

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Hello and welcome again to another edition of Let's Talk Ed with Professor Chris.

Today we're talking skills, trades... really, what I think of as something else that you could do. Get off and start your own little business if you want to, right?

My special guest today, on my left Jean, and on my right, Hamid. Experts in skills and trade. So, we're gonna get right started.

If you haven't subscribed, please please please do subscribe, right, and we'll get right to it.

Welcome, welcome, Jean.

Welcome, Hamid, how you all doing?

JEAN MCBRIDE: Great. Thank you for having us.

HAMID KING: OK.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: This is great. I'm I'm very happy to have you all here.

So, to get started, I'm gonna go... Jean, this is a trick question.

JEAN: Ok.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: But, also a very easy one, OK... that I always ask my guests.

Looking back, did you see yourself being where you are right now?

Did you go to school for what you're doing right now?

JEAN: I did not. I actually went to school and majored in English. I wanted to be a journalist and I was actually a writer for a large portion of my career and I just decided that I really wanted to give back to my community. So, I've decided to become a teacher.

And I taught English for a little while and then I just realized that students need so much more than what we can offer inside of the 8 hours of the school day that encouraged me to kind of pursue college access coordinating and then led me to career coaching.

Which kind of led me to do apprenticeships. So, yeah, it's been a different type of journey.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Great.

JEAN: Not a straight one.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: We'll get into details more as to what your area is.

Hamid, the same question.

HAMID: I would say no.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: By the way, I haven't had anyone that had said yes on this topic.

HAMID: Yeah. When I think about it as being an instructor now.

No, I never was in school thinking of being an instructor. Now being in the trades. Yes, I mean I've done that since I've been out of high school, so I do... I would have probably seen myself in the trades but instructor? No, I was no, no.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No. That's great. So, This is why I look at the camera once again to say this is not new as you're going to college, you're thinking about what you need to do.

It's OK to get started. You're gonna figure it out. Our dreams might change. Our visions might change, but we're still gonna be on track, right?

So, Jean, tell us about your program.

JEAN: So, I am the youth apprenticeship coordinator with Wake Tech. We are offering the opportunity for students to start working inside of their career pathway while they are in high school and we also give them the opportunity to continue their instruction, their classroom portion of their learning at Wake Tech.

So, it's a really great program because it allows us to expose students to pathways sooner, which allows them to finish quicker and we also do that free of charge.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Alright, so I'm gonna get a little bit... what I usually what I'm doing this here... I say I play the the devil's advocate, but since I don't like the devil and angels and I won't get into that, Hamid tell us about your area.

HAMID: Well, I'm an instructor in the building trades, umm. Yeah, I'm an instructor in building trades.

I I've, I guess... before that I've done service work, I've done work under contract. There's... so construction and maintenance that's that's just pretty much my background and...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yeah, OK.

So, what are some of the specific skills... I'm trying to figure out what a difference is based on

what Hamid said. And what you said... apprenticeship... How do those two align? Where does the student stand?

Would you say it starts with the trades or did it start with apprenticeship?

JEAN: So, I think that is first let me say completely up to the student. I think each student is different with what they're looking for... their overall outcome in the end. And I think that's where you are able to separate which pathway they take.

So, if you have a student that just wants a certification then just want to be able to come to college and work in their particular industry while they are also gaining the educational experience at same time, I think that apprenticeship is definitely a great avenue for them.

If you have a student who is not quite ready to take on a full-time job yet, maybe they are just really wanting to zero in on the educational side of it and get that part first. Then I think they should take a different pathway of... that's doesn't look like a apprenticeship.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, so when I hear what you just said, it sounds to me more like your target audience is high school. Is that correct?

JEAN: Yeah. So, that is that is certainly one of our target audiences. We are opening it up. We've actually just started opening our apprenticeship opportunities up to high school students this year.

Primarily, we have targeted those who have gone to high school and maybe they are in a career pathway and they're looking to change now. They want to change directions, they want to learn a new skill. They wanna make a little bit more money.

Those are the ones who we are seeing express interest in our apprenticeship pathways. But it is now open to high school students because we do know that students should have options as they are graduating. It's not all about a four-year university.

So, you know, we want to be sure that they know all of the options that are available.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, you just said money and also said it's not all about a four-year universities, which is where my angel advocate is going to kick in very soon.

But, Hamid, let's very quickly... So, from what she said, apprenticeship trades.

What are some of the trades specifics that you...

HAMID: I like what you just said. I I would agree with it.

