

KEYNOTE:

# INCLUSIVE PROSPERITY – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND HR

Columbus, by pretty much any economic measure you can find, is thriving. City leaders, however, are aware of the stark reality that not everyone is participating in the city's good fortune.

At the CIO Tomorrow forum, Harrison said as the region continues to grow, "inclusive prosperity" should be its mantra. And he's walking the talk by spending a lot of time with local employers to take action on the issue.

"It's important for the community and companies because, as a region, well-run companies with a lot of growth potential, one of their constraints is enough talent," he said. "We have a lot of people in our community who aren't participating in this economic growth."

There are several layers to the issue. One is there's not enough in-migration of people to keep pace with what companies need talent-wise. If we want to attract big corporate projects like Amazon's H2Q, the region has to have talent

that's mobilized and available for high-skill, high-wage careers.

Harrison said many local employers are "leaning in" and going to work. Columbus State, for example, has formed partnerships with big manufacturers like Honda and Worthington Industries on work-study programs. More than 20 manufacturers now are involved in the effort that started six years ago.

"Four years ago, students with an associate's degree didn't have a career path," Harrison said. That's changed now.

Another partnership involves the insurance industry. Harrison said companies like Nationwide Insurance have recognized that their work forces are aging and that the people who will replace them will be different employees in



**DR. DAVID HARRISON**  
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many ways, including much more sophisticated technology skills.

An industry consortium is working to develop different career paths for insurance workers, including for adult students. Nationwide has made a specific commitment to hire veterans, "a great example of how companies need to think differently about the talent pipeline," Harrison said.

"It really is about partnerships," he said. "Historically, the relationship between the employer and higher education has been largely transactional. Students earn degrees and colleges come to campus to recruit and hire in a competitive way."

Now, the relationship is much more collaborative.

"To really achieve inclusive prosperity and widen the talent pool for employers, they have to look past the 22-year-old recent college grad," he said. "The star of the boardroom going forward is going to be the HR leader who has the ability to acquire and develop talent."

Talent for most companies is going to be the rate-determining step on who is successful and who isn't. It will separate companies."

Success stories will be written about those that embrace creative recruiting and then hold on to that talent through a commitment to developing people.

"The pace of change is going to continue to accelerate; jobs are changing so quickly," Harrison said. "Companies need to question their HR practices so that the individuals who may have not been considered before – because they didn't check the right GPA or age boxes – are now being considered, sought out and put on a career path." ■

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