2018 Texas Open Innovation Conference eBook

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Featuring interviews from:

Dr. Shah Ardalan
President
Lone Star College-
University Park

Christopher Bailey
#Innovation Catalyst
 ExxonMobil

Robert Bornhofen, DM
Strategy & Innovation Leader, IBM
Adjunct Professor, Strategy,
University of Maryland,
University College

David Camerlengo
Trade & Investment
Commissioner
Queensland Government

Brett Cornwell
Executive Director
Texas A&M University

Denis Greene
Author
Wheelie Through The Baboons: Innovation Leadership

Mike Mathews
AVP for Technology
and Innovation -
Chief Information Officer
Oral Roberts University
The 2nd Annual Texas Open Innovation Conference will be held on March 28-29 at Lone Star College-University Park in Houston, TX. This year, we're excited to have brought together such a skilled group of speakers, and we look forward to hearing each of their outlooks on innovation, creativity, and problem-solving in the modern world. In the lead-up to the conference, we've conducted interviews with seven of our speakers to give you a preview of their event presentation, as well as an insight into how they see innovation in their respective sectors.

We hope you enjoy this eBook, and if you would like to hear more from these experts, we invite you to register for the event at: www.texasopeninnovation.com

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Dr. Shah Ardalan
President, Lone Star College-University Park

- Dr. Shah Ardalan is the President of LSC-University Park
- He is Lone Star College-University Park’s first President and a member of the Lone Star College Executive Council
- Prior to becoming President in September 2012, Ardalan served as LSC-University Park’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - LSC-UP is now recognized as one of the most innovative community colleges in the country
- Dr. Ardalan holds a doctoral degree in Community College Leadership from Roueche Graduate Center of National American University at Austin, Texas
  - Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering from North Carolina A&T State University
  - Bachelor’s degree in Physics from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC
  - Multiple diplomas and certificates from University of Lausanne (Switzerland) and Harvard University
- In 2008, Ardalan was named Lone Star College Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer
- Ardalan pioneered the restructuring of all Lone Star College IT operations, resources, and services
- Before joining Lone Star College, Ardalan invested 20 years in both educational and executive roles at leading community college and university systems in North Carolina, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas
- Throughout his career, Ardalan has been recognized for his grand visionary ability and bringing together other thinkers and achievers to fulfill a vision to help students reach their goals
- That collaborative spirit and leadership has led Lone Star College-University Park to grow from 3,600 to over 13,000 students in five years

The Presentation

Opening Address - The Role of Community Colleges in the Innovation Ecosystem
March 28, 2018 - 9:00 am

Dr. Shah Ardalan
President
Lone Star College - University Park
Interview Questions

1. When it comes to the innovation ecosystem, what makes community colleges so agile?

In my opinion, the whole notion of the American community college is the biggest or most important innovation of the Americans in the world of education. Other countries have similar technical colleges, but the way the American community college is now a model the rest of the world is looking at.

The first community college was created in 1901. The virtue of creation is innovation in itself. Community colleges also have their challenges. People don’t know if they’re a university or not. This means they’ve had to go through a lot of changes or adjustments. When the challenges come, community colleges know their mission is to be the only hope for a lot of students.

This has led community college leaders to be innovative. Also, as you know, agility is a part of how organizations are set up. Community colleges are set up to be quickly reactive to the needs of their community. We’re close to our community, many of us get funded by our community. That said, it helps us to be much more agile than others.

That’s what positions community colleges from other. It’s a part of our DNA to be innovative, and we have been because of the mission we have and because of necessity.

2. One of the primary criticisms of four-year universities is that they produce degrees that offer little real-world value. How are community colleges solving this problem and preparing students for innovative, fast-paced careers?

I wouldn’t so quickly criticize universities. They’ve done a great job for centuries for our country. They have their own challenges and their mission is different than community colleges. We don’t want to be compared to universities. When we talk about definitions for student success, we will focus on the fact that we are different.