My... for just the trades. I would say that you would actually, I would suggest to students, any

student to take up a trade.

Whether you're gonna go four year or you're gonna just get an associate's degree, take a trade first, no matter if you wanna be a business... if you wanna get a degree in business, engineering any other field that you can go in, there's a trade that can relate to that in some form or fashion.

Also, we've seen the markets, the, the, the actual job industry change, right? I mean, there's a lot of people who lost jobs when you talk to trades persons, they may have lost a job, but they didn't lose income most times.

They can figure out how to feed themselves, so that's my my kind of take on it would be suggest it to all students.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, good.

So, Jean for that, when you say apprenticeship programs, for example, we talking about carpentry, electrical, plumbing, right and those some of the programs?

JEAN: Yes.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

JEAN: So, those are currently some of our programs. We are always working to expand the pathway opportunities that are available for our students.

So, we have expanded out into EMT and we are currently pursuing other non-trade pathways such as pharmacy tech.

Uh, so we are... we're always looking for a apprenticable employment opportunities.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Good, good.

And Hamid, your trade sand they also the same kind carpentry...

HAMID: Yeah, we're in the building trades So, I'm not against any trades. I think all skilled trades makes sense. I just am familiar with building trades.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, again, you know, I want students to understand that when we're talking about apprenticeship, we're talking about trades. There's a lot of that right plumbing, electrical, you know, so OK.

How are you convincing your high school students to go to apprenticeship?

JEAN: So my biggest sell for students is the opportunity to gain work experience inside of a

career pathway. While you are still learning about it. Just, as a college graduate myself, even though I aspired to be a journalist, I did not work for a newspaper while I was in school. I did not gain that real-world work experience that I think sets you apart when you graduate.

And so, what we offer inside of that trade field, it's the opportunity for students who are interested in the pathway to work as they are completing classroom instruction.

So, if you're in automotive and you're learning how to change oil inside of the class when you go to work that day, you're changing the oil of a car.

So, it makes it meaningful and it also sets them apart so that when they are applying for jobs, they are first choice because they have that experience.

HAMID: Can I piggy back on that?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Actually, I was gonna say you said something about everything you want to do it starts with trades. So, I was gonna go there, but yeah. Piggy back on that.

HAMID: So, what I was thinking when with the partnership program, it makes sense if you're someone who knows you wanna be in the trade, that you're going into, it makes sense to go through apprenticeship program because now you're gonna receive not only the education, but you're gonna be paid. You're not.. you're not coming out of pocket.

When you're going to school. You're possibly coming out of pocket and now you have to decide. Is this what you truly wanna do? So, if you're trying to decide what I wanna do, go to school and possibly.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

HAMID: For the trade, if you know that, hey, I wanna be an electrician. I wanna be a plumber. I wanna be a Carpenter. Then go into the field as an apprentice and gain the experience, gain the money at the same time and then kind of piggy-backing on what we said earlier about the four-year college. If you're in, if you get a trade first, then go to a four year-college, you'll possibly can eliminate a lot of your debt because you could work and go to school at the same time and possibly pay out of pocket instead of taking on financial aid.

So, that's my thought in that.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So I'm going to be very honest. Right now in our four-year programs, honestly, after doing 4-year programs and everyone that has been watching my show know that that's kind of what I've been... lately though I said I talked to different entrepreneurship or small business owners. I always say you know what? I don't have a skill.

And that's plain and simple. I don't have a trade. Like right now... What I'm doing if I do decide you know what? OK, I did do bridge design long time ago before coming to academia.

I want to branch on my own, which by the way I've tried it is not easy because it's not an individual's skill where I could go out on my own.

What do you all think is a hesitation for students, right? And again, granted, they ask students that come to my program that I struggle with the math or some of the heavy sciences that I would say have you thought about apprenticeship? You know, have you thought about trades?

And there's always that hesitation. Like no, I want to go to a four-year school.

So, what is the selling point? Usually I don't like to say selling point because this is almost like a gift, but how are you all addressing that issue with students to say you know what apprenticeship is not really that bad.

Yeah, all trades for that matter.

JEAN: I think it's a very costly question mark. When you are not really certain what you want to do and you branch out into a four-year university. There's a potential for you to accumulate a large amount of loan debt while you're figuring it out.

Um, I think a lot of students or a lot of parents are are rightfully so, asking students very young. What do you wanna be when you grow up?

