

The Value is in the Data: How New Jersey is Utilizing Longitudinal Data to Show Return on Investment

August 12, 2025

- » National Discourse around the Return on Investment in Higher Education
- » New Jersey Context: New Jersey Statewide Data System
- » Benefits of Education Report
- » Policy Actions and Using ROI data
- » What is Next for NJ Benefits of Education Report and NJ advancing the measurement of Postsecondary programs ROI

Presenter Introductions



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National Discourse around the Return on Investment in Higher Education

Is College Worth It?

As economic outcomes for young adults with and without degrees have improved, Americans hold mixed views on the value of college

BY RICHARD FRY, DANA BRAGA AND KIM PARKER

EDUCATION GOVERNMENT + POLITICS

Higher education leaders seek clarification on 'return on investment' for new Iowa House committee

BY: BROOKLYN DRAISEY • JANUARY 21, 2025 8:00 AM



Independent Colleges and Universities Boost New Jersey Economy

New Jersey's independent colleges and universities provide an economic impact between \$4 and \$4.5 billion statewide, with 13 member institutions in 8 counties.

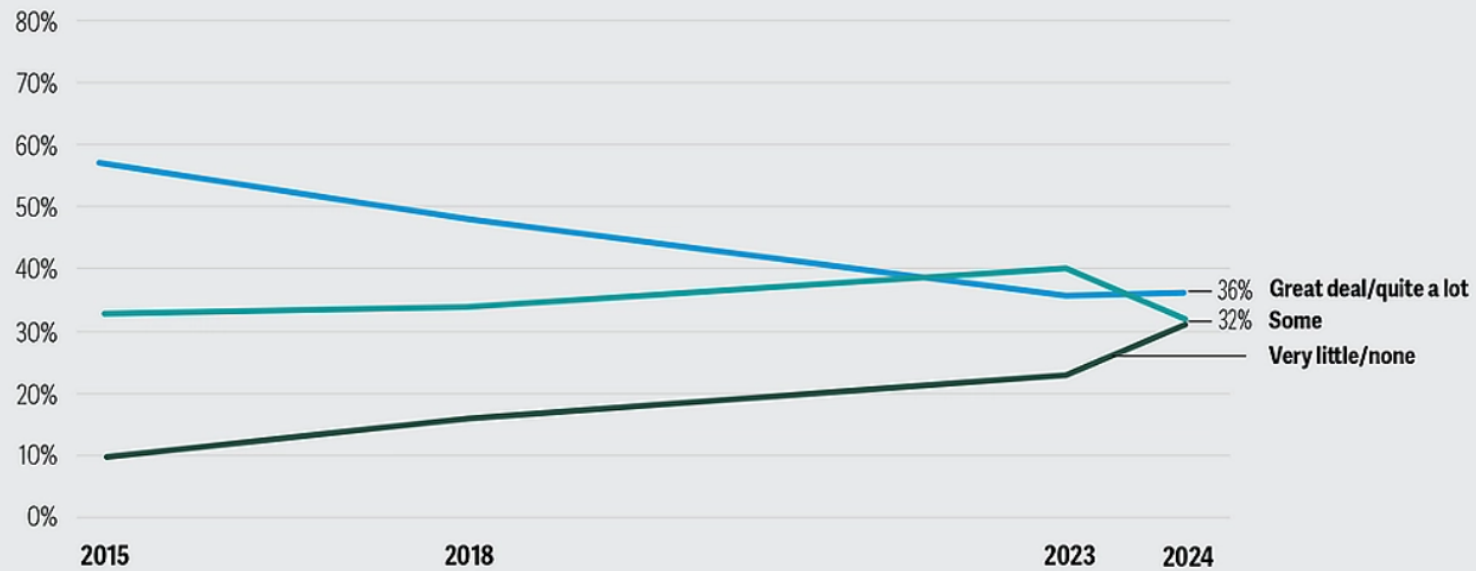
Independent Colla

National discourse around the return on investment in Higher Education

Figure 1

Public confidence in the value of US higher education has declined sharply over the past decade

Confidence in US higher education



Notes: "None" is a volunteered response. No opinion percentages are not shown.

Q: Please tell me how much confidence you have in higher education—a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?

Source: Jeffrey M. Jones, "U.S. confidence in higher education now closely divided," *Gallup News*, July 8, 2024.

As students question the value of college, higher ed works to fix the 'time trap'

Jamie Merisotis • May 20, 2024



[Students](#) [Academics](#)

Is the 3-Year Degree Dream Becoming a Reality?

Is a college education an investment or a gamble? It depends on the type of student.

Wade Zhou • Apr 7, 2025 Updated Jun 19, 2025



Postsecondary Value Commission
<https://www.postsecondaryvalue.org>

Postsecondary Value Commission: What Is College Worth?

A measurement framework for how individual colleges and universities create equitable value for students. ACT. An action agenda to encourage changes in policy ...

