

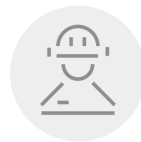
Building Better Postsecondary Pathways to Economic Mobility

Kerry McKittrick, Co-Director

July 3, 2025



AGENDA



- About Us
- College-to-Jobs Playbook
- College-to-Jobs Map
- Community College Case Studies

WHO WE ARE



The Project on Workforce is an interdisciplinary, collaborative project between the **Harvard Kennedy School Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy**, the **Harvard Business School Managing the Future of Work Project**, and the **Harvard Graduate School of Education**.

OUR LEADERSHIP

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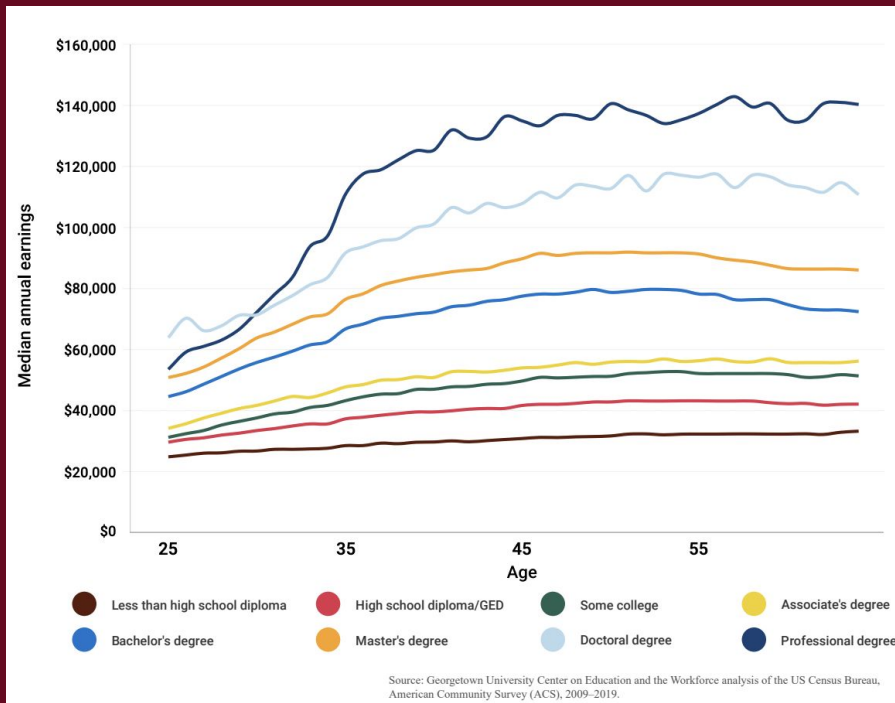


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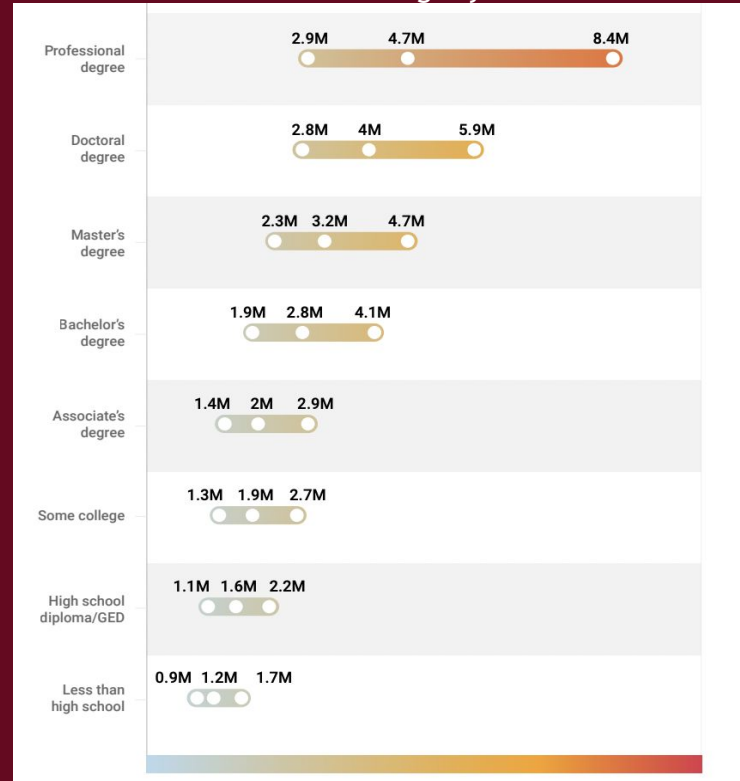
On average, the more education you have, the more money you earn, but there is significant variation.

