

8 Ways Universities Can Bridge Skills Gap

By providing [quality education](#) and achieving their desired student outcome, universities can supply professionals for the industries of our economy. Their respective [university ranking](#) will even improve potentially and gradually if they're able to do so successfully. However, drastic changes in various industries cause the seemingly-never-ending dilemma called the skills gap. University administrators have to overcome the skills gap problem if they're to achieve their goal of producing competent graduates for corporate companies. There are many countermeasures that universities can tackle to combat the skills gap problem; each of them has a degree of effectivity. But, in this blog, we'll only discuss eight of the best methods universities can execute to bridge the skills gap.

What Is the Skills Gap?

First, let's talk about the skills gap. Skills gap is a situation wherein the innate and current skills and competencies of an employee aren't enough or don't match the specific needs and requirements of an employer. Based on the general analysis, skills gap usually occurs if the universities' educational curriculums aren't in line with the changes and demands in the industries. In that case, students aren't able to absorb the complete skills and knowledge that they need to become fully eligible employees or professionals in their field of study.

Collaborate with Local Employers

Partnering and communicating with local employers is among the best or the best way to bridge the skills gap. In this approach, university administrators and educators will have a direct means of knowing the demands of corporate companies regarding employee labor skills and competencies. Some universities are even [forging official partnerships with corporate companies](#) in training their students, such as through internships or on-the-job training. In return, these universities will have to encourage or prompt their graduates to apply for a job in their partnering companies. Methods such as that eradicate the skills gap before it even occurs.

Analyze Trends in Career Opportunities

Over time, trends in career opportunities change along with the innovations of our industries. New kinds of jobs and careers open up as the use of technology advances. Employers need workers that are competent enough to fill in the vacancies of these new lines of work. If there aren't enough workers, then there's a skills gap. So if universities are aware of timely career opportunity trends, they can establish brand new coursework and curriculums to produce a new breed of professionals; thus, bridging the skills gap caused by new types of jobs. It's just like running a business that sells tangible products. You study what your consumers need to produce a product that best suits their tastes, preferences, and needs.

Update and Evolve Curriculums

Universities may pride themselves in offering quality education. Still, quality education ends when the current structure of their educational programs can no longer fully satisfy the needs and demands of companies. Because of that, educators and administrators update and evolve their curriculums. They add specific programs and training regimes that enrich the attributes of students and to equip them better after they graduate. Curriculums related to information technology, engineering, and business management are susceptible to updates due to rapid changes in such fields of study.

Use Timely Technology and Tools in Lectures and Training

As we all know, companies from different industries are embracing the advancement of technology and integrating it into their operations. That said, particular changes in their positions' [job descriptions](#) will undoubtedly happen, especially in terms of the required skills and qualifications. In this situation, the possibility of a skills gap is imminent. So as a countermeasure, universities use timely technology and automation tools in letting their educators conduct lectures and training sessions to the students. Subsequently, the students will obtain the right skill sets and knowledge, especially in terms of performing hands-on tasks using advanced technological tools. In this situation, educators can take action of optimizing the university's teaching methods by creating and submitting a proposal to the school administrators and executives.

Make Higher Education More Accessible

Sometimes, or probably most of the time, the reason why the skills gap is so wide is due to the lack of individuals attending higher education. Lack of students in higher education means there will be a lack of competent graduates to fill in the job vacancies of companies. According to an article in VisualWorkforce.com, employers suffer an \$800,000 loss yearly due to vacancies that last for 12 weeks. The root cause of why there will be a lack of students is because of how expensive higher education is; not everyone can afford it. For that reason, university administrators are eyeing to make their tuition fees affordable. Some of them are offering scholarships for fresh high school graduates with excellent GPA scores. The individuals that administrators usually prioritize to have cheap or free access to higher education are those with potential and great academic prowess. If they continuously follow this approach, they'll be able to fulfill the workforce demands and needs of company employers.

Emphasize Focus on Student Retention

Students who might drop off and discontinue their course can result in a lack of competent graduates as well, which then also leads to a skills gap. There are several reasons why students halt their college education, such as academic difficulties and conflicts of interest. For one, universities don't want to lose students because that means loss of revenue. So, part of their [policies](#) is to focus on [student retention](#) strategies. Educators establish programs that help students who are struggling with their studies, and campus counselors monitor their psychological wellbeing and morale. Other than those two, the administrators evaluate faculty performance to determine student satisfaction. Student satisfaction is crucial in retaining students until they finish their courses.

Conduct Sustainable Research

We all know for a fact that universities are establishments that seek knowledge and discovery. They stay true to that fact by conducting sustainable research, which helps in bridging the skills gap. How so? It's simple; universities with sustainable research about various fields of study enable them to be steps ahead of the employment needs and demands of our industries. They can potentially teach their students advanced knowledge and skills that aren't even a trend yet. So whenever new career opportunities and employment trend shifts arise, universities are ready to bridge the skill gap in no time.

Focus on Soft Skills

Educators tend to emphasize more focus on hard skills and instilling knowledge to their students, which is essentially right. But due to that, the enrichment of students' soft skills might be overlooked. Employers also assess the soft skills of fresh graduates in their hiring process. Graduates with excellent soft skills can perform and interact with people at a professional level. Here are some excellent examples of soft skills:

- Communication skills, verbal and written
- Interpersonal skills
- Planning and management skills
- Working under pressure
- Flexible and adaptable
- Computer literate
- Internet and social media savvy

According to a study in Deloitte.com, the US economy could suffer a \$2.5 trillion damage in the next decade due to skills gap problems. Less competent workers mean there will be fewer people who are capable of running the engines of our economy. That possibility doesn't apply in the US only, but also to all nations around the planet. However, considerable losses in our economy because of the skills gap will not be a significant problem if universities do their part in bridging them.