OMAHA Public Schools

RESEARCH DIVISION

Follow-Up of the Omaha Public Schools 2025 Graduates

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Executive Summary/Key Findings

The following statements highlight the key findings of the Follow-Up of the 2025 Graduates of Omaha Public Schools (OPS). Much greater detail regarding the post high school activities and outcomes for this graduating class can be found throughout this report.

- A majority (61.8%) of the contacted 2025 OPS graduates were attending postsecondary education when contacted to complete their graduate follow-up. This is a 0.8 percentage point increase over the previous year's graduates.
- Postsecondary attendance rates varied across OPS high schools; Central and Westview High Schools had the highest postsecondary attendance rate.
- Postsecondary attendance rates vary across student demographic characteristics; Asian graduates, graduates who were not eligible for educational benefits, and exited EL graduates were more likely to attend postsecondary 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 postsecondary institutions across the United States, the vast majority attended within Nebraska.
- The most often attended postsecondary institutions for the 2025 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 wanted to take 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; Hispanic or Latino graduates and graduates identified as Two or More Races were more likely than other graduates to be working full-time. English learner (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, law, public safety and security, and arts, audio-visual, and communications.
- When asked about what OPS could have done to better prepare graduates for their future, graduates suggested more financial literacy and life skills training, greater flexibility in the career academies and pathways system, more challenging coursework, more supportive and caring teachers, and greater access to college and scholarship information and opportunities.

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 postsecondary education, and factors influencing these decisions. Some of the information collected in the report is required by Nebraska State statute; however, additional data is gathered because of its value to families, staff members, and other interested agencies. The *Follow-Up of the 2025 Omaha Public School Graduates* is the 71st such study administered by OPS.

A total of 2,722 students who started their high school careers in 2021-22 and graduated from Omaha Public Schools in 2025 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 383 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 1,693 respondents. In total, post-graduation data was collected from 2,076 graduates (76.3%). The district used the additional family and friends' contact information obtained from graduates when records on file were no longer valid. 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 2025 Graduates

The OPS Research Division attempted to contact all 2,722 2025 graduates and collected follow-up data from 2,076 graduates resulting in a 76.3% contact rate. Additionally, contact rates ranging from 72.9% to 78.4% were achieved across the nine OPS high schools. The demographic make-up of the contacted 2025 graduates was nearly identical to the 2025 graduating class as a whole. Table 1 illustrates the contacted graduates were representative with respect to gender, socio-economic status, English learner status, special education status, and racial composition.

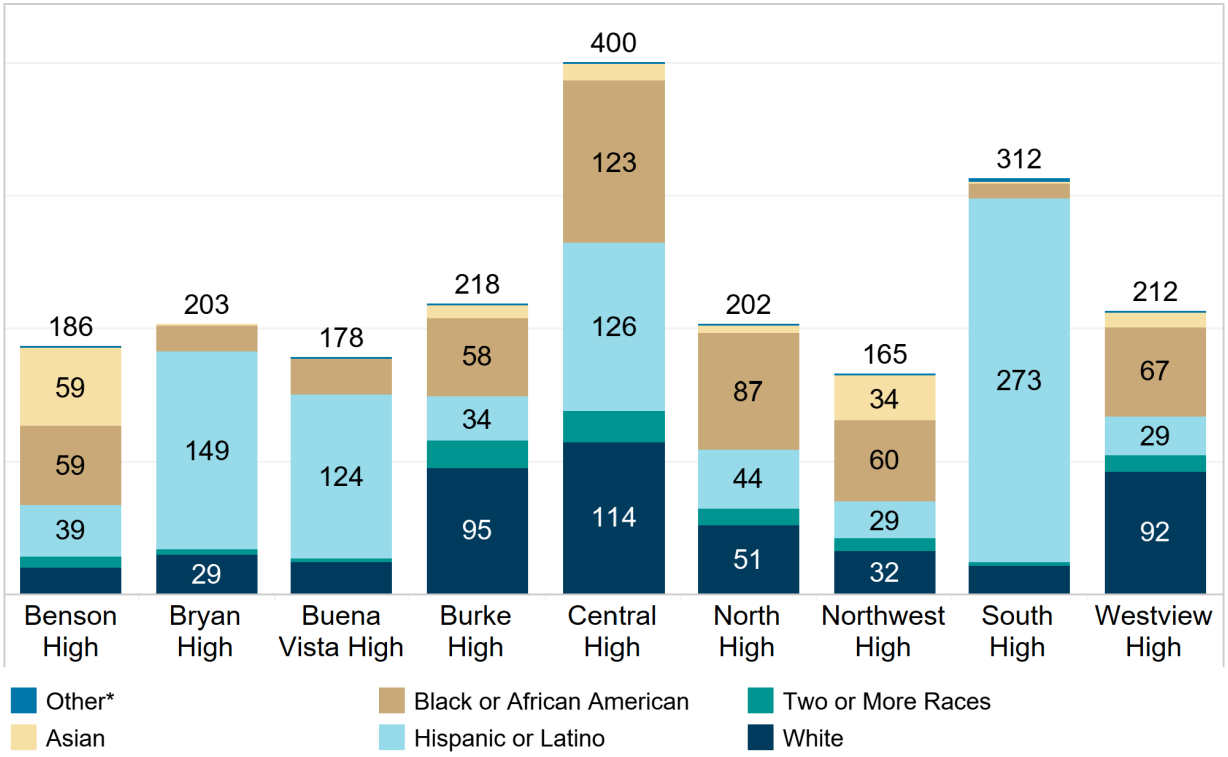
Table 1: Demographics of the 2025 Graduating Class and Those Who Were Contacted

	2025 Graduates	Contacted 2025 Graduates
Female/Male Ratio	51.0%/49.0%	50.6%/49.4%
Eligible for Educational Benefits	55.1%	55.2%
English Learners	10.3%	11.3%
Exited English Learners	23.9%	23.7%
Special Education	11.3%	11.6%
Asian	6.4%	6.5%
Black or African American	24.5%	24.6%
Hispanic or Latino	40.6%	40.8%
Two or More Races	4.8%	4.6%
White	23.1%	23.0%
Other*	0.7%	.5%

*The "Other" racial/ethnic group includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander graduates and has been combined due to small populations.

The representative nature of the contacted graduates extended to the varied racial composition of graduates across the OPS high schools. Figure 1 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 or Latino graduates while Westview, Burke, and Central had the largest number of White graduates. North and Central had the largest number of Black or African American graduates. Benson and Northwest had the largest number of Asian graduates.

Figure 1: Number and Race/Ethnicity of Contacted 2025 Graduates from Each School



*The "Other" racial/ethnic group includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander graduates and has been combined due to small populations.

Postsecondary Education Attendance

At the district level, 61.8% of the contacted 2025 graduates were attending some type of postsecondary education either full or part-time. The most recent national data available shows 61% of 2023 high school graduates were pursuing postsecondary education the fall after they graduated (National Center for Education Statistics, 2026). As can be seen in Figure 2, postsecondary enrollment varied significantly across OPS high schools with Westview achieving the highest percentage at 69.5%, followed closely by Central at 69.4%. Bryan High and Northwest had the lowest percentages of graduates attending postsecondary education (51.3% and 52.8% respectively).