And the career options that they have been exposed to are what they generally move forward with and select and for a long-time four-year university has been the ways, like the gate keeper of success. You go to college, you get that four-year degree and then your opportunities are unlimited.

However, we're now living in a time where the trades are in very high demand and if you take a moment to just explore some of these pathways, you might see that it's actually something that you're good at and that you like. It's not gonna cost you a lot of money to pursue this pathway and your return on investment is gonna be so great.

Immediately after you graduate... probably with what we're saying with our students... area II usually hired within the first semester of the program, so you have a job.

You know you're making a great salary, and once you graduate, you're making an even better salary.

So, for our students, I think I always try to center it back at, you know, what do you want when

you looking for and how much of a risk are you willing to take in order to receive this life that you that you want and apprenticeship is guaranteed job.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right. I mean, what type of students are you seeing coming to trades?

Are these students that say I'm gonna go to college to go to into trades, or are those the ones that, for example, I would say, you know what the four-year is not what you need to do, go and look into trades.

What, what are you seeing?

HAMID: So, I am seeing students to the point that have just graduated high school.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

HAMID: I see students who are may have been in their field of what they do for 10-15 years and now it's like they're like, I want something new. This isn't for me.

I've had people say sitting behind a desk wasn't for them, and now they want something new.

And then I'm just had some people even better to whoever I just done with the service and now they're like, hey, I did this in in the service, I wanna go forward with more, so I'm like cool.

You see, it's hard to say a specific... there's no specific because if you go into the trades the trades are diverse, so that's a beauty of the trades.

You, you you see everybody, there's no... Only this person does this or that. There you see everybody. So, that's one of the beauties of the trades.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, Hamid just raised a good point. Because when I went into civil engineering, I'd always wanted to do bridges.

I had no idea that after getting my degree in bridge design that I wasn't gonna be on the field actually designing, and I've shared the story many, many times and I'll share it again. When I was actually in the industry, we had to go talk to some middle school students about what we do and just to kind of encourage them when we see them as part of kind of community that that we do for the company.

And I was telling them about all this bridge, this is back in Florida, and I said, oh, you know, we're one of the bridges that I'm working on right now is the highway, you know, across their school and this innocent student out of nowhere said, do you know my dad?

I'm like, does he... does Dad work at a company that I'm working? I don't know if you all kind of get where this is going and I'm like, what's his name? You know, it's like... so and so. Ok, does he,

do you know which company works for? And he's like, no, no, no. He is building the bridge right by our school. And then it clicked.

When I went back to the office, I had to tell everybody in the office that we don't build bridges. We don't even construct bridges. We design bridges, but again, when I was... excuse me, into the bridge, I thought I was gonna be putting on my hard hat out in the field.

You know, putting rebar, you know and all that, but that is not the case. So, I had to always kind of tell the students. I said to them if you think about mechanical engineering, you actually not gonna be in the plants. You know, we're taking field trips to the plants and I saw some of my students are like, oh, this is cool... I'd like to... I'm like, well, with your 4-year degree, you ain't gonna be on the line like this to do. So, that's a very, very good point.

Good. What is the misconception, I'm gonna start with you Jean, that you think people have about apprenticeship.

JEAN: Well, I think a lot of parents that I interact with, and even students, have the misconception that it is a very dirty, gritty type of pathway and, you know, depending on which pathway you choose, that might be the case.

But there are pathway options available to students that don't require those that specific setting. So, I think that's one of the misconceptions that we face, and you know, just trying to get the word out about our pathways. And then I think a lot of it is also questions about the longevity of of career.

You know, people associate apprenticeships with being a short-term experience, and it is a short-term experience as far as the you working on the job and you gaining the education.

But what you take with you, which in the end for us, is a journey worker certification, can last a lifetime. So it's not, it's not a short-term experience. It's it's very much an investment.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: What do you think some of the misconceptions people have about trades? You can be honest....

HAMID: I yeah, I guess you would say maybe, maybe a big misconception of the building trades that maybe that only certain people can do it. I mean everybody... I'm talking from tall short, big, small, skinny, female male. Everybody can do the trades.

I mean, if you're somebody who likes puzzles who likes to solve problems, it is perfect for you. If you can thank if you're just somebody who has that, I think outside the box, it is perfect for you.

If you're somebody who doesn't think outside the box and you work straight with what's given to you, and this is what... it's perfect for you.

So, it's like I would say the building trades is perfect for everybody.

The the misconception would be that it's not for everybody...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Okay.

