

State Opportunity Index

2025

Connecting education
with opportunity

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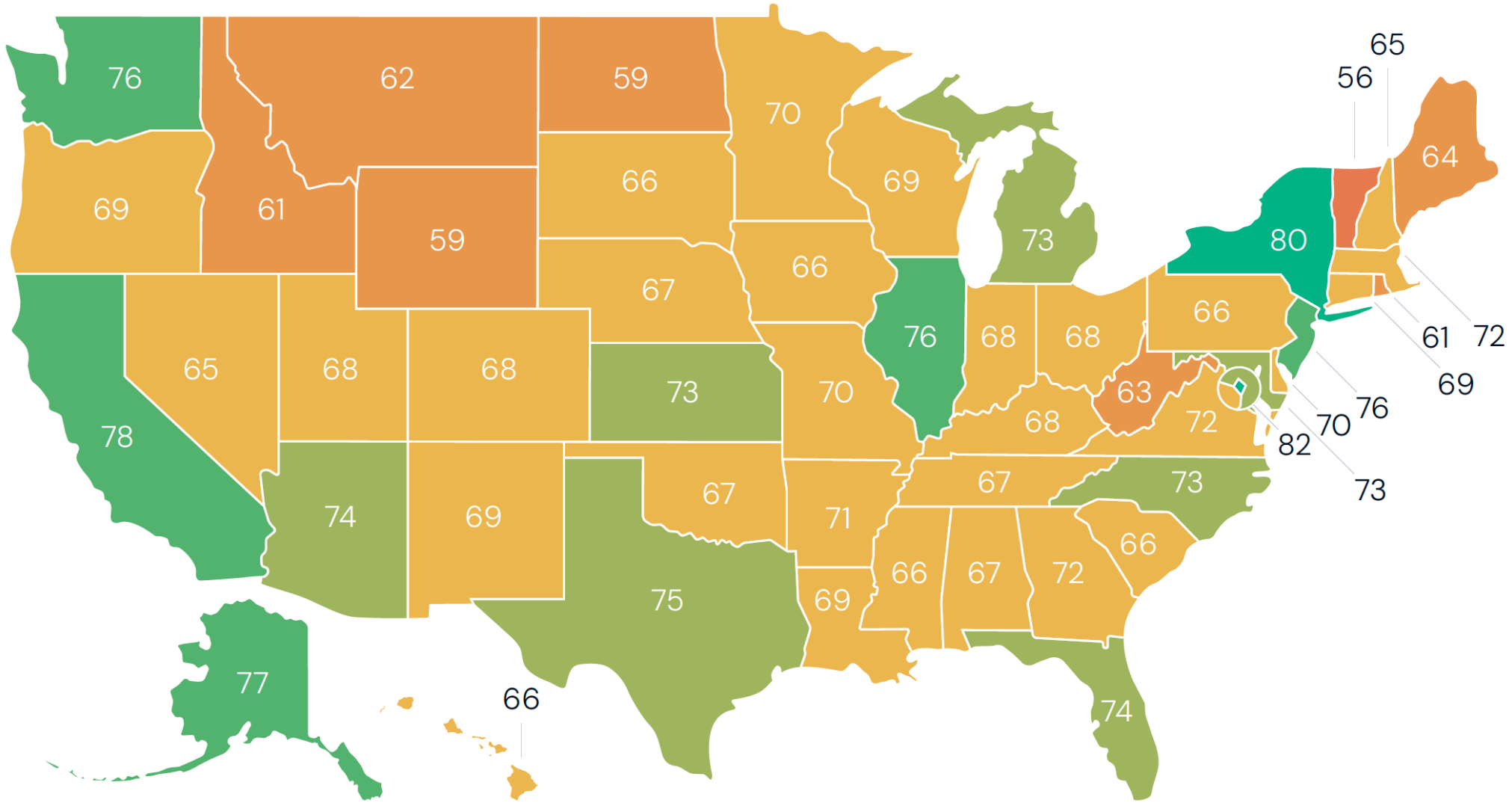
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



THREE ERAS OF PROGRESS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION



Positive 10-yr ROI



State Opportunity Index

Five keys to connecting education with opportunity



Clear
Outcomes



Quality
Coaching



Affordability



Work-based
Learning




Employer
Alignment





Clear Outcomes

Everyone has access to accurate information on employment outcomes to make informed decisions about postsecondary education.

Clear Outcomes Elements

-  **COLLECT**
1. Accumulates data for non-degree and non-credit postsecondary education and training programs
 2. Includes occupation, pay rate, and work location in wage record collections

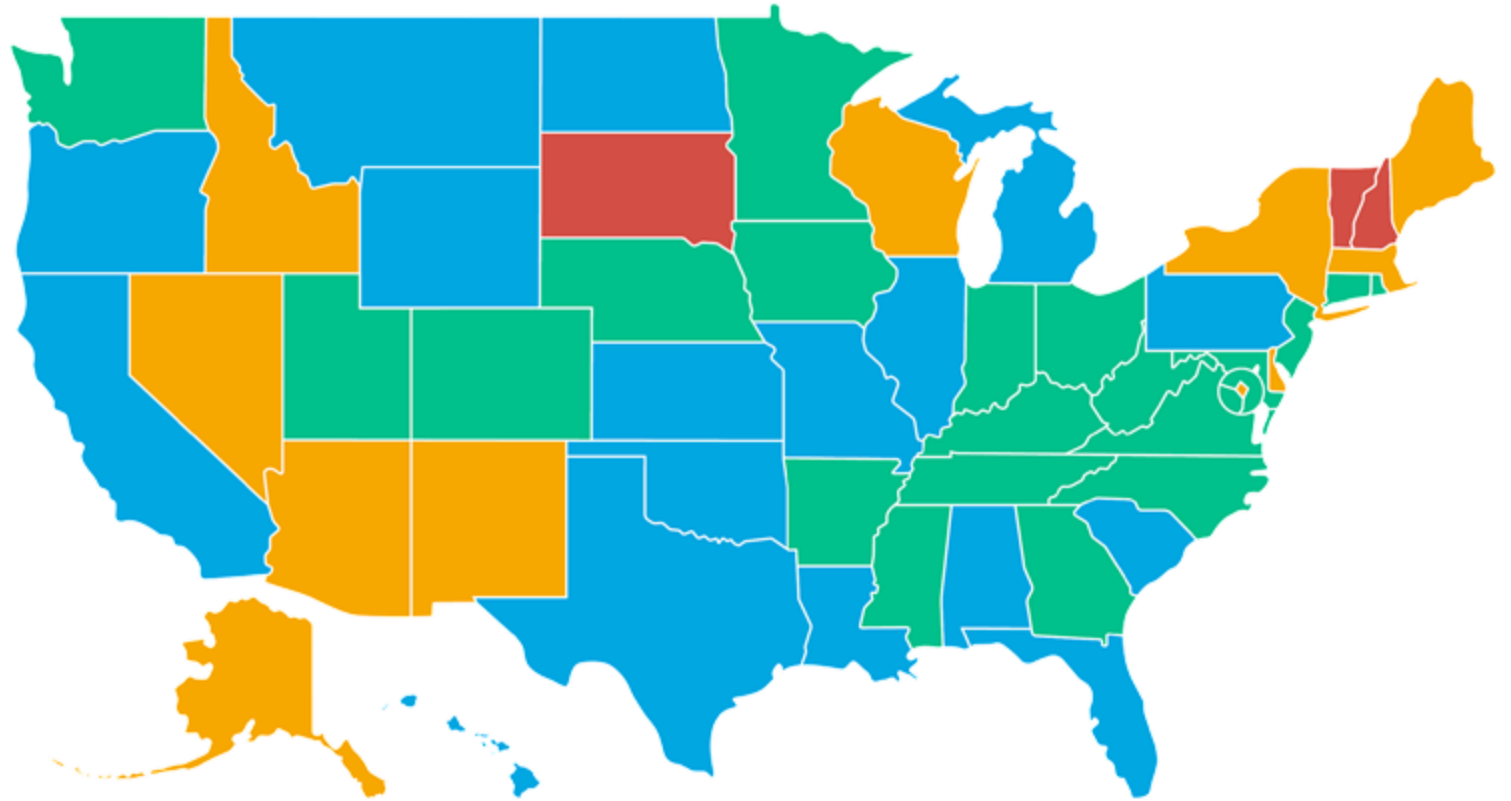
-  **INTEGRATE**
3. Integrates earnings and employment and postsecondary education and training outcomes
 4. Integrates earnings and employment and high school data
 5. Assesses postsecondary education training outcomes for those who relocate or work outside the state

