OMAHA Public Schools

RESEARCH DIVISION

Follow-Up of the 2024 Omaha Public Schools Graduates

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Executive Summary/Key Findings

The following statements highlight the key findings of the Follow-Up of the 2024 Graduates of Omaha Public Schools. Much greater detail regarding the post high school activities and outcomes for this graduating class can be found throughout this report.

- A majority (61.0%) of the contacted 2024 OPS graduates were attending post-secondary education when contacted to complete their Graduate Follow-Up. This is a 1 percentage point decrease over the previous year's graduates.
- Post-Secondary attendance rates varied across OPS high schools; Burke and Central High Schools had the highest post-secondary attendance rate.
- Demographic characteristics appear to influence post-secondary attendance rates; Asian graduates, graduates who were not eligible for educational benefits, and exited EL graduates were more likely to attend post-secondary education.
- The majority of graduates attending college were participating in four-year programs and the vast majority of college-going graduates were attending public universities or community colleges.
- Though OPS graduates attended post-secondary institutions across the United States, the vast majority attended within Nebraska.
- The most often attended post-secondary institutions for the 2024 OPS graduates were Metropolitan Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.
- The most common ways graduates reported paying for college were with scholarships and grants. How graduates paid for college varied somewhat based on their socio-economic status.
- The most common reason graduates gave to attend college was that they were pursuing a career that required them to do so. The most common reason graduates gave to not attend college was that they needed a break from school.
- Though most OPS graduates were working when they completed their follow-up, a greater proportion were working part-time rather than full-time.
- Employment status varied somewhat among different demographic groups; African American and Hispanic graduates were more likely than other graduates to be working full-time. Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits, EL graduates, and graduates not attending college were also more likely to be working full-time.
- Most working graduates held jobs in the hospitality and tourism, marketing/sales and service, and transportation and logistics industries.
- When considering graduates' career goals, the most popular field by far was health sciences, followed by architecture and construction and arts, audio-visual, and communications.
- When asked about what OPS could have done to better prepare graduates for their future, graduates suggested more college and career preparation, financial literacy education, personalized engagement from teachers and counselors, life skills training, and classroom environments more conducive to the learning process.

Introduction

The mission of Omaha Public Schools (OPS) is, "to prepare all students for success in college, career and life." Every year the district follows up with OPS graduates to gauge their adjustment to life after high school. Specifically, students are contacted and asked questions regarding their long-term goals, transition into the workforce, enrollment in post-secondary education, and factors influencing these decisions. Some of the information collected in the report is required by Nebraska State Law; however, additional data is gathered because of its value to families, staff members, and other interested agencies. The *Follow-Up of the 2024 Omaha Public School Graduates* is the 70th such study administered by OPS.

A total of 2,707 students who started their high school careers in 2020-21 and graduated from Omaha Public Schools in 2024 were included in this study. In the spring semester of their graduating year, students provided the Research Division with their personal email address and phone number, as well as phone numbers of friends or family with whom they were close.

Approximately five to six months after graduation, the OPS Research Division emailed students a survey regarding their current life experiences and activities. A total of 108 graduates completed the survey online. The remaining students were contacted by representatives of the Research Division by phone to complete the survey, resulting in an additional 1,980 respondents. The district used the additional family and friends' contact information obtained from graduates when records on file were no longer valid. In total, post-graduation data was collected from 2,088 graduates (77.1%). The Research Division used the survey software created by Qualtrics to collect the graduate follow-up data. The survey can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Characteristics of the 2024 Graduates

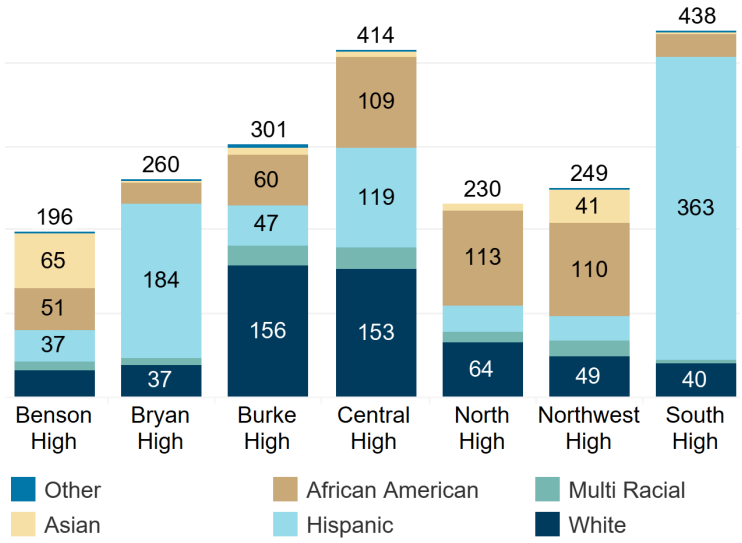
The OPS Research Division attempted to contact all 2,707 2024 graduates who began their high school careers in 2020-21 and collected follow-up data from 2,088 graduates resulting in a 77.1% contact rate. Additionally, contact rates ranging from 72.9% to 80.5% were achieved across the seven OPS high schools with graduating classes in 2024. The demographic make-up of the contacted 2024 graduates was nearly identical to the 2024 graduating class as a whole. Table 1 illustrates the demographic similarity between the 2024 graduates and those who completed their Graduate Follow-Up survey. The contacted graduates were representative with respect to gender, socio-economic status, English learner status, special education status, and racial composition.

Table 1: Demographic Comparison of the 2024 Graduating Class and Those Who Were Contacted

	2024 Graduates	Contacted 2024 Graduates
Female/Male Ratio	53.7%/46.3%	53.2%/46.8%
Eligible for Educational Benefits	62.7%	62.8%
English Learners	7.6%	7.3%
Former English Learners	26.3%	26.7%
Special Education	13.0%	13.1%
African American	23.8%	23.8%
Asian	7.0%	6.4%
American Indian & Pacific Islander	.7%	.5%
Hispanic	37.8%	38.8%
Multi-Racial	4.9%	5.1%
White	25.8%	25.4%

The representative nature of the contacted graduates extended to the varied racial composition of graduates across the OPS high schools. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the number of contacted graduates from each OPS high school as well as the number of contacted graduates from each racial/ethnic group. South and Bryan High Schools had the largest number of Hispanic graduates while Burke and Central had the largest number of White graduates. North, Northwest, and Central had the largest number of African American graduates. Benson and Northwest had the largest number of Asian graduates. The "Other" racial/ethnic group includes Native American and Pacific Islander graduates and have been grouped together because of small populations. The figures and tables throughout the remainder of this report reflect the numbers and percentages of contacted graduates.

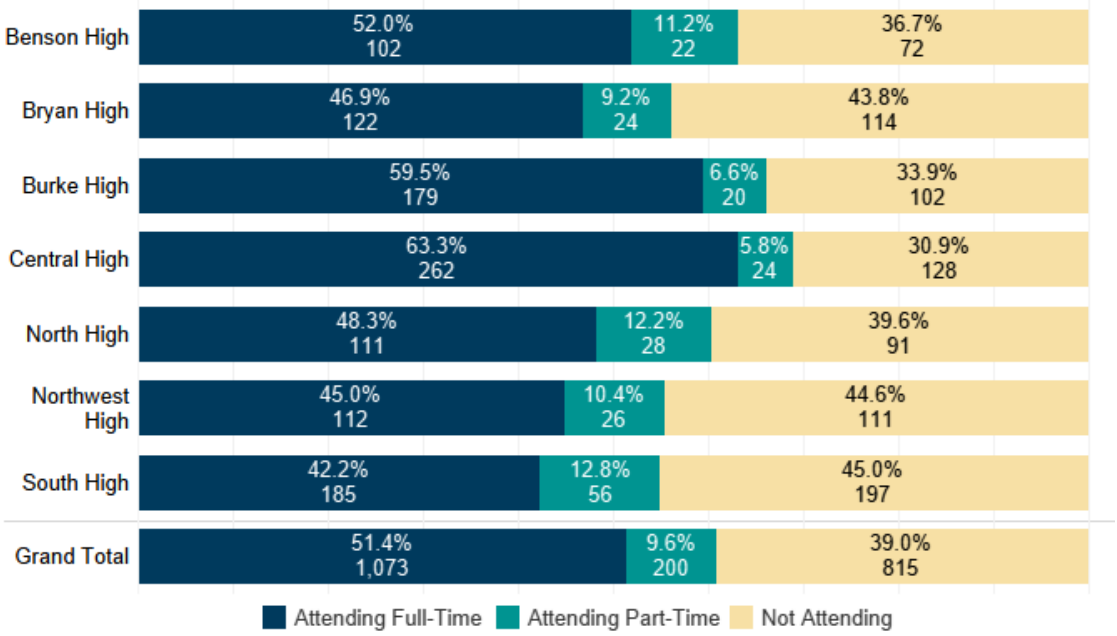
Figure 1: Number and Ethnicity of Contacted 2024 Graduates from Each School



