Hospitals Dodge Financial Penalty with Medicare ACA Loophole


According to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), hospitals demonstrating low quality measures face financial penalties under Medicare. However, due to a discovered loophole as confirmed (http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2015/08/27/quality-improvement-become-good-at-cheating-and-you-never-need-to-become-good-at-anything-else) within a new Health Affairs study, hospitals are now increasingly renaming Medicare patient readmissions as "observation stays" or are providing care for returning Medicare patients in the Emergency Room (ER) to thwart Medicare's financial penalties.

This idea is confirmed within Health Affairs by researchers David U. Himmelstein, MD, FACP, Professor at the City University of New York School of Public Health at Hunter College and Lecturer of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Steffie Woolhandler, MD, MPH, FACP, Professor in the CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College, Adjunct Clinical Professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Lecturer in Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Although the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) maintains a recent decline in hospital readmissions among Medicare patients is "a major advance for patient safety," Himmelstein and Woolhandler say reality paints quite a different picture. "[Lost] amidst the celebration is the fact that hospitals are increasingly 'observing' patients (or treating returning patients in the emergency department) rather than 'readmitting' them," Himmelstein and Woolhandler state. "But while re-labeling helps hospitals meet CMS quality standards (and avoid costly fines), it probably signals little real quality gain and often leaves patients worse off financially," they add.

Nearly 10 percent of hospital stays occurring within 30 days of discharge are classified under "observation," maintain researchers. One in four hospitals classified at least 14 percent of all repeat stays as falling under the "observation" category. "[Analysis] of time trends in observation stays makes it clear that they account for a significant chunk of the reduction in readmissions," researchers say. "Between 2010 and 2013, 36 percent of the claimed decrease in readmissions was actually just a shift to observation stays," they add.

More discharged patients are being treated in the ED without admission, the researchers claim. "Medicare rewards both approaches equally, but for hospitals, re-labeling is probably far cheaper (and more profitable) than re-designing. Medicare's readmission penalties are among the growing number of pay-for-performance (P4P) and value-based purchasing initiatives that offer bonuses to high performers and/or penalize the laggards," the authors add.
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By Jacqueline DiChiera on September 01, 2015

According to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), hospitals demonstrating low quality measures face financial penalties under Medicare. However, due to a discovered loophole as confirmed (http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2015/08/27/quality-improvement-become-good-at-cheating-and-you-never-need-to-become-good-at-anything-else/) within a new Health Affairs study, hospitals are now increasingly renaming Medicare patient readmissions as “observation stays” or are providing care for returning Medicare patients in the Emergency Room (ER) to thwart Medicare’s financial penalties.

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Himmelstein and Woolhandler conclude their research about Medicare readmission penalties with the following sentiment: “Become good at cheating and you never need to become good at anything else.”

Researchers highlight an additional "shocking" ACA flaw

As RevCycleintelligence.com reported last June, (http://revcycleintelligence.com/news/aca-adds-billion-in-bureaucratic-waste-administrative-costs) Himmelstein and Woolhandler previously confirmed a series of other dramatic flaws connected to the ACA with "shocking" research – most notably that the ACA promotes billions of dollars in bureaucratic waste with the bureaucracy gobbling up over a quarter of federal spending.
"We are wasting an enormous amount of money that ought to go to healthcare on paperwork," said Himmelein in a personal interview with RecycleIntelligence.com. "There is no reason, other than political difficulty, that we can't shed massive bureaucratic costs," he added. Himmelein and Woolhandler confirm CMS's projection of $2.7 trillion in spending for private insurance overhead and administering government health programs -- chiefly Medicare and Medicaid -- between 2014 and 2022, including a quite sizable $270 billion in new administrative costs tied to the ACA.

US Business Schools Inject Global Entrepreneurship Fever Into Education

Written by Seb Murray | MBA Entrepreneurs | Wednesday 2nd September 2015 05:02:00 GMT

US b-school report highlights growing appetite for entrepreneurial training among MBAs.

At the top-10 business schools 30% of MBA students are launching start-up ventures.

Entrepreneurship is thriving at top business schools and the US is injecting a dose of start-up fever into schools globally. A new report from Babson College and Baruch College says entrepreneurial activity is at a record high in the US, where 24 million entrepreneurs, or 14% of the population, are invigorating the economy.

Optimism about entrepreneurship is stronger than ever, as more than half the US population reported seeing good opportunities for starting businesses, according to Babson, the entrepreneurial specialist business school.

Fear of failure, which measures people's willingness to take risks in launching a venture, decreased 2% to 30% from 2012.

"We are seeing a lot of positive signals," Donna Kelley, Babson professor of entrepreneurship and lead author of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), told BusinessBecause.

Whereas during the economic downturn workers turned to entrepreneurship for a lack of jobs, "far more entrepreneurs are [now] driven by the prospect of opportunity".

Babson is one of a growing number of elite US schools to offer start-up training to help students spot such opportunity. Michigan Ross School of Business recently received $60 million of funding to further develop its entrepreneurial offering. Ross in the last academic year supported the launch and growth of more than 100 start-ups, it said.

The rate of entrepreneurial take-up among MBA students has been rapid. At MIT Sloan, 36% of MBA students founded start-ups. For UC San Diego, 34% of MBAs launched a company.

Across the top-10 schools the average is 36%, with 87% of those companies still operating last year, according to data from the Financial Times, including ventures launched at USC Marshall and Oxford Said business schools.

Diane Morgan, associate dean at Imperial College Business School
"There are more and more opportunities to enter incubators or accelerator programs and gain access to funding. Many of them are specifically targeting students," she said.

A number of schools have launched specialist courses and programs, adapting to the changing career tastes of the next generation of business leaders.

Simon Stockley, senior teaching faculty in entrepreneurship at Cambridge Judge Business School, believes entrepreneurship can be taught. He said: "People can be taught how to create or spot opportunities and how to build a business model to create, deliver and capture value from those opportunities."

