Labor Market Alignment and the Future of Career Pathways

International Forum on Skills Intelligence
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
(online event)

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Big takeaways

Mapping education to occupations and careers is essential to better allocate resources, inform enrollment management, and better ensure economic opportunity and mobility.

The US relies on implicit planning where information is meant to smooth market functioning yet we grossly underinvest in career navigation and other alignment tool development.

Work on career pathways needs to move to bring the workplace and the classroom closer together as well as map labour market transitions. We suggest skills profiles and concepts of occupational distance can be used to advance tool development.

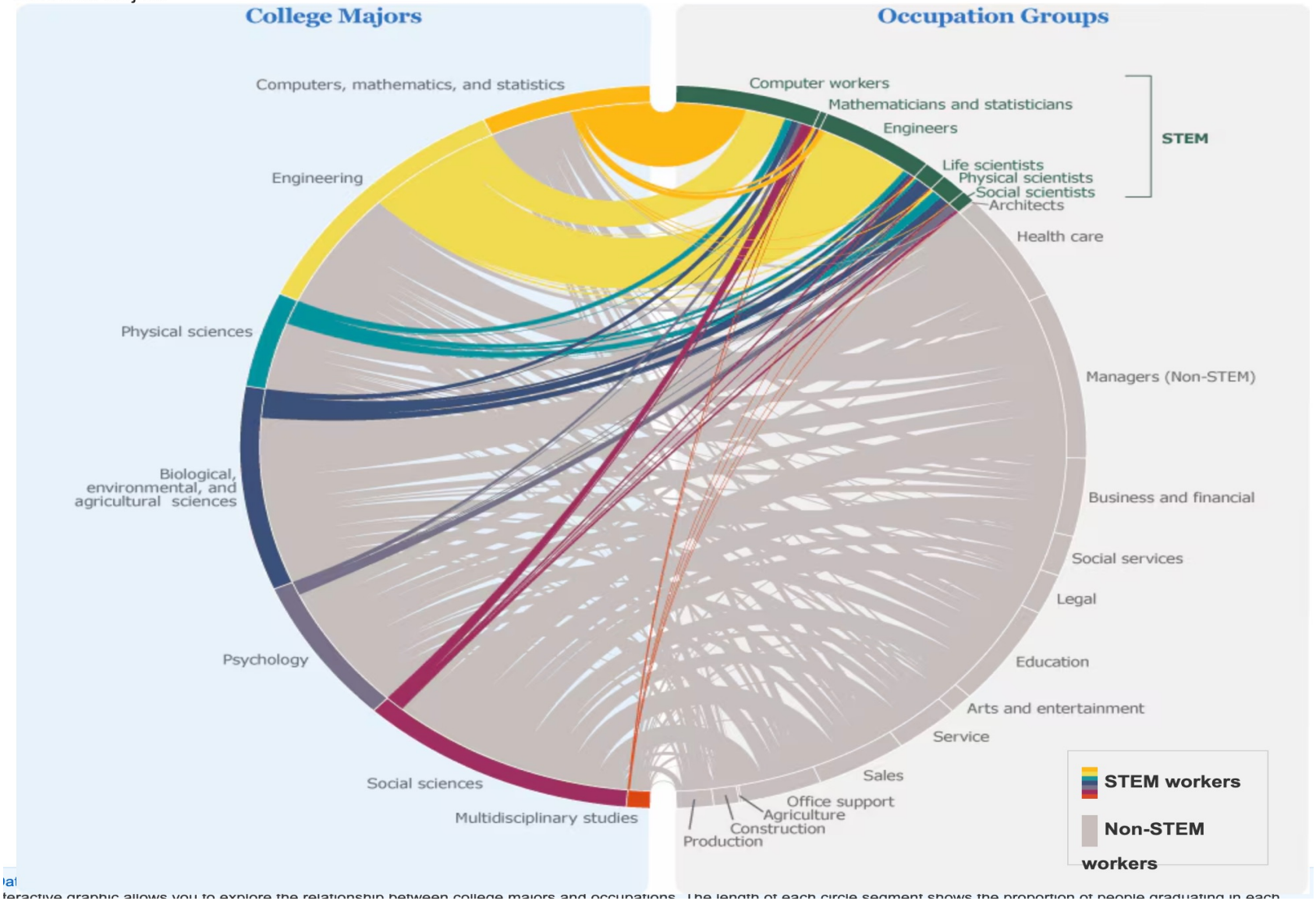
The US labour market is a messy place that resists nice neat 1:1 mappings

