

BEYOND ATTAINMENT

A look at postsecondary pathways that lead to higher earnings

Economic well-being is increasingly connected to postsecondary educational attainment. In fact, it is estimated that by 2027 at least 70% of jobs will require a postsecondary credential.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate economic impact on workers with lower levels of educational attainment has only underscored the critical connection between a postsecondary education, financial security, and the broader economic recovery.² In addition to the economic value of a postsecondary education, there are broader social benefits that cannot be ignored, including increased levels of civic engagement and participation.

However, the REACH NY network's December 2020 report, *Aiming Higher: How improving postsecondary equity and attainment will put New York State on the path to a bright future*, found that there are wide and persistent inequities in New York State's postsecondary pipeline, which deny many residents the opportunity to thrive. In the report, we urged state leaders to adopt an equity-driven attainment goal of 60% for New Yorkers of all races and ethnicities by 2030. Adopting the goal – and the policy changes needed to achieve it – would not only allow the state to meet the labor needs of an evolving economy, it would also address the systemic inequities in postsecondary educational attainment for historically underserved students, particularly students of color, first-generation college students, and students from low-income backgrounds.

But focusing on postsecondary completion without also being attentive to workforce outcomes threatens to only push inequities further down the education-to-workforce pipeline. Fortunately, data from the U.S. Department of Education College

Scorecard dataset – which combines information from postsecondary institutions and earnings information – can provide insight into how well institutions are preparing students for careers that lead to family-sustaining earnings. And while many factors may impact earnings, the College Scorecard dataset offers a glimpse of the interplay between institutions, fields of study, and median earnings – making it clear that inequities in postsecondary outcomes are not limited to enrollment, persistence, and completion rates and that limited access to institutions and certain fields of study creates significant discrepancies in median earnings.

Postsecondary credentials should place all New York residents on a pathway to earning a family-sustaining income and meeting their full potential, yet these findings sound an alarm – many postsecondary credentials fall short of that promise.

FINDING 1

Fields of study can act as gatekeepers to family-sustaining earnings

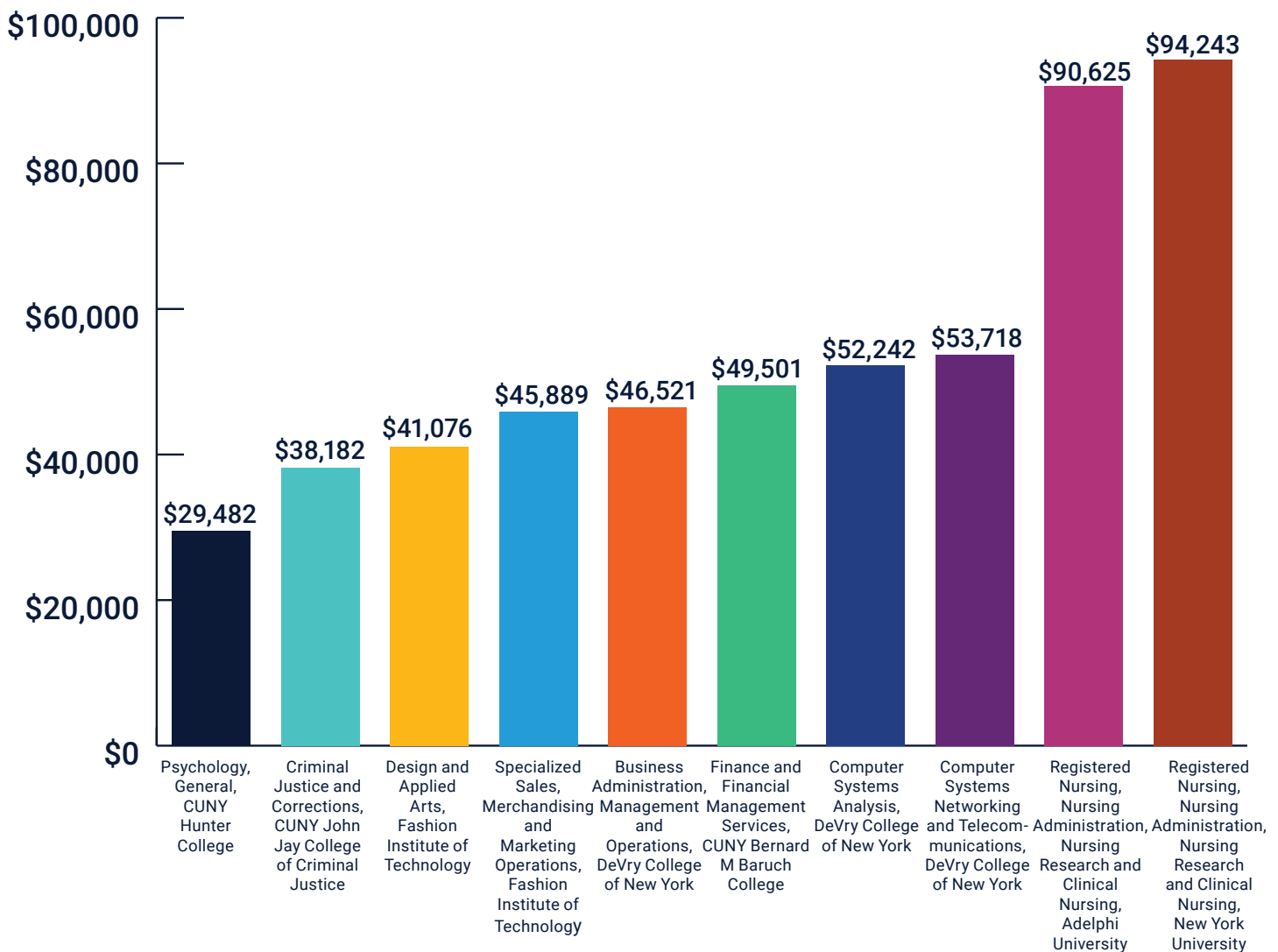
Despite equivalent investments of time, some fields of study can have a significantly larger return on investment for students than others. The median earnings for completing an associate degree in Legal Support Services at Long Island Business Institute were \$14,627, which were the lowest among all two-year fields of study. The highest median earnings for an associate degree were \$76,460 in the Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing field of study at City University of New York (CUNY) Queensborough Community College. In other words, the highest