National discourse around the return on investment in Higher Education

New Jersey Context: New Jersey Statewide Data System

The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS)



New Jersey Department of Education

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development

New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority

New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education

RUTGERS

Edward J. Bloustein School
of Planning and Public Policy

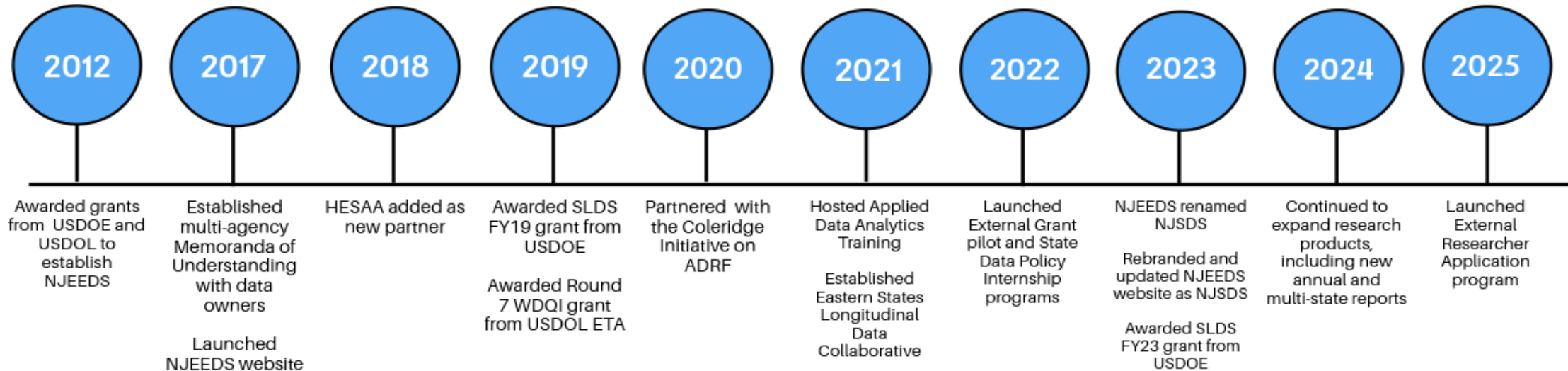
**JOHN J. HELDRICH CENTER
FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

NJSDS Mission

NJSDS aims to **help the public and stakeholders make data-informed decisions** to improve public policies and practices for New Jersey residents. This includes facilitating longitudinal and linked-data research, providing statistical data, and publishing reports on the NJSDS website.



History of NJSDS





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Recent NJSDS Project:

Benefits of Education Report

Project Spotlight: Benefits of Education Report II

- The Benefit of Education Report Series focused on defining and examining the return on investment (ROI) of higher education.
- We will focus on the second report in the series which examines the costs and benefits of pursuing and attaining postsecondary education under seven themes.

EXAMINING THE BENEFITS OF EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

by Ann Obadan, Ph.D.

Prepared by the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development | February 2025



Measuring the ROI of Higher Education in New Jersey

Earnings by
Educational
Award Level

Distribution of
Earnings within
Education Level

Projected
Earnings Growth
Overtime

Earnings
Premium
Relative to Price
of Education

Earnings by
Industry

Earnings by
Major

Earnings and
Tax Payments by
Educational
Award Level

Project Spotlight: Benefits of Education Report II



Researchers used administrative data from the New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS).

