



2026 Jobs Report



SPRING 2023 FELLOW

SPELMAN COLLEGE

SaRee Grimes

Fellow,
Alliance Theatre

 Kat Goduco

Together with our higher education and employer partners, we're proving what's possible when you empower the next generation of leaders with the skills, networks, confidence, and experience necessary to launch a strong career.



What does this report cover?

Alongside our dedicated partners, Braven is reigniting the promise of the American Dream.

To date, we have worked with more than 15,500¹ Fellows across the country, and our momentum continues to build. By 2032, we aim to serve 80,000-100,000 students, serving 25,000 new students each year through the Braven course.



FALL 2022 FELLOW

SPELMAN COLLEGE

Naomi Wagner

Voter Education and Outreach Coordinator,
Fulton County Government

 Kat Goduco

In this report, we spotlight the stories of the exceptional undergraduate students we are privileged to serve and examine Braven's impact through two central questions:

1

Are our Fellows securing quality career outcomes that put them on the path to the American Dream?

2

Are we supporting Fellows on the path to internships?

Why our work matters



SPRING 2024 FELLOW
SPELMAN COLLEGE
Kennedy Hoyt
Public Relations and Research Intern,
The Stories of Us
© Kat Goduco

Only about one quarter of the low-income or first-generation college students who enroll in college each year will graduate and secure a strong first job or enter graduate school.²



That's about **one million students** every single year who aren't on the path to the American Dream.

GRADUATE & SECURE A STRONG JOB OR ENTER GRADUATE SCHOOL

ARE NOT ON THE PATH TO THE AMERICAN DREAM



LOW-INCOME OR FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT ENROLLEES EACH YEAR

Mission

In collaboration with our higher education and employer partners, Braven empowers promising college students with the skills, networks, confidence, and experience necessary to transition from college to strong economic opportunities, which lead to meaningful careers and lives of impact.

Vision

The next generation of leaders will emerge from everywhere.



SPRING 2024 FELLOW

SPELMAN COLLEGE
Ryan Bates
Legislative Intern for Representative Lucy McBath,
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Internship

Kat Goduco



SPRING 2025 FELLOW

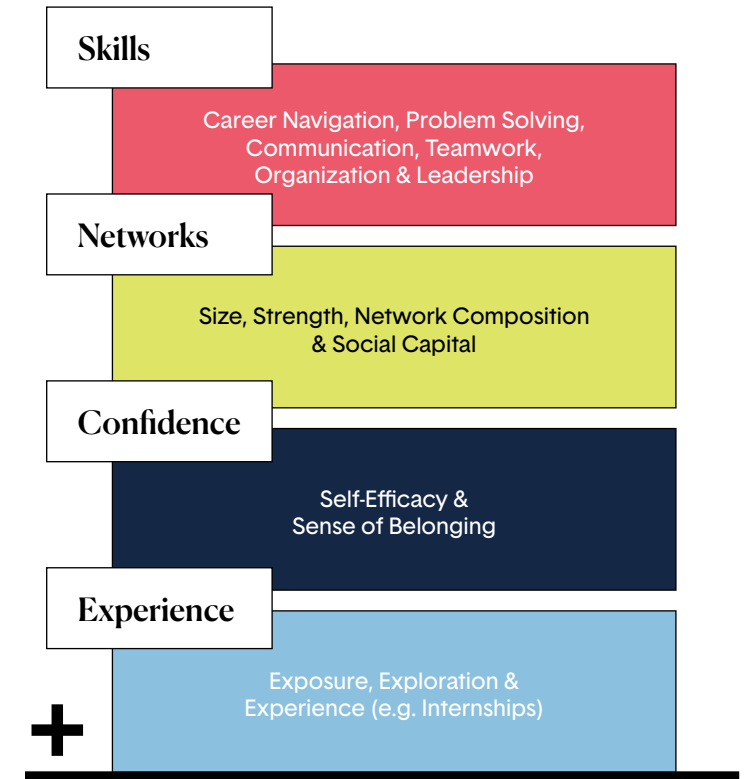
SPELMAN COLLEGE
Aubria King
 Patient Care Skills Intern,
 R&B Therapeutic Services LLC

Kat Goduco

The Braven Equation

Braven provides career readiness for students earning a four-year degree, ensuring students graduate ready to secure a strong first opportunity.

The Braven Equation is the sum of four career-readiness factors—skills, networks, confidence, and experience—which add up to a career-ready college graduate.



Career-Ready College Graduate

who secures a strong first economic opportunity or attends graduate school within 6 months of graduation

The Braven Experience

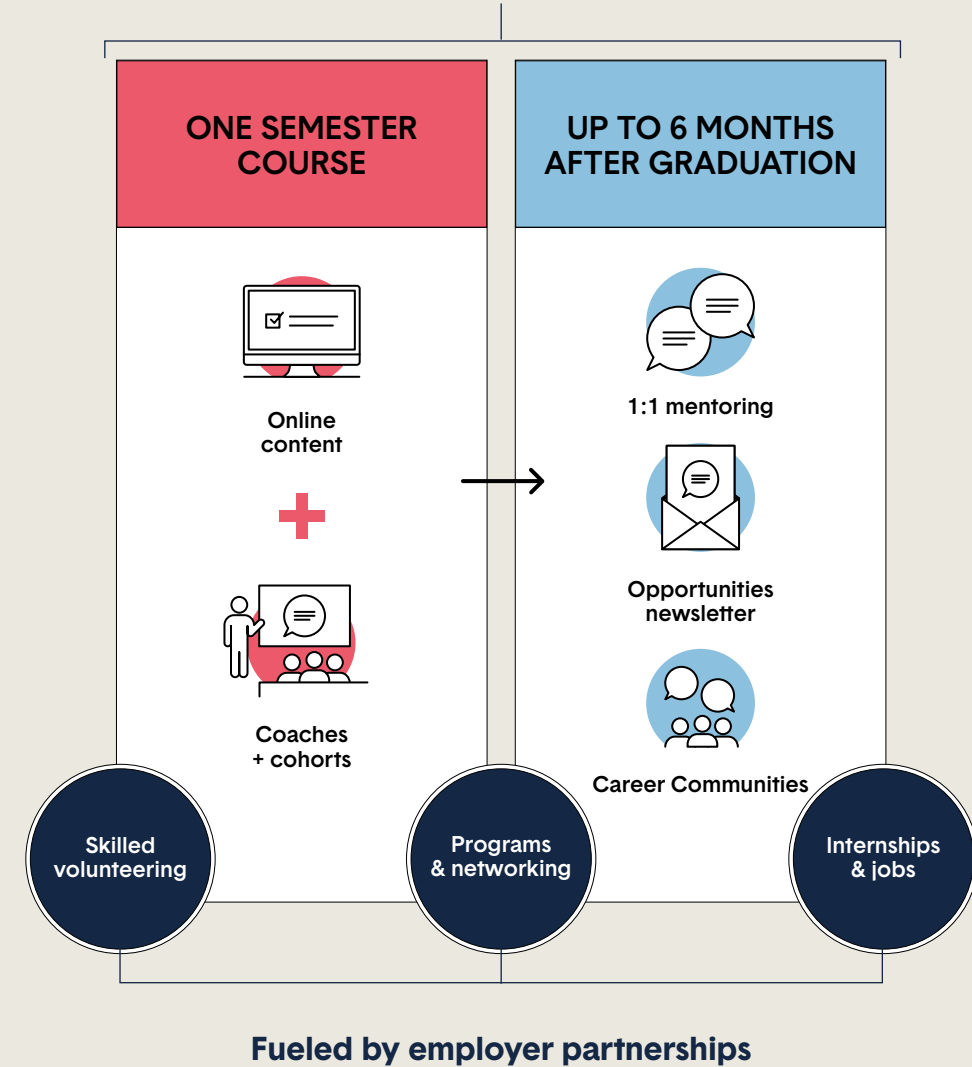
Braven equips promising college students on their paths toward quality economic opportunities through a semester-long, cohort-based course—developed with input from our students, volunteers, and higher education and employer partners—and support that extends beyond the course, continuing through six months after college graduation.