-  **PROVIDE**
6. Provides open data files containing aggregate education to employment statistics
 7. Publishes interactive resources informing education to employment decision-making
 8. Affords researchers with access to individual-level matched education to employment datasets

-  **IMPACT**
9. Enables learners to access and utilize their own verified education and employment data
 10. Designates unit with responsibility for generating education to employment insights

CLEAR OUTCOMES

Results





Quality Coaching

Everyone has access to education-to-career coaching that helps them reflect on their talents and interests, choose a career goal, map pathways through education, and navigate challenges.

Quality Coaching Measure

GUIDANCE

During or before enrolling in your current education program, have you received **personalized coaching or guidance** to help you select the education and training experiences that will **prepare you for a successful career**?

Yes

No



TIMELY LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

During or before enrolling in your current education program, have you received these types of information? [If yes] When?

- Which education to career paths might be a **good fit for your strengths and interests**
- **Job opportunities** that your education program could lead to
- Potential **earnings** in different **careers related to your education program**
- **Career outcomes** of students **from your institution**

Before enrolling

During my first year as a student

After my first year but before my final year

During my final year



SUPPORT

During or before enrolling in your current education program, how much **support** did you have in:

- Setting education and career **goals** and developing a **plan** to achieve those goals?
- Identifying and **overcoming barriers** to success?