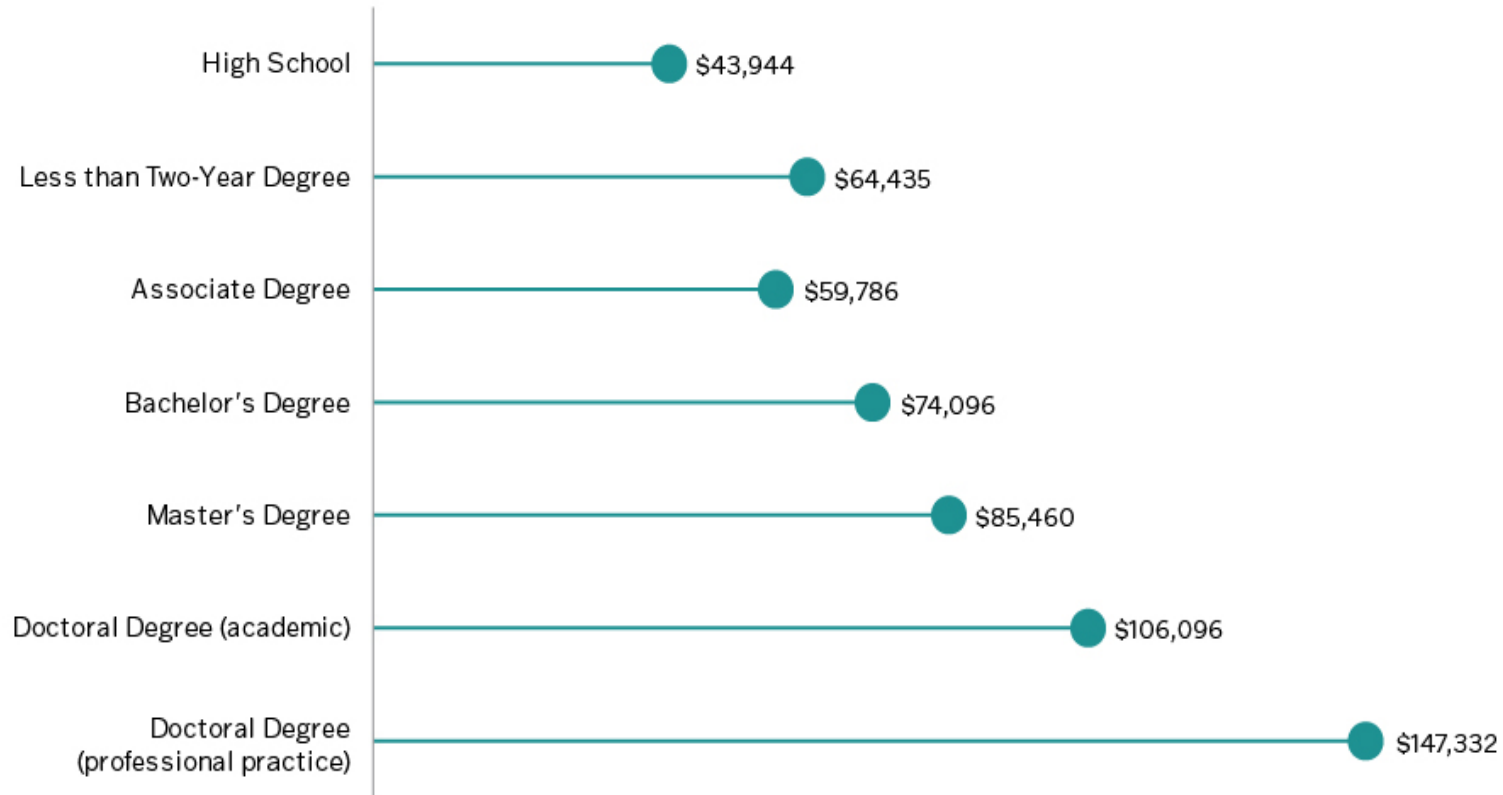


Data includes Unemployment Insurance (UI) wages and employer records from NJDOL, graduate files from NJDOE, and completions and enrollment information from OSHE for 2013-14 to 2022-23.



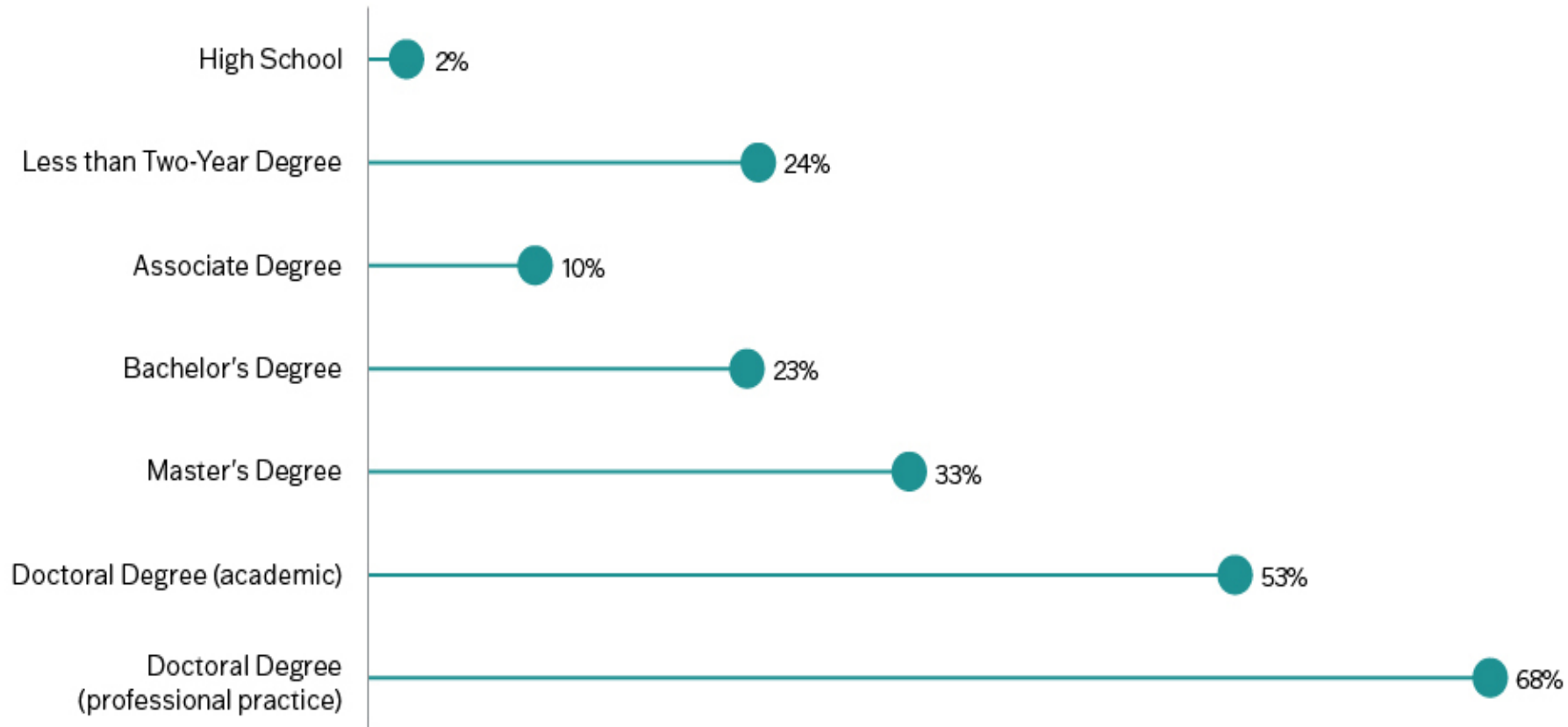
Researcher conducted a descriptive analysis and linear time-series projections to demonstrate differences in outcomes by educational level.

