2024 NEWSLETTER
MSU FUTURE OF WORK INITIATIVE

In This Issue

Future of Work was created in 2020 as a Thematic Area by the College of Social Science. The initiative has grown tremendously in 2024, thanks to our incredible academic, industry, and community partners. We are thrilled about the work that is being done at MSU and the connections we have forged between researchers and community and industry leaders. We are grateful for your continuing support and participation. Please read on for a summary of our 2024 activities and news about future opportunities.

Dr. Tara Behrend,
Future of Work Initiative Director

Research Collaboration Opportunities

In Spring 2025, we will launch a survey of Michigan Businesses to better understand their needs and concerns regarding workforce development, skills, technology, and the changing landscape of work. We invite all FOW community members from industry, government, and academia to help us build this survey! We will make the dataset available to all who contribute. If there is a question you would like us to include in the survey, please submit the request here. Our team will incorporate as many requests as feasible while building the survey.

Submit your ideas for the FOW Survey!

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A team of MSU researchers across four colleges has begun planning a collaborative effort focusing on human-technology interaction in skilled trade occupations, including welding and construction. The core team includes Tara Behrend, Vaibhav Srivastava, Hye Jin Rho, Surya Congress, Yu Kong, Robby Ratan, Kevin Hoff, and Sinem Mollaoglu. Researchers who are interested in joining this collaborative effort can contact tsb@msu.edu.

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2024 Convening

In March 2024, we hosted a convening to bring together researchers, industry leaders, educators, and community partners to drive conversation about how to address challenges related to the changing landscape of work and the rise of AI and automation. Co-organized by Dorothy Carter, Nathan Carter, and Tara Behrend, with opening remarks from CSS Dean Brent Donnellan and Interim Provost Thomas Jeitschko, the day featured flash talks from psychology, economics, geography, law, HRLR, supply chain management, education, construction management, and engineering; and lively discussions from all 70 attendees.

We look forward to fostering the partnerships we have built between academics and industry leaders to benefit the workforce in Michigan and beyond.

Dr. Behrend introduces Drs. Carter, Chang, Mollaoglu, and Srivastava as part of a panel discussion

Panelists

Human-Technology Systems: Dorothy Carter, Daisy Chang, Sinem Mollaoglu, Vaibhav Srivastava

Skills and Training: Kevin Hoff, Amanda Chuan, Guo Chen

Governance and Policy: Kristine Bowman, Angela Hall, Emilie Jackson, Arnold Weinfeld

Access to Work: Ann Marie Ryan, Peter Berg, Hung Jen Kuo, Sriram Narayanan

Wenjia Cao, an economics PhD student, presents her winning research poster on AI and skill groups

Janet Lillie, MSU Assistant Vice President for Community Relations, delivered a keynote that described the landscape of Michigan workforce development leaders. A closing keynote from Dr. Ruth Watkins, President of the Strada Education Network, challenged attendees to re-envision the future of the land grant university and how we can better serve working learners of the future.

Leaders from Capital-area workforce and education organizations gather to share their expertise

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Welcome!

Global leaders in the transformation of work

Everyone has an important perspective to share

1. Human-Technology Systems

Deep learning & coordination — DISRUPTIONS

NASA deep-space exploration

Communication DELAYS

COME ON, SIRI!!

& our reliance on on-board intelligence

PROJECT TEAMS

extreme weather

Driverless car connectivity

Capturing data while maintaining TRUST

Humans & robots

Trust

Tackling information overload

Rehabilitation

BIAS in Design

0101010101
0101010101
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The dark side of surveillance

Our population is shrinking — we NEED AI!!

2. Skills & Training

Is College Worth it?

informal workers

2/3 of world's labour

the INTEREST Gap

Artistic (lots of interest... not so many jobs)

Cognitive Skills...

AI has disrupted education

Detecting AI use

How do we evaluate/ Screen worker skills?

20% of the people use 80% of services

Career Support

Seeing What's POSSIBLE

Employers paying for education

• Alumni
• Industry contacts

DEMAND

the Future of Work in MICHIGAN
Janet Lillie - VP for Community Relations

This applies to ALL of us

THEMES
1 Proud of their work
2 Challenges

Responding to change

Who what where when How

This is just the beginning!

Attracting businesses
✓ Childcare ✓ Housing

ILLUSTRATED *LIVE

Governance + Policy

Reducing & removing barriers

Research to community

The future of work in our region

PLASTIC — Biodegradable alternatives

Connection Communication Collaboration

the outside world

PARTNERING w/ community colleges

"GREAT" Lab

Nothing ABOUT us without us, where there's a WILL, there's a WAY

MICRO CREDENTIALS

Short-form learning

Stackable (like lego)

BIAS

in AI
→ inclusion barriers

penalty testing

Nimble skills

MSU

Gig economy

online

platform

Accommodations

hey, Alexa!