Here at community colleges, we’re more focused on workforce development. When people come to us, they’re either not ready to or have no intention to go to six years of college to get a degree and get a job. We, however, can train them in 8 weeks and put them to work. We offer stackable credentials which allow them to continue on, get their credits, and move on.

We have been designed to ensure we increase the upward mobility and create and build the middle class of this country. It’s a very different mission from universities that are focused on research.

Currently, the majority of students are going to community colleges, so we’re a major player. More than 856,000 at community colleges in Texas, while 796,000 are at traditional universities, according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
Around the country we are talking about millions of students at community colleges. We’re supporting them going to reach as much as they want.

3. What are community colleges doing to drive open innovation?

Community colleges place a heavy focus on partnership. Companies come to us with challenges and we help them.

Community colleges can also leverage their faculty. Many faculty members come with many years of experience in industry, which does three things for us. One is that they have many contacts in industry, which means it’s much easier to form partnerships. Secondly, they teach students who then go and know exactly what they need to do, because they’ve learned from somebody who’s done it and has real world experience.

Finally, because we’re not pushing them to publish papers, they can become very innovative, which helps promote innovation in our student base. For us, we have a whole week of innovation. For faculty, staff, and students, they all provide ideas on innovation. We also have grants for innovation - specifically grants for faculty to introduce innovation in the classroom. We also believe innovation is not only about technology.

4. Why did Lone Star College launch the Texas Open Innovation Conference?

Lone Star College is not new to innovation. The creation of community colleges is innovation in itself. The creation of University Park was a very innovative idea. They went out and purchased the world headquarters for Compaq computers and turned it into this facility with a daycare, industry partners, high school, university, community college, etc. When you think about it, creating this whole environment, and turning it into this great facility to serve community from six months old through doctoral degrees, all of whom can go through that process and still park in the same part. That’s an innovative process in and of itself!

Since I had the honor of becoming president, we put out a call which we called invitation to innovate. How did people want this college to feel? What did they want it to be? I then had the honor of recruiting people who believed in our idea of innovation. Since then, we have won global IMS awards, awards from the White House, etc. Innovation is a part of who we are. Partnership with TOIC the first year was very successful.

This year, we expanded it to the whole Lone Star College, which is one of the fastest-expanding college systems in the country. We recognize that if Houston is to be recognized as a leader in innovation, our role is to bring innovation and community together to help Houston and Texas.
Christopher Bailey is the #innovation Catalyst at ExxonMobil IT and has spent the last 11 years working to drive innovation.

Today, Christopher spends his time researching innovative techniques and working with creative partners to improve the culture of innovation at ExxonMobil. He is credited with creating additions to ExxonMobil’s Education services, content, and internal podcasts; including the #innoCast podcast, Innovation Catalyst course, and Intrapreneur Bootcamp.

Christopher has a Masters in Information Systems Management from Brigham Young University.

At the upcoming 2018 Texas Open Innovation Conference, Christopher and his colleague Jeff Rosenbaugh will be delivering a talk titled Enterprise Podcasting as a Lean Startup, which covers the journey ExxonMobil has taken to drive forward open innovation by first creating an open innovation culture internally.

To mark the presentation by Christopher and Jeff, we interviewed Christopher about podcasting, the benefits of internal startups, and how to avoid the pitfalls of conventional “big bang” tactics.

Here’s what he had to say:

1. How can focusing resources and attention on internal affairs benefit open innovation for other organizations?

Christopher: “This is something we learned in the early days of trying to move the culture toward open innovation: if the company isn’t already going outside to look for help and solutions - if that’s not a natural step they’re taking, there may be some barriers internally that are keeping them from that.

This is most visible at a team level - they want ownership of the solution, so they do it on their own. If you’re going toward the open innovation side of things, though, you have to go external, and that won’t happen with a team focused on owning the solution.

