

# The Post-Completion Value of Community College Credentials: Using Data to Examine Programs and Student Success

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**ATD Data Summit 2025**

# Many students are not enrolled in a program that clearly leads to a job or transfer in their major field of interest

Typical Community College Program Enrollments By Field



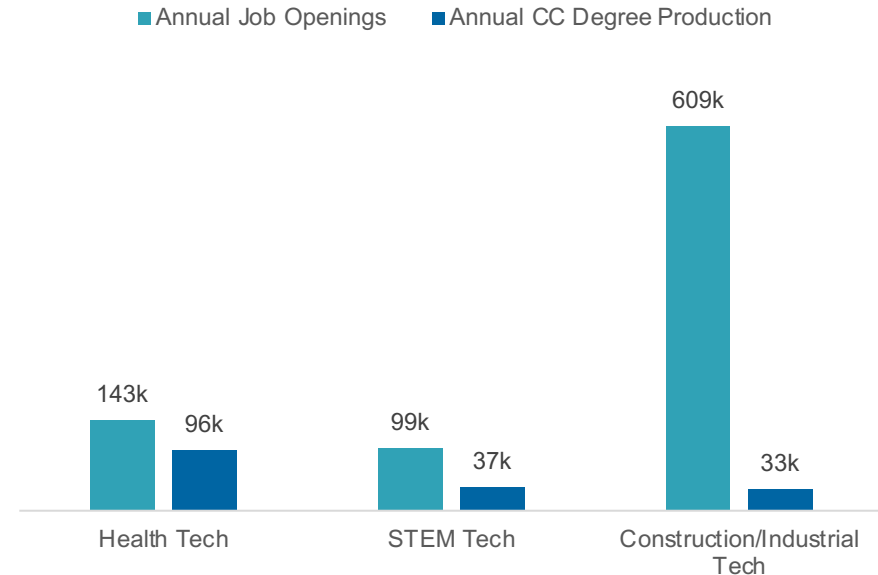
What motivation do these students have to continue and complete?

There is **strong projected demand for well-paying middle skill jobs** that require a strong applied technical and communication and problem-solving skills.

Community colleges are **not on track to meet this demand**.

Programs leading to higher earnings also have **greater need to diversify**.

## Projected Middle-Skill Job Openings in Tech Fields 2021-31 compared to Community College Workforce Degrees in Technology Fields 2022-23



CCRC analysis of IPEDS Completions and Projected Openings from Carnevale et al., (2023)

# In this session

**CCRC** COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
RESEARCH CENTER  
Teachers College, Columbia University

RESEARCH REPORT | APRIL 2025

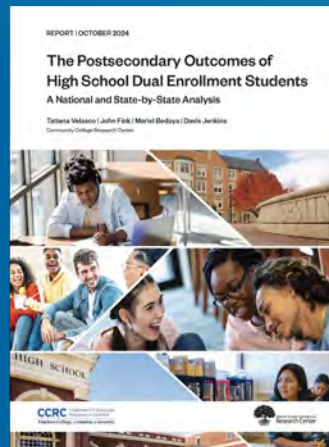
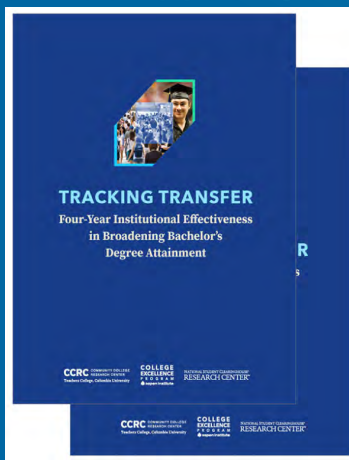
## Which Community College Awards Are Likely to Prepare Students for Post-Completion Success?

By Davis Jenkins, John Fink, and Tatiana Velesco

Three years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly three-quarters of community colleges had not fully restored their enrollments to pre-pandemic levels (Fink, 2023). Enrollments had already been declining since around 2011, when labor markets began to recover after the Great Recession (Jenkins & Fink, 2020). The decrease in community college enrollments nationally over more than a decade has been accompanied by growing skepticism among prospective students and large segments of the public about the value of a college education. A 2023 survey of students who had recently attended a community college (including some graduates and some who stopped out before completing) found that respondents earning less than the median of \$48,000 annually were markedly less likely to say their education was worth the cost or helped them achieve their goals than those who earned more than that amount (Strada, 2023). The survey also found that students who completed an associate degree or transferred to a four-year institution valued their education more than those who did not.

However, most students who start at a community college do not complete any credential. According to the latest data from the National Student Clearinghouse, only 43% of students who start at a community college complete a degree or certificate at any institution within six years, meaning that most come away with no credential (Lee & Shapiro, 2023). Among those who do earn a credential, too many earn one that is not well designed to prepare them for success in employment or further education.

Over 90% of the credentials that community colleges award each year are designed to lead to direct employment or transfer to a bachelor's program rather than for personal enrichment. Students who enroll in these programs should expect them to lead efficiently to a living-wage job and career advancement or to a bachelor's degree program in their field of interest. Yet many community college workforce and transfer programs do not enable students to secure a good job or transfer in a major without excess credits. What is more, graduates of programs that do prepare students for good jobs or transfer are too often not demographically representative of the overall student population and communities that the colleges serve.



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1. What programs are our students currently enrolled in?
2. What opportunity does each program lead to in terms of further education and/or immediate job prospects and earnings. Which programs lead to greater or lesser opportunity?
3. Is student representation across programs proportionate? Which subgroups of students are underrepresented in higher-opportunity programs?



