# State Opportunity Index



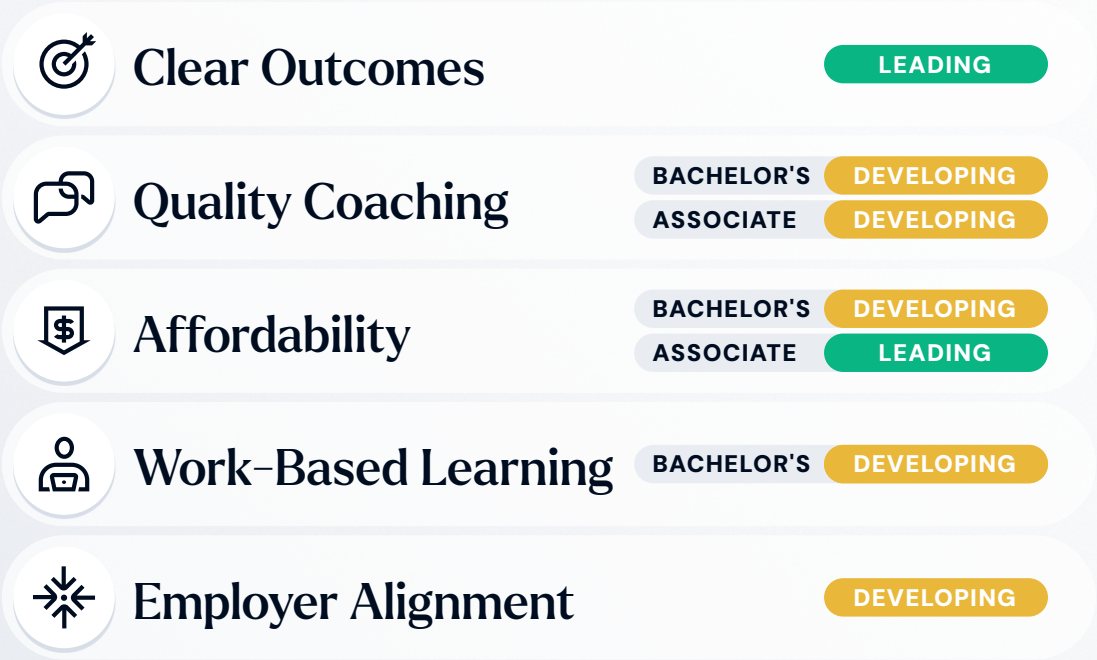
# New Jersey

## State Summary 2026

# New Jersey 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).

**New Jersey is among 17 states Leading in Clear Outcomes. The state also 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.




**State Opportunity Index**

strada

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.

