

Upskilling Year in Review 2019

2019 was yet another banner year for upskilling, with a number of large companies doubling down on already major commitments and new employers, colleges, community organizations, and more developing innovative new approaches. These expanded offerings now include master's degrees, industry certifications, and skills development programs for working students, creating new opportunities for advancement for employees of businesses big and small. As UpSkill America approaches its fifth anniversary, we're excited to see the continued growth of the upskilling field and creative new approaches to helping workers attain valuable skills.

These new commitments reflect broader changes in business. This year's new statement on the purpose of a corporation from the Business Roundtable reflects companies' growing understanding of the importance of upskilling. Among other priorities, the Roundtable's members committed to:

"Investing in our employees. This starts with compensating them fairly and providing important benefits. It also includes supporting them through training and education that help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world. We foster diversity and inclusion, dignity and respect."

This UpSkill America Year in Review provides highlights of these new programs and the work that we have done with our partners to provide tools and resources to help them create new training and education programs or improve their current offerings to help advance the skills and careers of their workers.

The year in numbers

- **\$700 million:** Amazon's commitment to upskilling through 2025
- **3,000:** Employees who have graduated from college through Starbucks' College Achievement Plan
- **600+:** Student employees eligible for Snow College's training program
- **93%:** Course completion rate for the JetBlue Scholars program
- **75:** Types of degrees offered by the Chipotle Cultivate Education Program
- **8.8%:** Take-up rate in year one of the Disney Aspire college degree program

Large Corporations

Last year saw more major commitments to upskilling, expansions of existing programs, and employers sharing exciting results from their programs. The continued growth and commitment to upskilling show how valuable these programs are to businesses and workers alike. Highlights from 2019 include:

Amazon Pledges \$700 Million to Upskilling through 2025

Amazon pledged to upskill 100,000 employees by 2025 through a series of training, tuition assistance, apprenticeship, and certification programs. The upskilling programs are designed to create pathways for employees across the company's work, from corporate offices to fulfillment centers and prepare them for in-demand jobs.

Walmart Expands Live Better U

Walmart marked the first anniversary of its \$1-a-day Live Better U education benefit by adding 14 additional technology degrees and certificates, including cybersecurity, computer science, network security, and computing technology. Walmart also created a graduation bonus program for associates who begin the program without any college credits.

JetBlue Expands Upskilling to Offer Master's Degrees

The JetBlue Scholars program now includes pathways to master's degrees in leadership, business management, information technology, aviation management, and liberal arts through five colleges offering online programs. The program provides a variety of discounts, scholarships, and support services for employees to access these advanced degree programs.

Chipotle Unveils New College Program

Chipotle Mexican Grill announced a new program to offer debt-free college degrees in business and technology. The company will pay 100% of costs upfront, allowing employees to access programs at several universities without having to incur debt.

Starbucks College Achievement Plan Celebrates Fifth Anniversary

Starbucks' College Achievement Plan celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2019. More than 3,000 employees have graduated from the program, which offers 100% tuition coverage for online bachelor's degree programs at Arizona State University. As of August 2019, more than 12,000 employees were enrolled in the program.

Disney Shares Results from its Aspire Program

More than 8,000 employees enrolled in classes in the first year of the Disney Aspire program, nearly 9% of eligible employees. The program pays 100% of tuition upfront for more than 300 academic paths and has been expanded to include nursing and additional master's degree programs since its launch.

From the UpSkill America Network

Through our UpSkill America Network, we also had the chance to learn from innovative new approaches to upskilling from small and medium-sized businesses, nonprofits, education providers, and governments across the country. Below are a few examples of the strategies that these organizations implemented to help their employees grow and learn:

Annandale Christian Community for Action

The Annandale Christian Community for Action Child Development Center created a program to support its staff's development through Virginia's Registered Apprenticeship program. Each apprentice has an annual professional development plan and is mentored by a teacher with a bachelor's degree. Eight employees have graduated from the program and 24 more are enrolled.

Baylor Scott & White Health

Baylor Scott & White Health, the largest not-for-profit healthcare system in Texas, partnered with Austin Community College (ACC) and Workforce Solutions Capital Area to launch a registered apprenticeship program at Baylor Scott & White Medical Center – Round Rock to upskill entry-level employees to become Registered Medical Assistants. ACC developed a competency-based condensed curriculum in which apprentices attend class during the day, 40 hours a week for nine weeks, and are paid as they train. After they complete the curriculum, apprentices take a national exam and complete additional on-the-job training.

Goodwill Industries of San Antonio

Goodwill San Antonio (GWSA) partnered with Palo Alto College and Education Design Lab to develop and pilot two upskilling programs for Goodwill San Antonio employees. One program leads to a college-level certificate in logistics management, for which GWSA offers tuition support. The program is expected to provide a pathway for upward mobility for employees to help build high-demand skills required to access jobs that lead to family-sustaining wages.

Snow College

Snow College, a community college in Utah, surveyed student employees and used the results to develop a program that provides training for employees and supervisors and tracks outcomes. The training is available to all of the college's more than 600 student employees. The program trains students in one or more of eight competencies defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers Career Readiness program.

Mountain View Working Scholars

Working Scholars—a community-funded program that helps California residents earn a college degree at no cost—celebrated its first class of 18 graduates in Mountain View. The milestone comes just two and a half years after Study.com created the program to upskill local workforces and combat economic inequality. Students in the program complete college courses on Study.com and transfer the credits to Thomas Edison State University, which bestows their degree. Working Scholars launched in Mountain View in January 2017 and has since expanded to San Francisco, Gilroy, Sunnyvale, East Palo Alto, Santa Clara, Perris, and the Ravenswood School District.



New from Upskill America in 2019

Tools for Employers

- Cost of Turnover Tool: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/cost-of-turnover-tool/>
- Tuition Assistance Policy Discussion: Roadmap to a Skilled and Educated Workforce: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/tuition-assistance-policy-discussion-roadmap-to-a-skilled-and-educated-workforce/>
- Accessing the Network of Local Upskilling and Related Resources Available to Support Your Business: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/accessing-the-network-of-local-upskilling-and-related-resources-available-to-support-your-business/>

Blog Posts from Our Partners

- Three Things I Learned About Upskilling while at Discover Financial Services, Jon Kaplan: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/three-things-i-learned-about-upskilling-while-at-discover-financial-services/>
- Who's In, Who's Out: Opportunity in America, David K. Gibson: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/whos-in-whos-out-opportunity-in-america/>
- The Importance of Upskilling During Economic Downturns, Carol Morrison and Kevin Martin: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/the-importance-of-upskilling-during-economic-downturns/>

Upcoming in 2020

UpSkill America will be celebrating its fifth anniversary in 2020. To celebrate this anniversary, on January 21, 2020, we will be bringing together leaders in business, researchers, policymakers, and upskilling program graduates to share what we've learned over the past five years, highlight innovative approaches to upskilling, discuss solutions to common challenges, and explore the future of the upskilling movement. The event will be held at the Aspen Institute in Washington, DC. We hope you'll be able to join us. You can learn more or register at [as.pn/upskillanniversary](https://www.aspeninstitute.org/upskillanniversary).

Learn More

To stay connected to the upskilling movement, visit our website, [as.pn/upskill](https://www.aspeninstitute.org/upskill). UpSkill America is an initiative of the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program. Join our mailing list ([as.pn/eopmail](https://www.aspeninstitute.org/eopmail)) and follow us on social media ([as.pn/eopsocial](https://www.aspeninstitute.org/eopsocial)) to learn more about our work.