In our core higher education model, students take the course for credit. Students who come through BravenX via college success organizations receive a financial stipend in lieu of credit.

OUR HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS



In partnership with higher education institutions and college success organizations



Are our
Fellows
securing
quality career
outcomes that
put them on
the path to
the American
Dream?

Section

1





New college graduates are experiencing an especially challenging labor market

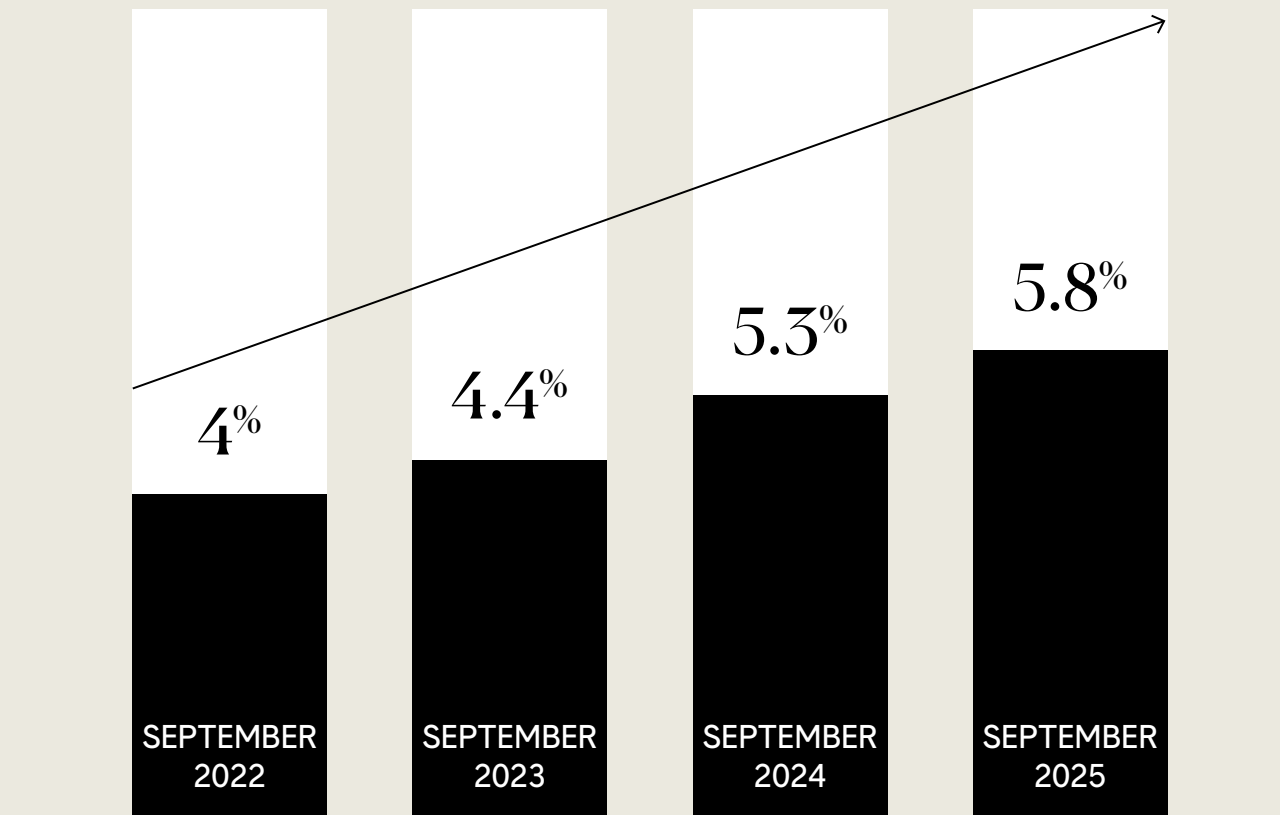
The entry-level market is tight. We have seen stagnation in entry-level job openings which, in part, is driving rising unemployment of recent graduates.

STAGNATION IN ENTRY-LEVEL JOB OPENINGS



Year-over-year, senior job titles are up 4%, while postings for junior titles are down 7%.³

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR NEW GRADUATES (AGED 22-27) ON THE RISE⁴





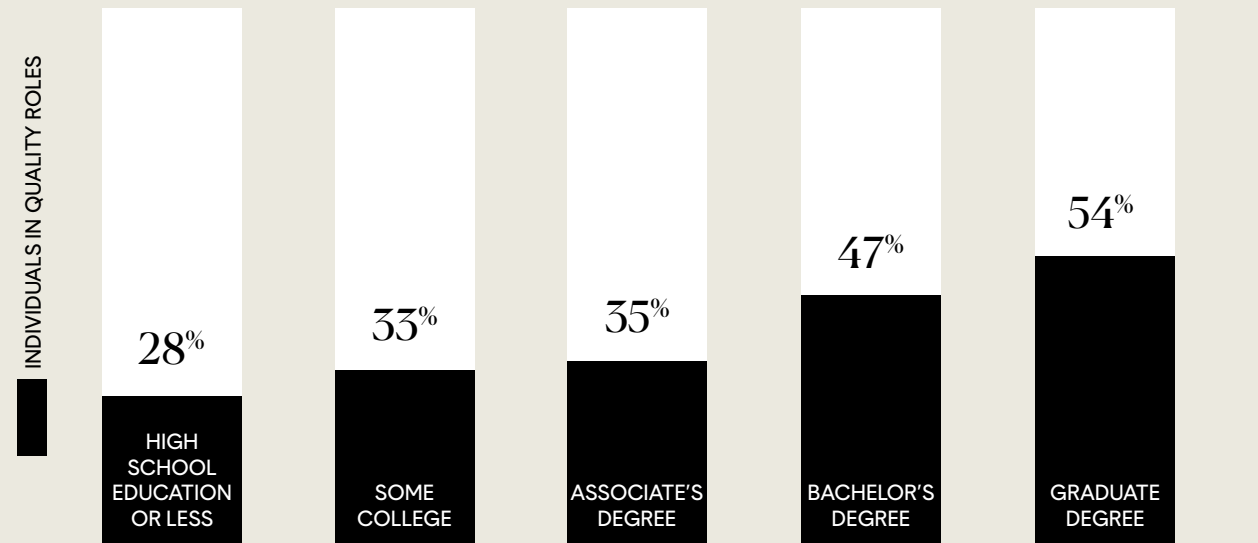
Pursuing the bachelor's degree is still the surest path to economic mobility

Compared to high school graduates, bachelor's degree holders have higher employment rates, greater job security, and earn more over their lifetime.