Automated Speech Recognition

ADA accommodations?

What do I ask for?

Abilities — first approach
1 Assessment
2 Task Augmentation
3 Workflow

Try my GLASSES!
(Err... no. It's not one-size-fits-all)

childcare

Affordable housing

Mental health support

EQUITY

LISTEN !!!

THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE

Access to Work

We're an AGING Workforce

• Upskilling
• Meaningful work
• Flexibility
• Pension

Age-inclusive

ILLUSTRATED *LIVE

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KEYNOTE
RUTH WATKINS

Strada education foundation

There's NO BETTER place than Michigan State University to make these changes!

analyze what works

Here's what we need! (employers)

For some people, being left out lasts more than a minute

from research to policy

Accessible learning

BITE-SIZE bundles

SPEED

REPORT COMING APRIL!

Place

Employment

Flexibility + personalization

Work-based LEARNING

Equitable pathways to opportunities

Education

let's do 3!!

WHY 4 years?

REFORM

Dual-enrollment
CollegeInThree

Affordability (paid internships)

ILLUSTRATED *LIVE

Summer Research Incubator

In July, we hosted 12 doctoral students from around the country for an interdisciplinary, week-long deep dive into the future of work. Students took part in workshops with MSU professors, visited research labs and local organizations, and learned from distinguished panelists and guest speakers. FOW worked with Professors **Daisy Chang** and **Quinetta Roberson** to plan this event, with funding provided by the MSU College of Social Science and the Butler Endowment Fund.

Students visited Alro Steel to learn about how Alro has adapted to changing environments

Students were inspired to build their skills and expand their research through exposure to interdisciplinary perspectives and site visits. They heard from faculty in Economics, HRLR, Psychology, Management, and Media & Information Science about how to build research partnerships, how to ask important research questions, how to navigate the publication process, and more. They also heard from **Erin Eatough** of Fractional Insights, Inc., about communicating research with impact. **Cindy Kangas** from the Capital Area Manufacturing Network spoke to the group about the world of manufacturing and facilitated our visits to Ionetix and Alro Steel. **Jim Curran** from Great Lakes Reality Labs gave us a tour and inside look at their cutting edge studios. The week wrapped up with a keynote lecture from distinguished sociologist **Mitchell Stevens** from Stanford University, who spoke about the future of education in a changing world.

Students visit Dr. Ratan's SPARTIE Lab

__MSU Presenters & Speakers:__
Ann Marie Ryan, Chris Nye, Kevin Hoff, Robby Ratan, Brian Winn, Dorothy Carter, John Hollenbeck, Steven Haider, Nick Hays, Ahleah Miles, Angela Hall, Sriram Narayanan, Phil DeOrtentiis, Bill Chopik, Dorothy Carter, Hye Jin Rho, Quinetta Roberson

Partner Spotlight

Jim Curran, Great Lakes Reality Labs

One highlight of the summer school was our visit to Great Lakes Reality Labs in Lansing, hosted by founder (and Spartan!) Jim Curran.

Jim created GLRL to support education and training efforts in Michigan through virtual reality technology. His talented team of developers and designers are working to create the next generation of immersive and interactive educational and training tools. He employs several Spartans as software designers and technicians. GRLR is also home to Michigan's first commercial motion capture studio, a massive 2500+sqft space that is the largest in the Midwest.

Grant Workshops

Dr. Jay Goodwin, Army Research Institute

Dr. Goodwin is a Senior Research Scientist at the U.S. Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Sciences. He visited MSU in February 2024 to speak about the broad strategy of the Army to make the transformation to a skills-based organization in response to a changing work landscape, and the research and development needed to achieve this transformation. He also spoke with doctoral students, sharing advice about applied research careers.

Dr. Jordan Berg, National Science Foundation

Dr. Berg is a program director of engineering at the National Science Foundation. He visited MSU in September 2024 to speak about interdisciplinary opportunities at NSF, with a special focus on "the future of the future of work."

Dr. Berg and Dr. Goodwin both generously spent the day providing 1:1 mentoring to researchers and students to support their grant activities. Faculty attending each event came from across MSU and benefited from the exposure to new ideas and new colleagues as well.
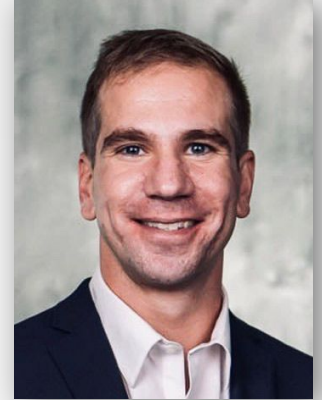
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Research Faculty Spotlight

What is a current/upcoming project you are excited about? One exciting project is focused on measuring the social impact of jobs. Although most jobs benefit society in some way, not all jobs contribute positively. For example, a marketer for a tobacco company can have a negative impact by promoting the use of a harmful substance. To capture this complexity, we are developing a comprehensive framework to assess how jobs can benefit or harm society in different ways. We expect that studying social impact perceptions will also inform understanding about how people choose careers in the modern labor market.

