

The New Conundrum:

Skills Based Learning
Meets
AI

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Founder, Education Design Lab
Author, Who Needs College Anymore?



We Were Making Great Progress

1. Rise of Skilled Based Hiring in the US...
Employers beginning to make the shift
2. Colleges/universities stepping up to offer more “micro-pathways” and micro-credentials
3. Enrollment data showing consumers asking for short term credentials

But, WAIT.



1. Aneesh Raman: Chief Data Officer, LinkedIn: 70% of the skills for the average job according to our data will have changed by 2030.

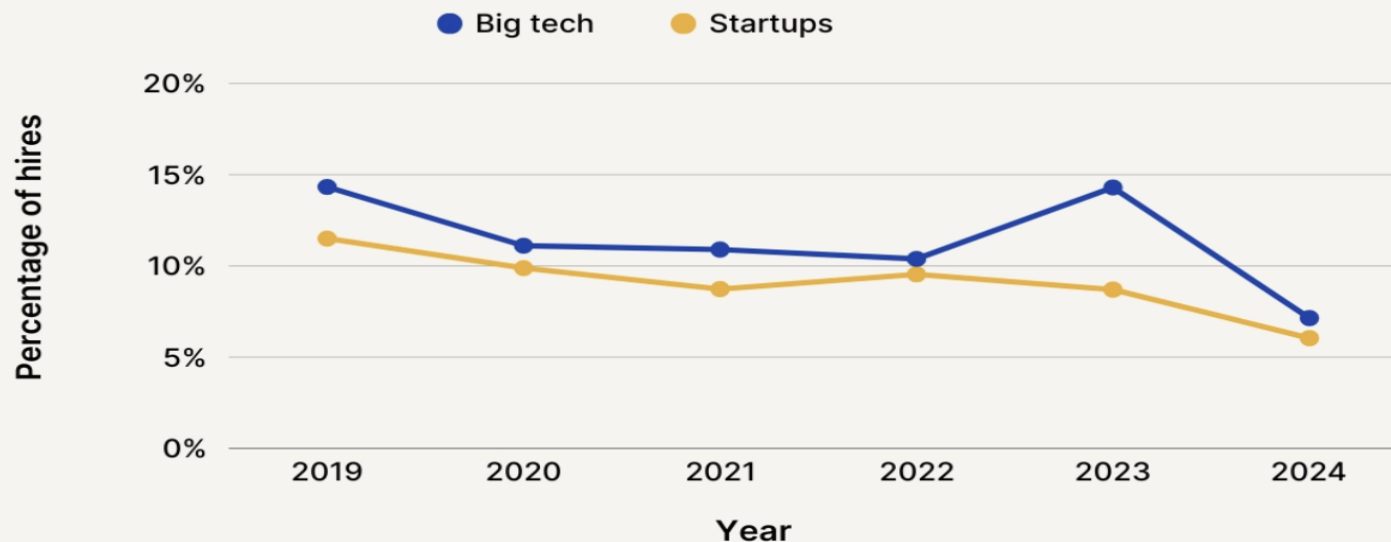
2. Dario Amodei: CEO of Anthropic: Technology could cut U.S. entry-level jobs by half within five years.



The first rung of the career ladder ? 🤖

Gen Z squeeze: Entry-level share of hires down 50% from pre-pandemic levels

Percentage of new hires with one year or less of total experience at time of hire.



*Big tech represents the top 15 technology companies by market cap.

*Startups represents companies funded by the top 100+ VC firms that closed a Seed through Series C round in the previous 4 years.