HAMID: When it really is if that makes sense?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: That makes great sense. I know, I know you're trying to be really nice, but I'll give you one of the misconceptions that will get a little dirty here.

One is the pay, and I think students are surprised to find out how much people in trades an apprenticeship can make. We'll get a little more in detail on that.

When I was growing up and now I'm actually, you know, I think one of the conversations I've been having with Hamid for a long time is trying to get into some technical programs, to kind of see how, you know, I can implement that outside the U.S. for because there's that need.

But when I was growing up and I think it's the same here, we tend to think that people who go into trade are not smart enough. That's one of the biggest misconceptions. Yet, those who think they are smart enough, like you said, cannot handle trades.

So, I think that is something I actually want to look in here to clarify to say, trades or apprenticeship are not as easy as you think. Yes, it's a pathway for those who you know, it's OK to calculus and sciences. This is a way for you, but it's still not an easy way, so I kind of wanna clear that misconception.

Let's talk about money, since I know that's a big thing.

HAMID: That's important.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Who wants to start? but what?

HAMID: So, you wanna speak on what type of money is in trades?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: It's in trades. I get my trades and I open my own little plumbing.

HAMID: I mean when you talk about being a business owner, profits are unlimited, right?

If you talking about entry level to most building trades, you're probably somewhere between and \$15 and \$20 an hour entry level.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No way.

HAMID: Yeah, but most most trades, and look at it this way right now. There's a high demand for trades persons. There's a high amount of trades persons who are retiring.

Alright, so yeah, we now need to replace those those persons who are just doing the work. There's companies that I mean I speak to companies often and they are like, yes, we'll come speak with your students. We need people.

They'll tell the student, hey just send me your resume. I don't... I know you're in school right now... send me your resume and we'll see if we can work around your schedule.

These companies need bodies. They need people and they need willing people. That's what the real thing is. They don't just need somebody who's like, I just want the money. They have to be willing to make the money, but learn the skill and so the money is there.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Jean?

JEAN: I agree 100%.

And I also like to tell the story that the person first person that I ever met that on the beach house work as a welder. Umm, it is an amazing opportunity for you to make a lot of money with a apprenticeships.

We register all of our employers with a competitive wage scale. So, from the moment they register with us, we know what they are planning to pay students and through the apprenticeship program, students are given raises at certain increments based on their training.

So, once they are in the program and doing well, maneuvering through it, they receive a raise every year and we know how much they are gonna be making at the end at their journey worker's rate. So all of that is determined for them prior to or as the the employer is being registered with us.

So, as students are enrolling, we can tell them exactly what they can expect to get paid while working with a specific employer. And it's like I said, very competitive salaries because the demand is super high.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: You mentioned welding and I think so I just gave you all my little background on how I don't go on the field, except we have to go to inspections. And welding was one of those things that I I would I had the guys who do the wending on our bridges getting paid anywhere from \$45 to \$60 an hour.

And it really made me think I'm like... this trade... How about do I learn how to weld as a side gig?

So, again I understand where this is coming from. Honestly, and Hamid you touched on this here. I think on a four-year program, this should be a requirement.

I think people would say I'm pushing this too much, but honestly I think just because I have seen four-year students graduate with what it is that you want to major in and it mostly feeling is that engineering several electrical and I've had students say you know what, this is not really what I wanna do. I thought it's gonna be more hands-on, right?

So, in my mind, if maybe there was some skill or trade part of the curriculum to say you know you're required to do this whether you use it or not.

I know students are gonna hate me for saying this here because you're looking at ohh boy. We already have 60 credits we gotta do, now you gonna add a trade skill.

But, I think that is... and by the way, Germany is very heavy on trades. So, that's where we talk a little bit of politics because they pay more for the trade skills that they pay for the four-year engineering, right? Or the four-year school.

So. So, that's that's good. Again, you know, for all my four-year students taking Professor Chris here, you know, he's let us down. No. I'm just trying to provide option and more practical relevant options, you know, for you all.

So, again, I'm very happy that we kind of debunked the myth of ohh, you're not smart enough going to apprenticeship. Alright, so one area that I want to discuss is the different diversity, right?

In apprenticeship are we gonna see more women? Are we gonna see more men?

JEAN: You, right now will probably see more men still. We are definitely targeting our approach, working with local business owners who are women who own businesses inside of the trades and then also different community organizations. Just to make women aware of the opportunity because just as Hamid said we know that you can do it if you want to do it, it's no one is counted out.

