State Opportunity Index



Arizona

State Summary 2026

Arizona at a glance

THE STATE OPPORTUNITY INDEX is a framework for measuring and improving education-to-career outcomes. For each state, the Index reports the percentage of graduates who experience a positive return on investment and summarizes progress in five key areas for improving success beyond completion: Clear Outcomes, Quality Coaching, Affordability, Work-Based Learning, and Employer Alignment. States are grouped into four categories: Leading (at the forefront, demonstrating strong progress); Advanced (substantial progress); Developing (early stages of improvement); and Foundational (just beginning their journey).

Arizona improved from Developing to Advanced in Clear Outcomes, joining 21 other states in the category (17 states are Leading). Quality Coaching for associate students also is Advanced (no states are Leading). The state is among 35 states and jurisdictions Leading in Affordability at associate degree institutions. To learn more about progress in other states, visit strada.org/state-opportunity-index.

Clear Outcomes		ADVANCED
Quality Coaching	BACHELOR'S	DEVELOPING
	ASSOCIATE	ADVANCED
Affordability	BACHELOR'S	ADVANCED
	ASSOCIATE	LEADING
Work-Based Learning	BACHELOR'S	DEVELOPING
Employer Alignment		DEVELOPING

State Opportunity Index

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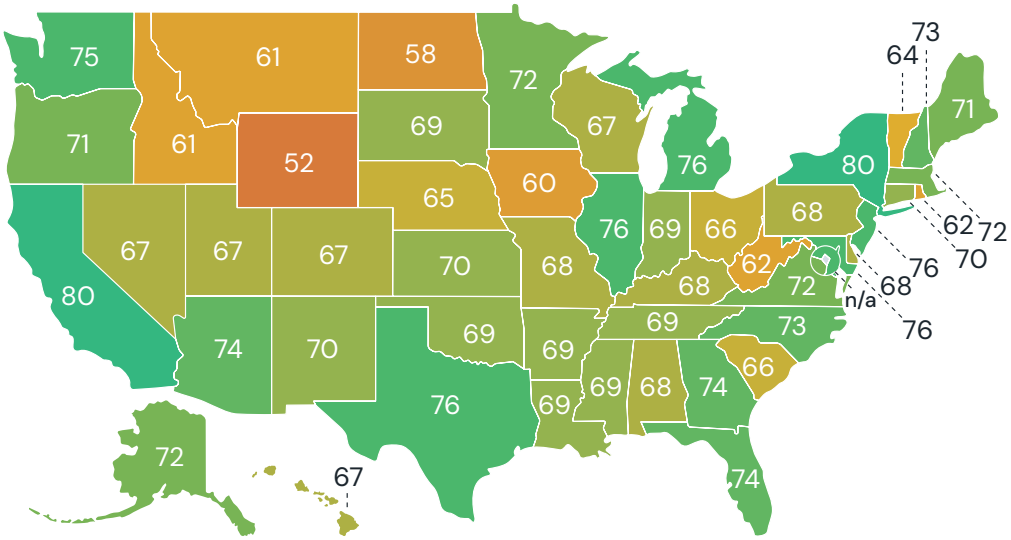
In cases in which the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.
References for "unavailable" refer to states in which there was insufficient data to assign a rating at this time.