Even graduates from engineering programs only work as engineers

76% of the time in early career

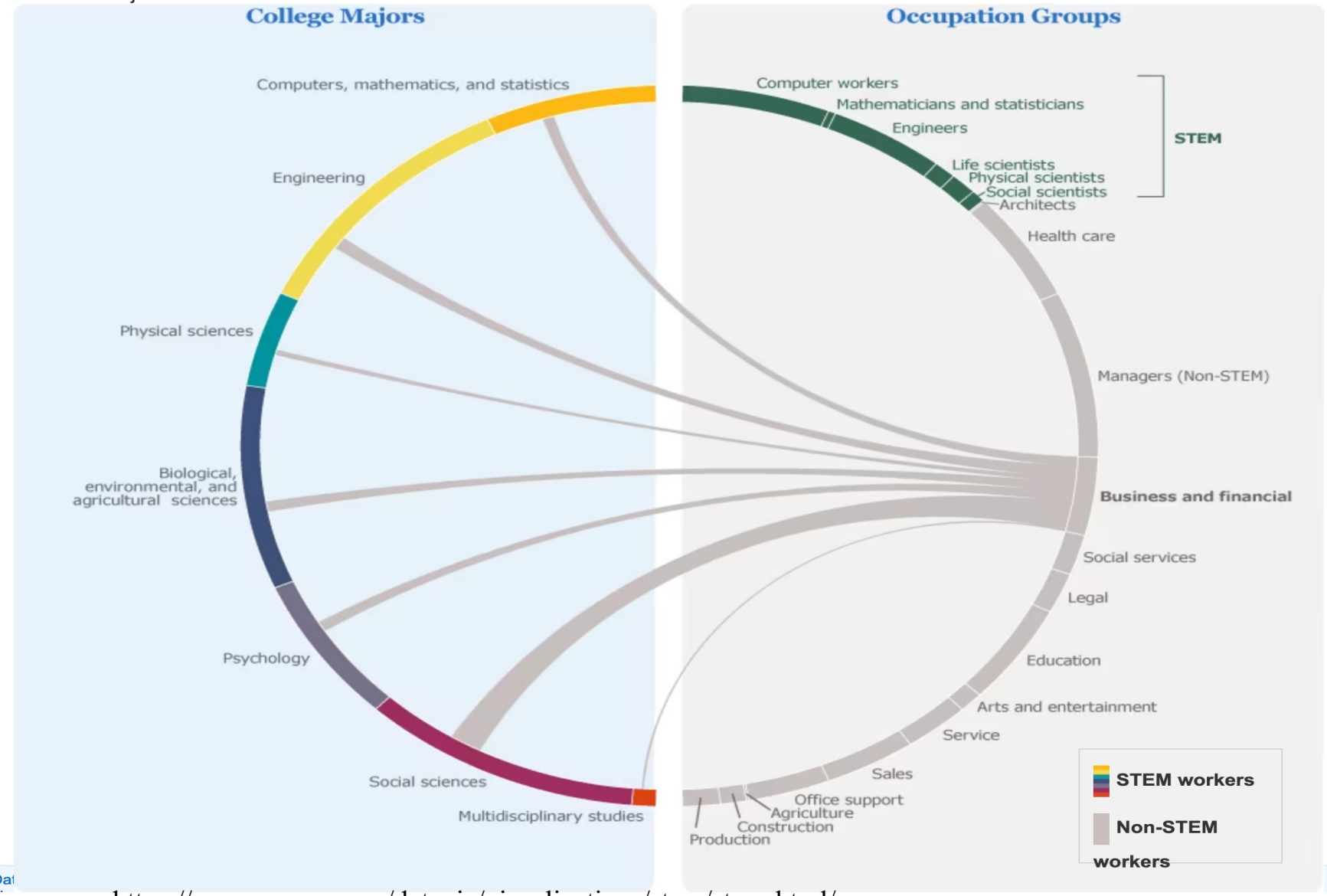
67%, 10 years out

All STEM Majors



teractive graphic allows you to explore the relationship between college majors and occupations. The length of each circle segment shows the proportion of people graduating in each

All STEM Majors



https://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/stem/stem-html/

We are working to build out the design architecture to measure the alignment between credential production and projected education demand at the occupation level.

This work was motivated by a project in California; the Launch Board.

We are extending this work think about mobility in the labour market and paths towards
Economic opportunity.