Babson's Donna added that as well as offering a place to "fail safely," business school provides a global network that entrepreneurs can tap into.

"College is a great place to develop your skills and test your ambitions," she said. "It's a great place to bounce ideas off of other entrepreneurially minded students."

Nearly 10% of US entrepreneurs are starting medium or high-technology businesses, according to the GEM study. This trend is mirrored globally as the Internet has reduced the cost of starting a company, fuelling the rise of entrepreneurship.

"Technology is playing an increasingly important role in the start-up ecosystem," said Aruna Reddy, head of the Cell for Entrepreneurship at the Indian School of Business. "The fast-paced development of web technologies, rapid prototyping, and 3D printing have definitely made it easier for entrepreneurs to validate, refine, and scale-up."

According to the GEM report, 6.5% of US entrepreneurs are starting businesses within organizations — an indication that "corporate entrepreneurship" can coexist alongside independent start-ups.

"More and more students are interested in the way their organization may develop an entrepreneurial mind-set," said Justin Jansen, professor of corporate entrepreneurship at Rotterdam School of Management.

"Incumbent firms face a highly dynamic and disruptive environment," he added. "They need to respond faster, but also in different ways — by changing their business model and changing the way they collaborate with and acquire novel insights from start-ups and clients."

Women entrepreneurs have also seen an increase in the US, demonstrating some of the highest rates of start-up activity — 11% — in the developed world, according to GEM. Business schools have sought to develop more female up-starts with initiatives such as funding for scholarships and seed capital.

New York's Columbia University, for example, this year ran a program with the Kenya Association of Women Business Owners to offer training for emerging market women hoping to scale start-up companies.

Dr Muhammad Azam Roomi, senior lecturer in entrepreneurship at Cranfield School of Management, said women's business school networks can act as a source of referrals and marketing for company founders.

"These networks help them in finding customers and act as an excellent word of mouth promotional strategy, saving advertisement costs," he said.
Philly, others should adopt K-14 school model

If you have school-aged children like we do, you've probably heard the following question, after a particularly challenging homework assignment or classroom project:

When am I going to use this in the real world?

Every parent understands that what kids learn in the classroom will help them in later life. But sometimes it's hard — even for us, as the nation's secretaries of labor and education — to explain how abstract concepts relate to practical applications. Why? For one thing, we have a 21st-century economy, but much of our K-12 education system remains stuck in the 20th century. What kids learn at school isn't always aligned with the skills they'll need as adult professionals.
To prepare our young people for the 21st-century workforce, we must do a better job of teaching job-ready skills and equipping the next generation to thrive in the global economy.

As the columnist Tom Friedman points out, 21st-century workers need the knowledge, flexibility, and ingenuity to thrive in jobs that haven't even been invented yet. That requires creativity and foresight from our nation's schools. Students should have a solid foundation in the basics, but they also need technical know-how to match the technology they'll inevitably work with. And they need employability skills — like critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Some high schools are rising to the challenge. In addition to core classes, they're offering instruction in robotics, computer programming, even nanotechnology. These courses are developed in collaboration with local employers, who understand that working with schools will benefit their communities and their bottom lines.

Some communities are taking this to the next level, creating formal partnerships between industry, community colleges, and the K-12 system.

In Brooklyn, Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) is a unique arrangement among IBM, the City University of New York, and the New York City Department of Education. This six-year high school graduates students with a high school diploma, an associate's degree, and the industry experience they need to compete for high demand jobs. They also have "first in line" preference for employment with IBM. It's precisely the kind of innovative approach needed to compete in the 21st-century economy.

This model has been replicated successfully across the country; today, about 40 schools nationwide are partnering with more than 70 private-sector employers in various industries. Last summer, we traveled together to Toledo Technical Academy in Ohio, and were blown away by the state-of-the-art skills of their robotics team.

We want to help take this model to scale. Last year, the Obama administration invested $107 million in Youth CareerConnect grants to support similar efforts nationwide. The Toledo public schools won funds to scale up their efforts even further.

There's no reason Philadelphia shouldn't be the next city to adopt this model. With Mayor Nutter's leadership, Philadelphia has brought real-world apprenticeship opportunities to city residents, matching workers with promising careers in many fields, especially information technology. A K-14 school that gives more young people access to 21st-century skills is the next logical step, and we hope businesses will consider partnering with the city and schools to make it a reality.

In the decades ahead, middle-class jobs will require more than a high-school diploma, but not necessarily a four-year degree. That's why President Obama has called for free community college for all responsible students. With more than five million job vacancies in the United States right now, our training programs must align with employer needs, and the nation's community college system is the obvious place to turn. In the future, we must provide students with a strong
academic foundation that links classroom activities with real world issues and careers.

Students can no longer sit down after graduation and apply for jobs from the classified section. They need career training long before they receive their diplomas. The K-14 model does exactly that. With technical education, experience in the workplace, and mentors in their chosen field, these young people gain a solid career footing and a chance to punch their ticket to the middle class. They have no doubt that what they're learning is relevant to the workplace, and that those skills will help them succeed in the real world.

Thomas E. Perez is the U.S. secretary of labor (www.dol.gov) and Arne Duncan is the U.S. secretary of education (www.ed.gov).
NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — City transportation officials are celebrating the opening of new Citi Bike stations in Manhattan with an inaugural bike ride.

The bike-share program has officially expanded to the Upper East and West sides.

Officials were planning to ride from a newly installed station on 67th Street and Lexington Avenue outside Hunter College to another station on 63rd Street and Broadway.
If there is one thing most Americans have been able to agree on over the years, it is that getting an education, particularly a college education, is a key to human betterment and prosperity. The consensus dates back at least to 1636, when the legislature of the Massachusetts Bay Colony established Harvard College as America's first institution of higher learning. It extended through the establishment of "land-grant colleges" during and after the Civil War, the passage of the G.I. Bill during the Second World War, the expansion of federal funding for higher education during the Great Society era, and President Obama's efforts to make college more affordable. Already, the cost of higher education has become a big issue in the 2016 Presidential campaign. Three Democratic candidates—Hillary Clinton, Martin O'Malley, and Bernie Sanders—have offered plans to reform the student-loan program and make college more accessible.