Positive ROI

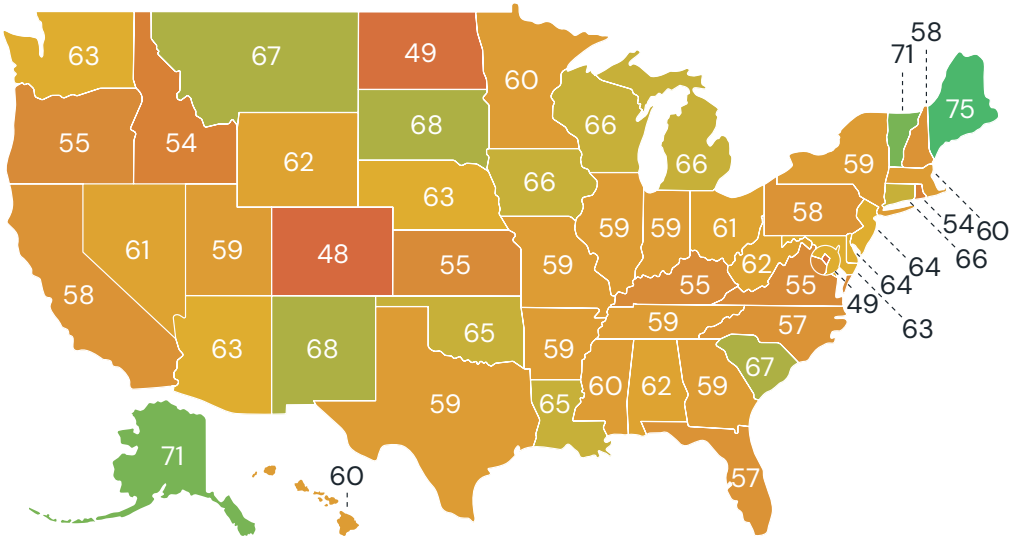
	Arizona	National
Overall	72%	70%
Bachelor's	74%	73%
Associate	63%	60%

All students who invest their time and money in earning a degree should be financially better off because of it. The Positive ROI value for each state represents the estimated percentage of public college graduates whose earnings premium over high school graduates is enough to repay their total cost of a degree within 10 years.

Percentage of graduates with Positive 10-year ROI by state - bachelor's degrees



Percentage of graduates with Positive 10-year ROI by state - associate degrees



Clear Outcomes

ADVANCED

Arizona 2026

Everyone should have access to accurate information on employment outcomes that can help them make informed decisions about education after high school. The Clear Outcomes measure is based on 10 critical elements that contribute to the capacity of state education-to-employment data systems to clarify education pathway outcomes in order to inform personal, public, and private sector investments.

Arizona has seen several improvements in its data infrastructure and improved from Developing to Advanced overall. Arizona improved from Developing to Advanced in integrating post-high school education and employment data (element 3) and in having a designated unit for generating education-to-employment insights (element 10), and from Foundational to Developing in integrating high school completion and employment data (element 4). Arizona also is one of 11 states that are Leading in providing individuals with access to their own verified education and employment data for learning mobility (element 9).

COLLECT

State data system elements	State description	Category
1. Includes learner-level and program characteristic data for nondegree and noncredit postsecondary education and training programs	Arizona collects enrollment and credential outcome data for WIOA-eligible training providers. Arizona links these nondegree credentials to employment outcomes.	DEVELOPING
2. Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location	Arizona does not collect any of the three enhanced elements, and Strada's research did not demonstrate an emerging collection policy.	FOUNDATIONAL

INTEGRATE

State data system elements	State description	Category
3. Integrates and delivers information on learners' earnings and employment after postsecondary education and training completion, and over time	Arizona integrates information on employment and earnings from administrative sources with its (i) public four-year institutions and (ii) some community colleges. The state publishes these postsecondary education-to-employment outcomes through the Arizona Board of Regents' Alumni Wages Report and Pima Community College's Graduate Employment Dashboard. These outcomes are not disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, or family income/economic status.	ADVANCED
4. Integrates and delivers information on learners' earnings and employment after high school completion and over time	Arizona is in the process of integrating information on employment and earnings from administrative sources for all students from Mesa Public Schools.	DEVELOPING
5. Partners with national and multi-state initiatives to assess education-to-opportunity outcomes for graduates and non-graduates of postsecondary education and training programs who relocate or work outside the state	Arizona partners with PSEO (<25% graduate coverage) and the State Wage Interchange System.	ADVANCED

