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# HIGHER EDUCATION

## THOUGHT LEADER FORUM

**N**o doubt, it's an exciting time right now in Portland and the role of educational institutions and their business partners are more important than ever.

*Strategic partnerships are key in helping students create their future.*

*But how can higher education create a culture that allows it to effectively engage with its students and broader communities on challenging issues?*

*In search of answers to that question, we gathered four Thought Leaders in the higher education community to discuss how organizational approaches can support students and the community now and into the foreseeable future.*

*Portland Community College President Mark Mitsui; Cliff Allen, dean of Portland State University's School of Business; Naomi Haslitt, a partner at Miller Nash Graham & Dunn who serves on the education law practice team; and Josh Condon, a project executive at construction firm Howard S. Wright, discussed these issues with moderator Erica Heartquist on behalf of the Portland Business Journal.*

**Erica Heartquist:** How can institutions of higher education strengthen relationships with their communities through dynamic and strategic partnerships (i.e. public and private partnerships)?

**Mark Mitsui:** "Community" is our middle name, and we serve our community through many kinds of strategic partnerships, including partnerships with the business community. For example, we currently work with more than 1,600 employers, largely through our employer advisory councils. These councils are made up of subject matter experts that inform our curriculum and facilitate on-the-job and work-based learning opportunities, like cooperative education experiences, internships or apprenticeships. They also provide equipment, help us to network within the sector, and they hire our graduates at a pretty high rate.

**Cliff Allen:** I want to point to two things that are unique that we do. We are expanding our co-op program to be included across Portland State University. So a student will go work for six months for an employer, and the employer formally agrees to that. It includes English, it includes history, it includes a variety of things because

we know that the humanities have the best critical thinkers. We know that from our graduate programs, when you start to think about how they write and things like that, they're great at communication. The other thing that we do with the community is we work on really large problems. Currently, there are seven deans and several faculty and students at Portland State University that are working with the community to try to solve homelessness. We are in the city so we can do that with private and public partnerships. We're the place where we can have a reasonable conversation about the problem and we have the expertise to do the research and try to figure out what to do. There was a 2017 homeless census done by PSU students and faculty, commissioned by Multnomah County, which revealed there are 4,100 homeless people in Portland — which we know doesn't include children. So it may be twice to three times that much. We're trying to solve at least a part of that. And we do that in partnership with people like you all at this table, large corporations and individuals.

**Josh Condon:** First, having our higher education partners continue to perform check-ins with the

industry that Mark and Cliff are speaking about is key. The industries, and specifically the construction industry, are receiving the benefit of the education that you're both providing. It's really important that it's a two-way collaboration where the industry is talking with educators about what we need as employers and what innovations are coming out, and what we expect the future innovations will be in order to make sure that the correct education is being provided. In addition to having frequent conversations and partnering meetings with higher education faculty, Howard S. Wright puts a lot of effort and value in speaker meetings where we are talking with the students that are in the middle and end of their education. By sharing with the students firsthand the projects that we're working on, the ones that are coming up, and the new technologies that we are implementing, we are able to raise an excitement in the students. You get them interested in the industry so they can start asking faculty early on to train them on the trends and innovations current to the industry.

**Naomi Haslitt:** This discussion strikes a couple chords with me, as well. The programs you are describing

sound like great opportunities to open the door to higher education to students that might not see it as a viable option when they're in high school. When students see programs that allow them to offset the cost of education with paid internships or apprenticeships that provides the opportunity for them to say, "This is something that I can really do." And the work experience programs provide students not only the opportunity to learn about a work environment but also to develop skills that allow them to adapt to the changing needs in their field, both hard and soft skills that allow a student to know that, "Yes, I will be able to thrive in this work when I'm finished with school." For a higher education institution contemplating public and private partnerships, it can be important to understand early on in the process how nimble the institution can be within its mission, governing policies, and leadership so that the institution can identify how and when to move programs forward or change them as the market or community needs change.