The Great Misalignment
Addressing the Mismatch between the Supply of Certificates and Associate's Degrees and the Future Demand for Workers in 565 US Labor Markets
2024
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Kathryn Peltier Campbell

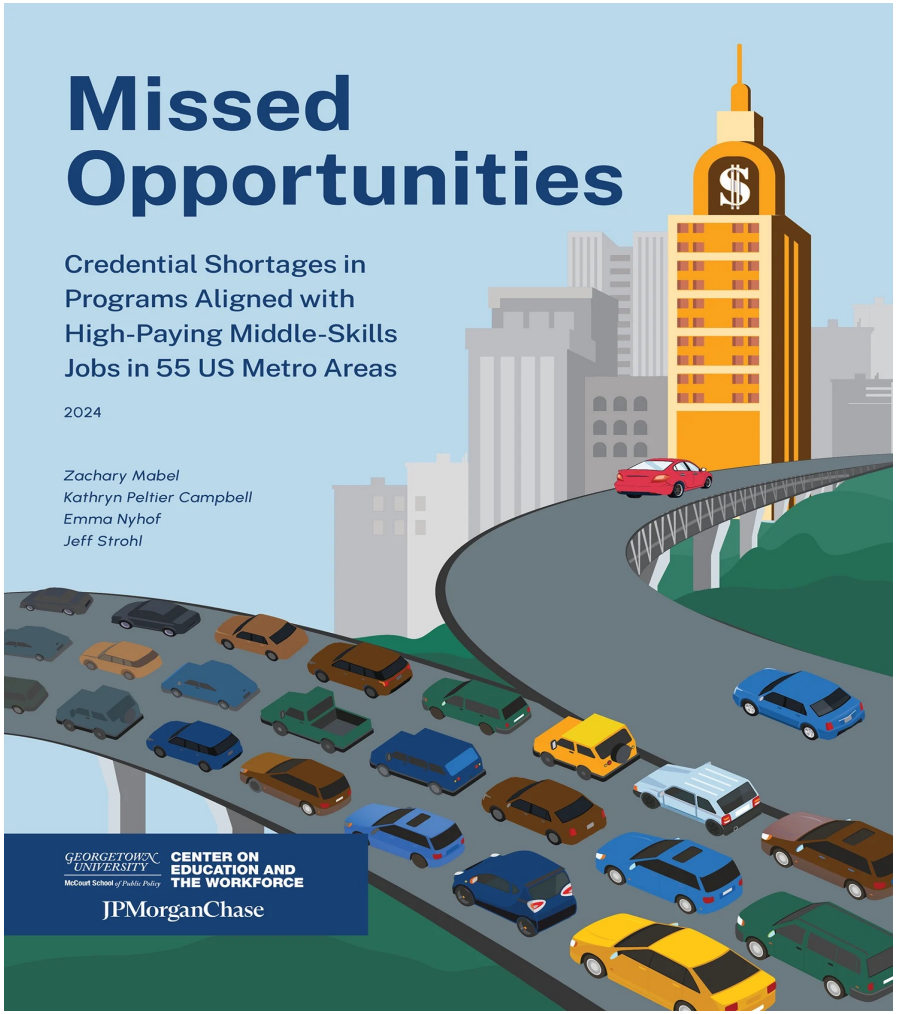
Missed Opportunities
Credential Shortages in Programs Aligned with High-Paying Middle-Skills Jobs in 55 US Metro Areas
2024
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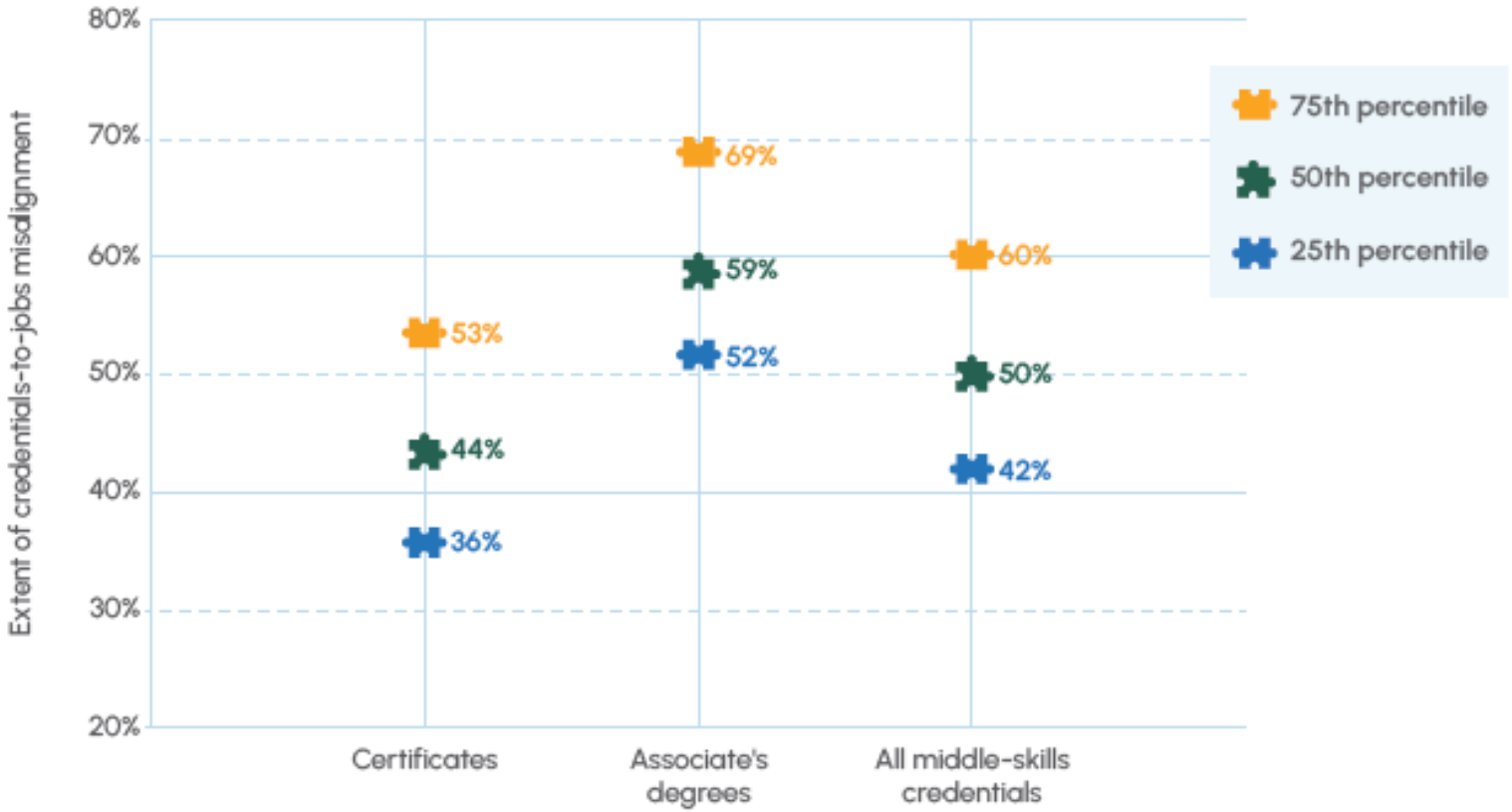
Figure 2. The proportion of middle-skills credentials requiring redistribution to achieve full credentials-to-jobs alignment is 42 percent at the 25th percentile and 60 percent at the 75th percentile of the misalignment distribution across all local labor markets.



