, the rapid integration of AI is transforming how skills are developed, assessed, and applied. Second, systems are moving toward skills-based frameworks, requiring new approaches to credentials, pathways, and policy. Third, there is growing urgency around career navigation, ensuring learners can understand and act on evolving labor market opportunities.

Key Takeaways From the Conference, and What To Do Next

Make AI capability provable, not promised: embed AI across programs and require portfolio-ready outputs that demonstrate real use.

Move to skills-based pathways: define priority skills, align curriculum and assessment to them, and issue skills signals alongside the transcript.

Rebuild career navigation around real market demand: use labor-market and alumni data to guide program decisions and give learners clear next-step pathways into jobs.



Day 1

Opening Remarks

The opening remarks by Patrick Brothers, QS Executive Director, positioned skills and employability at the center of higher education and economic development. Brothers highlighted how global systems are being reshaped by converging forces, including technological disruption, demographic change, and shifting labor market dynamics. These pressures are accelerating the need for upskilling and reskilling at an unprecedented scale.

A key message was that higher education institutions must prepare graduates for evolving workforce demands. Data presented during the session showed significant variation in how countries and institutions perform across measures such as employer reputation, future skills readiness, and academic strength.

AI automation and augmentation emerged as a key theme in education and workforce alignment. Rather than simply replacing jobs, AI is reshaping how work is performed, enhancing human capability in some contexts while transforming roles in others. The session concluded by emphasizing the importance of collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and policy alignment. As global systems continue to evolve, the ability to respond collectively, and with urgency, will be critical to ensuring that skills development keeps pace with workforce needs.

Unlocking Skills Mobility: The Policy Agenda for US Higher Ed, Policy Pathways to a Skills-Driven Postsecondary System

This session explored the growing shift toward skills-based policy in the US, highlighting the role of individual states as key drivers of innovation. While federal attention to skills, competencies, and workforce mobility is increasing, much of the practical progress is happening at the state level, where policy experimentation is more agile and responsive.

A central insight was that effective skills systems depend on connecting four core elements: governance, interoperable data, quality assurance, and employer engagement. While few states have fully integrated these components, many are advancing in individual areas. The challenge is bringing them together into cohesive systems that allow skills to be recognized, validated, and transferred across contexts.

The discussion also highlighted promising models such as competency-based education and stackable credentials. Programs like Maine's Jobs for Maine's Graduates show how learners can build portable, verifiable skills through structured pathways linked directly to employment outcomes. These approaches are particularly valuable for learners who face barriers to traditional education routes.

However, structural challenges remain. The continued dominance of the credit hour limits wider adoption of skills-based approaches. Panelists noted that while workarounds are emerging, more fundamental reform is needed to unlock true skills mobility.

The transition to a skills-driven postsecondary system is underway, but scaling it will require stronger alignment between policy, data systems, and employer needs.



Can Your Graduates Back Up Your AI Promise?

As universities increasingly position themselves as AI-ready, this session addressed a critical question: can graduates demonstrate meaningful AI capability in practice? The discussion highlighted a gap between institutional ambition and student outcomes, with many institutions investing in AI tools and strategy without ensuring students can apply these skills in real-world contexts.

Speakers argued that AI fluency must go beyond theoretical understanding or claims on a CV. Students need to produce tangible, portfolio-ready outputs that show how they have used AI to solve problems, generate insights, or create value. This reflects changing employer expectations, where applied capability matters more than static skill labels.

One example was the integration of AI across entire programs, rather than isolating it within specific courses. By embedding AI into core learning experiences such as market research, product development, and business analysis, students gain practical exposure that mirrors workplace realities.

The session also emphasized that AI adoption extends beyond students. Faculty and staff must build their own capabilities, supported by institutional frameworks that encourage experimentation and collaboration. This includes using AI in advising, curriculum design, and administrative processes.

Ultimately, AI was positioned as an ongoing institutional practice. Success will depend on continuous iteration, clear expectations, and a focus on ensuring students graduate with demonstrable, relevant skills.



The Future of Healthcare: System Pressures, Talent Gaps, and the Role of Higher Education

This session explored how higher education can respond to growing pressure on healthcare systems, including workforce shortages, burnout, rising demand, and rapid technological change.

A central theme was that healthcare talent gaps exist across multiple levels. While clinical roles such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and therapists remain essential, the wider healthcare economy is also changing quickly. Speakers highlighted growing demand for skills in health data science, bioinformatics, AI, healthcare technology, research, operations, and management.

AI was cited as a major force reshaping both clinical care and scientific discovery. In areas such as radiology, pathology, cardiology, drug development, and genomic analysis, AI is already changing how work is done. However, speakers emphasized that AI is more likely to augment healthcare professionals than replace them entirely. Human judgement, clinical oversight, and patient care remain critical.

The discussion also highlighted the challenge of burnout, particularly among frontline healthcare workers. Many professionals are leaving or considering leaving the field, while others need flexible routes to upskill and move

into new roles. Higher education can support this by offering shorter, competency-based, and employer-aligned pathways that help workers progress without stepping away from employment for long periods.

Experiential learning was identified as one of healthcare education's strengths. Clinical training has always relied on structured, hands-on experience, and speakers suggested that other disciplines could learn from this model. Carefully designed placements, simulations, and employer partnerships can help learners build confidence and apply skills in real settings.

The session also stressed the importance of exposing students earlier to the full range of healthcare careers, not just doctors and nurses. Roles such as surgical technicians, lab technicians, data analysts, health informatics specialists, and healthcare managers offer meaningful pathways into a growing sector.

Overall, the session reinforced that healthcare will continue to need skilled, motivated people. The role of higher education is to build flexible pipelines, integrate technology responsibly, and prepare learners for both clinical and non-clinical roles in an evolving system.



How the Higher Education Sector is Rising to the Skills Challenge: The QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026

This session explored how subject-level rankings can offer insight into how effectively higher education systems are preparing talent for the future. Rather than focusing only on institutional prestige, the discussion highlighted how rankings data can reveal deeper patterns of national capability, particularly in areas linked to emerging skills demand.

Two key indicators were emphasized: the number of ranked institutions within a country and their average performance. Together, these provide a more nuanced view of a system's ability to generate skills at scale. While established systems such as the UK, US, and Australia remain strong, countries like China and India are rapidly increasing their presence, particularly in STEM fields.

A central theme was the need to move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. Grouping

subjects into broader clusters, such as AI, digital, and green capabilities, revealed new insights into how countries are positioning themselves. Some smaller systems demonstrated strong performance in targeted areas, suggesting that strategic focus can be as important as scale.

Another key takeaway was the gap that can exist between strong research output and global perception. In some cases, institutional excellence is not fully reflected in reputation, pointing to a need for stronger positioning and clearer communication at both institutional and national levels.

This reinforced the idea that rankings should be used as more than comparative scorecards. When applied strategically, they can guide investment, sharpen focus, and strengthen positioning within the global skills landscape.

The quality of universities in the subject rankings is closely correlated with tertiary enrolment rates...



GLOBAL SKILLS WEEK

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026 & UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Meeting the Moment: Online Learning Is the New Skills Lifeline

Online learning has shifted from a supplementary option to a central part of institutional strategy. As learner expectations evolve, workforce disruption accelerates, and non-traditional student populations grow, institutions are under increasing pressure to deliver flexible and accessible education at scale.

