State Opportunity Index



Delaware

State Summary 2026

Delaware 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).

Quality Coaching for bachelor's students improved from Developing to Advanced in Delaware, placing the state among five in this category (no states are Leading). Affordability at bachelor's degree institutions also improved from Developing to Advanced, placing the state among 13 in this category, while two are Leading. To learn more about progress in other states, visit strada.org/state-opportunity-index.

Clear Outcomes		DEVELOPING
Quality Coaching	BACHELOR'S	ADVANCED
	ASSOCIATE	UNAVAILABLE
Affordability	BACHELOR'S	ADVANCED
	ASSOCIATE	ADVANCED
Work-Based Learning	BACHELOR'S	DEV./ADV.
Employer Alignment		FOUNDATIONAL

State Opportunity Index

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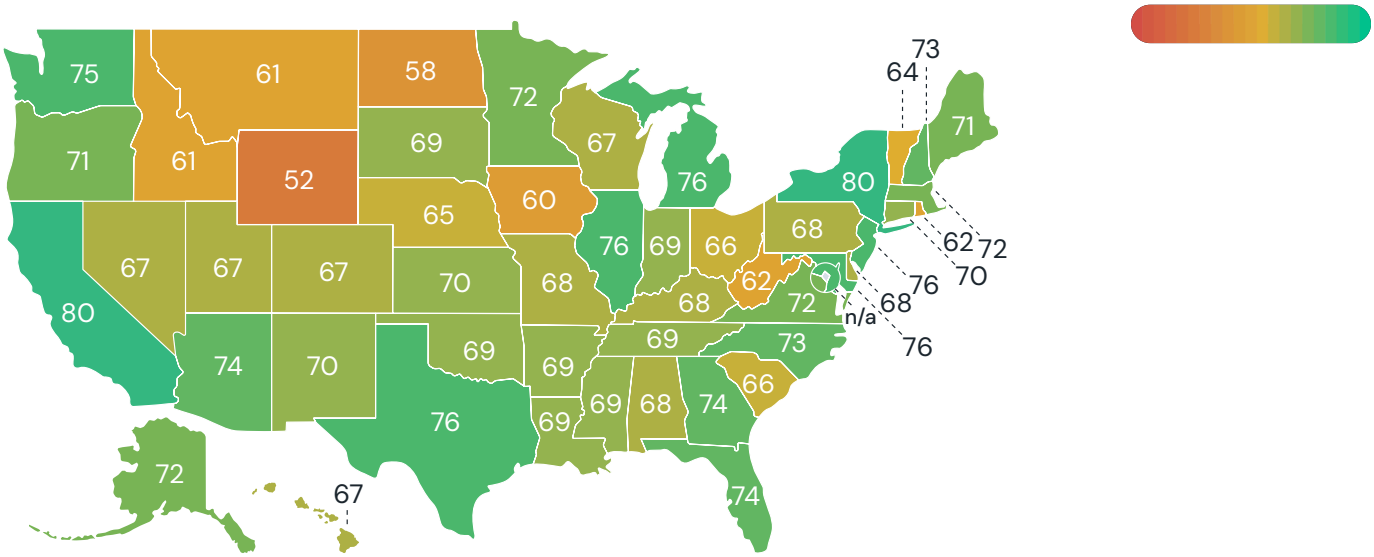
In cases in which the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.
References for "unavailable" refer to states in which there was insufficient data to assign a rating at this time.