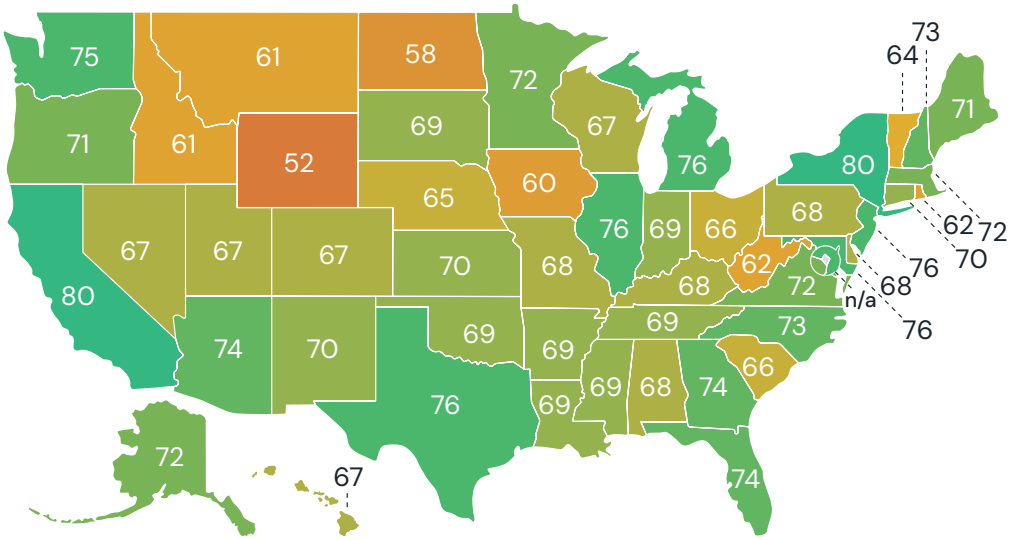
# Positive ROI



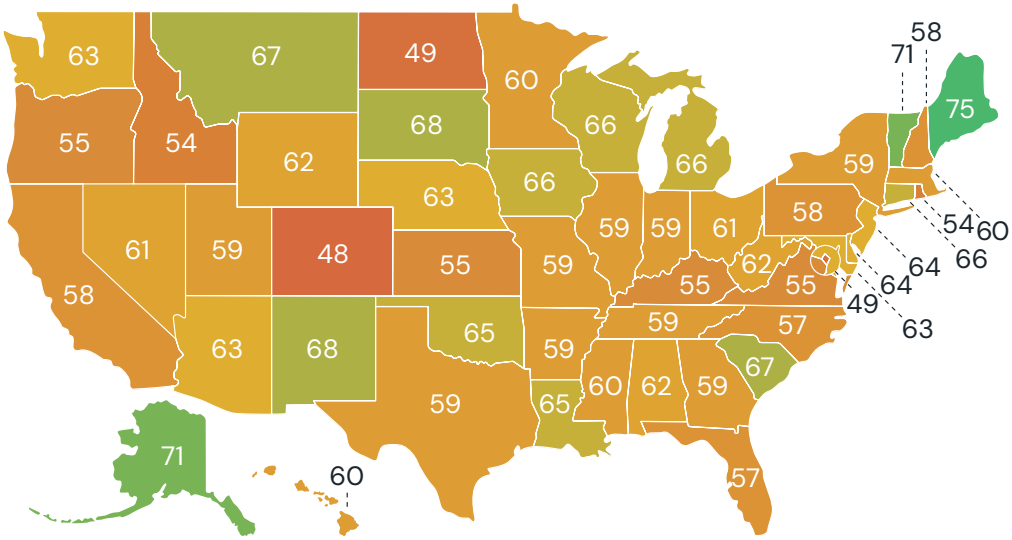
| | New Jersey | National |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | 75% | 70% |
| **Bachelor's** | 76% | 73% |
| **Associate** | 64% | 60% |

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

LEADING



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.

**New Jersey** improved from Foundational to Developing in enhanced wage records (element 2). Integrating post-high school education and employment data (element 3) also is a strength, and it is one of 11 states Leading in this element.

## 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 | New Jersey collects enrollment and completion data for: (i) college-issued, noncredit credentials; (ii) WIOA-eligible training programs; and (iii) other third-party credentials, including industry certifications and apprenticeships. New Jersey does not link college-issued, noncredit credentials to employment outcomes but does link WIOA-eligible training programs to employment outcomes through MyCareerNJ's NJ Training Explorer. The state is updating and improving its nondegree program employment outcomes reporting. | ADVANCED |
| 2. Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location | In 2026, New Jersey introduced legislation to collect occupation (job title), pay rate (hours worked), and work location (address). | 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 | New Jersey integrates administrative records on employment and earnings with its (i) public four-year institutions; (ii) some private four-year institutions; and (iii) community colleges. The state publishes these postsecondary education-to-employment outcomes as an interactive resource through the New Jersey Postsecondary Employment and Earnings Dashboard. These employment outcomes are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender. | LEADING |
| 4. Integrates and delivers information on learners' earnings and employment after high school completion and over time | New Jersey integrates administrative information on employment and earnings with high school completion records. New Jersey Department of Education's School Performance Report includes the percentage of high school graduates entering postsecondary education and the number of graduates entering apprenticeship programs. The New Jersey Statewide Data System publishes reports on the education and employment pathways of high school graduates. However, these employment outcomes are not disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, or family income/economic status. | ADVANCED |
| 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 | New Jersey partners with PSEO (data pending), the Multi-State Data Collaborative, and the State Wage Interchange System. | LEADING |

**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

LEADING

New Jersey 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 | New Jersey is developing public-use datasets containing aggregate statistics for all of its dashboards. | DEVELOPING |
| 7. Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions | New Jersey publishes an interactive resource containing education-to-employment statistics for public four-year institutions, some private four-year institutions, and community colleges. The state publishes a separate interactive resource containing employment outcomes for WIOA-eligible training providers. | LEADING |
| 8. Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets | The New Jersey Statewide Data System provides external researchers with deidentified, individual-level data from across state agencies. The data available include K-12, higher education, and workforce and training information. An executive leadership committee reviews requests to access these data, and all requests must align with the state's research agenda. Researchers also can review data dictionaries that provide details of the potential datasets available prior to applying for data access. | 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 | New Jersey's MyCareerNJ portal includes digital career tools: NJ Training Explorer and NJ Career Navigator. The NJ Career Navigator is an artificial intelligence-powered recommendation engine matching users to training opportunities and in-demand jobs based on their skills, employment history, and professional goals. | DEVELOPING |
| 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 New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS), operated by the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, is the state's centralized, authoritative source designated by the state for generating E2E insights. It has ready access to integrated E2E data and produces resources on postsecondary employment outcomes. There is evidence of sustainable funding, governance, and staffing. NJSDS partners include the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development and New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, among other agencies. | ADVANCED |