Promoters of higher education have long emphasized its role in meeting civic needs. The Puritans who established Harvard were concerned about a shortage of clergy; during the Progressive Era, John Dewey insisted that a proper education would make people better citizens, with enlarged moral imaginations. Recently, as wage stagnation and rising inequality have emerged as serious problems, the economic arguments for higher education have come to the fore. "Earning a post-secondary degree or credential is no longer just a pathway to opportunity for a talented few," the White House Web site states. "Rather, it is a prerequisite for the growing jobs of the new economy." Commentators and academic economists have claimed that college doesn't merely help individuals get higher-paying jobs; it raises wages throughout the economy and helps ameliorate rising inequality. In an influential 2008 book, "The Race Between Education and Technology," the Harvard economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz argued that technological progress has dramatically increased the demand for skilled workers, and that, in recent decades, the American educational system has failed to meet the challenge by supplying enough graduates who can carry out the tasks that a high-tech economy requires. "Not so long ago, the American economy grew rapidly and wages grew in tandem, with education playing a large, positive role in both," they wrote in a subsequent paper. "The challenge now is to revitalize
The “message from the media, from the business community, and even from many parts of the government has been that a college degree is more important than ever in order to have a good career,” Peter Cappelli, a professor of management at Wharton, notes in his informative and refreshingly skeptical new book, “Will College Pay Off?” (PublicAffairs). “As a result, families feel even more pressure to send their kids to college. This is at a time when more families find those costs to be a serious burden.” During recent decades, tuition and other charges have risen sharply—many colleges charge more than fifty thousand dollars a year in tuition and fees. Even if you factor in the expansion of financial aid, Cappelli reports, “students in the United States pay about four times more than their peers in countries elsewhere.”

Despite the increasing costs—and the claims about a shortage of college graduates—the number of people attending and graduating from four-year educational institutions keeps going up. In the 2000-01 academic year, American colleges awarded almost 1.3 million bachelor’s degrees. A decade later, the figure had jumped nearly forty per cent, to more than 1.7 million. About seventy per cent of all high-school graduates now go on to college, and half of all Americans between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four have a college degree. That’s a big change. In 1980, only one in six Americans twenty-five and older were college graduates. Fifty years ago, it was fewer than one in ten. To cater to all the new students, colleges keep expanding and adding courses, many of them vocationally inclined. At Kansas State, undergraduates can major in Bakery Science and Management or Wildlife and Outdoor Enterprise Management. They can minor in Unmanned Aircraft Systems or Pet Food Science. Oklahoma State offers a degree in Fire Protection and Safety Engineering and Technology. At Utica College, you can major in Economic Crime Detection.

In the fast-growing for-profit college sector, which now accounts for more than ten per cent of all students, vocational degrees are the norm. DeVry University—which last year taught more than sixty thousand students, at more than seventy-five campuses—offers majors in everything from multimedia design and development to health-care administration. On its Web site, DeVry boasts, “In 2013, 90% of DeVry University associate and bachelor’s degree grads actively seeking employment had careers in their field within six months of graduation.” That sounds impressive—until you notice that the figure includes those graduates who had jobs in their field before graduation. (Many DeVry students are working adults who attend college part-time to further their careers.) Nor is the phrase “in their field” clearly defined. “Would you be okay rolling the dice on a degree in communications based on information like that?” Cappelli writes. He notes that research by the nonprofit National Association of Colleges and Employers found that, in the same year, just 6.5 per cent of graduates with communications degrees were offered jobs in the field. It may be unfair to single out DeVry, which is one of the more reputable for-profit education providers. But the example illustrates
"Cappelli's larger point: many of the claims that are made about higher education don't stand up to scrutiny.

It is certainly true that college has been life changing for most people and a tremendous financial investment for many of them," Cappelli writes. "It is also true that for some people, it has been financially crippling. . . . The world of college education is different now than it was a generation ago, when many of the people driving policy decisions on education went to college, and the theoretical ideas about why college should pay off do not comport well with the reality."

No idea has had more influence on education policy than the notion that colleges teach their students specific, marketable skills, which they can use to get a good job. Economists refer to this as the "human capital" theory of education, and for the past twenty or thirty years it has gone largely unchallenged. If you've completed a two-year associate's degree, you've got more "human capital" than a high-school graduate. And if you've completed a four-year bachelor's degree you've got more "human capital" than someone who attended a community college. Once you enter the labor market, the theory says, you will be rewarded with a better job, brighter career prospects, and higher wages.

There's no doubt that college graduates earn more money, on average, than people who don't have a degree. And for many years the so-called "college wage premium" grew. In 1970, according to a recent study by researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, people with a bachelor's degree earned about sixty thousand dollars a year, on average, and people with a high-school diploma earned about forty-five thousand dollars. Thirty-five years later, in 2005, the average earnings of college graduates had risen to more than seventy thousand dollars, while high-school graduates had seen their earnings fall slightly. (All these figures are inflation-adjusted.) The fact that the college wage premium went up at a time when the supply of graduates was expanding significantly seemed to confirm the Goldin-Katz theory that technological change was creating an ever-increasing demand for workers with a lot of human capital.