A key shift highlighted in this panel was the move from institution-centered to learner-centered design. Universities are rethinking how programs fit into the lives of working adults, career changers, and learners with incomplete credentials. This includes expanding modular programs, short-form credentials, and employer-aligned certificates.

Speakers emphasized the role of online learning in addressing skills gaps. Faster program development and closer collaboration with employers allow institutions to respond

more effectively to labor market demand. However, they cautioned that high-quality online provision requires significant investment in infrastructure, staffing, and marketing, and may take time to become sustainable.

The discussion also addressed misconceptions around quality. Well-designed online programs can match or exceed traditional formats, particularly when they incorporate active learning, clear outcomes, and strong student support. However, perceptions are still influenced by poor experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the session positioned online learning as a strategic lifeline, enabling institutions to expand access, support lifelong learning, and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving skills economy.



Building Skills Systems That Move With the Economy: Lessons Emerging from Arizona

As economic and technological change accelerates, workforce systems are being pushed to adapt more quickly and precisely to shifting demand. Arizona was highlighted as a strong example of how a responsive, locally driven approach can better align skills development with real-world needs.

A central issue is the disconnect between education and the labor market. Traditional systems, often built on standardized models and historic data, can produce credentials that lack regional relevance. In contrast, Arizona is advancing hyper-local strategies that reflect the realities of specific industries, demographics, and workforce challenges.

Speakers highlighted sector-focused initiatives in areas such as semiconductor manufacturing, electric vehicles, and healthcare. These demonstrate how targeted

investment can address both skills shortages and economic priorities. Efforts are also underway to build integrated data systems that track outcomes, identify demand, and support real-time decision-making.

Employers are increasingly involved in designing training pathways and supporting workforce development through internal upskilling initiatives. “Grow your own” talent models were highlighted as particularly effective in addressing persistent labor shortages.

The session concluded with a broader reflection on systems thinking. Effective workforce strategies require coordination across education, economic development, and policy, grounded in local realities but supported by strong data infrastructure.



Universities as Catalysts for the Green Skills Transition

This session examined the role of universities in supporting the transition to a green economy, emphasizing that sustainability is not only an environmental issue but also a workforce and economic priority.

Speakers highlighted the scale of demand for green jobs across sectors, noting that education systems have yet to fully align with these needs. A key misconception addressed was that green skills are limited to technical or STEM fields. In practice, they are increasingly embedded across industries and require a broader set of capabilities, including problem-solving, collaboration, and systems thinking.

The discussion stressed the importance of integrating sustainability throughout the education system, from early learning to higher education and lifelong learning. Rather than treating green skills as a niche area, institutions need to embed them across curricula and learning experiences.

Equity was also a central concern. Access to green skills opportunities remains uneven, particularly across gender and socio-economic groups. Ensuring a just transition requires deliberate efforts to widen participation and remove barriers.

Universities were positioned as key contributors to this shift through research, curriculum development, and partnerships. However, speakers emphasized that progress depends on collaboration with industry, government, and other education providers.

Overall, the session framed the green transition as a systemic challenge that requires coordinated action to align skills development with the needs of a sustainable economy.



Future-Ready Workforce: Policy, Practice, and the New World of Work

AI is accelerating workforce transformation while exposing structural weaknesses in existing education and employment systems.

A central theme was the disconnect between labor market demand and workforce preparation. Employers continue to report difficulty finding skilled talent, while many workers struggle to access stable, high-quality jobs. This reflects limitations in systems that rely on outdated data and rigid pathways.

Speakers emphasized the need for real-time building the intelligence to better understand changing demand. Without accurate and timely data, policymakers and institutions risk making decisions based on incomplete information. Strengthening data infrastructure was identified as a critical priority.

The session also highlighted gaps in support for incumbent workers. Many programs focus on students or unemployed individuals, leaving those already in work with limited opportunities to upskill or reskill. This is increasingly problematic in a context where continuous learning is essential.

Employer involvement emerged as another key factor. Training systems are most effective when employers play an active role in designing and delivering learning experiences.

The discussion concluded with a call for more ambitious policy approaches. Addressing workforce challenges in an AI-driven economy will require stronger public-private partnerships, more flexible pathways, and a greater emphasis on lifelong learning.



Building the Future: How Indiana is Using Skills to Drive Innovation and Growth

This session explored how Indiana is using workforce strategy to drive economic growth, particularly in the context of low unemployment and increasing competition for talent.

A key challenge is that growth is no longer constrained by demand, but by the availability of skilled workers. As a result, the state is focusing on developing talent more effectively rather than relying on attraction alone. One example is the “Power Up” initiative, which ties funding to measurable outcomes such as wage growth for incumbent workers. This shifts the focus from participation to tangible economic impact.

The session also explored the use of data and technology to improve career navigation. AI-enabled tools are helping individuals identify

realistic career pathways based on their background, experience, and local labor market conditions, making progression more accessible and actionable.

Universities were positioned as critical economic infrastructure, contributing through education, research, partnerships, and talent pipelines. They also play a key role in attracting investment and supporting emerging industries such as life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the importance of aligning workforce development with broader economic strategy, ensuring education, policy, and industry work together to support long-term growth.



Data-Driven By Design: How Innovative Universities Shape Strategy with Real-Market Data

This session focused on how universities can use labor market data to inform strategy, improve curriculum relevance, and strengthen student outcomes.

Speakers emphasized that data must be applied with clear purpose. Rather than relying on generic insights about “top skills” or “top jobs,” institutions need to ask context-specific questions aligned with their mission and the markets they serve

Evidence presented highlighted gaps between education and employment outcomes. In some cases, graduates lacked key technical skills for target roles, while important human capabilities such as adaptability and self-motivation were underrepresented in curricula.

The session also showed how data can enhance the student experience. AI-powered career guidance tools can support better decision-making, improve job placement outcomes, and strengthen employer engagement.

Another key insight was the value of alumni data. Analyzing career trajectories allows institutions to identify emerging opportunities, assess program effectiveness, and refine employer partnerships.

The overall message was that universities can shape economic and social outcomes at scale, but only if they use real-market data systematically to guide decisions.



From Principles to Practice: A 60-Minute Responsible AI Readiness Workshop for Higher Education

This workshop explored how institutions can move from experimentation with AI to more structured and responsible implementation.

Participants worked through a framework for assessing AI maturity across governance, teaching, operations, and research. The exercise showed that most institutions remain in the early stages of AI adoption, with activity often fragmented across departments.

Key challenges included limited coordination, concerns around ethics and privacy, and uncertainty about the impact of AI on learning outcomes. Faculty resistance and capability gaps were also identified as barriers.

The discussion emphasized the importance of governance. Responsible AI adoption requires clear policies, shared language, and alignment across the institution, rather than isolated initiatives.

The workshop concluded with a call for more deliberate action. While experimentation remains important, institutions need to formalize their approach to ensure AI is integrated in ways that are ethical, effective, and aligned with strategic goals.