Median Annual Earnings Over Time, By Education Level



SOURCE: GEORGETOWN CEW, 2021

Variation in Lifetime Earnings By Education Level



A skilled workforce is critical to regional economic prosperity.

#1

“Workforce Skills” is the #1 factor cited by mayors trying to attract businesses to their communities

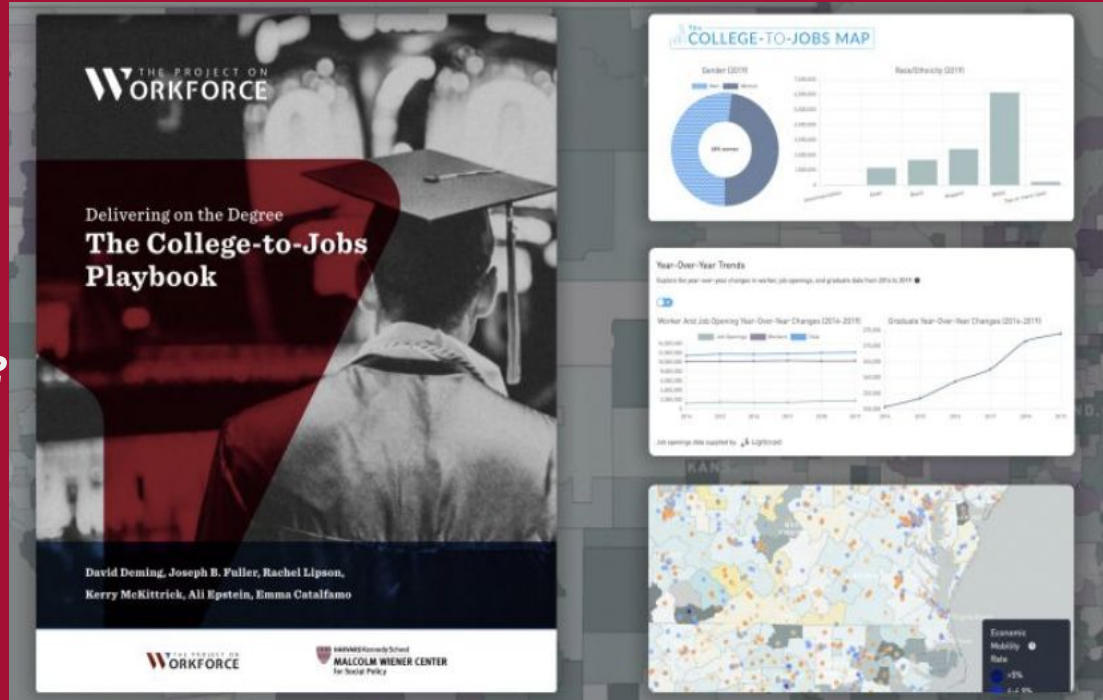
26%

Just 26% of employers strongly agree that community colleges are producing the work-ready employees that their company needs

SOURCE: MENINO SURVEY OF MAYORS 2018; FULLER & RAMAN 2022

COLLEGE-TO-JOBS

*Investigating the
(mis)alignment between
higher education and the
workforce*



Delivering on the Degree

*How can higher ed, employers,
and policymakers improve
students' career outcomes and
build stronger regional
economies?*



Delivering on the Degree

The College-to-Jobs Playbook

David Deming, Joseph B. Fuller, Rachel Lipson,
Kerry McKittrick, Ali Epstein, Emma Catalfamo