The US labour market is based on churn, American workers have 11+ job changes.

The most recent stats on some other markets suggest an average job tenure of of 11 years or 3-4 jobs depending on work life(based on France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK.)

The US has patently rejected explicit planning or any good efforts to build better bridges between the classroom and workplace.

We rely on implicit planning models where information is meant to grease the functioning of the ‘free market’ yet

We grossly underinvest in the very critical career navigation systems that would help align student/worker choices with rational not random career events.

We need a comprehensive counseling system to address the pipeline problem

Career navigation has become extremely complex

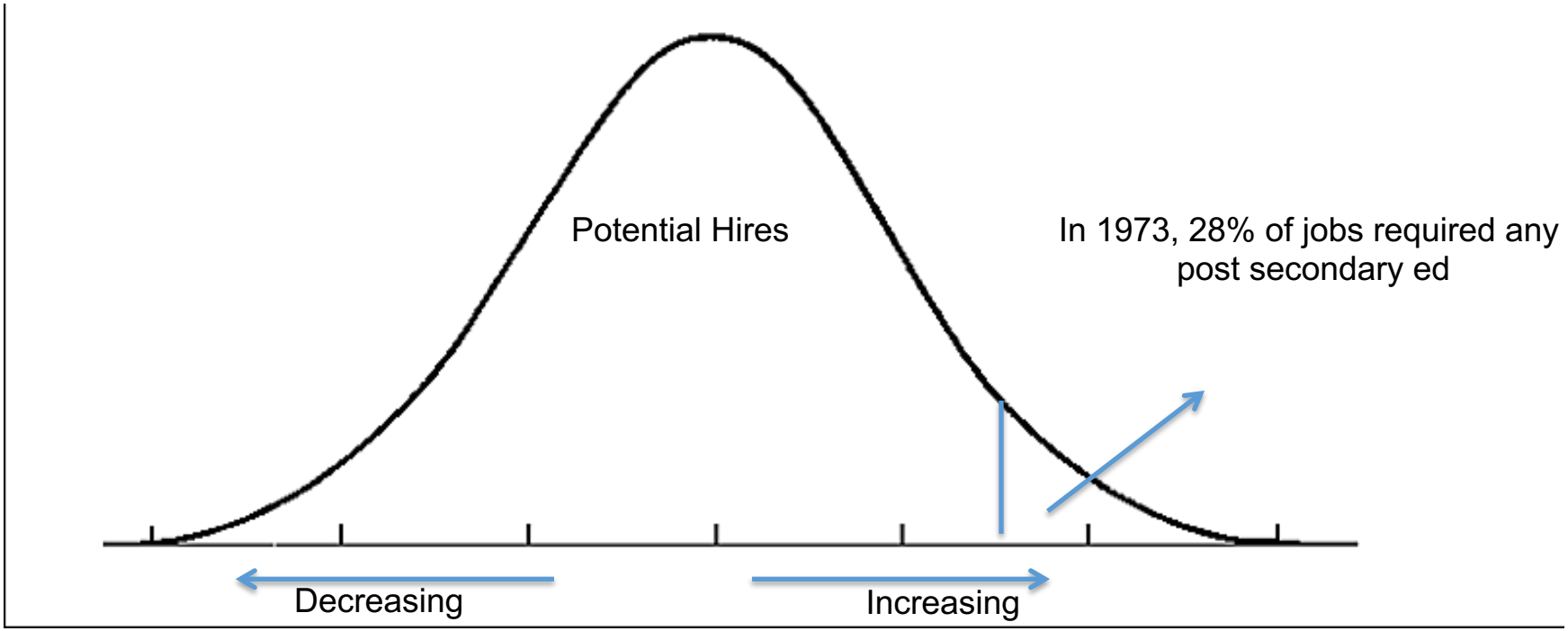
- The number of occupations has grown **3x** since 1950.
- The number of postsecondary programs has grown more than **5x** since 1985.
- There are more than **1 million** unique credentialsXdegree levelX institutional combinations.