Post-Secondary Educational Attendance

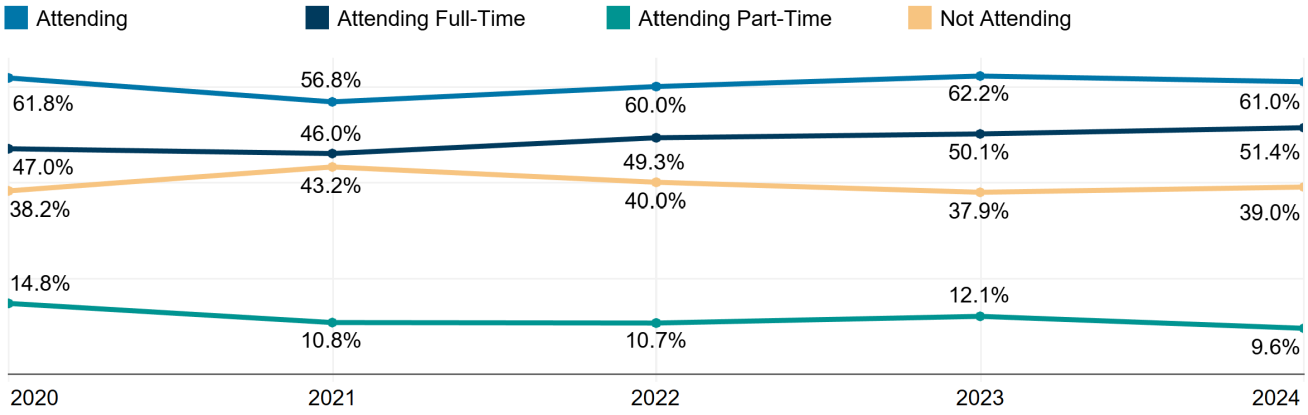
At the district level, 61.0% of the contacted 2024 graduates were attending some type of post-secondary education either full or part-time. The most recent national data available shows 62% of 2022 high school graduates were pursuing post-secondary education the fall after they graduated (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). As can be seen in Figure 2, post-secondary enrollment varied significantly across OPS high schools with Central achieving the highest percentage at 69.1%. Northwest had the lowest percentage of graduates attending post-secondary education (55.4%).

Figure 2: Post-Secondary Educational Attendance of the 2024 Graduates from Each High School



At the district level, the percentage of graduates enrolling in some type of post-secondary education decreased slightly when compared to the 2023 graduates. As can be seen in Figure 3, the percentage of OPS graduates who attended post-secondary education has fluctuated between 56.8% and 62.2% over the past five years. The slight decrease in post-secondary attendance between 2023 and 2024 is due to a decrease in part-time attendance.

Figure 3: Five Years of Post-Secondary Attendance

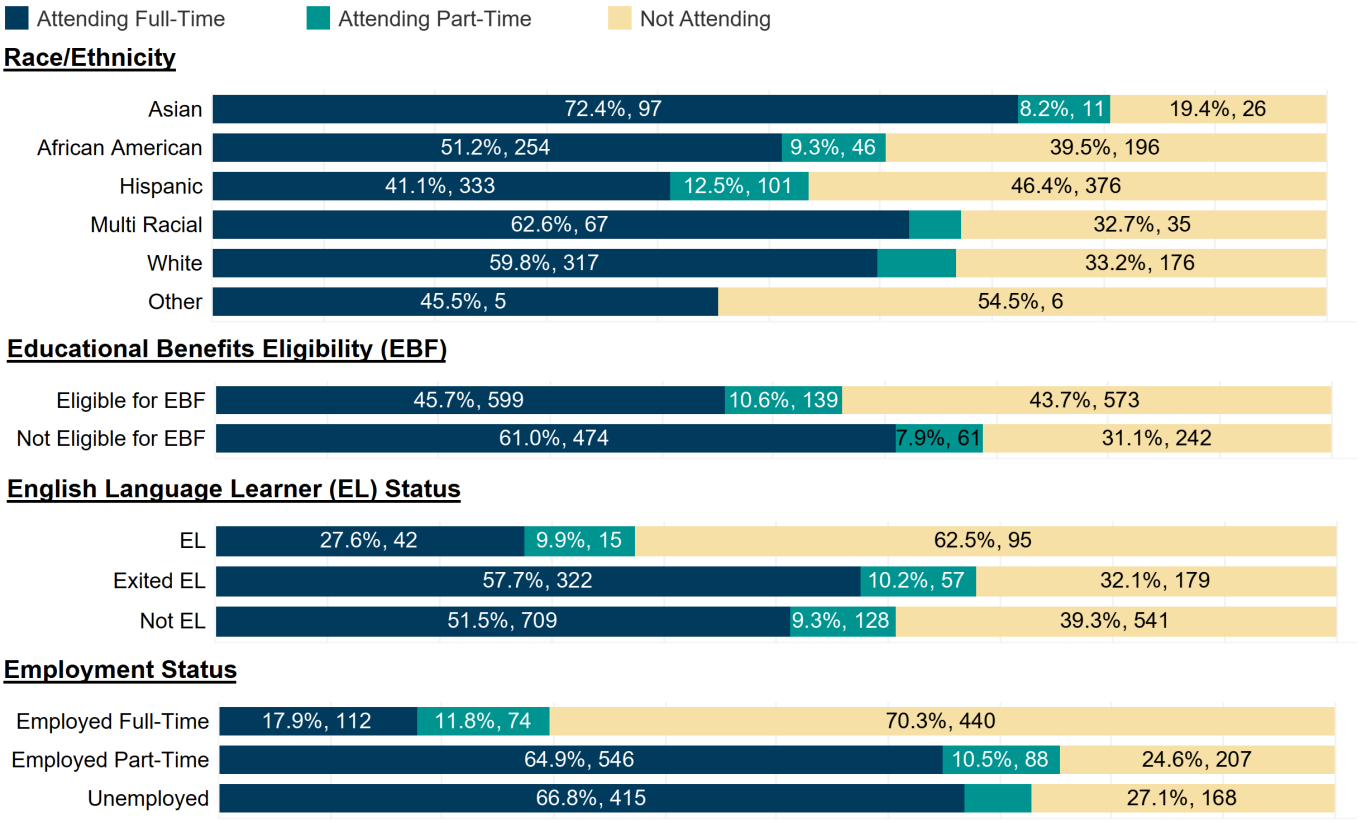


Demographic Influences on Post-Secondary Attendance

Several demographic characteristics appear to influence the likelihood of OPS graduates attending post-secondary education full or part-time. Figure 4 (next page) illustrates how post-secondary attendance differed for 2024 graduates from different racial backgrounds, socio-economic status, English language proficiency, and employment status. Asian graduates were the most likely to have enrolled in post-secondary education (80.6%), followed by Multi-racial (67.3%) and White (66.8%) graduates. Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits were

far less likely to attend post-secondary education when compared to their more affluent counterparts (56.3% vs. 68.9%). English learner graduates (ELs) were least likely to attend post-secondary education (37.5%); however, exited ELs attended at a higher rate (67.9%) than graduates who were not ELs (60.7%). Only 29.7% of graduates working full-time were attending post-secondary education, whereas 75.4% of graduates working part-time and 72.9% of unemployed graduates were attending post-secondary education .

Figure 4: Post-Secondary Educational Attendance for Various Demographic Groups



Type of Programs and Post-Secondary Institutions Attended by the 2024 Graduates

At the district level, 61.0% of the graduates attending post-secondary education were participating in four-year programs and 39.0% were participating in two-year (or less) programs as seen in Figure 5. The most recent national data available indicates 73% of the 2022 graduates attending post-secondary education were attending four-year programs and 27% attended two-year programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). The proportion of graduates participating in four- and two-year programs differed considerably across OPS high schools. Burke had the highest percentage of graduates attending four-year programs (71.0%), followed by Central (67.5%). Bryan and Benson had the highest percentage of graduates attending two-year programs (54.1% and 50.8%, respectively).