During the past decade or so, however, a number of things have happened that don't easily mesh with that theory. If college graduates remain in short supply, their wages should still be rising. But they aren't. In 2001, according to the Economic Policy Institute* (#editorsnote), a liberal think tank in Washington, workers with undergraduate degrees (but not graduate degrees) earned, on average, $30.05 an hour; last year, they earned $29.55 an hour. Other sources show even more dramatic falls. "Between 2001 and 2013, the average wage of workers with a bachelor's degree declined 10.3 percent, and the average wage of those with an associate's degree declined 11.1 percent," the New York Fed reported in its study. Wages have been falling most steeply of all among newly minted college graduates. And jobless rates have been rising. In 2007, 5.5 per cent of college graduates under the age of twenty-five were out of work. Today, the figure is close to nine per cent.
If getting a bachelor's degree is meant to guarantee entry to an arena in which jobs are plentiful and wages rise steadily, the education system has been failing for some time.

And, while college graduates are still doing a lot better than nongraduates, some studies show that the earnings gap has stopped growing. The figures need careful parsing. If you lump college graduates in with people with advanced degrees, the picture looks brighter. But almost all the recent gains have gone to folks with graduate degrees. "The four-year-degree premium has remained flat over the past decade," the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland reported. And one of the main reasons it went up in the first place wasn't that college graduates were enjoying significantly higher wages. It was that the earnings of nongraduates were falling.

Many students and their families extend themselves to pay for a college education out of fear of falling into the low-wage economy. That's perfectly understandable. But how sound an investment is it? One way to figure this out is to treat a college degree like a stock or a bond and compare the cost of obtaining one with the accumulated returns that it generates over the years. (In this case, the returns come in the form of wages over and above those earned by people who don't hold degrees.) When the research firm PayScale did this a few years ago, it found that the average inflation-adjusted return on a college education is about seven per cent which is a bit lower than the historical rate of return on the stock market. Cappelli cites this study along with one from the Hamilton Project, a Washington-based research group that came up with a much higher figure—about fifteen per cent—but by assuming, for example, that all college students graduate in four years (In fact, the four-year graduation rate for full-time, first-degree students is less than forty per cent, and the six-year graduation rate is less than sixty per cent.)

These types of studies, and there are lots of them, usually find that the financial benefits of getting a college degree are much larger than the financial costs. But Cappelli points out that for parents and students the average figures may not mean much, because they disguise enormous differences in outcomes from school to school. He cites a survey, carried out by PayScale for Businessweek in 2012, that showed that students who attend M.I.T., Caltech, and Harvey Mudd College enjoy an annual return of more than ten per cent on their "investment." But the survey also found almost two hundred colleges where students, on average, never fully recouped the costs of their education. "The big news about the payoff from college should be the incredible variation in it across colleges," Cappelli writes. "Looking at the actual return on the costs of attending college, careful analyses suggest that the payoff from many college programs—as much as one in four—is actually negative. Incredibly, the schools seem to add nothing to the market value the students."

So what purpose does college really serve for students and employers? Before the human-capital theory became so popular, there was another view of higher education—as, in part, a filter, or screening device, that
sorted individuals according to their aptitudes and conveyed this information to businesses and other hiring institutions. By completing a four-year degree, students could signal to potential employers that they had a certain level of cognitive competence and could carry out assigned tasks and work in a group setting. But a college education didn't necessarily imbue students with specific work skills that employers needed, or make them more productive.

Kenneth Arrow, one of the giants of twentieth-century economics, came up with this account, and if you take it seriously you can't assume that it's always a good thing to persuade more people to go to college. If almost everybody has a college degree, getting one doesn't differentiate you from the pack. To get the job you want, you might have to go to a fancy (and expensive) college, or get a higher degree. Education turns into an arms race, which primarily benefits the arms manufacturers—in this case, colleges and universities.

The screening model isn't very fashionable these days, partly because it seems perverse to suggest that education doesn't boost productivity. But there's quite a bit of evidence that seems to support Arrow's theory. In recent years, more jobs have come to demand a college degree as an entry requirement, even though the demands of the jobs haven't changed much. Some nursing positions are on the list, along with jobs for executive secretaries, salespeople, and distribution managers. According to one study, just twenty per cent of executive assistants and insurance-claims clerks have college degrees but more than forty-five per cent of the job openings in the field require one. "This suggests that employers may be relying on a B.A. as a broad recruitment filter that may or may not correspond to specific capabilities needed to do the job," the study concluded.

It is well established that students who go to elite colleges tend to earn more than graduates of less selective institutions. But is this because Harvard and Princeton do a better job of teaching valuable skills than other places, or because employers believe that they get more talented students to begin with? An exercise carried out by Lauren Rivera, of the Kellogg School of Management, at Northwestern, strongly suggests that it's the latter. Rivera interviewed more than a hundred recruiters from investment banks, law firms, and management consulting firms, and she found that they recruited almost exclusively from the very top-ranked schools, and simply ignored most other applicants. The recruiters didn't pay much attention to things like grades and majors. "It was not the content of education that elite employers valued but rather its prestige," Rivera concluded.

If higher education serves primarily as a sorting mechanism, that might help explain another disturbing development: the tendency of many college graduates to take jobs that don't require college degrees. Practically everyone seems to know a well-educated young person who is working in a bar or a mundane clerical job, because he or she can't find anything better. Doubtless, the Great Recession and its aftermath are partly to blame. But something deeper, and more lasting, also seems to be happening.
In the Gladman-Katz view of things, technological progress generated an ever-increasing need for highly educated, highly skilled workers. But, beginning in about 2000, for reasons that are still not fully understood, the pace of job creation in high-paying, highly skilled fields slowed significantly. To demonstrate this, three Canadian economists, Paul Beaudry, David A. Green, and Benjamin M. Sand, divided the U.S. workforce into a hundred occupations, ranked by their average wages, and looked at how employment has changed in each category. Since 2000, the economists showed, the demand for highly educated workers declined, while job growth in low-paying occupations increased strongly. "High-skilled workers have moved down the occupational ladder and have begun to perform jobs traditionally performed by lower-skilled workers," they concluded, thus "pushing low-skilled workers even further down the occupational ladder."