**Heartquist:** How can higher education create a culture that allows

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## THOUGHT LEADER FORUM: HIGHER EDUCATION



### CLIFF ALLEN

#### DEAN, PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Dean Cliff Allen joined Portland State University in 2008 as an assistant professor. He's held roles developing new programs, recruiting faculty, and rose to associate dean of graduate business programs. He started the successful master's program in Global Supply Chain Management, which was named by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top 20 online graduate business programs in the country. He also started a program in Business Analytics and oversaw major curriculum updates to PSU's MBA and Master of Taxation programs.

Before joining PSU, Allen was a supply chain specialist in the private industry. He was senior vice president at General Dynamics in Spokane, Wash., and a vice president at 3Com Corp. in Salt Lake City. He also has been a supply chain and leadership consultant for companies such as Blount Industries, Hanna Andersson, The Standard Insurance, Fred Meyer Jewelers and the Bonneville Power Administration.



### NAOMI HASLITT

#### PARTNER, MILLER NASH GRAHAM & DUNN LLP

Naomi Haslitt advises public and private higher education institutions and public school districts on employment, accommodation issues arising under state and federal law, student, and other federal and state compliance issues. In addition to educational institutions, she defends employers in all areas of employment and labor law. She regularly counsels employers on day-to-day personnel issues and provides training to managers and employers. Naomi's practice focuses on defending claims for employment discrimination, disability discrimination and accommodation, wrongful discharge, and wage and hour, as well as other tort claims, in litigation and administrative agency proceedings.



### MARK MITSUI

#### PRESIDENT, PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Mark Mitsui began his tenure as president of Portland Community College on September 1, 2016.

Previously, President Mitsui served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges within the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education for the U.S. Department of Education. In Washington, he worked to advance President Obama's community college agenda through partnerships with numerous federal agencies and national stakeholders. This included co-leading the My Brother's Keeper Postsecondary Completion interagency team, working to improve college access and completion for the nation's young men of color.

Prior to serving in the Obama administration, Mitsui was president of North Seattle College in Washington state, from 2010 to 2013, and Vice President of Student Services at South Seattle College, beginning in 2006.



### JOSH CONDON

#### PROJECT EXECUTIVE, HOWARD S. WRIGHT

Josh Condon joined Howard S. Wright 12 years ago as a project engineer and quickly proved himself as a valuable asset, earning a promotion to project manager just two years later. In addition to his experience on alternative delivery projects such as RA-4, Josh has delivered many large-scale and complex health care and higher education projects for high-profile clients including Portland Community College, Legacy Health, Oregon State University, PeaceHealth, Kaiser Permanente, and Providence Health & Services. As project executive, Josh provides strategic oversight to the health care and higher education group in Portland ensuring the team has the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to deliver quality work and achieve continued growth within the department. Josh graduated from Oregon State University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and is a LEED-accredited professional.



Jeff Condit

Cody Elliott

Naomi Haslitt



Jollee Patterson

Mike Porter

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it to effectively engage with its students and broader communities on challenging social issues including civil rights' issues, Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo movement, equity, etc.?

**Condon:** I can offer a construction aspect of it. On our higher education construction projects, we think it's very important that students observe and recognize diversity on the projects. Maximizing the amount of diversity and inclusion that are on construction projects is something that the construction industry has not always been good at. It's getting much better, but we, as an industry, still have a long way to go. I think having a well-rounded workforce, especially on higher education projects, provides a first-hand experience for students and provides them an opportunity to say, "Once I graduate, I'm going toward this degree and here is someone that has a similar background as to where I'm from, doing the same thing that I am striving to do upon graduation." Something that we, as the construction industry, really need from the higher education institutions is just to make sure that that access to a growing pool of students is as diverse as possible. The talent pool that we're getting our talent from is always continuing to progress and having that as an opportunity for everybody is really what we are looking to the higher education institutions to help us with.