Beyond AI: The Human Skills That Keep Graduates Hired

Leaders from Savannah College of Art and Design highlighted that while AI is reshaping creative industries, long-term employability will depend on combining technical fluency with distinctly human capabilities. As AI changes how work is carried out, demand is increasing for skills such as communication, collaboration, adaptability, and creative judgement.

Speakers noted that leading institutions are embedding AI across the curriculum, not as a standalone subject but as a tool within learning experiences. This is paired with deliberate development of human skills through real-world projects, teamwork, and applied learning.

Insights from SCAD's AI summits with companies such as Google and Netflix showed that hiring is increasingly focused on human qualities.

Three capabilities were emphasized:

- Taste (developed judgement and creative discernment)
- Human-led ideation (using AI to support execution rather than generate ideas)
- Creative direction (guiding complex, AI-supported workflows)

These highlight the importance of human-led thinking in a landscape where AI supports, but does not replace, originality and judgement.

The session also pointed to the need for new forms of assessment. Skills such as collaboration, communication, and leadership require more holistic approaches, including multi-source evaluation and performance-based tasks.

Overall, the session reinforced a core theme of the conference: in an AI-augmented workforce, advantage will come from combining technical capability with human strengths.



The Future of AI and Technical Learning: Building AI Fluency on Campus

This session examined how institutions can respond to growing demand for AI and technical skills, highlighting both the scale and urgency of the challenge. As technological change accelerates, the shelf life of skills is shrinking, requiring more flexible and continuous learning models.

Speakers pointed to a widening gap between employer demand and available talent. Organizations are struggling to recruit individuals with AI capabilities, while workers face increasing pressure to upskill. In response, new models of technical learning are emerging, defined by flexibility, personalization, and strong alignment with industry needs.

Key features include centralized learning platforms, hands-on training, and structured pathways that move learners

from foundational knowledge to applied competence. Certifications and credentials are becoming more important signals of capability, particularly in technical fields.

The session also explored the value of partnerships between higher education and technology providers. By leveraging external platforms and tools, institutions can accelerate adoption and scale more effectively.

A central takeaway was that AI fluency must extend beyond technical disciplines. Preparing students for the future workforce requires embedding these capabilities across all areas of study.



From Access to Impact: Scaling Applied AI Education Across America's Community College Network

This session highlighted the role of community colleges in expanding access to AI education and supporting workforce development at scale.

Community colleges are well positioned to deliver applied, job-focused training due to their strong links with local employers, flexible program structures, and accessibility for diverse learners. They are often among the first to respond to workforce needs, particularly in fast-moving technical fields.

The discussion focused on collaborative models designed to scale AI education nationally. By sharing curriculum resources, industry partnerships, and best practices, networks of institutions can accelerate program development and improve consistency in quality and outcomes.

A key insight was the importance of local adaptation. While shared resources provide a foundation, successful programs must reflect regional labor market needs and institutional context. Faculty engagement is therefore critical to ensuring relevance and effective delivery.

Challenges remain, including gaps in digital infrastructure, faculty capacity, and student preparedness. However, speakers emphasized that coordinated investment and collaboration can help address these barriers.

Overall, scaling AI education depends not only on technology, but on strong institutional networks, employer alignment, and a focus on applied learning that leads directly to employment outcomes.



From Credentials to Currency: Making Skills Portable at Global

This session explored the challenge of making skills verifiable, portable, and trusted across education and employment systems. While there is growing agreement that skills are more meaningful indicators of capability than traditional credentials, the infrastructure to support this shift is still developing.

Speakers described this as a “plumbing problem”, centered on interoperability, shared language, and data systems. Without common standards, employers and institutions struggle to interpret and trust skills signals, limiting their impact.

Examples highlighted the importance of employer-recognized credentials and outcome-based approaches.

Programs that link training directly to measurable results, such as employment or wage progression, show how skills can function as real currency when supported by strong systems.

The discussion also pointed to the need for cultural change. Employers must continue shifting hiring practices toward skills, while institutions embed skills-based approaches more deeply into their offerings. Building a global skills economy will require coordinated action to ensure skills are consistently defined, validated, and recognized across contexts.



A Skills-Driven University: Strategy, Curriculum, and Outcomes in Action Network

This session explored how global talent development is evolving in response to shifting geopolitical, economic, and technological conditions.

A key theme was the increasing complexity of talent mobility. While some countries are expanding internationalization strategies, others face constraints linked to policy and public perception. This is creating a more competitive and fragmented global landscape.

Speakers highlighted the need to move beyond traditional models of international education based on physical mobility. Flexible, skills-based approaches that combine global engagement with local relevance are gaining traction.

The session also emphasized the importance of aligning education with labor market demand. This includes embedding skills in curricula, integrating experiential learning, and strengthening industry partnerships.

Global competencies such as cultural awareness, language skills, and adaptability were identified as increasingly important. Programs that combine academic learning with international experience were highlighted as effective models.

Overall, preparing talent for a global economy requires coordinated action across institutions, governments, and employers, balancing global connectivity with local impact.



Capital for Capability: Philanthropy Scaling Skills Pathways

As workforce challenges increase in scale and complexity, philanthropy is being called on to support more systemic, long-term change rather than isolated initiatives.

A key theme was that many communities already have strong programs but lack the coordination and infrastructure to scale their impact. Philanthropy can play a catalytic role by providing flexible, long-term investment that connects existing efforts and strengthens systems.

The concept of “patient capital” was central to the discussion. This approach allows programs to develop over time rather than requiring immediate results, which is particularly important in education and workforce systems where change can take years.

The session also highlighted the importance of intermediaries that connect education providers, employers, and learners. These organizations help align stakeholders and create clearer, more coherent pathways.

In addition to technical skills, speakers stressed the importance of supporting wider learner needs, including wellbeing, belonging, and social capital. These factors are essential for long-term success but are often overlooked.

Overall, scaling skills pathways requires a shift in focus toward strengthening existing systems, improving coordination, and investing in infrastructure that enables sustainable impact.



Borderless Talent: Educating for a Skills-Driven World Network

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Building the Skills Infrastructure: How Technology Connects Learning, Employers, and Workforce Systems

This session focused on the infrastructure required to make a skills-based economy function effectively. While much attention is given to credentials and programs, the underlying systems that connect learning to employment remain a major challenge.

A central issue is the lack of a shared language around skills. Multiple overlapping frameworks make it difficult for employers, educators, and technology providers to interpret and exchange data consistently, creating friction across the system.

Advances in technology, particularly AI, offer opportunities to address these challenges. Adaptive learning systems can personalize training, while improved data systems can better align education with labor market

demand. However, these tools depend on interoperable standards to be effective.

The session also highlighted overlooked barriers, such as language proficiency, which can limit access to opportunity even when technical skills are present. Integrating language development into workforce training was presented as a practical solution.

Overall, a functioning skills economy depends on infrastructure that is accessible, interoperable, and centered on human needs, enabling better matching between learners and opportunities.



Validating Workforce Readiness: How an R1 University Uses Hiring Assessments to Strengthen Co-op Outcomes

This session explored how employer-aligned assessments can help bridge the gap between academic learning and workforce readiness.

Using Northeastern University's co-op model as a case study, speakers showed how structured work experiences create strong feedback loops between employers and institutions. Integrating hiring assessments allows students to practice real-world evaluation methods while providing institutions with insight into performance.