Increasingly, the competition for jobs is taking place in areas of the labor market where college graduates didn't previously tend to compete. As Beaudry, Green, and Sand put it, "having a B.A. is less about obtaining access to high paying managerial and technology jobs and more about beating out less educated workers for the Barista or clerical job." Even many graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—the so-called STEM subjects, which receive so much official encouragement—are having a tough time getting the jobs they'd like. Cappelli reports that only about a fifth of recent graduates with STEM degrees got jobs that made use of that training. "The evidence for recent grads suggests clearly that there is no overall shortage of STEM grads," he writes.

Why is this happening? The short answer is that nobody knows for sure. One theory is that corporate cost-cutting, having thinned the ranks of workers on the factory floor and in routine office jobs, is now targeting supervisors, managers, and other highly educated people. Another theory is that technological progress, after favoring highly educated workers for a long time, is now turning on them. With rapid advances in processing power, data analysis, voice recognition, and other forms of artificial intelligence, computers can perform tasks that were previously carried out by college graduates, such as analyzing trends, translating foreign-language documents, and filing tax returns. In "The Second Machine Age" (Norton), the M.I.T. professors Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee sketch a future where computers will start replacing doctors, lawyers, and many other highly educated professionals. "As digital labor becomes more pervasive, capable, and powerful," they write, "companies will be increasingly unwilling to pay people wages that they'll accept, and that will allow them to maintain the standard of living to which they've been accustomed."

Cappelli stresses the change in corporate hiring patterns. In the old days, Fortune 500 companies such as General Motors, Citigroup, and I.B.M. took on large numbers of college graduates and trained them for a lifetime at the company. But corporations now invest less in education and training, and, instead of promoting someone, or finding someone in the company to fill a specialized role, they tend to
"That change is fundamental, and it is the reason that getting a good job out of college is now such a challenge."

Obtaining a vocational degree or certificate is one strategy that many students employ to make themselves attractive to employers, and, on the face of it, this seems sensible. If you'd like to be a radiology technician, shouldn't you get a B.A. in radiology? If you want to run a bakery, why not apply to Kansas State and sign up for that major in Bakery Science? But narrowly focused degrees are risky. "If you graduate in a year when gambling is up and the casinos like your casino management degree, you probably have hit it big," Cappelli writes. "If they aren't hiring when you graduate, you may be even worse off getting a first job with that degree anywhere else precisely because it was so tuned to that group of employers." During the dot-com era, enrollment in computer-science and information-technology programs rose sharply. After the bursting of the stock-market bubble, many of these graduates couldn't find work. "Employers who say that we need more engineers or IT grads are not promising to hire them when they graduate in four years," Cappelli notes. "Pushing kids into a field like health care because someone believes there is a need there now will not guarantee that they all get jobs and, if they do, that those jobs will be as good as workers in that field have now."

So what's the solution? Some people believe that online learning will provide a viable low-cost alternative to a live-in college education. Bernie Sanders would get rid of tuition fees at public universities, raising some of the funds with a new tax on financial transactions. Clinton and O'Malley would also expand federal support for state universities, coupling this funding with lower interest rates on student loans and incentives for colleges to hold down costs. Another approach is to direct more students and resources to two-year community colleges and other educational institutions that cost less than four-year colleges. President Obama recently called for all qualified high-school students to be guaranteed a place in community college, and for tuition fees to be eliminated. Such policies would reverse recent history. In a new book, "Learning by Doing: The Real Connection between Innovation, Wages, and Wealth" (Yale), James Bessen, a technology entrepreneur who also teaches at Boston University School of Law, points out that "the policy trend over the last decade has been to starve community colleges in order to feed four-year colleges, especially private research universities." Some of the discrepancies are glaring. Richard Vedder, who teaches economics at Ohio University, calculated that in 2010 Princeton, which had an endowment of close to fifteen billion dollars, received state and federal benefits equivalent to roughly fifty thousand dollars per student, whereas the nearby
College or New Jersey got benefits of just two thousand dollars per student. There are sound reasons for rewarding excellence and sponsoring institutions that do important scientific research. But is a twenty-five-to-one difference in government support really justified?

Perhaps the strongest argument for caring about higher education is that it can increase social mobility, regardless of whether the human-capital theory or the signalling theory is correct. A recent study by researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco showed that children who are born into households in the poorest fifth of the income distribution are six times as likely to reach the top fifth if they graduate from college. Providing access to college for more kids from deprived backgrounds helps nurture talents that might otherwise go to waste, and it's the right thing to do. (Of course, if college attendance were practically universal, having a degree would send a weaker signal to employers.) But increasing the number of graduates seems unlikely to reverse the over-all decline of high-paying jobs, and it won't resolve the income-inequality problem, either. As the economist Lawrence Summers and two colleagues showed in a recent simulation, even if we magically summoned up college degrees for a tenth of all the working-age American men who don't have them—by historical standards, a big boost in college-graduation rates—we'd scarcely change the existing concentration of income at the very top of the earnings distribution, where C.E.O.s and hedge-fund managers live.

Being more realistic about the role that college degrees play would help families and politicians make better choices. It could also help us appreciate the actual merits of a traditional broad-based education, often called a liberal-arts education, rather than trying to reduce everything to an economic cost-benefit analysis. "To be clear, the idea is not that there will be a big financial payoff to a liberal arts degree," Cappelli writes. "It is that there is no guarantee of a payoff from very practical, work-based degrees either, yet that is all those degrees promise. For liberal arts, the claim is different and seems more accurate, that it will enrich your life and provide lessons that extend beyond any individual job. There are centuries of experience providing support for that notion."

* (#correctionasterisk)An earlier version of this article misstated the name of the Economic Policy Institute.

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John Cassidy has been a staff writer at The New Yorker since 1995. He also writes a column about politics, economics, and more, (http://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy) for newyorker.com.
Standing with perfect posture, Katherine Liepe-Levinson scanned her bedroom. "Where, oh where, did I put it?" she mused, her pet cat staring indifferently, perhaps waiting for a pat.

