[music]

CHILD 1: I – when I grow up, I want to be a stunt double.

CHILD 2: I want to be a YouTuber.

CHILD 3: I want to be a cleaning lady which – when I have my own business.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Hey, Ray. Things have changed a lot since we were in college, haven't they?

RAY HARRIPAUL: Oh, yeah. My abacus, I think I need to oil up the threads again.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah. I remember I used to get a really sore shoulder from carrying my stone tablets and chisel in my backpack. A lot of exciting changes are happening in the world of higher education and future students will have a much different experience than we did. Let's give a shout out to the kids.

[children's voices] Yay.

RAY HARRIPAUL: So, they are the Boomers, Gen X, we have got Gen Y and Gen Z, but do you know what the kids born after 2010 are called?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: No.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Gen Alpha.

[children's voices] Yay.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: There they are again. They sound like a fun bunch. A troop of tech savvy toddlers. A pack of producing preschoolers. A group of growth hacking grade schoolers. Okay, I'm done.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Yeah. Today we are talking about how the world of higher education needs to make a big shift to get ready for them and for the diverse needs of today's students.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: And how colleges and universities need to adapt and change to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving workforce.

[music]

RAY HARRIPAUL: Welcome to Work Shift.

[music]

ANNE SADO: We just can't think of a student as a student anymore. They are much more unique and that's why we start – we have started talking about personalization and how do we personalize the education experience. And we realize we have to do that, but we can't do it individually for every single person, because we'd never get it all done. But we have to think about, you know, how is our student different and how can we cater or

sort of personalize – how can we make it unique to them so that they can most effectively meet their learning needs.

[music]

RAY HARRIPAUL: Digital disruption.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: The gig economy.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Artificial intelligence.

[mechanized voice] Robots.

RAY HARRIPAUL: There is a lot of talk about these things in the media and online, but what do they mean for you?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: I am Shawne McKeown.

RAY HARRIPAUL: And I am Ray Harripaul.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: We are exploring the future of work and changes you can expect to see at your job.

RAY HARRIPAUL: We'll tell you how this massive digital shift could change your career and what you could do to adapt, evolve, and thrive.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Today we are exploring the stage before you launch or re-launch your career, postsecondary education. We are talking to George Brown College President, Anne Sado.

RAY HARRIPAUL: An industrial engineer turned education leader, Anne is also the Co-chair of the Business/Higher Education Roundtable, a group that aims to provide work integrated learning options for all postsecondary students. She is also on the board of directors at Polytechnics Canada and has been inducted into the Women's Executive Network Hall of Fame.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: And she is a member of the Order of Canada.

[music]

RAY HARRIPAUL: Anne Sado became the President of George Brown in 2004, and as you can imagine, there has been a lot of change in the past 15 years. We kick off our conversation by asking her about the biggest change she has seen in that time, just as George Brown releases its latest strategy and vision plan for the future.

ANNE SADO: I don't know if one could possibly talk about a biggest one, just because there has been so many and, if anything, they seem to be coming more fast and furious all the time. But just sort of thinking back and, you know, maybe current experience sort of newer in one's brain or memory or whatever. But I am thinking a lot these days because of some of the discussions we are having about all of the new entrants in the education space, and that's something that 16 years ago we weren't even thinking about and we weren't talking about. And it could be anything from Lynda.com. And, in fact, we are

working with Microsoft – well, Lynda or LinkedIn – I guess it is now Microsoft – to, you know, to talk about collaboration opportunities, et cetera. Or you think about things like Udacity which only started in 2011, I think, and that online content, et cetera, and how people are learning and what they are looking to as options. It's not that we are the only game in town or that they even think about traditional ways of learning, and I think that's something that we have to be very, very aware of. The other thing that I have been thinking a lot about is how we have – how the system has changed, and this is in a positive way, about creating more pathways for students and more opportunities to navigate education in a different way. You know, way back when, certainly when I was going to school, it was, you know, very traditional. You went to high school, then if you were going to study, you went to postsecondary and you went to either college or university. And then after you finished your studies, your undergraduate studies, you might go on to graduate studies or you would go to work. And now I don't think we have, you know, that kind of a norm anymore.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: A linear path.

