



The Carnegie Classifications' New Student Access & Earnings Classification

SHEEO Finance Network
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Meet Our Speakers



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Overview of the Updated Carnegie Classifications

2025 Carnegie Classifications

- All institutions were automatically classified based on the data they have reported and/or that has been federally collected.
- Institutions have to apply to be classified.

Institutional
Classification

Student Access
and Earnings
Classification

Research
Activity
Designation
(if applicable)

Elective
Classifications

Community
Engagement

Leadership for
Public Purpose

Sustainability

General Definitions for the 2025 Institutional Classification Dimensions

Academic Program Mix

The fields of study in which institutions award 50% or more of their degrees.

- Three general categories:
- **Special focus:** 50%+ degrees awarded in a single academic area or field (11 subcategories)
 - **Professions-focused:** 50%+ degrees awarded in fields that are considered pre-professional
 - **Mixed:** Fewer than 50% of their degrees in any one area

Award Level Focus

The focus and mix of award levels at an institution; generally, where they award the most degrees.

- Associate
- Associate/Baccalaureate
- Baccalaureate
- Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's
- Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate
- Graduate-focused

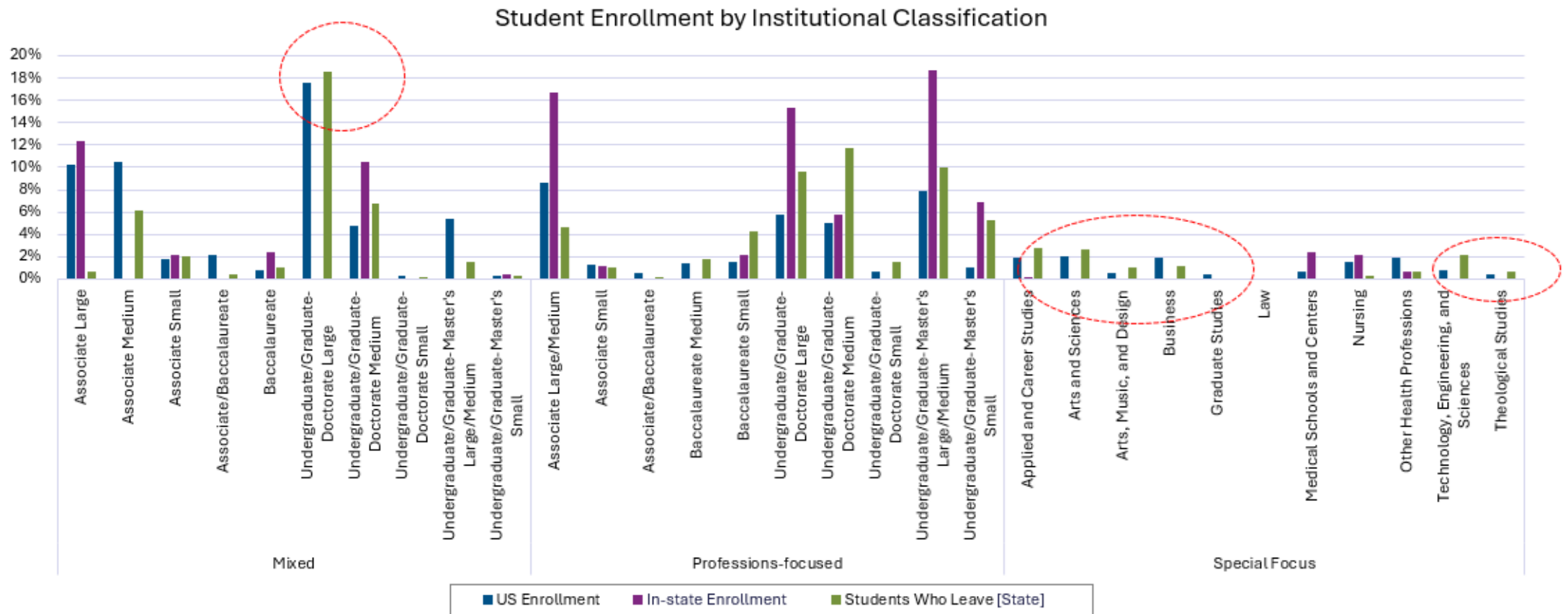
Size

The size of an institution, as measured by its total 12-month headcount, including full- and part-time students, and including undergraduate and graduate students

The 2025 Institutional Classification Has 31 Classifications

- **Associate Colleges**
 - Mixed Associate Large
 - Mixed Associate Medium
 - Mixed Associate Small
 - Professions-focused Associate Large/Medium
 - Professions-focused Associate Small
- **Associate/Baccalaureate Colleges**
 - Mixed Associate/Baccalaureate
 - Professions-focused Associate/Baccalaureate
- **Baccalaureate Colleges**
 - Mixed Baccalaureate
 - Professions-focused Baccalaureate Medium
 - Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small
- **Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Institutions**
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small
- **Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Institutions**
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
- **Special Focus Institutions**
 - Special Focus: Applied and Career Studies
 - Special Focus: Arts and Sciences
 - Special Focus: Arts, Music, and Design
 - Special Focus: Business
 - Special Focus: Graduate Studies
 - Special Focus: Law
 - Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers
 - Special Focus: Nursing
 - Special Focus: Other Health Professions
 - Special Focus: Technology, Engineering, and Sciences
 - Special Focus: Theological Studies

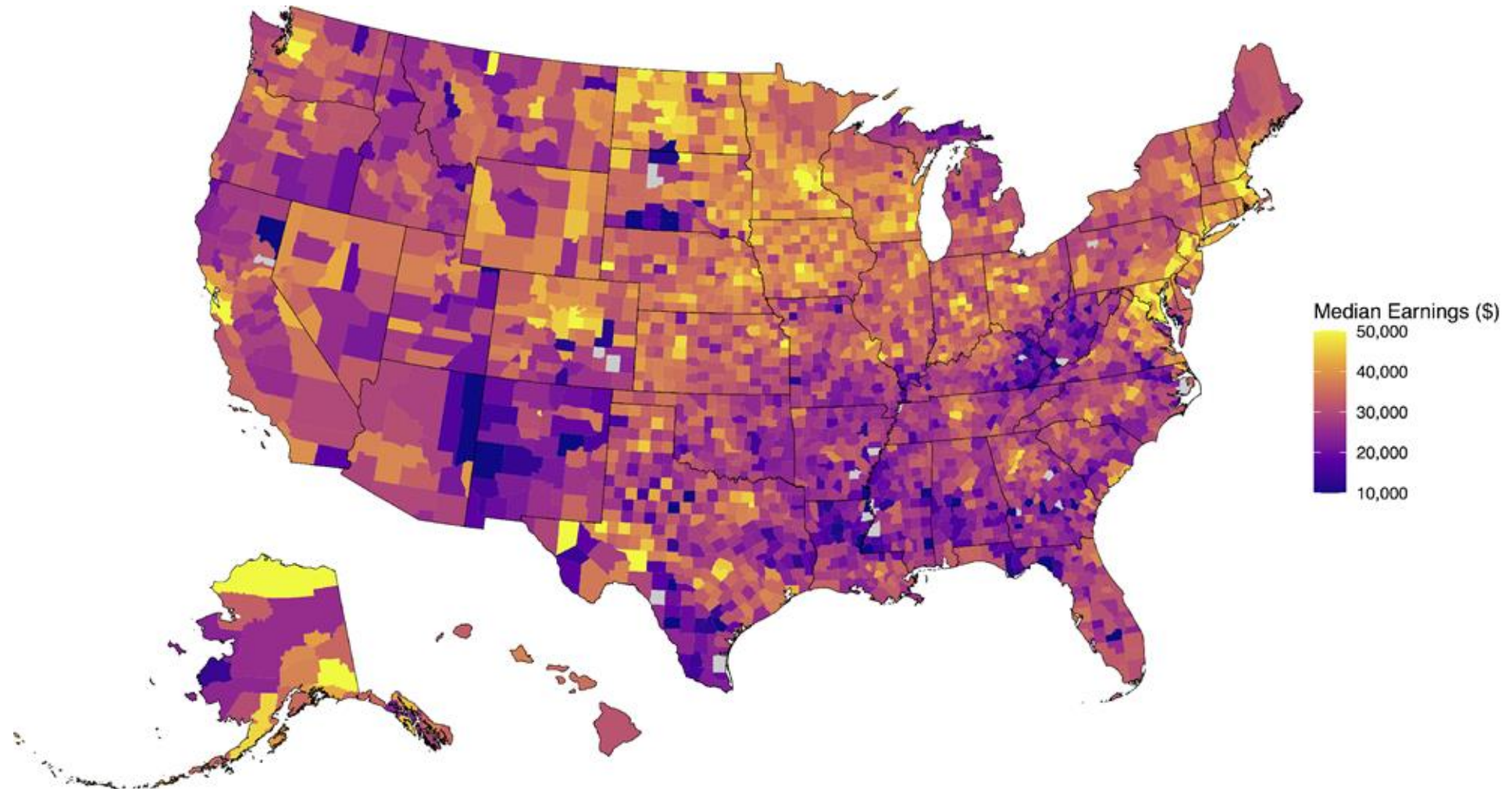
Many Students Leave State to Attend Types of Institutions that Don't Exist in [State]