Suddenly, she plucked out her "Caribbean Conservancy" bucket hat from beside her bed, as a look of relief flooded her face. "Got it!" she said, grabbing her Sony NEX. "This is essential. Now we can go. Bye, Marty!" she called out to her husband, who was quietly typing at the kitchen table.

The destination was a modest pond not far from her home/studio in Riverside, an escape from the grind in Queens. "Oh, that's pretty," she said, looking out across the water, when a curious head popped out of the mud.

"Wow! C'mere, guy," she cooed to what she came to find out was a rather large snapping turtle trudging toward her. "Where are your friends?"

She took a few photos before lowering her camera to browse her handwork.

"Photography, for me, it feels spiritual, light, magical," she said, flipping through her shots. "It makes me feel like I'm dancing again. It's the closest I can get."

Ms. Liepe-Levinson has spent her whole life in the arts, starting as a professional dancer from ages 16 to 24 and continuing with degrees in theater, teaching drama on the high school and college levels, running her own dance company, and finally, working as a photographer.

"I look for the beauty in all the things I like to do," she said during an earlier interview, sitting in a garden chair inside her bright, sunny studio. "The dancer captures emotions and movement in time with the music, and the photographer captures emotions, light and movement in the moment."

Her studio is a mini gallery, lined with large photos of moving water—rippling ponds in the Quogue Wildlife Refuge, reflections of fish and turtles in the Peconic Bay and River, and dappled colors seemingly vibrating with energy—with a quick shutter speed and her signature style.

"I love to photograph water," she said. "I think the times I am most tranquil and energized are when I'm around the ponds, streams and bays. In the Hamptons, everyone thinks of the ocean, but there are so many more subtle beauties as well."

A graceful and lithe woman appearing much younger than her 62 years, Ms. Liepe-Levinson explained that because ponds are indicators of the ecosystem's overall health, she enjoys photographing the wildlife in them—wild ducks, geese and the occasional
snapping turtle.

"As an avid hiker and nature lover, I’ve been concerned about the ongoing pollution of our waterways in New York State" she said. "So I decided to record the flora and fauna of the Hamptons, and also of the Hudson River around New York City."

When she started focusing on wildlife in the water with a fast shutter speed, Ms. Liepe-Levinson said she began getting wild, mysterious patterns, light refractions and reflections that were "even more interesting than the wildlife I was attempting to shoot."

The vibrant colors and patterns she captures are purely natural results—no manipulation, she said—thanks to available light, camera angles, shifting wind patterns on the water and in the foliage, refractions on the water's surface, and zooming in for close-ups. "I don't use any filters. You can get tremendous blue color, depending on where the sun is and how you angle your lens," she said. "None of my work is manipulated. I just use the 'strong contrast' feature on my camera that makes the colors pop."

"Mother Nature does it better than anyone could do it," she added.

Ms. Liepe-Levinson, who grew up in Portland, Oregon, credits her parents for her artistic ability: her mother was a well-known landscape painter, and her father, Winfried Liepe, an amateur photographer.

"But as a young girl, all I wanted to do was dance," she said. "My teachers noticed my ability when I was about 6 years old, and told my parents I should go to dance school."

She took modern dance and ballet in Portland and, though her parents wanted her to attend college, she won a scholarship at age 15 for the Joffrey Ballet Company in Washington and Manhattan, as well as the Boston Ballet.

"Because I had an aunt in Boston, they let me go," she recalled. "But when I got there, they had only part-time jobs, so I decided to go to Europe, where I had more relatives, and I joined the ballet opera companies, who gave me full-time work."

By age 18, she was an apprentice with the Zurich Opera Ballet and went on to the Scapino Ballet in Amsterdam, where she toured Europe, dancing in all the major opera houses. But after two years, she saw the Alvin Alley dancers in Amsterdam and decided she wanted to audition for them. She won a full scholarship to Alvin Alley Dance School and returned to Manhattan at age 20, where she met her husband.

"That was the best time in my life," she said. "I loved dancing with Alvin Alley and living in the city with my husband. We've been married 41 years."

Ms. Liepe-Levinson later formed her own dance company, "Synergy," until she was forced to stop. "I danced until I was 24, when I had a knee injury, and then I had to rethink my life," she said. "So I started studying acting, and then got a B.A. from Empire State College in drama at age 30."

She earned a master's degree in theater from Hunter College and her doctorate from The Graduate Center CUNY. She taught acting and drama at Colgate University for eight years, as well as at Hunter College and the High School of Performing Arts in Manhattan. Along the way, she studied at the International School of Photography.

"After 9/11, I formed my own drama therapy company, to tour schools and promote awareness of HIV prevention, anger management and tolerance for diversity," she said. "Then, I guess you could say, I 'retired' into photography, being inspired as I spent more time in nature over the past 10 years in the Hamptons."

"I feel like I've been in little ponds at lots of different places," she added, with a smile.

Katherine Liepe-Levinson's photography will be on view during the Southampton Artist Association's Labor Day Show through Sunday, September 13, at the Southampton Cultural Center. An opening reception will be held on Saturday from 4 to 6 p.m. For more information, visit southamptonartists.org.

A solo show of her work, "Earth & Water Series," will open with a reception on Saturday, September 12, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Vital-A Tea Shop & Gallery in Riverhead. The exhibition will remain on view through the end of the month. Her photographs are also included in the "August Abstracts" exhibit at 30 West Main Gallery in Riverhead through October 29. For more information, visit katherinelepielevinson.zenfolio.com.
Rubenstein named Dana Fellow

September 1, 2015

Helen Rubenstein has been named the Robert P. Dana Emerging Writer Fellow for 2015-16.


Rubinstein has taught at the University of Iowa, where she received an Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, at Brooklyn College, and at New York City College of Technology.

She has worked as an in-house copy editor at Farrar Straus Giroux publishing house and has held a number of prestigious writing residencies, including at the MacDowell Colony and the Ragdale Foundation.