Earnings Progressively Increased with Educational Award Level



The median earning in 2022 was \$43,944 for high school degree holders and \$147,322 for professional doctorate degree holders.

68% of Professional Doctoral Degree Holders Earned more than \$100,000 in 2022



Professional Doctoral Degree Holders Projected to earn the most wage

Twenty years after graduation, professional doctoral degree holders are projected to earn up to \$287,015 compared to \$75,813 for high school degree holders.

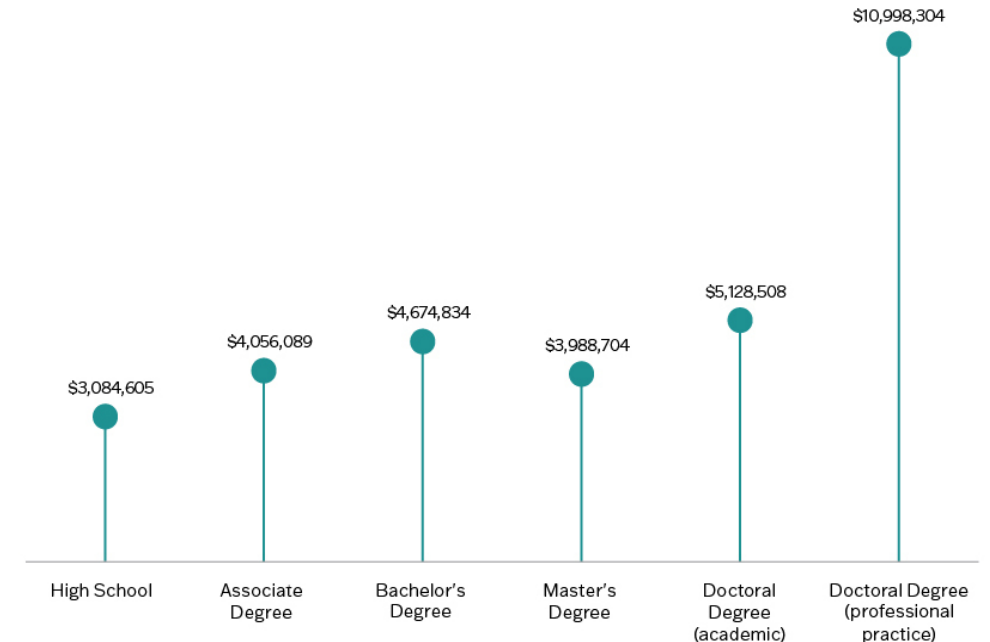
	1 Year After Graduation	10 Years After Graduation	20 Years After Graduation
High School	\$27,256	\$49,776	\$75,813
Less than Two-Year Degree	\$51,995	\$65,566	\$83,033
Associate Degree	\$34,920	\$66,790	\$102,006
Bachelor's Degree	\$44,965	\$82,334	\$120,702
Master's Degree	\$70,309	\$88,562	\$107,851
Doctoral Degree (academic)	\$82,112	\$114,811	\$144,545
Doctoral Degree (professional practice)	\$63,118	\$171,784	\$287,015

The cost of additional postsecondary education is justified in 8 to 12 years

The financial benefit of postsecondary education **remains positive even after adjusting for educational costs and lost wages** due to the decision to continue attending school.

Projected Lifetime Earnings Minus Cost of Education for 2013–14 New Jersey Graduates