**Allen:** It's interesting what has happened to the landscape in Portland and to our student body. Over the last five years, the face of our students has completely changed. Less than 50 percent of our students identify as white and that's a dramatic change throughout the city of Portland. What that's done is create much

need for identifying how we help students. We at Portland State's School of Business and most higher education institutions in urban environments have a retention of around 70 to 75 percent. That means 25 percent of our students are not graduating and they have some form of debt more than likely. So we have gone on a journey to fix that problem. What we found was that students of color, LGBTQ students and veterans had a special challenge with things like daycare. And our students all work. A lot of them are single parents, so we often talk about this demographic, and I think PCC has the same one, but a 27-year-old Latino with two jobs and a child. She's taking two accounting classes at night because she's trying to better her life. We started raising funds to pay for students' daycare. We started paying for things like utility bills. We clothe them for interviews and give away food and, by the way, when we give away food, the lines are around the building. We know we have homeless students and so all of that wraps up into "how do we get them graduated and into firms like yours to do great things?" So our retention numbers have started to increase because of all these extra things we've done and the community has been very generous in trying to help our students.

**Mitsui:** These things resonate a lot with me, personally, and with Portland Community College. I agree that community colleges have a very high percentage of students who are homeless or are experiencing housing and food insecurity. We know, too, that there is an intersection between poverty and equity. So we have highly talented and capable students who, if given an opportunity, can really make a positive difference for themselves, their family and their communities if their unmet financial needs can be met. We have student government-funded food pantries

on each of our campuses and these are extremely helpful. We also know that we need some work at the policy level to help our students meet the opportunity cost of going to school and therefore be able to study more and work less, and graduate and get a good job. We need both pantries and policy, I guess. So we're wondering, "Can we influence state policy around the integration of federal benefits?" We helped run a bill in the state legislature, HB-4043, and it passed. Prior to that, we received funding from the community college system, so we'll be able to convene all 17 community colleges in Oregon, the governor's office, and state agencies to talk about creating state policy around federal and state benefit programs so that the barriers to accessing them, for students attending school, are minimized. That way, students can take more credits, study more, work less, and graduate. And there is no better way out of poverty than through education. We have a similar demographic to PSU. Twenty-eight is the average age of our credit students, with many of them also being parents - tuition is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the cost of attendance. Through great strategic partnerships with state agencies like the Department of Human Services, we have been able to increase access to the community colleges for low-income students through something called the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) 50/50 Program. This program combines food assistance with education and career pathways to move students out of poverty. In order to support more equitable student success, we have also incorporated Critical Race Theory into the way we do business at PCC - even applying it to facilities planning and evaluating how space reflects this. We're gradually infusing cultural competence into the curriculum. We're not there yet - in fact, we've

just begun. But we're trying to intentionally and strategically embed it within the college, and as part of our strategic plan.

**Allen:** To your point about having faculty and staff be sensitive and have cultural shifts toward where our students are today, that's been a major, major effort on PSU's part. For instance, we know that the transgender community is growing in our classrooms. So we put all of our faculty through pronoun training so that they identify correctly. You'll see their email signatures will have their identification pronouns, so we're trying to meet students where they are. One last thing about homelessness: we know there are food deserts in Portland. The Southeast 82nd Avenue Fred Meyer closed its store and now it's very expensive to be poor. Folks have to buy things at 711 now versus buying them at a grocery store. They come to school and they're hungry and they don't even have access to food like others do. We have challenges as community leaders beyond our campus that we have to consider. And that takes resources. That's the hard part.

**Haslitt:** Diversity of thought and experience is a tremendous asset in any educational environment or workplace. At the same time, students with different life experiences may face different, and perhaps more challenging situations, as they move through their academic experience. It is important to "meet them where they are" as opposed to forcing the student to search out resources when they're in a time of crisis that may impede their ability to obtain their degree in a timely way or cause them just to exit academia altogether. It can be challenging for institutions to make sure that it has the right personnel with the right services

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in the right place for those individuals that need to access them. That can often mean pushing out information and services more than expected. Today's students also seem to often be on the forefront of issues impacting their own civil rights and college campuses are the places where those conversations are happening. If a student feels that they are in an environment where they are thriving, then they're going to continue through those challenges. But there can often be tension between safe spaces and freedom of speech. And it is a balancing act to make sure that an institution is providing deference to both of those concepts with its students and surrounding community.

**Mitsui:** We declared our college a "sanctuary college" not too long after the election. We've established a resource center for undocumented students and their families, which students led. The students really advocated for it, and we responded to that need. You do raise a really good point about the conflict between freedom of speech — not wanting to allow a hostile climate and wanting to be supportive of our students. We turned to our philosophy faculty, as many of them are part of PCC's "Center for Civic Participation." They help to facilitate grassroots dialogue on how to have courageous but difficult conversations. One of the first questions we heard from faculty after the election was, "Okay, what if it does come up, and you want to talk about it — what are some of the ground rules to establish?"