These assessments serve both as preparation tools and diagnostic mechanisms. They help students build confidence while highlighting skill gaps that can inform curriculum development.

The discussion extended beyond technical ability to include broader employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, and professional behavior. Embedding these into assessment processes supports a more holistic approach to readiness.

The session demonstrated that making skills visible to employers requires more than transcripts. Recognized signals of capability, integrated into the student experience, can strengthen alignment between education and employment.



India Track | Roundtable Discussion

This session examined India's evolving role in the global skills economy, highlighting both its scale and its potential as a strategic partner.

With over 43 million higher education students and ambitious expansion targets, India faces growing demand for new delivery models. Policy reforms such as the National Education Policy 2020 are enabling greater flexibility, including modular pathways, multidisciplinary learning, and stronger integration of skills into higher education.

A key theme was the need to better align education with employability. While India has strong talent potential, particularly in technology and AI, gaps remain between academic provision and industry needs. Addressing these requires stronger partnerships, expanded vocational pathways, and a greater focus on lifelong learning.

The session also highlighted opportunities for international collaboration, including research partnerships, branch campuses, and digital delivery models. Speakers emphasized the importance of co-creation and shared value in these partnerships.

Despite challenges such as governance complexity and perceptions of vocational education, India's scale and innovation capacity position it as a major force in the future global skills landscape.

For a deeper exploration of these insights, download **India's Rising Role in Global Higher Education and Skills Development**, which captures the key insights, opportunities, and recommendations emerging from the India Track discussions at Global Skills Week 2026.

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Skills for Translational Research and Technology Transfer: Aligning University Output with Industry Needs

This session explored the challenge of translating academic research into real-world impact, framing technology transfer as a skills issue rather than purely a structural one.

Speakers highlighted the disconnect between research excellence and commercial application, often driven by differences in incentives, language, and expertise. Addressing this requires capabilities such as market analysis, project management, and partnership development.

Examples showed how targeted interventions, including revised faculty incentives, industry advisory boards, and dedicated structures, can improve outcomes. Embedding translational

thinking early in the research process was identified as a key factor.

The session also raised broader questions about institutional priorities. While commercialization is important, it must be balanced with core academic missions, and not all institutions will engage at the same level.

The speakers concluded that successful technology transfer depends on aligned incentives, strong partnerships, and the development of new capabilities across the research ecosystem.



Building the AI-Ready and Intelligent Campus of Tomorrow, Today

This roundtable explored what it means to become an AI-ready institution, emphasizing that transformation extends beyond technology to include culture, governance, and capability.

A key distinction was drawn between widespread informal use of AI tools and structured institutional integration. While students are already using AI extensively, many institutions lack clear policies and coordinated strategies.

Challenges include overreliance on AI by students, gaps in faculty capability, and concerns around data privacy and ethics. Addressing these requires investment in training, partnerships, and infrastructure.

The discussion also highlighted AI's potential to improve university operations, including advising, admissions, and administrative processes. Progress in these areas often depends on experimentation and clear demonstrations of value.

Looking ahead, participants identified human-centered skills such as creativity, resilience, and emotional intelligence as increasingly important. As AI automates routine tasks, these capabilities will become key differentiators.



Day 2

Global by Design: Reimagining Mobility, Talent, and Opportunity at Scale

This inspiring keynote from Dr Fanta Aw challenged traditional models of global education, arguing that current systems are not designed to meet growing demand.

While international mobility remains important, it serves only a small proportion of learners and is increasingly constrained by cost and policy. The discussion highlighted the need to move beyond mobility as the primary model and focus on expanding access more broadly.

A “global by design” approach focuses on enabling opportunity to move across borders.

This includes digital learning, modular pathways, and transnational education models that can reach more diverse learners.

The session also emphasized the human value of global education in fostering understanding and reducing inequality. Achieving this requires intentional design and collaboration.

Overall, global education was framed as a system in transition, with a need for more inclusive and scalable approaches.



Learner Voices: What Actually Works from Classroom to Career

This session centered on the perspectives of students and recent graduates, offering insight into how education is experienced in practice.

A key theme was relevance. Learners value experiences that connect directly to real-world application, such as project-based learning, internships, and experiential programs. These approaches help build confidence and practical capability.

Students also highlighted the broader impact of education, including personal growth, independence, and identity development. While employability is important, education also shapes purpose and direction.

At the same time, traditional models were often seen as overly focused on grades and passive learning. Learners expressed a desire for clearer links between their studies and future opportunities.

The session reinforced the importance of designing education with learners, ensuring experiences are engaging, relevant, and outcome-focused.

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The Modern Anchor Institution: Bolstering Economic Growth Through Talent, Innovation, and Place Partnerships

This session explored how universities are evolving as anchor institutions that contribute directly to regional economic development.

Speakers highlighted three core roles: developing talent, supporting innovation, and partnering with communities. Universities are increasingly expected to act as active participants in local ecosystems.

Examples included employer-sponsored projects, community initiatives, and support for regional infrastructure. These demonstrate how universities can drive growth while addressing local needs.

The session also emphasized reducing barriers to collaboration. Simplifying processes and building internal capacity can help institutions engage more effectively with external partners.

Overall, universities were positioned as key connectors of talent, knowledge, and place, contributing to long-term economic and social resilience.



Redesigning the Bridge: Emerging Models from Education to Work

This session examined new approaches to linking education and employment, focusing on integrated, outcome-driven models.

Speakers highlighted the limitations of fragmented systems that separate education, training, and employment services. In contrast, effective models combine these elements into cohesive pathways that support learners from entry to employment.

Apprenticeships were identified as a strong example, combining paid work, structured learning, and recognized credentials. These models offer clear routes into employment while meeting employer demand for experience.

The discussion also emphasized the importance of support services such as mentoring, housing, and career guidance. These are critical in helping learners navigate complex systems and succeed over time.

What emerged most clearly was the need for more coordinated, learner-centered pathways that align education with real-world outcomes.



Equipping Graduate Business Students With the Skills Employers Actually Need

This session explored how graduate business programs are adapting to better prepare students for the skills employers actually need, while also helping them communicate those skills clearly in a competitive hiring market.

A major focus was the need to prepare students for constant change. Speakers emphasized that adaptability, curiosity, interdisciplinary thinking, and lifelong learning are becoming essential. Fordham University highlighted the value of experiential learning, global and community-based projects, and programs that bring together business, law, policy, and science. These approaches help students work through complex problems without clear answers and build the confidence to operate across disciplines.

Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business shared how its MBA curriculum has been redesigned to better reflect employer needs. The process drew on input from industry, alumni, students, and faculty, and resulted in several key changes. These include reducing the required core to allow more flexibility, mapping courses to career pathways, integrating AI across the curriculum, and moving leadership communication earlier in the program so students are better prepared for internship recruitment.

The session also examined the changing nature of employer partnerships. Strong partnerships are increasingly strategic rather than transactional, involving multiple parts of the university and creating value beyond recruitment alone. Examples included Fordham's deeper engagement with IBM and Georgetown's Small Business Core, where students work with local businesses alongside mentors from Boston Consulting Group.