Figure 5: Length of Programs Attended by the 2024 Graduates from Each High School

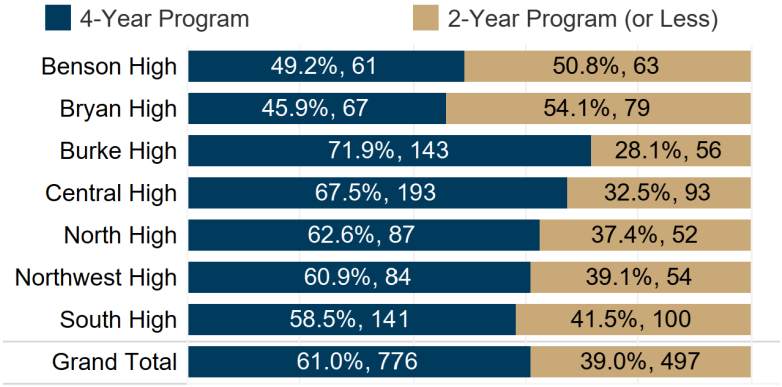
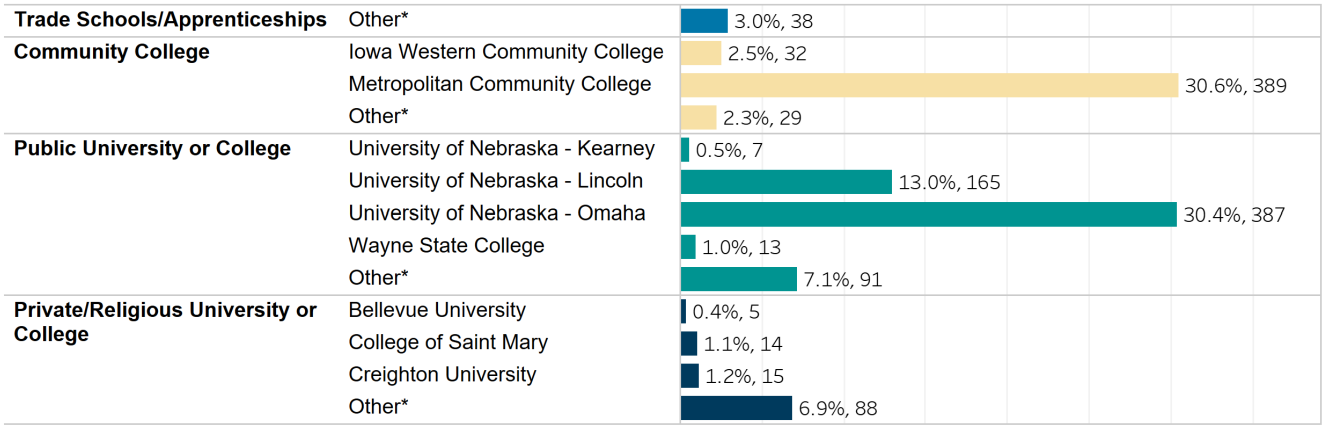


Figure 6 illustrates nearly 1/3 (30.6%) of the 2024 graduates participating in post-secondary education attended Metropolitan Community College. The University of Nebraska at Omaha was the second most frequently attended school at virtually the same rate (30.4%). The University of Nebraska system (Kearney, Lincoln, and Omaha) served 43.9% of OPS graduates attending post-secondary education.

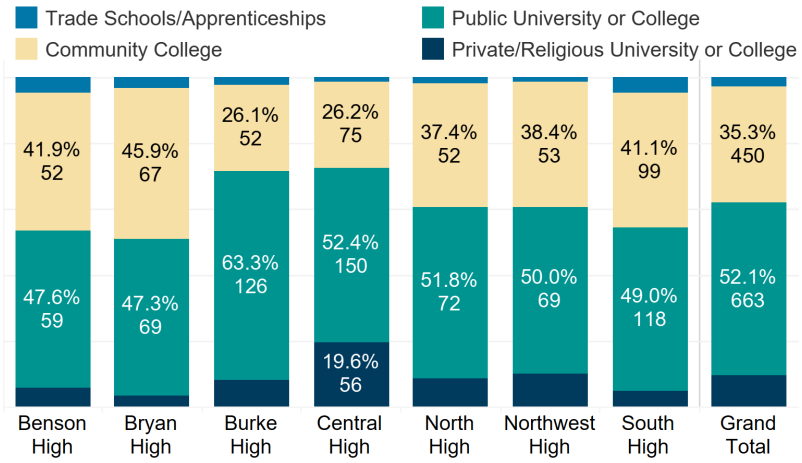
Figure 6: Post-Secondary Institutions Attended by 2024 OPS Graduates



**Other post-secondary schools attended by OPS graduates included a multitude of educational institutions located across the country (see Figure 10).*

Many graduates (52.1%) attending post-secondary education attended a public college or university. Community colleges were also a popular choice (35.3%). Private colleges and universities (9.6%) and trade schools and apprenticeships (3.0%) served fewer graduates. The types of post-secondary educational institutions attended by graduates differed significantly across high schools (see Figure 7). Central High School had the highest proportion of college-going graduates attending private colleges or universities (19.6%). Burke High School had the largest proportion of graduates attending public colleges or universities (63.3%). Graduates from Bryan and Benson High Schools had the largest proportion of graduates attending community colleges (45.9% and 41.9% respectively).

Figure 7: Type of Institution Attended by 2024 Graduates



Given the differing costs of the various types of post-secondary educational institutions it comes as no surprise that college-going graduates who were eligible for educational benefits were less likely to attend private colleges or universities and more likely to attend community colleges than their more affluent counterparts (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Post-Secondary Institution and Educational Benefits Eligibility

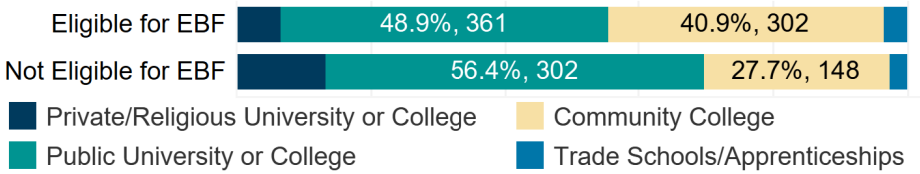
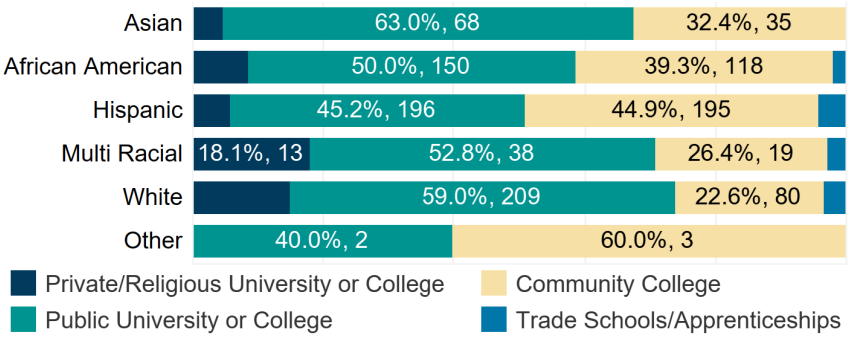


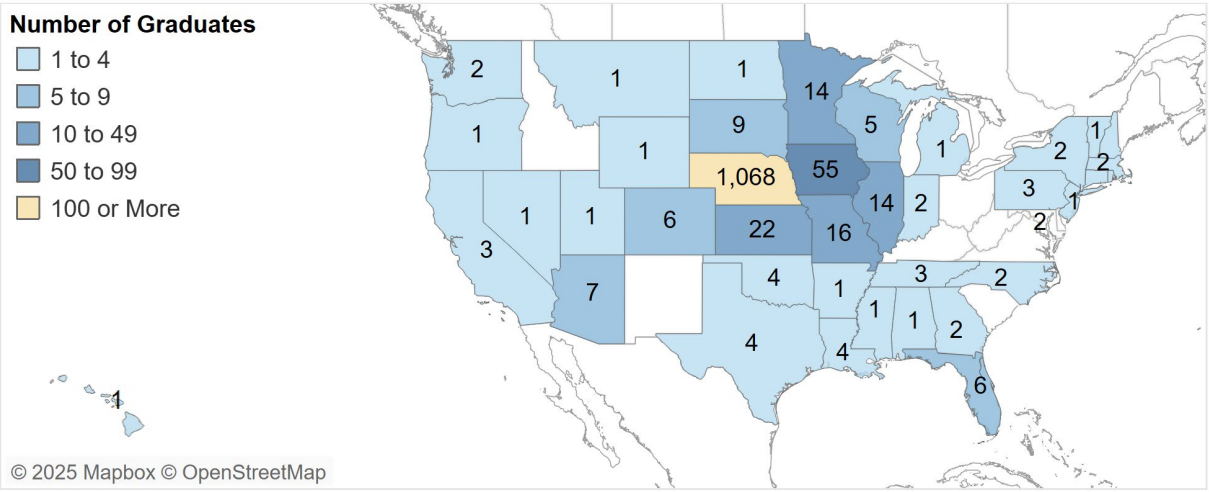
Figure 9 illustrates the variability found in the type of post-secondary schools attended by college-going graduates from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Apart from graduates in the Other category, graduates from all racial/ethnic backgrounds were more likely to attend a public college or university than any other type of school; however, the proportion of graduates doing so differed across racial/ethnic groups from 45.2% for Hispanic graduates to 63.0% for Asian graduates. Multi-racial college attendees were the most likely to attend a private or religious college or university (18.1%), followed by White college attendees (15.0%). With the exception of the Other category, Hispanic and African American college attendees were the most likely to attend a community college (44.9% and 39.3% respectively).