Rubinstein is currently working on two books.

This fall, she will teach Introduction to Creative Writing and a first-year writing course on the Racial Imaginary. The Dana Fellow teaches two courses, assists with the administration of the Center for the Literary Arts, serves as an advisor for Open Field literary magazine, and works with students across campus on literary arts programming. The position is half-time, allowing the fellow to work on his or her own writing projects while in residence. The fellowship is named in honor of Robert Dana, the former poet laureate of Iowa and Cornell College English and creative writing professor who died in February 2010.
RIT will house a new 3-D printing center

Rochester Institute of Technology will house a new research facility that focuses on studying the growing field of 3-D printing.

RIT will receive $921,000 a year to house the New York State Center for Advanced Technology in Additive Manufacturing and Functional Printing — or the AMPrint Center for short. A group of local colleges and businesses will have access to the center — RIT, Clarkson University, SUNY New Paltz, Xerox, Kodak, GE, Coming and MakerBot. RIT professor Denis Cormier will head the new center.

New York state hopes to become a go-to place for 3-D printing, an industry that projects to grown to $21 billion worldwide by 2020, according to Wohler's 2014 State of the Industry Report.

AMPrint joins a list of advanced technology centers in the state. Alfred University has a center focused on ceramic technology, City University of New York has a center for photonics applications and Columbia University has a center for advanced information management.
Making This World a Better Place – An Interview with Brooklyn Judge Michael Gerstein

WEDNESDAY, 02 SEPTEMBER 2015 06:19  BY: FERN SIDMAN

In a 2014 contempt of court case centering around an improper digital image that captured a sex abuse victim on the witness stand, Judge Gerstein had all the evidence against defendant Yona Weissman thrown out of court.

As summer turns to fall, we are reminded that election season is fast approaching. As Brooklynites take their annual jaunt to polls to exercise their civic responsibility, the Jewish Voice has taken this opportunity to enlighten our readers to the fact that on primary day, (Tuesday, September 10th), they will have the opportunity to vote for New York Civil Court judge in the 6th district.

Speaking to incumbent Judge Michael Gerstein in a phone interview, he told the Jewish Voice, “Although I had been previously elected as a civil court judge, I serve as a criminal court judge and deal both felony and misdemeanor cases.”

Having served on the bench for the last decade, Judge Gerstein has decided some well publicized cases, but as someone who is decidedly committed to the betterment of society he has placed a pronounced emphasis on public safety. The scourge of drunk driving and the rise in alcoholism has ravaged Brooklyn as it has throughout the country and thusly, Judge Gerstein has designated a special part of the criminal court for the exclusive purpose of dealing with these often difficult cases.

“I am the first judge that hears these cases and we have initiated an extensive alcohol treatment program, Judge Gerstein says. “The defendant attends counseling sessions several times a week as well as being required to undergo weekly urine tests. We find that having these people in the program offers us a much more likely chance that they won’t re-offend, and that means that everyone will be safe.”

He adds that through the help of the Educational Assistance Corporation, the court can utilize localized providers of treatment for those struggling with alcoholism.

With over 40 published opinions, Judge Gerstein has carved out a distinguished niche for himself in the world of jurisprudence.

In a 2014 contempt of court case centering around an improper digital image that captured a sex abuse victim on the witness stand, Judge Gerstein had all the evidence against defendant Yona Weissman thrown out of court.
Weisman has used his cell phone to take a picture of an 18-year-old Orthodox Jewish woman testifying against her former religious counselor Nechemya Weberman, who was convicted of molesting her following a closely-watched trial in 2012.

According to a Daily News report, Judge Gerstein's decision to toss the evidence was predicated on a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision; establishing that a search of a cell phone requires a warrant.

In a 2013 case of battling artists in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, Judge Gerstein ruled that the affixing of defamatory posters by one artist accusing his fellow artist of child molestation is enough to constitute aggravated harassment while verbal threats may not.

The artist that hung up the posters and made the false allegations against his former associate argued that his actions were protected under the United States Constitution's protection of the freedom of speech. Judge Gerstein agreed with the premise by saying, ""The First Amendment of the United States Constitution forbids the silencing of speech merely because it is objectionable or offensive to the listener," but also said that the actions of the poster hanger did indeed constitute a crime and did "not run afoul of the First Amendment."

In December of 2014 case concerning a French Jewish tourist who had scaled the Brooklyn Bridge a month earlier to take pictures, Judge Gerstein offered his stern admonishment to the defendant. "This is about tying up city resources," he said and added that such irresponsible acts could prevent authorities from reacting to more serious crimes. He ordered that Yonathan Soudi engage in 30 days or 240 hours of community service by cleaning a Manhattan jail.

As someone who has a great deal of respect for the city that he lives in and the borough that he resides in, Judge Gerstein said in a voice reverberating with enthusiasm, "I have lived in Flatbush for 36 years and am proud to be a part of the great borough of Brooklyn."

As an alumnus of Brooklyn College and New York University law school, Judge Gerstein contributed to the city's learning environment by teaching legal writing at Cardozo Law School in Manhattan from 2004-2012.

Always striving to be a person who embodies true 'Tikkun Olam' (repairing the world), Judge Gerstein devotes his time to serving on the board of directors of the storied East Midwood Jewish Center in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. Moreover, he holds a position on the board of directors of the Institute for Living Judaism in Brooklyn, a non-denominational center for learning that aims to promote tolerance, moderation, and pluralism in furthering the study and practice of the Jewish tradition.
Study finds 14% of Americans were entrepreneurs in 2014

By Caitlin Huston
Published: Sept 2, 2015 9:15 a.m. ET

The number running a fresh business is highest in 16 years of research

Entrepreneurship in the United States is at its highest rate in at least 16 years, a new study reports.