“Interventions” connecting higher education to careers



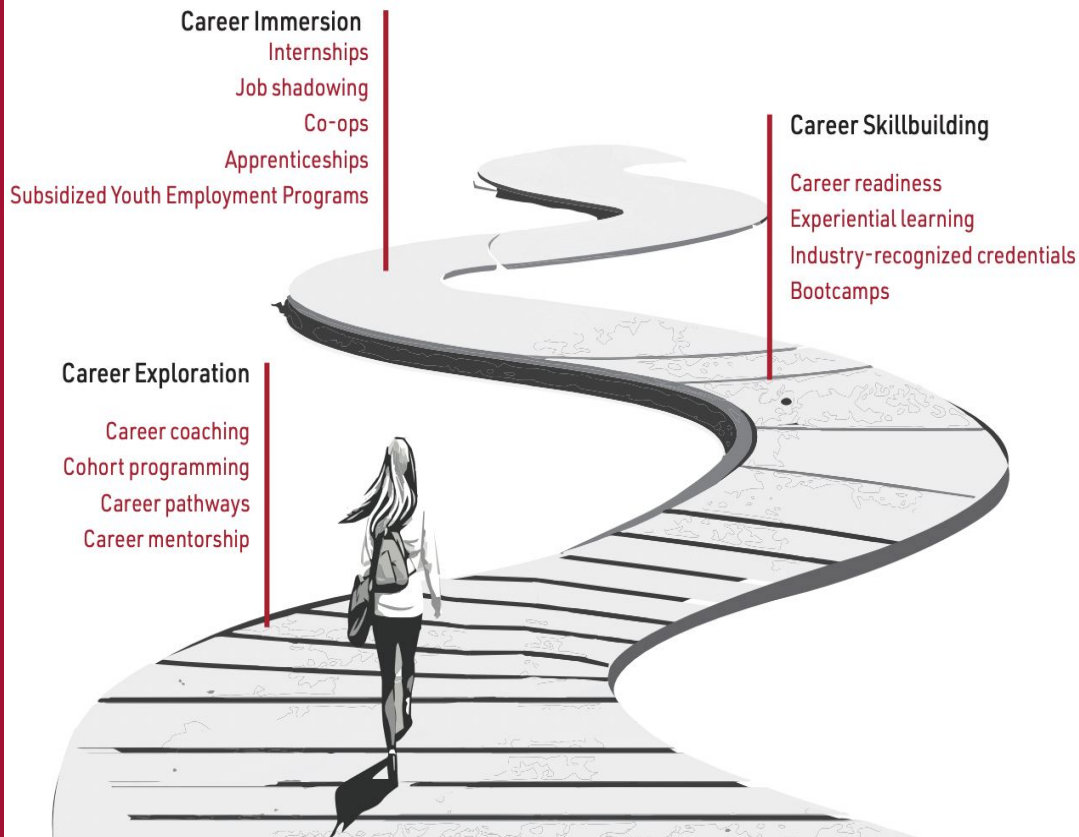
Exploration



Skillbuilding



Immersion



Evaluating research & practice

- 1 Research Prevalence
- 2 Research Strength
- 3 Implementation Prevalence
- 4 Implementation Feasibility

Intervention Category	Research Prevalence	Research Strength	Implementation Prevalence	Implementation Feasibility
Career coaching				
Cohort programming				
Career pathways initiatives				
Career mentorship Programs				
Career readiness curriculum				
Experiential learning coursework				
Industry-recognized credentials				
Last-mile bootcamps				
Internships				
Job shadowing				
Co-ops				
Apprenticeships				
Subsidized youth employment programs				

Key insights about the education-to-work ecosystem



The ecosystem is **poorly aligned**, making collaboration and accountability difficult.



Interventions tend to be **siloed** within institutions of higher education.



Combining multiple interventions amplifies their effectiveness.



Interventions are often implemented **inequitably**, but there are strategies to expand access and success.

