

3. The Way Forward

This year's Strategic Planning Committee did a lot of reading to try to better understand our changing world and the evolving higher education market. One of the books was *Blue Ocean Strategy*, which discusses how some organizations are successful in highly competitive markets. Most organizations swim in red, shark-infested waters competing for the same fish. Other organizations seek out uncontested "Blue Ocean" space in the market by understanding which aspects of their service should be enhanced because they are most valued by their customers, and which aspects should be diminished in an effort to lower costs.

To remain relevant, every community college needs to differentiate their programs and services to meet the needs of its students, to provide skilled workers for the local economy, and to support the unique needs of its community. In their report, "[The Future of Work in America](#)," the McKinsey Global Institute calls communities like ours "Silver Cities" with higher than average retirement-age people (Yavapai County has twice the national average of people 65 and older!) This provides opportunities to both provide programming of interest to this largely untapped market segment (Community Events, OLLI, Literary Southwest, etc.), and to train workforce-age students to provide the products and services that retirees need such as healthcare, professional services, and technology.

McKinsey's report also highlights that we are in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution, where Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation are becoming more prevalent in the workplace. Both "white collar" and "blue collar" jobs are impacted. Workers/ Employers will need to continue to upskill to remain competitive in this new workspace. In "[The Indispensable Institution](#)," the authors advocate that community colleges are uniquely positioned to help people make these career transitions given the colleges' strong backgrounds in career and technical education programming.

In the coming months, YC will finalize its annual Strategic Plan update. The revised plan will demonstrate we are listening to our students' needs and describe [how we will differentiate](#) (hyperlink) ourselves from our competitors, thereby creating more value for our students and our community.

As you will see in the following section describing YC Budget data, YC has a practice of reallocating resources to support emerging strategic priorities. The FY22 Budget will undoubtedly need to continue that tradition. The updated Strategic Plan will be shared with the DGB by the end of the spring term.

In the meantime, please feel free to visit our new [Strategic Planning](#) website to peruse all of the articles, books and data which are motivating YC to develop innovative strategies as we adjust to the shifting educational landscape.

