# State Opportunity Index





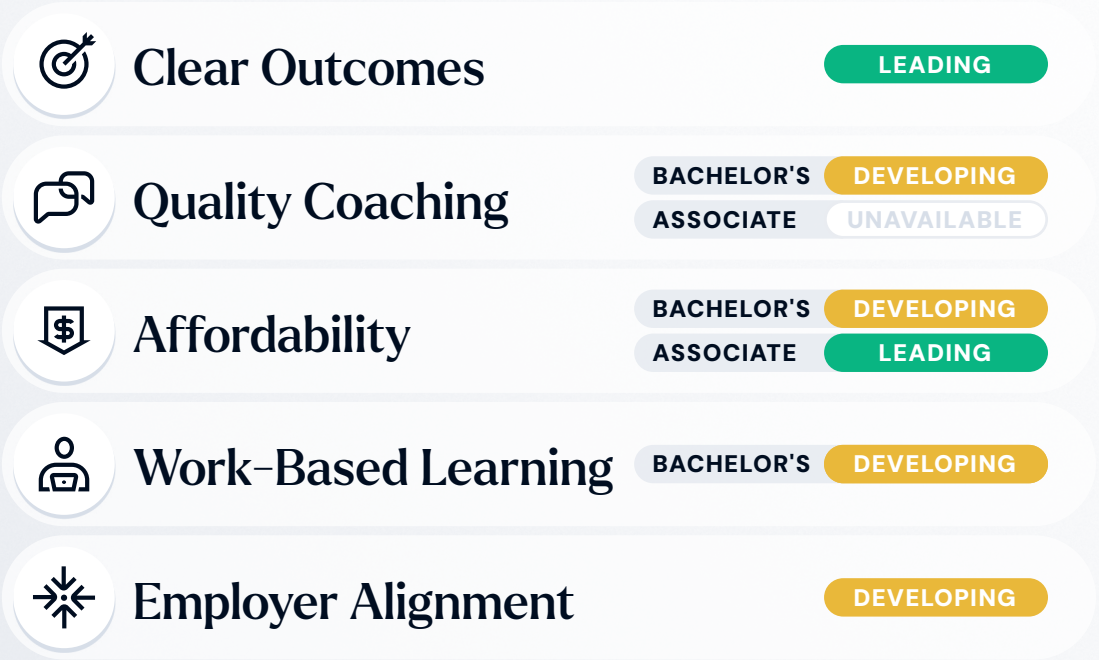
# West Virginia

## State Summary 2026

# West Virginia 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).

**West Virginia 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.

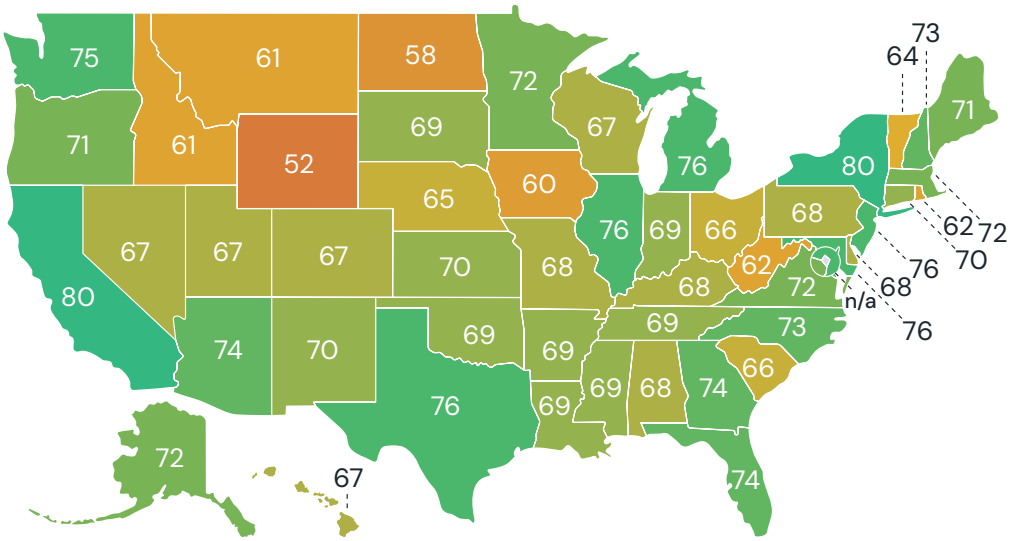
# Positive ROI



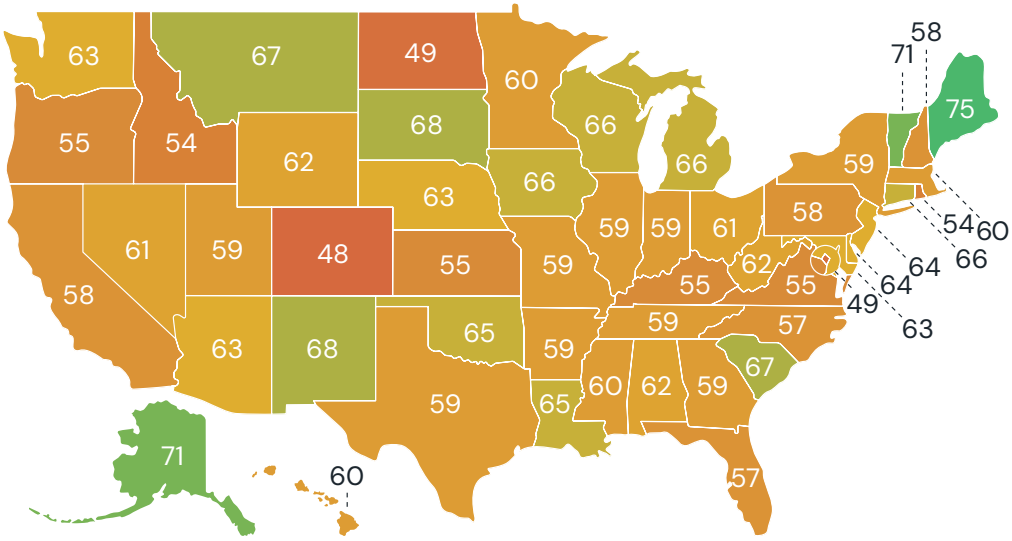
| | West Virginia | National |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | 62% | 70% |
| **Bachelor's** | 62% | 73% |
| **Associate** | 62% | 60% |

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.

**West Virginia** improved from Developing to Leading in verified data for learning mobility (element 9). Enhanced wage records (element 2) and integrating high school completion and employment data (element 4) are areas of particular strength, and it is one of nine and 15 states, respectively, that are Leading in these elements.

## 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 | West Virginia collects enrollment and credential outcome data from college-issued, noncredit nondegree credentials. The state is piloting integration of these noncredit credentials to administrative records on students' employment and earnings. | ADVANCED |
| 2. Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location | West Virginia collects job title and work location on a required basis but does not collect pay rate. The state is now using these enhancements in postsecondary education-to-employment analysis. | LEADING |

## 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 | West Virginia integrates administrative records on employment and earnings with its (i) public four-year institutions and (ii) community colleges. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission publishes these employment outcomes as an interactive resource. These employment outcomes are not disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, or family income/economic status. West Virginia does not integrate information on employment and earnings from administrative sources with private four-year institutions. | ADVANCED |
| 4. Integrates and delivers information on learners' earnings and employment after high school completion and over time | West Virginia integrates administrative information on employment and earnings with high school completion records. The state publishes these employment outcomes as an interactive resource. These employment outcomes are not publicly disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, or family income/economic status. | LEADING |