Category Key

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure

- **Foundational** — Not in development
- **Developing** — In development
- **Advanced** — Partially present
- **Leading** — Fully present

Clear Outcomes

ADVANCED

PROVIDE

State data system elements	State description	Category
6. Provides comprehensive and timely open data files containing anonymized education-to-opportunity statistics that anyone can access, download, and otherwise use	Arizona publishes an interactive resource featuring downloadable tables containing education-to-employment statistics for WIOA-eligible training providers.	DEVELOPING
7. Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions	Arizona publishes interactive resources containing education-to-opportunity statistics for one community college and WIOA-eligible training providers.	DEVELOPING
8. Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets	Arizona provides researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets. The state clearly documents the request and review processes.	LEADING

IMPACT

State data system elements	State description	Category
9. Enables learners and earners to access and utilize their own verified data, unlocking opportunities for college and career advancement	The Arizona Community College Coordinating Council and the Arizona Board of Regents launched the Arizona Learning Mobility Collaborative (AZLMC) uniting Arizona's public higher education institutions with key workforce and nonprofit partners to design an integrated, learner-centered credentialing ecosystem. The AZLMC aims to empower Arizonans to document and build their knowledge, skills, and competencies through incremental, portable credentials; leverage their learning to access education and employment opportunities; and strengthen the state's data infrastructure to more effectively support learners and inform evidence-based policy and practices. In June 2026, Arizona was selected a semifinalist for the Connecting Talent to Opportunity Challenge to strengthen the connections between learners and earners by accelerating the development of a statewide talent marketplace.	LEADING
10. Designates a unit with responsibility and dedicated, full-time capacity for generating education-to-employment insights to inform state policymaking and resource allocation decision-making	The Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity coordinates workforce development strategy and evaluation, produces labor market information, and maintains the Integrated Data System (IDS). Laws 2016 Chapter 372 established the Workforce Data Task Force, with representatives from higher education, workforce development, and economic development agencies, to govern the IDS. The IDS maintains ready access to integrated E2E data and publishes resources that report on supply/demand labor market attributes.	ADVANCED

Category Key

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure

- **Foundational** — Not in development
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- **Leading** — Fully present

Quality Coaching

BACHELOR'S DEVELOPING **ASSOCIATE** ADVANCED

Everyone should have access to coaching that helps them reflect on their talents and interests, choose a career goal, chart a path, and navigate challenges. The Quality Coaching measure is based on the percentage of associate students and bachelor's senior students who reported receiving personalized guidance, timely labor market information, and support to create a plan and overcome barriers.

Arizona remains Developing in overall Quality Coaching for students at bachelor's degree institutions. Similar to most other states, rates of bachelor's students receiving labor market information by the end of their first year improved. At the associate level, it is one of 17 states of the 42 with available associate-level data that are categorized as Advanced overall.

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
PERSONALIZED GUIDANCE				
Percentage of students at public institutions who report receiving personalized coaching or guidance to help select the education that will help prepare them for a successful career	DEVELOPING **36%**	**35%**	DEV./ADV. **41%**	**45%**
TIMELY LABOR MARKET INFORMATION				
The average share of students at public institutions who receive timely labor market information, across the various types below, before enrolling or during their first year	FND./DEV. **25%**	**26%**	DEVELOPING **29%**	**35%**
Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for students' strengths and interests	35%	34%	34%	45%
Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to	22%	21%	35%	31%
Potential earnings in different careers related to students' education program	29%	30%	34%	40%
Career outcomes of students from their own institution	15%	17%	14%	23%
SUPPORT				
The average share of students at public institutions who receive at least some support in setting goals and in overcoming obstacles	ADVANCED **69%**	**72%**	ADV./LEAD. **79%**	**73%**
Setting education and career goals, and developing a plan to achieve these goals	68%	71%	78%	73%
Identifying and overcoming barriers	69%	73%	81%	73%

Category Key

- **Foundational** <25%
- **Developing** 25% to <50%
- **Advanced** 50% to <75%
- **Leading** ≥75%

Affordability

BACHELOR'S ADVANCED ASSOCIATE LEADING

A quality postsecondary education should be within everyone's reach, with clear, predictable, and manageable costs. The Affordability measure is based on how many hours a week the average student would need to work to cover the in-state net price (total cost of attendance minus any grants and scholarships), how many hours a student from a low-income family would need to work to cover their typical in-state net price, and the percentage of students that complete their degree on time – a critical factor in the cost of a degree.