median earnings for an associate degree were more than 5 times greater than the lowest median earnings. Furthermore, half of the median earnings for associate degrees were below \$28,000, which is only \$2,250 above the 2019 Federal Poverty Line for a family of four (\$25,750).

Similar disparities in median earnings are observed across fields of study for bachelor's degrees. For instance, students completing their bachelor's degree in Computer Science at Cornell University had median earnings of \$122,485 – the highest median earnings across all four-year fields of study. However, students completing a bachelor's degree in Graphics Communication at The School of Visual Arts had median earnings of \$13,132 which is not

only the lowest median earnings across all four-year fields of study, it is also nearly \$1,500 lower than the lowest median earnings for associate degrees. The inequities between the highest and the lowest median earnings for bachelor's degrees are much larger than they are for associate degrees – with the highest median earnings being more than 9 times greater than the lowest median earnings. A look at the fields of study with the most earners by institution reveals persistent inequities in median earnings for bachelor's degrees, with median earnings for Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing at New York University being more than 3 times greater than earnings for Psychology at CUNY Hunter College (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Median Earnings for Bachelor's Degree Fields of Study with the Largest Number of Earners



FINDING 2

Even within the same fields of study, there are inequities in earnings across institutions

Even when students are pursuing the same field of study, enrollment in specific institutions may result in higher earnings. These inequities are highlighted when we compare the lowest median earnings and highest median earnings for the same field of study across institutions. There was a total of 69 fields of study for associate degrees. In 35 of the 69 fields of study, the **median earnings premium** was less than 20%, including 28 fields of study that were only offered by one institution. In addition, 10 fields of study have median earnings premiums that were greater than or equal to 20%, but less than 40%. There were 24 more fields of study where the median earnings premium was more than 40%, including seven fields of study where median earnings were more than double depending on which institution students attended. The highest median earnings for the Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities field of study – which was the field of study with the greatest number of earners – was \$34,420, which was more than double the lowest median earnings (\$16,663) for the same field of study (See Figure 2).

A **median earnings premium** is the percent difference between the highest median earnings for a specific field of study compared to the lowest median earnings for that same field of study. For example, if at institution 1 the median earnings for field of study X are \$15,000 (highest among all institutions) and at institution 2 the median earnings for field of study X are \$10,000 (lowest among all institutions) the median earnings premium for field of study X is 50% (\$5,000). A median earnings premium of 0% means there is no difference between the highest and lowest median earnings and a median earnings premium of 100% means that the highest median earnings are double the lowest median earnings.

“ Postsecondary credentials should place all New York residents on a pathway to earning a family-sustaining income and meeting their full potential, yet these findings sound an alarm – many postsecondary credentials fall short of that promise.



FIGURE 2. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Associate Fields of Study

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings	
Design and Applied Arts	\$16,478	\$46,407	182%	There are 7 fields of study where the median earnings premium is \geq 100%
Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services	\$20,687	\$55,512	168%	
Dental Support Services and Allied Professions	\$23,340	\$59,485	155%	
Legal Support Services	\$14,627	\$34,908	139%	
Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing	\$36,848	\$76,460	108%	
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	\$16,663	\$34,420	107%	
Computer and Information Sciences, General	\$20,921	\$42,682	104%	
Hospitality Administration/Management	\$18,771	\$36,668	95%	There are 17 fields of study where the median earnings premium is \geq 40%, and $<$ 100%
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions	\$38,289	\$72,762	90%	
Specialized Sales, Merchandising and Marketing Operations	\$16,478	\$31,305	90%	
Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications	\$25,194	\$42,884	70%	
Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians	\$39,648	\$67,324	70%	
Teaching Assistants/Aides	\$16,786	\$28,443	69%	
Business Administration, Management and Operations	\$20,550	\$34,420	67%	
Criminal Justice and Corrections	\$20,687	\$34,495	67%	
Mental and Social Health Services and Allied Professions	\$21,052	\$34,526	64%	
Accounting and Related Services	\$19,227	\$31,374	63%	
Health and Medical Administrative Services	\$25,194	\$39,009	55%	
Electrical Engineering Technologies/Technicians	\$40,896	\$61,064	49%	
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Technologies	\$28,960	\$43,087	49%	
Computer Software and Media Applications	\$14,935	\$22,192	49%	
Community Organization and Advocacy	\$18,967	\$28,013	48%	
Communication and Media Studies	\$18,309	\$26,933	47%	
Culinary Arts and Related Services	\$22,777	\$32,753	44%	
Audiovisual Communications Technologies/Technicians	\$18,507	\$25,194	36%	There are 10 fields of study where the median earnings premium is \geq 20% and $<$ 40%
Physical Sciences	\$16,169	\$21,964	36%	
Business Operations Support and Assistant Services	\$18,315	\$24,421	33%	
Fine and Studio Arts	\$16,874	\$21,964	30%	
Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services	\$20,140	\$26,121	30%	
Human Services, General	\$24,035	\$31,133	30%	
Information Science/Studies	\$31,305	\$39,369	26%	
Computer/Information Technology Administration and Management	\$29,685	\$37,208	25%	
Somatic Bodywork and Related Therapeutic Services	\$21,052	\$25,876	23%	
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician (HAC, HACR, HVAC, HVACR)	\$36,488	\$44,728	23%	