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**IPEDS Completions Data:** Community college awards by program, disaggregated by student race/ethnicity and gender

**Associated earnings:** Average program-level earnings for college programs reported in IPEDS that matched to Scorecard data

**College Scorecard Data:** Median earnings two-years post-graduation among program graduates who were working and not enrolled in postsecondary ed

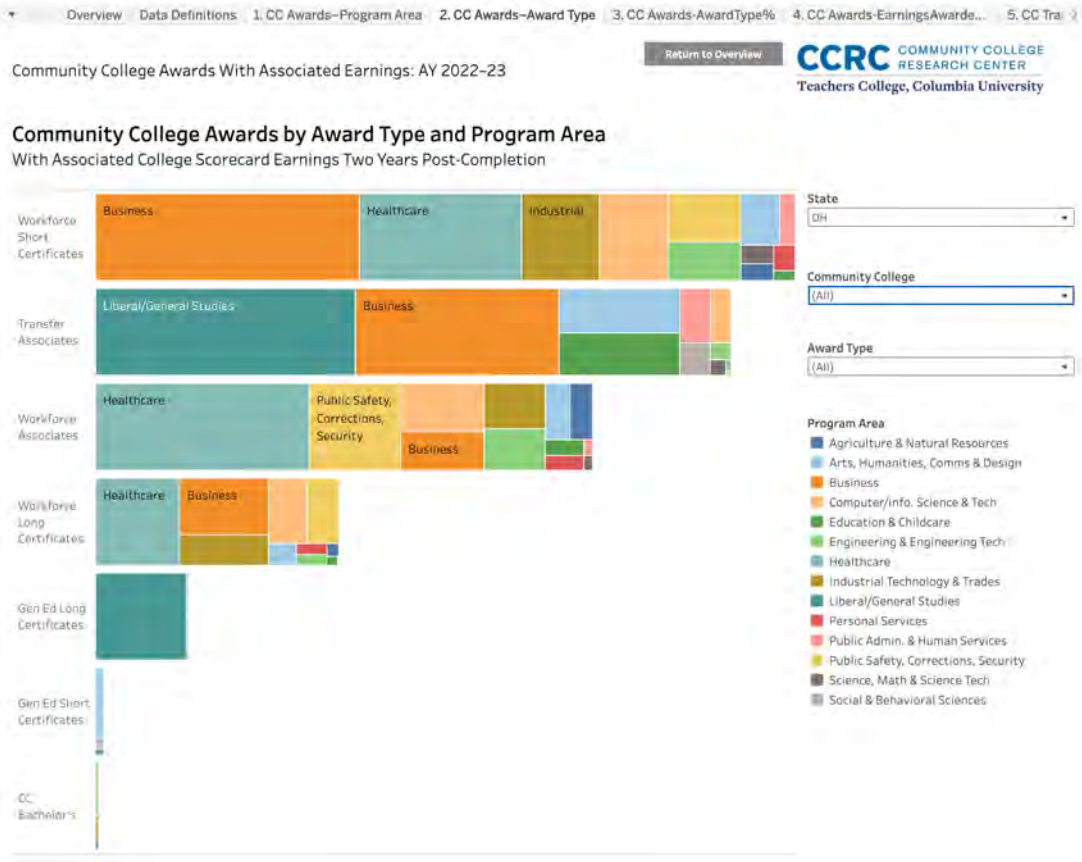
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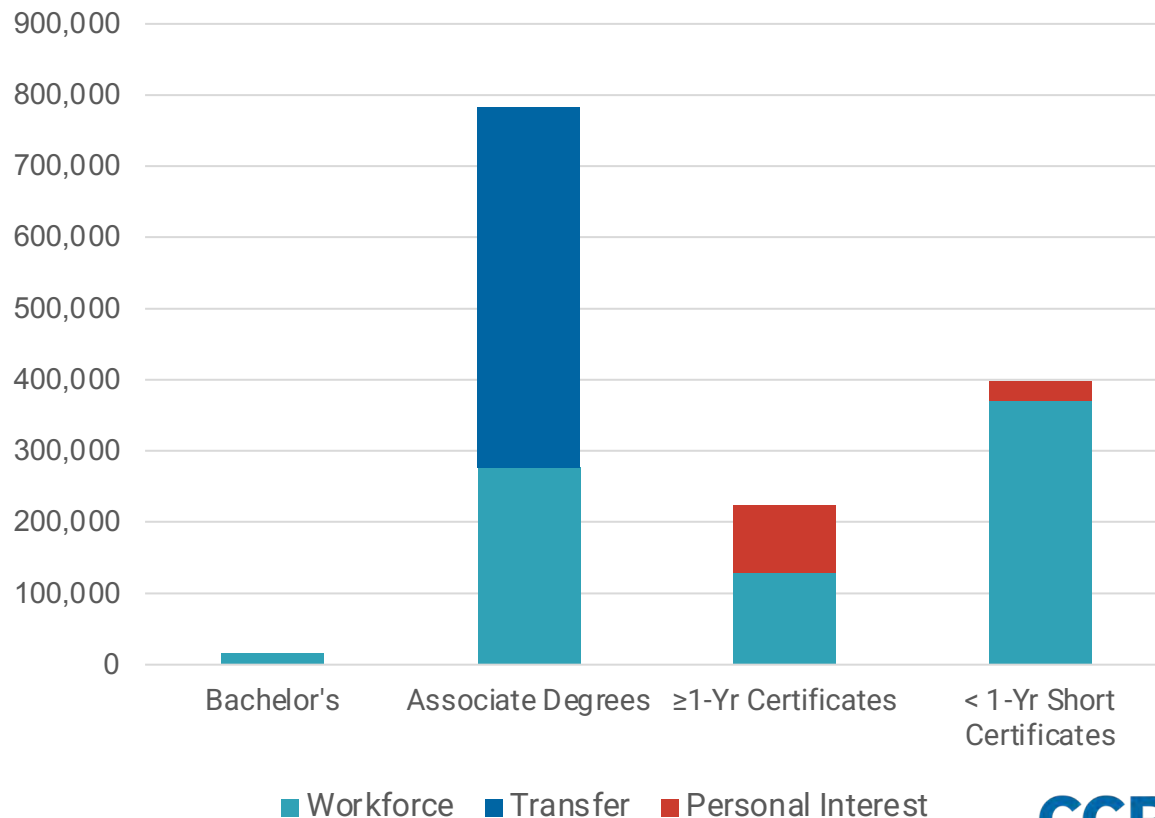
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Assessing the post-completion value of community college credentials requires examining the award level, field and intent