Figure 2: Postsecondary Education Attendance of the 2025 Graduates from Each High School

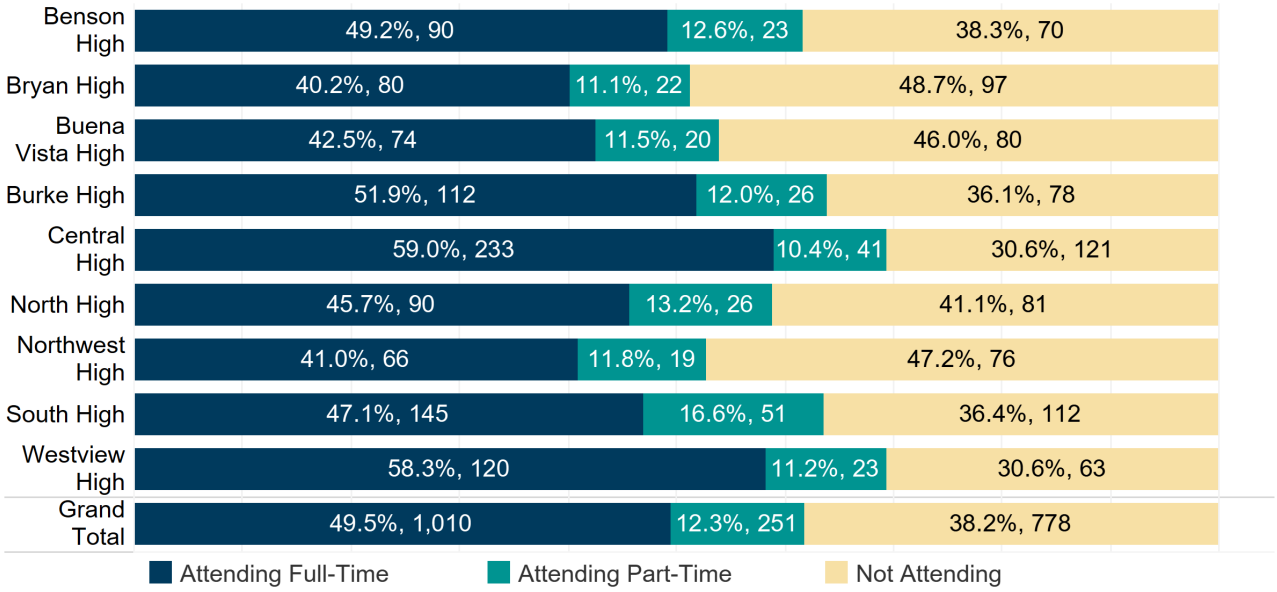
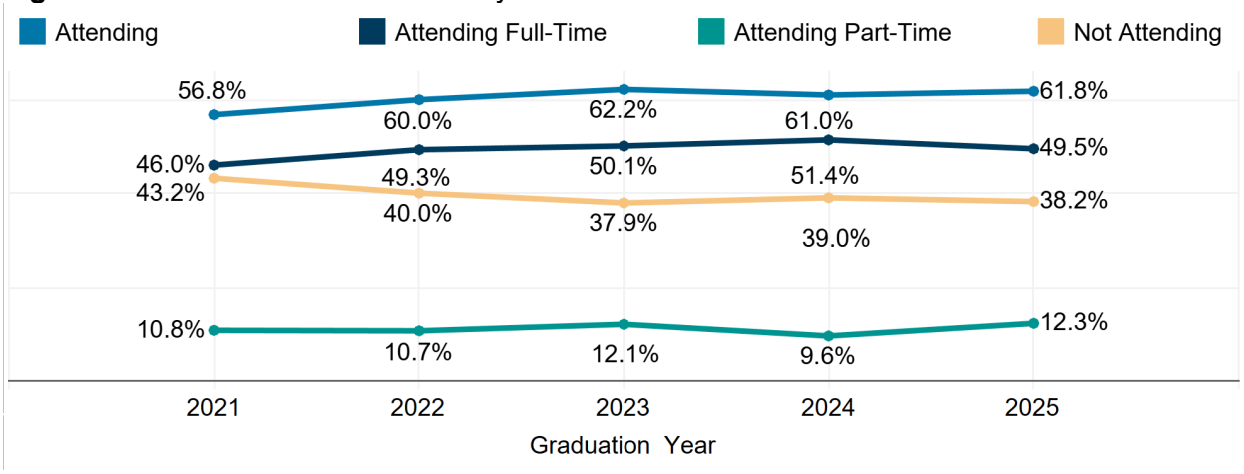


Figure 3 shows at the district level, the percentage of graduates enrolling in some type of postsecondary education increased slightly when compared to the 2024 graduates. When comparing the 2024 and 2025 graduates' postsecondary attendance, full-time attendance was slightly lower for the 2025 graduates while part-time attendance was higher. The percentage of 2025 graduates not attending postsecondary education was slightly lower than for the 2024 graduates.

Figure 3: Five Years of Postsecondary Attendance

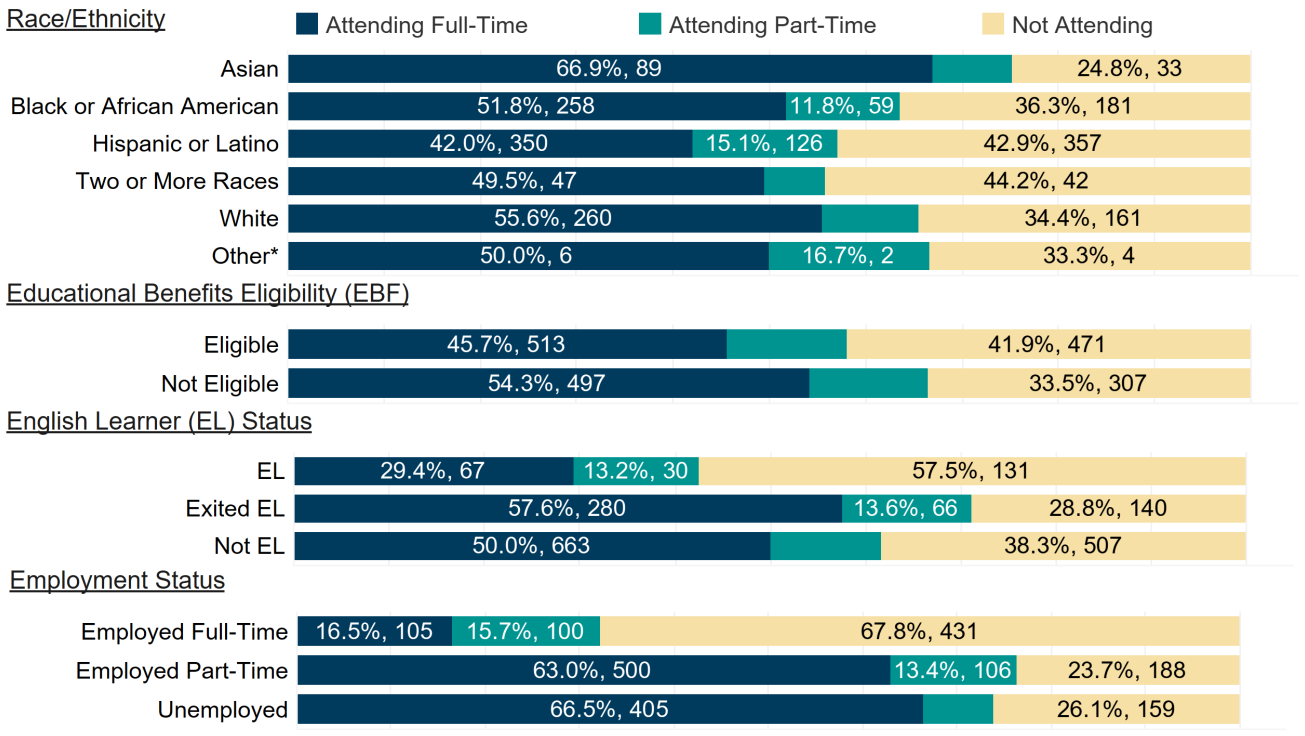


Demographics and Postsecondary Attendance

The likelihood of OPS graduates attending postsecondary education full or part-time varied across student demographic characteristics. Figure 4 (next page) illustrates how postsecondary attendance differed for 2025 graduates from different racial backgrounds, socio-economic status, English language proficiency, and employment status. Asian graduates were the most likely to have enrolled in postsecondary education (75.2%), followed by the Other racial