Positive ROI

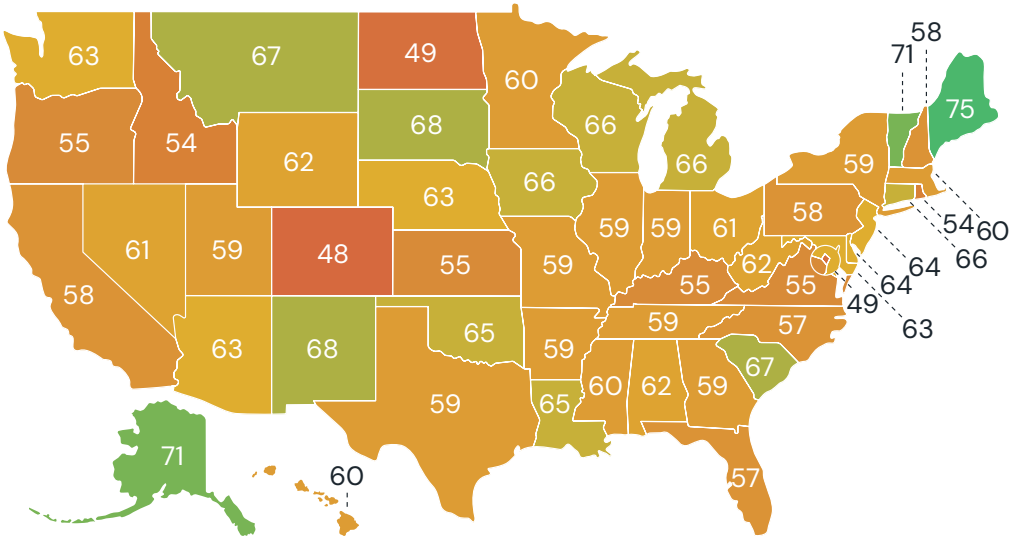
	Delaware	National
Overall	67%	70%
Bachelor's	68%	73%
Associate	64%	60%

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

DEVELOPING

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.

Delaware improved from Foundational to Developing in enhanced wage records (element 2). Nondegree and noncredit data (element 1) are a strength, while integrating post-high school education and employment data (element 3) is an area with room for growth.

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	Delaware collects enrollment and credential outcome data for: (i) college-issued, noncredit credentials; (ii) WIOA-eligible training providers; and (iii) occupational licensure. The state links college-issued noncredit credentials and WIOA-eligible training providers to employment outcomes.	LEADING
2. Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location	In 2025, the state received a Department of Labor Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant to implement enhanced wage record collections. Delaware is developing collections of occupation (SOC code) and work location.	DEVELOPING

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	Delaware does not integrate postsecondary education records with employment and earnings data from administrative sources.	FOUNDATIONAL
4. Integrates and delivers information on learners' earnings and employment after high school completion and over time	The Delaware P-20 Council is developing a SLDS that can integrate information on employment and earnings from administration sources with high school completion records.	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	Delaware partners with the Multi-State Data Collaborative 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

DEVELOPING

Delaware 2026

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	Delaware is developing comprehensive and easy-to-use open datasets containing aggregate education-to-employment statistics.	DEVELOPING
7. Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions	Delaware publishes an interactive resource containing employment outcomes for WIOA-eligible training providers.	DEVELOPING
8. Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets	The Delaware Education Research Alliance (DERA), a collaboration between the Delaware Department of Education, Delaware State University, and the University of Delaware's College of Education and Human Development, provides researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-employment datasets. Most research projects are submitted in response to DERA's request for proposals, ensuring that research addresses state priorities.	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	No evidence was identified through the state's response or in Strada's research of the state demonstrating this element.	FOUNDATIONAL
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	No evidence was identified through the state's response or in Strada's research of the state demonstrating this element.	FOUNDATIONAL

Category Key

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure

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

Quality Coaching

Delaware 2026

BACHELOR'S **ADVANCED** ASSOCIATE UNAVAILABLE

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.

Delaware improved from Developing to Advanced in overall Quality Coaching for students at bachelor's degree institutions. Support also is a strength for bachelor's students, performing above the national average as one of five states categorized as Leading in this element. There are not yet sufficient data to report Quality Coaching for Delaware's associate degree students.

	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 **31%**	**35%**	UNAVAILABLE **-**	**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	DEVELOPING **27%**	**26%**	UNAVAILABLE **-**	**35%**
Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for students' strengths and interests	36%	34%	-	45%
Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to	20%	21%	-	31%
Potential earnings in different careers related to students' education program	30%	30%	-	40%
Career outcomes of students from their own institution	20%	17%	-	23%
SUPPORT				
The average share of students at public institutions who receive at least some support in setting goals and in overcoming obstacles	LEADING **79%**	**72%**	UNAVAILABLE **-**	**73%**
Setting education and career goals, and developing a plan to achieve these goals	78%	71%	-	73%
Identifying and overcoming barriers	79%	73%	-	73%

Category Key

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

Affordability

Delaware 2026

BACHELOR'S **ADVANCED** ASSOCIATE **ADVANCED**

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.