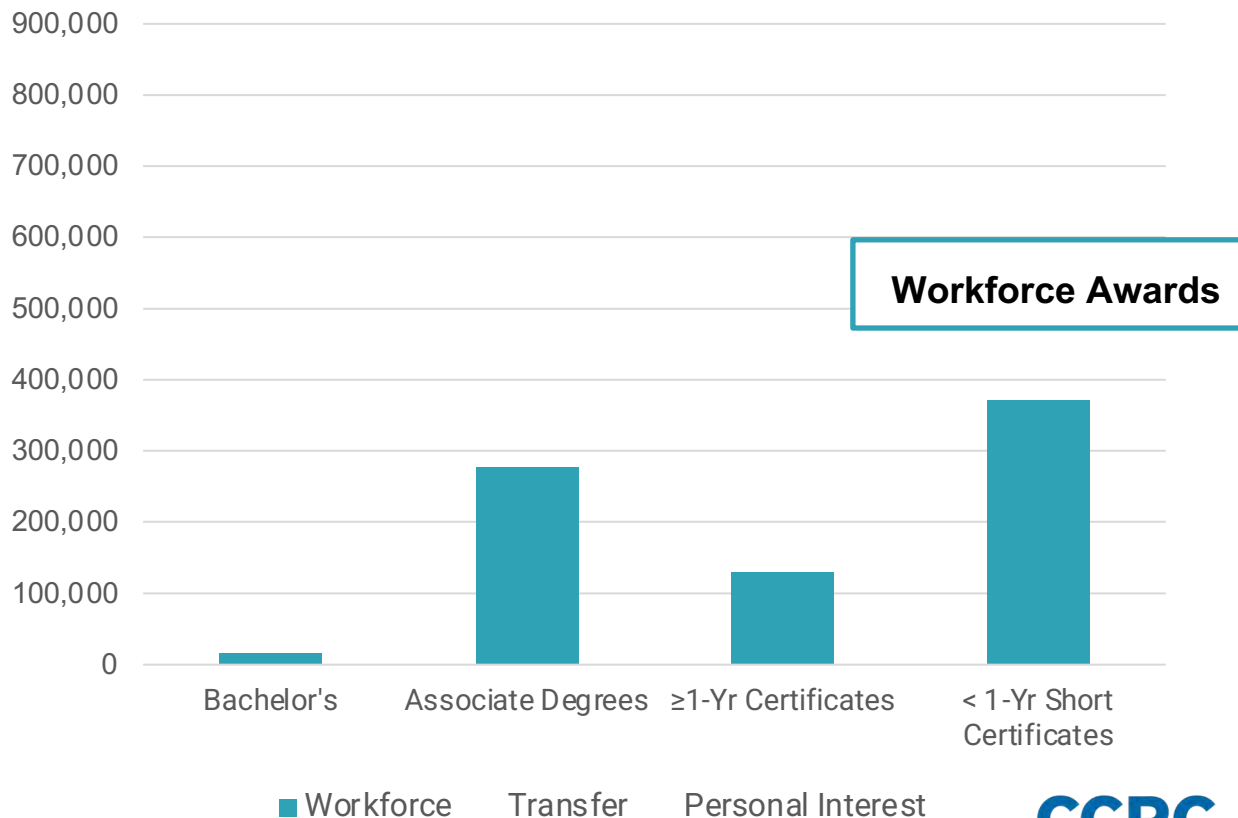
### Community College Awards by Intended Program Outcome: AY 2022-23





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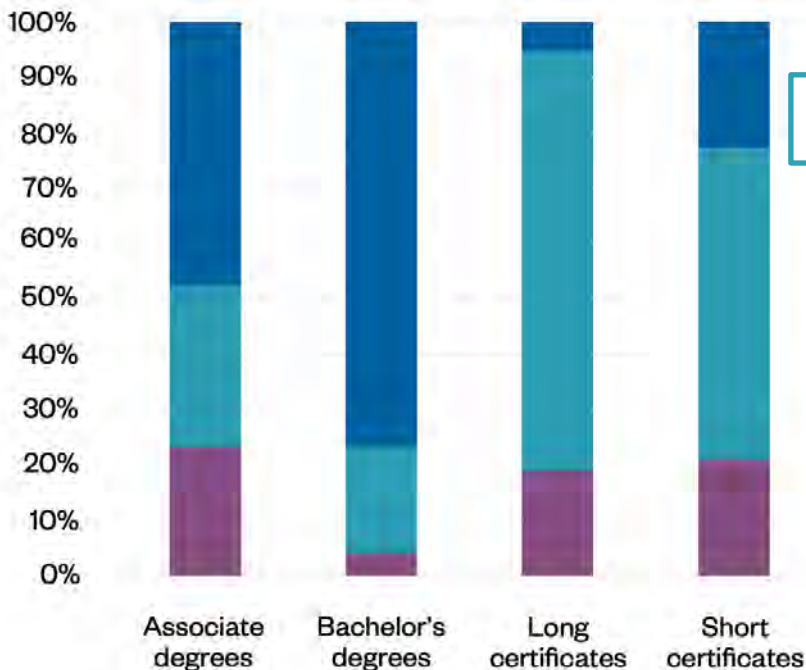


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## Community College Workforce Awards & Associated Earnings AY 2022-23

### B. Share of Awards by Associated Earnings Category

Well below living wage < \$30,000    Near living wage \$30,000 – \$40,000    Well above living wage > \$40,000

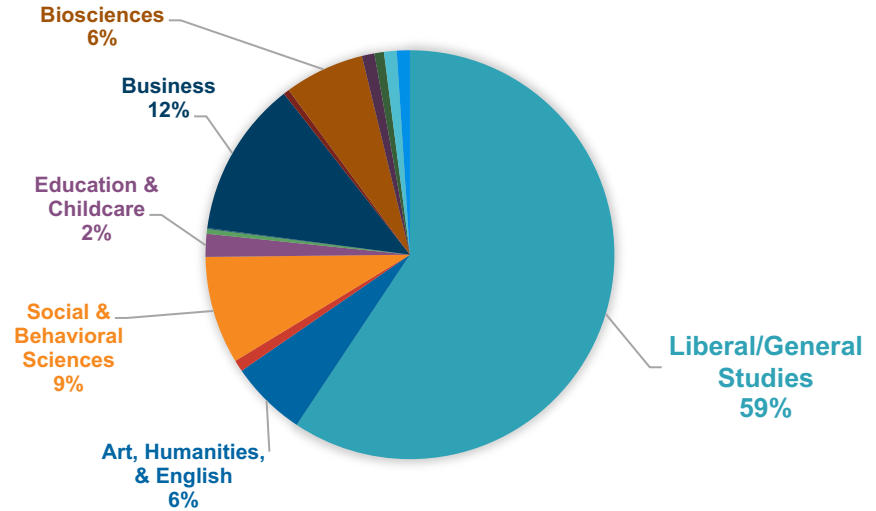


Workforce Awards

Community college transfer associates are not well aligned with bachelor's degrees awarded by four-year institutions.