Arizona is one of 15 states categorized as Advanced or Leading for overall affordability at bachelor's degree institutions. It performs particularly strongly in the on-time completion category, as one of 18 states in which at least half of students at bachelor's degree institutions complete on time.

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
STUDENT HOURS OF WORK NEEDED				
Average student hours of work needed	DEVELOPING **26 hours per week** Average annual net price: $15,194	**26 hours per week** Average annual net price: $15,270	ADVANCED **12 hours per week** Average annual net price: $9,991	**8 hours per week** Average annual net price: $8,089
Low-income student hours of work needed	ADVANCED **13 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $10,329	**12 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $9,813	LEADING **9 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $8,850	**4 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $6,678

Category Key	Foundational	Developing	Advanced	Leading
	≥30 hrs	20 to <30 hrs	10 to <20 hrs	<10 hrs

Bachelor's	
State	National
ON-TIME COMPLETION RATE	
ADVANCED **53%**	**47%**

Category Key	Foundational	Developing	Advanced	Leading
	<35%	35% to <50%	50% to <65%	≥65%

Work-Based Learning

BACHELOR'S DEVELOPING

All students should have access to paid, immersive work-based learning experiences that connect education to career. The Work-Based Learning measure is based on the percentage of bachelor's senior students who reported participating in at least one of the following types of paid experiences: paid internship, paid apprenticeship, paid co-op, paid practicum, or paid undergraduate research experience. For students at associate degree institutions, participation is reported when data are available, but states are not categorized.

Arizona's bachelor's degree institutions are categorized as Developing, a category shared by 32 other states; however, participation in paid work-based learning is lower than the national average. Students at Arizona's associate degree institutions participate in paid work-based learning at higher rates than students nationally.

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
QUALITY WORK-BASED LEARNING				
Percentage of students at public institutions who participated in at least one of the five types of quality paid work-based learning experiences	DEVELOPING **32%**	**43%**	**34%**	**14%**
Paid internship participation	25%	35%	27%	10%
Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid)	61%	71%	55%	30%

Category Key

- **Foundational** <25%
- **Developing** 25% to <50%
- **Advanced** 50% to <75%
- **Leading** ≥75%

When the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.

In addition to student self-reporting of apprenticeship participation, states have other sources of information on participation in registered apprenticeships via the U.S. Department of Labor. In Arizona, 0.26 percent of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of 9,688 apprentices. Across the country, this number ranges from 0.86 percent (Hawaii) to 0.12 percent (Oklahoma). In countries with leading apprenticeship systems, such as Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and England, apprentices constitute about 2.5–3.0 percent of the labor force, so all states in the U.S. have substantial room for improvement.

Employer Alignment

DEVELOPING

Students should have access to programs that lead to quality jobs and employers should be able to find the talent they need to fill high-wage roles. The Employer Alignment measure is based on the percentage of terminal bachelor's degree holders aged 25-34 employed in a college-level job as well as the supply/demand ratio for a set of high-demand, high-wage jobs in each state.