A great deal of support

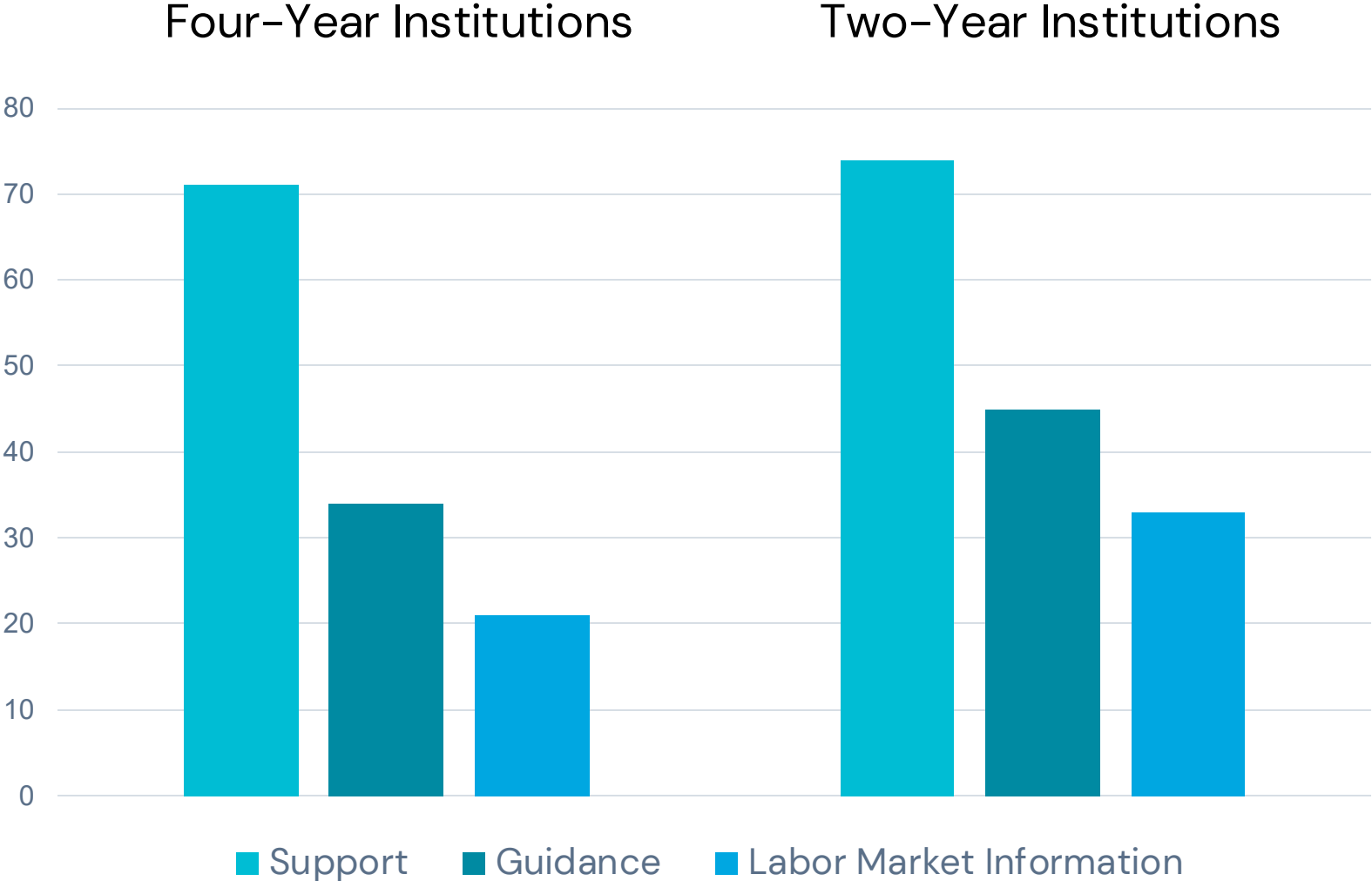
Quite a bit of support

Some support

A little bit of support

No support at all

Elements of Quality Coaching

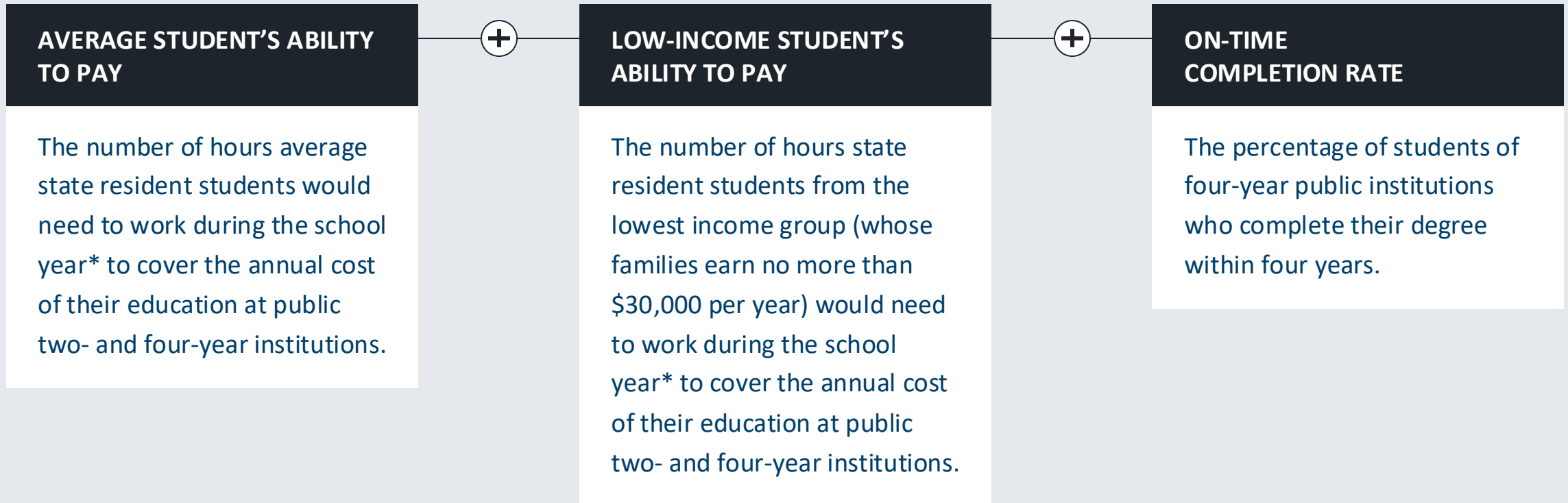




Affordability

A quality education is within everyone's reach.
The cost of education is not an insurmountable
obstacle for students.

Affordability Measure

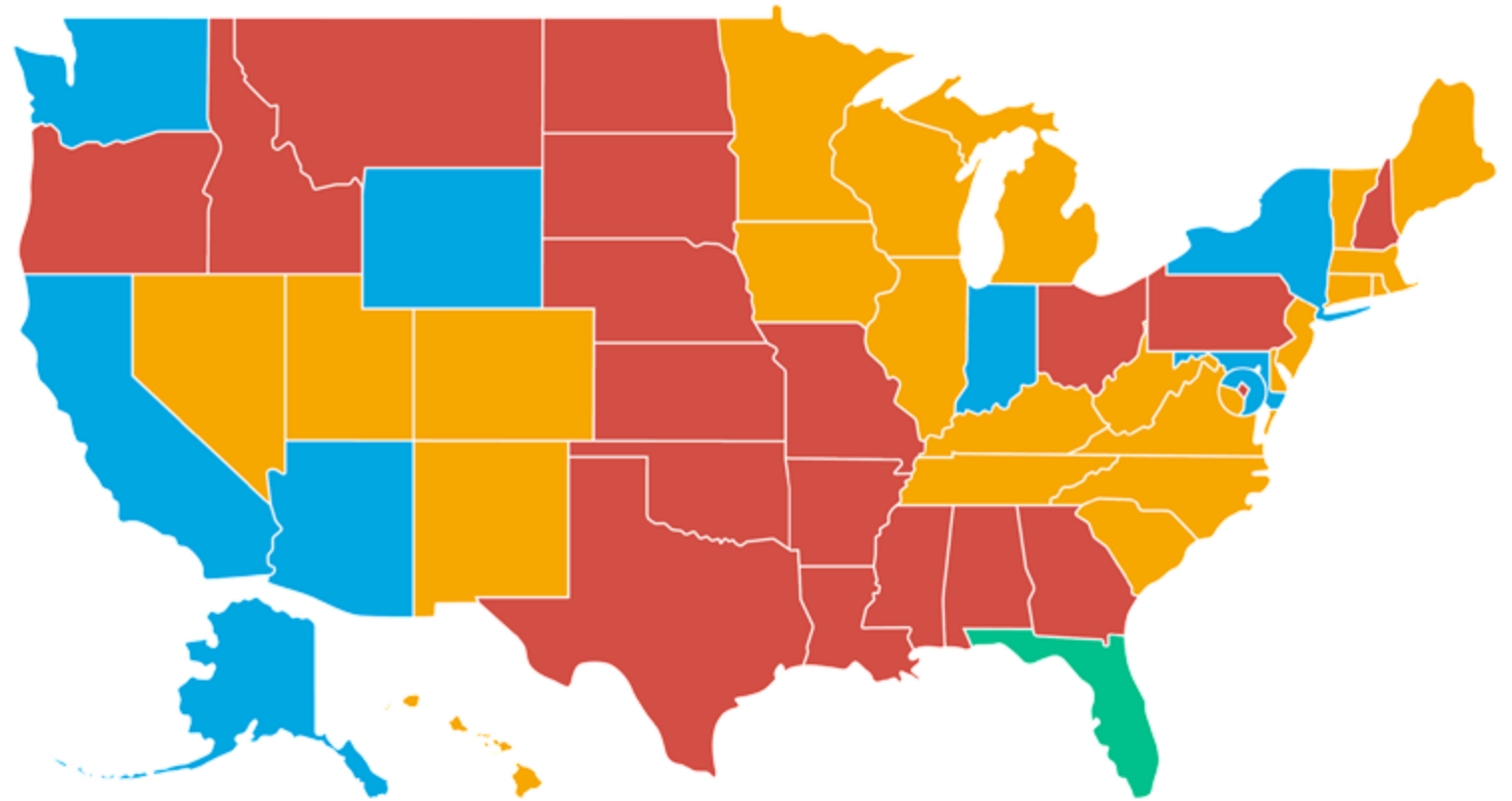


*This measure assumes students work 400 hours during the summer and 30 weeks during the school year.