To move them away from this, you have to start with the ‘not invented here’ mentality. That starts with getting them to realize there may be solutions outside, and they could benefit from an outside perspective.
The other thing you have to fix internally if you want to go outside is to get teams to own the problem rather than just owning the solution. When they take ownership of the problem, they’ll be much more open to solutions they wouldn’t have created.

When you go in and fix the internal mindset first, it makes it easier to go outside and share that problem with somebody else. When you see teams doing that, going outside with their problems, you know they value that kind of input because they’ve already ‘gone outside’ themselves internally to the company.”

2. What are the unique perks of podcasting (cultural, etc.)? Is it something most enterprises should consider?

Christopher: “Yes, but not in the way you’d think. There are conventional ways we’re trying to communicate right now - email campaigns, websites, digital signage - everyone is relatively familiar with these mechanisms. It’s important to make a distinction that podcasting isn’t a replacement of those mechanisms, but an addition to them.

Podcasting is a great addition because it’s under-utilized and tends to hit demographics you don’t typically reach. When we were first looking at podcasting, we realized younger generations listened to our podcasts more, matching research suggestions. So if you’re looking to dig into demographics that you’re not reaching right now, podcasting can be a great mechanism for that.

The other thing is information overload. Most solutions are targeted at improving the existing channel, making it stickier or more eye-catching. Podcasting takes a different approach and targets untapped time during the day - the commute, the workout time, the lunch break, etc. All those bits of time are places where people are trying to unwind and get engaged with something else. That’s a great place to bring relevant messages to people who are interested in hearing them, but on ‘their time.’

People might still want to listen to external podcasts, sure; but we found that, as we created mobile options, the number of people listening shot up. Those are two untapped resources you’re digging into while you’re doing podcasting.”

3. How can developing an internal startup allow teams to avoid the pitfalls associated with “big bang” tactics?

Christopher: “The typical pitfall an ‘innovation team’ will have is that they try to design the full solution from the start; it’s what we’re used to doing. Podcasting is a great example - it’s a known technology and pretty well understood. It’s not blockchain or VR. As such, it’s very easy for a team to go in and say ‘yeah, that’s what it should look like.’

Our typical ‘big bang’ approach is based on the assumption that we should create the thing because people will come. ‘Other companies have ‘X’ and so we should too, our employees, customers, processes, etc. are just like theirs.’
But maybe (for example with podcasting) your company doesn’t have anyone who is going to listen to podcasts. Perhaps nobody commutes, or they already have entrenched lunch practices, etc. Why would you go down that road if you didn’t have ‘customers’ for it? So instead of approaching it as a ‘big bang,’ you want to test and learn first.

When people go out and try to create services - especially when we’re talking about podcasting as a service - they’re making a huge assumption, which is that people are going to listen.

When people come to me interested in starting a podcast internally, I tell them they first need to figure out whether they have an audience who is going to listen to the content they create. Because there are so many assumptions around the service, you have to develop it differently. It’s not just that there is some uncertainty here - there are massive amounts of uncertainty here, things that if left untrue, make the entire effort crumble. When we consider this critical assumption, we can begin to think ‘If this is not true, why am I going to bother doing any of the work around it?’ That’s a big mind shift for many companies.”

4. What can conference attendees look forward to in your presentation?

Christopher: “We want to explore some situations they’ve likely not considered, like the shocking amount of assumptions we often make. If you’re not testing these things, they could go horribly wrong.

We also want to explore how to integrate feedback from leadership, especially when that feedback represents a different opinion or a different solution than your customers are suggesting; how do you approach that? Typically, people believe they either have to just say yes and do it, or blaze their own path and ignore the feedback. There’s a third option, though, and that’s one of the things we’re going to cover.

Lastly, we want to explore how you inspire people to work as a startup, the value of that; using the podcasting story as a means to help people see the value of a different mode of working. Each of these pointing us toward a solution for creating an ‘open innovation’ mindset.”
Dr. Robert Bornhofen on Divergent Thinking, Open Innovation, and Creativity

Dr. Robert Bornhofen is a practitioner-scholar who has a passion for helping organizations adopt change, act on new ideas, and grow through innovation. To this end, Robert currently teaches a course called Global Marketplace Strategy at University of Maryland University College.