FIGURE 2. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Associate Fields of Study continued

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings
Visual and Performing Arts, General	\$16,786	\$20,140	19%
Drama/Theatre Arts and Stagecraft	\$16,685	\$18,771	13%
Veterinary/Animal Health Technologies/Technicians	\$29,250	\$32,569	11%
Electrical and Power Transmission Installers	\$46,966	\$51,652	10%
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science/Research and Allied Professions	\$44,468	\$47,729	7%
Funeral Service and Mortuary Science	\$43,426	\$46,217	6%
Precision Metal Working	\$36,608	\$38,721	6%
Agricultural Production Operations	\$23,134	\$23,134	0%
Agriculture, Agriculture Operations, and Related Sciences, Other	\$36,324	\$36,324	0%
Agriculture, General	\$29,685	\$29,685	0%
Agriculture/Veterinary Preparatory Programs	\$27,822	\$27,822	0%
Bioethics/Medical Ethics	\$60,399	\$60,399	0%
Biology, General	\$19,592	\$19,592	0%
Building/Construction Finishing, Management, and Inspection	\$28,598	\$28,598	0%
Business/Commerce, General	\$27,508	\$27,508	0%
Carpenters	\$26,585	\$26,585	0%
Construction Trades, Other	\$28,960	\$28,960	0%
Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition Services	\$20,687	\$20,687	0%
Education, Other	\$58,433	\$58,433	0%
Electrical/Electronics Maintenance and Repair Technology	\$27,048	\$27,048	0%
Electromechanical Instrumentation and Maintenance Technologies/Technicians	\$32,711	\$32,711	0%
Environmental Control Technologies/Technicians	\$33,565	\$33,565	0%
Health and Physical Education/Fitness	\$23,649	\$23,649	0%
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General	\$30,771	\$30,771	0%
Heavy/Industrial Equipment Maintenance Technologies	\$39,549	\$39,549	0%
Human Resources Management and Services	\$29,685	\$29,685	0%
Legal Professions and Studies, Other	\$27,494	\$27,494	0%
Marketing	\$22,824	\$22,824	0%
Music	\$22,329	\$22,329	0%
Ophthalmic and Optometric Support Services and Allied Professions	\$39,927	\$39,927	0%
Psychology, General	\$25,967	\$25,967	0%
Public Administration and Social Service Professions, Other	\$24,035	\$24,035	0%
Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication	\$25,194	\$25,194	0%
Radio, Television, and Digital Communication	\$17,387	\$17,387	0%
Wildlife and Wildlands Science and Management	\$25,967	\$25,967	0%

There are 35 fields of study where the median earnings premium is < 20%



The inequities in median earnings within fields of study for bachelor's degrees were starker than they were for associate degrees. The highest median earnings were more than double the lowest median earnings for 22% of the bachelor's degree fields of study, which is more than double the share (10%) of the associate degree fields of study where the same is true. The inequities in median earnings for bachelor's

degrees were not only more consistent than for associate degrees, they were also more pronounced. The highest median earnings for bachelor's degrees were more than three times greater than the lowest median earnings for seven fields of study, including Graphics Communication, where the highest median earnings were four times greater than the lowest median earnings (See Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Bachelor's Fields of Study

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings
Graphic Communications	\$13,132	\$54,252	313%
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions	\$32,119	\$115,339	259%
Business Administration, Management and Operations	\$25,194	\$86,129	242%
Biology, General	\$13,702	\$46,478	239%
Mathematics	\$27,584	\$91,211	231%
Communication and Media Studies	\$17,950	\$55,813	211%
Economics	\$26,224	\$79,419	203%
Computer Science	\$41,565	\$122,485	195%
Psychology, General	\$17,560	\$48,432	176%
Political Science and Government	\$21,052	\$56,415	168%
Fine and Studio Arts	\$17,489	\$45,696	161%
Computer/Information Technology Administration and Management	\$36,141	\$89,006	146%
Business/Commerce, General	\$33,565	\$82,507	146%
Drama/Theatre Arts and Stagecraft	\$16,015	\$38,829	142%
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies, Other	\$20,482	\$49,646	142%
Music	\$13,393	\$32,391	142%
Physics	\$29,250	\$69,338	137%
Computer and Information Sciences, General	\$34,908	\$82,641	137%
Chemical Engineering	\$35,416	\$83,351	135%
Human Resources Management and Services	\$29,956	\$69,338	131%
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	\$21,873	\$49,660	127%
Accounting and Related Services	\$31,547	\$71,351	126%
Computer Engineering Technologies/Technicians	\$39,369	\$88,933	126%
Film/Video and Photographic Arts	\$17,652	\$39,729	125%
Radio, Television, and Digital Communication	\$21,781	\$49,019	125%
Design and Applied Arts	\$23,068	\$51,273	122%
Social Sciences, General	\$29,250	\$64,493	120%
International Relations and National Security Studies	\$24,730	\$53,775	117%
Mechanical Engineering Related Technologies/Technicians	\$31,423	\$67,587	115%