Arizona is one of 21 states and jurisdictions categorized as Advanced in college-level employment among recent bachelor's degree graduates at 60 percent, the same as the national rate. Along with 23 other states, it is Developing in its overall supply/demand ratio. The state improved from Foundational to Advanced in the supply/demand ratios for nursing and manufacturing/ trades technicians and technologists.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT			
The percentage of bachelor's degree graduates who are employed in college-level jobs		60%	ADVANCED
SUPPLY/DEMAND RATIO			
The overall ratio: the average of the entry-level supply/demand ratios for these nine opportunity occupational groups			DEVELOPING
Information technology and business	Data analytics		LEADING
	Finance and accounting professionals		FOUNDATIONAL
	Finance and accounting support		FOUNDATIONAL
	Information and cybersecurity		LEADING
	Software development and engineering		LEADING
Healthcare	Healthcare technicians and technologists		FOUNDATIONAL
	Nursing		ADVANCED
Manufacturing and engineering	Engineering		LEADING
	Manufacturing/Trades technicians and technologists		ADVANCED

Category Key

- **Foundational** <50%
- **Developing** 50% to <60%
- **Advanced** 60% to <75%
- **Leading** ≥75%

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Arizona 2026

Appendix

Student Survey Responses

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Appendix // **Survey Data Tables**

The following tables provide student responses for questions included in the 2026 State Opportunity Index survey.

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
SAMPLE SIZE				
Respondents, 2026	1,457	36,564	49	17,000
Respondents, 2025–26 combined	2,660	77,803	187	32,005
VALUE				
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "My education will be worth the cost"?				
Strongly disagree	5%	4%	–	7%
Somewhat disagree	10%	9%	–	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	8%	9%	–	8%
Somewhat agree	39%	38%	–	28%
Strongly agree	38%	40%	–	52%
Thinking about how your education supports your career goals, how satisfied are you with how well your institution prepared you for the workforce? *(1: Not at all satisfied … 10: Extremely satisfied)*				
Average (1-10)	7.3	7.2	–	7.8
QUALITY COACHING				
Before choosing your major or program of study, how did you receive information on careers, salaries, job opportunities, etc.? *(Select all that apply)*				
One-on-one meeting with faculty or advisor	18%	22%	–	22%
Career fair, group workshop, orientation session, or in a class	25%	30%	–	23%
National job boards *(LinkedIn, GlassDoor, Indeed, Idealist)*	35%	28%	–	25%
College career portal *(Handshake, Symplicity)*	23%	20%	–	12%
Career assessment tools *(MyMajors, Career Coach)*	16%	14%	–	14%
Labor market tools *(Lightcast, O*NET, state workforce websites)*	8%	6%	–	7%
AI-based tools *(ChatGPT, Perplexity, CareerVillage, Roadtrip Nation)*	13%	13%	–	13%
Conversations with friends and family members	53%	52%	–	47%
Conversations with alumni, mentoring services, scholarship groups, etc.	15%	18%	–	13%
Email or newsletter	17%	16%	–	14%
Other	7%	5%	–	9%
None of these	9%	9%	–	12%
I have not yet chosen a program of study.	0%	1%	–	1%

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
WORK-BASED LEARNING				
During your time in college, have you participated in any of the following? *(Select all that apply)*				
Micro-Internship: short-term work experience, typically lasting four weeks or less, on a specific, employer-defined project	20%	23%	–	7%
Project-Based Learning Activity: real-world, employer-designed projects built as assignments within academic courses	29%	30%	–	12%
Service Learning: courses that combine academic instruction with community service, addressing a real-world need	19%	24%	–	12%
Externship: a short-term experience where a student shadows a professional to observe day-to-day duties to learn about a specific career field	17%	21%	–	10%
During your time in college, have you participated in any of the following? *(Select all that apply) [Paid or unpaid]*				
Internship: fixed-term position lasting longer than four weeks performing entry-level tasks for an employer	42%	47%	–	11%
Apprenticeship: paid job combining on-the-job training under an experienced mentor with classroom learning	4%	5%	–	4%
Co-op program: degree program that alternates periods of academic courses with paid work experiences	3%	4%	–	2%
Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours: closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting	18%	20%	–	14%
Undergraduate research: experience outside of a course, typically working directly with a faculty member in a lab, on a project, or on a research team	24%	25%	–	6%
In-state participation: Student participation in at least one of the five paid experiences in the same state as their institution (paid internship, paid apprenticeship, paid co-op program, paid student teaching, practicum, clinical hours, paid undergraduate research)	25%	32%	–	10%
Did you get credit or a record on your transcript for any of your experiences? *(Select all that apply) [Shown to those who reported the work-based learning experience in question]*				
Internship: fixed-term position lasting longer than four weeks performing entry-level tasks for an employer	54%	52%	–	52%
Apprenticeship: paid job combining on-the-job training under an experienced mentor with classroom learning	29%	33%	–	41%
Co-op program: degree program that alternates periods of academic courses with paid work experiences	40%	47%	–	47%
Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours: closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting	61%	62%	–	65%
Undergraduate research: experience outside of a course, typically working directly with a faculty member in a lab, on a project, or on a research team	60%	56%	–	38%