SignalFire

There is a way forward

Credential Design Work

Agile Data (and Outcome) Sharing

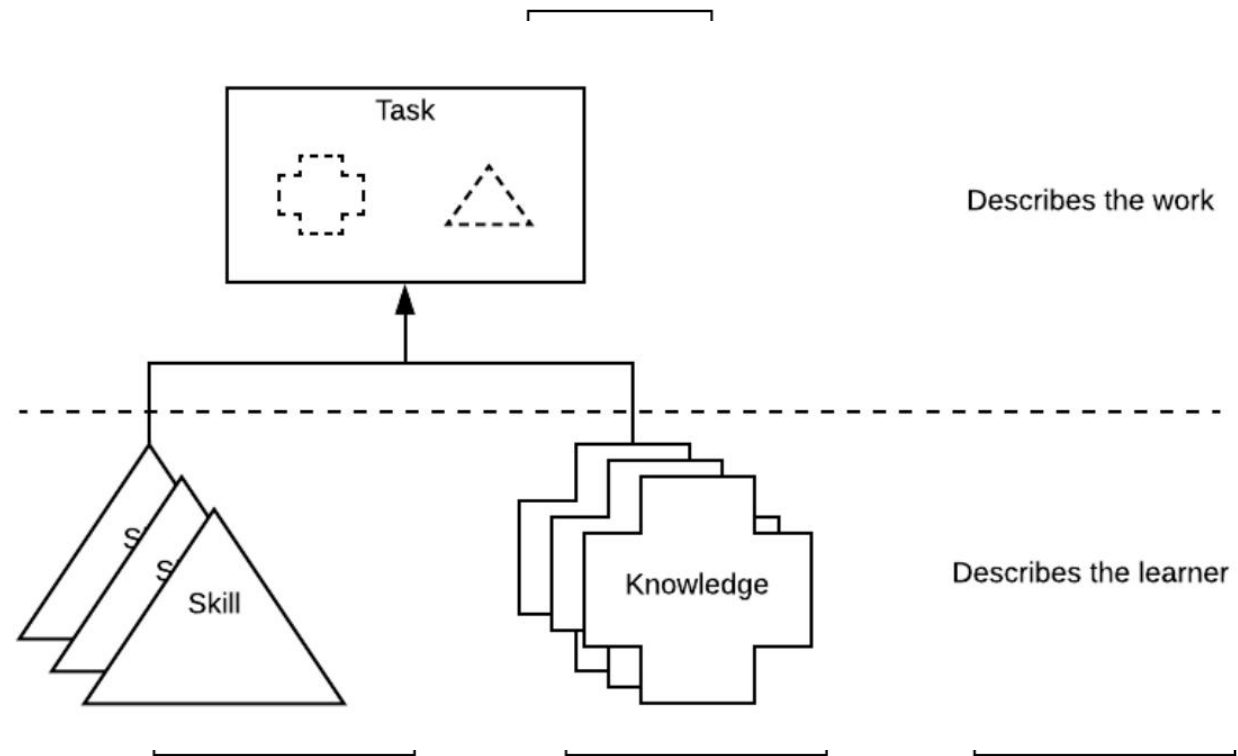
Narrative building

Skills is becoming the coin of the realm

**“Skills-based hiring
can help us recruit for
jobs that don’t exist
yet”**

**World Economic
Forum, March 2025**

**21% of US
employers
surveyed removed
bachelor degree
requirements in
2024**



Lean into the sub-degree credential design

Credential
Design
Work

100 colleges in the US are designing “Micro-pathways”
w employers to fill high demand jobs

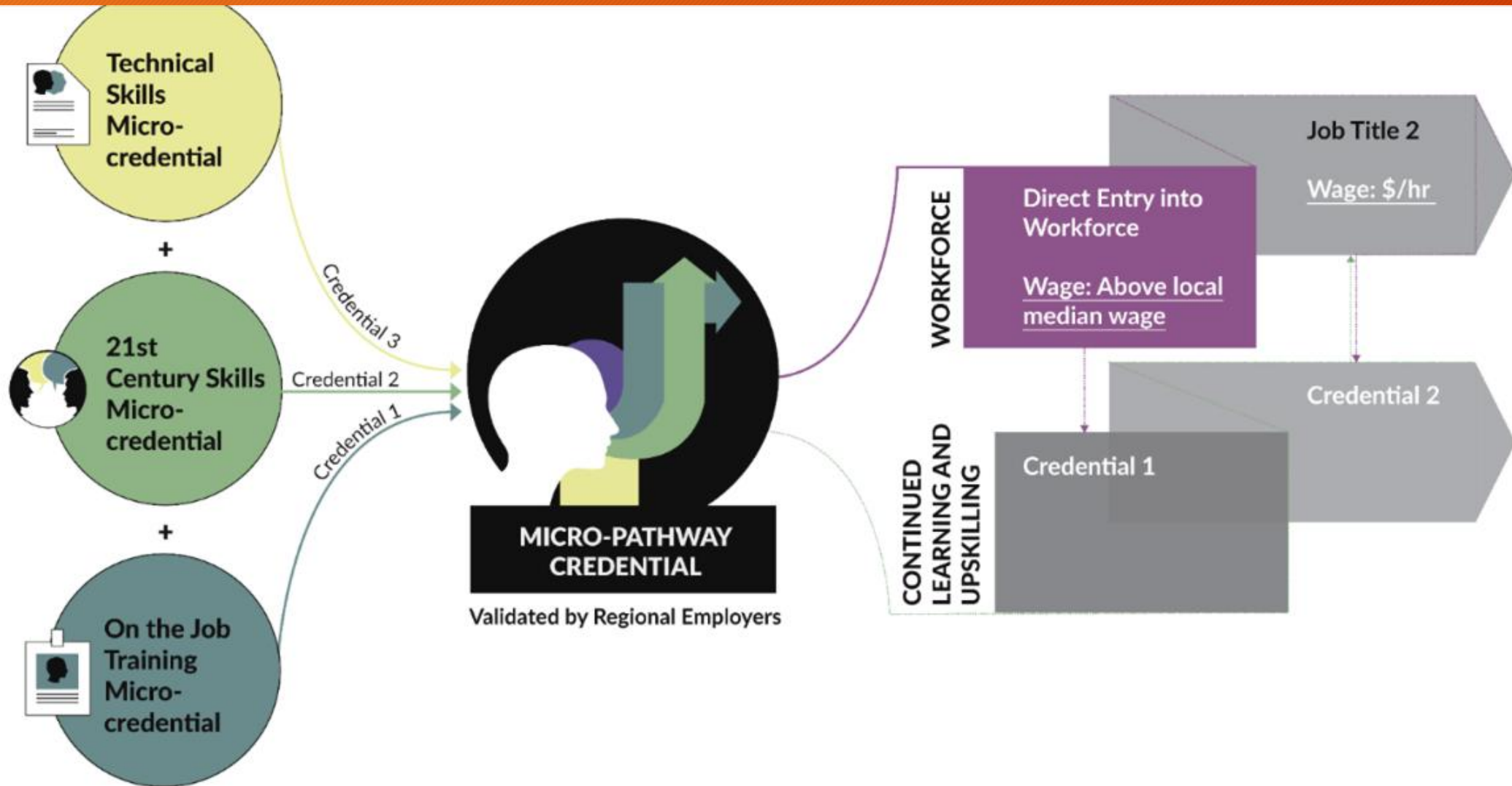
Education Design Lab

Designing education toward the future of work

Precision Optics Technician
Cloud Computing Engineer
Industrial Maintenance
Engineer
Business Data Analyst