According to a study released Wednesday by Babson College and Baruch College, 14% of the United States working age population, about 24 million people, reported being entrepreneurs in 2014. But they weren't all like Mark Zuckerberg starting Facebook FB, -2.46% in a Harvard dorm — 6.5% were forming businesses within established companies and 11% were between the ages of 55 and 64, the highest rate of entrepreneurship activity for that age group among 29 developed economies in the study.

The results were the strongest since the colleges began the study in 1999. The study surveys a representative sample of the U.S. population to extrapolate the results and defines entrepreneurship as businesses less than 3.5 years old.

Donna Kelley, lead author and professor of entrepreneurship at Babson College, cited improving economic conditions for the gains. A better economy may have created more “opportunity entrepreneurs” — those starting a business when they see an opportunity, rather than out of necessity — to enter the market, she said.

The number of opportunity entrepreneurs fell during the recession, Kelley noted. The businesses may also be bolstered by state governments promoting entrepreneurship, as well as easier access to venture capital.

“There’s a little bit more certainty in the environment,” Kelley said.

The 2014 study recorded the highest level of optimism in its history, with 51% of the U.S. population saying they thought there are good opportunities to start a business. Fear of failure was recorded at 30%, down from a high of 32 percent in 2012.

Additionally, 65% see entrepreneurship as a good career choice and 70% who see entrepreneurship as a good opportunity were not “deterred by fear of failure.”

The high entrepreneurship rate could be good news for non-entrepreneurs as well: 24% of entrepreneurs said they expect to hire 20 or more people in the next five years. About one-third of firms with a single founder and 76% of firms with three or more co-founders expected to have six or more employees in five years.
Ten Years After Katrina, New Orleans Charter Schools Have Made Real Improvements

New Orleans students have learned more and they are better-prepared for college and careers than they were before the city's education reform.

Savannah Robinson | Sep. 2, 2015 7:00 am

Last Saturday marked the 10th anniversary of the tragic Hurricane Katrina hitting the city of New Orleans that killed nearly 2,000 people, left thousands stranded and demanded reconstruction of this American city. Prior to the catastrophe, New Orleans' education system was searching for ways to improve student achievement and the state had created a state school district to manage low-performing schools called the Recovery district. The majority of New Orleans' schools were transitioned over to the state shortly after the storm. Louisiana's Recovery School District took over 102 of the 126 schools from the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) in late-November 2005 with a mandate to recreate them as charter schools. Out of the 24 remaining schools, seven were uninhabitable, five still remained directly managed by OPSB, and the other 12 became charters, as well.

Today over 90 percent of New Orleans' students attend a public charter, which is far more than any other American city (Detroit City School District comes in second with 55 percent). This ten-year anniversary has sparked a wide array of reflection in response to the education reform that took place in New Orleans post-Katrina.

Despite the academic progress that has taken place, there has been ongoing criticism against New Orleans' charter schools. Baruch College's Professor Andrea Gabor wrote a recent piece criticizing New Orleans' schools for The New York Times. "The Myth of the New Orleans School Makeover," is an opinion piece highlighting faults in the charter system with questionable data and condemning the statistics used to show the student's improvement.

Gabor addresses the school system's failure in handling disadvantaged students and "keeping track" of all the kids. Her conclusion dismisses the progress of the New Orleans' education reforms especially for disadvantaged students:

For outsiders, the biggest lesson of New Orleans is this: It is wiser to invest in improving existing education systems than to start from scratch. Privatization may improve outcomes for some students, but it has hurt the most disadvantaged pupils.
The Louisiana State Superintendent of Education John White took the time to write a very balanced response to Gabor’s claims in an open letter to correct some of the misleading information. Superintendent White answers the following four questions in his piece:

1. Who is the New Orleans public school system of today?
2. How does a system of charter public schools protect the most vulnerable students?
3. Are students experiencing greater life opportunity in this system?
4. What other challenges persist in New Orleans schools?

The Superintendent’s answers give up-to-date demographics, school choice information, graduation rates, and the number of students continuing onto college. He concludes his piece recognizing needs for more improvement, but not ignoring current progress by stating, “In that spirit, we can tell a New Orleans story that is both rightly proud of who we are and deeply humble as to whom we have yet to become.”

New Orleans’ improvements are real and deserve to be recognized. According to a report by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, not only are charters in New Orleans serving a higher percentage of public school students than anywhere else in the nation, they are also approaching the Louisiana state average in the percentage of students who are proficient in reading and math—a rare accomplishment for urban public schools.

Following Hurricane Katrina and education reforms, the performance of students rose steadily compared to that of students in other Louisiana districts that were affected by the hurricane. Superintendent White also stated the city’s on-time high school graduation rate has increased from 54 percent in 2005 to 73 percent by last year. Furthermore, 76 percent graduate in five years, which exceeds Louisiana’s average, and the graduation rate for black students surpasses the national average.

As Tulane University economics professor Doug Harris found in a new study (Figure 1 Below) published in the Fall 2015 Education Next, "Between 2005 and 2012, the performance gap between New Orleans and the comparison group closed and eventually reversed, including a positive effect of the reforms of about 0.4 standard deviations, enough to improve a typical student’s performance by 15 percentile points."

**A New Trajectory (Figure 1)**

*Following Hurricane Katrina and the reforms enacted in its aftermath, the performance of New Orleans students rose steadily compared to that of...*
an infographic that displays dramatic academic gains that New Orleans students have made, especially in the Recovery School District. RSD students test scores at basic or above climbed from 15 percent in 2005 to 57 percent by 2014 and all students throughout New Orleans climbed from 33 to 63 percent in the same time frame. Students with disabilities proficiency rates increased from 18 percent in 2008 to 44 percent by 2013. Additionally, more than half of New Orleans students are now enrolling in college.

Varying opinions are inevitable in any reform situation, but acknowledging achievements and failures accurately will help determine the best future actions for the schools. Conversations about New Orleans’ education will remain a forefront issue for the city and reevaluation is necessary to make adjustments to continue to improve student achievement.