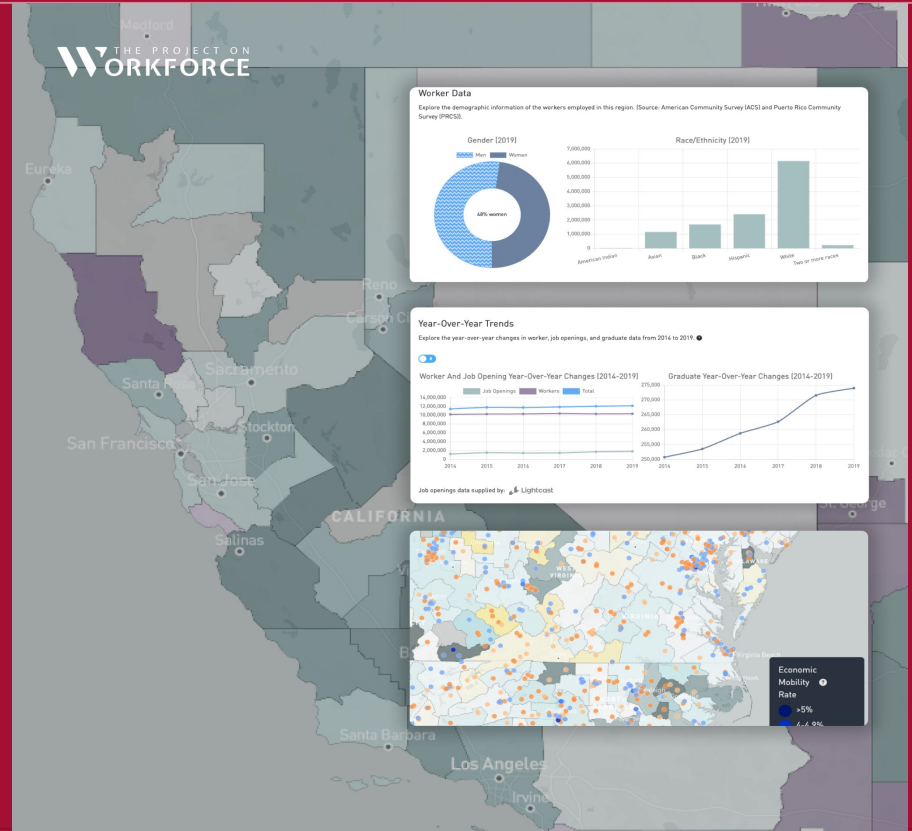
Recommendations for higher ed, business & policy

1. Strengthen college-employer partnerships
2. Expand work-based learning
3. Redesign accountability measures
4. Modernize data systems
5. Skill for the future of work



COLLEGE-TO-JOBS MAP

- One-stop shop for regional higher education and labor market data.
- Links education and employment data and compares regional growth.

