

# 2026 Jobs Report



SPRING 2024 FELLOW

NATIONAL LOUIS  
UNIVERSITY

**Ghassen Hattab**

Business Development  
Representative,  
Shamrock Trading  
Corporation

 Chris Joyce

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 15,500<sup>1</sup> 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.



SPRING 2024 FELLOW

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Brandon Padilla**

Audit Intern,  
KPMG

Chris Joyce

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 and college completion?

# Why our work matters



FALL 2022 FELLOW  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
**Sterlen Johnson**  
Tax Auditor,  
Franchise Tax Board California  
Chris Joyce

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.<sup>2</sup>



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

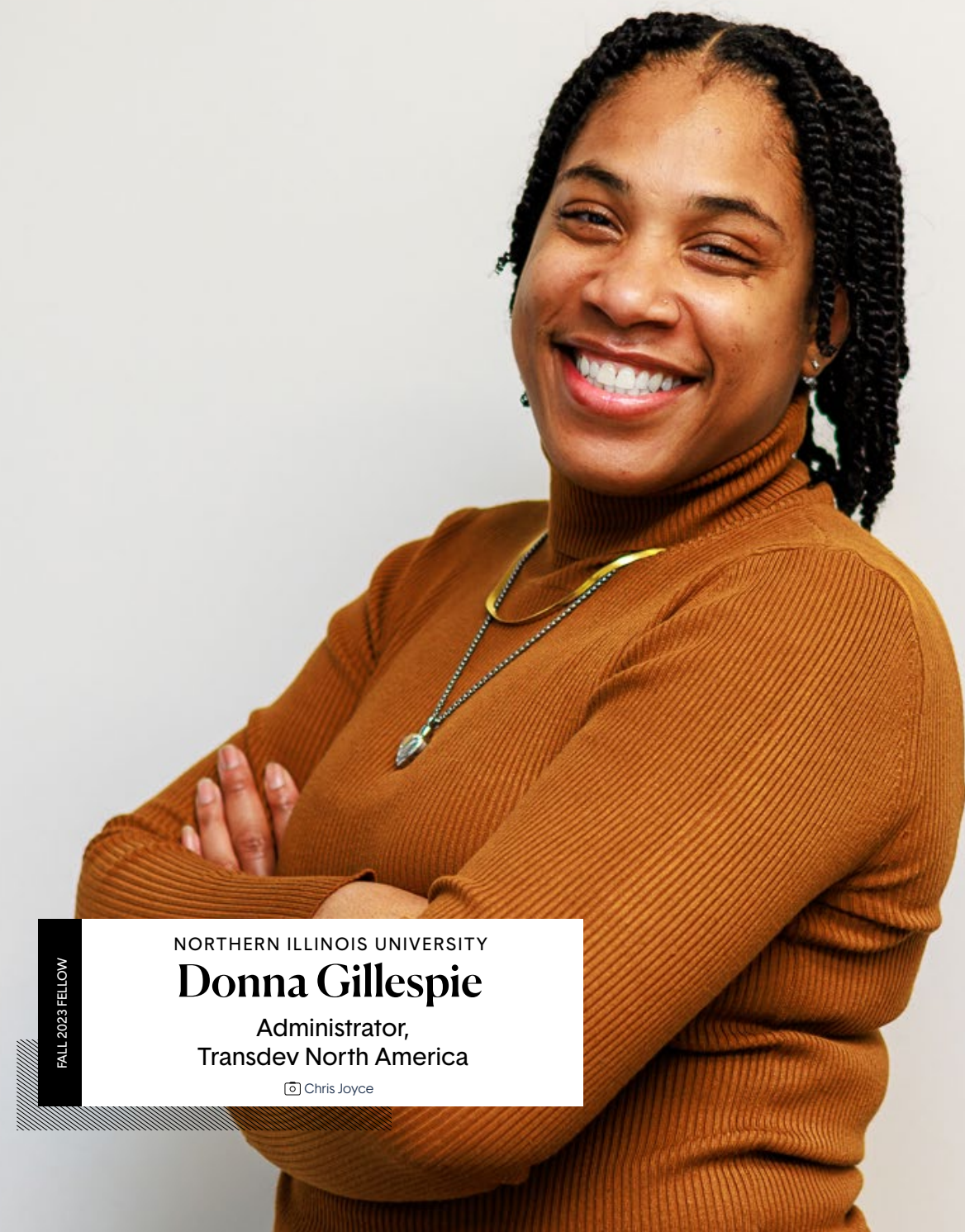
# Mission

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.

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# Vision

The next generation of leaders will emerge from everywhere.