In your opinion, what are the research areas in FOW that need more attention? We need more research on work that occurs outside of an office setting, such as the trades or the gig economy. There are many unique challenges in these work contexts that are not well addressed in the work psychology literature. For example, several skilled trades occupations (e.g., plumbers, construction managers) are facing shortages of workers and their current workforce is aging, so we need to develop new ways of attracting and retaining young people in these jobs as they provide critical services to society.

Where might we spot you outside of MSU? I love hiking, biking, and camping so I can often be found on trails or state parks around Michigan. My favorite local hiking spot is Lake Lansing North and my overall favorite hiking spot in Michigan is the Manistee River trail.

Dr. Kevin Hoff,
Assistant Professor of Psychology

Dr. Hye Jin Rho,
Assistant Professor of Human Resources and Labor Relations

What is a current/upcoming project you are excited about? My research team is preparing to launch a national survey of hotel housekeepers to examine how new advanced technologies—specifically, algorithmic management systems—affect their perceptions in the quality of work. Our goal is to investigate the sources of variation in institutions, human capital, worker voice, and the design of the technology itself that may mitigate negative impacts while enhancing positive impacts of technology. With a new grant from the Russell Sage Foundation, I am excited about the potential of this national survey to enhance our empirical understanding of broader patterns, shedding light on how these technologies influence worker experiences across diverse contexts and informing strategies to promote worker-centered outcomes.

Is there a book or article you want to recommend to people? *Inside the Invisible Cage: How Algorithms Control Workers* by Hatim Rahman examines how digital labor platforms use algorithmic decision-making to reconfigure the rules of work. It's a fascinating read that could help inform our understanding of how online labor market platforms (e.g., Upwork, TopCoder, Gigster) exert control over high-skilled workers, ultimately shaping their working lives.

Where might we spot you outside of MSU? Moka has become my go-to spot for work during the week. On weekends, you might find me at Taste, sipping my coffee early in the morning.

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News and Opportunities

Welcome Dr. Layla Dang, Strada Postdoctoral Researcher

Layla earned her PhD in social psychology from Purdue University in 2024, where her research broadly examined psychological processes that hinder social change and social equity. During her doctoral studies, Layla worked as a graduate research assistant at Purdue's Office of Undergraduate Research. There, she evaluated undergraduate research programs and studied how research teams adapted to virtual and hybrid environments. This work fueled her current interest in conducting research with tangible impacts on educational and work policies and programs, with an emphasis on questions relevant to the future of work. Originally from Chennai, India, Layla enjoys singing, playing tennis, and reading fiction in her free time.

At MSU, Layla is working as a postdoctoral fellow thanks to generous support from the Strada Education Foundation. Layla will have the opportunity to collaborate with Strada leaders and other fellows and engage in field-building in the emerging science of working learners.

Graduate Student Funding Opportunity

MSU Doctoral Students who are conducting research on any topic related to the future of work, including the impacts of emerging technologies, changing demographics, remote work, skills, etc., can apply for up to $3000 to support their research activities. To apply, submit a 750-1000 word summary of the proposed research activities and budget needs, including an explanation of:
-    The scholarly value of the research question
-    The practical value of the research question
-    The proposed methods, data sources, and analytic approach
-    A detailed budget and timeline

A letter from the student's advisor stating that they are in good standing and the project has been reviewed is also required. Note that any disciplinary tradition or methodological approach is acceptable, but all projects should have clear practical implications and projects that benefit workers in Michigan will receive priority.

Submissions can be sent via email to futureofwork@msu.edu by **February 15, 2025.**

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Upcoming Events

On April 22, 2025, we will welcome Dr. Allison Pugh to campus to discuss her new book, The Last Human Job, which argues for preserving human connection at work in the age of AI. Dr. Pugh is a renowned sociologist, Professor at John Hopkins University, and the Vice President of the American Sociological Association.

You can hear a preview of Dr. Pugh discussing her book here.

The New York Times Editorial Board wrote about the book here: Human Interaction is Now a Luxury Good.

More information about this event will be shared in the Spring!

THE LAST HUMAN JOB

The Work of Connecting in a Disconnected World

ALLISON PUGH

Thank You

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