Assistant Teacher
Certified Medical Assistant
Health Coach
Bookkeeper

100 Community Colleges are Designing “Micro-Pathways” w their employers



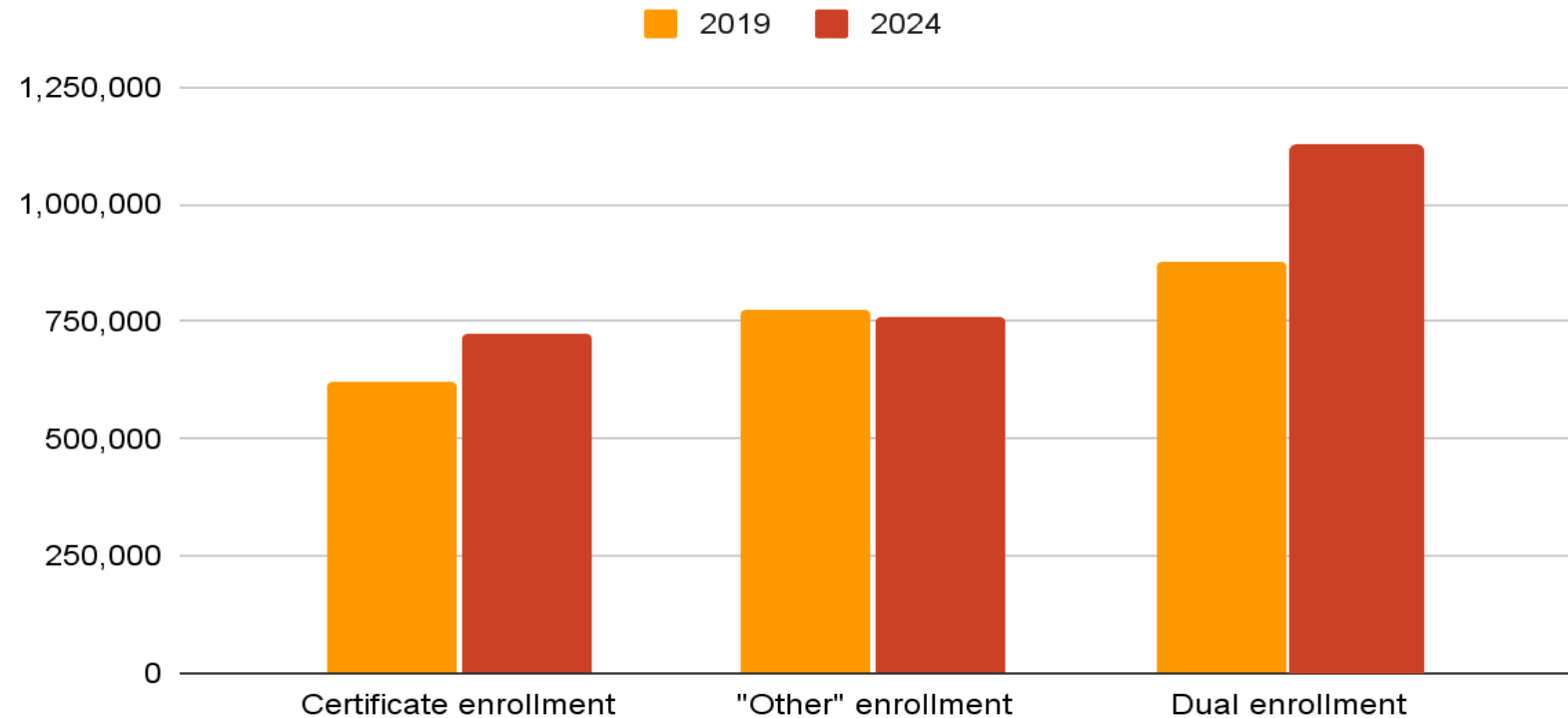
Short term credentials are salvaging enrollment trends in the US, which were dropping significantly until 2023