There are 39 fields of study where the median earnings premium is $\geq 100\%$



FIGURE 3. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Bachelor's Fields of Study continued

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings
Biomedical/Medical Engineering	\$31,839	\$67,473	112%
Biological and Physical Sciences	\$21,781	\$45,852	111%
History	\$22,648	\$47,260	109%
Ecology, Evolution, Systematics, and Population Biology	\$20,444	\$42,532	108%
Linguistic, Comparative, and Related Language Studies and Services	\$16,169	\$33,281	106%
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services, Other	\$28,960	\$59,350	105%
Hospitality Administration/Management	\$29,866	\$61,124	105%
Communication Disorders Sciences and Services	\$17,375	\$35,327	103%
Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Subject Areas	\$27,280	\$55,286	103%
English Language and Literature, General	\$20,824	\$41,937	101%
Sociology	\$25,484	\$50,856	99%
Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, General	\$24,421	\$48,432	98%
Architecture	\$27,126	\$53,358	97%
Natural Resources Conservation and Research	\$23,091	\$44,942	95%
Romance Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics	\$26,063	\$50,439	94%
Chemistry	\$21,964	\$42,235	92%
Anthropology	\$20,140	\$38,289	90%
Electrical, Electronics and Communications Engineering	\$49,644	\$92,277	86%
Criminal Justice and Corrections	\$29,033	\$53,358	84%
Finance and Financial Management Services	\$39,909	\$73,195	83%
Information Science/Studies	\$37,424	\$67,101	79%
Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition Services	\$26,121	\$46,321	77%
Social Sciences, Other	\$22,192	\$39,153	76%
Computer Software and Media Applications	\$37,568	\$65,387	74%
Specialized Sales, Merchandising and Marketing Operations	\$28,443	\$49,344	73%
Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Levels and Methods	\$25,967	\$44,928	73%
Arts, Entertainment, and Media Management	\$26,739	\$46,217	73%
Marketing	\$28,598	\$48,667	70%
Health and Physical Education/Fitness	\$22,192	\$37,748	70%
International Business	\$28,960	\$48,432	67%
Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing	\$59,810	\$97,959	64%
Mechanical Engineering	\$54,053	\$87,973	63%
Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies	\$20,687	\$33,565	62%
Research and Experimental Psychology	\$26,353	\$42,682	62%
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other	\$25,426	\$40,896	61%
Mathematics and Statistics, Other	\$32,569	\$52,107	60%
Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations	\$34,526	\$54,810	59%

There are 39 fields of study where the median earnings premium is >= 100%

There are 46 fields of study where the median earnings premium is >= 40%, and <100%



FIGURE 3. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Bachelor's Fields of Study continued

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings
Dance	\$16,478	\$25,967	58%
Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other	\$23,649	\$36,560	55%
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General	\$25,194	\$38,455	53%
Journalism	\$25,194	\$38,289	52%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Other	\$26,997	\$40,791	51%
Public Health	\$27,295	\$41,193	51%
Computer Engineering	\$52,733	\$79,389	51%
Neurobiology and Neurosciences	\$26,353	\$38,829	47%
Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences, General	\$27,295	\$40,017	47%
Ethnic, Cultural Minority, Gender, and Group Studies	\$24,035	\$35,060	46%
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science/Research and Allied Professions	\$52,733	\$76,460	45%
Special Education and Teaching	\$31,799	\$46,087	45%
Health and Medical Administrative Services	\$32,391	\$46,380	43%
Management Information Systems and Services	\$52,107	\$73,949	42%
Security Science and Technology	\$29,685	\$42,073	42%
General Sales, Merchandising and Related Marketing Operations	\$33,993	\$48,041	41%
Geological and Earth Sciences/Geosciences	\$21,781	\$30,771	41%
Biochemistry, Biophysics and Molecular Biology	\$23,340	\$32,925	41%
Engineering Technologies/Technicians, Other	\$47,520	\$66,941	41%
Electrical Engineering Technologies/Technicians	\$49,323	\$69,002	>39%
Human Services, General	\$26,739	\$37,363	>39%
Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication	\$32,210	\$44,934	>39%
Visual and Performing Arts, General	\$26,121	\$36,141	38%
Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications	\$53,718	\$72,901	36%
Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods	\$37,208	\$50,439	36%
Engineering, General	\$55,348	\$74,576	35%
Non-Professional General Legal Studies (Undergraduate)	\$29,685	\$39,369	33%
International/Global Studies	\$28,381	\$36,848	30%
Social Work	\$29,639	\$38,289	29%
Civil Engineering	\$56,810	\$73,321	29%
Electromechanical Instrumentation and Maintenance Technologies/Technicians	\$54,192	\$69,338	28%
Public Administration	\$33,138	\$41,937	27%
Apparel and Textiles	\$34,526	\$43,638	26%
Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions	\$56,641	\$71,351	26%
Industrial Engineering	\$63,430	\$79,081	25%
Clinical, Counseling and Applied Psychology	\$30,771	\$38,289	24%
Visual and Performing Arts, Other	\$31,127	\$38,289	23%
Zoology/Animal Biology	\$19,683	\$24,035	22%