This course teaches students to analyze the various stages in the strategy development and planning processes, assess external opportunities, threats, and internal organizational capabilities, understand critical success factors in achieving strategic objectives, apply a variety of qualitative and quantitative business-analysis techniques, and develop an overall strategic plan of action designed to meet the higher-level goals of an organization.

Robert also works with IBM to drive strategy and innovation and has previously held positions as an innovator with Southwest Airlines and an Adjunct Professor at Jack Welch Management Institute.

At the upcoming Texas Open Innovation Conference, Robert will be delivering a presentation titled “Diversity in Openness, Creativity in Thought: A Case Study on Realizing Vision.” In anticipation of the upcoming presentation, we interviewed Robert on open innovation, divergent thinking, and creativity.

Here’s what he had to say:

1. **How can “divergent thinking” enable organizations to address the challenges associated with open innovation?**

   Dr. Robert Bornhofen: “Divergent thinking is getting people from diverse backgrounds to come up with creative ideas. As we ideate to address a problem, we want an open innovation model that embraces people from different backgrounds. The more diversity we have, the richer and more creative the response. Divergent thinking helps us get much more creative with innovation.”

2. **What are the first steps for an organization looking to create more openness and creativity?**

   Dr. Robert Bornhofen: “The first step is understanding where the organization is heading - the vision, the future, and similar things. If the company is Ford Motors, that future may be environmentally-friendly vehicles or all-luxury vehicles. When you know where you’re heading, that’s a good starting point.
From there, you look at where you are today and what’s holding you back from getting to your goal - what are the problems and the pain points? That’s the best way to create value for the business and customers, and to move in the direction of the future vision."

3. What sets organizations that generate highly-creative ideas apart from those who don’t?

Dr. Robert Bornhofen: “The first element is the ability to sustain innovation versus being a one-hit wonder. Look at companies like 3M and Google. They’re mature and capable of creating ideas that customers want and will pay a premium for. The sustainability of generating creative outcomes is essential.

Another measurement is the ability to come up with something bold - something other organizations have not been able to create.

After sustainability and impact comes culture. Culture is the third element of creativity. Creative organizations have a culture that attracts people to want to work there. Working at IBM, Google, and Microsoft, for example, sets people apart because those brands are on the exciting cusp of change and breakthroughs." 

4. What can conference attendees look forward to in your presentation?

Dr. Robert Bornhofen: “Companies that are active in innovation or beginning to work with others will be able to open up their intellectual property and rely on others external to their company.

With that comes the need to protect what they’re sharing and clarify who owns what, regarding patents, and determine how to prevent someone else from using their intellectual property. It’s taking innovation up a level and learning to protect your investment and intellectual property.

Far too many companies do not do this. As to what can be done to mitigate the risk of IP misuse while, at the same, fostering highly collaborative and creative outcomes, you’re encouraged to listen to the presentation.”
David Camerlengo & Brett Cornwell on Open Innovation, Building Bridges, and Cross-Border Commercialization

David Camerlengo is the Trade & Investment Commissioner at Trade & Investment Queensland, a position he’s held since September 2013. Originally from Brisbane, Australia, David oversees the trade and investment portfolio across North America, including markets in the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico.

Under David’s direction, the North America market focuses on supporting technology from Queensland, including mining technologies, agritech, life sciences, MedTech, and defense, together with traditional industries such as food & beverage and education.

Brett Cornwell, meanwhile, is the Executive Director for Texas A&M Technology Commercialization. He leads the Licensing and IP Management and New Ventures division activities. This includes partnering with industry leaders to commercialize the A&M System’s portfolio of technologies to spin out new companies in support of the commercialization of technologies.