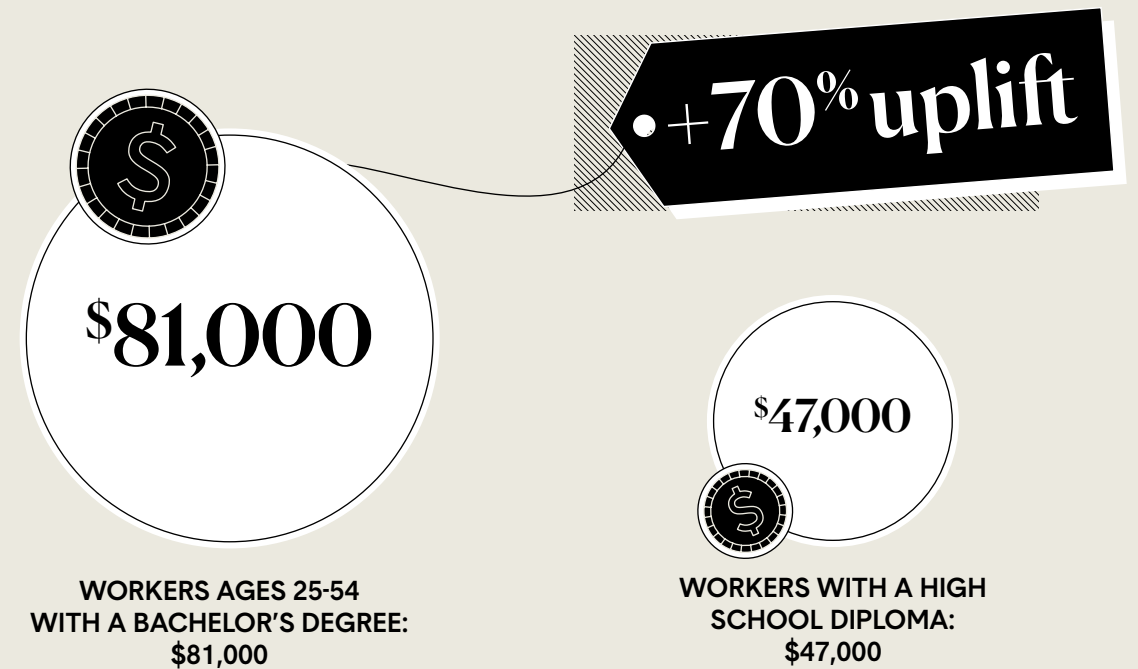
Employees with a four-year degree earn 70% more than workers with a high school diploma alone.

The bachelor's degree remains a strong predictor of job quality

According to The American Job Quality Study, employees with a bachelor's or graduate degree are more likely to have strong job quality than those with an associate's degree, some college, or a high school education or less.⁵



MEDIAN ECONOMIC OUTCOMES FOR WORKERS AGED 25-54 WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE⁶





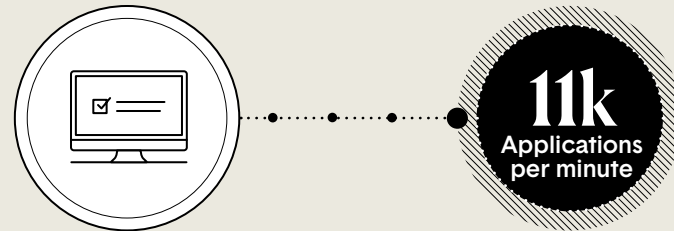
AI reshapes expectations for early-career talent

The challenge today is not the value of the degree itself, but ensuring students can successfully translate the skills they develop in college into the skills needed in entry-level positions.

Although the long-term effects of AI on job availability are still emerging, its influence on the job search experience and hiring practices is already evident.

Increase in job applications

AI is making it easier to apply to jobs. In June 2025, LinkedIn reported that the number of job applications surged more than 45% year-over-year, and the platform is clocking an average of **11,000 applications per minute**.⁷

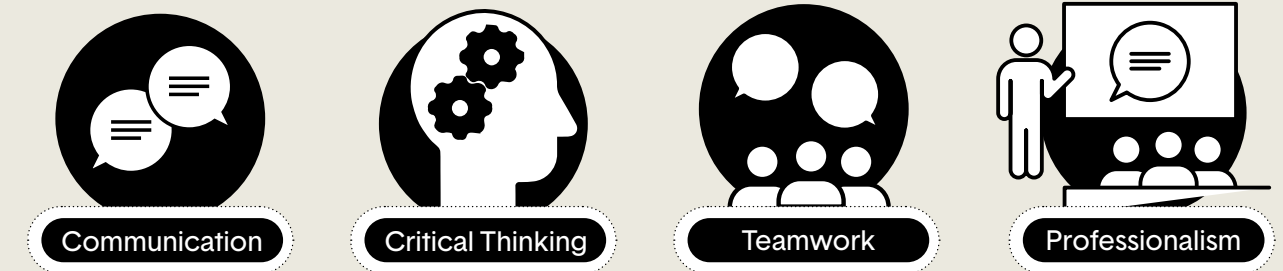


AI's impact on job hunting

Twenty-six percent of candidates say AI has made it harder to stand out due to increased competition. Among Gen Z, that number jumps to 45%.⁷

Employers are prioritizing human skill competencies to distinguish the strongest entry-level candidates in an increasingly competitive applicant pool.

These include:⁸



These are closely aligned with the six career-readiness skills Braven helps students develop in the Accelerator course:

- Career navigation
- Leadership
- Organization
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving

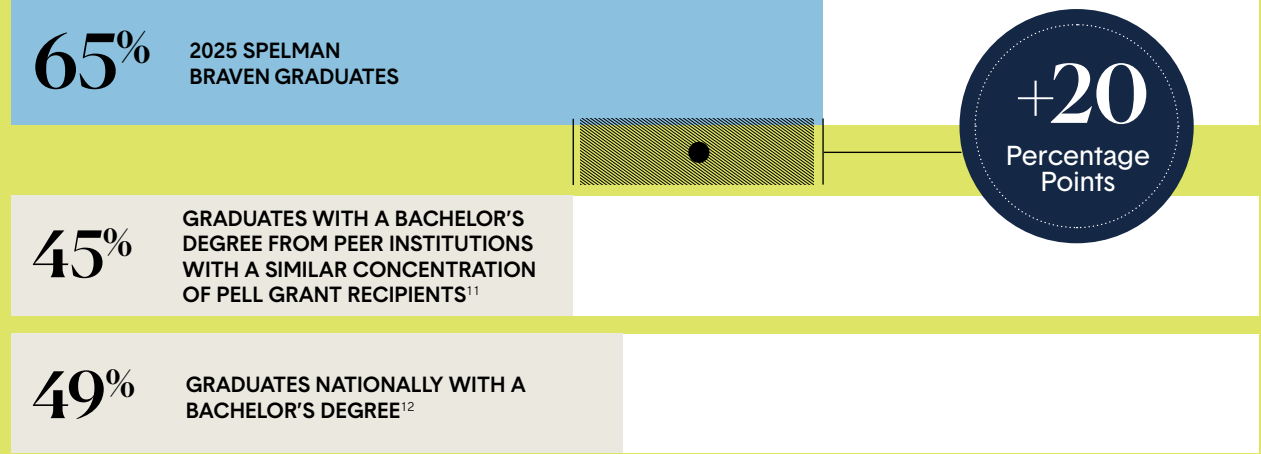
In 2025, 535 Braven Fellows graduated from Spelman College.



SPRING 2025 FELLOW
SPELMAN COLLEGE
Tashyra Lyles
Teaching Fellow,
Breakthrough Atlanta
Kat Goduco

Spelman Braven Fellows secured quality opportunities after college

+20
This new class is outpacing their peers nationally in quality outcome attainment⁹ by 20 percentage points (65%¹⁰ vs 45%¹⁰) within six months of graduation.