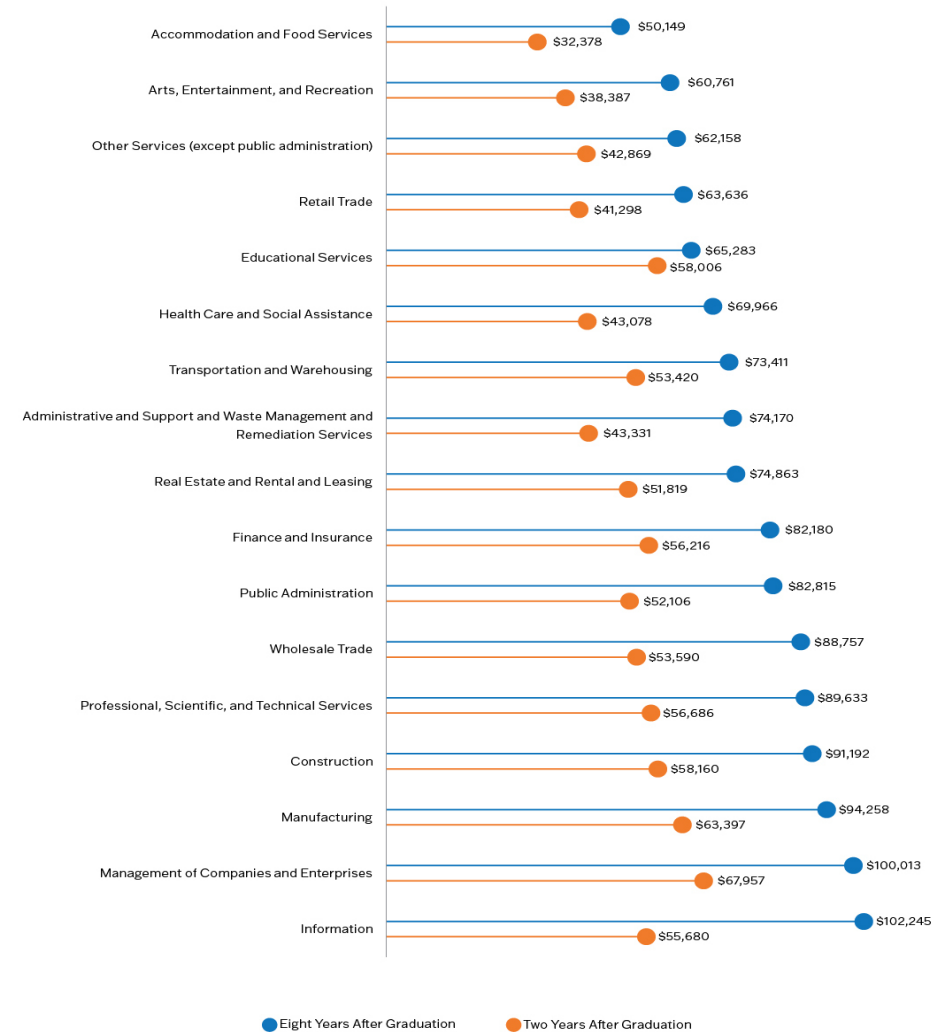
	Costs			Income		
	Foregone Wages	Total Cost of Attendance	Total Cost (Foregone Wages + Total Cost of Attendance)	Lifetime Earnings	Net Lifetime Earnings Above High School Degree	Break-Even Year
High School				\$3,084,605		
Associate Degree	\$56,083	\$38,499	\$94,582	\$4,150,671	\$971,484	8
Bachelor's Degree	\$119,258	\$110,723	\$229,981	\$4,904,815	\$1,590,229	9
Master's Degree	\$197,832	\$166,085	\$363,917	\$4,352,621	\$904,099	9
Doctoral Degree (academic)	\$380,589	\$332,170	\$712,759	\$5,841,267	\$2,043,903	12
Doctoral Degree (professional practice)	\$380,589	\$332,170	\$712,759	\$11,711,063	\$7,913,699	10



Graduates working in the Information Sector Reported the Highest Median Earnings

Eight years after graduation, individuals who were working in the accommodation industry earned \$50,149 while those working in the information sector earned \$102,245.

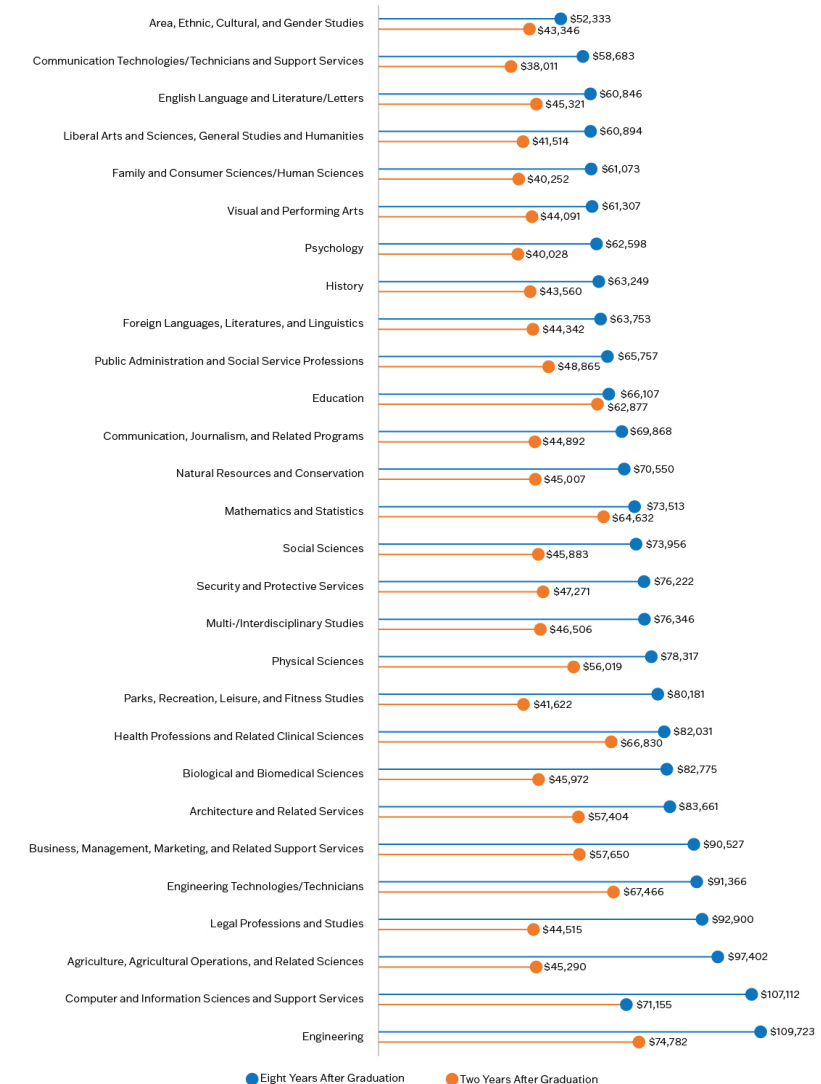
Median Earnings of 2013–14 Bachelor's Degree Graduates in Constant 2022 Dollars by Type of Industry, Two- and Eight-Years Following Graduation



Graduates in Engineering had the highest median earnings

Graduates of Cultural and Gender Studies earned \$52,333 and those of Engineering earned \$109,723 eight years after graduation.