Our counseling system fails to meet that complexity

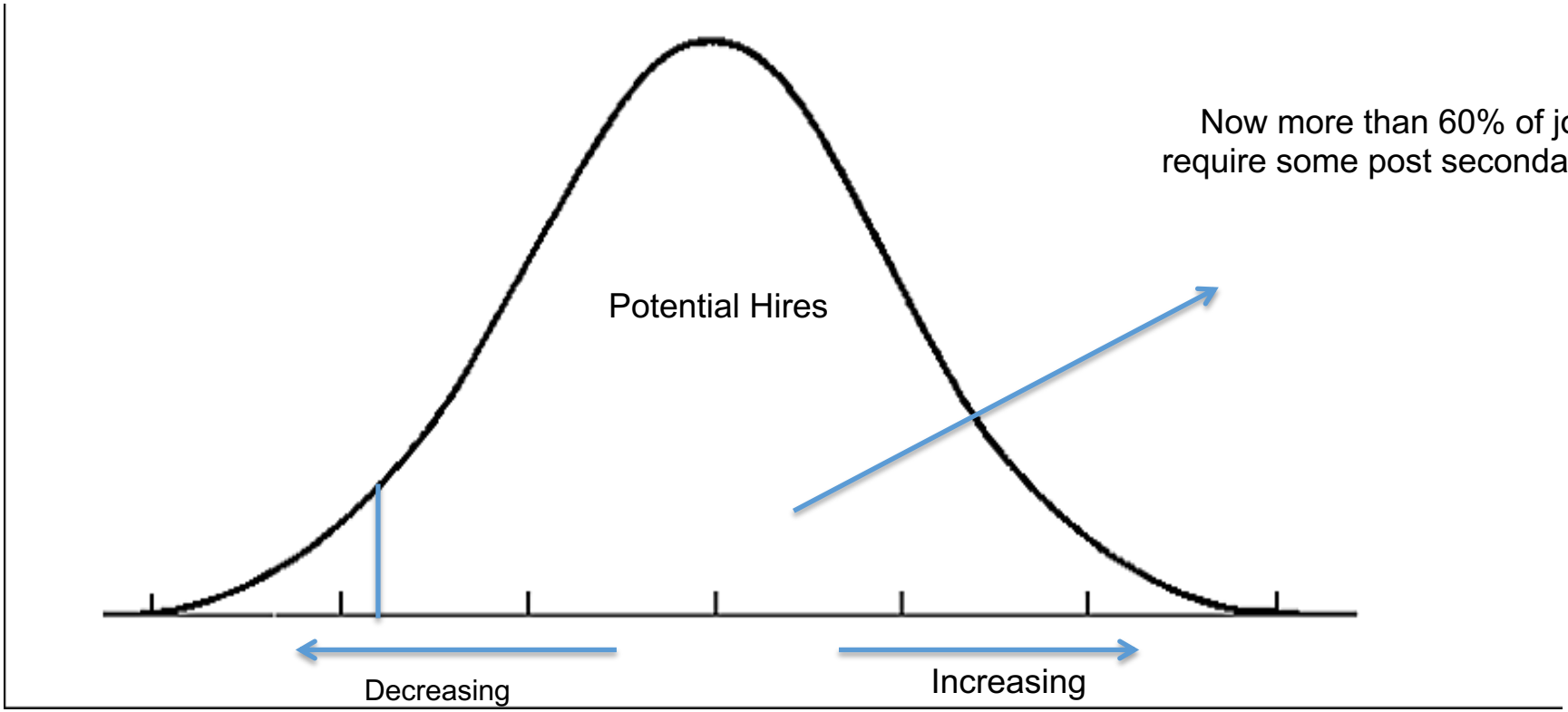
- Only **14%** of high school students talk with a counselor about their career interests and plans.
- Fewer than **25%** of college graduates utilize campus career services.