## Community College Transfer Associate Degrees by Field:

AY 2022-23



### STEM Majors

CC Transfer Associate Degrees	Bachelor's Degrees, Public Four-Years
10%	24%

### Liberal/General Studies Majors

CC Transfer Associate Degrees	Bachelor's Degrees, Public Four-Years
59%	3%

## ***Diving into the Data:***

What credentials is your college awarding, in what fields, and to whom?

Are your college's workforce and transfer programs worth completing in that they prepare students to secure good jobs or transfer successfully?

Community College Awards With Associated Earnings: AY 2022-23

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## Community College Awards by Award Type and Program Area

With Associated College Scorecard Earnings Two Years Post-Completion



1. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/completion-value>
2. Start on tab 2, "CC Awards-Award Type"
3. Select "OH" under State
4. Select your college under "Community College"
5. Hover over the bars to get more detail



[Return to Overview](#)

Community College Awards With Associated Earnings: AY 2022-23

## Community College Awards by Award Type, Program Area, Field, and Name

With Associated College Scorecard Earnings Two Years Post-Completion and Share of Awardees by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

State:  Community College:  Award Type:  Program Area:  Student Characteristics:

Program Area	Program Field	Number of Awards	Median Two-Year Earnings (2019\$)	Percent with Valid Earnings	Percent Female	Percent Asian	Percent Black	Percent Hispanic	Percent White
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>28,985</b>	<b>\$36,024</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>67.1%</b>
<b>Healthcare</b>	Nursing	3,455	\$45,059	77.2%	87.6%	2.7%	15.9%	4.4%	66.7%
	Allied Health Technology	2,775	\$39,566	56.4%	69.1%	2.7%	9.0%	4.8%	75.1%
	Allied Health Administr.	950	\$26,944	38.0%	94.2%	3.5%	14.7%	7.8%	56.5%
	Mental Health and Coun.	634	\$27,591	4.7%	57.9%	0.0%	27.8%	4.1%	61.8%
	Allied Health Other	412	\$27,446	25.7%	73.5%	2.9%	18.0%	10.9%	59.2%
	Dentistry and Dental Tec.	361	\$41,454	60.7%	96.1%	2.8%	6.1%	4.7%	78.9%
	Allied Health Administr.	352	\$26,454	96.6%	89.2%	5.1%	26.7%	15.3%	44.0%
	Medicine, Pharmacolog.	228			91.7%	0.4%	17.1%	4.4%	68.0%
	Allied Health Assistance	50			74.0%	0.0%	8.0%	14.0%	66.0%
	Public Health	13			38.5%	0.0%	23.1%	0.0%	53.8%
<b>Business</b>	Secretarial and Adminis.	3,528	\$29,127	0.6%	25.9%	0.4%	24.6%	3.3%	49.5%
	Business Administratio.	2,787	\$28,501	3.4%	59.3%	2.2%	20.9%	5.0%	62.2%
	Accounting	554	\$34,121	3.6%	73.3%	5.2%	9.2%	5.6%	74.2%
	Marketing and Sales	133	\$27,669	7.5%	57.9%	3.8%	9.8%	6.8%	75.2%
	Banking and Finance	101			60.4%	3.0%	12.9%	4.0%	65.3%
	Logistics, E-commerce, ..	85	\$33,777	35.3%	24.7%	1.2%	16.5%	5.9%	61.2%
	Management informati.	13			23.1%	7.7%	30.8%	7.7%	38.5%
<b>Public Safety, Corrections, Security</b>	Law Enforcement	2,040	\$31,792	11.3%	37.4%	1.3%	16.5%	9.7%	65.6%
	Legal Support Services	508	\$32,082	6.1%	82.5%	2.0%	14.8%	12.2%	62.0%
	Fire	465			12.5%	0.9%	3.9%	5.6%	80.2%
	Forensic Security and In.	61			23.0%	3.3%	4.9%	3.3%	80.3%
	Corrections	49	\$33,131	61.2%	69.4%	0.0%	10.2%	4.1%	83.7%
	Homeland Security	4			0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%
	Law	0							
<b>Computer/Info.</b>	Computer and Informat.	1,161	\$35,859	18.3%	20.3%	2.8%	9.8%	5.5%	70.3%

Showing workforce awards

Award Type

(Multiple values)

- ☐ (All)
- ☒ CC Bachelor's
- ☐ Transfer Associates
- ☒ Workforce Associates
- ☒ Workforce Long Certificates
- ☒ Workforce Short Certificates
- ☐ Gen Ed Long Certificates
- ☐ Gen Ed Short Certificates