category (66.7%) and White graduates (65.6%). Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits were less likely to attend postsecondary education than graduates who were not eligible (58.1% vs. 66.5%). English learner graduates (ELs) were least likely to attend postsecondary education (42.5%); however, exited ELs attended at a higher rate (71.2%) than graduates who were not ELs (61.7%). Only 32.2% of graduates working full-time attended postsecondary education, whereas 76.3% of graduates working part-time and 73.9% of unemployed graduates attended postsecondary education.

Figure 4: Postsecondary Educational Attendance for Various Demographic Groups



*The "Other" racial/ethnic group includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander graduates and has been combined due to small populations.

Type of Programs and Postsecondary Institutions Attended by 2025 Graduates

At the district level, 58.1% of the graduates attending postsecondary education were participating in four-year programs and 41.9% were participating in two-year (or less) programs as seen in Figure 5. The most recent national data available indicates 74% of the 2023 graduates attending postsecondary education were attending four-year programs and 26% attended two-year programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2026). The proportion of graduates participating in four- and two-year programs differed considerably across OPS high schools. Central had the highest percentage of graduates attending four-year programs (65.3%), followed closely by Northwest (64.7%). Benson had the highest percentage of graduates attending two-year programs (59.3%).

Figure 5: Length of Programs Attended by the 2025 Graduates from Each High School

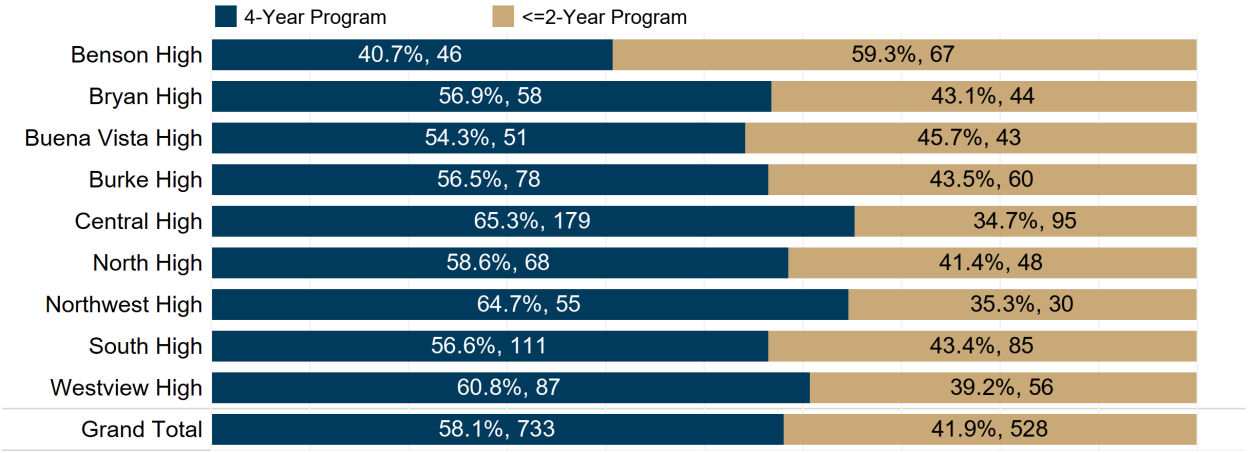
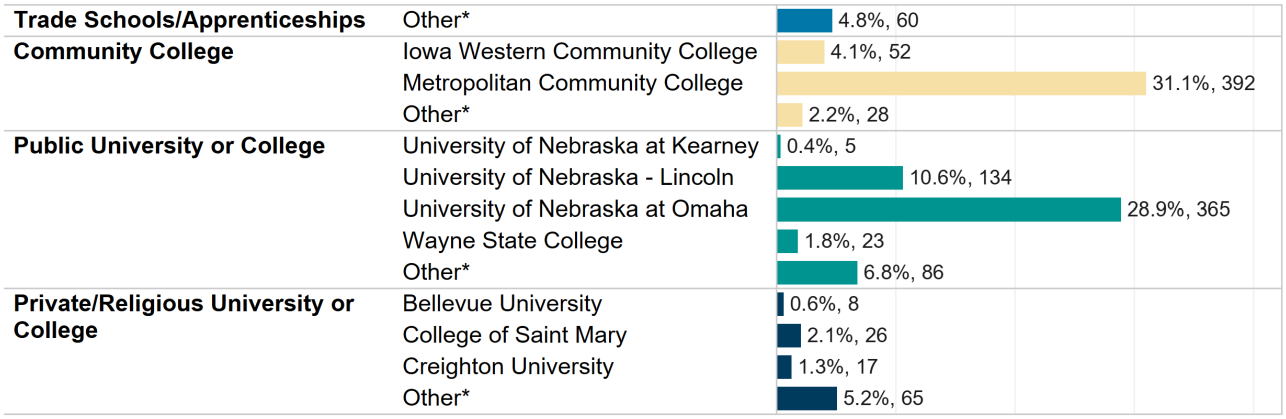


Figure 6 illustrates nearly one-third (31.1%) of the 2025 graduates participating in postsecondary education attended Metropolitan Community College. The University of Nebraska at Omaha was the second most frequently attended school (28.9%). The University of Nebraska System (Kearney, Lincoln, and Omaha) served 39.9% of OPS graduates attending postsecondary education.

