

ASSURING QUALITY IN APPRENTICESHIPS: A TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE

Speaker Biographies

Simon Ashworth is currently chief policy officer for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP). Formed over 15 years ago, AELP is a national trade association, representing the interest of over 900 organizations delivering vocational learning, sustainable employment, and employability support. Last academic year, AELP members delivered 76 percent of England's apprenticeships. Ashworth's first job was in the welfare-to-work sector at a small local training provider in Derby, and he has since worked for several training providers across business functions, including quality, curriculum development, supply chain management, and direct delivery. Ashworth represents AELP on the Institute for Apprenticeships Stakeholder Reference Panel, Education and Skills Funding Agency Provider Reference Group, Ofqual's Vocational & Technical Qualifications Reference Group, and the Student Loans Company Stakeholder Forum.

Sir Gerry Berragan, chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships, was a career soldier for 37 years, finishing as the adjutant general, responsible for all army personnel matters. Before this, he was director general for personnel and the director general army recruiting and training from 2008 to 2011. He has been involved in designing, delivering, and evaluating training for most of his career and has always been passionate about gaining accreditation for soldiers' considerable skills training. He became the army's apprentices ambassador in 2008, leading the effort that resulted in the army becoming the largest apprenticeship provider in the country, offering more than 45 nationally recognized training schemes. He brings this practical leadership experience of delivering high-quality training and successful apprenticeships at scale to his current role. He is also chairman of the Forces Pension Society, a not-for-profit membership organization providing advice and support to members of the armed forces' pension schemes.

Tom Bewick, president of the Transatlantic Apprenticeship Exchange Forum has 20 years of strategic leadership and entrepreneurial experience and is a leading authority on the effective expansion and delivery of apprenticeship programs throughout the United States and United Kingdom. Bewick maintains expertise in key industry areas, such as government and industry engagement, vocational training, education, and enterprise policy. He also plans international apprenticeship reforms and leads efforts to eliminate long-term youth unemployment. Tom has written numerous influential publications, including several comparative works about successful apprenticeship.

Thomas Burton, head of assessment at the NOCN Group, is an educational professional with over 15 years in the UK's further education sector. Burton has experience in both private and public education organizations, gaining extensive knowledge in the delivery, assessment, and quality assurance of both qualifications and apprenticeship end-point assessments. Burton has operated across many academic and vocational subject areas, ranging from entry level to level six. Burton was a hospitality apprentice and vocational learner after leaving high school and became the lead culinary project manager for the 2012 London Olympic games, delivering food production operations at two Olympic sites.

John Ladd, administrator of the Office of Apprenticeship at the US Department of Labor, oversees the National Registered Apprenticeship System. The National Registered Apprenticeship System operates in cooperation with state agencies, businesses, industry, employers, employer associations, labor and management organizations, and educational institutions. It is the nationally recognized credentialing system for skilled and technical occupational training programs with almost 500,000 active apprentices in the US. Before this, Ladd served as the deputy administrator for the Office of National Response and the director of regional management in the Office of Field Operations. Ladd has been in numerous leadership positions for major Employment and Training Administration initiatives, including Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development, InnovatETA, and the Employment and Training Administration's Transformational Forums. Ladd has received numerous awards and honors while at the Employment and Training Administration, including being selected for the inaugural Excellence in Leadership Program class. Ladd also has extensive experience in the Employment and Training Administration's regional offices, having spent several years working with workforce development programs at the Boston office. Ladd first came to the Department of Labor as a presidential management fellow in 1993. He also has experience at the local level of the public workforce system, having worked in Boston, MA and Stamford, CT. A Boston native, Ladd received his bachelor's from Boston University and his master's in public policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Susanna Lawson, chief executive officer and cofounder of OneFile, started her career as a psychology graduate from the University of Manchester and went on to work with adults with learning difficulties. Lawson then had to complete a national vocational qualification in care to prove her practical competencies, and her involvement in vocational training began. After completing her national vocational qualification levels two and three, she was appointed the national contract manager for an independent training provider, overseeing one thousand apprentices across the UK. Throughout her journey, she witnessed inefficiencies at every stage of the sector, and together with her partner, decided to build a solution: OneFile. OneFile is now the leading e-portfolio software in the educational sector. By developing the latest innovations in paperless technology, OneFile has generated unprecedented efficiencies across the sector: from 84 percent savings in paper and printing to over 1,000 percent returns on investment. Apprentice completions increased by 20 percent and engagement by 32 percent. Onefile won the Queen's Award for Innovation, and Lawson was awarded Forward Ladies/HSBC National Business Woman of the Year in December 2017. She is also a member of BAME Apprenticeship Alliance Advisory Panel and the Mayor of Greater Manchester's Business Advisory Panel. Lawson continues to be an ambassador for the vocational training sector in the UK and in the US.

Mardy Leathers was appointed to serve as the director of the Missouri Division of Workforce Development in 2017. Since then, he has served an integral role in shaping novel and innovative models to expand apprenticeship and work-based learning programs in Missouri, played a key role in the state's Talent for Tomorrow and Best in Midwest initiatives, and led the launch of an apprenticeship partnership with the United Kingdom. Before becoming the director of workforce development, he most recently served as executive director of the Center for Workforce Development at East Central College in Union, Missouri. There, he played a key role in developing the statewide Community College Workforce Development Network and oversaw the college's business and industry training efforts, community education, health care career certification, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs. Leathers also served as Crawford County, Missouri Clerk and holds a bachelor's from Southeast Missouri State University, a master's from William Woods University, and is a doctor of management candidate with Webster University.