**Allen:** We are the access university for both the city and the state, frankly. What we've found is that for these new majority students, we do case competitions against University of Oregon, University of Washington and all over the northwest, and we win. They prove themselves time and time again when given the opportunity. There is no reason to think that these students aren't just as good as any other student we've ever had. Many, in fact, are better in some cases. To your point about "Black Lives Matter" and the #MeToo movement, we've found two things: we've hired advisors that look like our students. We're also trying to do that with faculty but that's harder because we have a tenure model. So we're trying very hard and we're getting there in some cases. The advisors that look like students are the ones that build the trust with the students. That has helped. Also, we've embraced activism and I love it. It reminds me of when I was a kid. It's great as long as it's done in a way that's thoughtful. I think it adds value. It's important to young people to be able to embrace new ideas. As I told my faculty, "Remember, 22 percent of the people here voted for Trump. So when you are talking in the classroom, embrace both sides and be ready to have and allow discussions to take place." We do have students that think the opposite, so we have to be open to all discussions.

**Condon:** When it comes to contracting, the question tends to lean towards how are we measuring against our pre-established or contracted diversity metrics? While it is a great place to start, if the objective is to simply meet a percentage, then we're not doing our job as a community. The real reason that we're working to change construction to a naturally diverse industry, is to be a reflection of the diversity of our community and provide equal opportunity in a construction related career. It's getting the different backgrounds, it's getting the different ways of thinking about things and coming together and solving problems, which

is what we do as contractors. And so, if we're merely chasing goals, we are not keeping our focus on the point of the programs. This is very important for our industry — owners, contractors, and trade partners alike — to keep in mind. And Mark, I don't want to steal your thunder, but one thing that is impressive to me is PCC's and PSU's commitment to having venues for everyone to have a voice. We recently turned over a space at the PCC Sylvania Campus. The space was the last phase of the PCC Mall Area where there are numerous different resource centers. To have a resource center where conversations can take place, where people can go talk to somebody and have discussions about, "This is how I'm feeling. What should I do about it?" Just to be able to have that resource is huge. It's a truly awesome

and was inspiring to be able to be a part of.

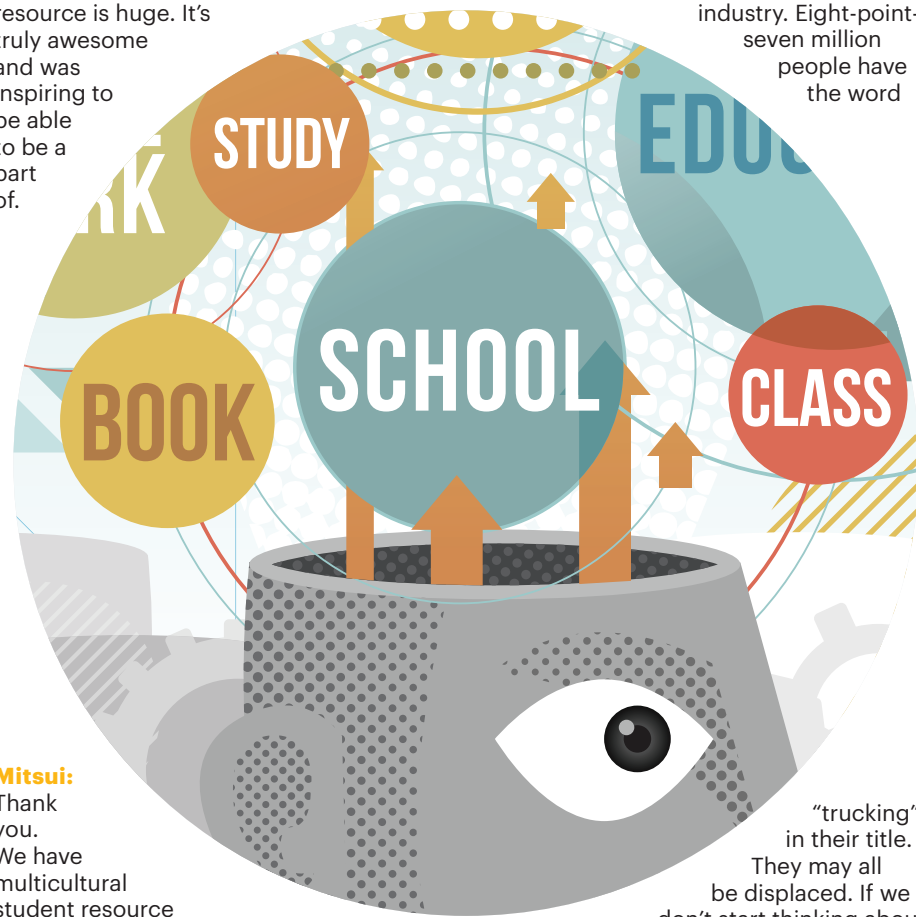
**Mitsui:** Thank you. We have multicultural student resource centers, queer resource centers, veteran's resource centers, and the DREAMer center, and they are the generative sources of programming and strategies. The day after the election, I walked through the centers to see how people were doing. The centers were crowded — they were places where folks felt they could come, to be in community.