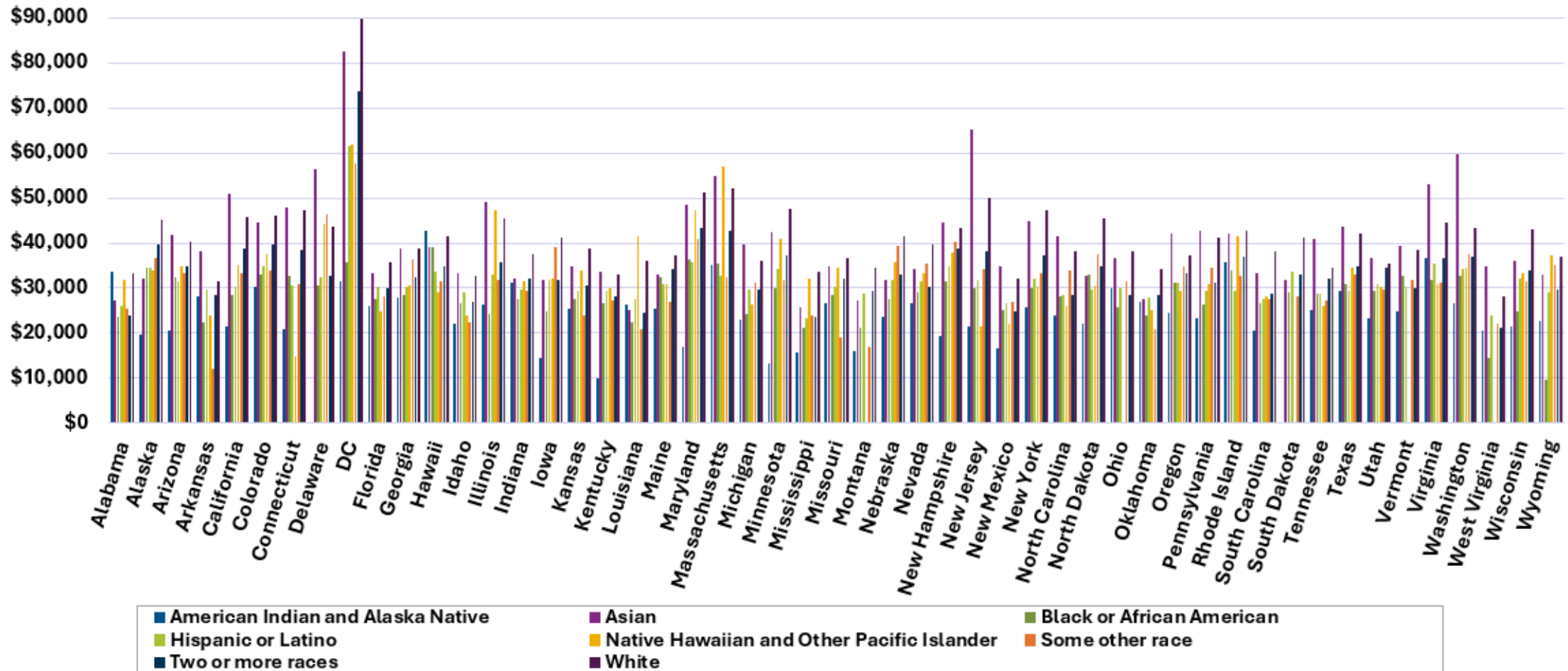
Logic of Student Access and Earnings Classification

1. Institutions should be assessed relative to meaningfully similar institutions [Institutional Classification]
2. Institutions are embedded in places and should be assessed relative to those places
 - Demographics of students who might enroll
 - Labor market differences across place and race/ethnicity
 - Geography of each institution is unique
3. Results built on comparison
 - Institution data compared to predicted or comparison data

Median Earnings of People with High School Diploma or Higher Differs Within States