Figure 9: Post-Secondary Institution Type and Race/Ethnicity



As shown in Figure 10, the 2024 OPS graduates pursuing post-secondary education attended institutions across the United States. Most college-going graduates, however, remained relatively close to home and attended post-secondary education in Nebraska or the neighboring state of Iowa and surrounding states.

Figure 10: The Number of 2024 Graduates Attending College in Each U.S. State



Financial Support and the Decision to Attend or Not Attend Post-Secondary Education

The 2024 graduates who attended post-secondary education either full or part-time utilized multiple types of funding sources to pay for their education (see Table 2). Overall, scholarships were the most frequently utilized funding source (61.8%) followed by grants. Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits while in high school were more likely to utilize grants than graduates who were not eligible. Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits were much less likely than their more affluent counterparts to utilize loans, personal earnings/savings, and help from family or friends.

Table 2. Sources of Financial Support for Post-Secondary Education

	All Attending College	Eligible for Educational Benefits	Not Eligible for Educational Benefits
Grants	45.6%	55.8%	31.4%
Scholarships	61.8%	59.3%	65.2%
Loans	17.8%	13.6%	23.6%
Personal earnings/savings	25.0%	21.8%	29.3%
Family/friends	16.0%	8.2%	29.2%
Employer assistance	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%
Other	.9%	.5%	1.5%

Post-secondary attendees noted several factors that influenced their decisions to further their education (see Table 3). Overall, the most common factors, for graduates who were and were not eligible for educational benefits, were that graduates were pursuing a career that required a degree, the need to improve job qualifications, and parents' desire for graduates to attend college. The availability of financial resources was also a significant factor for graduates of different socio-economic backgrounds, but more so for graduates who were eligible for educational benefits.

Table 3. Factors Influencing the Decision to Attend Post-Secondary Education

	All Attending College	Eligible for Educational Benefits	Not Eligible for Educational Benefits
Pursuing a career that requires a degree	69.9%	67.1%	73.8%
Pursuing a career that requires a license or certification	12.8%	13.8%	11.4%
Need to improve job skills/qualifications	67.0%	67.6%	66.2%
Parents/guardians wanted you to attend college	63.0%	63.4%	62.4%
The availability of financial resources	65.2%	69.5%	59.3%
Believe college is the only means to a better job	27.5%	29.5%	24.7%
Other	.6%	.5%	.7%

Graduates who did not attend post-secondary education right after high school were asked about factors that influenced their decision to not attend (see Table 4). The most influential factor for all graduates was the need to take a break from school. Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits were more likely to identify the inability to find college funding, low grades/test scores, and family related demands as factors affecting their college attendance decision. Graduates who were not eligible for educational benefits were more likely to identify that their career choice did not require a degree. Of the 815 graduates who were not attending post-secondary education, 83.9% planned to attend college in the future. Though 35.1% did not know when they would attend college, 49.3% planned to do so within the following year.

Table 4. Factors Influencing the Decision to Not Attend Post-Secondary Education

	All Not Attending College	Eligible for Educational Benefits	Not Eligible for Educational Benefits
Want to take a break from school	61.8%	63.5%	57.9%
Career doesn't require a degree	10.7%	9.4%	13.6%
Unable to obtain enough funds	24.2%	26.2%	19.4%
Grades/test scores too low	27.5%	28.8%	24.4%
Family related issues or demands	16.1%	17.8%	12.0%
Do not think school is worth it (effort, money, time, etc.)	9.0%	8.4%	10.3%
Do not like school	9.8%	9.6%	10.3%
COVID-19 pandemic	16.7%	17.5%	14.9%
Other Influences	10.1%	8.2%	14.5%

Comparisons of Graduates Who Were and Were Not Attending Post-Secondary Education

All 2024 graduates were asked whether their parents/guardians attended college and whether they obtained some type of degree. Forty-five percent (45.1%) of graduates reported that their parents/guardians attended college and 74.6% of these parents earned some type of degree. Graduates whose parents earned a degree were more likely to attend some type of post-secondary education.

- 55.9% of graduates whose parents attended college but did not earn a degree were attending post-secondary education, whereas 72.0% of graduates whose parents attended college and earned a degree were attending post-secondary education.
- 55.8% of graduates whose parents did not attend college were attending post-secondary education

In addition to parents'/guardians' degree attainment, graduates who were and were not attending post-secondary education differed in several other ways. Table 5 illustrates that graduates who were not attending post-secondary education were slightly more likely to have dependents and more likely to live with their parents, relatives, or friends. These differences in housing are largely due to the higher percentage of graduates who are attending post-secondary education, living in dormitories and paying for their housing through scholarships or student loans.

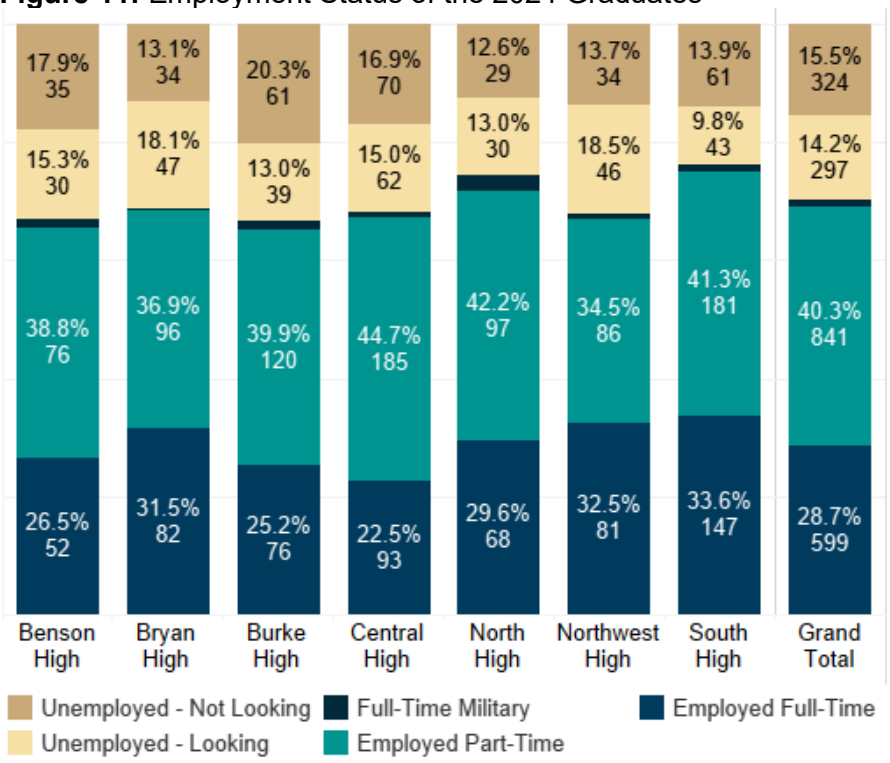
Table 5. Additional Differences Between 2024 Graduates Attending and Not Attending College

The Graduate …	All Graduates	Attending College	Not Attending College
Is married	.8%	.6%	1.1%
Has at least one dependent	2.2%	1.5%	3.4%
Lives with parents/guardians	66.4%	57.3%	80.9%
Lives with friends, relatives, or alone	10.2%	6.3%	16.4%
Lives in group housing (e.g. dorms)	23.4%	36.4%	2.7%
Lives with someone at no cost to the graduate	47.4%	44.4%	52.2%
Pays own rent or dorm fee (e.g., Loans)	50.8%	54.4%	45.1%
Has rent paid by someone other than the graduate	1.8%	1.3%	2.7%

Employment of the 2024 Graduates

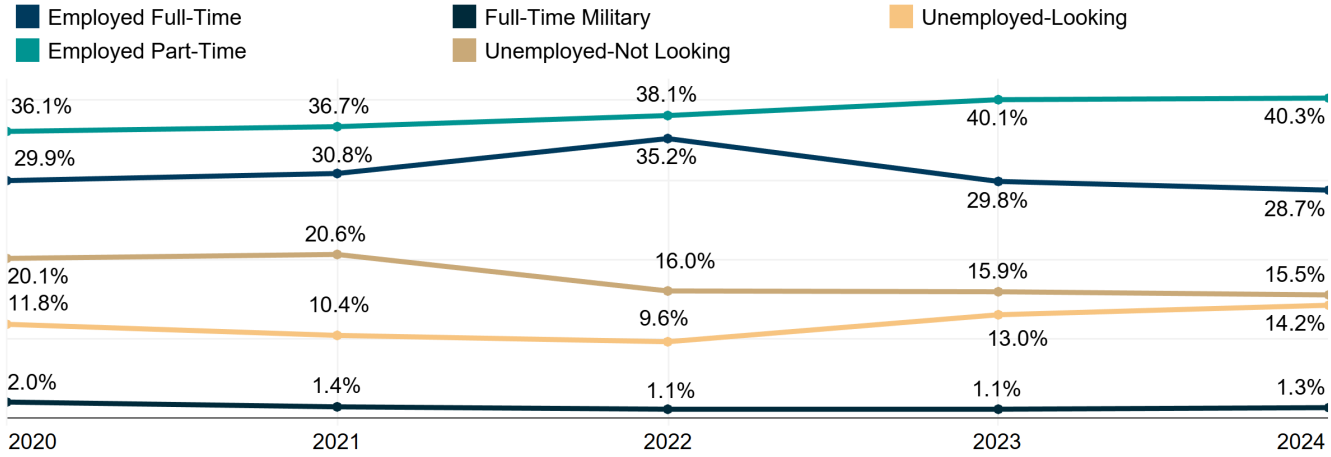
The majority (70.3%) of 2024 graduates were employed in some capacity at the time they were contacted for their follow-up; 28.7% full-time, 40.3% part-time, and 1.3% were in the military. Thirty percent (29.7%) of graduates were not employed when contacted; 14.2% were looking for employment and 15.5% were not looking. The employment status of graduates varied across OPS high schools, with Northwest and South High Schools having the highest percentage of graduates working full-time (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Employment Status of the 2024 Graduates