AFFORDABILITY

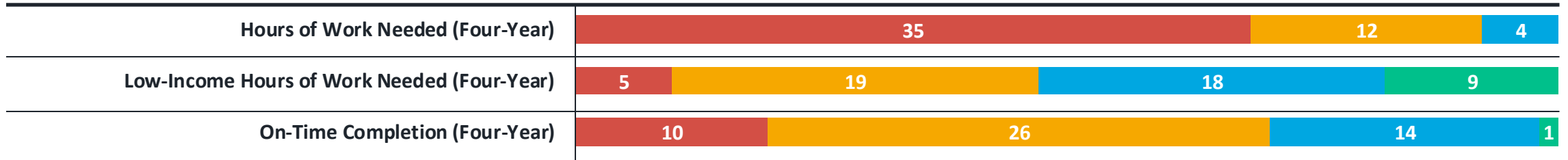
Results

Four-Year Institutions



Elements of Affordability

2025 ELEMENT RATINGS (NUMBER OF STATES)





Students and families believe in the promise

- College is *extremely* or *very important* for future goals
- College is a *great* or *good* investment

More than 8 in 10 prospective students, current students, and their parents **agree**

They are confused about the cost — and skeptical about your motivations

- **Only 1 in 3** have a *straightforward* experience with **financial aid**
- **Less than half** *completely* or *very much trust* institutions to **charge a fair price**
- **The majority** believe colleges **care more** about *making money* than *educating students*



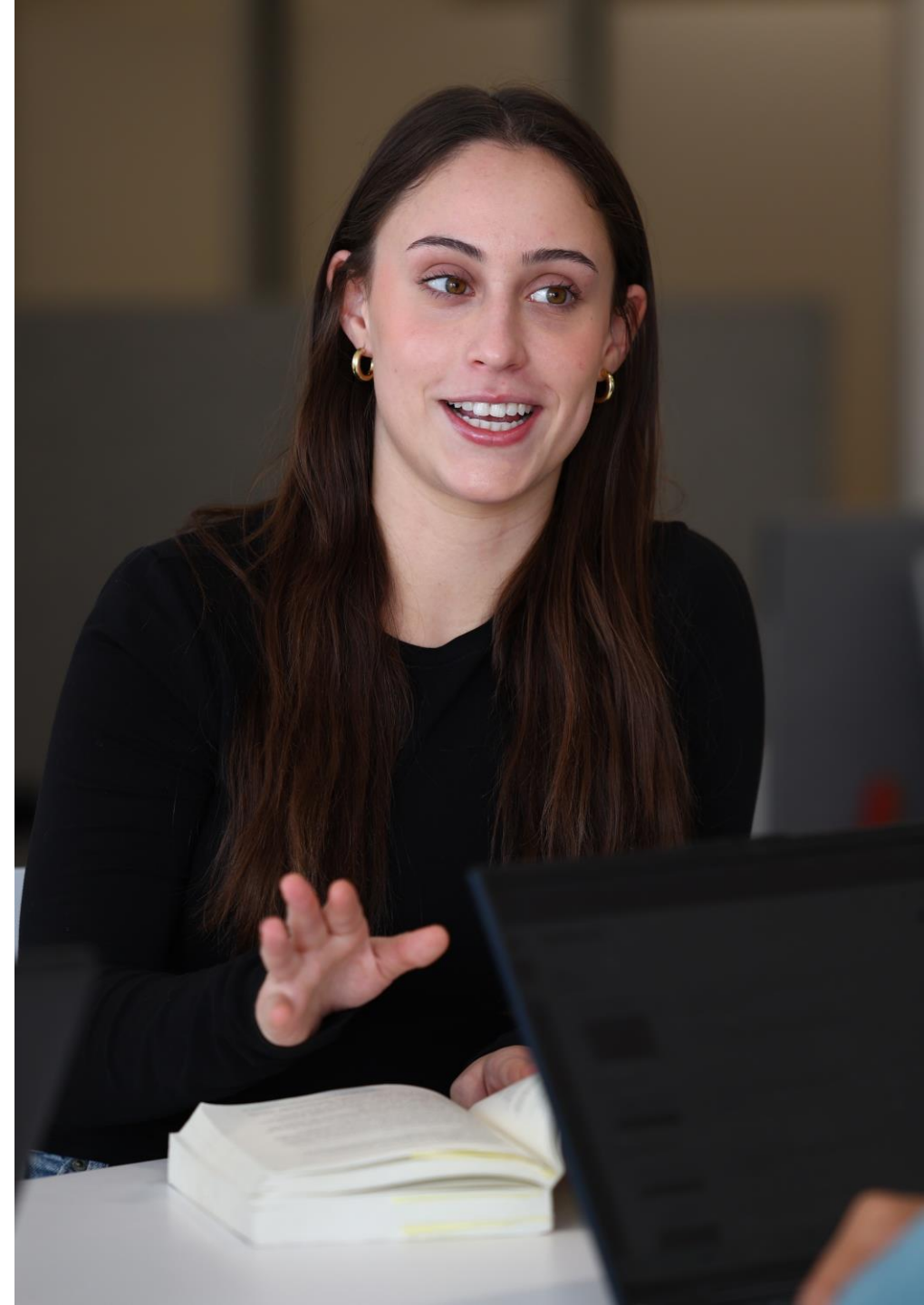
They want affordability solutions built on transparency and predictability

Highest Priorities

- Cost transparency
- Price and payment guarantees
- Predictable costs and prices

Lowest Priorities

- ROI data and cost comparisons
- Net Price calculators
- Income-based repayment
- Early pricing guarantees





Work-Based Learning

All learners have access to work-based learning experiences, including paid internships and apprenticeships, that help connect their education to their career aspirations.