**Category Key**

*Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure*

- **Foundational** — Not in development
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# Quality Coaching

**New Jersey 2026**

BACHELOR'S **DEVELOPING** ASSOCIATE **DEVELOPING**

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.

**New Jersey** remains Developing in overall Quality Coaching for students at both bachelor's and associate degree institutions. The rate of bachelor's students receiving labor market information by the end of their first year of college increased, though it still remains below the national average and is categorized as Foundational in this element.

| | 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 **32%** | **35%** | DEVELOPING **39%** | **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 | FOUNDATIONAL **23%** | **26%** | DEVELOPING **30%** | **35%** |
| Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for students' strengths and interests | 28% | 34% | 34% | 45% |
| Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to | 19% | 21% | 29% | 31% |
| Potential earnings in different careers related to students' education program | 27% | 30% | 34% | 40% |
| Career outcomes of students from their own institution | 16% | 17% | 22% | 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. **74%** | **73%** |
| Setting education and career goals, and developing a plan to achieve these goals | 68% | 71% | 71% | 73% |
| Identifying and overcoming barriers | 71% | 73% | 76% | 73% |

**Category Key**

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

# Affordability

**New Jersey 2026**

BACHELOR'S **DEVELOPING** 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.

**New Jersey** performs strongly in its on-time completion rate for students at bachelor's degree institutions, and is one of 18 states where at least half of their students complete on time. At the associate level, Affordability is on par with most other states, and it is one of 35 states and jurisdictions categorized as Leading overall at this level.

| | Bachelor's | | Associate | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | State | National | State | National |
| **STUDENT HOURS OF WORK NEEDED** | | | | |
| Average student hours of work needed | FOUNDATIONAL<br>**36 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $19,734 | **26 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $15,270 | LEADING<br>**7 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $8,000 | **8 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $8,089 |
| Low-income student hours of work needed | ADVANCED<br>**19 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $12,846 | **12 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $9,813 | LEADING<br>**5 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $7,154 | **4 hours per week**<br>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 | |
| **51%** | **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.

**New Jersey** is on par with most other states in paid work-based learning participation. Participation is categorized as Developing for students at bachelor's degree institutions, along with 32 other states.

| | 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 **41%** | **43%** | **16%** | **14%** |
| Paid internship participation | 33% | 35% | 8% | 10% |
| Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid) | 71% | 71% | 34% | 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 New Jersey, 0.23 percent of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of 11,263 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.

**New Jersey** is one of 21 states and jurisdictions categorized as Advanced in college-level employment among recent bachelor's degree graduates with a rate of 60 percent, on par with the national average. Though its overall supply/demand ratio remains Foundational, ratios for data analytics and information and cybersecurity improved from Advanced to Leading, and ratios for manufacturing/trades technicians and technologists improved from Foundational to Leading.

| 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 | | | 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%