There are 46 fields of study where the median earnings premium is $\geq 40\%$, and $<100\%$

There are 19 fields of study where the median earnings premium is $\geq 20\%$ and $< 40\%$



FIGURE 3. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Bachelor's Fields of Study continued

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings
Area Studies	\$37,928	\$44,170	16%
Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering	\$59,485	\$69,140	16%
Physiology, Pathology and Related Sciences	\$28,236	\$32,569	15%
Audiovisual Communications Technologies/Technicians	\$25,194	\$28,598	14%
Criminology	\$32,806	\$37,208	13%
Natural Resources Management and Policy	\$31,996	\$36,131	13%
Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services	\$29,250	\$32,772	12%
Legal Support Services	\$38,289	\$42,682	11%
Community Organization and Advocacy	\$35,416	\$39,369	11%
Environmental/Environmental Health Engineering	\$51,273	\$56,157	10%
Architectural Sciences and Technology	\$42,235	\$45,696	8%
Air Transportation	\$39,523	\$42,682	8%
Business/Managerial Economics	\$40,768	\$43,426	7%
Civil Engineering Technologies/Technicians	\$57,017	\$60,523	6%
Philosophy	\$24,912	\$26,353	6%
Parks, Recreation and Leisure Facilities Management	\$33,077	\$34,814	5%
Construction Engineering Technologies	\$58,221	\$59,937	3%
Literature	\$21,234	\$21,781	3%
Engineering-Related Fields	\$63,749	\$65,131	2%
Homeland Security	\$43,240	\$44,170	2%
Operations Research	\$84,653	\$85,538	1%
Animal Sciences	\$29,685	\$29,866	1%
Applied Mathematics	\$41,342	\$41,565	1%
Agricultural Business and Management	\$80,747	\$80,747	0%
Agricultural Engineering	\$51,690	\$51,690	0%
Agricultural Production Operations	\$31,314	\$31,314	0%
Agriculture, General	\$36,848	\$36,848	0%
Agriculture/Veterinary Preparatory Programs	\$28,719	\$28,719	0%
American Sign Language	\$31,585	\$31,585	0%
Architectural Engineering Technologies/Technicians	\$44,356	\$44,356	0%
Architecture and Related Services, Other	\$36,221	\$36,221	0%
Biotechnology	\$32,925	\$32,925	0%
Business/Corporate Communications	\$43,969	\$43,969	0%
Cell/Cellular Biology and Anatomical Sciences	\$21,508	\$21,508	0%
City/Urban, Community and Regional Planning	\$42,682	\$42,682	0%
Computer Programming	\$42,123	\$42,123	0%
Computer Systems Analysis	\$52,242	\$52,242	0%
Construction Management	\$56,776	\$56,776	0%
Culinary Arts and Related Services	\$28,381	\$28,381	0%

There are 72 fields of study where the median earnings premium is < 20%



FIGURE 3. Lowest and Highest Median Earnings with Earnings Premium for Bachelor's Fields of Study continued

Fields of Study	Lowest Median Earnings	Highest Median Earnings	The Earnings Premium Between the Highest and Lowest Median Earnings
Education, General	\$33,993	\$33,993	0%
Engineering Science	\$62,409	\$62,409	0%
English Language and Literature/Letters, Other	\$41,937	\$41,937	0%
Family and Consumer Economics and Related Studies	\$30,554	\$30,554	0%
Fire Protection	\$33,993	\$33,993	0%
Food Science and Technology	\$52,733	\$52,733	0%
Foods, Nutrition, and Related Services	\$28,019	\$28,019	0%
Geography and Cartography	\$45,696	\$45,696	0%
Housing and Human Environments	\$52,107	\$52,107	0%
Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians	\$44,942	\$44,942	0%
Insurance	\$63,898	\$63,898	0%
Landscape Architecture	\$42,682	\$42,682	0%
Legal Professions and Studies, Other	\$38,289	\$38,289	0%
Leisure and Recreational Activities	\$22,329	\$22,329	0%
Marine Transportation	\$73,446	\$73,446	0%
Materials Engineering	\$64,990	\$64,990	0%
Medical Illustration and Informatics	\$31,848	\$31,848	0%
Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering	\$81,997	\$81,997	0%
Nuclear Engineering Technologies/Technicians	\$94,408	\$94,408	0%
Nuclear Engineering	\$57,318	\$57,318	0%
Nutrition Sciences	\$25,774	\$25,774	0%
Plant Sciences	\$36,668	\$36,668	0%
Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing and Nursing Assistants	\$101,221	\$101,221	0%
Psychology, Other	\$43,928	\$43,928	0%
Public Administration and Social Service Professions, Other	\$47,260	\$47,260	0%
Public Policy Analysis	\$57,318	\$57,318	0%
Real Estate	\$34,704	\$34,704	0%
Science, Technology and Society	\$37,363	\$37,363	0%
Sociology and Anthropology	\$23,456	\$23,456	0%
Urban Studies/Affairs	\$38,289	\$38,289	0%
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Technologies	\$37,208	\$37,208	0%
Veterinary Biomedical and Clinical Sciences	\$44,542	\$44,542	0%
Veterinary/Animal Health Technologies/Technicians	\$28,598	\$28,598	0%