Work-Based Learning Measure

Participated in at least one of these five experiences:

Paid
internship

Paid
apprenticeship

Paid co-op

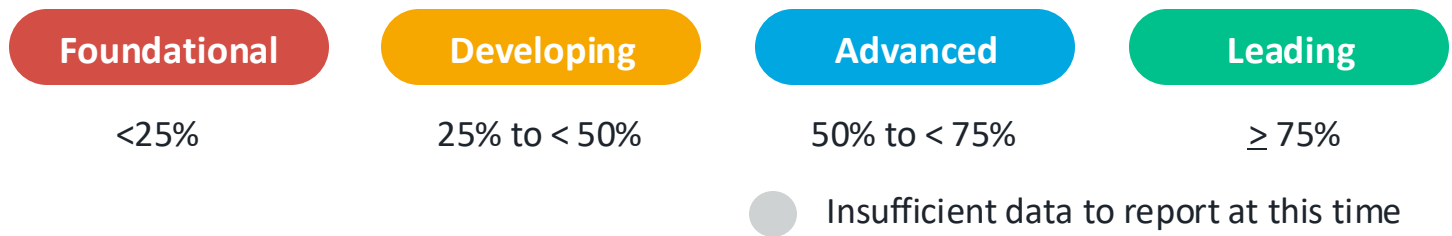
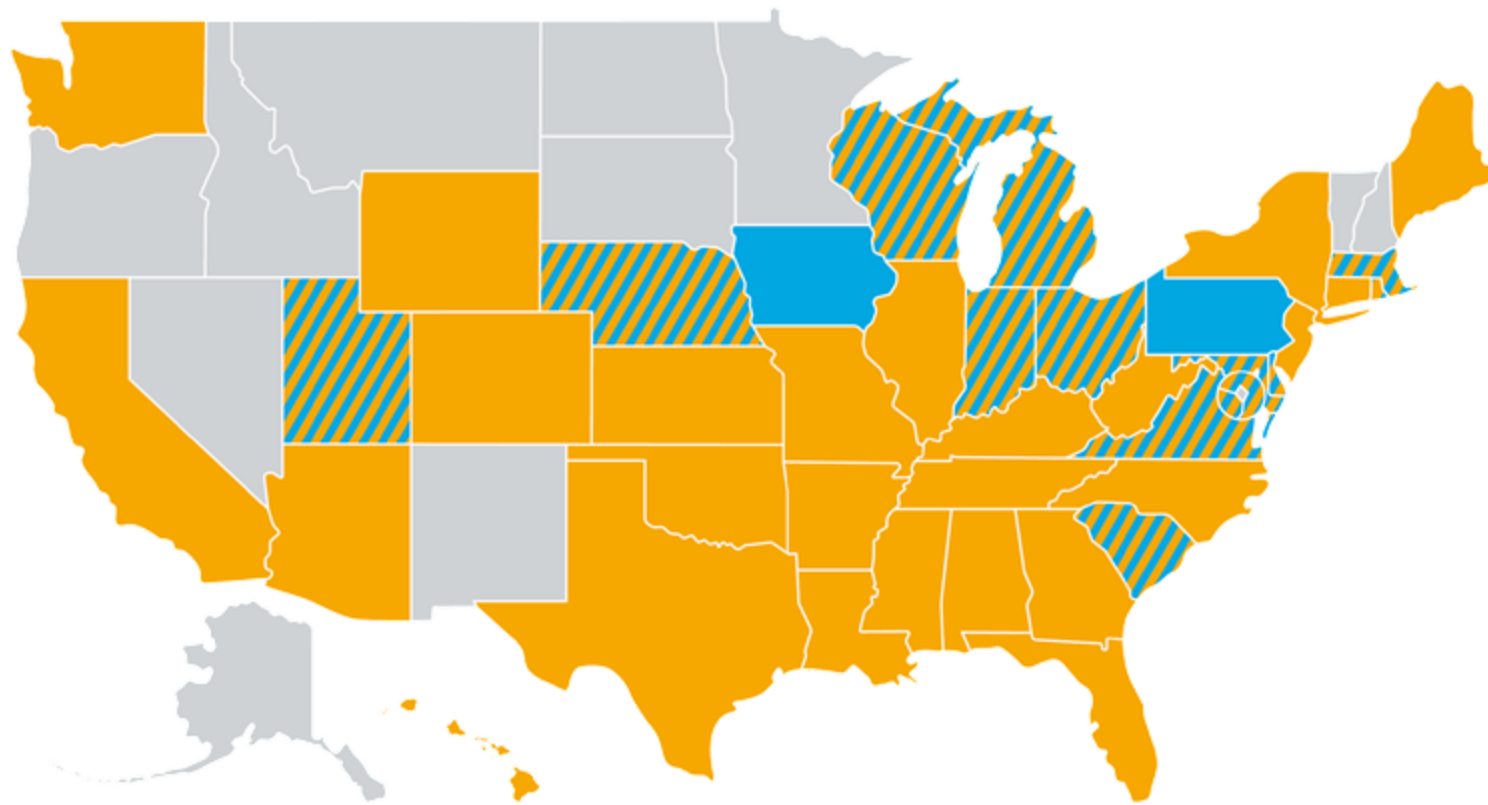
Paid
practicum

Paid
undergraduate
research
experience

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Results

Four-Year Institutions





Student viewpoint

>7 in 10

first-year students **expect to complete** a work-based learning experience

>8 in 10

students completing a work-based learning experience felt it made them a **stronger job candidate**

>70%

of interns sought experience in a **specific career**

Paid internships and employment outcomes

\$3,096 earnings boost **one year** after graduation for those with a paid internship

The Power of Work-Based Learning (2022)

~\$9,000 earnings boost **four years** after graduation for those with a paid internship

Forthcoming in Research in Higher Education (2026)

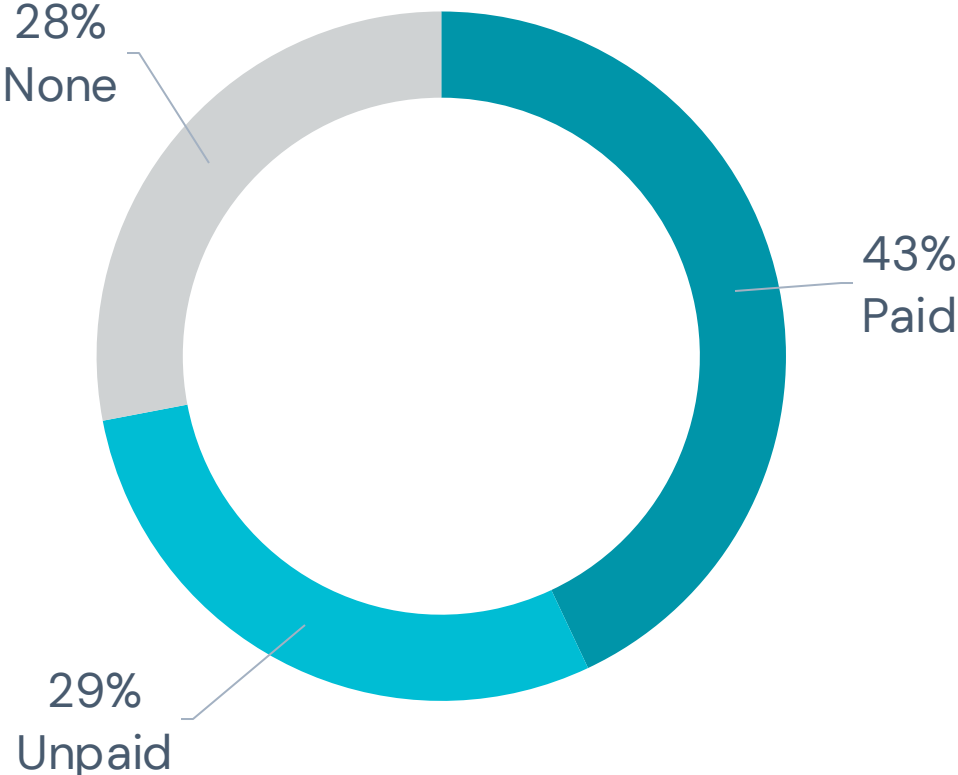
49% less likely to be **underemployed** after graduation for those who had an internship

