

Apprenticeships During the Pandemic: Cross-National Lessons Learned in Germany and the US

Speaker Biographies

Stefan Dietl is the Head of Global Vocational Education at Festo Didactic. In his role, he has helped to initiate vocational education departments and training centers in China, India, Hungary, and the US. He has worked at Festo Didactic since 1996 including as an instructor and as Deputy Head of Vocational Education prior to taking on his current role in 2007. He is the author of seven books and 100 articles in Germany and is co-author of the “Handbook for Trainers.” He went through an apprenticeship before obtaining a degree in Business Administration and Pedagogy from the University of Applied Sciences in Würzburg-Schweinfurt.

Diana Elliott is a principal research associate in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute. Her work focuses on families’ financial security and economic mobility and the programs and policies that support them, including housing affordability, apprenticeships, and financial empowerment. Elliott was previously research manager of the Pew Charitable Trusts’ work on financial security and economic mobility, where she was instrumental in fielding a major national survey on American family finances and published numerous reports and briefs about the state of financial well-being and economic mobility in the United States. Before joining Pew, Elliott was a family demographer in the fertility and family statistics branch in the Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division at the US Census Bureau. Elliott holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Miriam Farnbauer is the project director of the Skills Initiative, an effort that promotes apprenticeship training based on the German Dual Education System in the US. To help tackle the global skills shortage in the tech and manufacturing industry, Farnbauer leads a number of projects to enable dialogue and cooperation between the US and Germany. Her focus is to bring stakeholders at a local, regional and national level together to create a sustainable pipeline of talent and solutions. She is a participant of the NextGen Leadership Initiative of the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany and serves as a board member of the Los Angeles chapter of the American Council on Germany. Farnbauer holds a master’s degree in Education and Intercultural Communication from the University of Augsburg, Germany.

Chun Lu is the Director of Microsoft Apprenticeship Programs and Co-Founder of Microsoft Leap Apprenticeship Program. She is passionate about developing and empowering unconventional talent to pursue their dreams with a career in the technology industry. Before joining Microsoft in 2012, Chun served as an HR business professional, supporting multiple engineering, sales, and marketing organizations. Chun earned her master’s degree in Human Resources Management from the University of Regina, Canada, and holds a bachelor’s degree in English Literature from China. Chun has proven to be a successful HR Business leader throughout her career, whose business-driven approach ensures deliverability, compassion, and best-in-class customer service. Since its launch in 2015, Microsoft Leap Apprenticeship Program’s (website and LinkedIn) mission has been to recruit, develop, upskill talented people from all walks of life with the goal of global employability. Under Chun’s stewardship, Microsoft Leap prioritizes non-traditional, highly diverse candidates who showcase creativity, commitment, resilience, non-linear, and problem-solving ability. Proudly 98% of Microsoft Leap graduates are employed in the technology industry worldwide. “It’s partly about upskilling, but it’s more about confidence-building and becoming a lifelong learner...We just don’t value differences; Microsoft Leap seeks them out and invites them in,” says Lu. In her spare time, Chun enjoys being with her family on outdoor adventures and volunteering on give-back activities. Building opportunities through innovation, collaboration, and culture have not only been the

cornerstone of Chun's work, but it has served as a foundation for Lu as a mother, daughter, and wife. Often found quoting Helen Keller, Chun understands the importance of being a dreamer and how working as a collective can make a global vision come to life.

Bruce Noble is a Regional Director for the Energy Construction & Utilities Sector initiative powered by California Community College's Chancellor's Office for career pathways and employment pipeline creation, economic and workforce development, and CTE program alignment. Bruce has management services and business development, including international business, experience in energy, environmental mitigation, transportation and industrial equipment business and product development, and commercialization of service and distribution and supply chain channels. He has an MBA from Pepperdine University, George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management.