He is on the adjunct graduate faculty at Texas A&M University and teaches courses in technology commercialization. He is also a faculty member at the IC2 Institute at The University of Texas at Austin and is an Adjunct Lecturer in the McCombs School at the University of Texas at Austin as an instructor in the Master’s in Science and Technology Commercialization degree program.

At the upcoming 2018 TOIC conference, Brett and David will be delivering a presentation titled Global Innovation Networks – Building Bridges Across Borders/Continents/Oceans.

In anticipation of their upcoming presentation, we interviewed Brett and David about open innovation, building bridges, and the future of cross-border commercialization.

Here’s what they had to say:

1. What is the Open Worldwide Innovation Network (OWIN) and why does it matter?

David: “OWIN is a network of like-minded groups and individuals across the globe that share the vision of supporting commercialization and the transfer of technology across international borders. We have representatives in the U.S., including Texas A&M University, Europe, including AWEX, which is the Belgium Regional Economic Development Agency. We also have COWAY in China, which is the Technology Transfer Agency for Tsinghua University out of Beijing and Trade & Investment Queensland representing Australasia.”
Brett: “The reason a network like OWIN is important to companies is that it takes many unknowns out of working in one of the markets in the OWIN network. A small Texas company may not know anything about the capital markets and technology support in Belgium, but our partner AWEX does. The OWIN partners enable the rapid understanding of a foreign market by a company by having trusted partners on both sides of the ocean ready to help our client companies.”

2. **What are some of the most significant obstacles in the way of cross-border commercialization?**

David: “Firstly, understanding the market. What we do at OWIN is help facilitate introductions to potential partners and potential customers, which can give real market validation on the technology that’s being considered for the markets. Secondly, it’s helping these technology-based companies to understand and develop a pathway to market. This can be fundamental things like considerations from legal, taxation, immigration, etc. It also helps facilitate introductions to partners that can help them raise capital for their venture and the commercialization of their venture in the market.”

Brett: “The unknowns and the time it will take to uncover opportunities and plug into the foreign market are some of the biggest barriers to a company thinking about doing business internationally. It is tough for a Texas company to understand the depth and breadth of a foreign market without boots on the ground. OWIN can help provide those local experts and connections to ease the transaction.”

3. **How can open innovation work to “build bridges”?**

David: “We’ve seen some great case studies where a founder of a technology-based company has been able to partner with another member within the OWIN network to then collectively pursue a particular market within their region.

As an example, we work with a large engineering firm from Australia that also has a large presence in the U.S. They have been pursuing additional capabilities to service the water sector, and they identified a technology from Texas A&M through our network that they have now licensed and are using as a means of entering that particular vertical in North America.

We provide a softer landing for companies. We try to make thing smoother, simpler, and less complicated for businesses considering an international market or pathway.”

Brett: “One of the key things is the phrase ‘bridges.’ When you’re talking about international technology transfer, it’s like you’re using a boat to get from one country to the next. OWIN acts as a bridge you can go back and forth over, with trusted technology partners on either side of the bridge. When we have companies that are coming to TX from Australia or Belgium, for example, I know who I’m working with, and they know what they can expect when they get here.”
The key thing with OWIN is that you have trusted partners on both sides. I am absolutely comfortable with sending a Texas company to Australia, or vice-versa. It is not exploration, it is a worn path, and that is the bridge element of it.

Because of the relationships we’ve built up through OWIN, it’s easy for us to get the attention of companies around the globe because it is not a new exploration. It’s like using a travel guide with a travel agent helping you. So many times, when you’re going international, it’s an exploration. If you think of yourself as Columbus, that’s a really dangerous thing. If you think of going across an established bridge, though, with partners on each side, it’s a lot less scary."

4. What can conference attendees expect from your presentation?

David: “What’s unique about OWIN is that there’s value for organizations of different shapes and sizes: local economic development people, universities, government agencies, and the private sector, as well." 

