



A Letter from the Executive Director



December 26, 2023

Hello!

After working with QA Commons for almost five years, I am excited to take the helm as Executive Director. I have had the pleasure of working on a variety of “Employability” projects - which only bring me deeper into questions and ideas about how individuals thrive in the workplace - and how we can best prepare students for success and mobility.

My first job was at Hot Dog on a Stick on the Redondo Beach pier. My favorite job was as a camp counselor at a summer tennis camp. I have worked in large multinational corporations, small businesses, and education nonprofits. These experiences have led me here - **exploring skills and how they play out in the diverse labor force**. My academic background in the social sciences shapes my perspective.

Employability - which impacts financial security, lifestyle, and personal identity - can be considered a type of **cultural capital** influenced by family background, socioeconomic status, and the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions individuals acquire through life experiences. There are many matters that those who are successful in their careers take for granted. The “hidden” rules of the workplace are *unspoken* norms, expectations, and cultural nuances that are not explicitly stated but are crucial for

success and effective navigation in a professional environment. At a very basic level, we are talking about showing up on time and appropriate attire. At a higher level, we are talking about awareness of career options, navigating informal power structures and alliances, adapting communication styles to the specific workplace culture, taking the initiative to think and problem-solve, understanding reporting structures and appropriate channels for decision-making, knowing how to receive and provide constructive feedback, recognizing the significance of networking for personal growth, and more.

If we keep these norms hidden, we will not make progress. **Our work centers on helping learners and workers understand and master the behaviors required to succeed in a job and a career.** The delivery of our employability skills subject matter can be adapted to the audience – from select universities to carceral institutions.

The importance of employability lies in its potentially transformative impact on individuals - fostering economic independence, career growth, and societal well-being. For educational programs, a focus on Employability represents a proactive approach to continuous improvement and career development. By equipping learners and workers with the skills and resilience needed to navigate an ever-evolving job market, we can make a difference.

Yours in learning and progress.

Michelle Deasy

Michelle Deasy
Executive Director
The QA Commons