**Heartquist:** What does your organization do to ensure that you optimize the value that students receive from higher education?

**Mitsui:** Part of it is taking a look at the career pathways we are establishing, and asking what is the entry wage? What does wage progression look like? How resistant to automation is this sector? We don't want to train folks for a career that's going to disappear in a few years. How willing is the sector to support and recruit people of color? Then, taking all those factors into account, we look strategically at those sectors for which we want to prepare our students. And we need to think through our partnerships. Who are the employers we want to reach out to and partner with? Data is not everything, and not everything that counts can be measured, but data does help provide perspective and a starting point for discussion. We have four campuses, so research has to be modified to each part of our region. For instance, the demand for manufacturing might be a little bit different at Rock Creek than it is at Southeast. How do we tailor data so that students have the best information in order for them to be able to move into a specific industry?

**Allen:** I have this really weird job; I'm not trying to think about what happens next year, I'm supposed to think about what's happening four to five years from now with our students and what they're learning. And what that creates, to your point about how curriculum change can be slow and how do institutions maneuver that, it's more important than ever, and we do have some ways to do that. Jobs have changed and it's not the same landscape as it used to be. Productivity is not measured by agility of people in the factory. It's measured by automation and other mechanisms. We know with machine learning, for instance, that's going to dramatically change the worker, even five years from now.

Autonomous vehicles are going to disrupt the trucking industry. Eight-point-seven million people have the word



"trucking" in their title. They may all be displaced. If we don't start thinking about the answers to these things now in the community college and before, I mean, that's not that far away, we have to worry about those people and what will happen. So, again, homelessness plays into this and the politicians can do whatever they want, but I'm sorry, coal mining is not coming back. The cost per kilowatt of solar has completely taken over coal. When you look at the jobs that generate and build solar cells versus mine coal, that's the demonstration of how the worker has changed. So we have to educate that worker to work in those kinds of conditions and that kind of machine learning and all of that. I tell my alumni, you got your MBA five years ago, it's obsolete because we weren't talking about big data and analytics and predictive behavior, etc., back then. So lifelong learning is upon us and how do institutes of higher education figure that out? The days of going to the academy, moving on and then never looking back are not going to happen any longer.

**Mitsui:** Lifelong learning makes a lot of sense. Naomi, you mentioned the transferable skills that apply, like humanities learning outcomes, which we are hearing a lot about from employers. While employers do want technical skills, they certainly want critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, too. These are key skills for the 21st Century workplace. Change, like in IT and software design, is happening so quickly that no program can really keep up with it. At PCC, we have a credit side of the house and also a non-credit side. The non-credit side is made up of non-

credit bearing, short-term credentials. Industry-recognized credentials that we're especially focused on are in the health care and business sectors, but the spotlight could be expanded to other areas.

**Allen:** That's where we get to test new programs and the community votes with its feet. So if we're hitting the nerve that they need, they come. They're less expensive and allow you less approval through the faculty, etc., but I think faculty are also very much aware of the changes and I think much more agile than they used to be. It happens to them in their classrooms, they have to teach these things, so being current is important because the students are current.