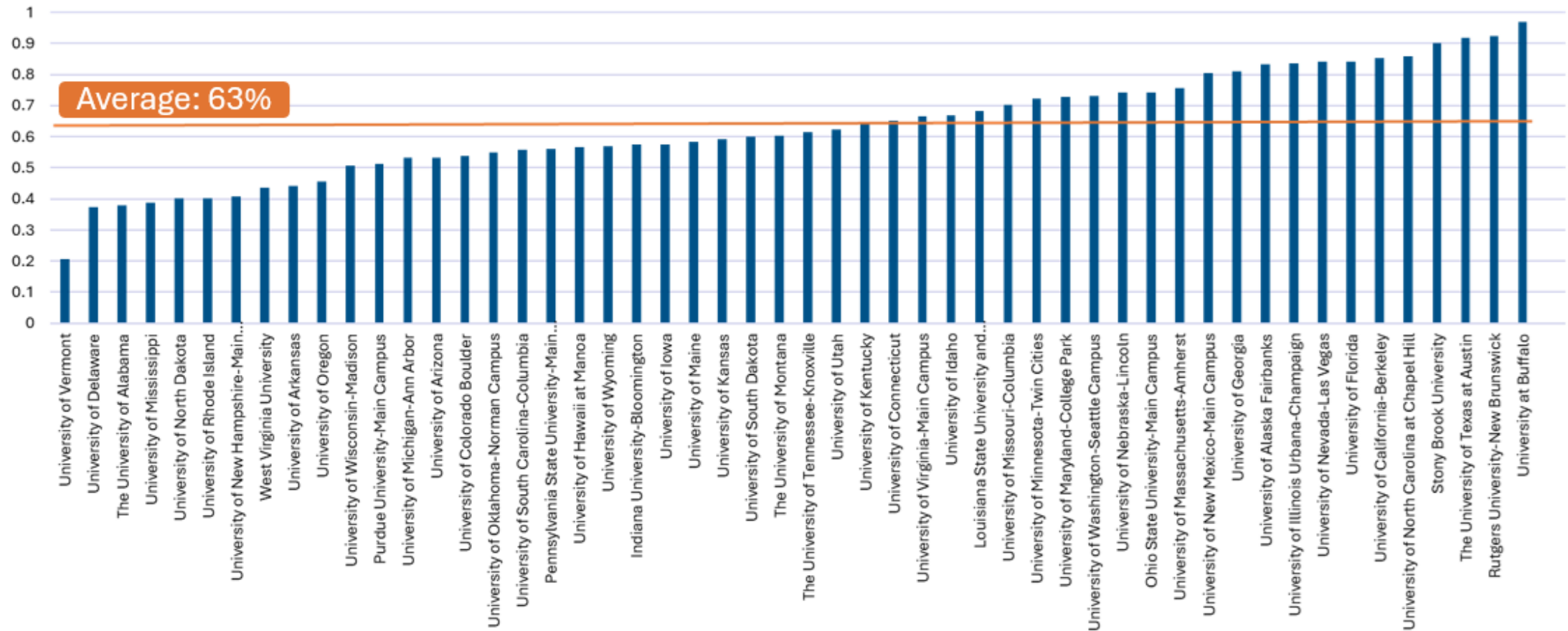


Median Earnings of People Aged 22 to 40 Years with High School Diploma or Higher by Race/Ethnicity and State



Percentage of Students Who Come from In-State Varies

Percentage of First-time Students Who Came from the State in Which the Institution Is Located, 2020-2022



Data Used in the Student Access and Earnings Classification

Are institutions providing access to a student population that reflects the demographics of the locations they serve?

ACCESS MEASURE

- Pell grant enrollment relative to the location students are from
- Underrepresented racial/ethnic composition of the student body relative to the location students are from

Primary sources: IPEDS, U.S. Census

After students leave an institution, how much are they making compared to peers in their job market?

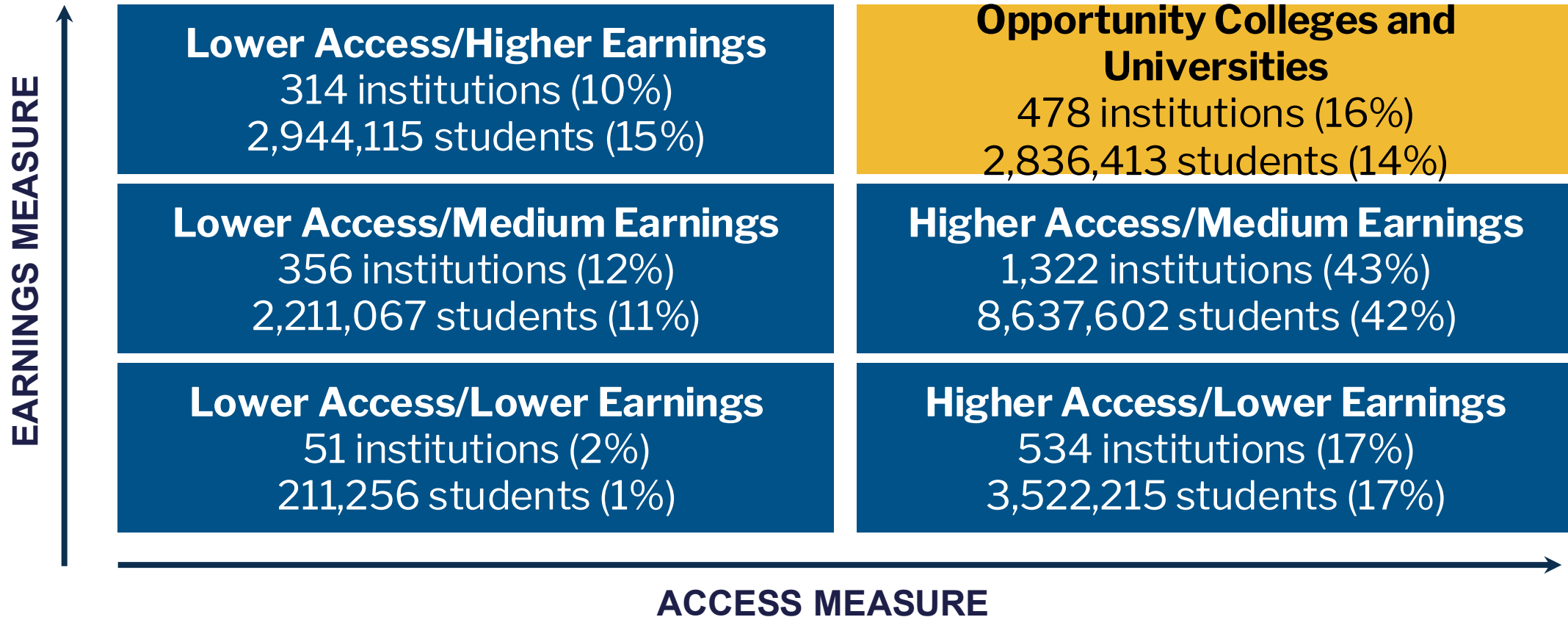
EARNINGS MEASURE

- Median post-attendance earnings data for all federally aided students, eight years after entry
 - Contextualized for location
 - Contextualized for the race/ethnicity of those students
 - Compare actual earnings to those in their area with a high school degree or higher

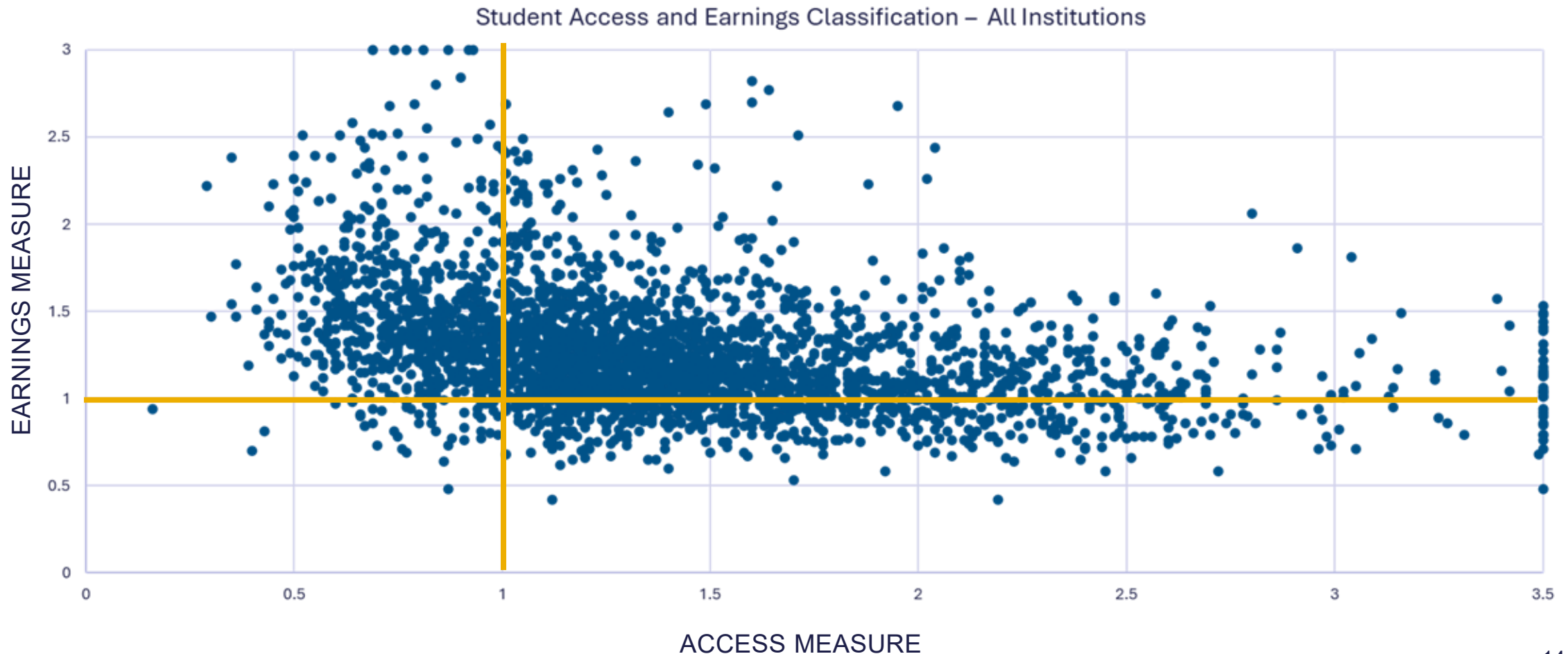
Primary sources: College Scorecard/IRS, U.S. Census