There are 72 fields of study where the median earnings premium is < 20%



FINDING 3

Median earnings are higher at institutions that serve the smallest shares of Pell-eligible students and American Indian, Black, and Latinx students than at institutions that serve the largest shares

The median earnings for fields of study at institutions with the largest shares of Pell recipients are lower than the median earnings at institutions with smallest shares of Pell recipients. For associate degrees, only 6% of the fields of study offered at the institutions with the largest share of Pell recipients have median earnings that are greater than or equal to \$40,000. However, more than one in four (29%) of the fields of study offered at the institutions with the smallest share of Pell recipients have median earnings that are greater than or equal to \$40,000. A similar pattern emerges for institutions with

the largest share of American Indian, Black, and Latinx students, where 20% of the fields of study had median earnings that were at least \$40,000, compared to 29% of the fields of study offered at the institutions with the smallest share of American Indian, Black, and Latinx students (See Figure 4).

For bachelor’s degrees, more than half (53%) of fields of study at the institutions with the smallest shares of Pell recipients have median earnings that are at or above \$40,000, compared to only 1-in-4 (25%) fields of study at institutions serving the largest shares of Pell recipients. An almost identical pattern is found when comparing fields of study at the institutions with the smallest shares of American Indian, Black, and Latinx students and fields of study at institutions serving the largest shares of American Indian, Black, and Latinx students (See Figure 5).

FIGURE 4. Share of Associate Fields of Study with Median Earnings Equal to or Greater than \$40,000 by Institutional Demographics