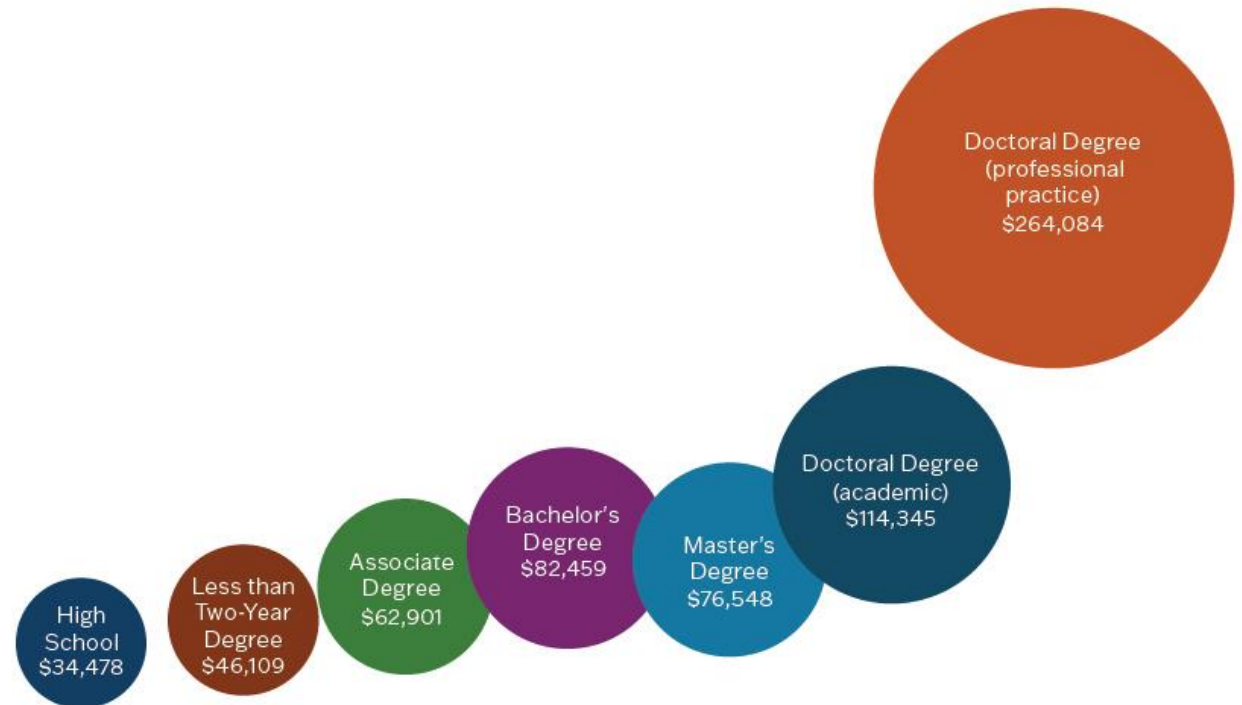
Median Earnings of 2013–14 Bachelor's Degree Graduates Working Full Time by College Major in Constant 2022 Dollars, Two- and Eight-Years Following Graduation



Tax Payment is Higher for Doctoral Degree Holders

30 years after graduation, high school degree holders have a projected total state tax of \$34,478, while it is \$264,084 for professional doctorate degree holders.

Total State Taxes Paid by 2013–14 New Jersey Graduates from 2015 to 2044 by Award Level



Overall Takeaways

- This research highlights how linked administrative data can help states have a better understand the value of education.
- Findings demonstrate that higher education helps individuals and families achieve upward economic mobility and results in higher state and federal income taxes.

What's Next for the NJSDS Annual Benefits of Education Report...

Limitations of current report approach



NJ UI DATA ONLY



TIME- DATA ONLY GOES
BACK TO 2013-14 HIGH
SCHOOL GRADUATES



COST DATA LIMITED TO
PUBLISHED TUITION
AND FEES



FINANCIAL AID DATA
LIMITED TO STATE-
FUNDED AID



CURRENTLY NO
“WEALTH” DATA

Next Steps



Next report will include analysis by race and gender and will include non-credit degrees holders using Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).



Subsequent report will use the recommended Postsecondary Value Framework (PVF) metrics as developed by the Postsecondary Value Commission (PVC).