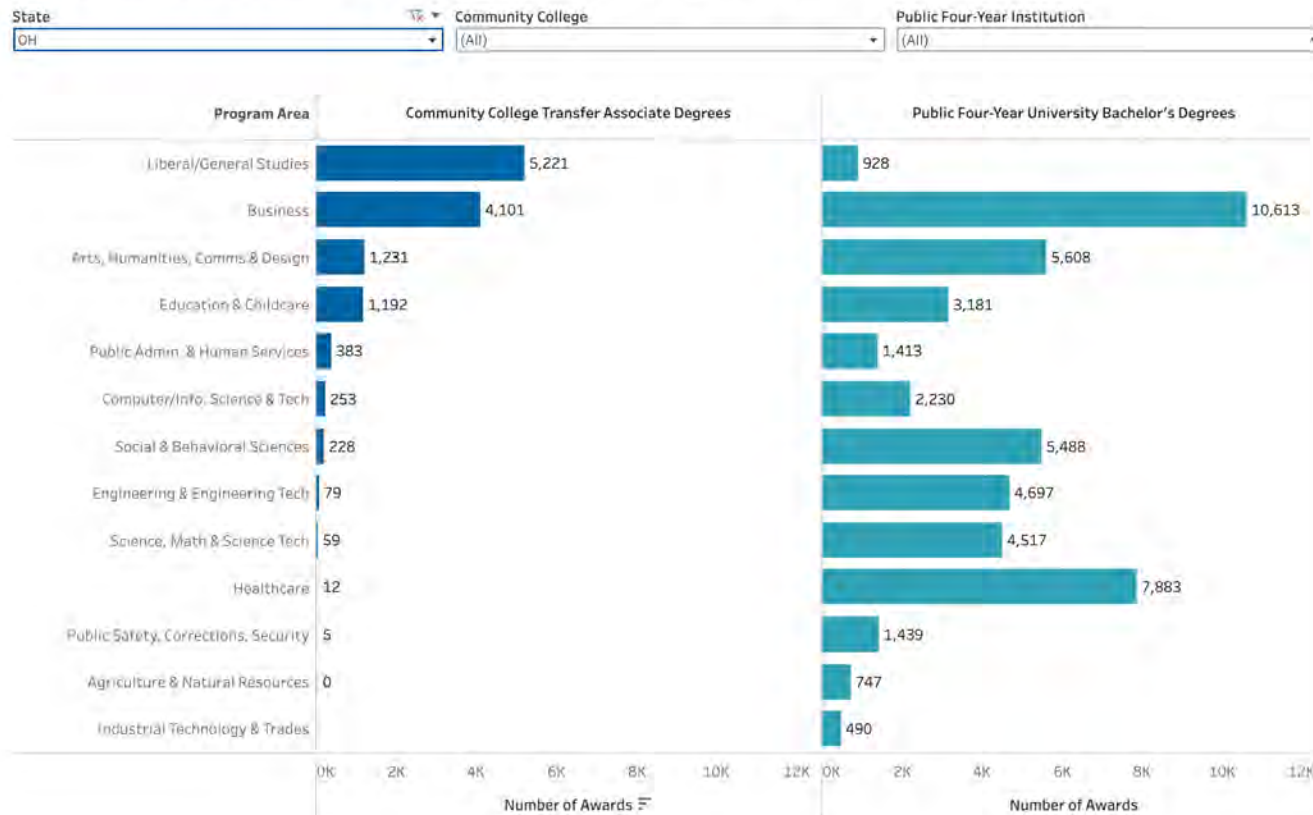
[Cancel](#) [Apply](#)

\*\*\*\*When you have a little time, check out Tab 4, which includes data on awards by race and gender, including earnings.\*\*\*

[Return to Overview](#)

Community College Awards With Associated Earnings: AY 2022-23

## Community College Transfer Associate Degrees Compared to Public Four-Year Bachelor's Degrees by Program Area

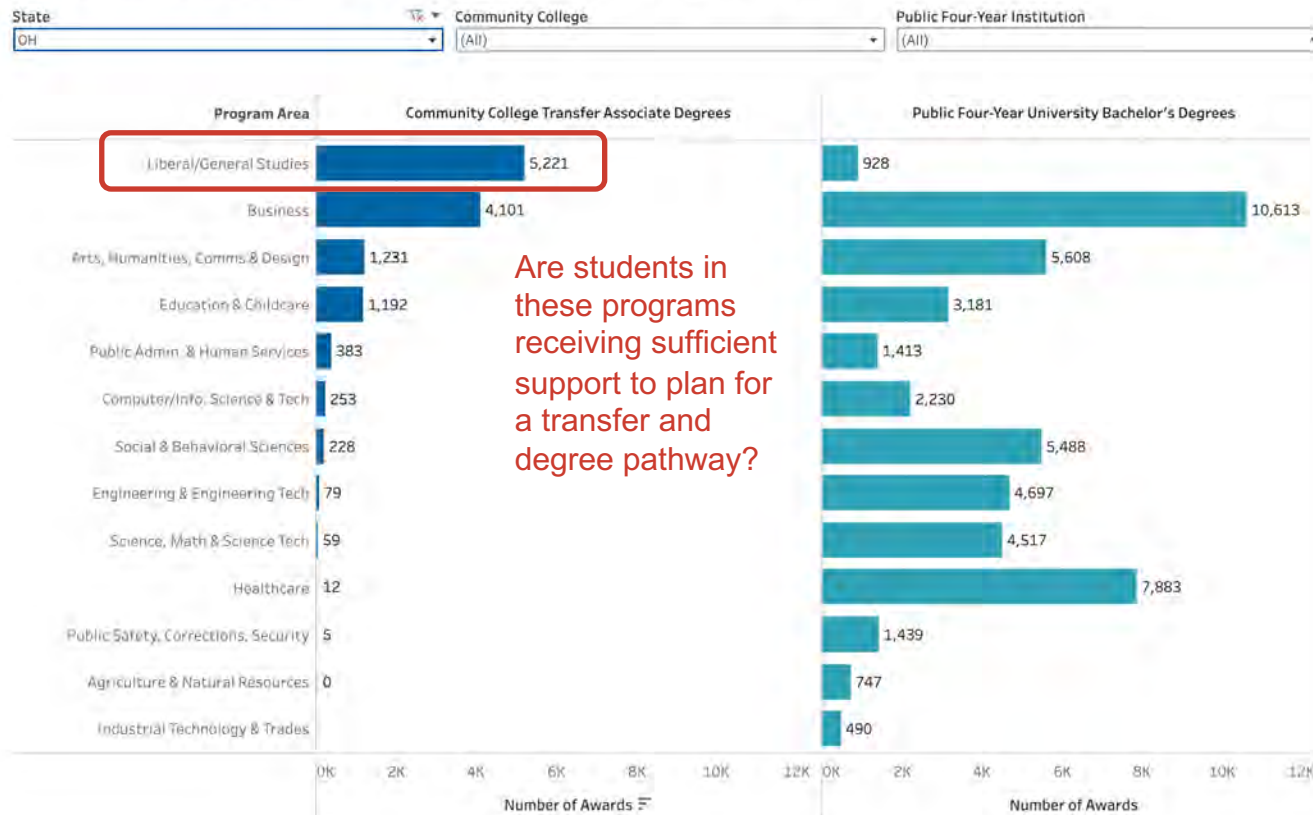


1. Start [here](#) to open the tableau
2. Go to tab 6, "CC Transfer AA vs 4-Yr BAs"
3. Select "OH" under State
4. Under Community College, select "Show 4-Year Comparison" & a College
5. Under Public Four-Year Institution" Select "Show CC Comparison" and a College

[Return to Overview](#)