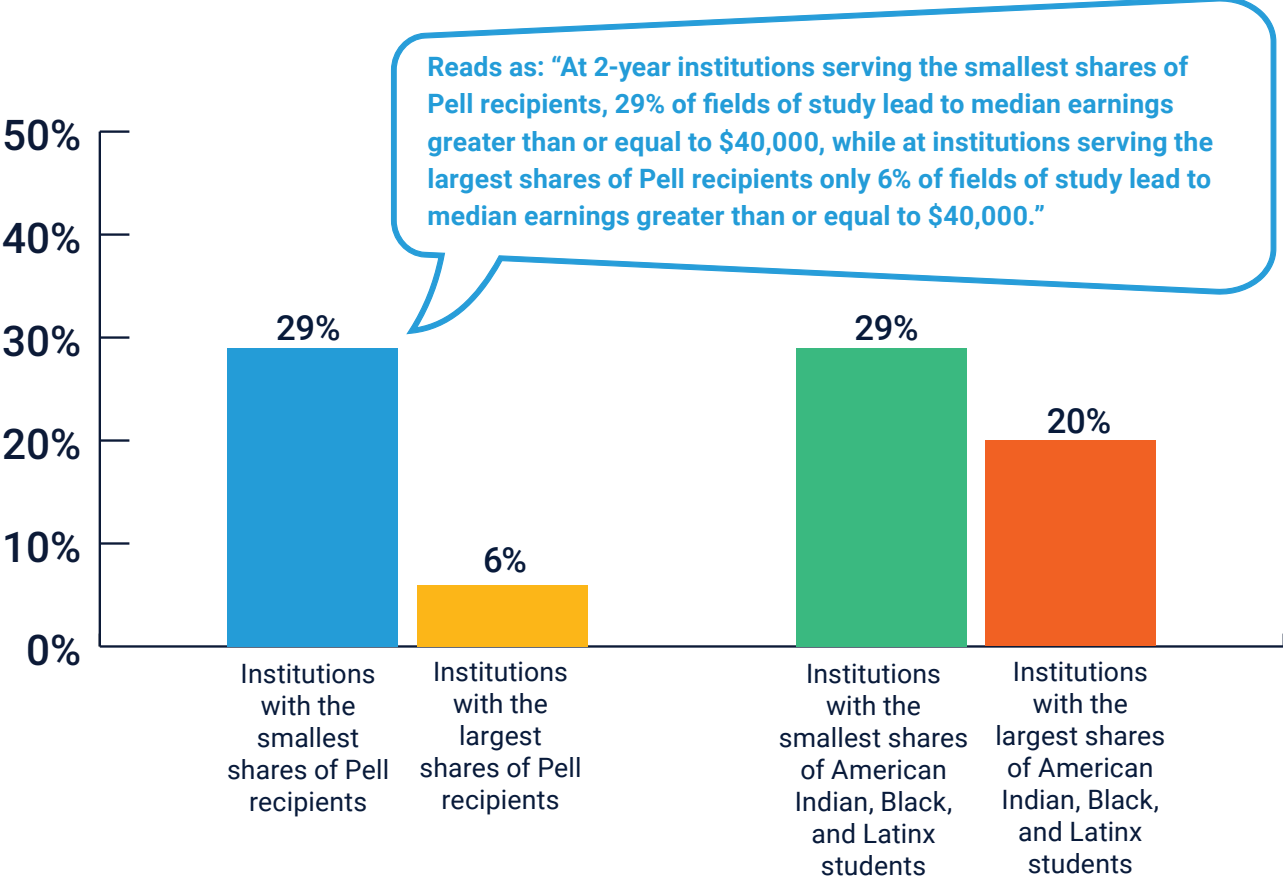
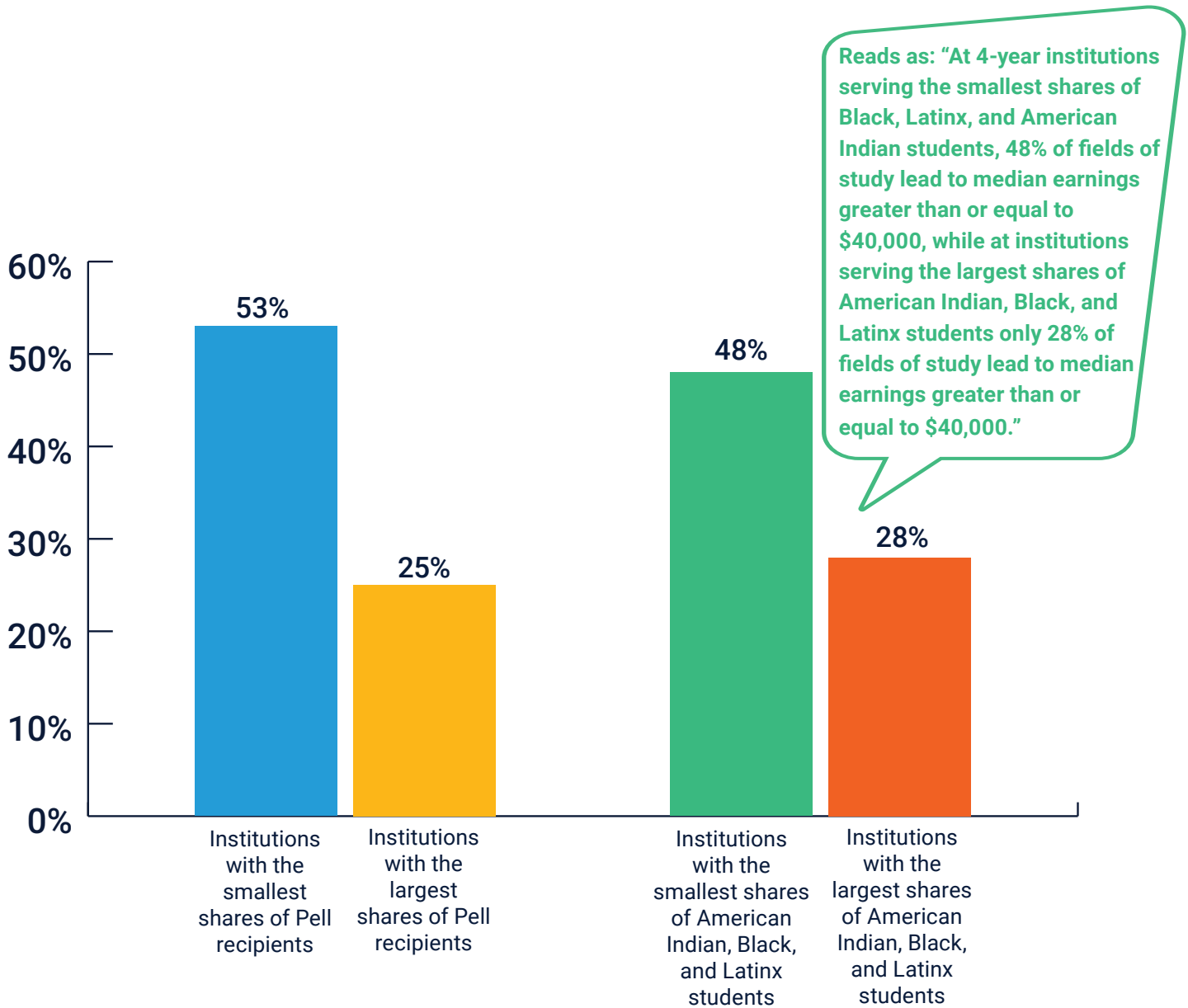


FIGURE 5. Share of Bachelor's Fields of Study with Median Earnings Equal to or Greater than \$40,000 by Institutional Demographics



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scorecard data findings highlight the need to provide additional academic and career support to students attending institutions with lower median earnings and to improve access — especially access for Pell-eligible and American Indian, Black, and Latinx student — to institutions with higher median earnings. In order to ensure New York residents are prepared to meet the labor demands of the future and achieve more equitable postsecondary outcomes, including family-sustaining earnings, the state should pursue an ambitious postsecondary equity agenda:

... The state should **adopt a statewide attainment goal of 60% that would apply to all regions and to New York residents of all races and ethnicities.**

The attainment goal should require public and independent postsecondary institutions to create context-specific strategic plans that set clear goals aligned to interim benchmarks and definitive measures of success, and to drive postsecondary outcomes with an equity lens. The attainment goal should also require state leaders at all levels to focus on the postsecondary academic and non-academic needs of groups of students that too often go underserved, including investment in statewide educational opportunity programs and Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP).

... The state should **create a statewide early childhood-to-workforce data system** to support institutions in identifying and addressing equity gaps in the educational pipeline and assess the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the education-to-workforce transition. The data

system should include college enrollment, persistence, and completion data and key workforce indicators, such as wage and employment data.