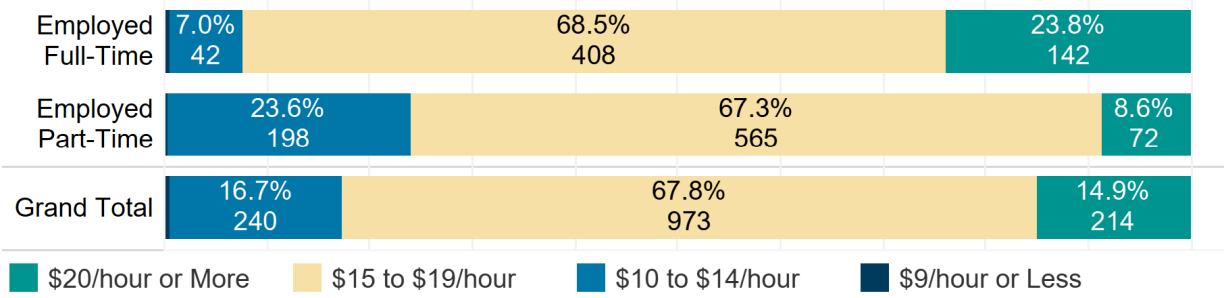
The employment status of OPS graduates has fluctuated somewhat over the past five years (see Figure 12). The percentage of graduates who were employed full-time had been increasing over the past few years, but more recently, has declined since the peak for 2022 graduates. Part-time employment increased steadily starting with the 2020 graduates and continued through the 2024 graduates. The percentage of graduates who were unemployed but looking for work has increased over the years while the percentage of unemployed graduates not looking for work has decreased.

Figure 12: Five Years of Employment Status



As illustrated in Figure 13, most graduates who were employed were earning $10 or more per hour. Graduates working full-time were much more likely than those working part-time to earn $15 or more per hour.

Figure 13: Graduates Working Full or part-time



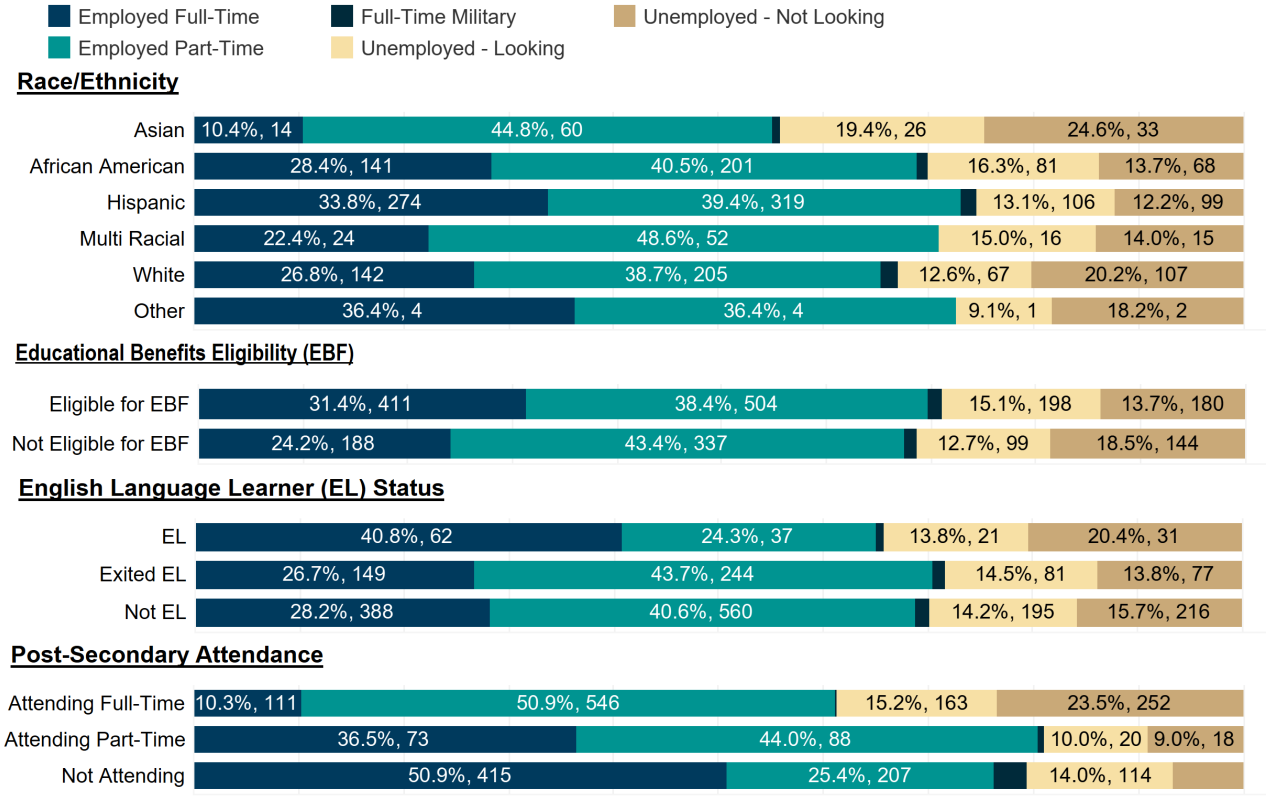
Variability in Employment Status Across Demographic Groups

Figure 14 illustrates that the employment status of the 2024 graduates varied considerably across differing racial, socio-economic, English language proficiency, and post-secondary educational attendance groups. Asian graduates were least likely to be working full-time and most likely to be unemployed. Except for graduates in the Other racial/ethnic category, Hispanic graduates were most likely to be working full-time, and Multi-racial graduates were most likely to be working part-time. The proportion of graduates who were unemployed varied across ethnic groups. Additionally, more than one half of the unemployed Asian, White, and Other graduates were not looking for employment.

The percentage of graduates who were working was similar for graduates who were and were not eligible for educational benefits; however, graduates who were eligible were more likely to be working full-time. Likewise, the percentage of graduates who were working was similar for those who were ELs, exited ELs, and graduates who were not ELs; however, EL graduates were more likely to be working full-time.

Finally, employment status differed significantly for graduates depending on whether they were attending post-secondary education. Graduates who attended post-secondary education full-time were significantly less likely to be working full-time and if unemployed, less likely to be looking for employment. Graduates who were not attending post-secondary education were most likely to be working full-time and if unemployed, more likely to be looking for a job. Graduates who were attending post-secondary education part-time were slightly more likely than those not attending, to be working either full or part-time.