SPELMAN BRAVEN CLASS OF 2025 DEMOGRAPHICS



Of the 535 Spelman Braven Fellows who graduated from college in 2025,

74%

are employed or enrolled in graduate school

72%

secured quality or pathway outcomes

FALL 2022 FELLOW

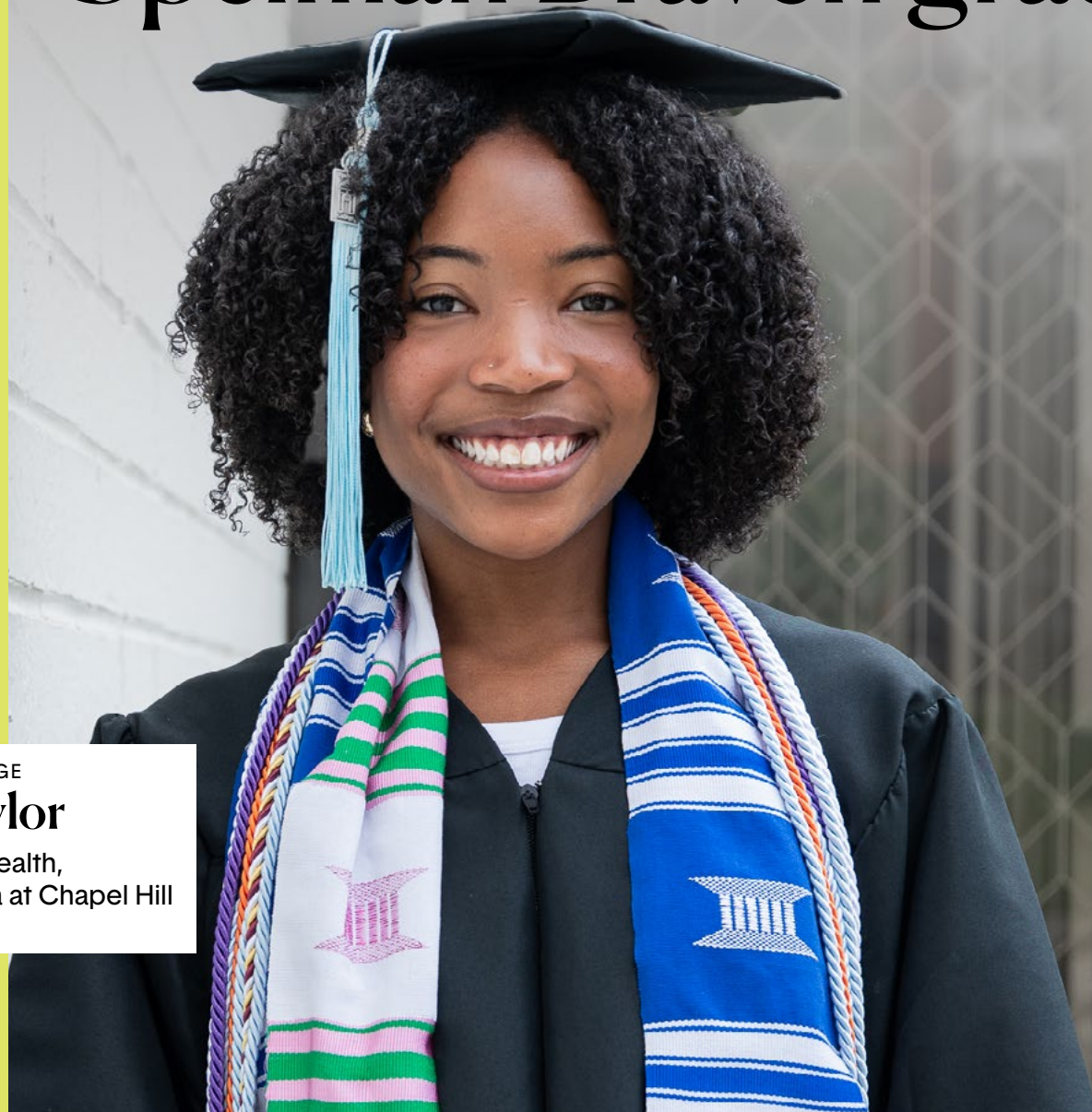
SPELMAN COLLEGE

Sydney Taylor

Master of Public Health,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Kat Goduco

The strength of roles our 2025 Spelman Braven graduates secured



2025 SPELMAN BRAVEN GRADUATES

HOW WE DEFINE QUALITY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES:

QUALITY OUTCOME

a full-time role that requires a bachelor's degree and includes some combination of promotion pathways, employee benefits, and a market-competitive starting salary, or enrollment in graduate school

PATHWAY OUTCOME

a role that does not require a bachelor's degree but helps students' financial sustainability, is aligned with career interests, and will likely lead to more career-accelerating possibilities through skill development

NON-QUALITY OUTCOME

a role that does not require a bachelor's degree, offers limited runway to additional career-accelerating opportunities, and is not aligned with students' career interests

65%
QUALITY ROLES OR GRADUATE SCHOOL

7%

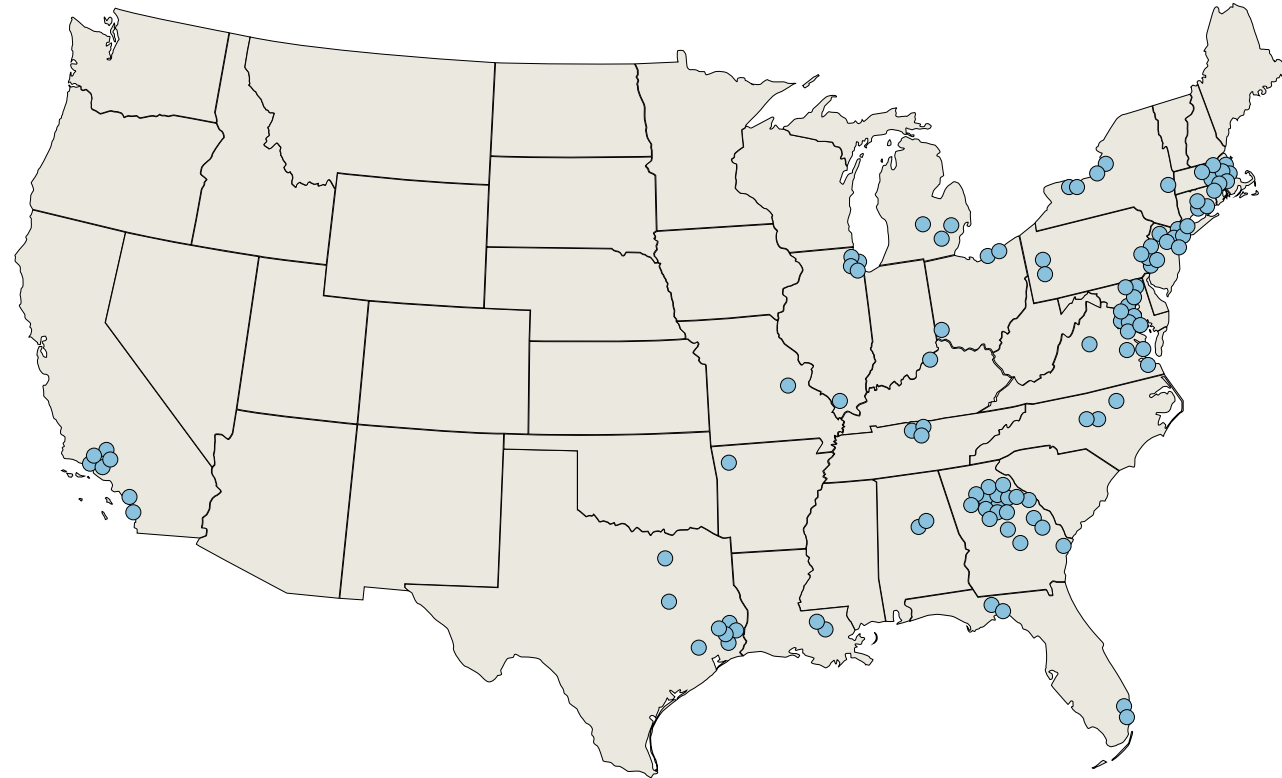
PATHWAY ROLES

2%

NON-QUALITY

26%
UNEMPLOYED

Spelman Fellow enrollment in graduate school



Enrollment in graduate school is one of the ways Braven defines a quality outcome.