ANNE SADO: There is no linear path and it's so different now. And I think of our students – 40 per cent come to us directly from high school. 60 per cent, the majority, don't. There is such a diversity in where they come from and what pathways they have taken, and what they might need to learn and what knowledge they need to acquire to keep moving on whatever journey that they are trying to move on. We also have the situation where learning is no longer all classroom-based, and again, 16 years ago we weren't talking about that very much. We had a little bit of – I can't even remember what we call it, you know, but our use of the LMS and –

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah.

ANNE SADO: – black – pre-blackboard. I can't remember even all the technologies we have used.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: LMS? That's a learning management system. It's software that allows students to submit assignments and connect with profs and class communities. George Brown's LMS is called Blackboard.

ANNE SADO: And now students are looking at, in some cases, 100 per cent online. They are looking for blended learning opportunities, they are looking for distance opportunities, and they are also – we are focussing a lot more on experiential learning and how that rounds out the student's experience in what they are going to learn and how they prepare. And I think all of that has been aided by the introduction of technology to help learning, and that's a big change in that whole technology space – from virtual reality to all sorts of things – is changing at warp speed.

RAY HARRIPAUL: So that's how the college has changed, but how about the students, how have they changed?

ANNE SADO: So if I look first at that 40 per cent of students who do come to us directly from high school, they are digital natives.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah.

ANNE SADO: We did not have digital natives 50 years ago when the college system started. They use technology in a more sophisticated way. They use it as part of their day to day. It's ubiquitous with who they are and what they do, and they are so comfortable with it. They expect to see it when they come to a postsecondary environment, and so I think that's just something that for those who have been around for a while and who weren't perhaps digital natives, that's a real change in what they see in their students. I also think we are seeing, like, even though we are a very diverse college and we always have been, I think we are seeing more diversity in our student body, and that also links to the fact that 60 per cent of our students are indirect. They don't come to us directly from high school, so their backgrounds are different. Their level of knowledge when they come to the college is different. Their experience. And so, how do we support them and how do we serve them well in their, you know, ongoing education journey.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: We also talked to an education expert at Microsoft.

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: My name is Lia Di Cicco-Remu and I am the Director of Education Strategy & Learning Solutions for Canada.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Lia has been at Microsoft Canada for nearly a decade helping educational institutions develop strategies for digital transformation. Before that she worked for Cisco. She is also an Ontario Certified Teacher.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Lia told us about what we can expect from postsecondary students of the future.

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: They are digi natives, but how we connect and socialize is different. So, everybody knows we are in the midst of this, you know, upheaval and this change and where there is chaos. There is opportunity. But I think it's important to see that what it's doing to the way we socialize and the way we communicate is very different. So, you think of the past where online communities didn't exist. The immediacy of – the immediacy and access of information didn't exist. You know, wherever, whenever, whatever we want in terms of info, we have at our fingertips. So, you know, the kids, they know more. The days of info in the hands of selected academics – that ivory tower – is over. We all have access and anyone and everyone can self-learn, synthesize content, and create new content, right?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Right.

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: So, think of, you know, Gen Alpha. Gen Alpha is nine today, so they are the most –

SHAWNE McKEOWN: I have never heard that term. Sorry, Gen Alpha?

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: Yeah.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: I have never heard that term.

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: Gen Alpha. Welcome – never mind Gen Y, Gen Z, just Gen Alpha. They are nine today and they are the most formally educated generation. Most formally educated generation and institutions have to be ready and responsive to this demand for knowledge and skills.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: And here is Anne.

ANNE SADO: So, we just can't think of a student as a student anymore. They are much more unique and that's why we start – we have started talking about personalization and how do we personalize the education experience. And we realize we have to do that, but we can't do it individually for every single person because we'd never get it all done. But we have to think about, you know, how is our student different and how can we cater or sort of personalize – how can we make it unique to them so that they can most effectively meet their learning needs.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Lots of things to consider. Say you have a 17-year-old student who has just completed high school who wants an in-class experience complemented by online components as well as a work placement. Then in the same program you could have a 37-year-old who is making a career change who wants most of their learning to be online because they work during the day.

