

## NEWS RELEASE

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## METS, Manners and More Learning Key to Future Career Success

*Missouri Workforce 2025 report reveals gaps, opportunities*

With diplomas in hand, thousands of Missouri high school and college graduates are polishing their résumés with hopes for a bright future. They are now entering the workforce of the 21st century, one that is rapidly evolving.

So what should students and present workforce members do now to make their résumés relevant in the future?

Just asking that question is a good start, says Rod Nunn, who was appointed by Governor Matt Blunt in October as Missouri's first Director of Education and Workforce Innovation.

"The only way to get prepared is to look ahead," he says. "Though we cannot predict line-for-line what a résumé of the future will look like, we can look at current trends to see what skills and educational attainments are becoming more important for 21st century careers."

Anticipating future workforce needs was one of the goals of the Workforce 2025 report. This report was published in December by the Missouri P-20 Council, a group created by state law to coordinate learning from preschool education (P) to graduate school and the workforce (20). The report provides a wealth of data on how Missouri's workforce and economic landscape will, and will not, be different in 2025.

The fastest growing and highest paying occupations in Missouri will generally require advanced education and training, according to Nunn. For example, careers that typically call for an associate degree are projected to increase by 21.8 percent; doctoral degree, 21.6 percent; and first professional degree, 17.2 percent.

***The Workforce 2025 report points to three ways Missourians can get ready now for the demands of the future – continuously update knowledge and skills, hone one's "soft skills," and explore opportunities in math, engineering, technology and science careers.***

### *Explore METS*

One of the most serious shortcomings the P-20 group found was the state's underproduction of graduates with a strong foundation in math, engineering, technology and science (METS). According to the report, the group of METS-related occupations is "projected to grow at a rate of 20 percent from 2004 to 2015 with over 22,000 openings," but the proportion of college students seeking METS degrees is on the decline. The inference for those who are still exploring degree options is that résumés strong in METS will be in high demand.

In fact, they already are, says Reba Phillips, director of human resources for McCarthy Building Cos. Inc., a St. Louis general contracting firm heavily populated by engineers.

“We are looking to hire about 300 new positions this year,” she says, adding the firm did the same in 2007. “That’s not attrition; that’s new slots that we need to do the work.”

And McCarthy is not unusual in its personnel needs, she says. Many construction firms are looking to add hundreds to their payrolls, which means qualified applicants — who must be strong in METS — are in a great position to find work.

The situation is similar in life sciences, says Dr. Keith Gary, director of program development at the Kansas City Area Life Sciences Institute. Though area life science companies are not having much trouble right now finding workers, several are planning to enlarge their workforce over the next few years, he says.

“I’m really concerned with how we’re going to meet that upcoming demand, especially when you look at national statistics, as well as regional statistics, that show fewer students are choosing METS careers.”

On a related note, the report found that all Missourians need to keep up with emerging technology, as some form of “digital literacy” will be required in all careers, from farming to health care.

“Being able to operate in a digital world is a necessity these days,” says John Lowry, general manager of the Harley-Davidson Motor Co. in Kansas City, an advanced manufacturing plant recently featured on National Geographic’s “Ultimate Factories” series. “Here at Harley-Davidson, we rely on digital technology for everything from managing the supply chain to scheduling production to shipping our products to dealers.”

### *Hone Soft Skills*

Though technology is changing the way Missourians work, employers also continue to place a high value on such “soft skills” as teamwork, integrity, professionalism and initiative.

Michael Dunaway, senior vice president of the Missouri Hospital Association, says the soft skills are often what bring the best candidates to the top of the applicant pool.

“While we screen for ‘hard skills,’ such as math competencies and reading comprehension, we are equally — if not more — interested in an applicant’s soft skills,” he says.

### *Never Stop Learning*

Missouri Workforce 2025 emphasizes that 60 percent of the 2025 workforce is already working. These adults will have to be deliberate about keeping themselves and their résumés up-to-date.

“It is a completely different workplace than it was 30 years ago when I began my career,” says Barbara Curry, a senior vice president at Kansas City Power & Light, and a chair of both the Full Employment Council and the Kansas City & Vicinity Area Workforce Investment Board.

“People who aren’t willing to embrace change are going to have a hard time.”

Lowry agrees and encourages workers to take control of their futures.

“Continuous education is critical if you want to be competitive,” he says. “I think the most important thing to remember is that you are the key to your own success. You are responsible for keeping up with new technologies and industry trends. If you stay current and continue to expand your knowledge, you will be able to write your own success story.”

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Fact sheet, graph, and more information are available at  
[http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri\\_connections\\_news\\_room.htm](http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm).

*The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Harrison.*