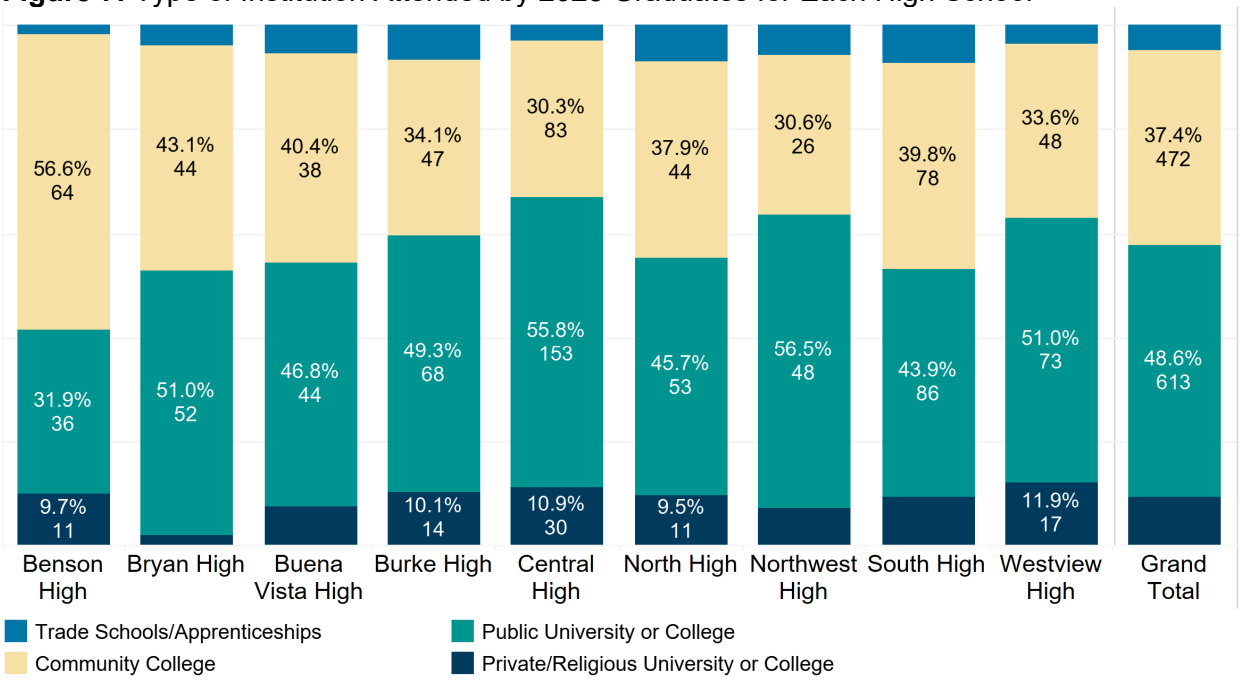
Figure 6: Postsecondary Institutions Attended by 2025 OPS Graduates



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

Many graduates (48.6%) attending postsecondary education attended a public college or university. Community colleges were also a popular choice (37.4%). Private colleges and universities (9.2%) and trade schools and apprenticeships (4.8%) served fewer graduates. The types of postsecondary educational institutions attended by graduates differed significantly across high schools (see Figure 7). Westview High School had the highest proportion of college-going graduates attending private colleges or universities (11.9%). Northwest High School had the largest proportion of graduates attending public colleges or universities (56.5%). Graduates from Bryan and Benson High Schools had the largest proportion of graduates attending community colleges (56.6% and 43.1% respectively).

Figure 7: Type of Institution Attended by 2025 Graduates for Each High School



Given the differing costs of the various types of postsecondary 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 graduates who were not eligible (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Postsecondary Institution and Educational Benefits Eligibility

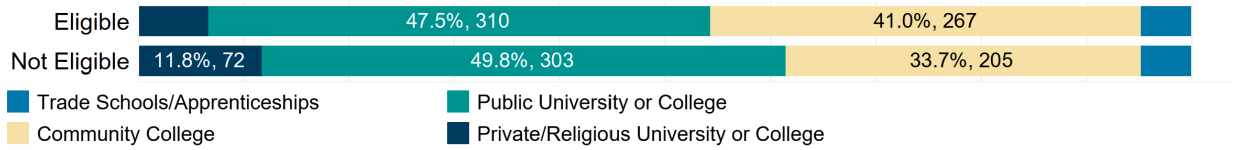
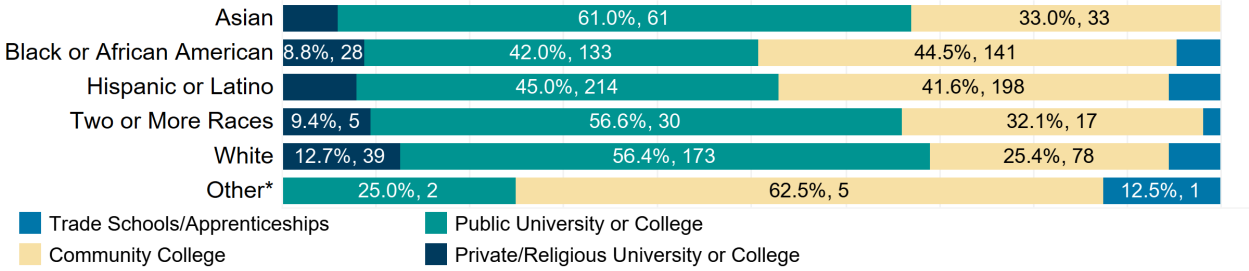


Figure 9 illustrates the variability found in the type of postsecondary schools attended by college-going graduates from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Apart from the Other racial category, graduates from most racial/ethnic backgrounds were more likely to attend a public college or university than any other type of school; however, the proportion of graduates doing so differed across racial/ethnic groups from 42.0% for Black or African American graduates to 61.0% for Asian graduates. White college attendees were the most likely to attend a private or religious college or university (12.7%). With the exception of the Other category, Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino college attendees were the most likely to attend a community college (44.5% and 41.6% respectively).

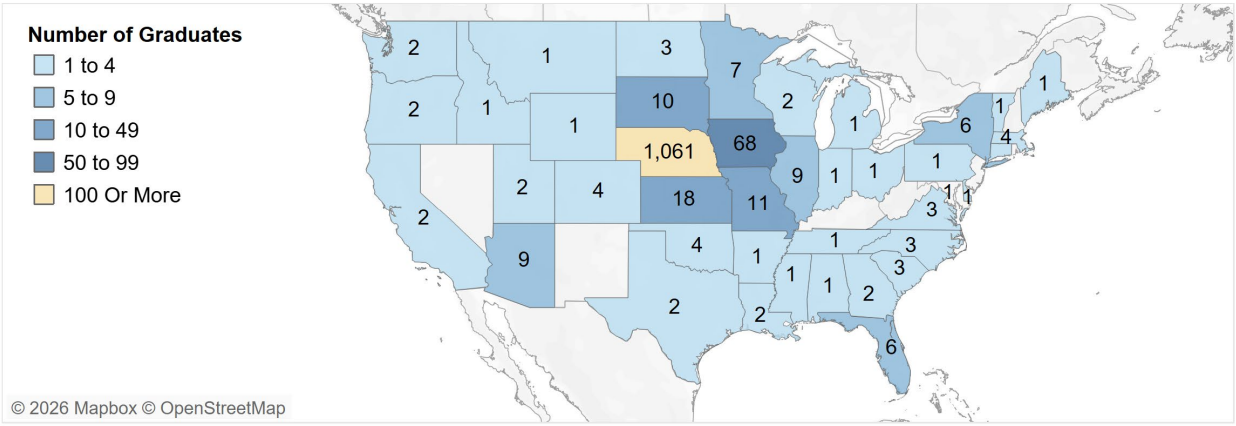
Figure 9: Postsecondary Institution Type and Race/Ethnicity



*The "Other" racial/ethnic group includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander graduates and has been combined due to small populations.

As shown in Figure 10, the 2025 OPS graduates pursuing postsecondary education attended institutions across the United States. Most college-going graduates, however, remained relatively close to home and attended postsecondary education in Nebraska or the neighboring states of Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, and Missouri.