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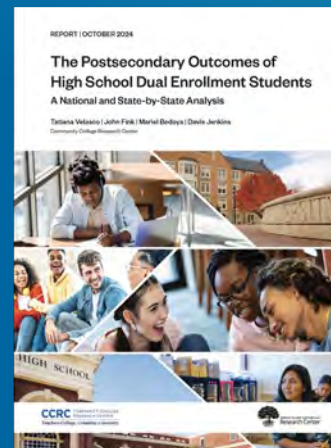
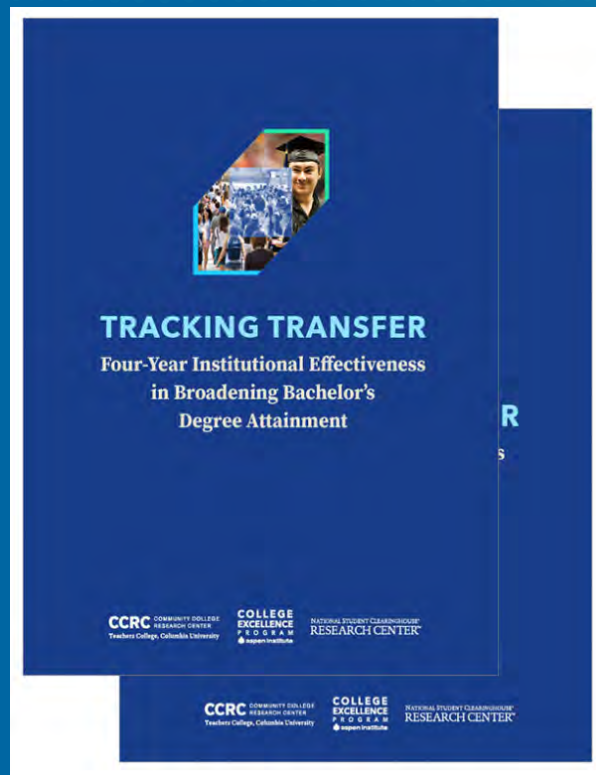
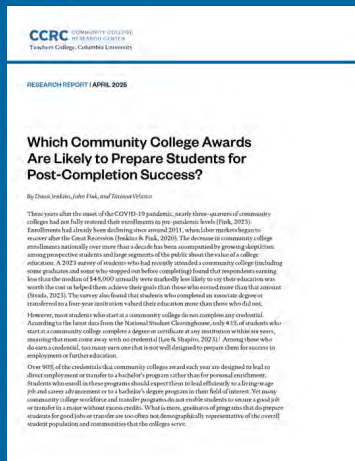
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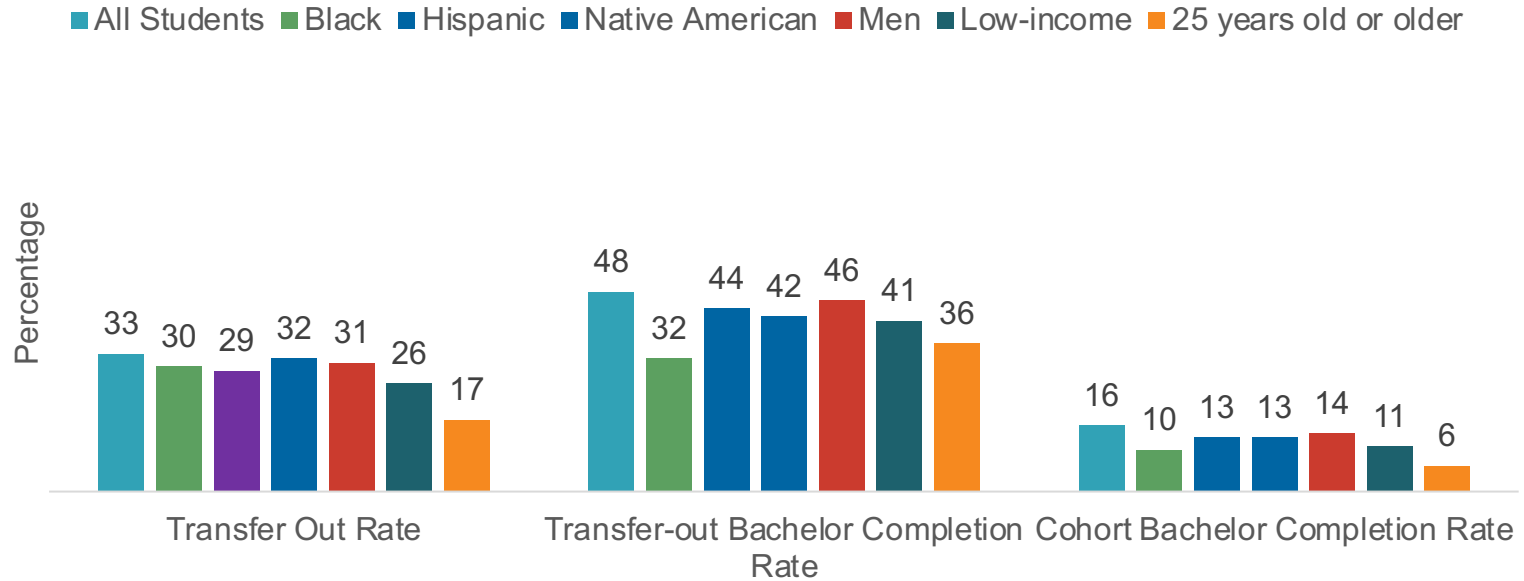
Are students in these programs receiving sufficient support to plan for a transfer and degree pathway?

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# About two-thirds of associate degrees granted at community colleges are transfer-oriented, yet transfer outcomes are low nationwide