Talk of skills-based hiring is our current fad that won't reduce the credentialism it originally railed against but it does hold promise to differentiate markets in a way that can improve alignment

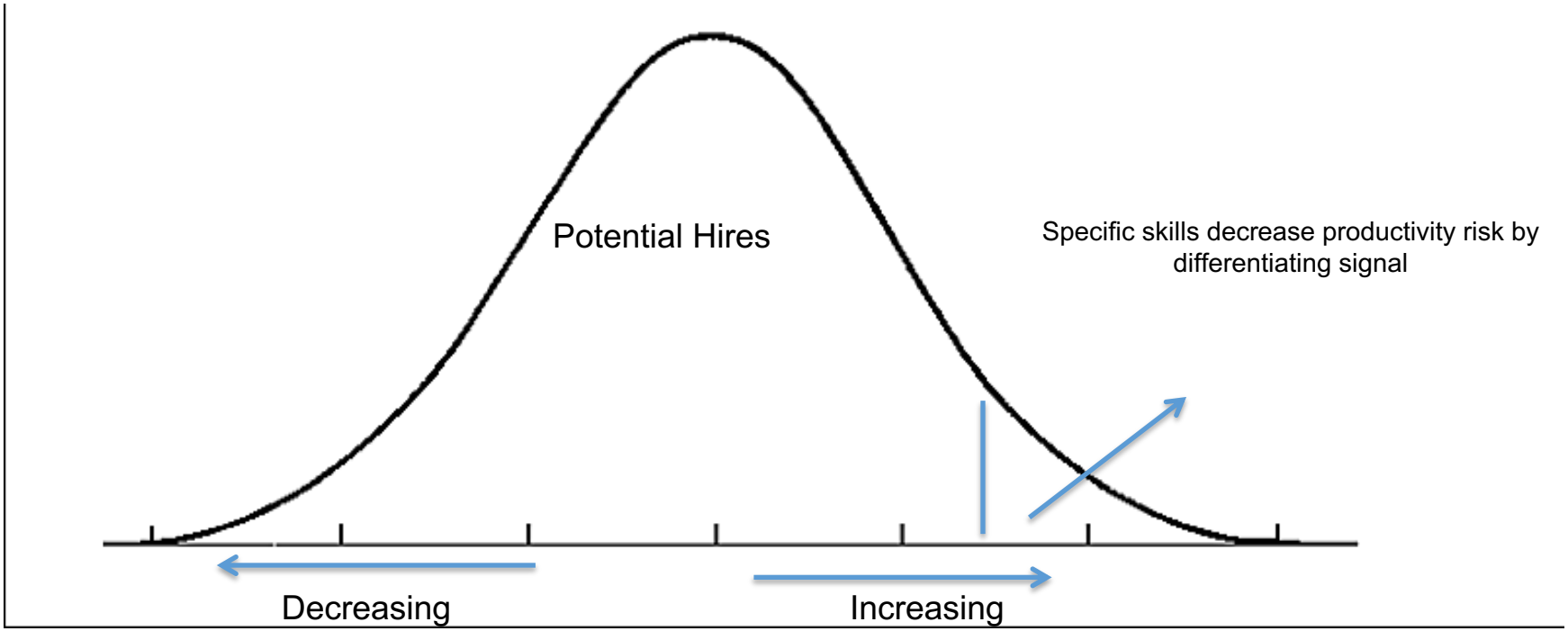
When fewer jobs required college employers were taking less risk in hiring grads. - Somewhat because of employer provided training.



The growth in the demand for college education means that the employer faces increased risk by 'just' choosing a college degree to decide employability.



Skill focus creates differentiated markets with decreased risk.