Figure 10: The Number of 2025 Graduates Attending College in Each U.S. State



Financial Support and the Decision to Attend or Not Attend Postsecondary Education

The 2025 graduates who attended postsecondary 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 (62.9%) followed by grants (44.6%). Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits while in high school were more likely to utilize grants than those who were not eligible, and much less likely to utilize loans, personal earnings, and help from family or friends. Most of the Other funding sources noted by graduates included military benefits, union dues, or their educational program was provided at no cost.

Table 2. Sources of Financial Support for Postsecondary Education

	All Attending College	Eligible for Educational Benefits	Not Eligible for Educational Benefits
Grants	44.6%	53.1%	35.6%
Scholarships	62.9%	63.7%	62.1%
Loans	16.6%	10.9%	22.7%
Personal earnings/savings	16.8%	11.3%	23.5%
Family/friends	25.9%	12.6%	40.1%
Employer assistance	1.9%	.9%	3.0%
Other	2.5%	2.6%	2.3%

Postsecondary attendees were asked about 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 and the need to improve job qualifications. 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 Postsecondary Education

	All Attending College	Eligible for Educational Benefits	Not Eligible for Educational Benefits
Pursuing a career that requires a degree	67.7%	67.2%	68.3%
Pursuing a career that requires a license or certification	19.0%	18.7%	19.4%
Need to improve job skills/qualifications	60.7%	59.8%	61.7%
Parents/guardians wanted you to attend college	54.2%	55.5%	52.7%
The availability of financial resources	59.8%	64.4%	54.8%
Believe college is the only means to a better job	25.9%	31.9%	19.4%
Other	1.8%	2.6%	1.0%

Graduates who did not attend postsecondary education right after high school were asked about factors that influenced their decision to not attend postsecondary education (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 this factor as affecting their college attendance decision. Graduates who were not eligible for educational benefits were more likely to identify that their grades or test scores were too low, they did not feel school was worth it, and they did not like school, as factors affecting their decision. Of the 778 graduates who were not attending postsecondary education, 83.8% planned to attend college in the future. Though 28.2% did not know when they would attend college, 58.8% planned to do so within the following year.

Table 4. Factors Influencing the Decision to Not Attend Postsecondary Education

	All Not Attending College	Eligible for Educational Benefits	Not Eligible for Educational Benefits
Want to take a break from school	66.6%	68.6%	63.5%
Career doesn't require a degree	7.5%	7.4%	7.5%
Unable to obtain enough funds	30.5%	31.6%	28.7%
Grades/test scores too low	24.6%	22.9%	27.0%
Family related issues or demands	15.3%	15.5%	15.0%
Do not think school is worth it (effort, money, time, etc.)	12.0%	7.4%	18.9%
Do not like school	10.0%	7.6%	13.7%
COVID-19 pandemic	8.1%	8.5%	7.5%
Other Influences	11.7%	13.2%	9.4%

Comparisons of Graduates Who Were and Were Not Attending Postsecondary Education

All 2025 graduates were asked whether their parents/guardians attended college and whether they obtained some type of degree. Forty-four percent (44.3%) of graduates reported that their parents/guardians attended college and 79.3% of these parents earned some type of degree. Graduates whose parents attended college were more likely to attend some type of postsecondary education.

- 65.7% of graduates whose parents attended college were attending postsecondary education, whereas 58.6% of graduates whose parents did not attend college were attending postsecondary education.
- 66.7% of graduates whose parents attended college and earned a degree were attending postsecondary education, whereas 61.6% of graduates whose parents attended college but did not earn a degree were attending postsecondary education.

In addition to parents'/guardians' degree attainment, graduates who were and were not attending postsecondary education differed in several other ways. Table 5 illustrates that graduates who were not attending postsecondary 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 postsecondary education, living in dormitories and paying for their housing through scholarships or student loans.

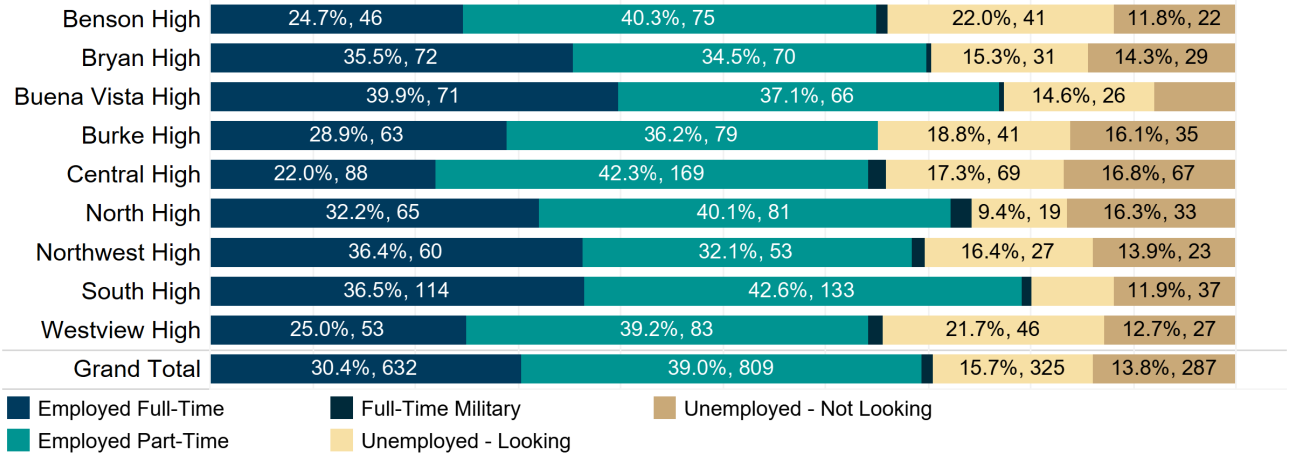
Table 5. Additional Differences Between 2025 Graduates Attending and Not Attending College

The Graduate …	All Graduates	Attending College	Not Attending College
Is married	.6%	.4%	1.0%
Has at least one dependent	2.7%	1.6%	4.6%
Lives with parents/guardians	67.7%	59.5%	81.0%
Lives with friends, relatives, or alone	10.6%	7.1%	16.5%
Lives in group housing (e.g. dorms)	21.3%	33.1%	2.3%
Lives with someone at no cost to the graduate	48.9%	44.9%	55.5%
Pays own rent, mortgage, or dorm fee (e.g., Loans)	46.9%	50.7%	40.9%
Has rent paid by someone other than the graduate	3.8%	4.0%	3.3%