**Haslitt:** It seems that your institutions' engagement of cost effective and strategic scholarship opportunities can really help with the burden that comes along with student loan debt and ultimately an individual's ability to move into up-and-coming areas of business and opportunities that they might not otherwise be able to take advantage of if the student has the equivalent of a mortgage as they enter into the workforce. These programs really seem to provide that opportunity to lower the cost and provide a more efficient way to get through school while learning the skills one needs in their chosen field but also having the ability to move with the market when it changes, because it inevitably will.

**Condon:** First and foremost, as contractors, keeping construction costs as low as possible while maximizing value for our clients is always a very large part of our business. The goal of the colleges is not to solely have a beautiful building, it's to provide an amazing education. For contractors to have a deep understanding of the clients' objectives, goals, and desired outcomes of a project are vital to manage the process to optimize value and control costs. By implementing a target value design process, it allows the colleges to meet desired budgets and preserve financial resources to be directed to the actual training and education and to not overspend on construction. It's not having a beautiful project that's over budget. Obviously, that's never a goal. Knowing the goals of the project and implementing Target Value Design to achieve these goals is where the construction industry really needs to focus, and I think for the most part, the high-quality contractors that are present in the Portland market are doing a very good job of that. Second, is to provide opportunities to students through assisting with scholarships, paid internships, and with mentoring. In reality, these programs are a win-win for Contractors because we're helping train the future leaders of our industry.

**Haslitt:** Professional firms like ours invest a lot of resources into employees, and when we do that, we want to not only hire great people, but retain and advance them and make them into leaders. We could always spend more time thinking about how we can partner and make sure that we are effectively working with our experts, meaning your institutions, to get that training and those opportunities, even if it's not another degree but a skill that needs to be learned to be successful as a business moving forward.

**Allen:** In the business school, we have the community at the table when we develop our programs. We've designed programs with them in mind. And so that's been an important part of the curriculum development. I wanted to say one other thing. There's a time-efficient, executive and professional education we call CEPE, or Center for Executive and



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Professional Education, where you can come in and it costs less money, etc. But there is something still to the academy type learning. What we have found is, especially with the humanity students that come in, critical thinking is one thing but design thinking is another. So we want art students to sit next to engineers who sit next to business people designing the automobile. Because I know business people would design a very ugly automobile. So how do you have that kind of education side-by-side? That's what the academy does; it allows that kind of thinking to be created, and that's why a university is there.

**Mitsui:** Things have changed so quickly. How does art and 3D printing relate? What are the intersections? The membrane between academic and technical education is becoming much more permeable, setting the stage for more interdisciplinary work. Employers see the value of people who are good with people and problem solving, who understand their field and can communicate it to others. It is also important that as we look at increasing the educational and skill levels of Oregonians, that we also think about the 440,000 adults in Oregon who have less than an associate's degree and are making less than \$15 an hour. Ten percent of Oregon's adult population doesn't have a high school credential. This economy has already left them behind, yet two-thirds of them are working — but in low-skilled, low-paid jobs. So part of what we have designed to help them "skill-up" is a career pathway concept whereby we integrate wrap-around services with short-term, stackable credentials and financial support. Our data shows a 94 percent completion rate, with a 91 percent completion rate for students of color.

**Heartquist:** How does your organization ensure that inclusion and diversity is present on your construction projects?

**Condon:** The benefit of inclusion and maximizing diversity is really about maximizing the different minds that are at the table tackling the challenges that arise in construction projects. Howard S. Wright's philosophy is to create opportunities and maximize inclusion on all projects, no matter what size the project is. "No project is too big or too small" is our guiding principle. Having subcontractors and suppliers in the conversation early to participate in developing an inclusion plan is key to achieving a plan that will optimize inclusion and diversity. Some smaller businesses might not want to take on a larger project. How do we provide opportunities for subcontractors and suppliers that hire a lot of their workforce from PCC and PSU? How do we provide them with opportunities to grow in a way that they're comfortable with? These are the types of questions we ask ourselves when we are collaborating on our strategy to optimize diversity and inclusion on our construction projects.