Delaware improved from Developing to Advanced in overall affordability at bachelor's degree institutions, and it is now one of 15 states categorized as Advanced or Leading. It also has the highest on-time completion rate for bachelor's students in the country.

	Bachelor's		Associate	
	State	National	State	National
STUDENT HOURS OF WORK NEEDED				
Average student hours of work needed	FOUNDATIONAL **33 hours per week** Average annual net price: $16,449	**26 hours per week** Average annual net price: $15,270	ADVANCED **19 hours per week** Average annual net price: $11,578	**8 hours per week** Average annual net price: $8,089
Low-income student hours of work needed	ADVANCED **17 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $11,019	**12 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $9,813	ADVANCED **17 hours per week** Average annual net price for low-income students: $10,934	**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		
	LEADING **65%**	**47%**

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

Work-Based Learning

BACHELOR'S DEV./ADV.

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.

Students at **Delaware's** bachelor's degree institutions participate in paid work-based learning at higher rates than students nationally. There are not yet sufficient data to report Work-Based Learning for Delaware's associate degree institutions.

	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	DEV./ADV. **50%**	**43%**	**-**	**14%**
Paid internship participation	41%	35%	-	10%
Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid)	82%	71%	-	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 Delaware, 0.40 percent of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of 2,062 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

FOUNDATIONAL

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.

College-level employment in **Delaware** is 56 percent compared to 60 percent nationally. Delaware trails most other states in Employer Alignment, largely due to its overall supply/demand ratio. Key areas of improvement include a shift from Developing to Leading in the supply/demand ratio for data analytics, from Advanced to Leading for information and cybersecurity, and from Foundational to Leading for manufacturing/ trades technicians and technologists.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT			
The percentage of bachelor's degree graduates who are employed in college-level jobs		**56%**	DEVELOPING
SUPPLY/DEMAND RATIO			
The overall ratio: the average of the entry-level supply/demand ratios for these nine opportunity occupational groups			FOUNDATIONAL
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		FOUNDATIONAL
Manufacturing and engineering	Engineering		LEADING
	Manufacturing/Trades technicians and technologists		LEADING