Credential
Design
Work

Certificate
enrollment
is **up 11%**
between
spring 23-24,
Xx% since
2019

National Student
Clearinghouse, Jan 25

Non-degree enrollment change in community colleges



Industry Certifications can be a proxy for degrees

Credential
Design
Work

Certificates

Google Data Analytics Professional
Certificate

Certifications

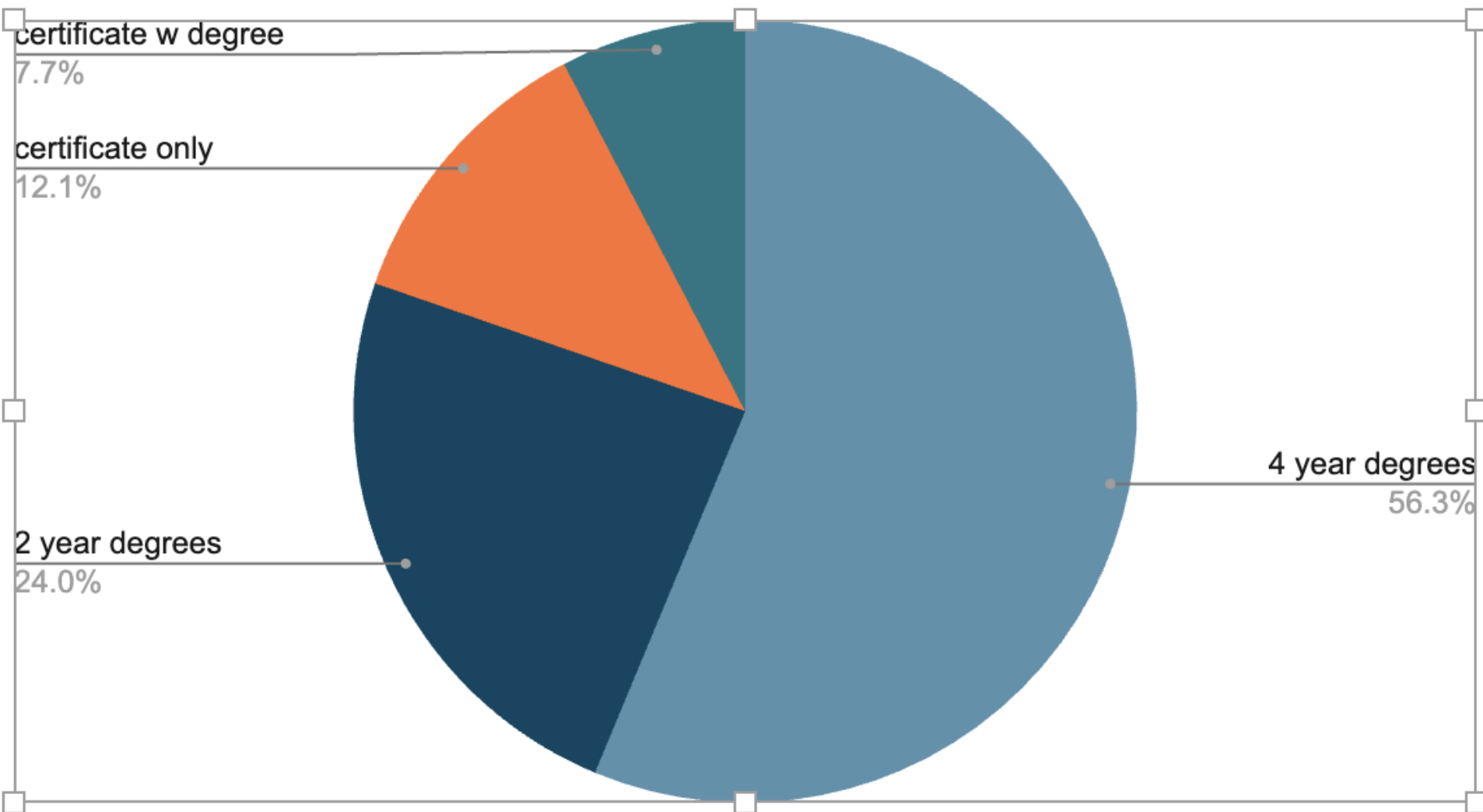
Project Management Professional (PMP)

Certified Information Systems Security Professional
(CISSP)

AWS Certified Solutions Architect

CompTIA Certifications:
A+ and Network+

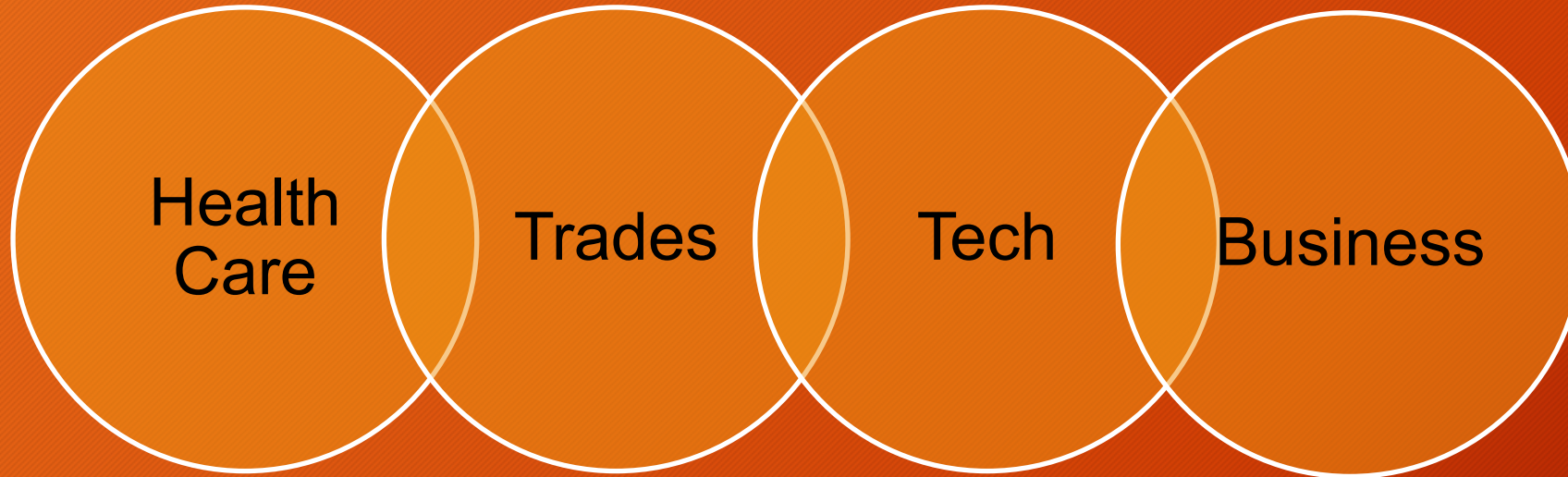
Completers by type of credential (23-24)