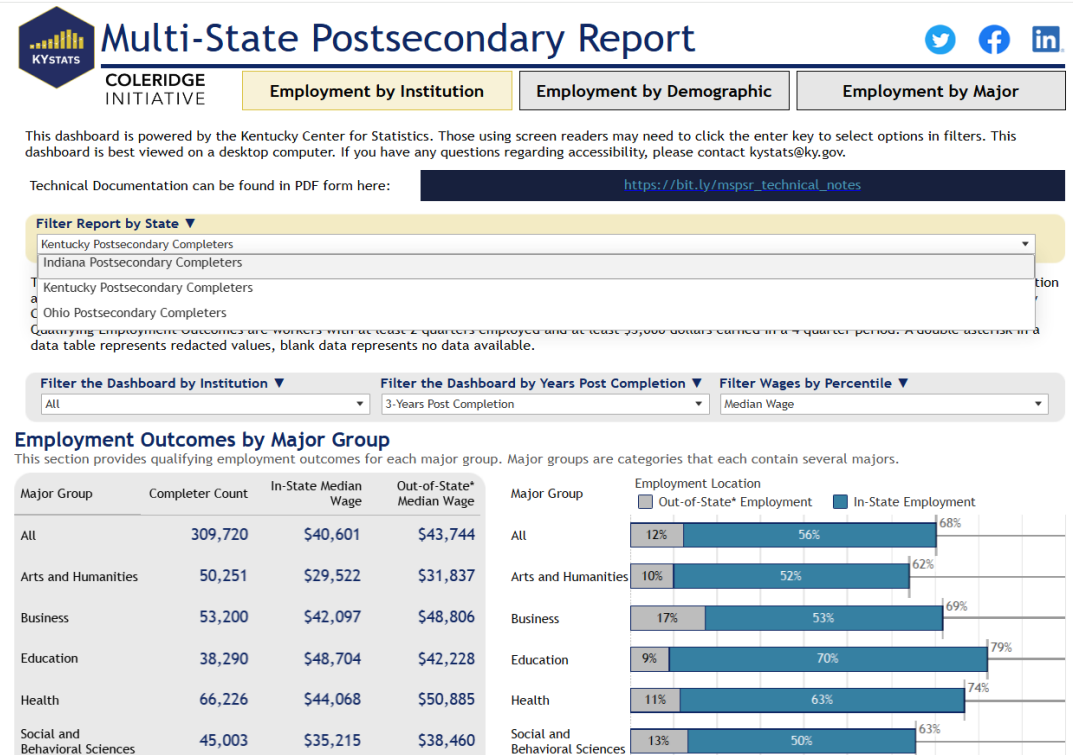
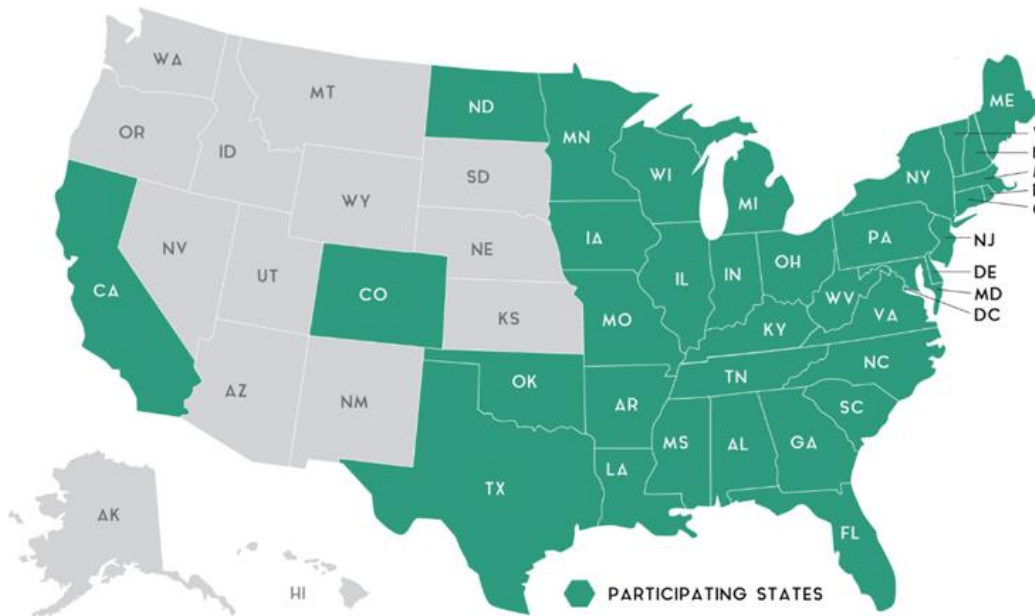
Expand metric definitions to take into account state-funded financial aid



The MSDC encourages using agency administrative data to address critical program and policy questions. It also encourages interstate collaboration.

Multi State Data Collaborative (MSDC)

- New Jersey will be included in the multi-state postsecondary report alongside Virginia, Rhode Island and Tennessee.



Postsecondary Value Framework

The commission has developed an approach for measuring *how* and *how much* students are better off because of their education.