| 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 | West Virginia partners with PSEO (25-49% graduate coverage), 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



## 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 | While not addressing the criteria for this element, West Virginia has a process for requesting aggregate education-to-opportunity statistics. | FOUNDATIONAL |
| 7. Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions | West Virginia publishes an interactive resource containing education-to-employment outcomes for public four-year institutions, community colleges, and high schools. | LEADING |
| 8. Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets | West Virginia provides external researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets. The state publishes a clear description of the request and review process. | 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 | In 2026, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) launched the West Virginia Collaborative to Advance Learning Mobility (WV CALM) to leverage the momentum of the state's microcredential initiative to build the infrastructure necessary to recognize all forms of learning and support learners in transitions between institutions and from education to work. WV CALM established three working groups to (i) establish aligned processes and strengthen institutional capacity in validating, documenting, and transcribing microcredentials; (ii) advance statewide policies and processes in prior learning assessment and credit for prior learning; and (iii) focus on pathway design and credential stackability. West Virginia received two LER Accelerator grants: (i) HEPC will shift general education to a competency-driven model, developing a statewide skills taxonomy and validation system; and (ii) Marshall University will boost the adoption of LERs in postsecondary education. In June 2026, West Virginia was selected a semifinalist for the Connecting Talent to Opportunity Challenge to strengthen 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 West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) maintains the SLDS, ensuring ready access to integrated E2E data for analysis. HEPC leverages this integrated data and dedicated expertise to produce reports on postsecondary employment outcomes. The Commission partners with Workforce West Virginia. | 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

# Quality Coaching

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

## West Virginia 2026

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.