Likelihood of good hire

This pushes us to think about occupations as skill bundles
And education as building portfolios

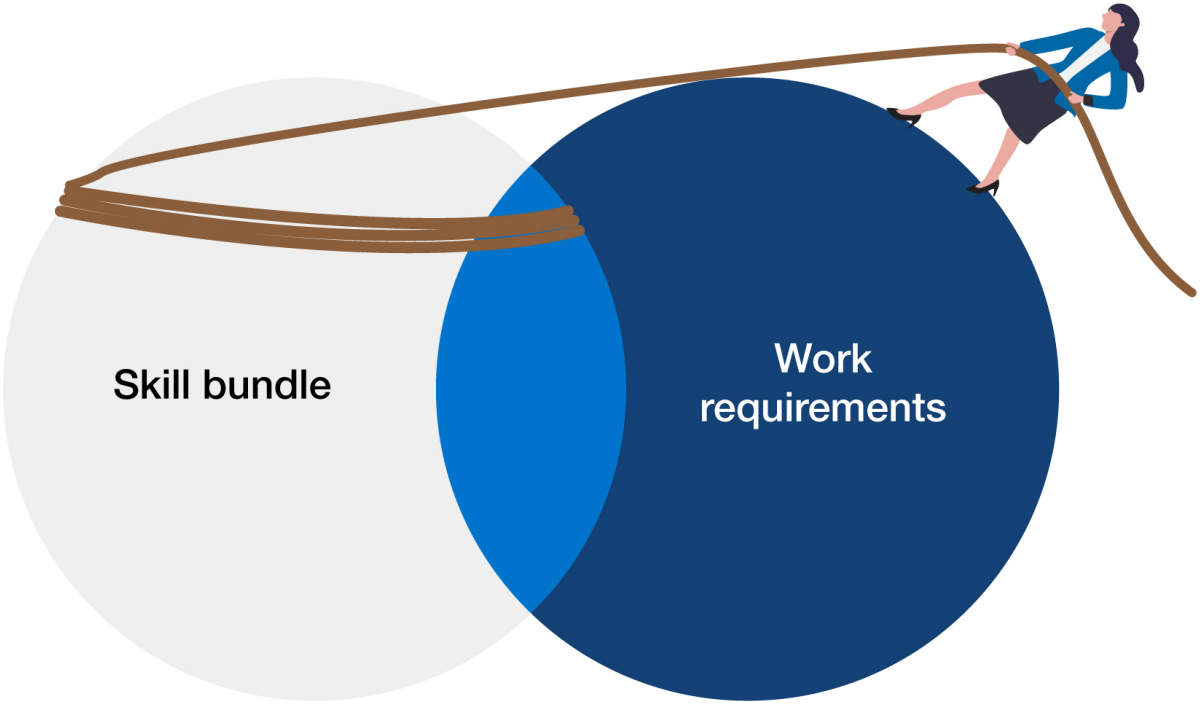
Occupational distance as a way to think about movement in the market, and as a way to build purposeful career pathways and navigation tools.