We need more universal assessment

Agile Data
Sharing

**Technical
skills**



Durable Skills

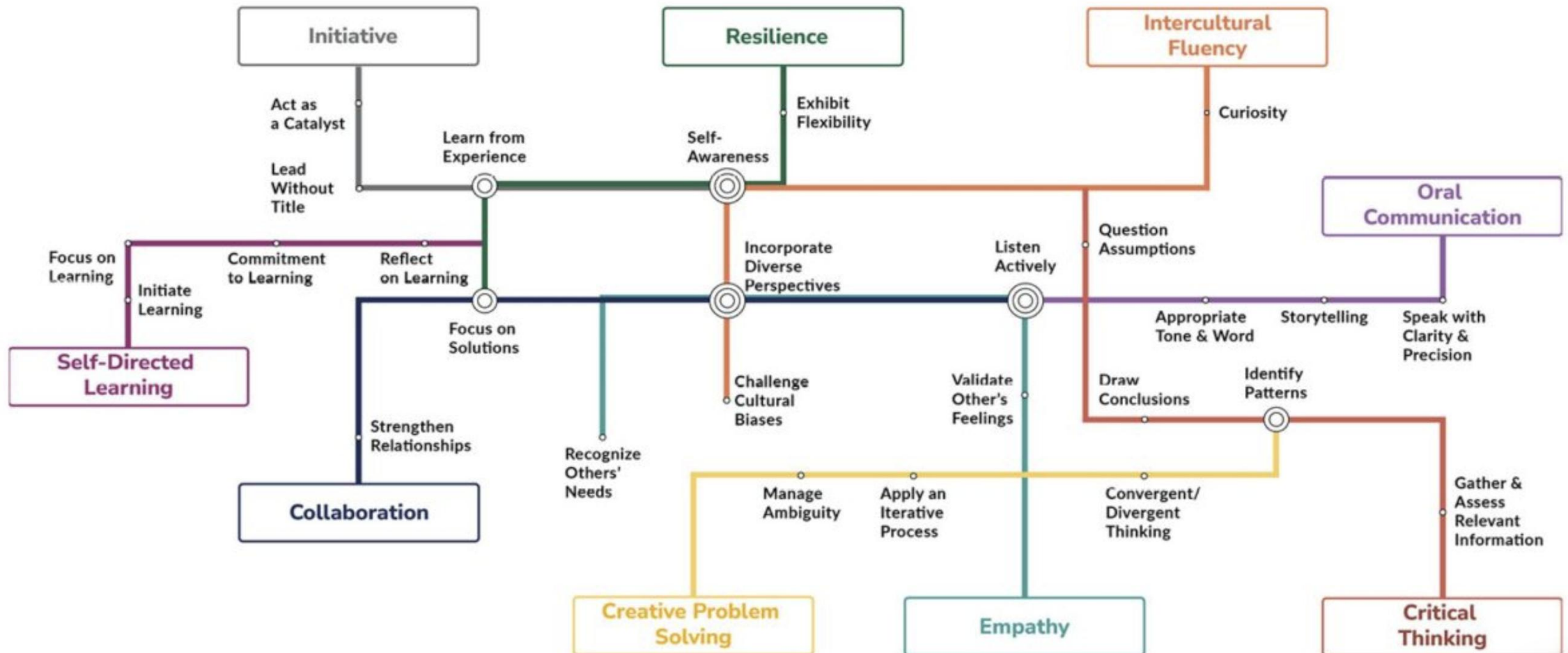
Empathy

Critical Thinking

Collaboration

Not enough progress certifying durable or “soft skills”

Credential
Design
Work



Speed up the Feedback Loop for Hiring and Outcome Data

Agile
Data
Sharing

SHRM

Chamber of Commerce
Foundation

Industry associations

Burning Glass Institute/ Lightcast

LinkedIn (US)