Talent Disrupted (2024)

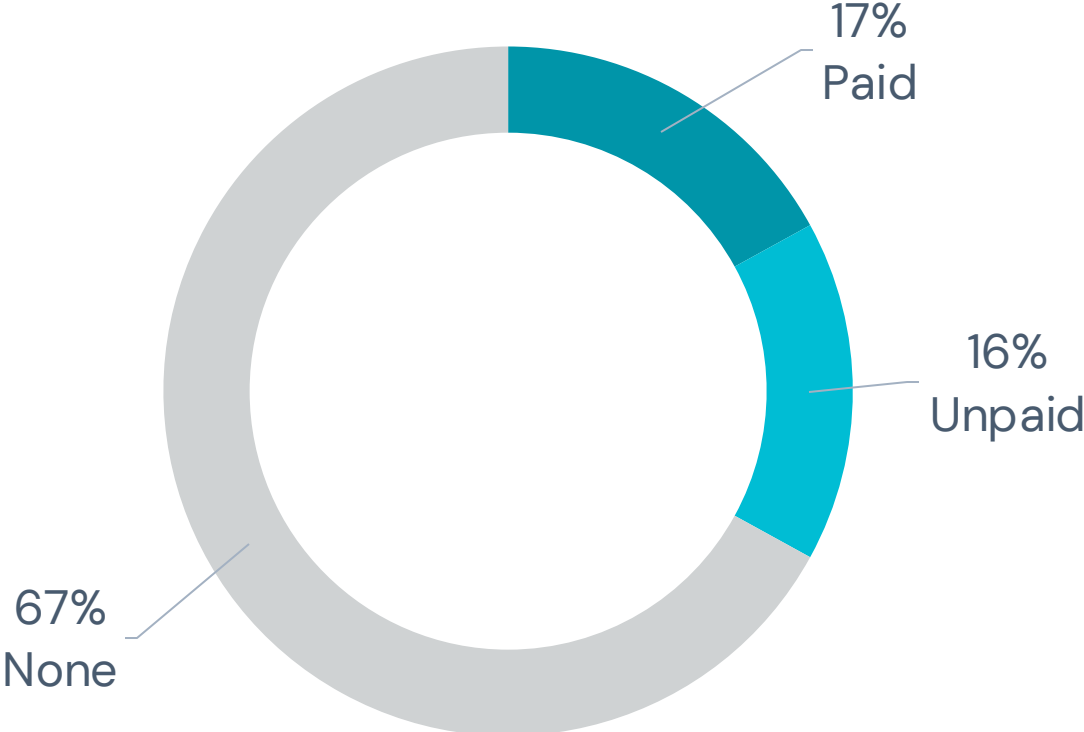


Work-Based Learning: Pay Lags Participation Nationally

Four-Year Institutions

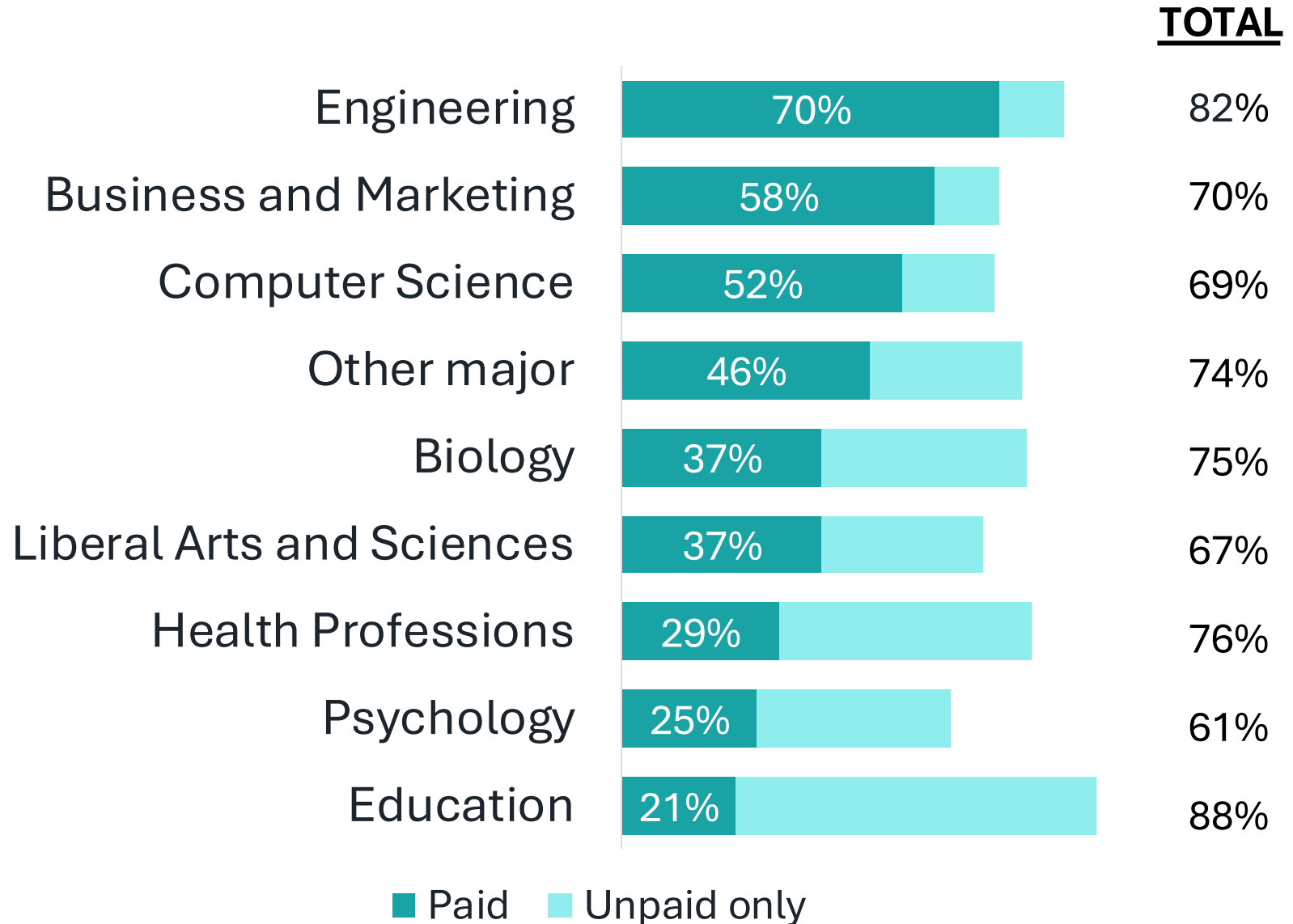


Two-Year Institutions





Work-based learning by major



Campus
Employment

Work Study

Off-campus
Employment

Project-based
Learning

Service
Learning

Micro-
internship

Paid
internship

Paid
undergrad
research
experience

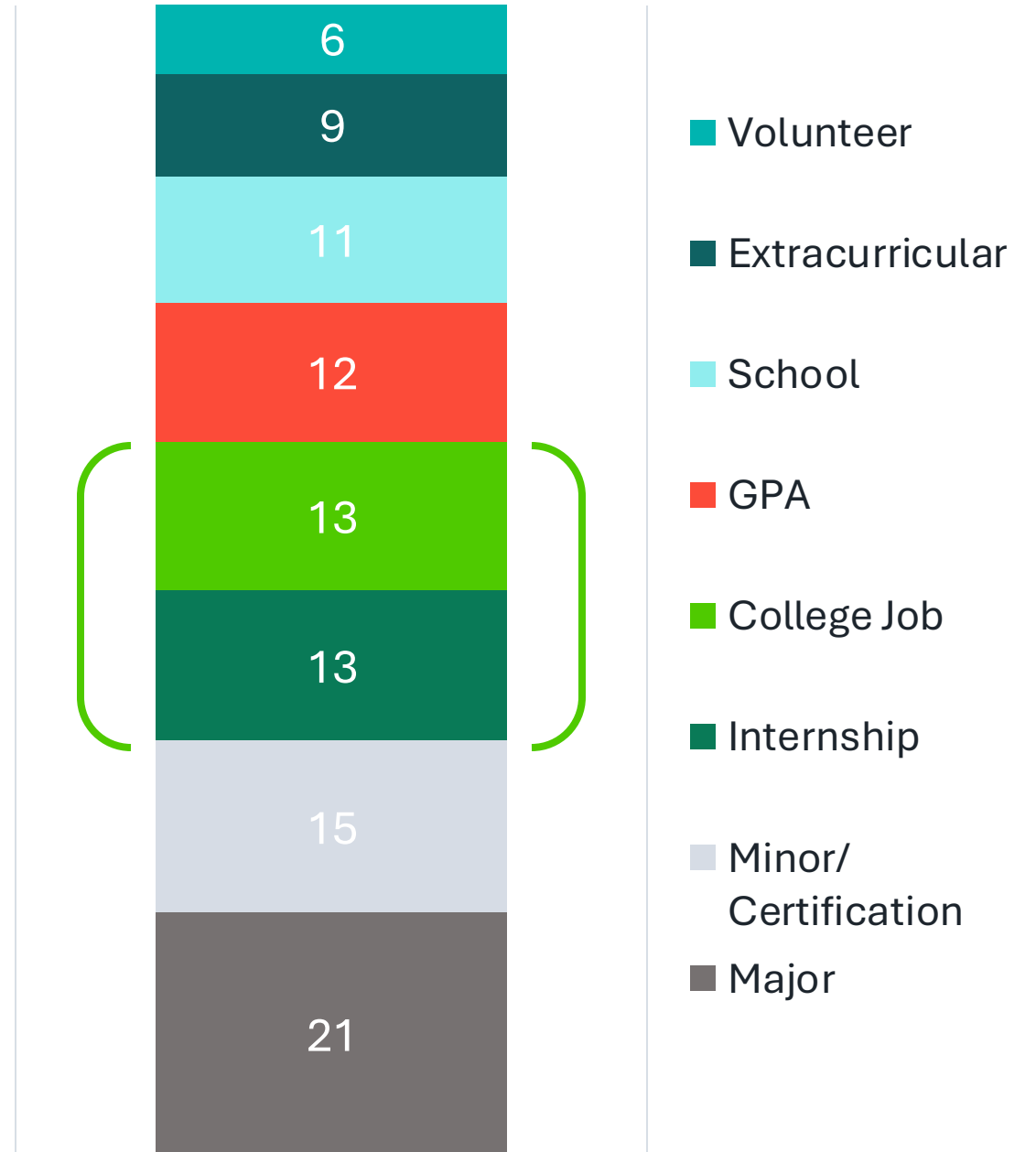
Paid
apprenticeship

Paid
co-op

Paid
practicum

Experience can't afford to wait

How employers evaluate recent graduates as job candidates





Employer Alignment

All learners can readily access programs that lead to quality jobs and mobility.

Employer Alignment Measure

%

=

$$\frac{\text{College graduates employed in college-level jobs}}{\text{College graduates}}$$

GRADUATES

%

=

$$\frac{\text{Graduates prepared for high-demand, high-wage jobs}}{\text{Early career high-demand, high-wage jobs}}$$