0: Minimum Economic Return



1: Earnings Premium



2: Earnings Parity



3: Economic Mobility



4: Economic Security



5: Wealth Parity





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Policy Actions Using ROI data

Pragmatic use of ROI Data

WHERE OPPORTUNITY MEETS INNOVATION

A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education



"This is a Silver Standard:"
A Case Study of New Jersey's
Legislation to Ensure Career
Preparation Programs Pay Off

October 2024

New Jersey's
strategic plan
for higher
education

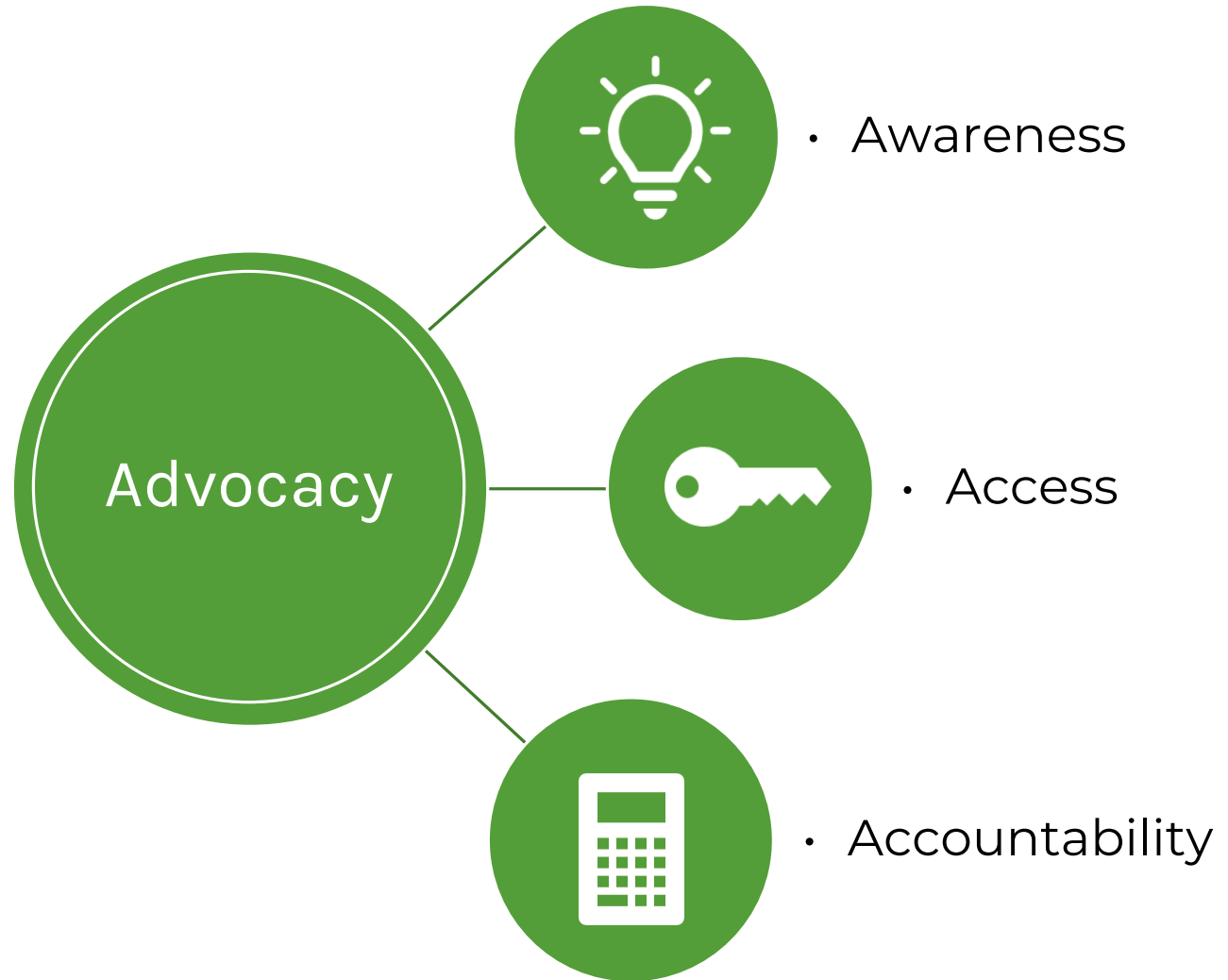
College For
You NJ:
Explore NJ
colleges,
discover their
affordability,
and enroll!

Innovation
Dual
Enrollment
Grant Program

Performance
Quality
Standards for
Career-Oriented
Programs of
Study

What does data do?

Collaboration and effective data utilization enables evidence-building around common themes



Future Prospects



CREATE A DASHBOARD BY
INSTITUTION AND PROGRAM OF
STUDY



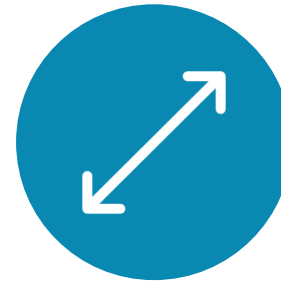
INCLUDE MULTI-STATE
EMPLOYMENT DATA



INCLUDE VARIOUS PVF
MEASURES



MERGE AND SYNCHRONIZE THE
MULTIPLE REGULATIONS, LAWS
AND POLICIES CALLING FOR
ROI



EXPAND TO INCLUDE
CERTIFICATE AND SHORT-TERM
PROGRAMS



EXPAND MEASURES OF ROI
BEYOND ECONOMIC, SUCH
AS CIVIC, SOCIAL,
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING



Discussion/ Questions



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[@njhighered](#)

Have questions?

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