



## **Editorial: Sooner Than Later**

*by Nicole Adrian*

Before really diving into this month's issue theme—connecting degrees to careers—I must admit I hadn't given it much thought. My first reaction was, "It's obvious college courses prepare you for your work and career path for later in life—right? That's why you go to college, isn't it?"

After some research and thinking about it more, I realized that some students really do need more than just classroom time and text books to learn the skills and information they need to successfully enter the job market and become a career person.

I remembered my own experiences as an English major, knowing I wanted to get involved in journalism once I graduated. Sure, I had an internship at a small-town newspaper, which helped prepare me for the future. It wasn't an experience, however, afforded to every writing student, and I had to find the time outside of my regular classroom work to do the job.

Luckily, there now seems to be more and more programs to teach students hands-on skills and information they'll need to be better prepared in their future careers.

Western Michigan University is one school doing just that. Those in the student managed investment class—a course taught by a principal at a local capital management firm—are part of a real-world learning experience in which students conduct investment research and manage an actual portfolio worth a half a million dollars.

The students' hands-on experiences will transfer well to their careers and can only help them be more successful on the job.

Washington state's integrated basic education and skills training (I-BEST) is another way in which students—in this case, non-traditional ones—are being prepared for life outside the classroom. I-BEST is an instructional model developed to meet the learning needs of undereducated and low-skilled workers to fill jobs. The program targets this population segment because these students may not have been successful in a traditional classroom setting.

The program has already made quite a difference in Washington state. Studies have found I-BEST students—when compared to adult basic education students in other workforce programs—to be three times more likely to earn college credit and nine times more likely to earn an award.

With more of these programs in place, students will not only learn the textbook information they will need for their future careers, but also have the hands-on experience and know real-world situations that can lead to even more successful careers.