ANNE SADO: And, as you say, it's the combinations and permutations of that that are almost infinite. But we have to sort of – I think there is enough probably commonalities that we have to understand, but we have to have flexibility and adaptability in how we offer some of our programs and some of our learning to make sure that it's effective for the student and that we can meet their needs, and at the same time, think about what are the industry needs and how are we serving the labour market.

RAY HARRIPAUL: So how does all of this change – technological and otherwise – affect teaching strategies?

ANNE SADO: We also have to – we have to explore with people who are already amazing educators and teachers what do they do and how do they do it. You know, what can new approaches, new technologies bring to the picture and how do we meld those, how do we prepare them, what different approaches do we have to take. So, I think by again investing in that element of how teaching and learning might – and it's not just the teaching, because it's the learning too, right? So, it's the learner, it's two parts of the equation. And if we invest in understanding that, supporting it, creating the opportunities for people to develop different approaches and different skills – I don't know what all of those will be in the classroom. But again, if we enable exploration of that, if we enable pilots trialling different things, I think we will get to a better place. And we also have to make sure we have that environment where we can share those learnings and that people can exchange their knowledge, their ideas, their experience, and that we can there translate that hopefully into improvements for everyone.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah, change needs to happen on the teaching front, Lia says.

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: We know now that traditional teaching practice isn't aligned to the varied way students learn and experience the world, so we need to deliver learning activities that build these important skills I was just talking about for today's digital economy. And these skills are the competencies. I mean that, you know, there is seven, there is ten, there is a whole bunch that I see in the research, but the main four are collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

RAY HARRIPAUL: George Brown has put a strong focus on helping students develop these skills.

ANNE SADO: Well, I think those skills are imperative in one way and it comes down back to adaptability. That if our students can figure out how to resolve conflicts – I mean, that's a reality of everyday life, that's the reality of the workplace, it's the reality of personal lives – I think that they are going to be able to cope with whatever or to continue to move forward. And so, you know, I think those soft skills, those human skills, are just really the essence. I mean, you know, people say that if they hire somebody, they – even if they don't have all of the detail and technical skills they need, they can teach those. But it's harder to develop all of those things. Or if you bring someone on and they don't have those, you know, ability to communicate, those ability to solve complex problems – if they don't have those skills, they are less likely to be successful. So, I think we are focussing on that, you know, because industry told us it's critical. I think we intrinsically understand that it's important just because we work in a work environment that is large and complex. So, I think that it's all part of that adaptability, that resilience, at really preparing for an uncertain and unknown future because things are changing so much.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: The world moves fast and in the face of a climate crisis automation, precarious employment, and rapidly advancing tech, resilience is more important than ever. So how do you help students develop it?

ANNE SADO: One part of it might be looking at breaking it down and looking at some of the skills that they might need to be resilient in this new fast-changing and very dynamic environment. And that could be anything from tolerance to ambiguity – which you can set up in environments to help, you know, people experience and then figure out how they are going to deal with that – to innovation literacy. So, it's just that, okay, if something doesn't go the way that you are expecting it to go or it goes a different way, it's not that it's a defeat or the end of the story. Maybe you have to think about how can I think differently? How can I think out of the box to sort of make this, you know, a solution possible? I think we also have to teach our students or make sure that our students have the ability to learn, and we talk about lifelong learning and how important that is in our environment. I think it's going to be more important to our society and I think if we instil in our students through the way we teach, through the experiences that we offer them, the ability to learn, I think we will be setting them up to be a lot more resilient in their future lives, in their future careers, et cetera. And I think another element that I think about a lot is how are students able to apply their knowledge in different contexts, and experiential learning is one of the reasons that we really heavily put our focus – a heavy focus on that as a college – a number of years ago as part of our last strategy, 2020, was because we felt it was so important to consolidate the knowledge that they were the skills that they were gaining in their school or educational environment into the workforce. And if you apply – and I can't even tell you – I could tell you probably a hundred stories of students that I have talked to who have had some kind of a placement opportunity, how the context of where they are in each case was so different that they learned something, you know, very unique about how they could apply their knowledge and their skills. And again, I can't help but think that that's going to lead to resilience in our graduates.