Category Key

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

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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	465	36,564	52	17,000
Respondents, 2025–26 combined	1,066	77,803	54	32,005
VALUE				
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "My education will be worth the cost"?				
Strongly disagree	4%	4%	–	7%
Somewhat disagree	8%	9%	–	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%	9%	–	8%
Somewhat agree	46%	38%	–	28%
Strongly agree	32%	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	19%	22%	–	22%
Career fair, group workshop, orientation session, or in a class	29%	30%	–	23%
National job boards *(LinkedIn, GlassDoor, Indeed, Idealist)*	23%	28%	–	25%
College career portal *(Handshake, Symplicity)*	21%	20%	–	12%
Career assessment tools *(MyMajors, Career Coach)*	15%	14%	–	14%
Labor market tools *(Lightcast, O*NET, state workforce websites)*	4%	6%	–	7%
AI-based tools *(ChatGPT, Perplexity, CareerVillage, Roadtrip Nation)*	10%	13%	–	13%
Conversations with friends and family members	57%	52%	–	47%
Conversations with alumni, mentoring services, scholarship groups, etc.	19%	18%	–	13%
Email or newsletter	13%	16%	–	14%
Other	3%	5%	–	9%
None of these	5%	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	34%	23%	–	7%
Project-Based Learning Activity: real-world, employer-designed projects built as assignments within academic courses	27%	30%	–	12%
Service Learning: courses that combine academic instruction with community service, addressing a real-world need	23%	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	25%	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	60%	47%	–	11%
Apprenticeship: paid job combining on-the-job training under an experienced mentor with classroom learning	6%	5%	–	4%
Co-op program: degree program that alternates periods of academic courses with paid work experiences	2%	4%	–	2%
Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours: closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting	19%	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	22%	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)	24%	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	46%	52%	–	52%
Apprenticeship: paid job combining on-the-job training under an experienced mentor with classroom learning	31%	33%	–	41%
Co-op program: degree program that alternates periods of academic courses with paid work experiences	32%	47%	–	47%
Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours: closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting	72%	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	35%	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	25%	16%	–	7%
10 to 19 hours per week	26%	30%	–	16%
20 to 29 hours per week	11%	18%	–	18%
30 hours or more per week	7%	14%	–	34%
Does not typically work while taking classes	31%	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	6%	13%	–	32%
Does not work	31%	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	14%	13%	–	3%
Specialized Campus Services: Library assistant, IT help desk technician, or fitness center attendant	10%	9%	–	3%
Peer-Based Roles: Tutor, Resident Assistant (RA), student government or student club role, peer advisor, or orientation leader	14%	12%	–	4%
Retail and Customer Service: Bookstore associate, convenience store clerk, or campus apparel shop worker	4%	5%	–	2%
Food Service and Hospitality: Dining hall staff, campus cafe barista, or catering assistant for university events	5%	7%	–	2%
Administrative and Office Support: Departmental office assistant, front desk receptionist for an academic building, or admissions office worker	7%	10%	–	4%
Other	4%	5%	–	2%
I never had an on-campus job.	55%	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	5%	8%	–	8%
Community and Public Service: Public schools, libraries, government agencies, community-based organizations	10%	11%	–	8%
Freelance and Gig Economy: Freelance writer, graphic designer, social media manager, rideshare driver	4%	8%	–	6%
Food Service and Hospitality: Waiter/waitress, bartender, cook, barista, food delivery driver	23%	24%	–	20%
Healthcare and Social Services: Caregiver for the elderly, home health aide, non-certified medical assistant	7%	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	14%	21%	–	21%
Professional Services: Bank teller, clerical assistant at a law firm, office receptionist, administrative assistant	3%	5%	–	5%
Seasonal or Recreational: Summer camp counselor, ski resort employee, lifeguard at a public pool, tour guide at a local attraction	9%	9%	–	4%
Skilled Labor and Trades: Warehouse worker, mover, construction laborer, auto detailer, landscaping worker	4%	6%	–	11%
Other	4%	7%	–	11%
I never had an off-campus job.	36%	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)*	26%	36%	–	19%
Advanced Placement classes or International Baccalaureate program in high school	32%	29%	–	8%
I transferred from an academic program at a two-year college, and I received transfer credit.	3%	17%	–	8%
I transferred from an academic program at a four-year college, and I received transfer credit.	6%	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.	9%	9%	–	7%
College credit for prior work or military experience *(Credit for Prior Learning, Prior Learning Assessment)*	2%	3%	–	3%
I did not bring any credits into my institution.	33%	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.	46%	46%	n/a	n/a
I plan to work full time at the job I had while I was enrolled.	6%	8%	n/a	n/a
I have accepted a new full-time job.	10%	11%	n/a	n/a
I plan to work part time.	4%	3%	n/a	n/a
I plan to pursue additional education, but have not yet been admitted.	12%	14%	n/a	n/a
I have been admitted to a program for additional education.	13%	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	37%	12%	n/a	n/a
Unlikely	42%	19%	n/a	n/a
Likely	14%	35%	n/a	n/a
Very likely	7%	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)*	4%	7%	–	11%
Certificate or badge *(from a postsecondary program)*	7%	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)*	6%	8%	–	13%
Some other type of career-focused credential	1%	3%	–	4%
I don't know.	27%	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)*	$20,844	$11,166
State appropriations per student FTE, public two-year institutions, FY2025 *(Source: SHEEO SHEF Annual Report)*	$11,757	$11,096
FAFSA completion rate, high school class of 2026 (through July 1, 2026) *(Source: NCAN)*	64%	59%
150% completion rate, first-time full-time students, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)*	73%	64%
150% completion rate, first-time full-time Pell recipients, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)*	55%	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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EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Headquarters
10 W Market St., Suite 1100
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Washington, D.C.
2001 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20006

strada.org