42%

42% of Spelman College's Fellows went on to graduate schools within six months of graduation.¹⁵

1. Agnes Scott College
 2. Augusta State University
 3. Barry University
 4. Baylor University
 5. Boston University
 6. Boston University School of Medicine
 7. Brown University
 8. California State University, Long Beach
 9. Carnegie Mellon University
 10. Case Western Reserve University
 11. Case Western Reserve University School of Law
 12. Central Georgia Technical College
 13. City University of New York
 14. Clark Atlanta University
 15. Columbia University
 16. DePaul University
 17. Drexel University
 18. Duke University
 19. Emory Healthcare
 20. Emory University
 21. Emory University Laney Graduate School
 22. Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing
 23. Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
 24. Emory University School of Medicine
 25. Faulkner University
 26. Fisk University
 27. Florida A&M University
 28. Florida State University
 29. Georgetown University
 30. Georgetown University Law Center
 31. Georgia College & State University
 32. Georgia Institute of Technology
 33. Georgia State University
 34. Harvard University
 35. Howard University School of Law
 36. Howard University
 37. Hult International Business School
 38. Johns Hopkins Medicine
 39. Johns Hopkins University
 40. Kennesaw State University
 41. La Sierra University
 42. Lamar University
 43. Louisiana State University
 44. Loyola University Chicago
 45. Meharry Medical College
 46. Mercer University
 47. Michigan State University
 48. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 49. Montclair State University
 50. Morehouse School of Medicine
 51. Morgan State University
 52. National Louis University
 53. New York University
 54. New Jersey Institute of Technology
 55. Northwestern University
 56. New York University Tisch School of the Arts
 57. Old Dominion University
 58. Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
 59. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
 60. Rice University
 61. Saint Joseph's University Philadelphia College of Pharmacy
 62. San Diego State University
 63. Savannah College of Art & Design
 64. Sotheby's Institute of Art
 65. Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
 66. Southern University Law Center
 67. Spalding University
 68. State University of New York, Syracuse
 69. Syracuse University
 70. Temple University
 71. Texas Southern University
 72. The George Washington University
 73. The University of Alabama at Birmingham
 74. The University of Michigan School of Public Health
 75. The University of North Carolina Adams School of Dentistry
 76. The University of Texas, Dallas
 77. Tufts University School of Medicine
 78. Tufts University
 79. Tulane University
 80. University of Arkansas
 81. University of California, Irvine
 82. University of California, Los Angeles
 83. University of California, San Diego
 84. University of Cincinnati
 85. University of Georgia
 86. University of Houston Law Center
 87. University of Houston-Downtown
 88. University of Maryland, College Park
 89. University of Massachusetts, Boston
 90. University of Miami
 91. University of Michigan - Ann Arbor
 92. University of Missouri
 93. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 94. University of Pennsylvania
 95. University of Pittsburgh
 96. University of Rochester
 97. University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry
 98. University of Southern California
 99. University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
 100. University of the District of Columbia
 101. University of Virginia
 102. Vanderbilt University
 103. Virginia Commonwealth University
 104. William and Mary
 105. Yale School of Public Health
 106. Yale University
 107. Yale Law School
- International Schools**
108. Alliance Manchester Business School
 109. Imperial College
 110. King's College
 111. McGill University
 112. Nanjing University
 113. St. Matthew's University
 114. University of Manchester
 115. University of Oxford

Building career wealth & health



SPRING 2023 FELLOW

SPELMAN COLLEGE
ShaDasia Reynolds
 Trainer,
 POSSE Foundation
 Kat Goduco

A high quality first job helps individuals build long-term wealth and health. Braven defines a strong first job as one that requires a bachelor's degree and is full-time, and also includes some combination of promotion pathways, employee benefits, and a market-competitive starting salary.

Six months post-graduation, Spelman Braven Fellows in the class of 2025 are outearning the national average salary for early college graduates.

\$56,956

Mean salary of **employed** 2025 Spelman Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation^{16,18}

Compared to a national average of \$43,018 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who were employed in 2024

+\$13.9k

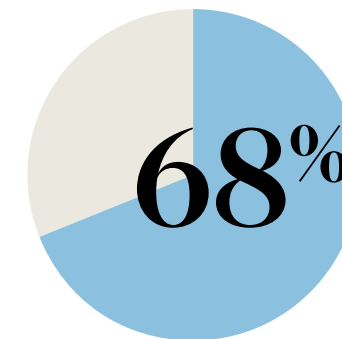
\$63,053

Mean salary of **full-time employed** 2025 Spelman Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation^{17,18}

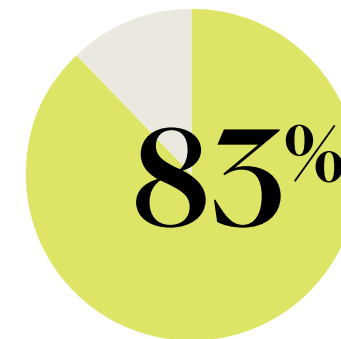
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024

+\$12.6k

RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST¹⁹



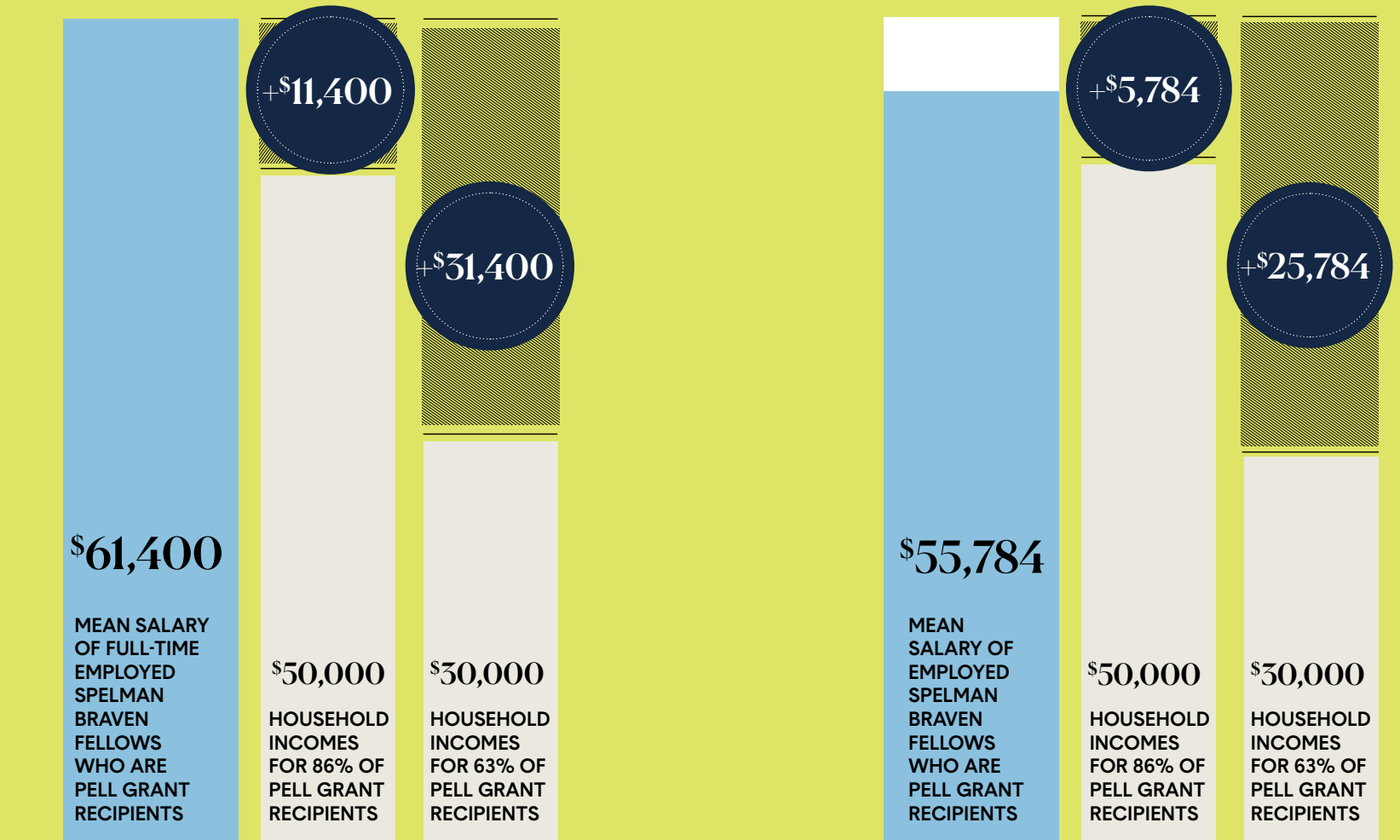
HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS¹⁹

The American Dream in action

Nationally, 63% of Pell Grant recipients come from families with annual incomes below \$30,000, and 85% come from families earning less than \$50,000 annually.²⁰

In their first job out of college, Spelman Braven Fellows are individually outearning most families who receive the Pell Grant.