Employment of the 2025 Graduates

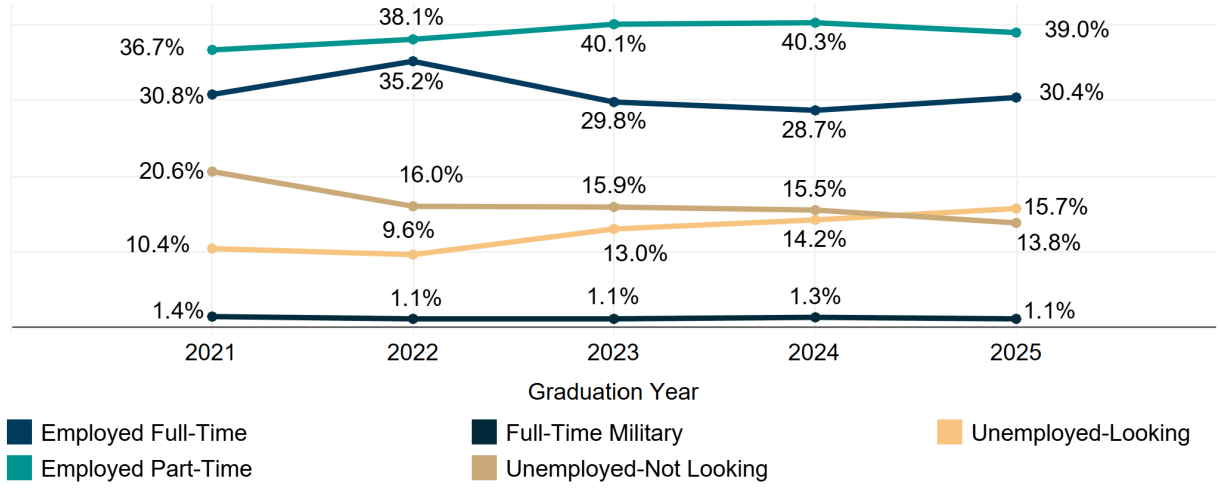
The majority (70.5%) of 2025 graduates were employed in some capacity at the time they were contacted for their follow-up; 30.4% full-time, 39.0% part-time, and 1.1% were in the military. Thirty percent (29.5%) of graduates were not employed when contacted; 15.7% were looking for employment and 13.8% were not looking. The employment status of graduates varied across OPS high schools, with Buena Vista, South, and Northwest High Schools having the highest percentage of graduates working full-time (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Employment Status of the 2025 Graduates



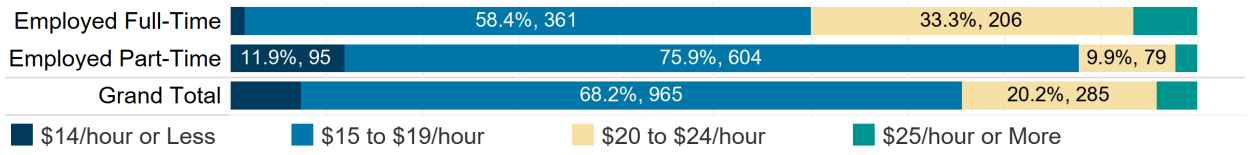
The employment status of OPS graduates has fluctuated somewhat over the past five years (see Figure 12). The percentage of graduates who were employed full-time peaked for the 2022 graduates, decreased for the 2023 and 2024 graduates and increased slightly for the 2025 graduates. Part-time employment has been increasing steadily over the past few years but decreased slightly for the 2025 graduates. The percentage of graduates who were unemployed but looking for work has increased steadily over the years while the percentage of unemployed graduates not looking for work has decreased. The percentage of graduates joining the military has remained just over 1% for the past five years.

Figure 12: Five Years of Employment Status



As illustrated in Figure 13 (next page), most graduates who were employed were earning $15 or more per hour. Graduates working full-time were much more likely than those working part-time to earn $20 or more per hour.

Figure 13: Graduates' Average Hourly Wage



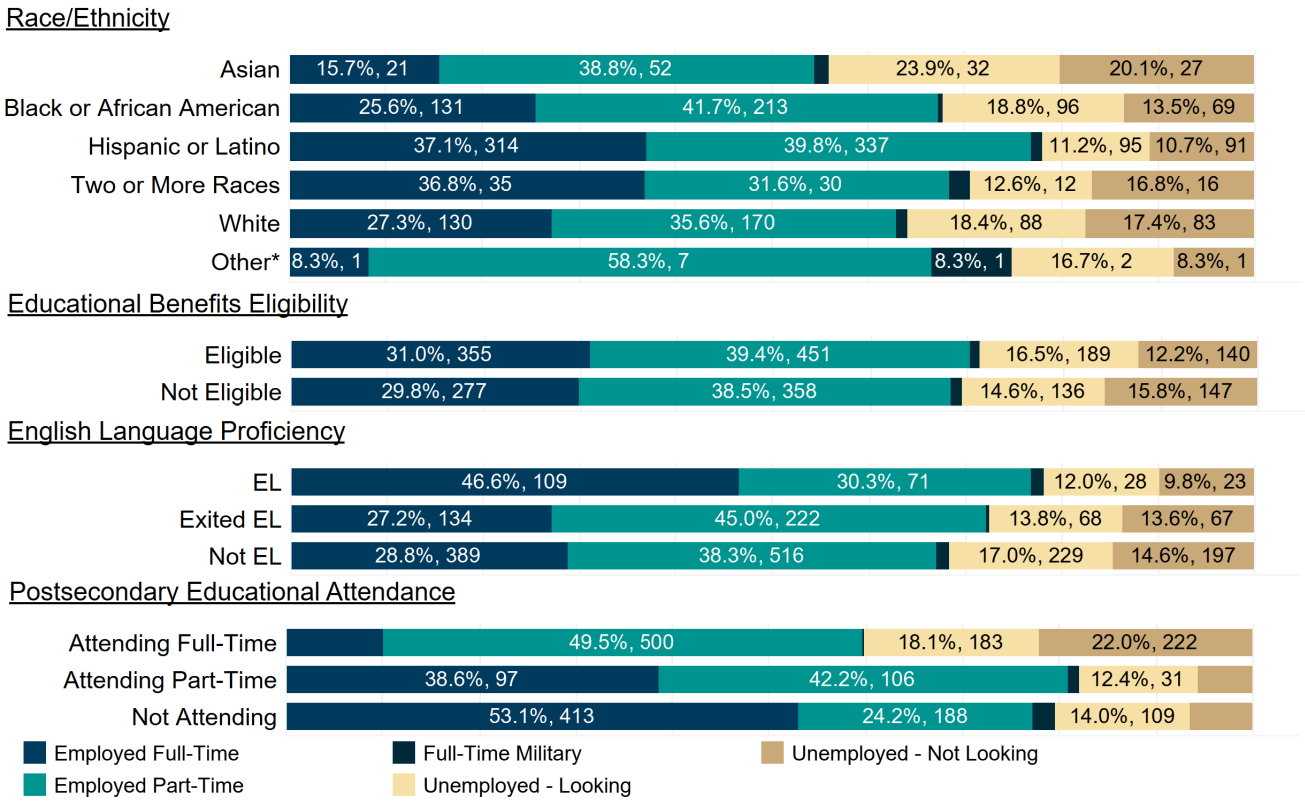
Variability in Employment Status Across Demographics Groups

Figure 14 illustrates that the employment status of the 2025 graduates varied considerably across differing racial, English language proficiency, and postsecondary educational attendance groups, and somewhat for differing socioeconomic groups. Apart from graduates in the Other racial category, Asian graduates were least likely to be working full-time and most likely to be unemployed. Hispanic or Latino graduates and those identified as Two or More Races were most likely to be working full-time. Apart from graduates in the Other racial category, Black or African American graduates were most likely to be working part-time. The percentages of graduates who were unemployed varied across ethnic groups along with the percentages of unemployed graduates who were looking and not looking for employment. The percentage of unemployed graduates who were looking for employment was greater for all racial groups except graduates who were identified as having Two or More Races.