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
STUDENT WORK				
During the school year, how many hours do you spend in a typical seven-day week working for pay?				
Less than 10 hours per week	12%	16%	–	7%
10 to 19 hours per week	25%	30%	–	16%
20 to 29 hours per week	21%	18%	–	18%
30 hours or more per week	24%	14%	–	34%
Does not typically work while taking classes	17%	22%	–	24%
Do you consider yourself a student who works or a worker that goes to school?				
A student who works	63%	65%	–	44%
A worker who goes to school	19%	13%	–	32%
Does not work	17%	22%	–	24%
Did you have an on-campus job at any point during the time you were enrolled in your current program? If so, what type of job(s) have you had? *(Select all that apply)*				
Academic and Research: Research assistant, lab assistant, or teaching assistant (TA) for a professor	13%	13%	–	3%
Specialized Campus Services: Library assistant, IT help desk technician, or fitness center attendant	8%	9%	–	3%
Peer-Based Roles: Tutor, Resident Assistant (RA), student government or student club role, peer advisor, or orientation leader	11%	12%	–	4%
Retail and Customer Service: Bookstore associate, convenience store clerk, or campus apparel shop worker	3%	5%	–	2%
Food Service and Hospitality: Dining hall staff, campus cafe barista, or catering assistant for university events	4%	7%	–	2%
Administrative and Office Support: Departmental office assistant, front desk receptionist for an academic building, or admissions office worker	8%	10%	–	4%
Other	3%	5%	–	2%
I never had an on-campus job.	65%	57%	–	86%
Did you have an off-campus job at any point during your time you were enrolled in your current program? If so, what type of job(s) have you had? *(Select all that apply)*				
Administrative and Professional Support: Office assistant at a local business, medical receptionist, or clerical worker	8%	8%	–	8%
Community and Public Service: Public schools, libraries, government agencies, community-based organizations	11%	11%	–	8%
Freelance and Gig Economy: Freelance writer, graphic designer, social media manager, rideshare driver	9%	8%	–	6%
Food Service and Hospitality: Waiter/waitress, bartender, cook, barista, food delivery driver	28%	24%	–	20%
Healthcare and Social Services: Caregiver for the elderly, home health aide, non-certified medical assistant	9%	10%	–	15%