A major takeaway was that developing skills is only part of the challenge. Students also need to articulate their experience, competencies, and impact effectively. Georgetown supports this through repeated practice, including "Tell me about yourself" drills, interview preparation, and storytelling exercises. Fordham also uses alumni and employer engagement to give students insight into recruitment expectations and professional pathways.

The session made clear that closing the skills gap requires continuous alignment between curriculum, employer needs, experiential learning, and career support. Higher education may not move at the same pace as industry, but institutions can become more responsive by piloting new ideas, learning from internal innovation, and building stronger employer and alumni partnerships.



Every Learner, Job-Ready: Scaling Personalized Skills Development

This session explored how personalized learning can support the shift toward a skills-first economy, focusing on how institutions can help learners develop job-ready capabilities more efficiently and at scale.

A central theme was that while demand for personalized learning is not new, advances in AI are making it far more achievable. Jeremy York from Coursera emphasized that the pace of skills change is increasing, making efficiency critical. Learners, particularly working professionals, have limited time, and any learning that is not directly relevant risks disengagement. Personalization helps address this by aligning learning more closely with individual goals, existing knowledge, and real-world tasks.

One key shift is the ability to integrate learning into the flow of work. Rather than separating education from professional activity, AI-enabled platforms can generate contextualized tasks, scenarios, and assessments that reflect what learners need to do in their jobs. This makes learning more practical and immediately applicable, improving both engagement and outcomes.

Skills intelligence and labor market data were highlighted as essential to this approach. By analyzing job postings, employer demand, and

learner data, platforms can continuously adjust learning pathways to reflect changing requirements. This creates more dynamic, responsive models of education that are better aligned with real-world outcomes.

However, scaling personalization presents challenges, particularly around data. Effective personalization depends on accurate, continuously updated information about a learner's starting point, goals, and progress, as well as clear mapping between skills and occupations. Building and maintaining this infrastructure remains complex.

The importance of balance was also emphasized. While AI can enhance practice, simulation, and adaptability, it should complement rather than replace core instruction and human input. Strong foundational teaching, mentorship, and real-world context remain critical.

The panel left little doubt that personalized learning has the potential to improve efficiency, relevance, and learner confidence, but success depends on combining technology, high-quality data, and human-centered design.



Standards, Safeguards, and Skills: Governing AI Globally

This session explored how universities can govern AI responsibly while still enabling innovation, skills development, and institutional transformation.

A central theme was that AI adoption cannot be left to informal experimentation alone. Speakers emphasized that institutions need clear governance structures to understand where AI is being used, manage risks, and model responsible behavior for students. This includes protecting student data, safeguarding faculty intellectual property, and avoiding uncoordinated “shadow IT” activity.

The discussion highlighted the value of AI capability frameworks in helping universities map their current activity across teaching, learning, operations, admissions, and other functions. These frameworks allow institutions to identify areas of strength, uncover gaps, and create a clearer direction for responsible implementation.

Skills were another major focus. Speakers argued that as AI advances, human capabilities become even more important. Teamwork, persuasion, empathy, ethical judgement, adaptability, and the ability to work in uncertainty were all identified as essential. Rather than framing AI only as a tool for substitution, the panel stressed

the importance of augmentation, using technology to strengthen human potential.

Examples from Arizona State University showed how AI is reshaping learning and assessment. Students are being taught to build and manage AI agents, with growing emphasis on the managerial skills needed to oversee hybrid human-agent teams. This raises new questions about what undergraduates need to learn, as skills once associated with senior roles may now be required much earlier.

The panel also explored differences between developed and emerging markets. In some contexts, AI can expand access through virtual tutors, automated grading, and localized learning tools. However, speakers warned of a potential AI divide where infrastructure, energy, data, and connectivity are limited.

The session reinforced that responsible AI governance requires standards, safeguards, and shared learning across institutions. Universities must balance innovation with accountability, ensuring AI supports inclusive growth while preserving human judgement, academic integrity, and meaningful skills development.



The Next Era of Navigation: Supporting Career Discovery with Real-World Data

This session explored how real-world outcomes data and labor market intelligence can improve career guidance and help students make more informed decisions about their futures.

A central idea was that students do not simply need more data. They need information that is clear, relevant, and easy to act on. Speakers noted that labor market data can be overwhelming for young people, parents, and counsellors, particularly when it is presented in complex formats. The challenge is therefore to translate detailed data into insights that students can understand and use at the right moment.

The discussion highlighted the importance of introducing career information earlier, before students make major decisions about subjects, pathways, or postsecondary options. Students often rely on Google, social media, peers, or family networks, which may not always provide accurate or complete information. Institutions can play a stronger role by making trusted data more accessible and embedding it throughout the learner journey.

Speakers also emphasized that career navigation should be continuous, not a one-time choice. As industries evolve and students'

interests change, learners need tools that help them revisit decisions, explore new pathways, and understand how education connects to opportunity over time.

Skills-based insights were identified as especially valuable. By showing students how courses, experiences, internships, and credentials connect to real jobs, institutions can help them better understand their options and articulate their value to employers.

A key future opportunity is the development of a “career GPS”, where students receive personalized guidance based on their interests, skills, education, and labor market demand. However, speakers also noted that institutions need to be more transparent with students, even when data reveals gaps in provision.

Looking ahead, better career navigation depends on making labor market data more understandable, personalized, and actionable. Supporting students effectively will require stronger collaboration between schools, universities, employers, data providers, and community organizations.



Thinking Like a Founder: Why the Entrepreneurial Mindset is the New Core Competency

This session explored why entrepreneurial thinking is becoming a core competency across industries, not only for students who want to start companies, but for anyone entering a changing workforce.

A central theme was the growing importance of human skills. Speakers noted that employers continue to report gaps in areas such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, and the ability to think creatively. These skills are becoming even more important as AI reshapes work and places greater value on adaptability, judgement, and initiative.

The discussion highlighted how institutions can embed entrepreneurial thinking across the student experience. DePaul University shared its Driehaus Cup pitch competition, which forms part of a required business course for first-year students. Working in teams, students identify problems, develop solutions, and pitch their ideas to peers, faculty, and employers. The process helps build confidence, collaboration, communication, and creative problem-solving from the start of the student journey.

Speakers also emphasized that entrepreneurship should not be limited to traditional startup pathways. It is about recognizing opportunities, responding to uncertainty, learning from failure, and taking ownership of solutions. These capabilities are relevant across roles, sectors, and career stages.

AI was another important focus. Speakers discussed how students are already using AI to develop ideas and solve problems, while also stressing that human judgement remains

essential. The ability to identify meaningful problems, guide AI tools, and evaluate outputs will become increasingly valuable.

The panel also addressed lifelong learning and upskilling. As skills needs change more quickly, universities must update not only their programs but also their own faculty capabilities. Employer partnerships were described as critical, with companies needing to act as co-producers of talent rather than simply recipients of graduates.

The session concluded that the entrepreneurial mindset is now a broad workforce capability. Institutions that cultivate curiosity, resilience, collaboration, and applied problem-solving will better prepare students for uncertain and AI-enabled careers. required much earlier.

The panel also explored differences between developed and emerging markets. In some contexts, AI can expand access through virtual tutors, automated grading, and localized learning tools. However, speakers warned of a potential AI divide where infrastructure, energy, data, and connectivity are limited.