The percentage of graduates who were working was similar for graduates who were and were not eligible for educational benefits. Graduates who were eligible for educational benefits were only slightly more likely to be working and slightly more likely to be working full-time. For the 2025 graduates, English proficiency had a greater impact on employment status than socioeconomic status. The percentage of EL graduates who were working was greater than for Exited EL graduates and the percentage of Exited EL graduates who were working was greater than for graduates who were not EL. EL graduates were also much more likely to be working full-time than Exited EL graduates and graduates who were not EL.

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

Figure 14: Employment Status for Various Graduate Demographic Groups



*The "Other" racial/ethnic group includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander graduates and has been combined due to small populations.

Current Jobs, Career Goals, and Fields of Study

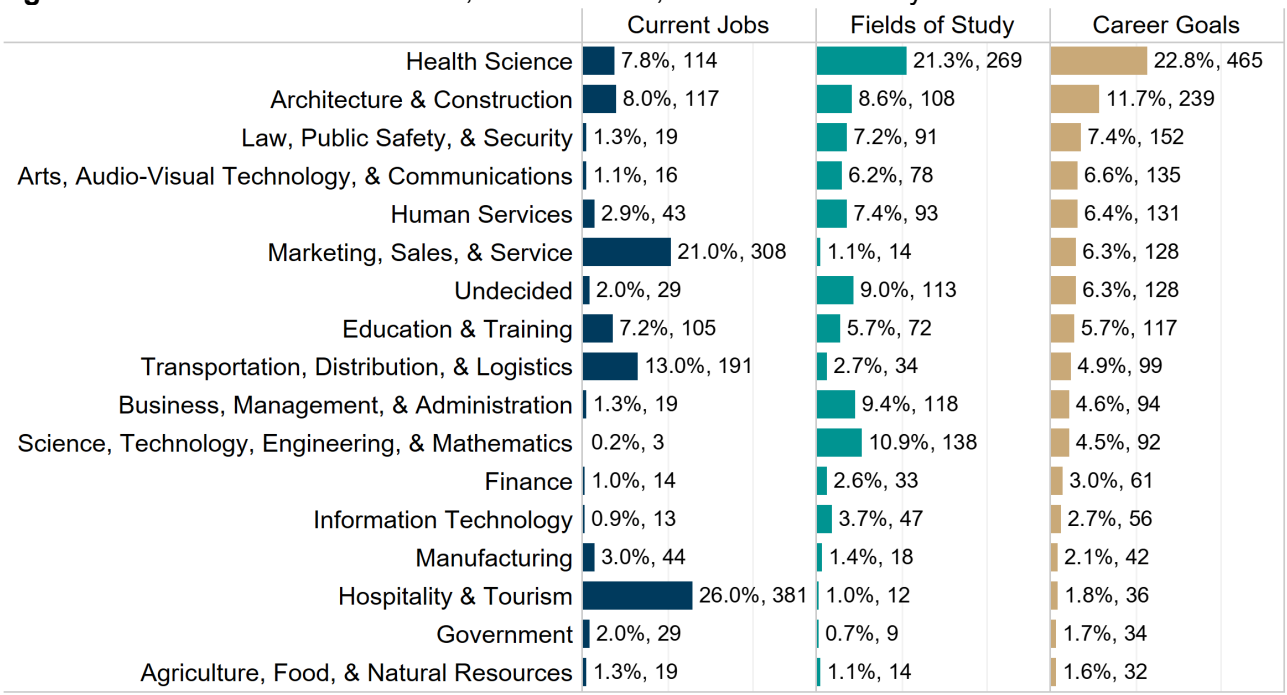
Many of the jobs held by the 2025 graduates tended to be entry level or low-skill jobs. Many working graduates are also attending postsecondary education and likely require the flexibility offered by these types of jobs. Figure 15 illustrates the 2025 graduates who were working held jobs in every career field; however, the majority (60.0%) of jobs held by graduates fell into only three career fields.

- 26.0% of working graduates held jobs in the hospitality and tourism career field. This field includes jobs such as cooks, wait staff, hosts, and hotel front desk and housekeeping staff.
- 21.0% 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.
- 13.0% 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 2025 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, law, public safety and security, and arts, audio-visual technology, and communications. Most employed graduates (77.9%) were not working in their

chosen career field, however, there was a relatively close alignment between the college-going graduates' career goals and their fields of study (i.e., college majors). Seventy-two percent (72.4%) 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

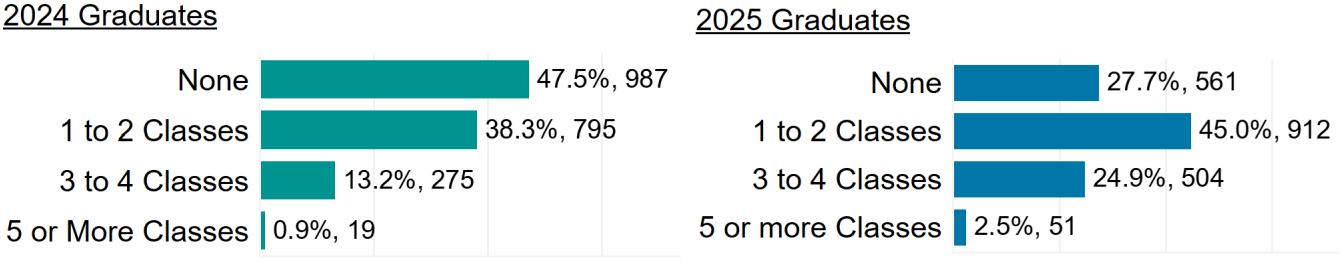
Figure 15: Graduates' Current Jobs, Career Goals, and Fields of Study



When compared to the 2024 graduates, the 2025 graduates were slightly less likely to be undecided regarding their career goals (8.1% vs. 6.3%) and slightly less likely to be undecided regarding their fields of study/majors if attending college (10.4% vs. 9.0%).

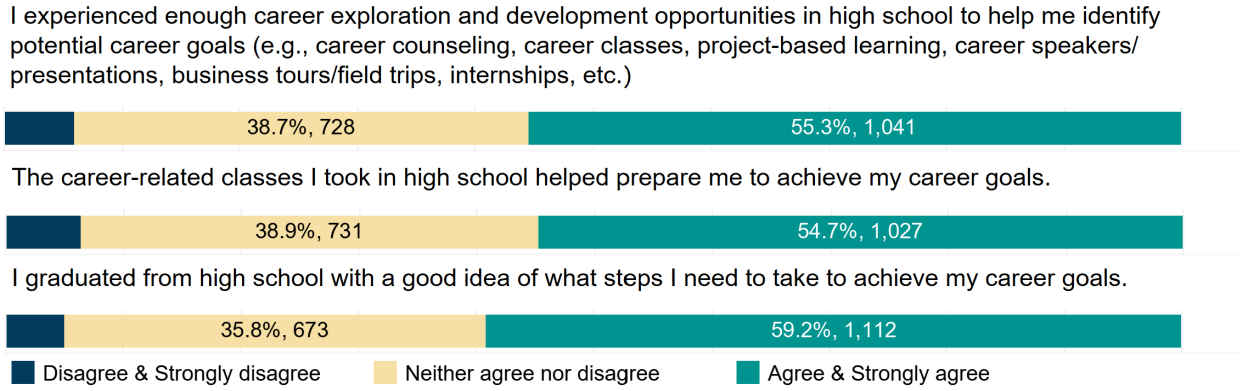
In order to explore the impact of high school experiences on career choices, graduates were first asked how many career-related courses they completed during high school. While most high school students complete at least one career-related course before graduating, it appears not all students recognize their coursework as career-related. Figure 16 illustrates that when compared to the 2024 graduates, the 2025 graduates may have participated in more career-related coursework and were certainly more aware of taking career-related classes. The 2025 graduates were the first graduating class to experience OPS's College & Career Academies and Pathways programming at all high schools.