Non-profits

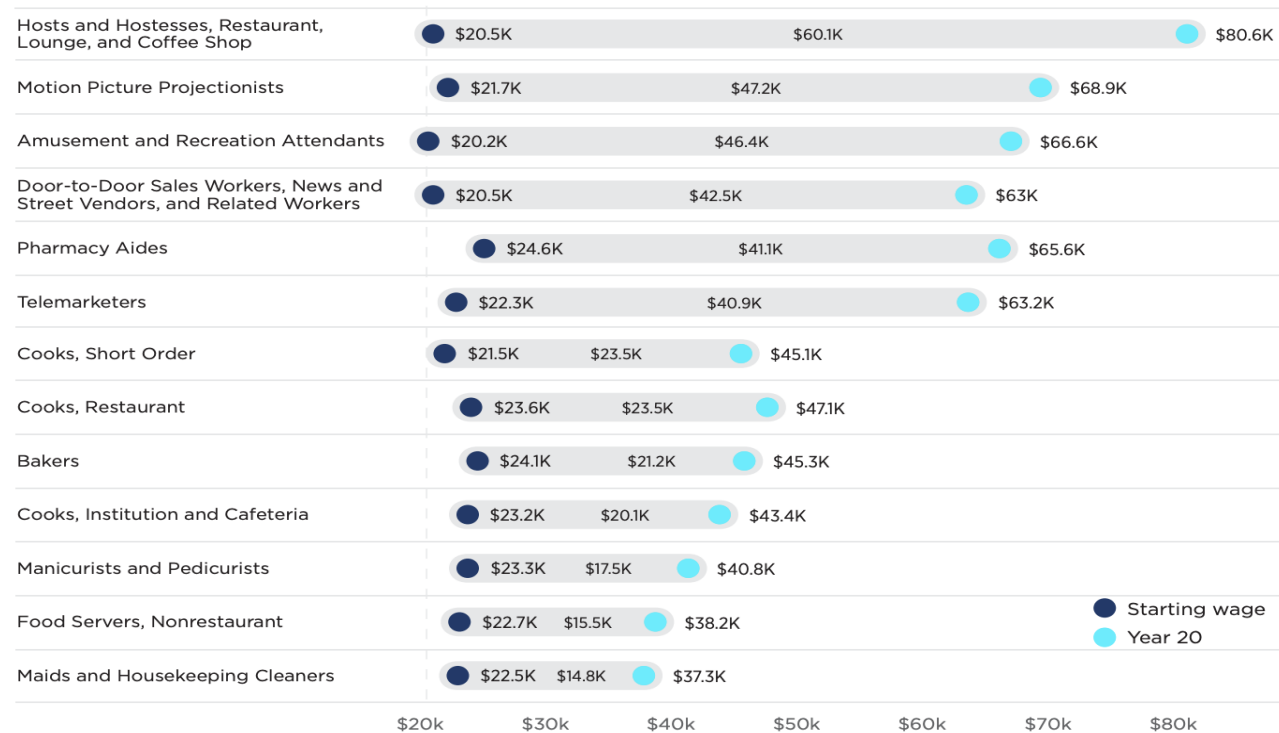
Governments, e.g. ONET (US Department of Labor), European Union

Burning Glass Institute analysis provides directional career advice

Agile Data
Sharing

Figure 1 *Workers Starting in Jobs with Low Wages Tend to Have Very Diverse Incomes Later in Their Careers*

Wages 20 years after starting in a low-wage job



Source: Burning Glass Institute analysis of OEWS data. Starting estimates based on 10th percentile wages; 20-year estimates based on median wages.

How do we keep up with skills as they change?

Agile
Data
Sharing

Paul LeBlanc, former university pres, co-founder of Matter and Space.

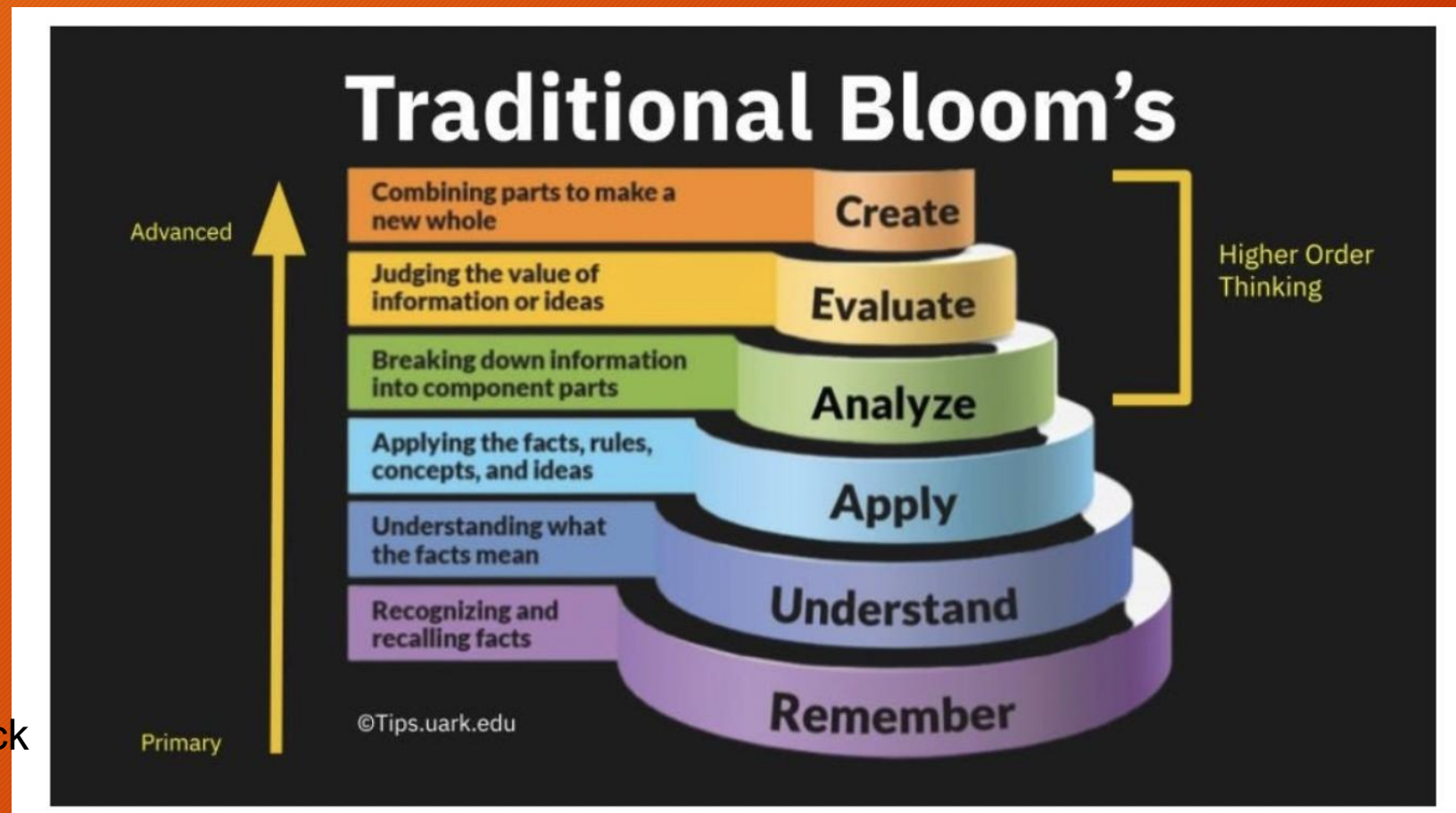
*“We can now lay out our learning objectives
for a course on Monday,
and be enrolling students by Thursday.”*