2025 Student Access and Earnings Classification


All Classified Institutions (3,055)



Full Distribution of All Institutions



On the Y axis, values greater than 3 have been capped at 3 and on the X axis, values greater than 3.5 have been capped at 3.5



Why the New SAEC Matters to States

The SAEC Speaks to State Priorities

Economic Mobility and Outcomes

1

Funding and Accountability

2

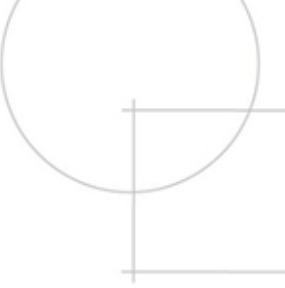
Public Trust and Transparency

3

Institutional Variation and Innovation

4

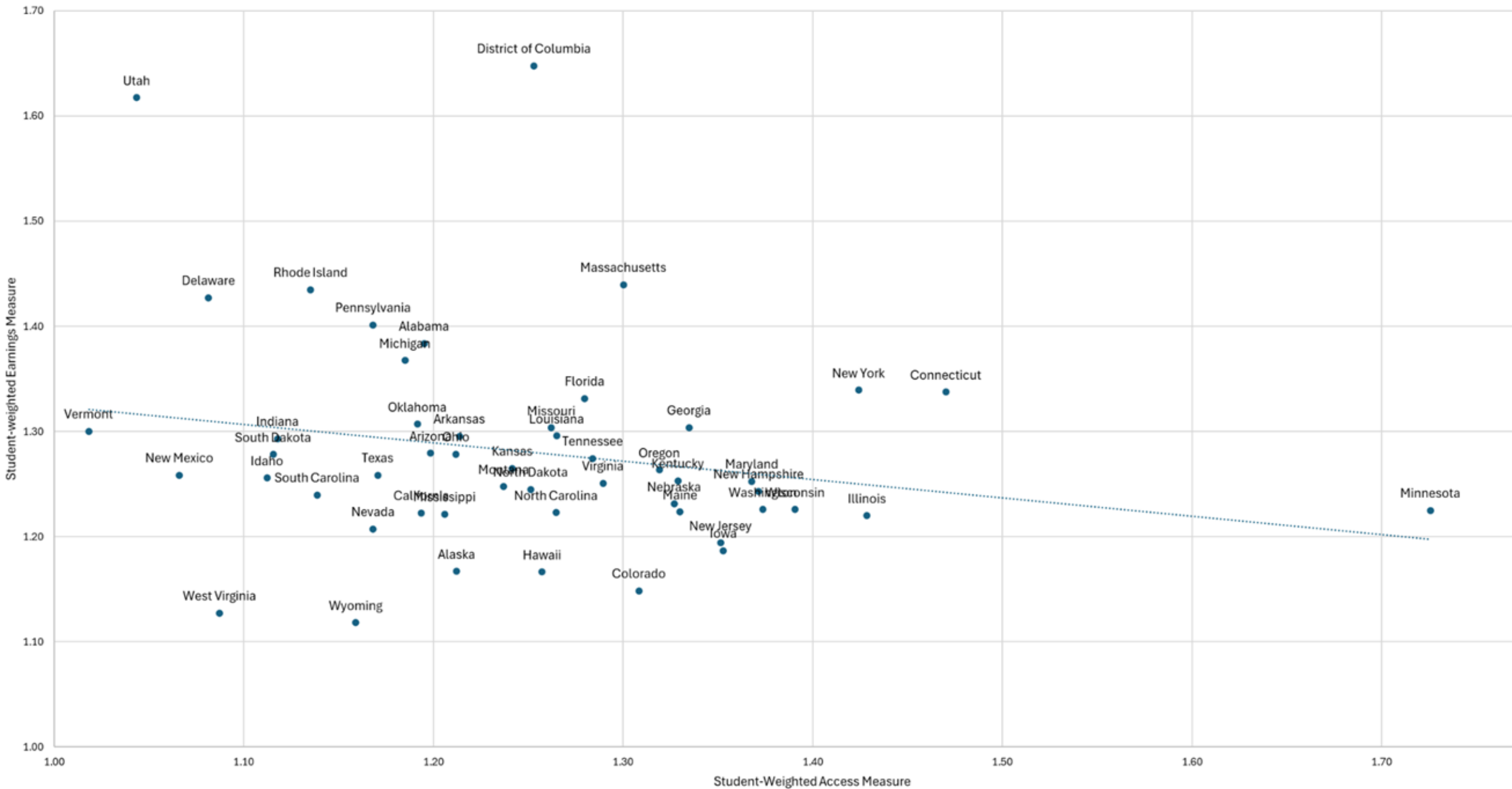
Unpacking State SAEC Data