Figure 16: The Number of Career-Related Classes Completed by 2024 and 2025 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



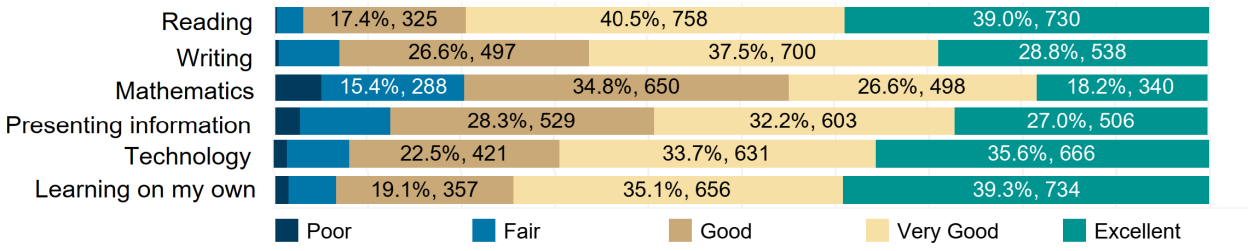
Additional Questions for the Graduates

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 ability, their ability to learn on their own, and their technology skills. Nearly 70% 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.

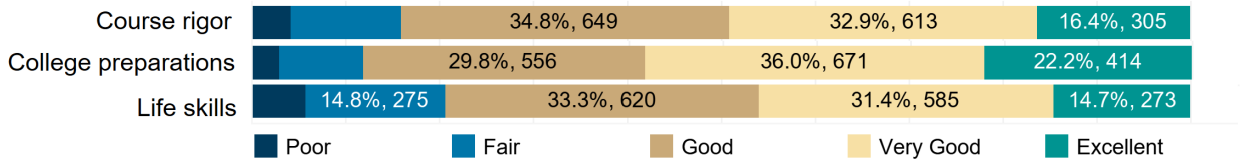
Figure 18: 2025 Graduates' Ratings of Their Skills



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 2025 graduates were most satisfied with OPS's efforts focused on college preparation. Over half (58.2%) of the graduates rated this feature as very good or excellent. Graduates were least satisfied with OPS's availability of life skills training. Though 46.1% of the graduates rated this feature as very good or excellent, 20.7% of the graduates rated it as poor or fair.

Figure 19: 2025 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 (64.6%) were completed without the graduate leaving a suggestion. Suggestions were left by approximately 734 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.

The feedback gathered from the 2025 graduates suggested five areas for improvement. Graduates who left comments most frequently requested (1) enhanced life skills and financial education, particularly in practical areas like tax filing, budgeting, cooking, and basic home maintenance. (2) The career pathway system, introduced when the 2025 graduates entered 9th grade, was often perceived as well-intentioned but overly rigid and restrictive. (3) Graduates reported that academic rigor was insufficient to prepare students for college-level work. (4) Teacher engagement also emerged as a concern, with graduates wanting more caring, attentive educators. (5) Finally, some graduates expressed frustration about limited access to timely information regarding college options, scholarships, and financial aid. Each topic is discussed in greater detail below.

<u>Life Skills and Financial Education</u>

Some graduates felt that life skills, particularly those that are financial in nature, are essential for postsecondary success but were largely absent from their curriculum. They consistently expressed that high schools did not adequately prepare them for real-world financial responsibilities such as filing taxes, understanding credit, budgeting, and managing money. They also requested more practical basic adulting skills instruction such as cooking, home maintenance, time management, and understanding healthcare and housing costs. Some graduates emphasized that these skills should be taught as required courses starting earlier in high school (sophomore or junior year) rather than as optional electives or single semester classes.

Career Exploration and Pathway Flexibility
Some graduates suggested that the academies and pathways system was too rigid and restrictive, and limited their ability to explore diverse career options and change directions. They felt that the career academy/pathway system forced early career decisions and prevented students from exploring multiple fields or switching pathways when their interests changed. Some graduates expressed significant frustration that once enrolled in a pathway, students faced barriers to taking electives outside their chosen field or changing to a different pathway. Some advocated for more flexibility in the pathway system, including easier cross-academy enrollment, the ability to change pathways multiple times, and broader elective options to support genuine career exploration.

Academic Rigor and College Preparation
Some graduates who left suggestions felt high school coursework was not rigorous enough and did not adequately prepare them for the demands of college-level work. They expressed concern that much of their homework and assignments did not require critical thinking or independent study. Several graduates also felt that the grading system was too lenient and did not reflect college standards, making the transition to college grading scales shocking and difficult. They suggested more challenging assignments, stricter grading standards, increased homework expectations, and more AP and honors classes to better prepare college-bound students.

Teacher Engagement and Support
Graduates occasionally suggested that some teachers could be more engaged, caring, and supportive in helping students learn and succeed. They reported that some teachers appeared disengaged, simply distributing assignments without explanation or demonstrating genuine care for student learning and success. Graduates felt that teachers should have provided more one-on-one support, used varied teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, and showed they cared about students' emotional and academic wellbeing. These graduates emphasized that good relationships between teachers and students are essential, and that teachers should be held to higher standards of professionalism and dedication to student success.

College and Scholarship Information Access
Finally, some graduates reported insufficient communication about college options, scholarship opportunities, and financial aid resources available to students. They indicated that information about scholarships, college applications, FAFSA, and financial aid was not adequately advertised or communicated to students, particularly those without family support for college planning. They also felt that counselors should proactively reach out to students about college and career opportunities rather than waiting for students to seek help on their own. Several graduates recommended that college preparation information be provided earlier in high school (freshman or sophomore year) and reinforced throughout all four years, rather than concentrated in senior year.

Overall, the feedback collected suggested some graduates valued and wanted more practical preparation for adult life, meaningful career exploration, academic challenge, supportive relationships with teachers, and greater access to postsecondary information and opportunities.

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 well over half of 2025 OPS graduates (61.8%) pursued postsecondary education. Nearly 60% of college-going graduates attended four-year colleges or universities while just over 40% attended community colleges or trade schools. OPS graduates attended postsecondary institutions across the United States, but most attended in Nebraska. In addition to attending postsecondary education, the 2025 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, or transportation and logistics fields. Like past graduating classes, the most popular career goal field for the 2025 graduates was health sciences, followed by architecture and construction, law and public safety and security, and arts, audio-visual, and communications. Though many graduates did not leave suggestions on how OPS could have better prepared them, some expressed a need for more financial literacy and life skills training, greater flexibility in the career academies and pathways system, more challenging coursework, more supportive and caring teachers, and greater access to college and scholarship information and opportunities.

References

National Center for Education Statistics, (2026). *Report on the Condition of* Education (NCES 2026-019). U.S. Department of Education, Washinton, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved 08/31/2026 from https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/reports.

Appendix A: 2025 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
- Pursuing a career that requires a license or certification
- 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 postsecondary 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
   - 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 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, Military
- 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