... The state should **strengthen consumer protection and protect borrowers** by providing oversight and improving program approval processes for schools that receive funds from federal and state aid programs. The state should include measures of access and quality, including workforce outcomes, as part of its accountability standards.

In addition, postsecondary institutions can take these steps to ensure that students are well prepared and supported for workforce transitions:

... Institutions of higher education should **collaborate with industry partners in fields that pay a family-sustaining wage to ensure program offerings and skill development are aligned with current and future workforce demands.**

... Institutions should also **integrate opportunities for career exposure and development** by increasing academic and career advising, facilitating internship opportunities, and offering other critical supports to prepare students for the workforce.

Focusing on the pipeline from postsecondary completion to workforce outcomes will help ensure a more equitable higher education system and put all New Yorkers on the path to earning a family-sustaining income and meeting their full potential.



A NOTE ON THE DATA

Source

Unless otherwise noted, all data findings in this report are based on The Education Trust–New York’s analysis of publicly available data on median earnings from the U.S. Department of Education’s College Scorecard project. College Scorecard data is culled from several sources – for example, median earnings data from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and a variety of postsecondary data elements from the U.S. Department of Education, including data from National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) – to increase transparency about college costs and student outcomes.

The College Scorecard dataset is released in two files: “Most-Recent-Cohorts-All-Data-Elements,” which provides institution-level data on the share of Pell grant recipients enrollment, the share of student enrollment by race/ethnicity, other data elements, and “Most-Recent-Cohorts-Field-of-Study,” which provides institution-level data on the number of earners and median earnings by degree/credential type and field of study. College Scorecard data is available here: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/data/>.

Universe

There are a total of 450 New York State postsecondary institutions in the College Scorecard “Most-Recent-Cohorts-All-Data-Elements” data file. In addition, we were able to identify 13 more New York State postsecondary institutions in the “Most-Recent-Cohorts-Field-of-Study” data file, for a total universe of 463 postsecondary institutions. The following institutions were excluded from the analysis:

- 16 Institutions that were not certified as an operating institution.

- 151 institutions that were not classified as 2-year or 4-year institutions.
- 28 institutions that were classified as exclusively graduate/professional institutions.
- 55 Institutions classified as “Faith-Related Institutions” due to the unique nature of their programs.

Of the remaining 213 institutions, 58 institutions were associate-degree-awarding institutions, 75 institutions were bachelor’s-degree-awarding institutions, 79 institutions awarded both associate and bachelor’s degrees, and 1 institution awarded neither an associate or bachelor’s degree and was excluded from the analysis.

Of the 137 institutions that awarded an associate degree, 88 (64%) were included in the analysis. For the associate degree analysis, the following exclusions were made:

- 46 institutions where data on median earnings was unavailable due to suppression.
- 1 institution where data on median earnings did not meet our n-size threshold of 20 earners.
- 2 institutions where data on median earnings was unavailable due to suppression OR where data on median earnings did not meet our n-size threshold of 20 earners.

Of the 154 institutions that awarded a bachelor’s degree, 134 (87%) were included in the analysis. For the bachelor’s degree analysis, the following exclusions were made:

- 14 institutions where data on median earnings was unavailable due to suppression.
- 6 institutions where data on median earnings was unavailable due to suppression OR where data on median earnings did not meet our n-size threshold of 20 earners.



Definitions

Median earnings data are adjusted to 2019 inflation dollars and reflect the combined earnings for two cohorts, two years after postsecondary completion by field of study. Specifically, the median earnings data is for 2017 earnings for students who received federal financial aid and graduated in the 2014-15 academic award year and 2018 earnings for students who received federal financial aid and graduated in the 2015-16 academic year. Median earnings data is excluded from the analysis whenever data is suppressed or the number of earners in a field of study is less than 20.

Fields of study are the primary academic concentration of postsecondary certificates and degrees and reflect Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes established by the U.S. Department of Education. CIP codes and field of study names are used to uniformly classify and categorize academic disciplines across all postsecondary institutions.

Data on institution-level demographics, such as share of Pell recipients and share of undergraduate degree-seeking students by race/ethnicity, are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as:

- “Pell Recipients” – Percentage of undergraduates who receive a Pell Grant for the 2017-18 academic year.
- “American Indian Students” – Total share of enrollment of undergraduate degree-seeking students who are American Indian/Alaska Native as reported in IPEDS, Fall 2018.
- “Black Students” – Total share of enrollment of undergraduate degree-seeking students who are Black as reported in IPEDS, Fall 2018.
- “Latinx Students” – Total share of enrollment of undergraduate degree-seeking students who are Hispanic as reported in IPEDS, Fall 2018.

ENDNOTES

1. Anthony P. Carnevale, “Ignore the Hype. College Is Worth It,” *Inside Higher Ed*, Feb. 13, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/02/13/why-one-should-ignore-reports-and-commentary-question-value-college-degree-opinion>.
2. Jaison R. Abel and Richard Deitz, “Some workers have been hit much harder than others by the pandemic,” *Federal Reserve Bank of New York Liberty Street Economics*, Feb. 9, 2021, <https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2021/02/some-workers-have-been-hit-much-harder-than-others-by-the-pandemic.html>.