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
Did you have an off-campus job at any point during your time you were enrolled in your current program? If so, what type of job(s) have you had? *(continued)*				
Personal and Household Services: Babysitter/nanny, pet sitter, dog walker, house cleaner	7%	8%	–	6%
Retail and Customer Service: Retail sales associate, cashier at a grocery store, customer service representative at a business	21%	21%	–	21%
Professional Services: Bank teller, clerical assistant at a law firm, office receptionist, administrative assistant	7%	5%	–	5%
Seasonal or Recreational: Summer camp counselor, ski resort employee, lifeguard at a public pool, tour guide at a local attraction	8%	9%	–	4%
Skilled Labor and Trades: Warehouse worker, mover, construction laborer, auto detailer, landscaping worker	6%	6%	–	11%
Other	9%	7%	–	11%
I never had an off-campus job.	23%	27%	–	25%
AFFORDABILITY				
Were you granted college credit for courses or work experience before enrolling at your institution? *(Select all that apply)*				
College courses taken while in high school *(Dual Enrollment, Concurrent Enrollment, Dual Credit, Early College Credit)*	34%	36%	–	19%
Advanced Placement classes or International Baccalaureate program in high school	24%	29%	–	8%
I transferred from an academic program at a two-year college, and I received transfer credit.	20%	17%	–	8%
I transferred from an academic program at a four-year college, and I received transfer credit.	13%	10%	–	12%
I took classes at another college but was not enrolled in a degree or credential program *(continuing education, summer classes, or extramural coursework)*, and I received credit.	10%	9%	–	7%
College credit for prior work or military experience *(Credit for Prior Learning, Prior Learning Assessment)*	5%	3%	–	3%
I did not bring any credits into my institution.	22%	21%	–	50%
POST-GRADUATION PLANS				
Which of the following best represents your plans within six months after graduation?				
I plan to work full time, but have not yet secured a position.	41%	46%	n/a	n/a
I plan to work full time at the job I had while I was enrolled.	12%	8%	n/a	n/a
I have accepted a new full-time job.	9%	11%	n/a	n/a
I plan to work part time.	3%	3%	n/a	n/a
I plan to pursue additional education, but have not yet been admitted.	11%	14%	n/a	n/a
I have been admitted to a program for additional education.	16%	10%	n/a	n/a
I have other plans.	2%	3%	n/a	n/a
I don't know what I plan to do after graduating.	5%	5%	n/a	n/a

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
How likely are you to remain in your institution's state after graduation?				
Very unlikely	15%	12%	n/a	n/a
Unlikely	21%	19%	n/a	n/a
Likely	34%	35%	n/a	n/a
Very likely	29%	34%	n/a	n/a
Which of the following best represents your career plans after you complete your current program?				
I plan to continue working for the same employer I have now.	n/a	n/a	–	21%
I plan to look for work with a new employer but in the same career.	n/a	n/a	–	23%
I plan to look for work in a new career.	n/a	n/a	–	56%
NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS				
Have you ever earned, or are you currently earning one of the following credentials relating to career-focused skills? *(Select all that apply)*				
Occupational license issued by a government agency *(teaching license, nursing license, cosmetology license)*	8%	7%	–	11%
Certificate or badge *(from a postsecondary program)*	15%	13%	–	17%
Industry-recognized credential *(Healthcare, IT, Skilled Trades and Manufacturing, Business and Professional Services, Hospitality and Culinary, Public Safety and Legal, Creative and Communications)*	9%	8%	–	13%
Some other type of career-focused credential	4%	3%	–	4%
I don't know.	13%	18%	–	18%
None of the above	57%	56%	–	46%

	State	National
EXTERNAL AFFORDABILITY METRICS		
State appropriations per student FTE, public four-year institutions, FY2025 *(Source: SHEEO SHEF Annual Report)*	$8,880	$11,166
State appropriations per student FTE, public two-year institutions, FY2025 *(Source: SHEEO SHEF Annual Report)*	$12,140	$11,096
FAFSA completion rate, high school class of 2026 (through July 1, 2026) *(Source: NCAN)*	48%	59%
150% completion rate, first-time full-time students, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)*	66%	64%
150% completion rate, first-time full-time Pell recipients, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)*	58%	53%

If we get this right, here's what the future could look like: A young person or adult explores options with a career coach. They have data on jobs and earnings by program. They know costs up front, and public options are affordable and accessible. They engage in paid work-based learning, building skills and clarifying goals. By completion, they don't just hold a credential (or a few).
They have a good job, experience, and momentum toward a better future.

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