**West Virginia** remains Developing in overall Quality Coaching for students at bachelor's degree institutions, consistent with most other states. There are not yet sufficient data to report Quality Coaching for West Virginia's associate degree institutions.

| | 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<br>**36%** | **35%** | UNAVAILABLE<br>**-** | **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.<br>**23%** | **26%** | UNAVAILABLE<br>**-** | **35%** |
| Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for students' strengths and interests | 30% | 34% | - | 45% |
| Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to | 19% | 21% | - | 31% |
| Potential earnings in different careers related to students' education program | 27% | 30% | - | 40% |
| Career outcomes of students from their own institution | 16% | 17% | - | 23% |
| **SUPPORT** | | | | |
| The average share of students at public institutions who receive at least some support in setting goals and in overcoming obstacles | ADV./LEAD.<br>**75%** | **72%** | UNAVAILABLE<br>**-** | **73%** |
| Setting education and career goals, and developing a plan to achieve these goals | 75% | 71% | - | 73% |
| Identifying and overcoming barriers | 74% | 73% | - | 73% |

**Category Key**

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

# Affordability



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.

Affordability at **West Virginia's** bachelor's and associate degree institutions is close to national averages. The state's net prices stand out as being among the lowest in the country.

| | Bachelor's | | Associate | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | State | National | State | National |
| **STUDENT HOURS OF WORK NEEDED** | | | | |
| Average student hours of work needed | DEVELOPING<br>**23 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $11,639 | **26 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $15,270 | LEADING<br>**8 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $6,728 | **8 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price: $8,089 |
| Low-income student hours of work needed | ADVANCED<br>**11 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $7,723 | **12 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $9,813 | LEADING<br>**4 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $5,543 | **4 hours per week**<br>Average annual net price for low-income students: $6,678 |

**Category Key**

- **Foundational** ≥30 hrs
- **Developing** 20 to <30 hrs
- **Advanced** 10 to <20 hrs
- **Leading** <10 hrs

| Bachelor's | |
|---|---|
| State | National |
| **ON-TIME COMPLETION RATE** | |
| DEVELOPING<br>**41%** | **47%** |

**Category Key**

- **Foundational** <35%
- **Developing** 35% to <50%
- **Advanced** 50% to <65%
- **Leading** ≥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.

**West Virginia's** bachelor's degree institutions are categorized as Developing, a category shared by 32 other states. There are not yet sufficient data to report work-based learning for West Virginia'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 | DEVELOPING **44%** | **43%** | **-** | **14%** |
| Paid internship participation | 38% | 35% | - | 10% |
| Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid) | 75% | 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 West Virginia, 0.47 percent of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of 3,622 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.

College-level employment in **West Virginia** is 58 percent, compared to 60 percent nationally. West Virginia's overall supply/demand ratio improved from Foundational to Developing. Its ratio for engineers improved from Advanced to Leading, nursing from Foundational to Developing, and manufacturing/trades technicians and technologists from Foundational to Advanced. Finance and accounting professionals also are an area of strength, with West Virginia among 14 states categorized as Advanced or Leading in their ratios for this occupational group.

| COLLEGE-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The percentage of bachelor's degree graduates who are employed in college-level jobs | | **58%** | DEVELOPING |
| **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 | | ADVANCED |
| | Finance and accounting support | | FOUNDATIONAL |
| | Information and cybersecurity | | LEADING |
| | Software development and engineering | | LEADING |
| **Healthcare** | Healthcare technicians and technologists | | FOUNDATIONAL |
| | Nursing | | DEVELOPING |
| **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%