[music]

SHAWNE McKEOWN: It's time to take a look at the future want ads. We have got a special edition this episode. We are outlining two – that's right – two cool jobs of the future.

RAY HARRIPAUL: We are going to ask our guests to give us an outline of a job that doesn't exist yet. According to the Institute of the Future, a non-profit thinktank based in Palo Alto, California, 85 per cent of jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Okay, Anne Sado, what have you got for us?

ANNE SADO: A robot-human collaboration coordinator.

RAY HARRIPAUL: What will a robot-human collaboration coordinator do?

ANNE SADO: Matching capability of a robot with the needs of the human. So, it could be that they have some – the types of knowledge that we're educating our social service workers or community workers with, at the same time as those who understand technology. And maybe we'll get to the point where robots can actually be programmed like, you know, with a – through AI, et cetera, to be more responsive to the needs that they are being used for, so, and again, if it's a personal need. So, someone who understands technology, maybe how to – the capability of it. Not – I don't know necessarily how to program it, but how to make sure it can be programmed how to meet the needs of the person, but also understanding those human needs and how those two can be melded. So probably a little bit of an evolution of some of the things that I learned as an industrial engineer with man-machine interface, but I think applied in a completely different context.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: What skills or education will be required for this job?

ANNE SADO: The ability to understand human needs in terms of service, from how to understand technology and the capabilities of different, you know, robotic or software or, you know, Alexa-type things.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Like software programming?

ANNE SADO: Yeah.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah.

ANNE SADO: Right, whatever. So, yeah, so an understanding of technology, an understanding of the human condition and needs. Maybe probably an understanding of some of – support services available, because again I don't think we can ever say that 100 per cent of someone's needs are going to be met by technology or 100 per cent of someone's needs are going to be met through human intervention.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Okay.

ANNE SADO: And maybe it's a marriage of those two or how can you navigate the system to get the support that someone needs.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Robot-human collaboration. This is cool. This is cool. Okay. Now we have got Lia's future want ad. This one is specific to postsecondary. Lia, what have you got?

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: The career skills activator.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: What will this person do?

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: So, you know, a career skills activator would work one too many with postsecondary education students in virtual environments to guide personalized learning journeys and support appropriate accreditation accordingly. So, what does all that mean? So, imagine, you know, you can, if you like, go to various lectures. You can go and listen to speakers, you can go talk to people, but don't think of it as a linear track. You have somebody that's going to, you know, over the – over in a virtual environment, so this is one to many, right?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Yeah.

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: In an education hub that sits there and people could come in and talk and have appointments and so on and so forth that will help identify what your areas of interest are and sort of package it for you.

RAY HARRIPAUL: What do you want to see on a resume of a person applying for a career as a skills activator?

LIA DE CICCO-REMU: The focus of what I would look for in this sort of career would be the ability to connect. So, you have someone that's savvy with the tech, understands, you know, the virtual world. Tech savvy with Office 365 with an emphasis on Teams. The ability to build and create personalized learning pathways for desired skills based on, you know, student's learning journeys. To be able to devise on all the certs that are out there, different degrees, and the training necessary to build up the skills that will attract employers to – upon entrance to the workforce. Connect. There it is. Connect the students to industry for mentorship and internship opportunities.

[music]

SHAWNE McKEOWN: That's a wrap on this episode of Work Shift. What did you think?

RAY HARRIPAUL: Want to share your thoughts on the future of postsecondary education?

SHAWNE McKEOWN: Email us at workshift@georgebrown.ca.

RAY HARRIPAUL: Get in touch and we might share your thoughts during our next episode.

SHAWNE McKEOWN: This podcast is brought to you by the fine folks at George Brown College. We want to thank Anne Sado and Lia De Cicco-Remu for sharing their thoughts with us today.

RAY HARRIPAUL: It's the end of your Work Shift. Check you later.

[End of recorded material 00:21:23]