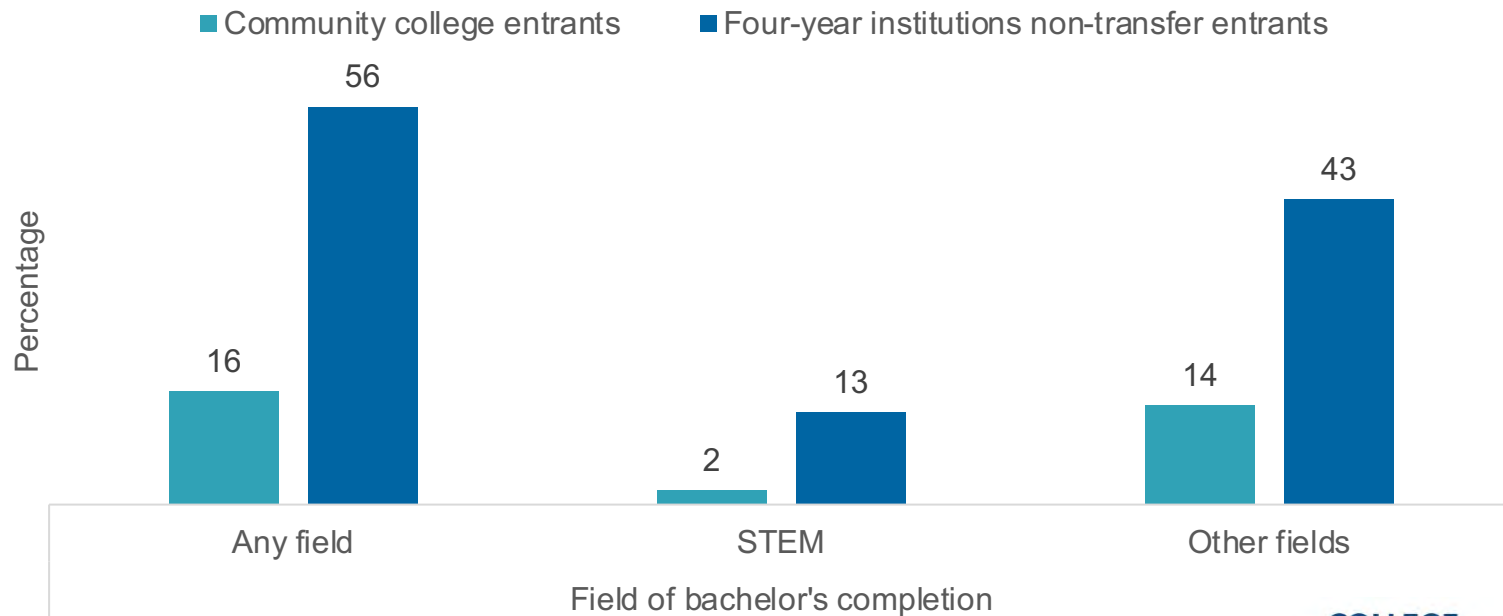
## Transfer: low outcomes, high disparities





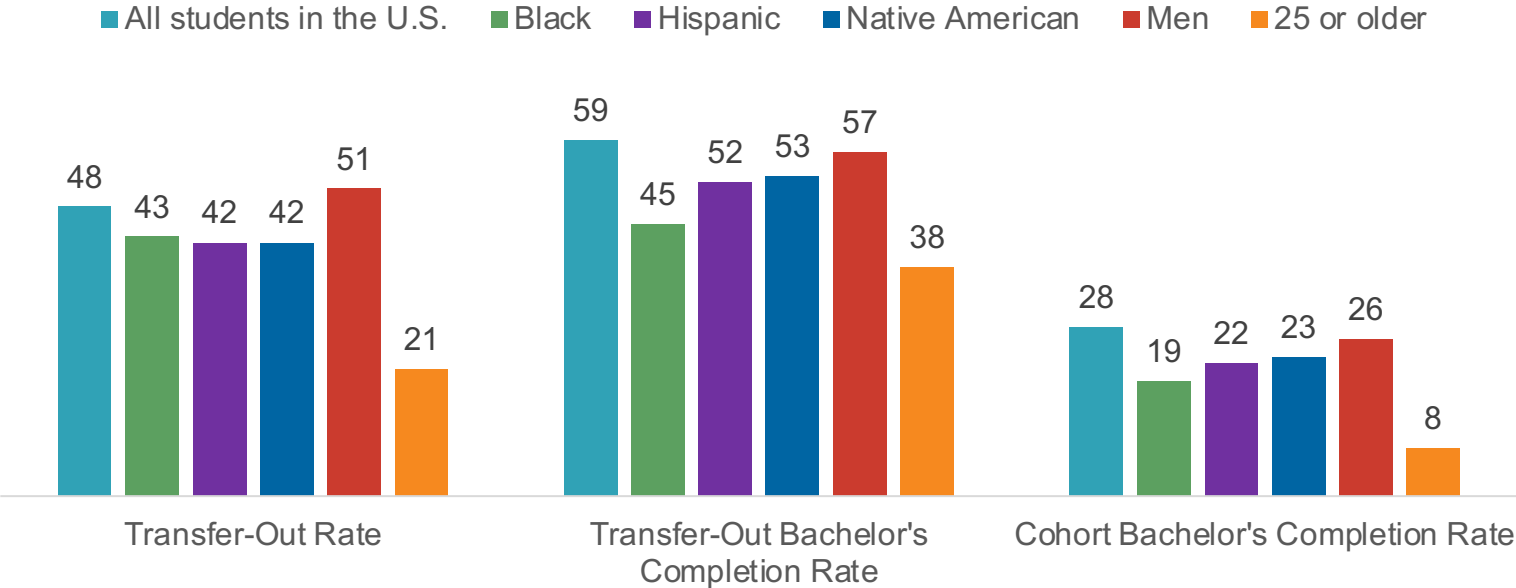
# Community college students complete bachelor's degrees in STEM at lower rates than non-transfer students

Bachelor's Completion within Six Years, 2015 Entry Cohort

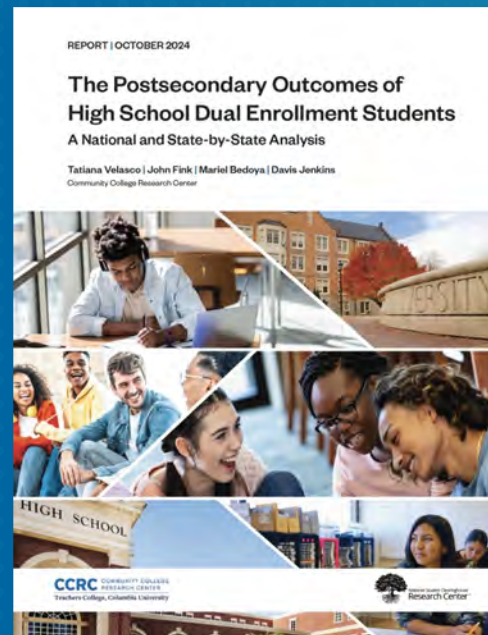
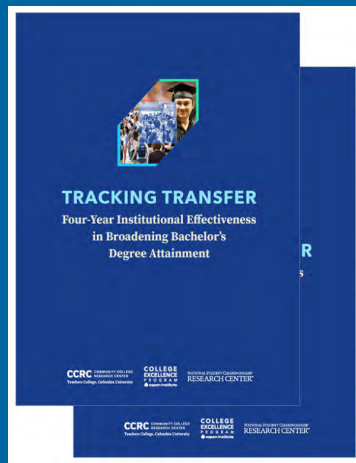
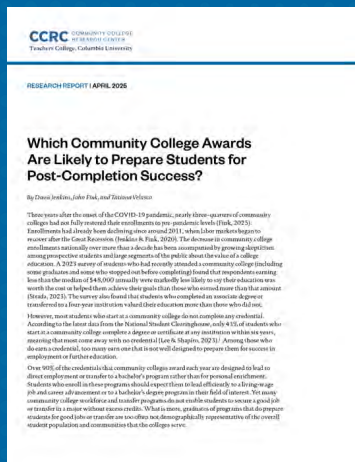


