

FOREWORD

The volume you are about to read is the second in a series of books we are curating for the Harvard Education Press (HEP) under the title *Work and Learning*. The first book, *Vocational Education and Training for a Global Economy*, is a set of cases profiling the vocational education systems of four countries: China, Singapore, Switzerland, and the United States. This book, also a collection of case studies, focuses on the United States. It is designed as a follow-up to our 2017 HEP volume, *Learning for Careers, The Pathways to Prosperity Network*. In that book, a history, overview, and analysis of the strategies at play in the Pathways Network, we could touch only lightly on what that work looks like on the ground in several of the most promising states, regions, and locales in our network. Consequently, we commissioned a set of case studies to give readers a more in-depth understanding of what it takes to develop and implement career pathways systems designed to equip young people with the combination of academic knowledge, technical skills, and professional/social skills to get started in the labor market and prepare them for an uncertain future. These cases represent the diversity of a national network. They come from five different regions of the country; two focus on states, two on regions, and one on a single locality.

Why case studies? We are often asked, “Where is the Pathways work happening well at scale?” and “What data do you have to show that this work makes a difference?” While our field partners are admirably grappling with the challenges of cross-sectoral and longitudinal quantitative data, we will not have any data that follow youth into the labor market until a decade or more into our work, and we may never have definitive causal data because this complex work has too many variables, too many players, and too many data-related challenges to allow for the definition of a clear baseline to enable meaningful before-and-after comparisons. Consequently, we

believe that our Pathways work to date is better shared through the stories and qualitative analysis found in these case studies.

A second question that readers may be asking is, who actually does the work that is described here? As the introduction notes, the Pathways Network that formed in 2012 meets twice a year to take part in powerful peer learning. At a Network Institute, it's always inspiring to look out at a hotel ballroom filled with around two hundred people from across the country, a good number of whom have been members of the Pathways Network from the start. They are from rural, suburban, and urban communities; they work at jobs as different as leading a nonprofit to advising a governor, to placing interns in work sites, to designing pathways reaching back to high schools from the perch of a community college. Yet they come together in their understanding of the need for pathways and their commitment to doing the hard work to create and sustain the cross-sector alliances that are required to put pathways in place. These are unsung champions of the young people who benefit and whose communities will be healthier places in which to grow up and thrive because of the thoughtfulness and persistence of these hardworking adults.

As for the young people who benefit from early career experiences, their voices are always worth hearing. Here are the words of a young man reflecting on the internship set up by his Delaware high school in partnership with Delaware Technical Community College: "I was at a chemical company. I didn't know when I started what I'd think, but by the end, I thought, 'This is really interesting.' I did something new every day; I got to go out in the field and do maintenance and work hands on . . . I really liked that. The team was welcoming, but they told me to stay in school. They wished they'd done that so they could improve their lives. I'm going to go to college in electrical engineering."

—Robert B. Schwartz and Nancy Hoffman