Figure 14: Employment Status for Various Graduate Demographic Groups



Current Jobs, Career Goals, and Fields of Study

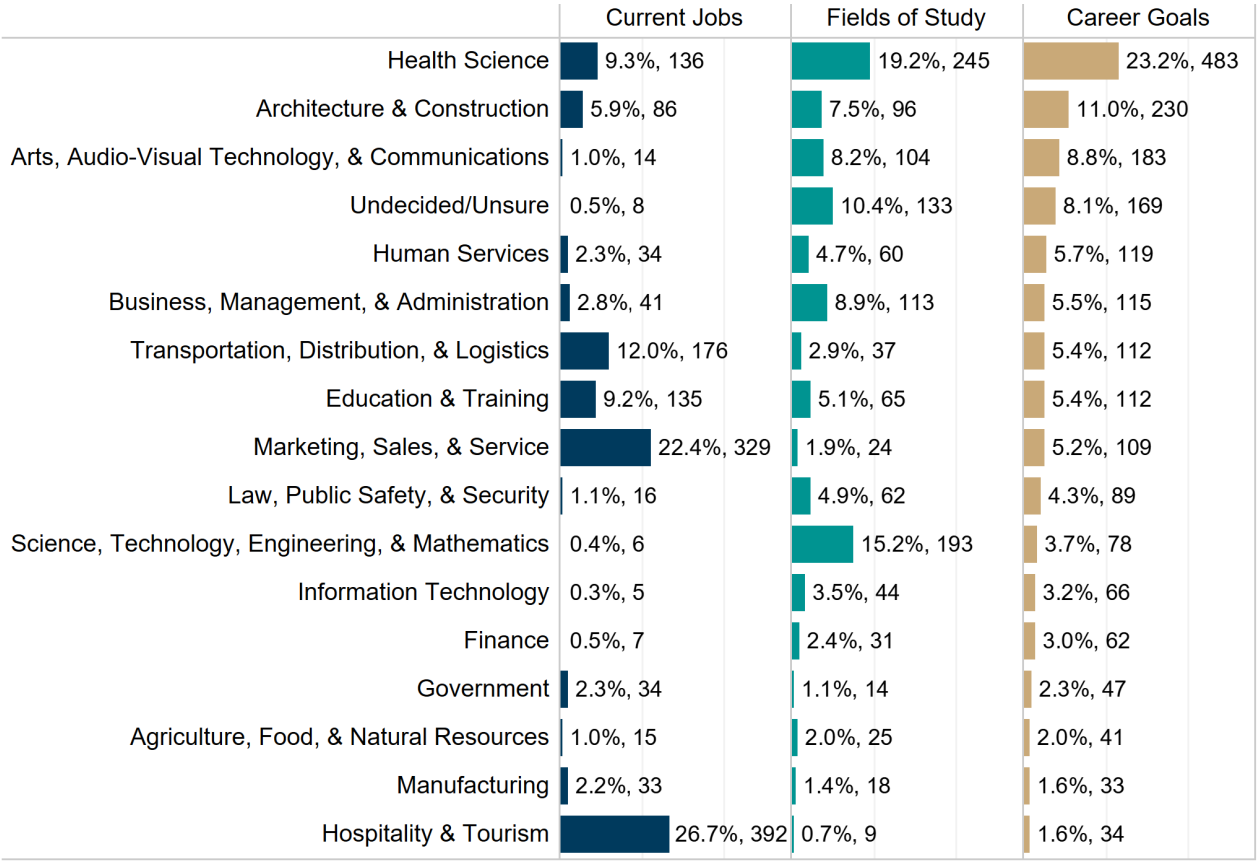
Many of the jobs held by the 2024 graduates tended to be entry level or low skill jobs. Many working graduates are also attending post-secondary education and likely require the flexibility offered by these types of jobs. Figure 15 illustrates the 2024 graduates who were working when contacted held jobs in every career field; however, the majority (61.1%) of jobs held by graduates fell into only three career fields.

- 26.7% of working graduates held jobs in the hospitality and tourism career field. This field includes jobs such as cooks, wait staff, host/hostesses, and hotel/motel front desk and housekeeping staff.
- 22.4% of working graduates held jobs in the marketing, sales, and service career field. This field includes jobs such as cashiers, supermarket clerks, telemarketing, and retail sales.
- 12.0% of working graduates held jobs in the transportation, distribution, and logistics career field. This field includes jobs such as delivery services and package handling, warehouse workers, auto mechanics and collision repair, carwash attendants, and auto detailing.

The current jobs and the career goals of the 2024 graduates were very similar to those of past graduating classes. Health sciences was the most popular field for graduates' career goals, followed by architecture and construction which was followed by arts, audio-visual technology, and communications. Though most graduates (76.5%) were not working in their chosen career field, overall, there was a relatively close alignment between the graduates' career goals and the

fields of study (i.e., college majors) in which they were participating. Nearly seventy percent (69.8%) of college-going graduates reported a field of study that matched their career goal field. A more complete description of the career fields can be found in Appendix B.

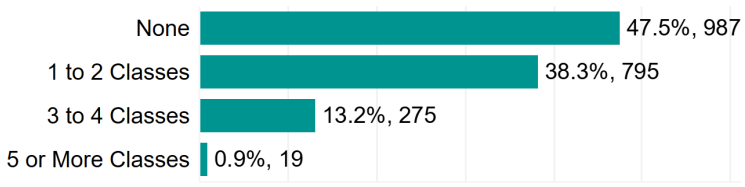
Figure 15: Graduates' Current Jobs, Career goals, and Fields of Study



When compared to the 2023 graduates, the 2024 graduates were equally as likely to be undecided regarding their career goals (approximately 8%) and equally as likely to be undecided regarding their fields of study/majors if attending college (approximately 10%).

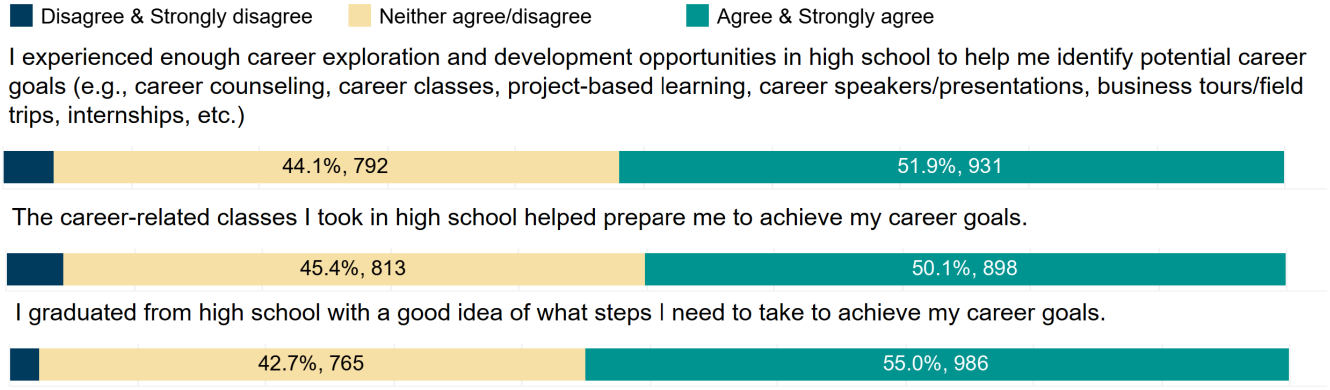
In order to explore the impact of high school experiences on career choices, graduates were asked how many career-related courses they completed during high school. Though most high school students complete at least one career-related course before graduating, Figure 16 illustrates just over half of graduates recognized they completed career-related courses, and that some (14.1%) completed three or more.

Figure 16: The Number of Career-Related Classes Completed by 2024 Graduates



Graduates were also asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with several favorable statements regarding how their career exploration and development activities impacted their career goals. Though a significant percentage of graduates were neutral (did not agree or disagree), over fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed that their career-related experiences helped them identify career goals, career-related classes helped them prepare to achieve their goals, and they graduated from high school knowing the next steps to take to achieve their career goals.

Figure 17: The Impact of Career-Related Activities on Graduates' Career Goals



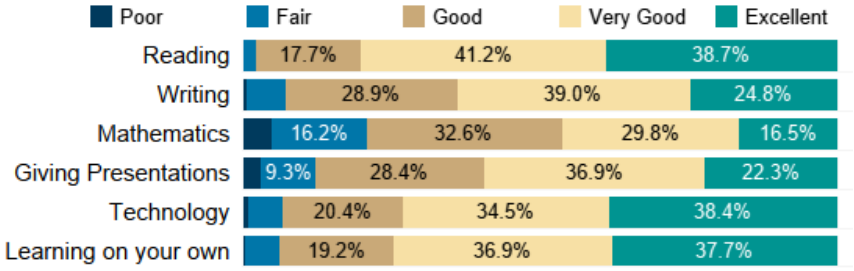
Additional Questions for the Graduates

Graduates were asked to rate themselves on several skills/abilities related to their experiences at OPS as well as several features of their OPS education. They were also asked to give suggestions on what OPS could have done to better prepare them for life after high school. Their responses are summarized below.

Graduates' Ratings of Their Skills and Abilities

Graduates rated their skills/abilities using a 5-point scale ranging from poor to excellent. Overall, graduates were more likely to rate their skill/abilities favorably and did not rate their skills/abilities as poor or fair very often (see Figure 18). Out of the six skills/abilities addressed in the survey, graduates were most confident regarding their reading skill, ability to learn on their own, and technology skill. Over 69% of the graduates rated their skills/abilities in these three areas as very good or excellent. Graduates were least confident regarding their skills in mathematics and presenting information. Over 12% of graduates rated their skills/abilities in these two areas as poor or fair.

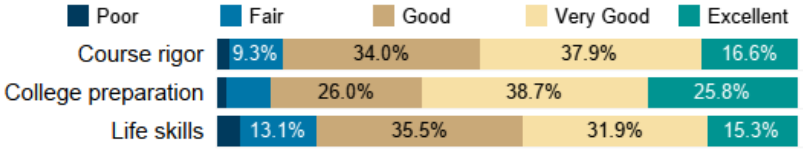
Figure 18: 2024 Graduates' Ratings of Their Skills



The Quality of Graduates' Experience in OPS

Overall, graduates rated the three features of their educational experience, course rigor, college preparation, and life skills training relatively favorably (see Figure 19). The 2024 graduates were most satisfied with OPS's efforts focused on college preparation. Well over half (64.5%) of the graduates rated this feature as very good or excellent. Graduates were least satisfied with OPS's availability of life skills training. Though nearly half of the graduates rated this feature as very good or excellent, 17.2% of the graduates rated it as poor or fair.