Brett: “This is an opportunity for company representatives to understand that Europe, Oceania, China, etc., don’t need to be scary of foreign. When you have a partner like Texas A&M or COWAY, which have built these bridges already. Individually or collectively, these company representatives have partners on the other side of the ocean who can help them.

OWN is an example of how an institution can build an international network to build bridges rather than merely doing one-off deals. It is so much easier to work with trusted technology partners than try to recreate something. OWIN is a concierge service for companies moving back and forth between international markets."
Denis Greene is an expert in innovation leadership, and has spent his career focusing on the cognitive skill of “Innovating on Command.” He is also the author of Wheelie Through The Baboons: Innovation Leadership.

His neuroscience research has revealed a simple, precise method to unlock their creative potential. He has gathered many case studies (surrounding the likes of Thomas Edison, Tesla, Archimedes, JK Rowling, Stephen King, Jerry Seinfeld, Doc Worley - Founder of KC Business Journal, Dr. Finch - inventor of the Apollo 13 heat shield, and others) during his career and raised over $200,000,000 for charitable organizations.

His interest in innovation came after he encountered a pack of baboons at 100 MPH on a motorcycle trip across Africa, and had to think quickly to get himself out of the situation. Denis is more than just a collection of outlandish stories, though: his easy-to-apply framework has also become an essential tool for professionals who need to be creative problem solvers.

At the upcoming 2018 TOIC conference, Denis will be delivering a presentation titled The Power of Innovation.

In advance of his upcoming presentation, we interviewed Denis about what it means to innovate on command, and how doing so can help individuals and corporations multiply their productivity and output and enjoy more creativity, starting now.

Here’s what he had to say:

1. How can “innovating on command” help increase output?

Denis: “In 2017 my co-researcher Dr. Maria Hunt and I studied high-performers, their innovation, and their cognitive strategies. We discovered that brilliant innovation is not IQ-dependent, nor based on gender, age, or wealth. It is singularly based on three cognitive strategies. They are simple; anyone can use them.

This is a continuation of the research that began with Maslow and his studies about self-actualized people. It is within the stream of positive psychology but is radically different because it’s grounded in the proven success of high achievers. It is not conjecture or theory.
When people learn to innovate on command or copy the cognitive strategies of super-high achieving innovations, they’ll experience a minimum of 12x increase in productivity. Copy people who have achieved tremendous success and you, too, will elevate your game."

2. How has a lack of innovation led to the downfall of Fortune 500 companies?

Denis: “Look at Blockbuster. Think of the hours you spent roaming around Blockbuster in the past, and now it’s gone. How did that happen? There are many other examples, as well.

Take Tesla - what if Ford decides to change Jaguar to an all-electric product? Ford and Tesla have the same market capitalization, but Ford produces 10x as many vehicles, so Tesla is way overvalued. Tesla is the first to market, but it’s the second to market that has a much higher success rate. This means my investment in Tesla is an irrational one.

We, myself included, tend to make investments based on emotion rather than deliberately effective, contemplative process.

Every day, we should have a contemplative practice on two things: what went well and what didn’t go well. Investors should do that too, as should middle managers and people involved in corporations. Unfortunately, there’s no respect for shifting to this state of mind in enterprises. As it turns out, that’s the best state of mind for decision-making.

In Fortune 500 companies, there are a few myths that are so strong they kill innovation-making. These are that innovation happens in a group, that hippies do it, it’s messy, and that you’re either born with it or not. This outlook robs Fortune 500 companies of innovation."

3. What do consistent innovation leaders and top achievers do differently?

Denis: “Three things exactly: 1) they have a daily ritual - they are very deliberate about a time and a place and a system for their innovative thinking. The woman who created Spanx, for example, did her innovative thinking back when she was a Fax saleswoman and would get stuck in 5 pm traffic every day. 2) they shift into that contemplative (alpha) state of mind, this allows them to see what is just below the surface. 3) they have a very deliberate focus of attention."