The session reinforced that responsible AI governance requires standards, safeguards, and shared learning across institutions. Universities must balance innovation with accountability, ensuring AI supports inclusive growth while preserving human judgement, academic integrity, and meaningful skills development.

What Does Entry-Level Mean Now? Rethinking Early Career Pathways

This session explored how the meaning of “entry-level” is changing as AI reshapes early-career roles and raises expectations for new graduates.

Much of the discussion focused on the fact that entry-level jobs are no longer defined simply by limited experience. Employers increasingly expect candidates to demonstrate practical capability, AI fluency, and strong durable skills from the outset. Communication, teamwork, adaptability, critical thinking, problem-solving, and initiative were highlighted as especially important.

Speakers noted that the traditional early-career pathway is narrowing. Roles that once provided broad entry points are being reshaped by automation, creating a more competitive landscape for graduates. As a result, students need more than academic achievement alone. Employers are looking for evidence that candidates can apply learning in real-world contexts.

The discussion emphasized the importance of experiential learning portfolios. Internships remain valuable, but students can also demonstrate capability through simulations, applied projects, certifications, employer-

led challenges, volunteering, and other meaningful experiences. The key is helping learners recognize these experiences as valuable and translate them clearly for employers.

Career services were positioned as essential, not optional. Speakers argued that professional development should be embedded into the student journey, so learners can build confidence, articulate their skills, and connect academic learning to workplace expectations.

Employer and higher education collaboration was also identified as critical. Partnerships need to reach faculty and program-level design, ensuring curricula reflect changing industry needs and provide students with repeated exposure to real-world challenges.

The session reinforced that early-career pathways are being redefined rather than simply disappearing. To create stronger entry points into meaningful work, institutions must combine academic learning, work-based experience, durable skills development, AI fluency, and clearer skills translation.



What's Next for Global Flows & Talent Mobility

This panel explored how global talent mobility is being reshaped by a mix of geopolitical change, economic pressure, and shifting student expectations. One of the clearest themes was the speed at which the landscape is evolving. Traditional study destinations like the US are no longer dominant by default, as other countries scale up quickly and compete more aggressively for international students.

At the same time, student decision-making is becoming far more pragmatic. While institutional reputation still matters, students are increasingly focused on outcomes—especially employability, migration opportunities, and return on investment. They are asking direct questions about whether a degree will lead to meaningful work and long-term stability. This reflects a broader shift toward education being viewed as a strategic investment rather than a purely academic experience.

The discussion also highlighted that global mobility is no longer just about students moving across borders. It now includes

the movement of skills, knowledge, and opportunity. As a result, universities are under pressure to rethink their role, not just as destinations, but as participants in global ecosystems of talent and innovation.

However, policy and politics remain powerful forces. Governments can rapidly reshape mobility through visa rules, caps, and immigration policies, often creating instability. There was a clear warning that rapid expansion without proper planning can lead to backlash and restrictive policies, creating boom-and-bust cycles in international education.

Looking ahead, transnational education—such as joint degrees, partnerships, and branch campuses—was identified as a key growth area. These models allow institutions to deliver global education without relying solely on physical mobility. Ultimately, the future of talent mobility will depend on how well institutions balance global ambition with sustainable, inclusive strategies that connect education to real economic and social outcomes.



The Great Higher Ed Disruption: What Comes Next

This workshop focused less on diagnosing disruption in higher education and more on what institutions can actually do next. The core message was clear: most of the big forces—demographic decline, geopolitics, visa policy—are outside institutional control. What matters now is identifying actionable steps within that constraint.

One major theme was the growing gap between education and employability. Employers are struggling to find talent, while graduates often lack both technical and “durable” skills like communication and problem-solving. At the same time, the nature of work is shifting rapidly: millions of roles will disappear, but even more new ones will emerge. This creates pressure on universities not just to deliver degrees, but to prepare students for continuous reskilling over a lifetime.

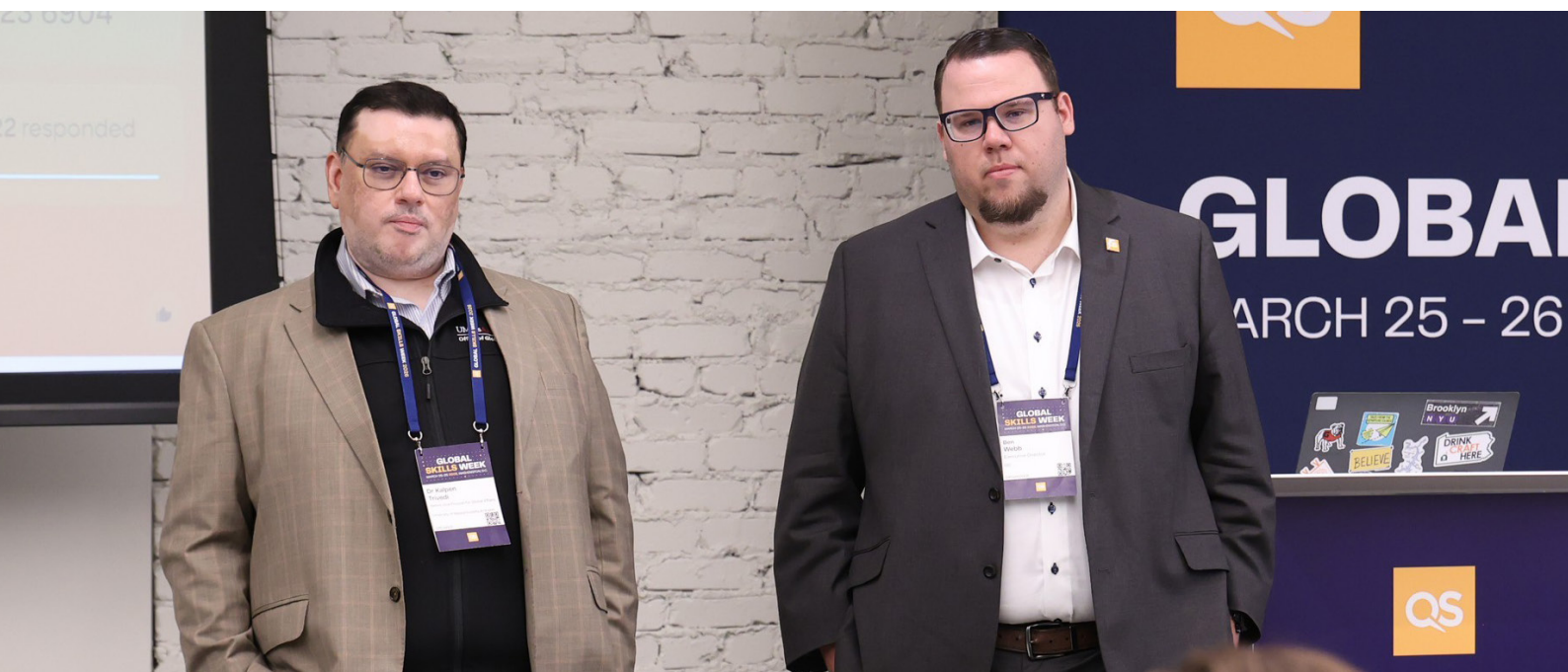
Participants repeatedly emphasized that employability cannot be treated as a silo. Strong employer partnerships are essential, not just for internships but for shaping curriculum, projects, and real-world learning experiences. Examples ranged from global internship exchanges to local collaborations

with small businesses, all reinforcing the idea that universities must act as part of a broader economic ecosystem.