New Analysis from Burning Glass Institute

- 12% of US micro-credential earners make substantial income gains (more than \$5K)
- Significant value for career switching and upward mobility

What Skills Matter in Age of AI

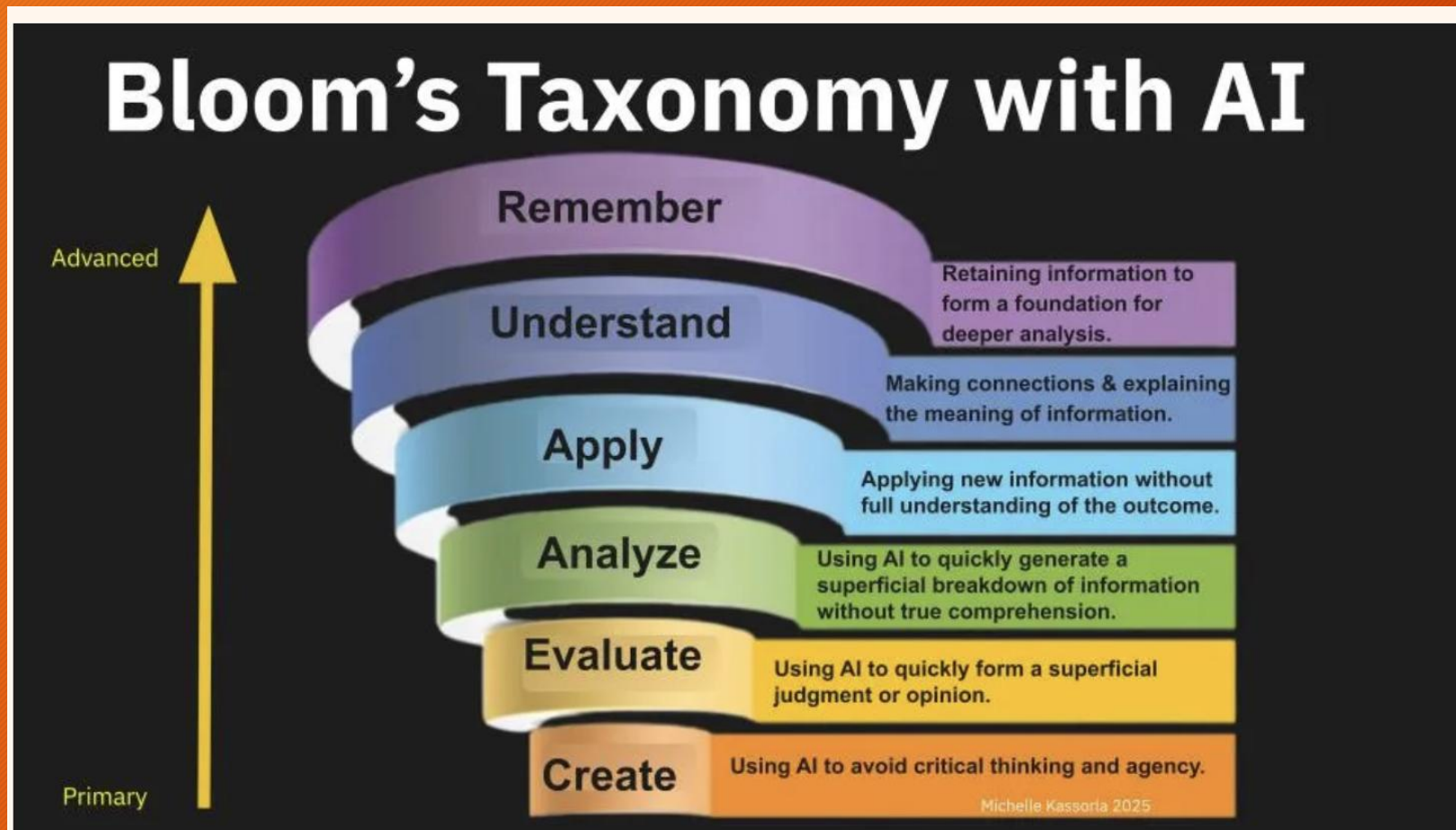
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From Michelle Kassorla
Academic Platypus substack
Georgia State U