State Opportunity Index

West Virginia 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 | 246 | 36,564 | 9 | 17,000 |
| Respondents, 2025–26 combined | 1,931 | 77,803 | 214 | 32,005 |
| **VALUE** | | | | |
| To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, "My education will be worth the cost"? | | | | |
| Strongly disagree | 3% | 4% | – | 7% |
| Somewhat disagree | 15% | 9% | – | 6% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 7% | 9% | – | 8% |
| Somewhat agree | 37% | 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) | 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 | 20% | 22% | – | 22% |
| Career fair, group workshop, orientation session, or in a class | 29% | 30% | – | 23% |
| National job boards *(LinkedIn, GlassDoor, Indeed, Idealist)* | 22% | 28% | – | 25% |
| College career portal *(Handshake, Symplicity)* | 17% | 20% | – | 12% |
| Career assessment tools *(MyMajors, Career Coach)* | 8% | 14% | – | 14% |
| Labor market tools *(Lightcast, O*NET, state workforce websites)* | 3% | 6% | – | 7% |
| AI-based tools *(ChatGPT, Perplexity, CareerVillage, Roadtrip Nation)* | 13% | 13% | – | 13% |
| Conversations with friends and family members | 54% | 52% | – | 47% |
| Conversations with alumni, mentoring services, scholarship groups, etc. | 14% | 18% | – | 13% |
| Email or newsletter | 15% | 16% | – | 14% |
| Other | 3% | 5% | – | 9% |
| None of these | 10% | 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 | 25% | 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 | 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 | 33% | 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 | 48% | 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 | 3% | 4% | – | 2% |
| **Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours:** closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting | 21% | 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 | 18% | 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) | 27% | 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 | 43% | 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 | 51% | 47% | – | 47% |
| **Student teaching, practicum, clinical hours:** closely supervised performance of professional responsibilities in a workplace setting | 80% | 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 | 41% | 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 | 17% | 16% | – | 7% |
| 10 to 19 hours per week | 30% | 30% | – | 16% |
| 20 to 29 hours per week | 18% | 18% | – | 18% |
| 30 hours or more per week | 12% | 14% | – | 34% |
| Does not typically work while taking classes | 23% | 22% | – | 24% |
| Do you consider yourself a student who works or a worker that goes to school? | | | | |
| A student who works | 69% | 65% | – | 44% |
| A worker who goes to school | 8% | 13% | – | 32% |
| Does not work | 23% | 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 | 10% | 9% | – | 3% |
| **Peer-Based Roles:** Tutor, Resident Assistant (RA), student government or student club role, peer advisor, or orientation leader | 13% | 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 | 8% | 7% | – | 2% |
| **Administrative and Office Support:** Departmental office assistant, front desk receptionist for an academic building, or admissions office worker | 10% | 10% | – | 4% |
| Other | 5% | 5% | – | 2% |
| I never had an on-campus job. | 54% | 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 | 4% | 8% | – | 8% |
| **Community and Public Service**: Public schools, libraries, government agencies, community-based organizations | 9% | 11% | – | 8% |
| **Freelance and Gig Economy:** Freelance writer, graphic designer, social media manager, rideshare driver | 3% | 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 | 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 | 24% | 21% | – | 21% |
| **Professional Services:** Bank teller, clerical assistant at a law firm, office receptionist, administrative assistant | 6% | 5% | – | 5% |
| **Seasonal or Recreational:** Summer camp counselor, ski resort employee, lifeguard at a public pool, tour guide at a local attraction | 6% | 9% | – | 4% |
| **Skilled Labor and Trades:** Warehouse worker, mover, construction laborer, auto detailer, landscaping worker | 3% | 6% | – | 11% |
| Other | 7% | 7% | – | 11% |
| I never had an off-campus job.. | 32% | 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)* | 45% | 36% | – | 19% |
| Advanced Placement classes or International Baccalaureate program in high school | 21% | 29% | – | 8% |
| I transferred from an academic program at a two-year college, and I received transfer credit. | 7% | 17% | – | 8% |
| I transferred from an academic program at a four-year college, and I received transfer credit. | 8% | 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. | 8% | 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. | 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. | 43% | 46% | n/a | n/a |
| I plan to work full time at the job I had while I was enrolled. | 8% | 8% | n/a | n/a |
| I have accepted a new full-time job. | 12% | 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. | 15% | 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. | 3% | 3% | n/a | n/a |
| I don't know what I plan to do after graduating. | 3% | 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 | 23% | 12% | n/a | n/a |
| Unlikely | 29% | 19% | n/a | n/a |
| Likely | 31% | 35% | n/a | n/a |
| Very likely | 17% | 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)* | 7% | 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)* | 8% | 8% | – | 13% |
| Some other type of career-focused credential | 3% | 3% | – | 4% |
| I don't know. | 24% | 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)* | $7,158 | $11,166 |
| State appropriations per student FTE, public two-year institutions, FY2025 *(Source: SHEEO SHEF Annual Report)* | $10,260 | $11,096 |
| FAFSA completion rate, high school class of 2026 (through July 1, 2026) *(Source: NCAN)* | 62% | 59% |
| 150% completion rate, first-time full-time students, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)* | 56% | 64% |
| 150% completion rate, first-time full-time Pell recipients, bachelor's degree institutions, 2023-24 *(Source: College Scorecard)* | 43% | 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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