State Opportunity Index

New Jersey 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 | 692 | 36,564 | 74 | 17,000 |
| Respondents, 2025–26 combined | 1,695 | 77,803 | 625 | 32,005 |
| **VALUE** | | | | |
| To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "My education will be worth the cost"? | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 6% | 4% | – | 7% |
| Somewhat disagree | 10% | 9% | – | 6% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 13% | 9% | – | 8% |
| Somewhat agree | 37% | 38% | – | 28% |
| Strongly agree | 35% | 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) | 6.9 | 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 | 27% | 30% | – | 23% |
| National job boards *(LinkedIn, GlassDoor, Indeed, Idealist)* | 28% | 28% | – | 25% |
| College career portal *(Handshake, Symplicity)* | 22% | 20% | – | 12% |
| Career assessment tools *(MyMajors, Career Coach)* | 11% | 14% | – | 14% |
| Labor market tools *(Lightcast, O*NET, state workforce websites)* | 4% | 6% | – | 7% |
| AI-based tools *(ChatGPT, Perplexity, CareerVillage, Roadtrip Nation)* | 14% | 13% | – | 13% |
| Conversations with friends and family members | 49% | 52% | – | 47% |
| Conversations with alumni, mentoring services, scholarship groups, etc. | 18% | 18% | – | 13% |
| Email or newsletter | 14% | 16% | – | 14% |
| Other | 3% | 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 | 29% | 23% | – | 7% |
| **Project-Based Learning Activity:** real-world, employer-designed projects built as assignments within academic courses | 24% | 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 | 52% | 47% | – | 11% |
| **Apprenticeship:** paid job combining on-the-job training under an experienced mentor with classroom learning | 5% | 5% | – | 4% |
| **Co-op program:** degree program that alternates periods of academic courses with paid work experiences | 7% | 4% | – | 2% |
| **Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours:** closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting | 14% | 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 | 25% | 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) | 34% | 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 | 56% | 52% | – | 52% |
| **Apprenticeship:** paid job combining on-the-job training under an experienced mentor with classroom learning | 36% | 33% | – | 41% |
| **Co-op program:** degree program that alternates periods of academic courses with paid work experiences | 58% | 47% | – | 47% |
| **Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours:** closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting | 59% | 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 | 53% | 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 | 19% | 16% | – | 7% |
| 10 to 19 hours per week | 32% | 30% | – | 16% |
| 20 to 29 hours per week | 16% | 18% | – | 18% |
| 30 hours or more per week | 11% | 14% | – | 34% |
| Does not typically work while taking classes | 22% | 22% | – | 24% |
| Do you consider yourself a student who works or a worker that goes to school? | | | | |
| A student who works | 65% | 65% | – | 44% |
| A worker who goes to school | 13% | 13% | – | 32% |
| Does not work | 22% | 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 | 11% | 13% | – | 3% |
| **Specialized Campus Services:** Library assistant, IT help desk technician, or fitness center attendant | 12% | 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 | 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 | 10% | 10% | – | 4% |
| Other | 6% | 5% | – | 2% |
| I never had an on-campus job. | 57% | 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 | 7% | 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 | 8% | 8% | – | 6% |
| **Food Service and Hospitality:** Waiter/waitress, bartender, cook, barista, food delivery driver | 20% | 24% | – | 20% |
| **Healthcare and Social Services:** Caregiver for the elderly, home health aide, non-certified medical assistant | 10% | 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 | 6% | 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 | 4% | 5% | – | 5% |
| **Seasonal or Recreational:** Summer camp counselor, ski resort employee, lifeguard at a public pool, tour guide at a local attraction | 10% | 9% | – | 4% |
| **Skilled Labor and Trades:** Warehouse worker, mover, construction laborer, auto detailer, landscaping worker | 5% | 6% | – | 11% |
| Other | 7% | 7% | – | 11% |
| I never had an off-campus job. | 26% | 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)* | 23% | 36% | – | 19% |
| Advanced Placement classes or International Baccalaureate program in high school | 25% | 29% | – | 8% |
| I transferred from an academic program at a two-year college, and I received transfer credit. | 13% | 17% | – | 8% |
| I transferred from an academic program at a four-year college, and I received transfer credit. | 9% | 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. | 7% | 9% | – | 7% |
| College credit for prior work or military experience *(Credit for Prior Learning, Prior Learning Assessment)* | 4% | 3% | – | 3% |
| I did not bring any credits into my institution. | 34% | 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. | 51% | 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. | 9% | 11% | n/a | n/a |
| I plan to work part time. | 5% | 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. | 9% | 10% | n/a | n/a |
| I have other plans. | 3% | 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 | 6% | 12% | n/a | n/a |
| Unlikely | 13% | 19% | n/a | n/a |
| Likely | 43% | 35% | n/a | n/a |
| Very likely | 38% | 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)* | 8% | 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)* | 7% | 8% | – | 13% |
| Some other type of career-focused credential | 2% | 3% | – | 4% |
| I don't know. | 28% | 18% | – | 18% |
| None of the above | 53% | 56% | – | 46% |

| | State | National |
|---|---|---|
| **EXTERNAL AFFORDABILITY METRICS** | | |
| State appropriations per student FTE, public four-year institutions, FY2025 *(Source: SHEEO SHEF Annual Report)* | $21,043 | $11,166 |
| State appropriations per student FTE, public two-year institutions, FY2025 *(Source: SHEEO SHEF Annual Report)* | $5,644 | $11,096 |
| FAFSA completion rate, high school class of 2026 (through July 1, 2026) *(Source: NCAN)* | 70% | 59% |
| 150% completion rate, first-time full-time students, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)* | 68% | 64% |
| 150% completion rate, first-time full-time Pell recipients, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)* | 59% | 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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