Michelle Kassorla's work: Inverted Bloom's

Agile
Data
Sharing



University...or Bust

Narrative
Building

“In my school, you are made to feel that if you don’t go to university, you are “nothing.”

Sebastian
17 year old
Denver, Co.

Two Competing Narratives

Narrative
Building

Narrative 1

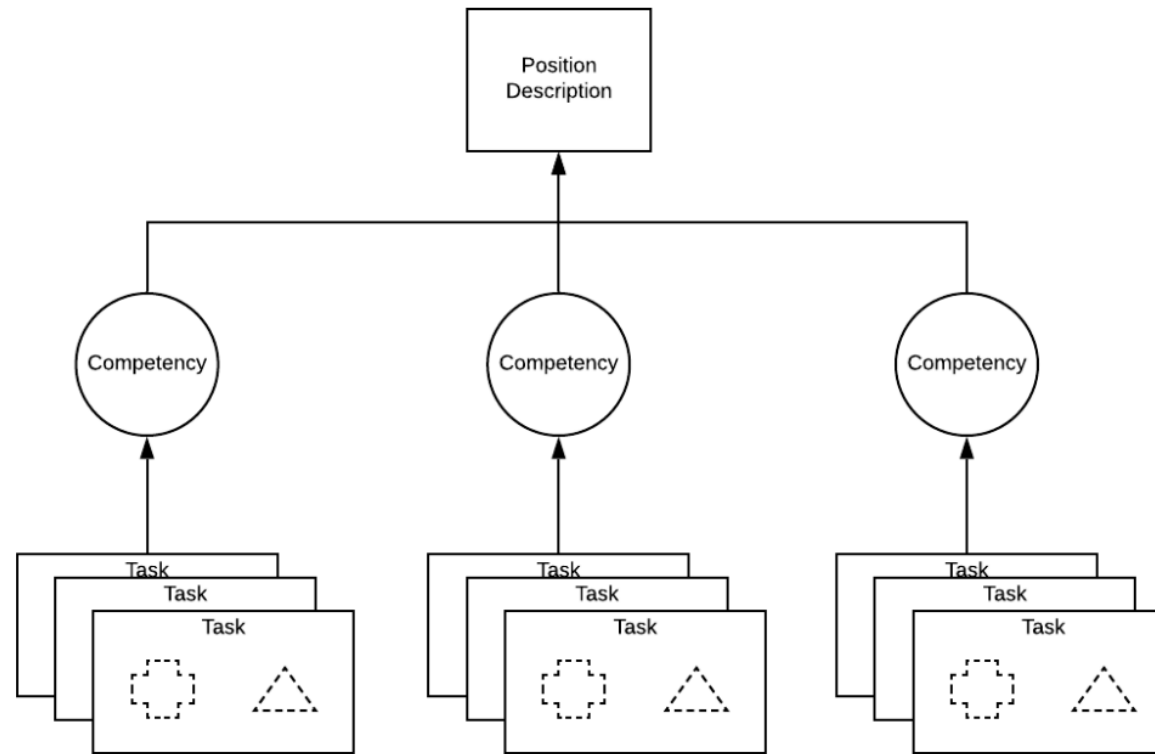
You have to go to university to get a "good job."

Narrative 2

University is too expensive.
And not so relevant to the
fast changing jobs of
today and tomorrow.

How will we know if we are skilled in the future?

Narrative Building



From the NICE framework

Historical College Enrollment, Selected Years

(in millions)



To Summarize

AVOID SKILL OF THE MONTH FADS:

We SHOULD design shorter term pathways that are revealed to us by skills intelligence, but with built in flexibility in case the high demand is short lived.

DATA HAS TO ACCESSIBLE/INTERPRETABLE

We MUST create skills intelligence databases and tools that move at the speed of change, but that are not a black box and unaffordable for governments, education providers, learners

USE AI TO INVEST IN HUMAN AGENCY

Agency around one's career prospects and path will help solve for mental health and economic development.

Some US Colleges are moving/will move to Stepladder Approach

1. Micro-pathways
2. Short-term credentials
3. Built in work experiences
4. Three-year degrees

There is a way forward

Credential Design Work

Agile Data (and Outcome) Sharing

Narrative building

How to order the book

whoneedscollegeanymore.org

How to be in touch

My email:

kathleendelaski@gmail.com

My substack:

www.kathleendelaski.substack.com



My orgs:

Edesignlab.org

Credentialengine.org

Harvard Project on Workforce
<https://www.pw.hks.harvard.edu/>