Figure 19: 2024 Graduates' Ratings of Educational Features



Suggestions on What OPS Can Do Better

The final question of the follow-up survey asked graduates to suggest anything Omaha Public Schools could have done to better prepare the graduates. Most surveys (72.5%) were completed without the graduate leaving a suggestion. Suggestions were left by approximately 575 graduates. All comments were submitted to analysis using the artificial intelligence (AI) functionality in Qualtrics, the survey software used by Omaha Public Schools. AI generated paragraphs summarizing graduates' comments were then validated and edited for length and clarity by OPS Research staff. This summary is presented below.

Graduates' comments indicated that Omaha Public Schools could improve in several key areas to better prepare students for life after high school. Overall, the 2024 graduates expressed a desire for more comprehensive college and career preparation, more financial literacy education, and life skills training in high school. They also wanted teachers and counselors to be more engaged with and supportive of students, and for a more structured and supportive classroom environment with better resources. These themes suggest the desire for a more holistic approach to education that prepares graduates for both academic success and real-world independence.

<u>College and Career Preparation</u>

Graduates felt that starting college and career preparation earlier in high school, ideally from freshman year forward, would have been beneficial. Additionally, they noted a desire for more diverse career options to be discussed, including nontraditional paths like trade schools and

vocational training. Many graduates believed that students needed more guidance and support in the classroom to help them prepare for college and future careers.

Financial Literacy
Graduates felt more comprehensive and extensive financial literacy classes that cover real-life financial skills such as managing credit, taxes, and bank accounts, would have been very beneficial. Additionally, graduates thought these classes should be integrated into the curriculum earlier, starting from freshman year. Many graduates indicated that financial literacy is crucial for students to succeed in the real world and should be a priority in high school education.

Teacher and Counselor Engagement
Graduates felt that teachers and counselors should have been more actively engaged with students by listening to their needs and concerns. Graduates also suggested teachers use different methods to engage students and make learning more interactive. Many believed that empathy and understanding from teachers and counselors are essential for students' emotional and academic wellbeing.

Life Skills Training
Graduates advocated for more life skills training in high school, including practical skills like cooking, budgeting, and time management. They also felt there was a need for these classes to be mandatory and integrated into the curriculum to prepare students for independent living. Graduates indicated they felt that life skills training was essential for students to succeed in the real world and should be prioritized in high school education.

Classroom Environment and Resources
Graduates felt it would have been very beneficial to have a more structured and distraction-free classroom environment to improve student focus and learning. Additionally, they mentioned a desire for more hands-on teaching methods and better resources such as technology and support for special education students. Many graduates suggested that supportive classroom environments are crucial for students to succeed academically and emotionally.

Summary

Every year, the Graduate Follow-Up study allows OPS to shine light on its progress toward preparing all students for success in college, career, and life. The results of the graduate follow-up study show the majority of 2024 OPS graduates pursued post-secondary education. Just over 60% of these graduates attended four-year colleges or universities while just under 40% attended community colleges or trade schools. OPS graduates attended post-secondary institutions across the United States, but most attended in Nebraska. In addition to attending post-secondary education, the 2024 OPS graduates joined the workforce in high numbers. Over 70% of graduates were working either full or part-time when contacted for their follow-up. Most working graduates hold jobs in hospitality and tourism, marketing/sales and service, and transportation and logistics fields. Like past graduating classes, the most popular career goal field for the 2024 graduates was health sciences, followed by architecture and construction, and arts, audio-visual, and communications. Though many OPS graduates expressed satisfaction with their high school education, some suggested more college and career preparation, financial literacy/life skills training, and more supportive classroom environments would have been beneficial.

References

Irwin, V., Wang, K., Jung, J., Kessler, E., Tezil, T., Alhassani, S., Filbey, A., Dilig, R., and Bullock Mann, F. (2024). *Report on the Condition of Education 2024* (NCES 2024-144). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved 10/21/5024 from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2024144.

Appendix A: 2024 Graduate Follow-Up Survey

Q1 Which of the following best describes your present employment situation?

- Employed Full-Time
- Employed Part-Time
- Full-Time Member of the Armed Forces
- Unemployed - Seeking Employment
- Unemployed - Not Looking For Employment

If Full-Time Member of the Armed Forces or either Unemployment options were chosen the survey skipped to question

Q2 What job are you currently performing? *If you have multiple jobs, please list your primary position.*

Q3 What field is your job in? *If you are unsure of the field, please select the final option*

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Arts, Audio-Visual Technology, and Communications
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Architecture and Construction
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, and Security
- Manufacturing
- Government and Public Administration
- Marketing, Sales, and Service
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics
- Undecided

Q4 In total, how many hours do you typically work each week? (Including all jobs.)

- 5 or fewer
- 6
- 7
- …
- 55 or greater

Q5 What is your average hourly wage? (Including tips)

- $9/hour or less
- $10 to $14/hour
- $15 to $19/hour
- $20/hour or more

Q6 What is your general career goal? In other words, what job would you like to pursue for your career?

_____

Q7 What field do you intend to work in? *If you are unsure, please select the last option.*

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Arts, Audio-Visual Technology, and Communications
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Architecture and Construction
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, and Security
- Manufacturing
- Government and Public Administration
- Marketing, Sales, and Service
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics
- Undecided

Q8 Following graduation from high school, have you participated in any educational or training classes or activities? If so, have you attended full or part-time?

- No
- Part-time
- Full-time At least 12 semester hrs, 15 quarter hrs, or 6 semester hrs for graduate students

If "No" was chosen, the survey skipped to question 18.

Q9 What state is the school in? _____

Q10 What is the name of the school you attend(ed)?

- University of Nebraska - Omaha
- University of Nebraska - Lincoln
- University of Nebraska - Kearney
- Metropolitan Community College
- Iowa Western Community College
- Creighton University
- Wayne State College
- College of Saint Mary
- Bellevue University
- Other

If any option other than "Other" was chosen, the survey skipped to question 14.

Q11 Please type the full name of the school you attend. _____

Q12 In what city is the school located? _____

Q13 Which of the following categories best describes your present school? *The first three options typically represent institutions with 4-year degree programs, while the last three tend to offer degrees or accreditation in two years or less.*

- Public University or College
- Private University or College
- Religiously Affiliated University or College
- Community College
- Technical, Career, or Trade School
- Other (seminars, workshops, apprenticeships, etc.)

Q14 Which of the following best describes your educational program?

- 4-Year Program
- 2-Year Program
- Military Training
- Apprenticeship
- 1-Year Program
- Online Classes
- Other (Please describe) _____

Q15 Which of the following categories is your field of study (major) in? *If you are unsure which field it falls under, please type your major in the final option.*

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Arts, Audio-Visual Technology, and Communications
- Business, Management, and Administration
- Architecture and Construction
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, and Security
- Manufacturing
- Government and Public Administration
- Marketing, Sales, and Service
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics
- Undecided

Q16 Which of the following factors influenced your decision to attend college? (Choose all that apply to you.)

- Need to improve job skills/qualifications
- Pursuing a career that requires a degree
- Parents/guardians wanted you to attend college
- Believe college is the only means to a better job
- The availability of financial resources
- Other _____

Q17 What is/was your source of financial support? (Pick all that apply to you.)

- Grants
- Scholarships
- Loans
- Personal earnings/savings
- Family/friends
- Employer assistance
- Other _____

If the respondent indicated they were not attending any type of post-secondary education the survey displayed questions 18 through 20.

Q18 Which of the following factors influenced your decision to not attend or leave college? (Choose all that apply to you.)

- Want to take a break from school
- Career doesn't require a degree
- Unable to obtain enough funding (scholarships, grants, loans) to pay for tuition
- Grades/test scores too low
- Family related issues or demands
- Do not think school is worth it (money, effort, time, etc.)
- Do not like school
- COVID-19
- Other _____

Q19 Do you plan to attend college in the future?

- Yes
- No

If "No" was chosen the survey skipped to question 21.

Q20 When do you plan to attend college?

- Within the next 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year from now
- 1 to 2 years from now
- 2 or more years from now
- Undecided

Q21 Did any of your parents/guardians attend college?

- Yes
- No

If "No" was chosen the survey skipped to question

Q22 Did any of your parents/guardians earn a college degree?

- Yes
- No

Q23 Are you married?

- Yes
- No

Q24 Do you share housing with other people? If so, who do you live with?

- Alone
- Group housing (dormitories, Greek housing, etc.)
- Parent(s) / Guardian(s)
- Other Relative(s)
- Friend(s)

Q25 How do you finance housing?