Authors' calculations based on NSC data

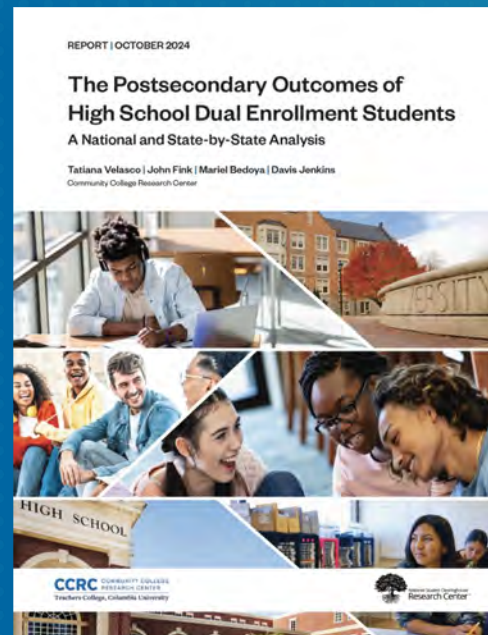
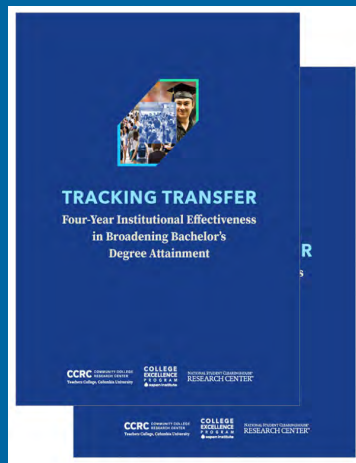
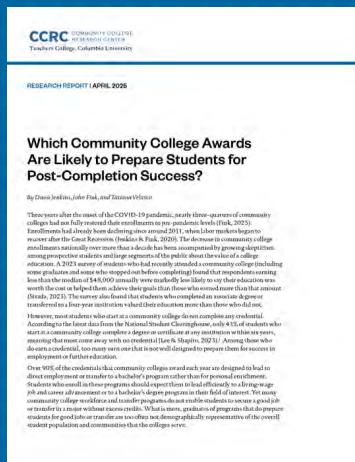
# Prior dual enrollment is associated with stronger outcomes and smaller disparities



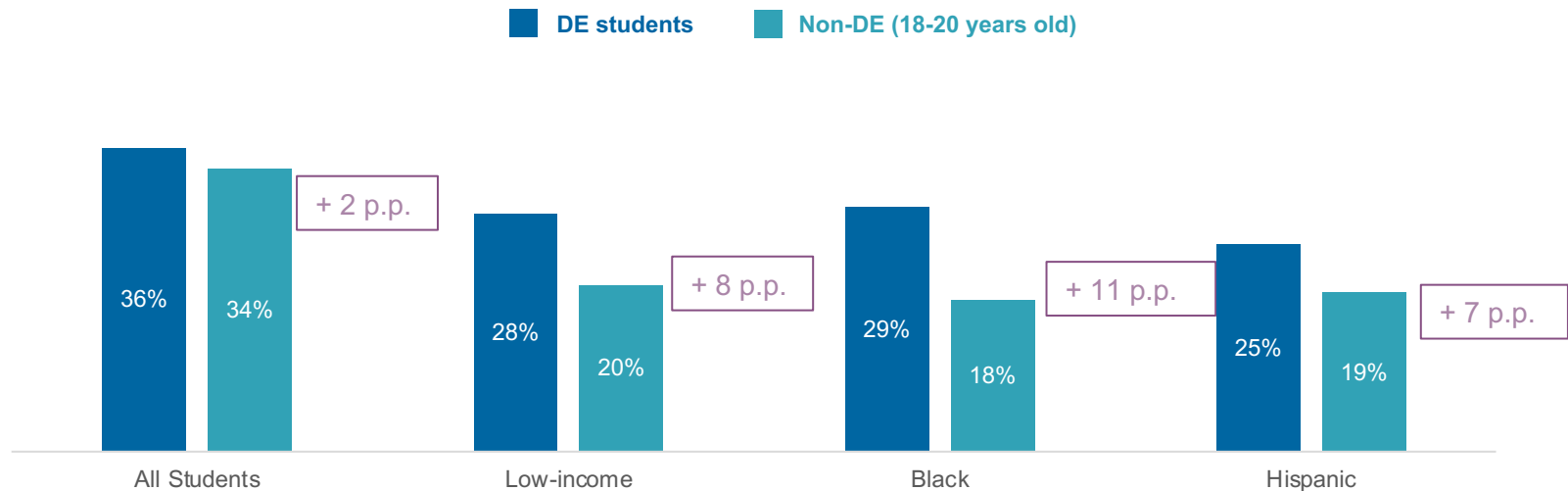
# 21% of community college students are high school dual enrollment students.



# How is high school dual enrollment supporting post-completion value?



**Bachelor's completion rate (within four years) by DE students who enrolled in a college within first year after high school and by non-DE (18–20) students**



**Dual enrollment students complete college at high rates, but there are gaps in outcomes.**



# The college-and-career pathway starts in high school

Coursework taking profiles	Accelerated Coursework Combinations		
	DE (1+ course attempted)	AP/IB (1+ course attempted)	CTE focus (10+ courses attempted)
DE only takers	X		
DE takers with CTE focus	X		X
DE and AP/IB takers	X	X	Some
AP/IB takers , no DE		X	Some
CTE focus only			X
No acceleration			

**DE alone, but especially in combination with other accelerated coursework is associated with significant earnings gains by age 24, even after accounting for student background.**

# Thank you!

Visit our website: [ccrc.tc.columbia.edu](https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu)

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