So, we are definitely going to make an effort to do a lot more marketing and a lot more programming that is tailored specifically to women in diverse population.

HAMID: I would... I would think that it definitely needs to be marketed to women more just the the natural nature of detail orientation, the, the, the the... I'm gonna be honest with you. I've had females in my class that I've instructed and a lot of times they'll take initiative to be almost like the group leader.

They'll they have something about them where it once they understand it now they're pushing it to everybody around them. And so I I think I mean, but I'm not saying don't market it to men

as well. But I really think the way I got into the trades was from my mother. So, that's why I'm like I know this first-hand. I mean...

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: You should have told me that before so I could have you tell us all about that.

HAMID: Yeah, I'm sorry, but yeah, that she, I mean, she pushed me into the trades. That's what she wanted to do. And she seen hey, after graduating high school complete something every time. So, that's how I went trade school, then college for Associates degree, because it was steps.

You're you're you're receiving something as soon as you complete it. Instead of, sometimes they're wait until four years just to receive that paper. You had so much happened in your life, and that for years that can easily tell you... No, I gotta leave. Or hey, I need to jump into another pep and now you're extending your years in school more than you need to.

So, but yeah, women should definitely be... I mean, I've I've see a lot of these organizations like the Women in Skilled Trades are popping up more, which is great.

But I think just just need more. We just need more.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: This has been good. I think you all kind of touched on almost all the questions I have on trades and apprenticeship. If nothing, I know one difference between the two.

Again, I know it paid, but definitely the option you know for, you know, I'll be honest, I know... Again, I'm gonna get a lot of comments about, you know, this interview here, which is great.

But again, the four-year road is not for everyone, right? I think you know and it's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with that.

One of the areas that I also like very, very well is the flexibility. I mean, with the skill... this trade, you know, I could go... go get a loan, and open my own shop, shop somewhere. I cannot open up a bridge company. That's that's a fact, right? So, I mean, I'm being very honest with that.

So, very quickly, before we close, uh JM, by the way, I didn't... people to understand that this is the we've met, but we've not really met uh, but this has been great.

So, what are your closing? Anything you wanna say about apprenticeship that you know, to kind of close this up?

JEAN: I would like to encourage people to job shadow. Umm... If you have any interest at all in the trades or even any career pathway outside of what you're currently doing, take an inside

look at it, go to the company, take a walk through, take a tour. Business owners are amazing because they are so willing to open their doors to you and show you what they do.

So, that would be my advice. Anybody that's interested, just you know, obviously I'm available to showcase what we have and you know, but even outside of companies that we partner with, I'm more than happy to work with anybody to expose them to the trades. So.

HAMID: And so.. what you said about, you're not trying to, you know, people are gonna comment about the four-year college.

So, I would say four-year college may not be for everyone, but college is.

So, that's something what my brother, I didn't understand it and I remember the middle school I was trying to go to a vocational high school and I was like, I'm gonna be a Barber. Cool.

But I was like that will stop me from having to go to college. My brother was like college is for everybody. I didn't understand what he was saying, but then when I came across an associate's program in the building trades, I'm like, ohh college is for everyone. I see what you're saying now.

So, you don't have to necessarily get a four-year degree, you don't have to get associate's degree, you can still go to a college and get certificates.

You can go... There's so much there's continuing education, even if you're in the field.

So, you have multiple paths, but I also would say hey, don't turn down these apprenticeships.

The apprenticeships make sense and you can get paid to learn something, and then you're able to take that and then provide for your family and teach your family something. And then they will create something for your generations behind you. It's worth it.

That would be my... go for it.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Well, there you have it. Apprenticeships, trades... again, don't crucify me. I'm just the messenger here. But you got a lot out of this, here. OK?

Personally, like I said today, if I wanna start a business, there is no better way, if I'd had a skill alright, so don't miss out on that opportunity.

You know, research, research. We're talking about different trades, you know, carpentry, electrical. There's so many different different trades you could do.

You all think about entrepreneurship. Always. How can I start my own business?

This is one way to actually do that, and again, for all my four-year transfer students... I'm not saying anything bad, just providing more options.

Thanks again for joining us here this this morning. If you haven't subscribed, please please, please do so. We'll get more people on here.

And by the way, if you have any questions for you like JM Jean or Hamid, just put it right in there and it will get these messages to them.

Thanks JM. Thanks Hamid.

HAMID: Thanks for having me.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Absolutely.

HAMID: It's been a pleasure.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you.