- Another person allows me to stay with them, free of charge.
- Another person pays my rent.
- I pay rent (includes taking loans for campus housing).
- I own my house/condo/etc.

Q26 Do you have any dependents/children? If so, how many?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- More than 3

Q27 Please rate your ability level in the following areas, as a result of your experience at OPS.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Reading	○	○	○	○	○
Writing (e.g., reports)	○	○	○	○	○
Mathematics	○	○	○	○	○
Presenting Information	○	○	○	○	○
Technology	○	○	○	○	○
Learning on your own	○	○	○	○	○

Q28 Approximately how many career-related classes did you complete while in high school**?** *Some examples of career-related classes are classes in culinary arts, automotive technology, business, finance, computer technology, healthcare, teaching, and engineering*

- 0-None
- 1 to 2 Classes
- 3 Classes
- 4 Classes
- 5 or More Classes

Q29 Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding career exploration and preparation activities you experienced during high school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I experienced enough career exploration and development opportunities in high school to help me identify potential career goals (e.g., career counseling, career classes, project-based learning, career speakers/presentations, business tours/field trips, internships, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
The career-related classes I took in high school helped prepare me to achieve my career goals.	○	○	○	○	○
I graduated from high school with a good idea of what steps I need to take to achieve my career goals.	○	○	○	○	○

Q30 Please rate the quality of the following features related to your education at OPS.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Course rigor (e.g., high standards, comparable to college-level difficulty, challenging homework, advanced courses available)	○	○	○	○	○
College preparation opportunities (e.g., study skill development, opportunities to explore education path, assistance with applications to college, scholarships, FAFSA, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Life skills training availability (e.g., resume writing, budgeting and financial planning, writing checks, preparing taxes, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○

Q31 Is there anything you suggest that Omaha Public Schools could have done to better prepare you?

_____

_____

Appendix B: Occupational Code Sheet – 16 Career Clusters

1. **Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources**
   - Landscapers, Gardeners, Lawn Care Workers, Grounds Crew
   - Veterinarians, Veterinary Assistants, Plant or Animal Scientists
   - Geologists, Mining Engineers, Mining Machine Operators
   - Forest Harvesting and Protection, Fish and Game Wardens, Rangers, Natural Resource Managers
   - Farmers and Ranchers, Butchers and Meat Cutters, Agricultural Products Inspectors, Animal Handlers, Groomers, and Trainers, Pest Control, Recycling Specialist

2. **Arts, Audio-Visual Technology, and Communications**
   - Actors, Dancers, Musicians, Models, Producers, Directors, Writers
   - Photographers, Designers (Interior and Fashion), Artists, Radio/TV Production
   - Typesetters, Lithographic Production, Printing Press Operators, Bindery Workers, Photographic Process Workers
   - Audio and Video Systems Technicians, Special Effects Technicians
   - Telecommunications Technicians, Equipment, Cable, and Line Installers/Repairers
   - Newscasters, Reporters, Editors, Broadcast Technicians

3. **Business, Management, and Administration**
   - Executives, Department Managers, Managers and Assistant Managers of Restaurants, Hotels, Supermarkets, and Retail Stores, Entrepreneurs/Business Owners
   - Accountants, Tax Preparers, Bookkeepers, Auditors, Bill Collectors, Billing Clerks
   - Employment Interviewers, Personnel and Payroll Clerks, Human Resource Managers, Compensation and Benefits Administrators
   - Data Entry Persons, Database Managers, Data Processors
   - File Clerks, Office Managers, Secretaries, Receptionists, Stenographers

4. **Architecture and Construction**
   - Plumbers, Carpenters, Electricians, Roofers, Brick Layers, Concrete Masons, Iron Workers, Drywall Installers and Finishers, Architects, Draftsmen, Painters, Construction Engineers
   - Home Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Installation and Repair, Solar Technician
   - Surveyors, Earth Moving Equipment and Crane Operators, Road and Highway Builders

5. **Education and Training**
   - Teachers, Coaches, Trainers, Aerobics or Religious Instructors, Lecturers, Professors, Librarians, Tutors, Library Assistants, Priest/Preachers/Missionaries
   - Child Care, Nanny, Teachers' Aides
   - School Administrators, Deans, Supervisors, Educational Researchers
   - Counselors, Developmental and School Psychologists, Speech Pathologists
   - Foreign Language Interpreter
   - College Recruiter

6. **Finance**
   - Stock and Investment Brokers, Real Estate Managers
   - Financial Managers, Financial Planners
   - Insurance Agents, Insurance Adjusters, Actuaries
   - Bank Tellers, Bank Officers, Loan Officers, Debt Collectors

7. **Health Science**
   - Pharmacist, Paramedic, Physician, Surgical Technologist, Dentists, Optometrists, Psychologist/Psychiatrists, Radiologists, Sports Medicine Specialists
   - Registered Nurse, Physical Therapist, Dental and Medical Assistants, Nursing/Psychiatric Aides, Licensed Practicing Nurse, Nurse Practitioners, Dental Hygienist, Chiropractor
   - Hospital Building and Grounds Maintenance, Hospital Equipment Maintenance
   - Public Health Administrators, Nurse Educators, Medical Records Technicians

8. **Hospitality and Tourism**
   - Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders, Hosts/Hostesses, Food Preparers, Food Safety and Sanitation Inspectors
   - Lifeguards, Athletes, Sports Officials, Amusement Park Attendants, Gaming and Recreational Operators
   - Ticket Agents, Travel Agents, Tour Directors, Convention Services, Movie Theater Workers, Hotel Reservation Personnel
   - Household (House Keeping) Workers, Baggage Attendants, Front Desk Attendants
   - Janitorial

9. **Human Services**
   - Barbers, Cosmetologists, Nail Technician, Massage Therapist
   - Social Service Workers, Geriatric Service Workers, Community Service Organizers, Consumer Credit Counseling, Peace Corp Worker
   - Career Counseling, Family Counseling, Dietitians, Nutritionists
   - Mortician, Coroner
   - Homemaker

10. **Information Technology**
    - Webmaster, Web Designer
    - Data Analysts, Database Specialists, Help Desk Technicians
    - Computer Analyst, Computer Programmers, Software Engineers and Designers
    - Computer Support Technicians, Network Engineers and Administrators

11. **Law, Public Safety, and Security**
    - Fire Fighters, Fire Chiefs, Fire Inspectors and Investigators, Dispatchers
    - Criminal Justice Professionals, Corrections Officers, Police, Guards, Detectives, Special Agents, Bailiffs, Forensic Experts, Search & Rescue Technicians
    - Lawyers, Legal Assistants, Paralegal Personnel, Judges

12. **Manufacturing**
    - Dental and Eyeglass Technicians, Jewelers, Musical Instrument Makers and Repairers, Precision Assemblers, Blacksmith
    - Electronics (including Computer) Repair/Installation, Vending Machine Repairers
    - Furniture Makers, Upholsterers, Shoe/Leather Production, Apparel/Textile Production, Factory Line Workers, Plastics Production, Machine Operators, Industrial Engineers, Forklift Operator, Mail Inserting Machine Operator
    - Industrial Inspectors, Tool and Die Workers, Welders, Commercial/Industrial Equipment Repair and Installation, Sheet Metal Workers, Production Managers, Foremen

13. Government and Public Administration

- Individuals working in regulatory services (Utilities, Communications, Water)
- Tax Collectors and Assessors, Defense Services
- Legislators, Legislative Aides, Governmental Leaders, Foreign Language Interpreters, Economists
- Occupational Safety Technicians, Pollution Control Technicians, Energy Management, Garbage/Sanitary Engineers

14. Marketing, Sales, and Service

- Advertising Agents, Marketing Research, Public Relations Writers
- Warehouse Managers, Shipping and Receiving Clerks, Route Sales Persons
- E Commerce, Sales Supervisors, Wholesale Distributors, Small Business Entrepreneurs
- Real Estate Sales, Appraisers, Miscellaneous Retail and Wholesale Sales, Sale of Products and Services, Pharmaceutical Sales, Telemarketing, Supermarket Clerks, Cashiers

15. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

- Environmental Engineers, Water Treatment Operators
- Laboratory Researchers, Biologist, Chemist, Physicist, Meteorologist, Sociologist
- Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineers, Petroleum and Rocket Specialists, Mathematicians, Statisticians

16. Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

- Flight Attendants, Bus, Truck, or Taxi Drivers, Rail Transportation, Pilots, Moving Van Drivers, Dispatchers, Air Traffic Controllers
- Urban Planners, Transportation Regulators
- Transportation Safety Analysts, Emergency Services Jobs
- Automobile, Motorcycle, and Aircraft Mechanics, Autobody Technicians, Car Washers
- Warehouse Operations Managers, Shipping and Receiving Clerks, Packers and Handlers, Postal Clerks, Mail Carriers, Dock Workers, Stockers