MEETING SUMMARY

Workforce Development: The College-to-Career Skills Gap

Date: October 23, 2026

Quick Recap

The webinar examined the college-to-career skills gap, focusing on the “calibration gap” between how new hires and supervisors assess the same work. Research shows early career staff rate their own skills much higher than supervisors do, with communication and time management showing the largest discrepancies. The presenter explained why the gap forms, how AI is widening it by making output look finished before judgment develops, and what supervisors can do: state clear expectations, give specific work-focused feedback, model reasoning through think-aloud processes, and ensure new hires build judgment before leaning on AI.

Summary

The Calibration Gap

The presenter shared research on the “calibration gap,” the difference between how new hires and their supervisors assess the same work. Early career staff consistently rated their own skills significantly higher than supervisors rated them. The largest gaps appeared in communication and time management. The presenter stressed that the gap is not primarily generational. It is a predictable product of how people learn and how work is reviewed.

Why the Gap Forms

The presenter outlined several mechanisms behind the gap. Newcomers often lack clear standards for what good work looks like, so they have no reliable benchmark to measure themselves against. Experienced professionals, in turn, tend to forget how difficult a skill was to learn, which leads them to leave expectations unstated and to underestimate how much guidance a new hire needs. Without structured feedback and support, those two blind spots reinforce each other.

How AI Is Widening the Gap

AI tools are making the gap larger. Because AI can produce work that looks polished and finished, new hires may deliver output that appears complete before they have developed the judgment to evaluate it. That makes it harder for both the new hire and the supervisor to see where skills are still developing.

Practical Steps for Supervisors

The session closed with recommendations for narrowing the gap. Supervisors should state expectations clearly rather than assume they are understood. Feedback should be specific and focused on the work, not on personality. Supervisors can also make their reasoning visible through think-aloud processes, walking new hires through how they approach a problem, not just the answer. Finally, firms should make sure new hires build judgment skills first, rather than relying on AI-generated content before they can evaluate it.