**Mitsui:** Our elected board has a very strong interest here and has approved, through resolutions, different contracting models to allow for this. Because if you always have to go with the lowest bidder, it limits how you can structure a contract to support equity and support access for firms. Howard S. Wright and other general contractors have done a really good job of also mentoring the subcontractors and

helping them to grow and develop.

**Haslitt:** It's interesting that you mentioned equity, because one of the things we've been noting as a staff and as we think about projects, is while diversity, inclusion and "sitting at the table" is important, we are learning and seeing that equity is essential, and it's just as important to provide the opportunity for meaningful participation and leadership. You're not just at the table, you're actually leading the conversation.

**Allen:** Portland is a unique place, we all know that. I would say that the social innovation part of construction has completely changed. We're not just looking at a metric anymore. People want to know the list of, "Okay, who falls within that and how can we go beyond that metric and how can we help everybody at the table?" It's the

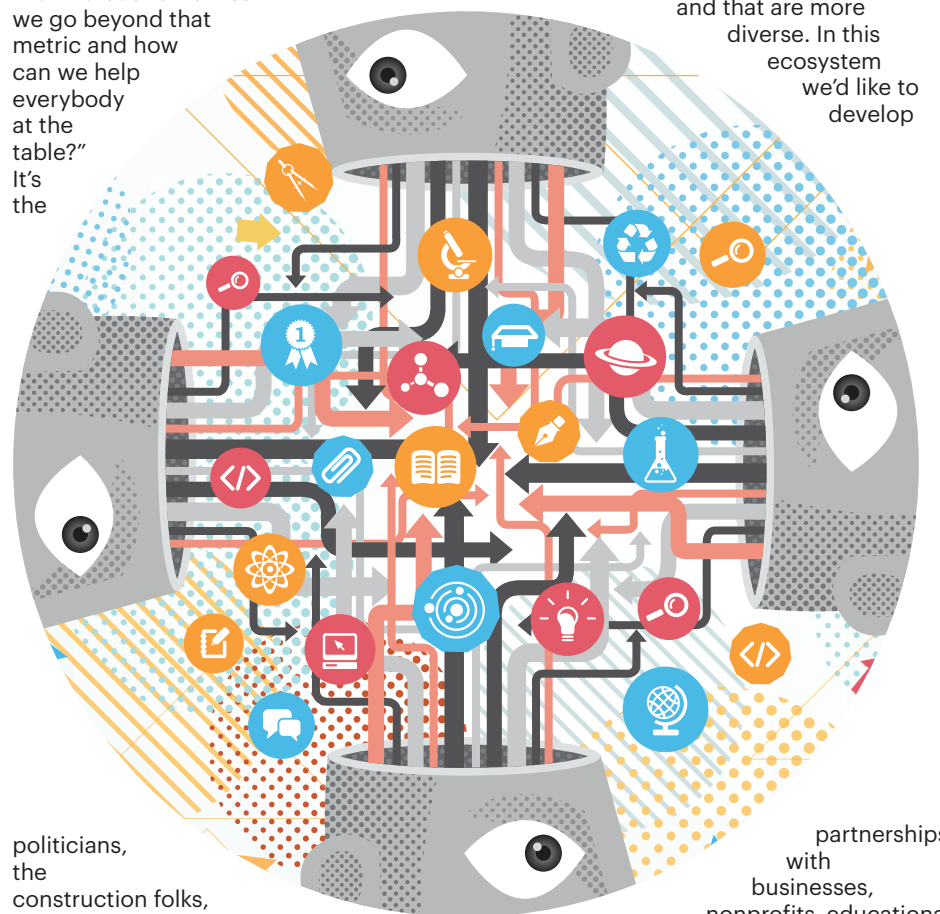
politicians, the construction folks, it's the community at large and it's the community of PSU and probably PCC as well. It's no longer just a number. It's actually something we all want to do because we have to. Because if we are not going to grow that opportunity for people then we're not going to be able to build the buildings and it has nothing to do with the metrics. It has to do with the changing labor force.

**Heartquist:** Describe the current relationship between business and industry and post-secondary education. In what ways do you partner, and what seems to work well?