Much of this work comes out of efforts to quickly reemploy dislocated workers

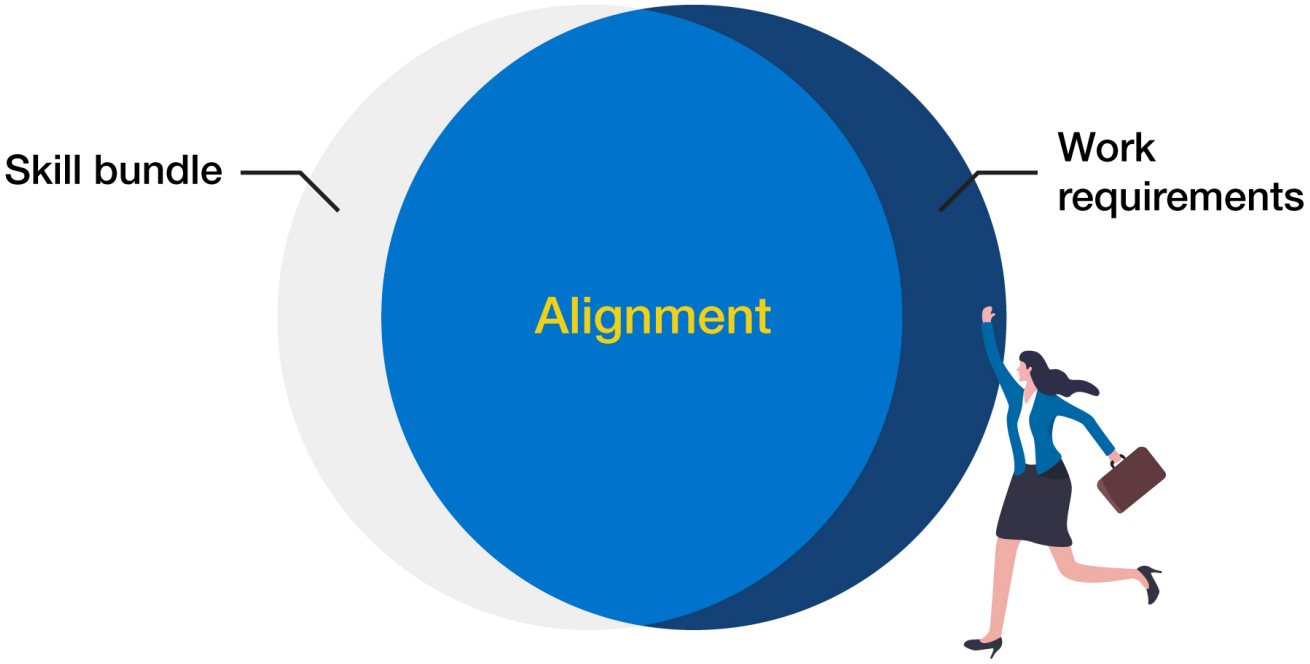
Movement in the US Labour market

1 Curriculum generates skill bundles

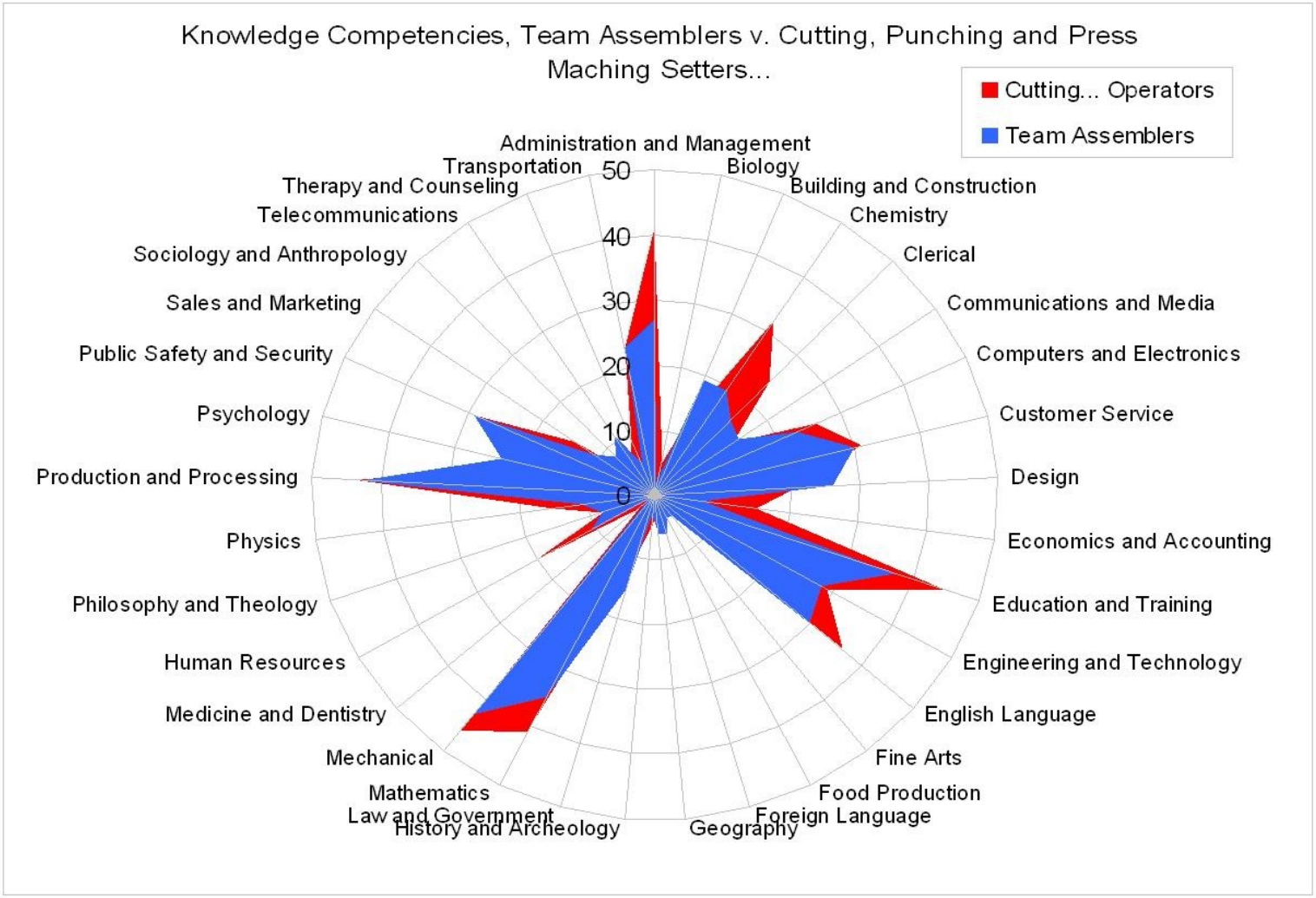
2 Sorting happens with first job as student becomes worker



3 First job leads to next and better job as job change helps align developed skill bundles with work requirements



Thinking about aligning specific skill and enhancing labor mobility via Education and training



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Thank you

Feel free to reach out with questions and suggestions.

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