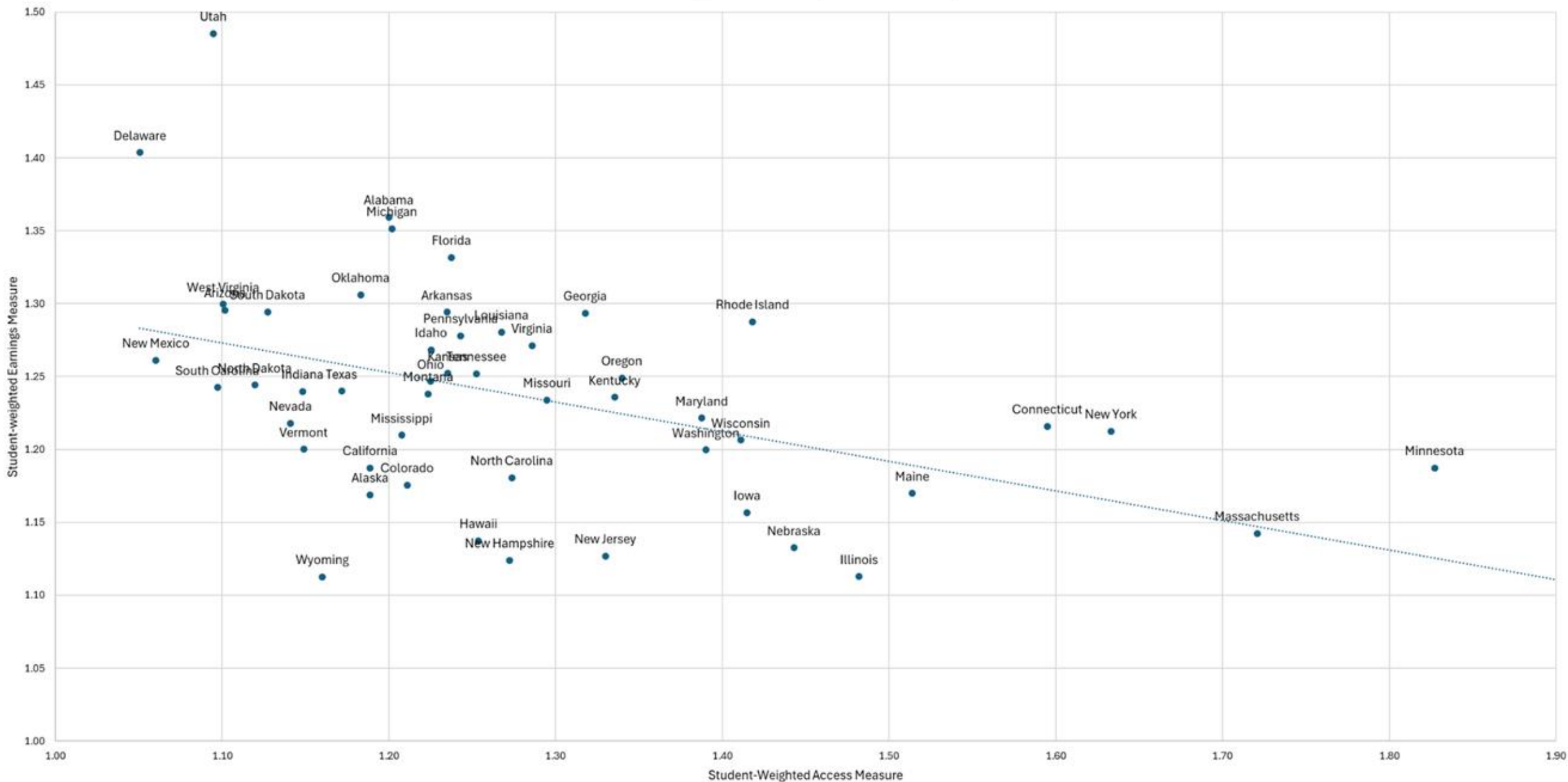
A piece of the puzzle to examine state policy and institutional performance

- What state policies contribute to these outcomes?
- What states policies could improve them?
- How do these metrics align with state performance metrics (esp. value-oriented ones)?
- What can we learn from institutions that are performing well?
- Do the outcomes - and the explanations for them - align with our state's vision for institutional missions?

Student-weighted State Analysis



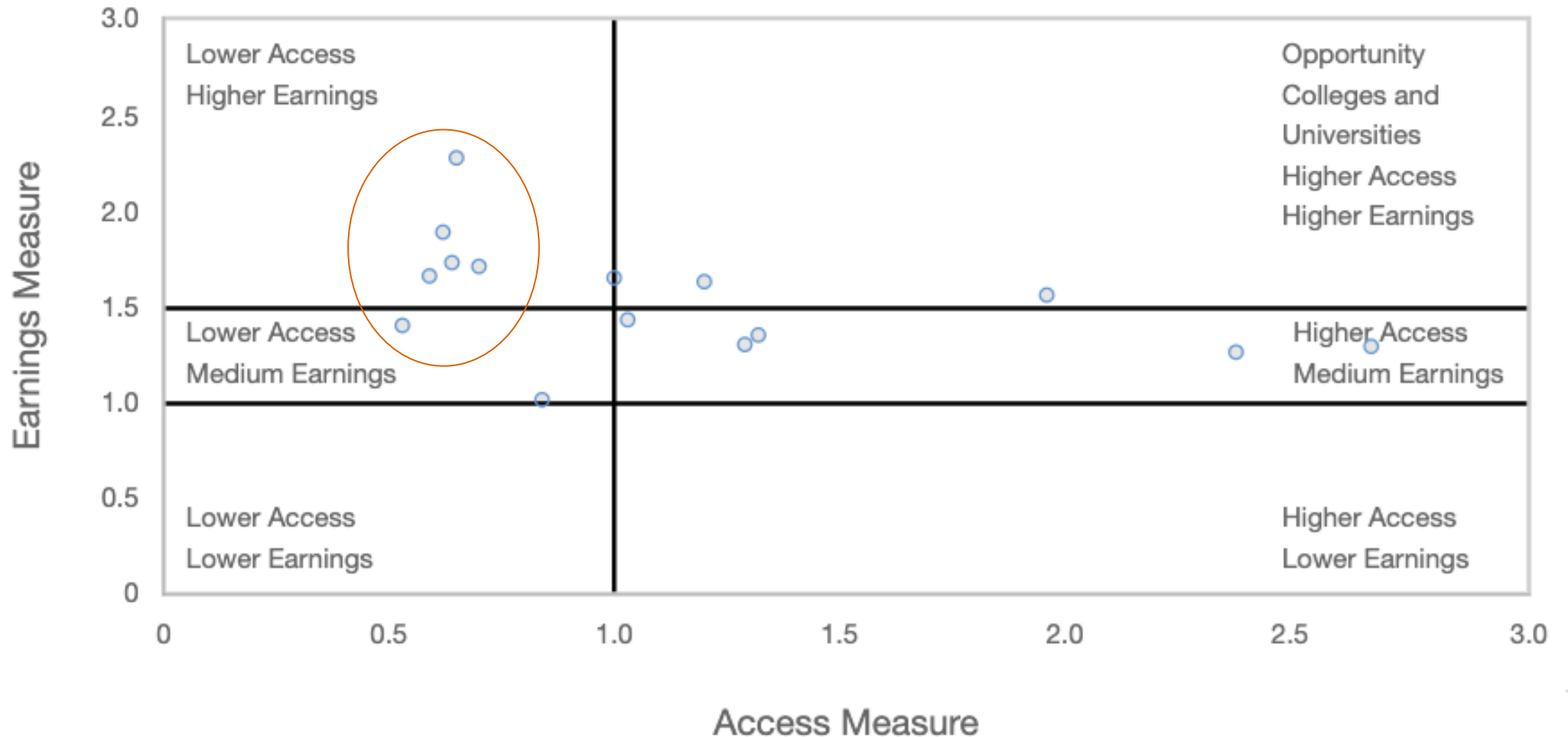
Student-weighted State Analysis - Publics Only