Another key insight was the need for flexibility in how education is delivered. Traditional degrees alone are no longer enough. Institutions are experimenting with shorter credentials, digital badges, online learning, and modular programs that can respond more quickly to labor market changes. These approaches offer a way to adapt without navigating slow internal governance processes.

Finally, the discussion highlighted a cultural shift in learners themselves. Students are arriving with different expectations, skill levels, and levels of independence. This raises questions about how much universities should support versus challenge students to develop agency and resilience.

Overall, the session pushed leaders to move beyond strategy talk and focus on immediate, practical changes: small but meaningful steps that can help institutions stay relevant in a rapidly evolving landscape.



What Technology Can't Replace: The Evolution of Durable Skills

This session focused on a clear tension: as AI improves technical work, human capability becomes the real differentiator—yet we're not very good at defining, teaching, or measuring it.

“Durable skills” (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, self-regulation, etc.) are what employers increasingly hire for. Technical skills still matter, but they evolve quickly, often becoming outdated within just a few years. What employers really need are people who can adapt, learn, and function in complex work environments. In practice, that means hiring for human capability.

The problem is signaling. Traditional hiring signals such as CVs, cover letters, and degrees are breaking down. AI can now generate perfect applications at scale, leading to massive increases in job applicants and making it harder to distinguish real capability. As a result, employers are shifting toward what they can't automate: how someone communicates, thinks, and behaves. But those skills are much harder to verify.

There's also a perception gap. Data shows large mismatches between how graduates rate their own skills and how employers assess

them, especially in leadership, communication, and professionalism. Students often have these skills but can't clearly demonstrate them.

A major theme was the need for a shared language and better measurement. Frameworks like “Pathways to Durable Skills” aim to standardize definitions and create rubrics, so skills like collaboration or critical thinking can be taught, assessed, and communicated consistently. Without that, employers and educators are talking past each other.

The session also pushed upstream. Durable skills aren't learned in a single course—they develop over time, across education, work, and life experiences. That makes them harder to formalize but also more valuable. Institutions need to be more explicit about when and how these skills are being developed, rather than assuming they emerge automatically.

The takeaway: in a skills-first economy, human capability is the new currency, but it only works if it can be clearly built, measured, and trusted.



What Role Do Standardized Tests Play in a Skills-Based World?

This session explored how standardized tests fit into a world increasingly focused on skills, competencies, and real-world readiness.

Speakers argued that standardized tests still have a role, but that role needs to be clearly understood. Tests like the SAT, GMAT, GRE, TOEFL, and others are primarily designed to measure academic readiness, including reading, writing, quantitative reasoning, data analysis, logic, and problem-solving. They are not designed to capture the full range of durable skills, such as teamwork, resilience, communication, or leadership.

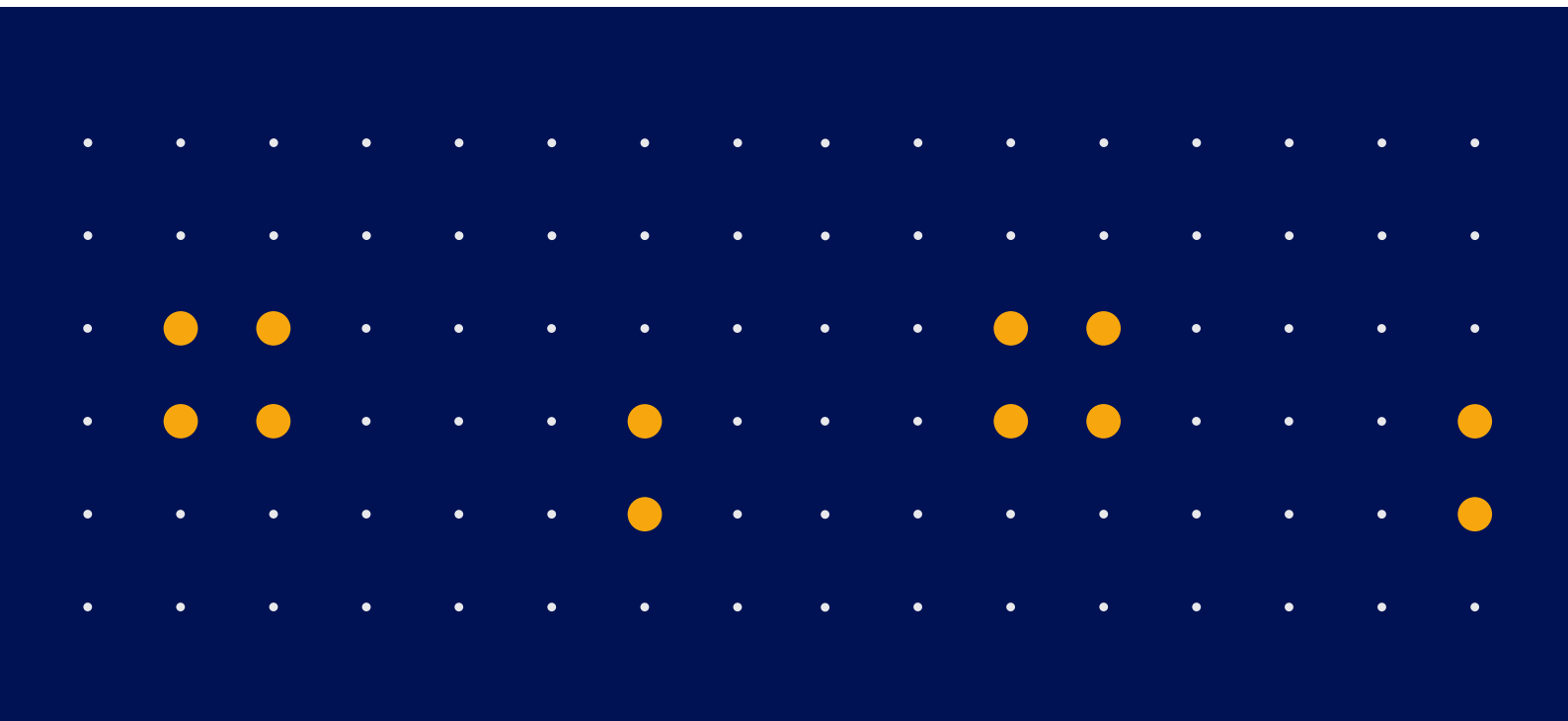
A central point was that standardized tests can provide a useful, common signal, especially when students come from very different educational contexts. Panelists noted that carefully designed assessments can help institutions compare applicants more consistently and can sometimes open doors for students whose academic potential may not be fully reflected in grades alone.

At the same time, the panel acknowledged that tests are only one signal. In a skills-based world, institutions need a broader portfolio of

evidence, including coursework, projects, credentials, interviews, and assessments of durable skills. The key is to use the right tool for the right purpose, rather than expecting one test to measure everything.