42%
of Spelman Braven 2025 graduates are Pell Grant recipients



MOST POPULAR INDUSTRIES FOR SPELMA BRAVEN FELLOWS



EDUCATION



BANKING & FINANCE



HEALTH



NONPROFIT

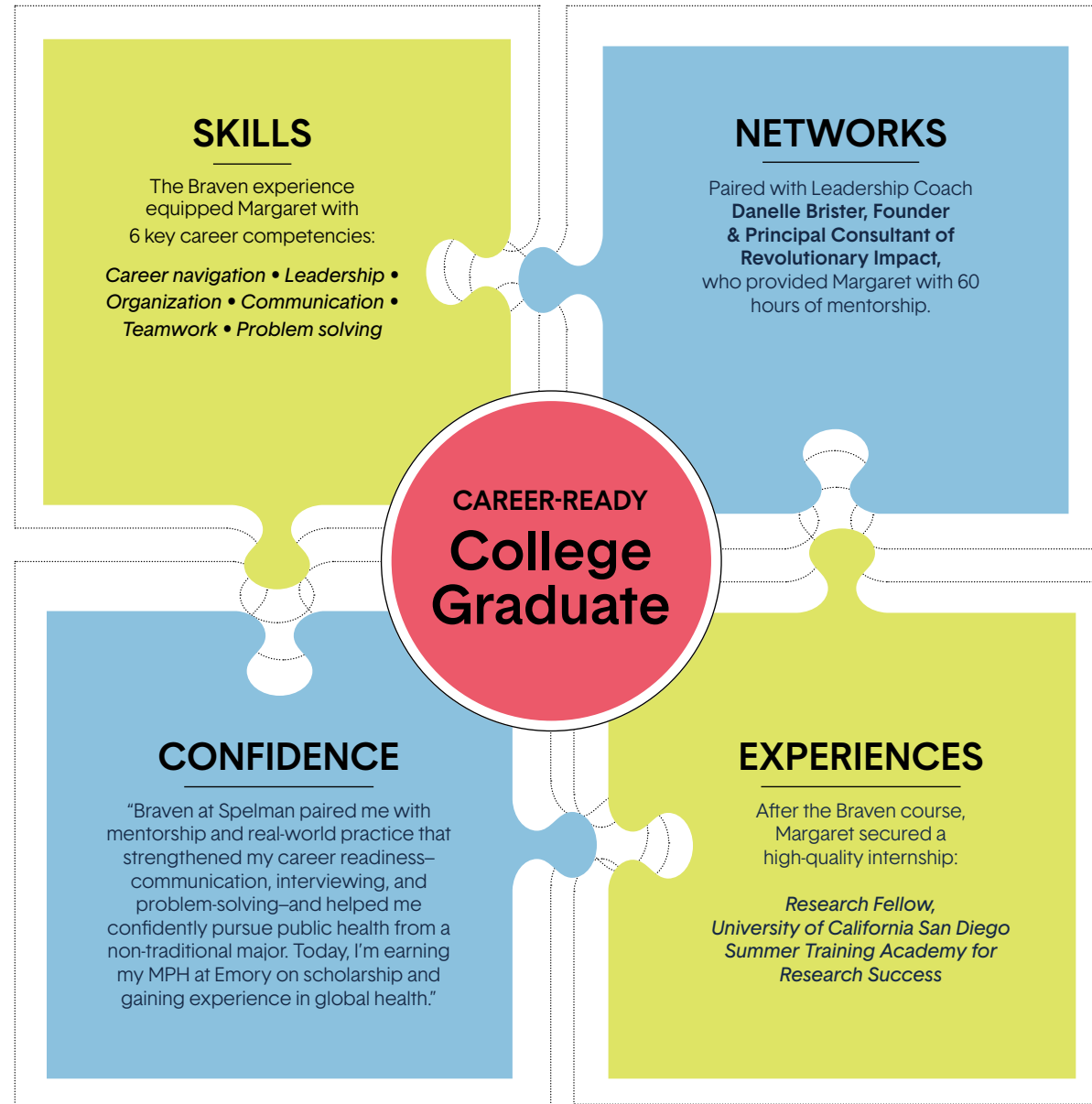


LAW



CONSULTING

With Braven's help, Margaret Harris built the foundation to get on the path to the American Dream.



The Braven Equation in action

SPRING 2023 FELLOW

SPELMAN COLLEGE
Margaret Harris
 Graduate Student, Master in Public Health, Emory University
 Kat Goduco

Are we supporting Fellows on the path to internships?

Section
2a

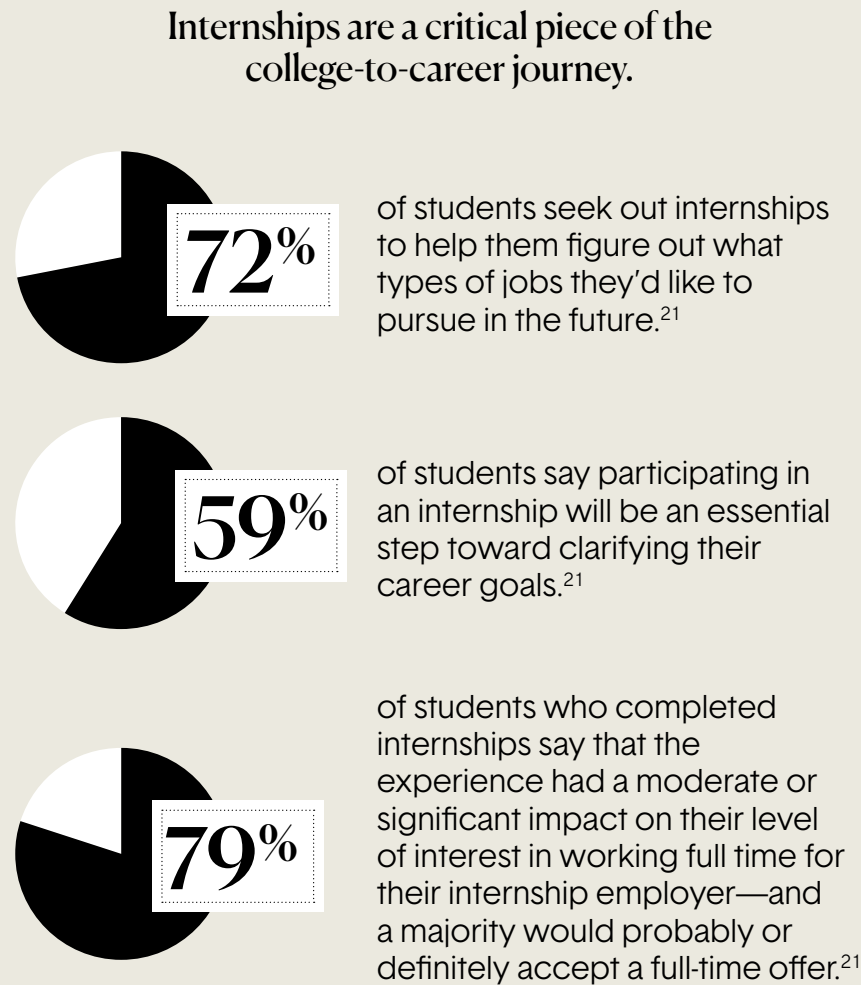




Students are facing greater competition for internships

Internships help students chart their futures, but fewer opportunities and rising competition make them harder to secure.