State Examples

Virginia

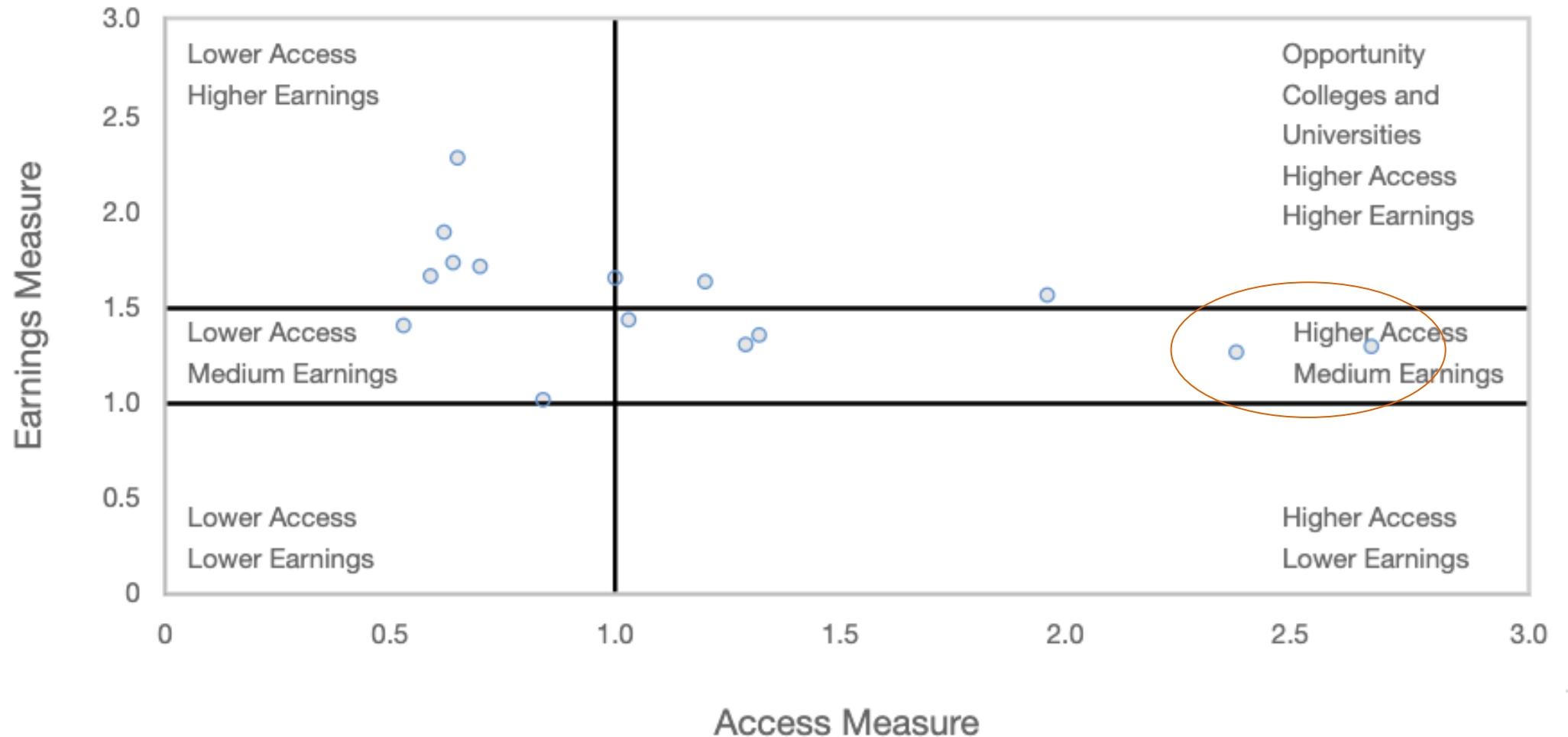
Lower access among 4yrs than many states. The state funded a "Pell Initiative" to improve access.



State Examples

Virginia

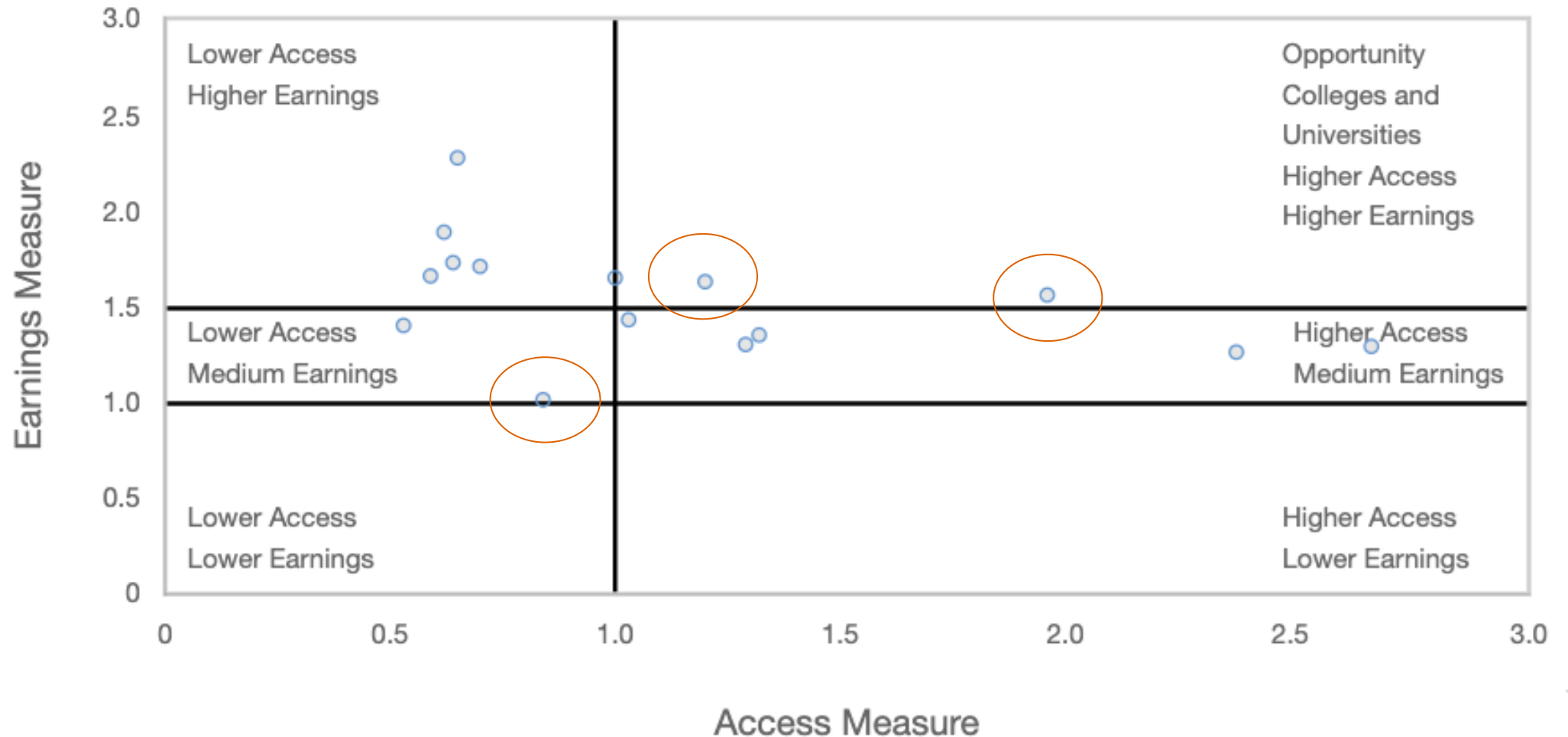
HBCUs have strong access - how to support them in increasing earnings?