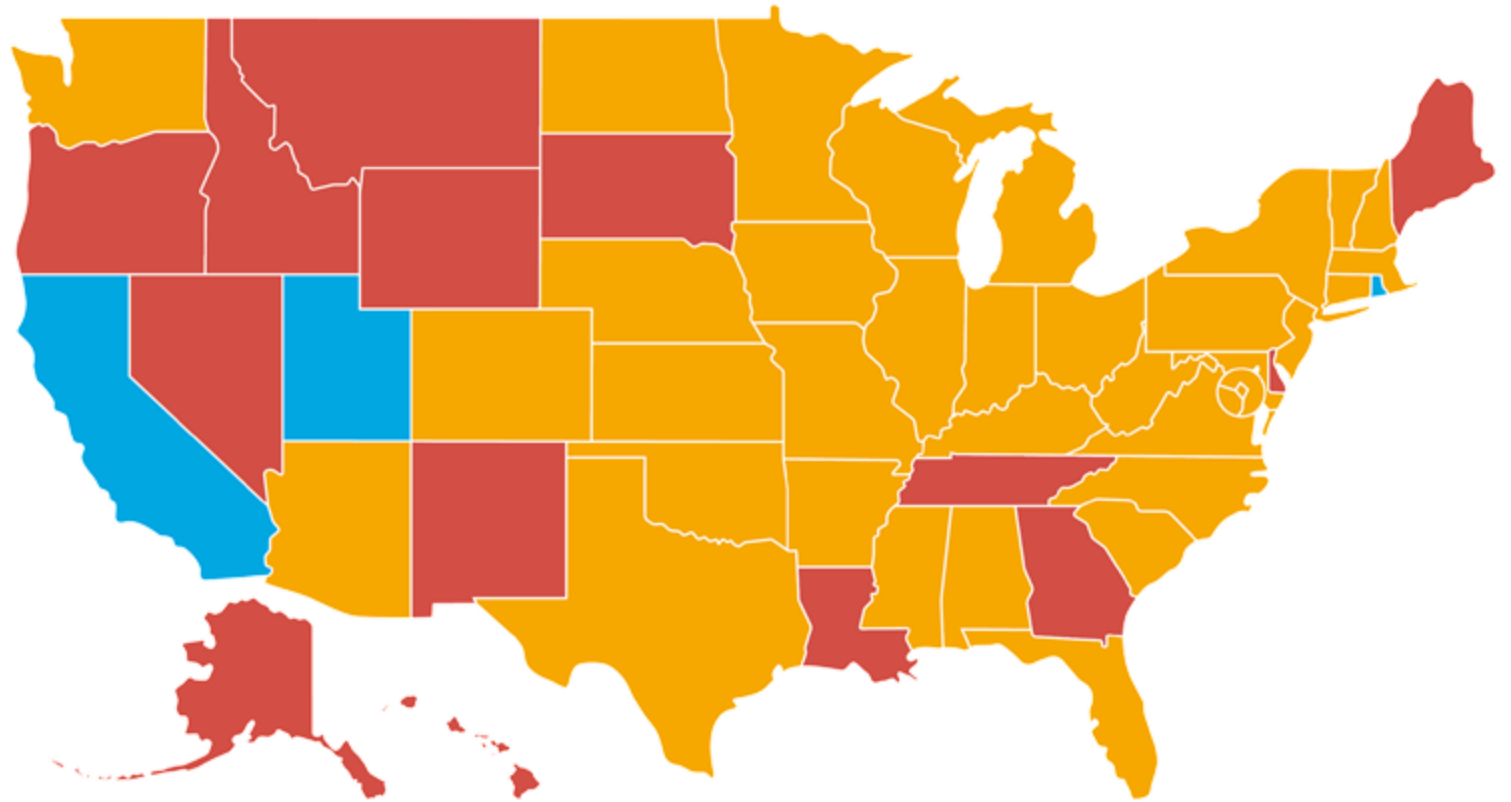
EMPLOYERS

COLLEGE-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT: Measured among 25-34 year olds with a bachelor's degree and no additional education.

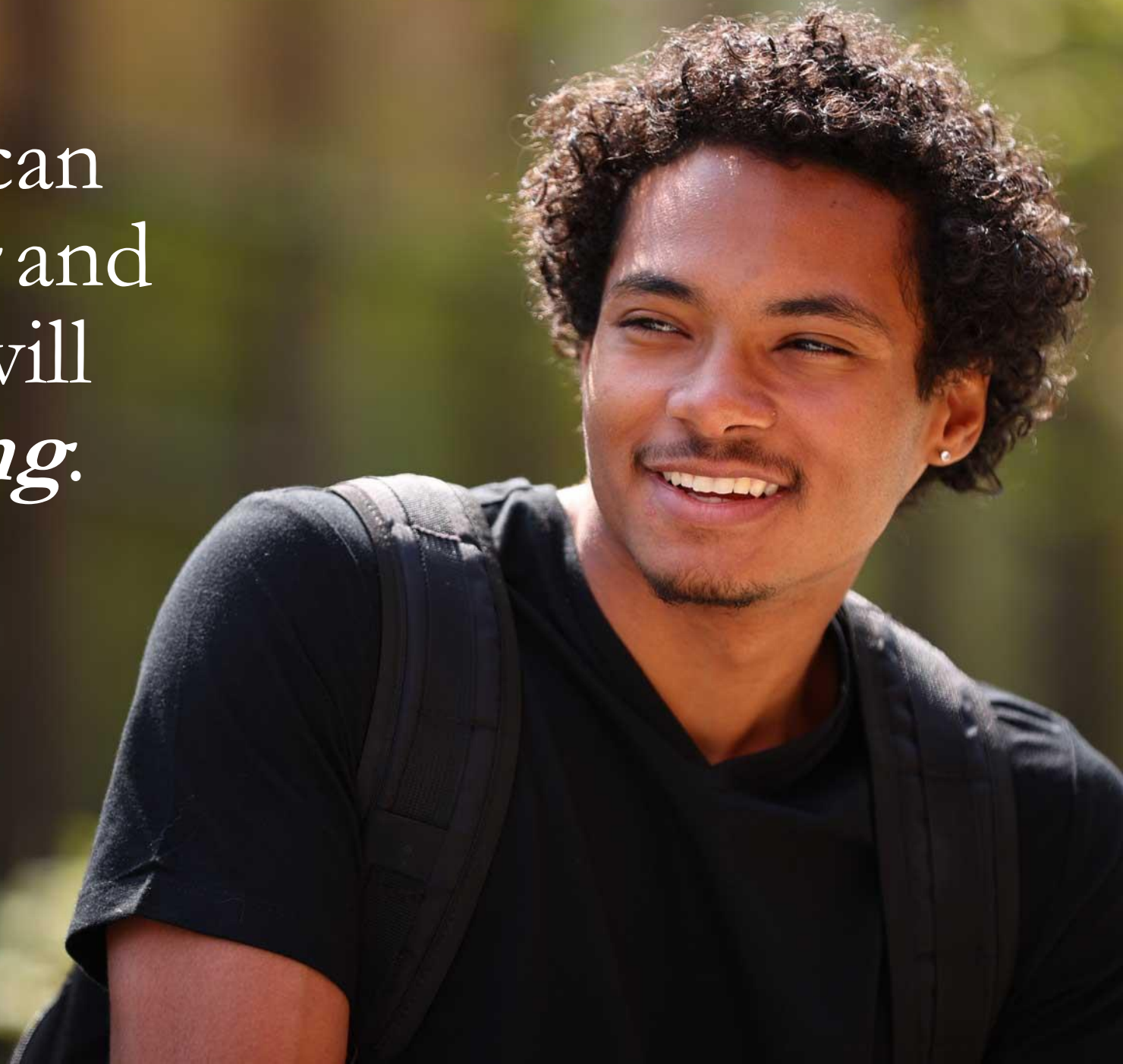
OPPORTUNITY JOBS: Data analytics, Engineers, Finance and accounting professionals, Finance and accounting support, Health care technicians and technologists, Information and cybersecurity, Nursing, Software development and engineering, Manufacturing/trades technicians and technologists.

EMPLOYER ALIGNMENT

Results



The promise you can
become *anything* and
the certainty you will
become *something*.



State Opportunity Index

Report webpage



State reports



Methodology