4. What can TOIC attendees look forward to in your presentation?

Denis: “They will be wildly entertained by the stories. They’ll also get three particular cognitive strategies used by high-achieving cognitive innovators, which they can implement today. Their lives and their jobs will be vastly improved. At a minimum, a person gets an increase in their creativity by 12x."
Mike Mathews on Blockchain, Education, and the Value of TOIC

Mike Mathews is the AVP for Technology and Innovation, and the Chief Information Officer at Oral Roberts University.

Mike has spent more than two decades working as a senior-level IT Executive. In the past, he’s held positions as a chief information officer, chief strategist for innovation, business development officer, trainer, teacher, and vice president of academic services for several large corporations and throughout higher education.

Previously, Mike spent 12 years at Cray Research, where he worked as an instructor and global training manager. He later spent eleven years at SunGard Higher Education, where he worked as the CIO, general manager, and VP of academic services.

In 2017, Mike was named one of the Top 30 Technologists, Transformers, and Trailblazers by the Center for Digital Education. He’s also been added to the Business Transformation 150 list, a list of elite executives leading global business transformation efforts, by Constellation Research, Inc.

At the upcoming 2018 Texas Open Innovation Conference, Mike will be delivering a speech titled Blockchain for Education - Transforming the Value and Trust for Individuals and Companies.

To mark Mike’s upcoming speech, we interviewed him about blockchain, technology, and the unique opportunities TOIC offers for innovators and leaders.

Here’s what he had to say:

What is Blockchain?

Mike: Blockchain is the first trusted database that accommodates the personalization and accuracy of records. The industrial age created an information gap – people started crying out for more reports, analytics, etc. As more reporting became available, it created a trust gap which then became global. Now that blockchain is here, it has the potential to close that trust gap.

With Blockchain, it’s possible to keep a central and ‘trusted’ repository of everything. You can’t check information out unless you own it, and you can’t check it back in until it’s been verified as the original master record.
What are the most exciting things blockchain stands to do for the educational system?

**Mike:** Right now, just 34% of Americans have a post-secondary degree. That’s because many people see college degrees as inaccessible. Through Blockchain, though, it’s possible to make education more attainable by giving verifiable credit for life and work experience; outside the degree format.

As Americans, we’ve let so many people fall off the charts because they think they can’t get a four-year degree. Blockchain allows more people to pursue education by creating a profile that equates to more than just transcripts or diplomas.

Nano-sizing education through virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence and integrated with blockchain gives everyone a new ‘truth ledger’ of their personal value. Citizens in the blockchain era will no longer be measured against a degree, but against their true net-worth of credentials and accomplishments.

**Advocates say Blockchain will revolutionize business and redefine companies and economies. What are the potential impacts of Blockchain technologies for companies?**

**Mike:** Every company wants to be a leader, and Blockchain will allow your company to climb to the top of your industry -- as you will be seen as the ‘trusted’ company.

It also helps limit cybersecurity issues. By reducing the number of data systems floating around, Blockchain allows people to be less fearful of data, and to become stewards of that data, instead.

For businesses, this is a huge advantage. It gives you the confidence that you’ll be able to communicate to your consumers. With this in mind, companies can let go of the thought that Blockchain will put them out of business. Instead, it will create new opportunities...if you innovate around the technologies rather than running scared from them, great things can happen.

**Why should people attend the Texas Open Innovation Conference in 2018?**

**Mike:** Well, first of all, Lone Star College University Park is a premier location. It triangulates industry, education, and business. It is truly the ‘Mall-of-America’ of Education and Industry. It’s a phenomenal place in so many ways. People will also get to meet businesses like Kastech who specialize in micro-innovations such as augmented and virtual reality with blockchain.

Beyond that, companies today want to be at the center of change. Even if you don’t necessarily lead change, you need to be aware of change to see its impact – both positive and negative – in your industry, as well as in other industries.

Finally, during my session, I’m going to be showing live demonstration of real augmented and virtual reality environments that connect with Blockchain. You don’t want to miss it.