State Examples

Virginia

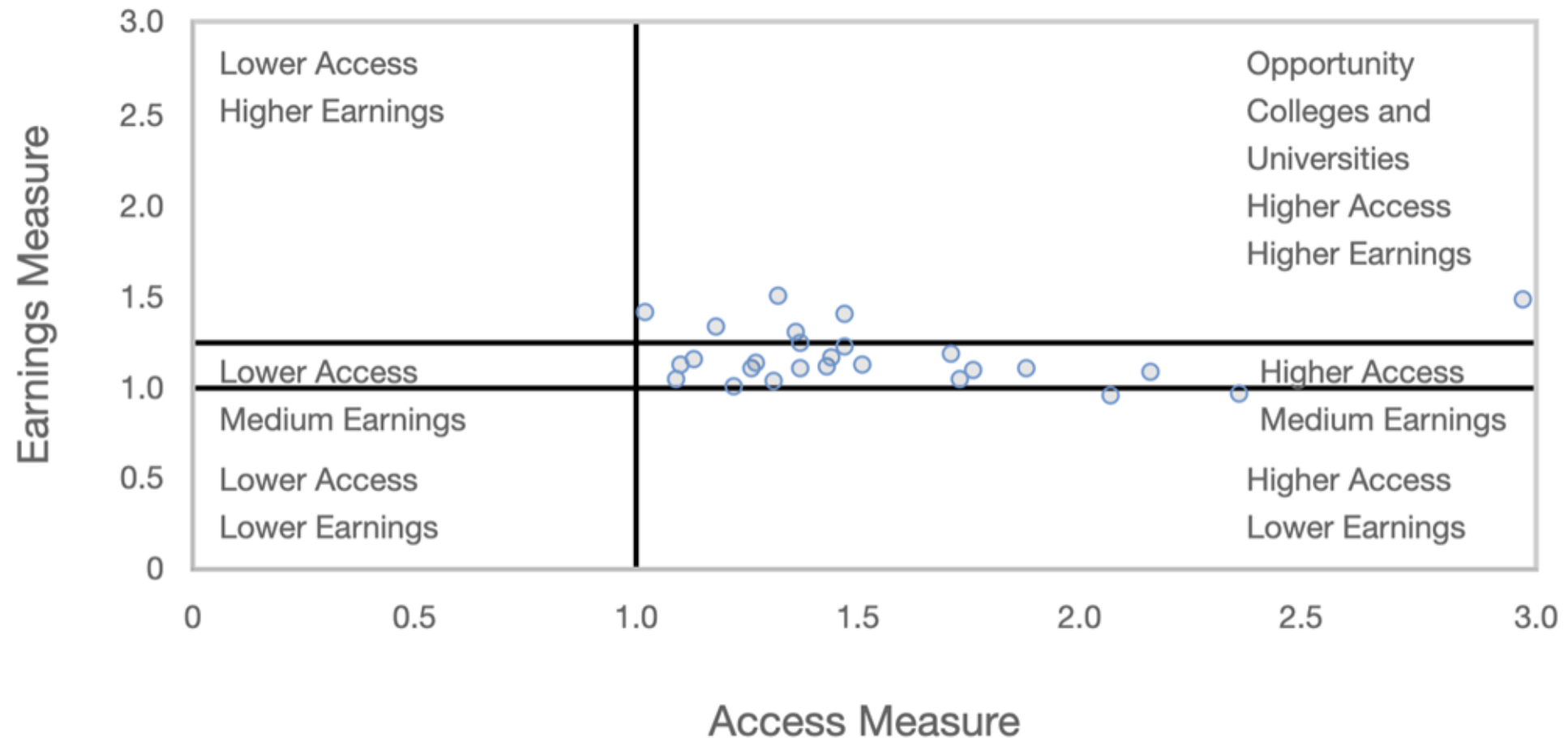
What can we learn about Mary Washington, George Mason, and Radford that can provide statewide lessons?



State Examples

Kansas

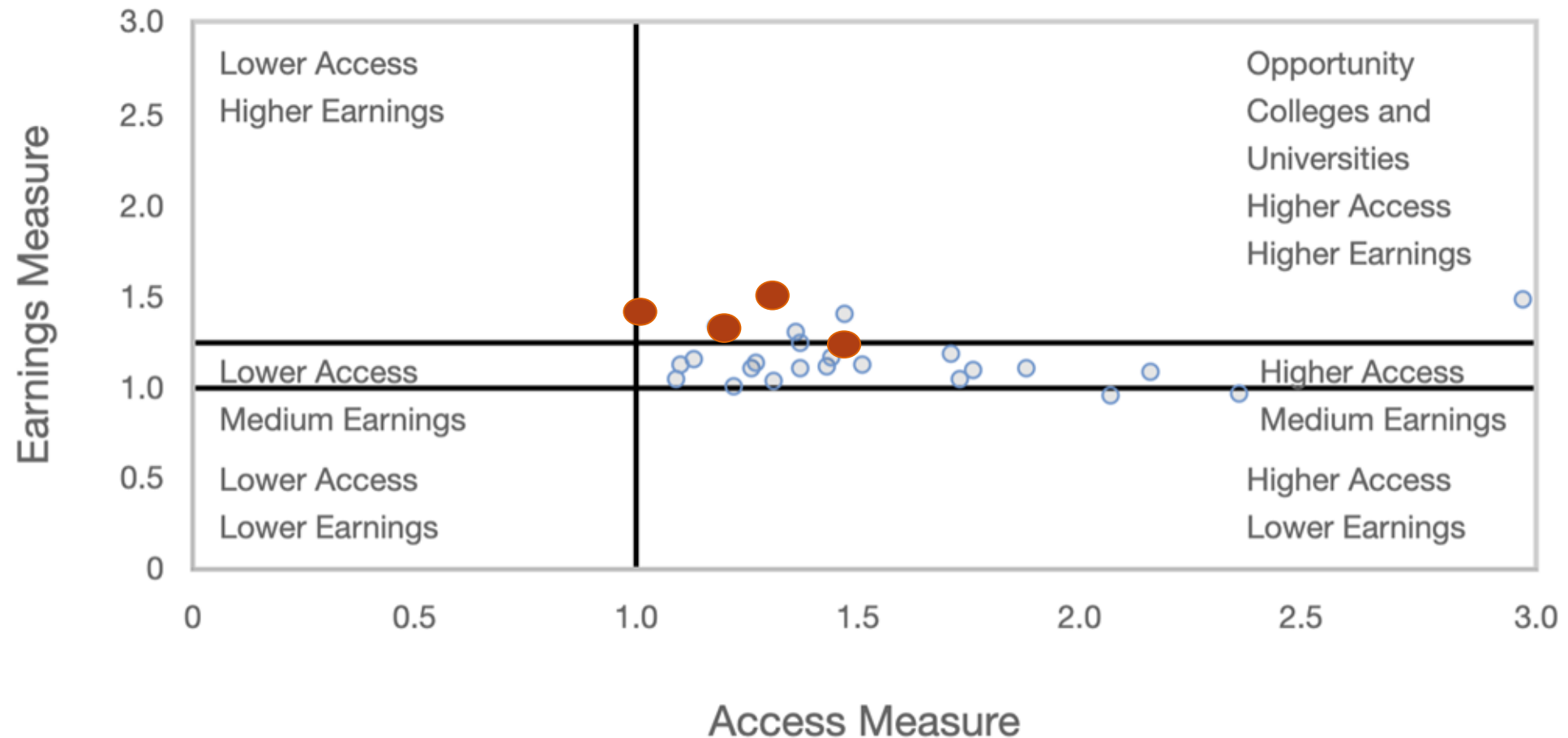
The state's associate colleges have strong SAEC results, suggesting some approach or design that is effective for the whole sector.