Robert Lerman is an Institute fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute, a professor of economics at American University, and a research fellow at IZA in Bonn, Germany. A leading expert on apprenticeship, he recently established the American Institute for Innovative Apprenticeship. His current research focuses on skills, employer training, apprenticeship programs in the United States and abroad, and housing policies. Lerman's published research covers employment issues, earnings and income inequality, family structure, income support, and youth development, especially as they affect low-income populations. In the 1970s, he worked as staff economist for both the Congressional Joint Economic Committee and the US Department of Labor. He was one of the first scholars to examine the patterns and economic determinants of unwed fatherhood and to propose a youth apprenticeship strategy in the United States. He served on the National Academy of Sciences panel on the US postsecondary education and training system and on the Maryland Task Force on Economic Development and Apprenticeship. Lerman has testified before congressional committees on youth apprenticeship, child support policies, and the information technology labor market. Lerman earned his bachelor's at Brandeis University and his doctorate in economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Simon Marti is the head of the Office of Science, Technology, and Higher Education at the Embassy of Switzerland in the US. In this capacity, he and his team focus on strengthening the bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the fields of science, technology, and education; they cover the respective policies and showcase the Swiss higher education, research, and innovation landscape. Until summer 2016, Marti worked with the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation in Bern, Switzerland, as a project manager in education management and research. Previously, he conducted postdoctoral research at Columbia University in New York City (Fellowship by the Swiss National Science Foundation) and worked for the European Parliament and the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration, among others. He is a political scientist and holds a doctorate from the University of Basel and a master's from the University of Bern. Before entering academia, he started out on a vocational and professional education and training pathway.

Jim Rosapepe is an environmentalist and education champion leading the fight to protect Maryland working families from attacks on their values, rights, and pocketbooks. In the Maryland House, he fought to protect open space, improve public schools, boost the University of Maryland, hold down taxes on middle class working and retired families, and protect Maryland neighborhoods from drugs and crime. In 1997, President Bill Clinton asked him to serve as US Ambassador to Romania, where he worked to make the world a safer place. After returning to the US in 2001, Governor Glendening appointed Rosapepe to the Board of Regents of the University System of Maryland. He championed the College Park campus, and he led the fight against state budget cuts to the University of Maryland and against double-digit tuition hikes. He helped draft and pass legislation to restore what was cut and cap tuition hikes. Now, in the Maryland Senate, he works to protect working families as a member of the Finance Committee and the Senate Democratic Leadership, as well as Senate Chair of the Joint Technology Committee and the Prince George's Delegation.

Katie Spiker is senior federal policy analyst with National Skills Coalition, working to advance Washington-based policy efforts through federal legislation, agency regulation, and national funding initiatives. In this capacity, Spiker analyzes proposed and existing federal workforce, postsecondary education, and human services policies. With National Skills Coalition field staff, she assists local leaders with their advocacy efforts on these issues in the district. Before joining National Skills Coalition in 2015, Spiker was the associate director of the National Center for Women's Employment Equity at Wider Opportunities for Women, where she managed the design and provision of on-site and virtual technical assistance and the creation of case studies and policy briefs on nontraditional occupations and occupational segregation. Spiker has also consulted with the Institute for Women's Policy Research and the National Women's Law Center. She served as policy counsel for Workplace Flexibility 2010 and the National Partnership for Women and Families as a women's law and public policy fellow. Spiker is a 2015 Ford Foundation public voices fellow. She holds a juris doctorate from Georgetown University Law Center and a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami.

Spenser Villwock, chief executive officer of Independent Electrical Contractors, is keenly focused on keeping the electrical and systems contracting industry at the cutting edge from coast to coast. Over the last five years, Independent Electrical Contractors has doubled their electrical apprentices from 2,400 companies that they educate in 51 training centers across the country. Villwock is a seasoned association executive with over 26 years of developing new programs, procedures, and additional value-add for key stakeholders. Villwock holds a master's in nonprofit management, the US Chamber of Commerce Institute of Management designation, a certified association executive designation, LEED-AP (existing buildings) accreditation, and a bachelor's degree in English.

Sarah Watts-Rynard joined Polytechnics Canada as chief executive officer in 2018. Before this role, she served as executive director of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, supporting Canada's apprenticeship community with research, promotion, and by connecting stakeholders across trades and sectors throughout Canada. After moving to Ottawa in 1990, Watts-Rynard worked in the offices of various members of Parliament both during and after earning her degree in journalism and English at Carleton University. She worked at a local defense contractor as a marketing coordinator between 2000 and 2002. In 2002, she joined the staff of the Textiles Human Resources Council, a nonprofit sector council based in Ottawa. There, she was director of communications and operations until joining the staff of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum in 2010. During her tenure at the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, Watts-Rynard led efforts to overhaul the organization's governance and membership model. She has been an active and outspoken advocate of the important role tradespeople play in the Canadian economy. Watts-Rynard serves on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Centre of Women in Science, Engineering, Trades, and Technology and the Canadian Club of Ottawa.