According to Handshake's Internship Index 2025:

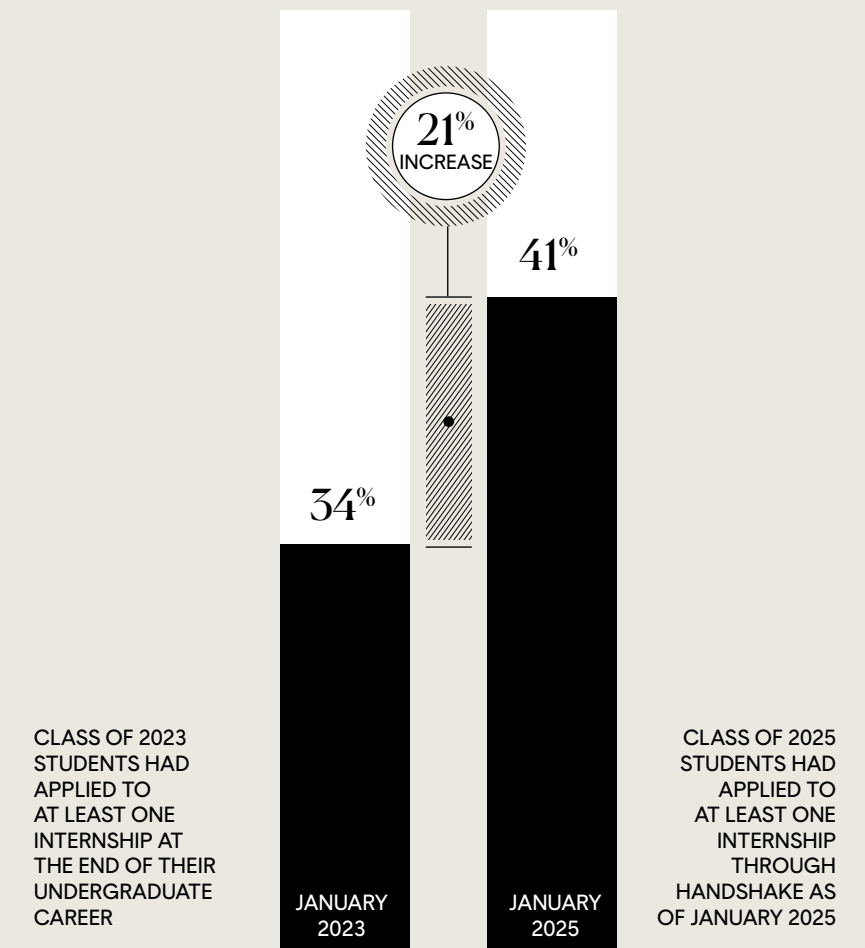


Internship demand is outpacing availability.

Internship postings declined more than 15% between January 2023 and January 2025. Meanwhile, internship applications surged.



INCREASE IN INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED²¹





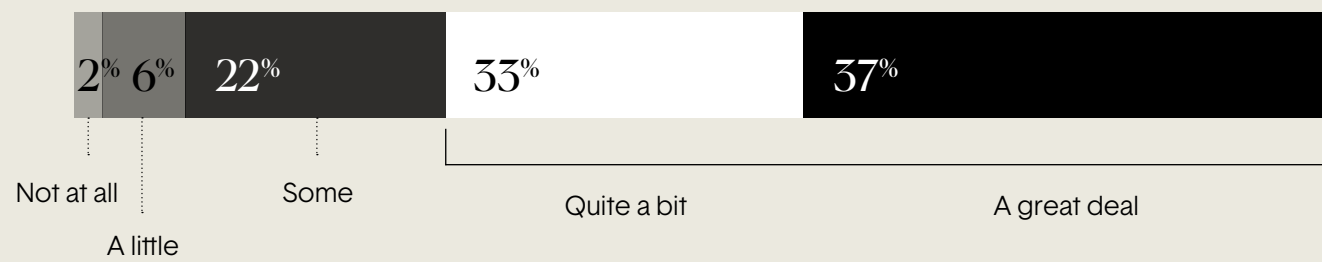
Paid internships increase networks & mentorship

The National Survey of Work-Based Learning from Strada Education Foundation and the Center for College Workforce Transitions found that paid internships have positive career value in several domains including social capital and mentorship.

NETWORKS



To what extent do you think your experience expanded your professional network?

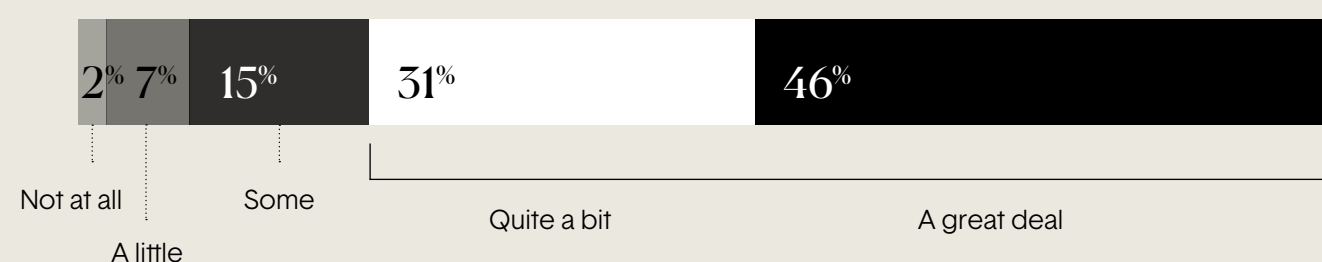


Seven in 10 students reported that paid internships substantially expanded their professional networks²²

MENTORSHIP



To what extent did your supervisor provide mentorship to support your career goals?



More than three-quarters of students reported high levels of career-focused mentorship²²

Encouraging levels of internship attainment for Spelman Braven Fellows

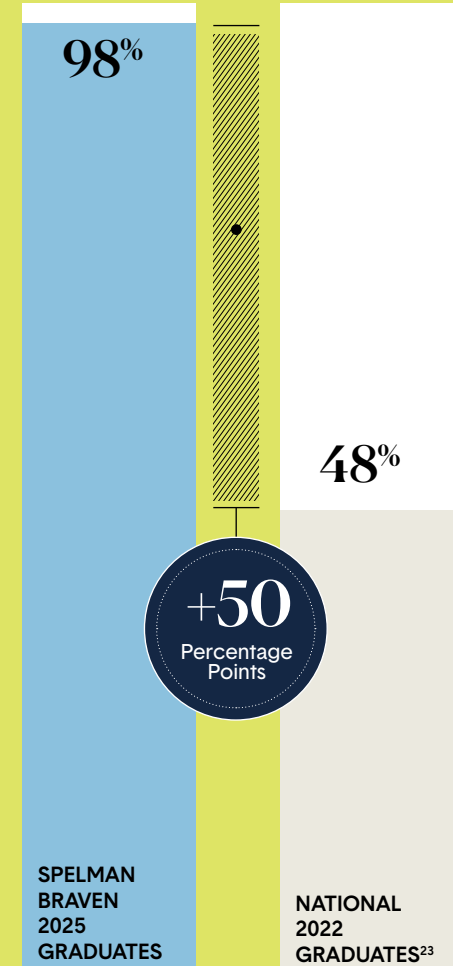


SPELMAN COLLEGE
Khaleah Tyler
Membership Development Intern,
World 50 Group
Kat Goduco

SPRING 2024 FELLOW

Compared with graduates nationally, Spelman Braven 2025 graduates were 50 percentage points more likely to have at least one internship during their college experience.

For college students, internships serve as critical proof points of experience that open professional doors.



HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS & EMPLOYER PARTNERS

Higher Education Partners

Chicago State University (BravenX)
 The City College of New York
 Delaware State University
 National Louis University
 Northern Illinois University
 Rutgers University - Newark
 San Francisco State University (launched Fall 2024)
 San José State University
 Spelman College
 University of Massachusetts Lowell (launched Spring 2026)
 University of North Texas (launched Spring 2026)

BravenX Partners

5 Strong Scholars Foundation
 Achieve Atlanta
 Arkansas Commitment
 Ascend Public Schools
 Associated Colleges of Illinois
 Augustana College

Breakthrough Kent Denver
 Carmen Schools of Science & Technology
 Chicago Scholars
 Chicago State University
 City Year Chicago
 Coney Island Prep Public Schools
 Cooperman College Scholars
 Coral Academy of Science Las Vegas
 Cristo Rey Network
 DREAM Charter School
 DSST Public Schools
 Evanston Scholars
 Excel Academy Charter School
 Excellence Community Schools
 Freedom Preparatory Academy Charter Schools
 IDEA Public Schools
 Judson University
 KIPP Metro Atlanta
 KIPP Forward
 KIPP NJ
 Lehman College
 LISA Academy
 National Association for Urban Debate Leagues
 Newark Youth Career

Pathways Program
 North Central College
 Noble Schools
 Rivet School
 SEEDS
 The Academy Charter School
 The Wight Foundation
 Uncommon Schools
 Uplift Education
 UtmostU

Employer Partners

LEAD

(\$250K+ and programmatic support)
 Adobe
 Barclays
 Blackstone Charitable Foundation
 Deloitte
 JPMorgan Chase Foundation
 LinkedIn
 Morgan Stanley
 NBA Foundation

ANCHOR

(\$100K+ and programmatic support)
 CIBC Foundation
 Cognizant US Foundation
 The College Board
 Salesforce

KEYSTONE

(\$25K+ and programmatic support)
 Audible
 Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance
 Blackbaud
 Nerdwallet
 Pathward N. A.
 Silver Lake
 Taco Bell Foundation
 UBS
 United Airlines

IMPACT

(\$5K+ and/or programmatic support)
 Bain and Company
 Brown Advisory
 Catalina
 Cisco
 Micron Technology, Inc.
 National Black Arts Festival
 National Coalition of 100 Black Women
 Staffmark
 Teach For America
 The Clorox Company
 Unacast
 Vanguard
 Visa
 Wells Fargo

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORTERS (\$1K+)

Anonymous
 Cynthia Bowman
 Deloitte Foundation
 Harriet Watkins
 LuLuMa Foundation
 New Profit, Inc.
 Prosper Road Foundation
 Susan Grant

A big thank you to our Atlanta Board of Directors:

Susan Grant
 Daniel Gordon
 Jerry Parrish

1. 15,563 Fellows have completed the Braven Accelerator course to date; this includes core sites (City College of New York, Delaware State University, Northern Illinois University, Rutgers University-Newark, San José State University, and Spelman College) and non-core sites (BravenX, San Francisco State University, Lehman College, and National Louis University).
2. The percentage of students not on the path to the American Dream is an estimate of the percentage of Pell-Grant or first-generation students who have graduated but have not secured a quality job post college. This cohort is based on the latest data available and is the total fall 2022 enrollment of first-time degree/certificate-seeking students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions (NCES 2023 Digest of Education Statistics table 305.10) and the total fall 2021 enrollment of 2YR > 4YR transfers (NSC Research Center Fall 2023 Transfer and Progress Report). Based on this cohort, the percent of students not on path to the American Dream is calculated leveraging the following sources: "Percentage of Undergraduates Receiving Pell Grant in 2022-2023" NCES 2023 IPEDS Trends Generator; "Number of Full-Time, First-Time Degree/Certificate-Seeking Undergraduate Students... by Type of Aid Received" NCES 2020 IPEDS Data Explorer table 20; "Total Undergraduate Fall Enrollment in Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Sex of Student, and Control and Level of Institution: Selected Years, 1970 through 2031" NCES 2023 Digest of Education Statistics table 303.70; Trends in First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcomes NCES 2018 First Generation Students Report; Trends in Pell Grant Receipt and the Characteristics of Pell Grant Recipients: Selected Years, 2003–2004, 2015–2016 NCES 2019 IPEDS Trends Generator; NACE 2025 First Destination Survey and September 2025 Federal Reserve Bank of New York Underemployment Rate.
3. "The Labor Market for Recent College Graduates: Unemployment Rates for Recent College Graduates versus Other Groups." Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 2024, www.newyorkfed.org/research/college-labor-market#:~:explore=unemployment. Accessed 24 Feb. 2025.
4. Shrivastava, Allison. "September 2025 Labor Market Update: The Squeeze on New Entrants Mirrors a Marketwide Decline." Hiring Lab, 25 Sept. 2025, www.hiringlab.org/2025/09/25/september-labor-market-squeeze-on-new-entrants/. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
5. Blankenship, Molly, et al. The American Job Quality Study: 2025 State of the U.S. Labor Force. Jobs for the Future / Families and Workers Fund / Gallup, Oct. 2025, www.jff.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/AmericanJobQualityReport_Final_10142025.pdf. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026. For the accompanying graph, a quality job is defined as one that allows workers to meet their basic financial needs, feel safe and respected, grow their skills, have a voice in decisions that affect them, and exercise some control over their time and work.
6. Morris, Catherine, et al. The Major Payoff: Evaluating Earnings and Employment Outcomes Across Bachelor's Degrees. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2025, cew.georgetown.edu/major-payoff. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
7. Kessler, Sarah. "The Rise of the Robot Job Seeker." The New York Times, 21 June 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/06/21/business/dealbook/ai-job-applications.html. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
8. Job Outlook 2025. National Association of Colleges and Employers, Jan. 2025, naceweb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2025/publication/research-report/2025-nace-job-outlook-jan-2025.pdf. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
9. Braven defines quality outcome attainment using the following methodology:
 - a. Quality outcome: Fellow enrolls in graduate school or secures a job that requires a BA/BS, is full-time, and is paid.
 - b. Part-quality outcome: Fellow secures a job that is paid, aligns with long-term career interests, and meets at least one of the criteria below:
 - i. Requires a bachelor's degree
 - ii. Is full-time
 - iii. Offers employer-provided benefits
 - iv. Earns >35k per year
 - v. Builds record of achievement/resume
 - vi. Builds transferable skills, especially within career interests
 - c. Not quality: Fellow secures a job that is paid, but does not meet the criteria of a part-quality or quality job.
 - d. Unemployed: Fellow is unemployed.
10. 65% is the percentage of Spelman Fellows who secured a quality job or enrolled in graduate school. All outcome percentages are based on Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (94% or 505 out of the total 535 Spelman College Fellows' outcome is known).
11. Braven's 45% peer benchmark is calculated by taking the NACE 2024 full-time employment rate for students at institutions with a high concentration of Pell Grant recipients (40-60%) from the NACE 2025 First Destination Survey, adjusting it for underemployment (using Federal Reserve of New York and U.S. Census data), and adding the percentage of students pursuing graduate school education.
12. Braven's 49% national benchmark is calculated by taking the NACE 2024 full-time employment rate from the NACE 2025 First Destination Survey, adjusting it for underemployment (using Federal Reserve of New York and U.S. Census data), and adding the percentage of students pursuing graduate school education.
13. Low-income means the Braven Fellow identifies as low-income or a Pell Grant recipient.
14. First-generation means the Braven Fellow identifies as a student who is the first in their immediate family to attend or graduate from a four-year college or university.
15. 42% is the percentage of Spelman Fellows who enrolled in graduate school. This percentage is based on Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (94% or 505 out of the total 535 Spelman College Fellows' outcome is known).
16. Braven employed salary average is the approximated salary average for Class of 2025 Braven Spelman Fellows at core sites who secured any job (quality, part-quality, or not quality).
17. Braven full-time employed salary average is the approximated salary average for Class of 2025 Braven Spelman Fellows at core sites who secured a full-time job.
18. U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Data filtered by age (AGEP 23-24), income (PINCP > \$1), hours worked (WKHP > 35 or WKHP > 0), employment status (ESR Civilian employed, at work), and educational attainment (SCHL Bachelor's degree). U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.
19. Data is based on 380 Post-Accelerator Fellow survey responses pooled from Fall 2021 - Fall 2025 across both core and non-core sites.
20. National Student Aid Profile: Overview of 2024 Federal Programs. National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2024, https://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/2024_National_Profile.pdf. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
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