



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Christine Sullivan

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Christine B. Sullivan is Executive Director, The Enterprise Center at Salem State College. Christine has served as Massachusetts Secretary of Consumer Affairs, responsible for the oversight of various regulatory agencies. She has also done extensive work in economic development and tourism, and was Chief of Staff in a Congressional office in Washington, DC.

She received a BA from Vassar College and a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

The Enterprise Center provides small business owners with the knowledge they need to maximize their business skills through more than 70 free programs a year, plus monthly CEO groups, an annual business plan competition, and support for the growth and development of the North Shore region's creative economy and other business clusters. They also provide this expertise to nonprofit organizations who make up a substantial share of New England's economy.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: The greatest change is the ability to communicate to thousands of people at lower cost. The advent of social networking has really enabled us to reach broader audiences at no cost other than our time. As we go forward we are seeking to use technology to create a small business community and link micro businesses locally and nationally.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: The economy. It's one thing to know you have to work faster and harder in this world. It's another when you are rowing against the tide. Our small businesses are resourceful and committed and for that I am thankful. But this is a hard time for almost everyone.

Q: How will globalization affect your professional area in the near term?

A: More and more US companies will seek to do business internationally and we need to better prepare them to do that. This means more programs in cross cultural training as well as the nuts and bolts of exporting and importing. Our children must be required to learn at least one second language. Interestingly a recent study of CEO's of major US companies found that they had only one thing in common—all of them had lived and worked for some period in another country.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: As a business incubator we help small businesses learn the skills to successfully run their businesses. Our challenge is to keep in the forefront of the issues they face so we can provide them with the training they need. And we need to raise enough money to maintain the staff and commitment we have managed so far. Whether it is a new “social media” effort, cloud computing, competing with China, or forming effective management teams, we have to be able to help businesses meet those needs.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: I think they face three challenges:

1. Finding a good job. While this recession lingers there are five applicants for every job. The difficulty the 20 something young professionals face in such a tough market cannot be understated.
2. Competitiveness—when I graduated from college jobs were falling off the trees. That is not so any longer. Candidates must be strategic and competitive in their job searches. Networking is more important than ever. Using social media to find a job is fine. They need to understand that asking their friends for help is a sign of strength.
3. Global knowledge—we do not educate people to be citizens of the world. But they are part of the larger world and ignorance of the world is a real disadvantage. It's not enough to know about your region or country. You need to keep up with the world.