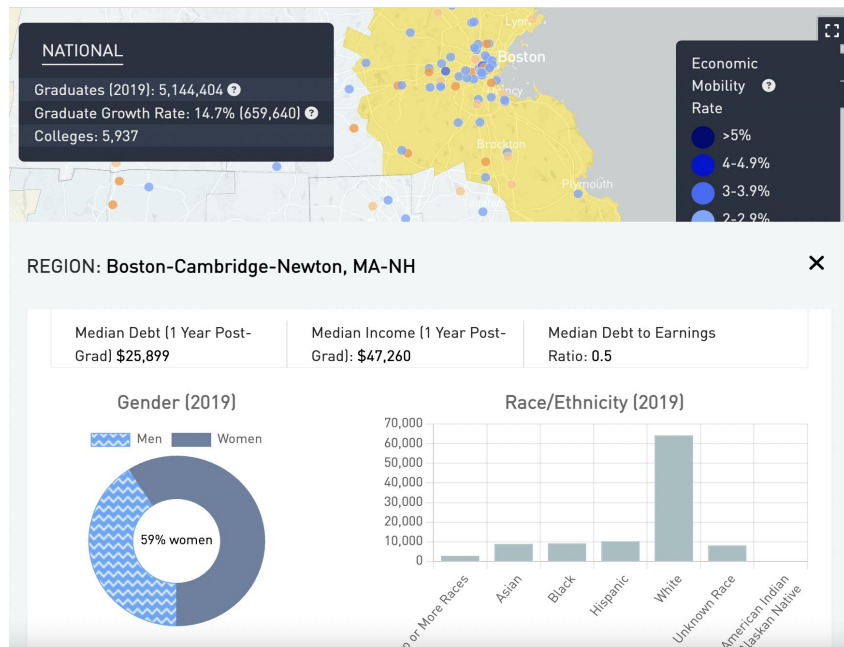


DATA SOURCES

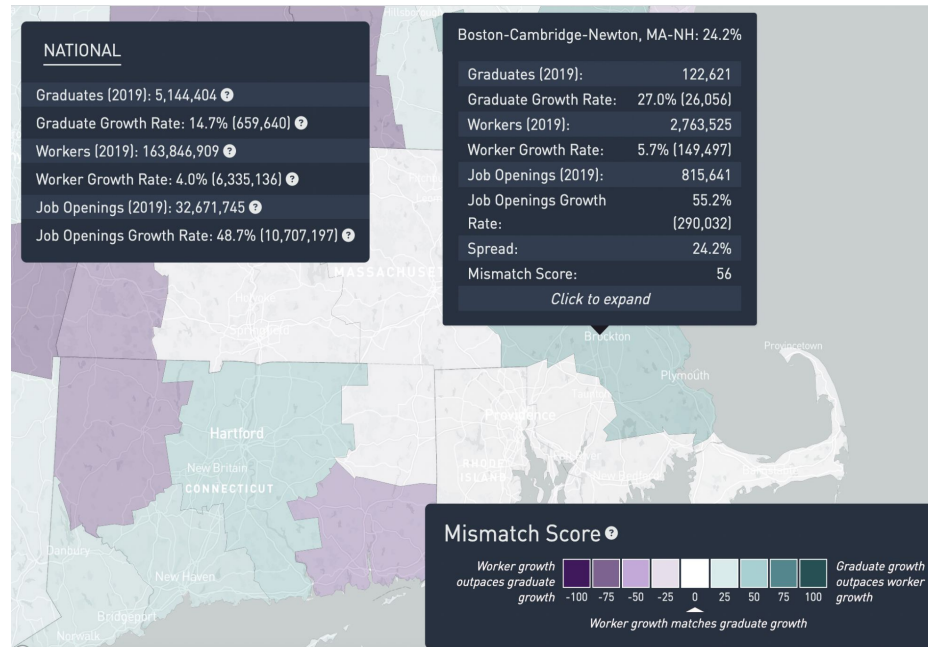
Data	Variables of Interest
College Scorecard	Institution Characteristics (Public/Private, MSI, etc.) Student Demographics (Race, Gender, % Pell-eligible etc.) Degrees Offered
IPEDS	Additional Institution Characteristics
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	Field of Study-to-Job Crosswalk
American Community Survey (ACS) and Puerto Rican Community Survey (PRCS)	Population Counts by Occupation, Employment Status, Demographics (County, Labor Market Area-wide)
Bureau of Labor Statistics	Occupational Growth Projections (State-wide)
Lightcast	Job Postings
Opportunity Insights, Mobility Report Cards	Economic Mobility Scores by Institution Student's adult income (at ~35 years old) by Institution
Projections Central Long-Term Employment Projections	Forecast modeling

EXAMPLE: Boston-Cambridge-Newton

College Graduate Data



Labor Market “Mismatch” Data



<https://www.pw.hks.harvard.edu/college-to-jobs>

Community Colleges Advancing Economic Mobility

How can community colleges leverage data, especially real-time labor market information (LMI), and emerging technologies to improve students' economic outcomes?

DATA & TECHNOLOGY IN ACTION:

COMMUNITY COLLEGES **ADVANCING ECONOMIC MOBILITY**

February 2025 | Edited by Joseph B. Fuller, Kerry McKittrick, and Amanda Holloway

Data & technology use at community colleges

DATA

Types

- Labor market information (incl. real-time LMI)
- Student demographic & performance data

Examples

- State + county data
- Lightcast
- National Labor Exchange
- Post-grad & employer surveys

TECH TOOLS & PLATFORMS

Types

- Advising & career planning
- Student tracking & alert systems
- Student communication (e.g. chatbots)

Examples

- CollegeAPP
- Starfish
- Career Coach
- College Central Network

Leveraging data & technologies: Case studies

1. Program planning & resource allocation
2. Curriculum development
3. Student support & advising
4. Evaluation & accountability
5. Advancing equity & designing for diverse learners



Key learnings & challenges using data for labor market alignment.

- ❖ Systemic data use requires institutional investment in culture & capacity, but resources are constrained.
- ❖ LMI has inherent limitations—and employer partnerships remain critical.
- ❖ Institutional silos present a key challenge to data integration across colleges.
- ❖ Post-graduation outcomes tracking is challenging and rarely comprehensive.
- ❖ Tech tools are abundant, but gen-AI adoption in curricula is nascent.
- ❖ State policy can accelerate—or impede—labor market alignment.

What's next?

Coming in 2026: Community Colleges, Data & Tech Playbook

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Thank you!

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