State Examples

Kansas

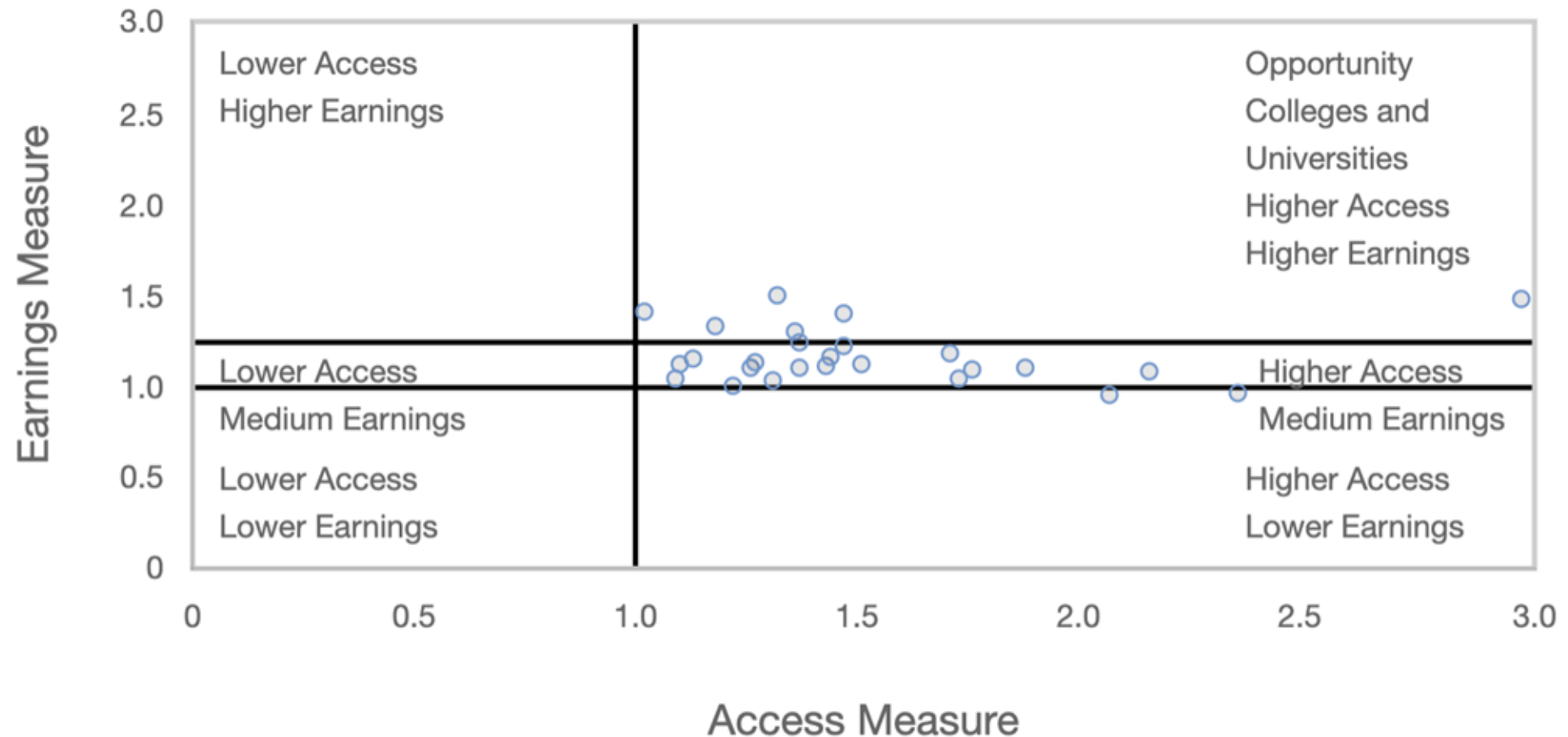
A few Technical Colleges have particularly strong earnings. Across the state, which credentials/fields generate strong earnings, and which ones don't?



State Examples

Kansas

How do state resources map to these institutions? How do other state performance metrics (% of grads earning living wage) map to the SAEC metrics?





SAEC Use Cases

Institutional- and Student-focused Use Cases

Institutional Recognition & Continuous Improvement

- *SAEC adds nuance beyond traditional outcome metrics.*

Strengthening Learner Navigation

- *Start with collaboration and support, while reinforcing expectations for student outcomes.*

Benchmarking & Peer Analysis

- *Move beyond traditional comparisons based on size or selectivity.*

Strategic Finance & Budget Planning

Aligning Investments with Outcomes

Use **SAEC** to guide resource allocation. States can evaluate:

- What investments improve **access**
- What investments improve **earnings outcomes**

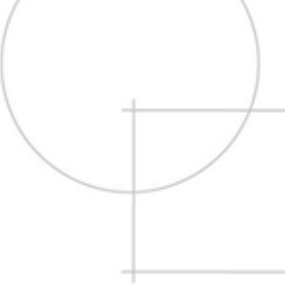
Examples of targeted investments:

- Student success supports
- Career services and work-based learning
- Transfer pathways
- Industry-aligned program redesign

Policy option

Create dedicated funding streams to support institutions improving SAEC outcomes.

Funding Formulas



Connecting State Funds to Student Outcomes

States distribute **~\$100B annually** in operating support to institutions.

SAEC can strengthen funding formulas by:

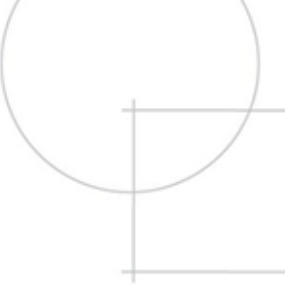
- Incentivizing **access to underserved students**
- Rewarding **strong earnings outcomes**
- Recognizing **Opportunity Colleges and Universities (OCUs)**

Advantages of SAEC earnings metric

- Adjusts for geography
- Accounts for student demographics
- Includes **all students, not only graduates**

A more complete measure of institutional impact.

Financial Aid Policy



Leveraging Aid to Expand Opportunity

States distribute **~\$15B annually** in financial aid.

SAEC can inform aid design by:

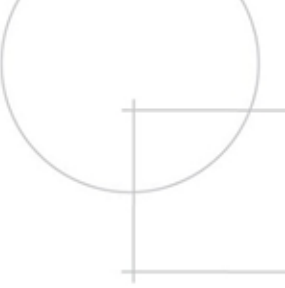
- **Creating positive incentives** - Additional aid for students attending **OCU institutions**
- **Ensuring accountability** - Review aid eligibility for institutions with **persistently weak outcomes**
- **Improving access** - Evaluate whether aid programs reach **low-income and underserved students**

Need-based aid strengthens access outcomes across institutions.



State Engagement to Date

Supporting State Use of SAEC



Ways that ACE can support states in using the Carnegie Classifications to build out their analyses

- Developing a peer group for one or more institutions to understand how a certain measure (e.g., salaries, faculty workload) compares to peers nationally
- Providing assessments of the earnings for college graduates and former students as compared to the overall population
- Understanding how well institutions are preparing students to make a living wage



Thank you!

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