**Allen:** I haven't mentioned something yet and I'm sure everyone would agree. I think the partnership between nonprofits and higher education institutions is more important than ever. The reason for that is that we do have these homeless students and we want to change that before they become a student if possible. And so, not just the traditional social work and urban policy, which is super important so I don't want to take away from that, but now the business schools engage with a number of nonprofits encouraging our faculty to serve on boards of nonprofits. This is where our community goes to get help. And so, having us tuned in to what's going

on there is super important. And I feel that that's become a change that I've seen; a positive one. So all of that engagement. Experiential learning is super important, not just in the institutions but also at the firms. They love it too, by the way. Employees are happier and they feel like they're making a huge difference.

**Mitsui:** I think we see this as a critical point in time for this region where we still have a robust recovery. However, the recovery hasn't helped all communities equally. And with the ever-increasing cost of living, particularly related to housing, we're seeing more and more gentrification. We're seeing communities at risk of displacement, communities that tend to have lower educational attainment, be lower income, and that are more diverse. In this ecosystem we'd like to develop



partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and others, to identify open jobs and skills-gaps, and to recognize that we've got communities that would love these jobs. How do we broaden that bridge so that we can develop a more equitable prosperity and provide the skilled workforce — not only for today, but for tomorrow? How do we reach out with an equity lens to communities that have traditionally been underserved? Much of this we've already talked about in terms of the strategies for support and recruitment of partnerships with nonprofits and businesses, and so that educational institutions are able to respond to changing demands while also helping students get through the pipeline. It's both an exciting and interesting time.

**Allen:** Part of it is educating and students don't even know at the high school level that these jobs exist. They may never even try to get one because they don't know it's there. The one I laugh about is that the Nike Air Jordan doesn't just fall out of the sky. People actually design it and build it. We've tried to start partnering and teach courses in business at the high school level just to get them exposed to thinking about things like that. That's how we get to that community that's underserved is by helping that population.

**Mitsui:** PCC serves nearly 7,000 high school students through a variety of programs and dual credit offerings saving these students about \$4 million per year in tuition and so, you're right, that there is tremendous opportunity. We're working on creating a more strategic, coherent set of policies with our K-12 partners.

**Heartquist:** What does your organization do to help mentor and train the new workforce to ensure that they are ready for their careers?

**Condon:** We provide paid internships that provide an avenue for people to not only help with the cost of education, but also to give them insight into what they're going to be doing once they graduate. It's this on-the-job mentorship that gets them hands on experience. Additionally, getting to the students when they're young and showing them what it's like to be an architect, a contractor or an engineer in programs like ACE. To show them first hand "this is what a construction project looks like" and "this is what you'd be doing if you were going to sit down and work 40, 50, 60 hours a week in an engineering firm."

**Allen:** I've honestly never been more optimistic about students. The students are incredibly resourceful and they are so smart. Again, meeting them where they are, not only from a higher education perspective, but frankly from the workforce perspective, the world is changing. And so we need to somehow meet them. Portland should be proud, to be honest.

**Condon:** Speaking of what Portland should be proud of, there are a lot of high-quality construction companies that are located in Portland. If you go to other cities, this is not always the case. All indicators show that it's not going to slow down. Construction is going to stay on the rise due to the demand on higher education, health care and the residential market. So the continuation of the collaboration of making sure education and the demands of the future workforce is key to the success of Portland's growth.

**Haslitt:** And I think we view our professional relationships as evolving and one that we hope to maintain over a lifetime, not just a small window; we try to find opportunities to support and nurture those relationships. We have attorneys in our firm who originally connected with the firm as support staff who have decided to become attorneys, gone to law school, and eventually become partners at the firm. We strive to provide not only continued professional development and mentorship within our organization but also look at opportunities outside of our organization for leadership within the community. Overall, being in the legal practice and specializing in higher education, it feels like we are in a very dynamic and exciting time. The conversations that are happening are challenging but they are incredibly interesting both from a curriculum and student perspective but also how we are working with the faculty and managing those dynamics. It feels as though we are in a time of evolution that is requiring some strategic thinking and flexibility that we really see and appreciate in our education partners.

**For more information on Thought Leader Forums:**

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