AI was another major theme. As AI makes it easier to generate polished essays, resumes, and applications, standardized assessments may become more important as controlled measures of what students can do independently. However, speakers also discussed how AI could improve testing itself, through more personalized preparation, richer question types, simulations, and new ways of assessing how students use AI responsibly.

Overall, the session positioned standardized tests as evolving rather than disappearing. Their future value will depend on transparency, fairness, validity, and how well they sit alongside other measures of academic, technical, and human capability.



The MBA Reimagined: Adapting Business Education for a Skills-Driven Era

This session explored how MBA programs are changing in response to a more skills-driven and AI-enabled labor market.

A central theme was that the MBA is no longer a single, fixed model. At the University of Tennessee's Haslam College of Business, the MBA portfolio now includes multiple formats, including full-time, online, executive, healthcare, and aerospace and defense pathways. At the University of Illinois Gies College of Business, the MBA is fully online, highly flexible, and designed for working professionals, with stackable elements that allow learners to build toward the degree over time.

Speakers underlined that MBA graduates still need strong business fundamentals, but the skills required around those fundamentals are evolving. Critical thinking, leadership, collaboration, communication, and the ability to navigate ambiguity were highlighted as essential. AI is changing the technical side of business education, but it does not replace the need for judgement, curiosity, and managerial capability.

A key challenge is helping students develop self-awareness and intellectual curiosity. Panelists noted that some students are underprepared for the personal and leadership development required in business roles, particularly those entering MBA programs with less work experience. Giving students room to explore, ask better questions, and experiment was seen as increasingly important.

AI fluency is also becoming a core part of the MBA experience. Institutions are adding dedicated AI courses, embedding AI into existing classes, and supporting faculty through training, grants, and peer learning. However, speakers stressed that students must learn not only how to use AI, but when to trust it, question it, and apply it responsibly.

Overall, the session positioned the MBA as still valuable, but only if it continues to evolve. Flexible formats, employer engagement, lifelong learning, and stronger integration of AI and human skills will be essential to keeping business education relevant.



Preparing Future Leaders: Embedding AI into Business Education

This session explored how business schools are embedding AI not as an add-on, but as a force reshaping the purpose and delivery of business education.

At the heart of the discussion was the idea that AI literacy is becoming essential for future leaders. Speakers argued that graduates may not be replaced by AI, but they could be replaced by people who know how to use it well. As a result, business schools need to move beyond isolated AI electives and integrate AI across programs, disciplines, and learning experiences.

American University's Kogod School of Business shared an "AI for all" approach, with AI embedded across majors, minors, certificates, and courses. Faculty are using AI in different ways, from prompting and classroom support to more advanced AI-led learning experiences. Students are also beginning to build portfolios of AI-enabled projects and applications, giving them tangible evidence of capability.

The University of Miami Herbert Business School emphasized the importance of career-focused, experiential learning. Rather than treating AI as a technical topic alone, the school is using it to help students solve real business problems, work with industry, and gain experience that better prepares them for the labor market.

The session also highlighted the importance of institutional change. Successful AI integration requires leadership, faculty training, incentives, industry partnerships, and a culture of experimentation. Speakers stressed that tools will keep changing, so the goal is not to master one platform, but to build confidence, curiosity, and responsible use.

Ultimately, the session confirmed that AI is pushing business schools to rethink their value. Future-ready graduates will need strong business fundamentals, AI fluency, and human skills such as communication, collaboration, judgement, and adaptability.



How Micro-Credentials and Certificates Bridge the Skills Gap

This session explored how micro-credentials and certificates can help bridge the gap between traditional degrees and fast-changing workforce needs.

A central theme was that learners and employers both need more flexible ways to signal skills. Degrees still have value, but they do not always show the specific capabilities a learner has developed. Micro-credentials can make those skills more visible, whether they sit inside a degree, stand alone, or support alumni returning for upskilling.

The University of Pittsburgh shared how its business school developed a portfolio of micro-credentials and graduate certificates that can be embedded into MBA programs or taken separately. These allow students to demonstrate specialisms in areas like marketing, finance, technology, and leadership, while giving working professionals and alumni a shorter route to re-skill or cross-skill.

Flexibility was a key lesson. Early credentials that were too narrow became difficult for students to complete, so the school moved toward broader structures with core requirements and optional advising tracks. This made it easier to respond quickly to new areas such as AI without waiting for long university approval processes.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of outcomes data. With the number of non-degree credentials growing rapidly, students, employers, and institutions need clearer evidence of which credentials lead to employment, wage gains, and career progression. CredLens was presented as one effort to bring more transparency to this space by tracking outcomes before and after credential completion.

Overall, the session reinforced that effective micro-credentials need to be flexible, employer-informed, and supported by strong learner services. They should not simply add more options, but create clearer, more accessible pathways to economic mobility.



Fostering Skills Equity: Building Access for All Learners

This session explored how skills equity can be advanced in a global economy where access to learning, leadership, and opportunity remains uneven.

Much of the conversation centered around the idea that gender continues to shape access to skills development. Speakers noted that women remain underrepresented in technology roles, particularly in Latin America, despite evidence that more diverse technology teams can improve business performance. The gap does not begin at the point of hiring, but much earlier, through unequal access to digital skills, role models, learning pathways, and confidence-building opportunities.

The discussion also highlighted the scale of the challenge. While progress has been made in closing gender gaps, especially in earlier stages of education, inequalities widen at higher levels of study, employment, and leadership. Women still face barriers linked to career breaks, care responsibilities, safety, pay gaps, and limited access to decision-making roles.

AI was discussed as both a risk and an opportunity. If designed without inclusion in mind, AI can reinforce existing inequalities. However, it can also expand access through personalized learning, lower-cost platforms, and stronger connections between skills development and job opportunities. Examples from Colombia showed how digital learning platforms can reach large numbers of learners and help them build pathways into the digital economy.

A key takeaway was that skills equity cannot be solved by isolated programs alone. Institutions need to examine the systems that create unequal outcomes, including policies, culture, leadership structures, and learner support. This includes mentoring, childcare, transport, safety, and clearer pathways into high-value sectors such as AI, green jobs, and STEM.

The session reinforced that building access for all learners requires intentional design, institutional change, and a broader understanding of skills that includes both technical capability and human strengths.





Conclusion

Global Skills Week 2026 highlighted a fundamental shift in how education, work, and skills are understood. Across sessions, a consistent message emerged: the systems that have traditionally connected learning to opportunity are no longer sufficient for the pace and complexity of change.

AI is accelerating transformation while exposing gaps in how skills are developed, recognized, and applied. At the same time, employers are placing greater emphasis on demonstrable capability, adaptability, and human strengths.

The transition to a skills-driven economy is underway, but progress remains uneven. Advancing it will require stronger connections between education, industry, and policy, supported by improved data, infrastructure, and collaboration.

Institutions that succeed will move beyond incremental change and adopt more integrated, flexible, and learner-centered models. This includes embedding skills across curricula, strengthening employer partnerships, and supporting lifelong learning.

The future of the global skills economy will be shaped not only by technological change, but by the choices made today. The priority is to design systems that are inclusive, responsive, and capable of delivering meaningful opportunity at scale.



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