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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
**Donna Gillespie**  
Administrator,  
Transdev North America  
Chris Joyce



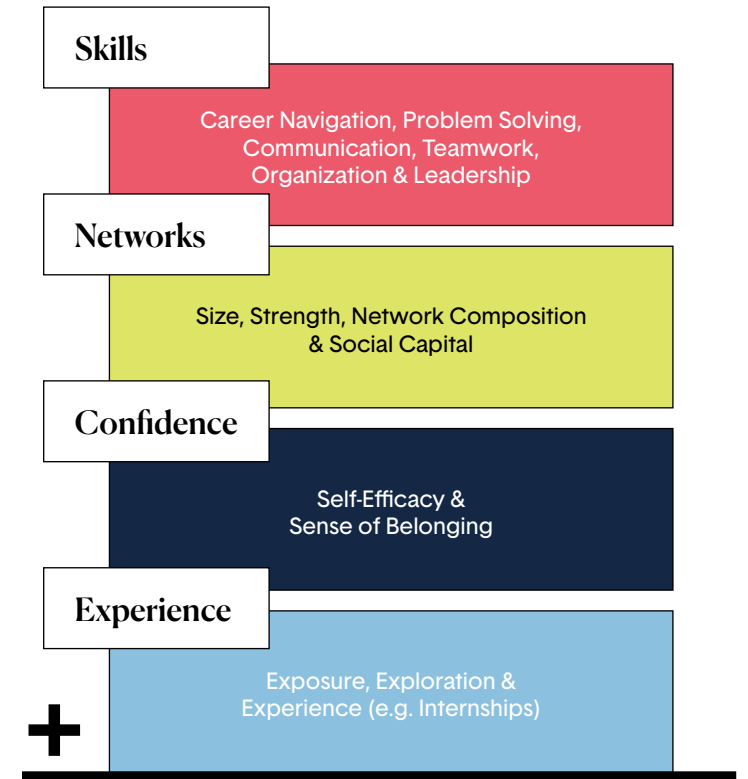
CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY  
**Abiodun Soneye**  
 Software Engineer,  
 JPMorgan Chase  
 Chris Joyce

SPRING 2024 FELLOW

# 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

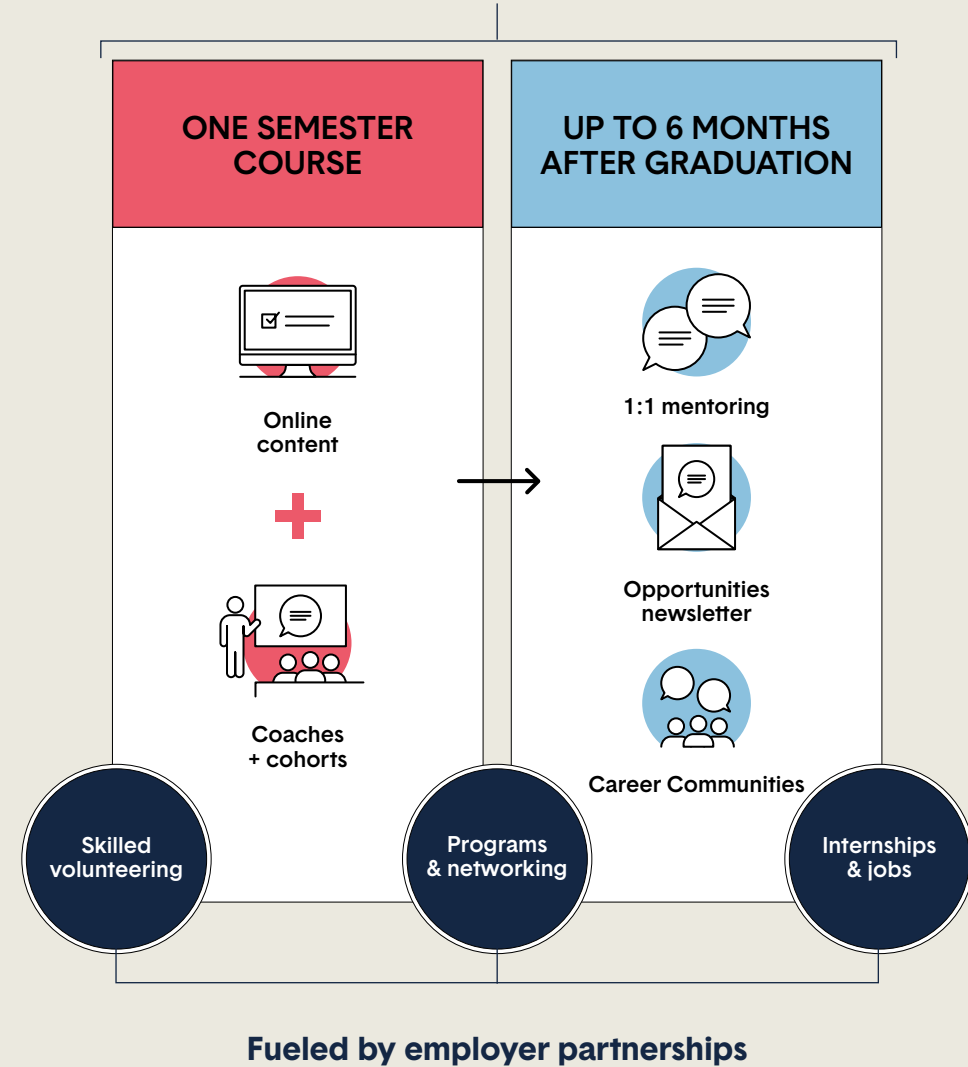
Braven equips promising college students on their paths toward quality economic opportunities through a semester-long, cohort-based course—developed with input from our higher education partners and faculty, employer partners, volunteers, and students—and support that extends beyond the course, continuing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

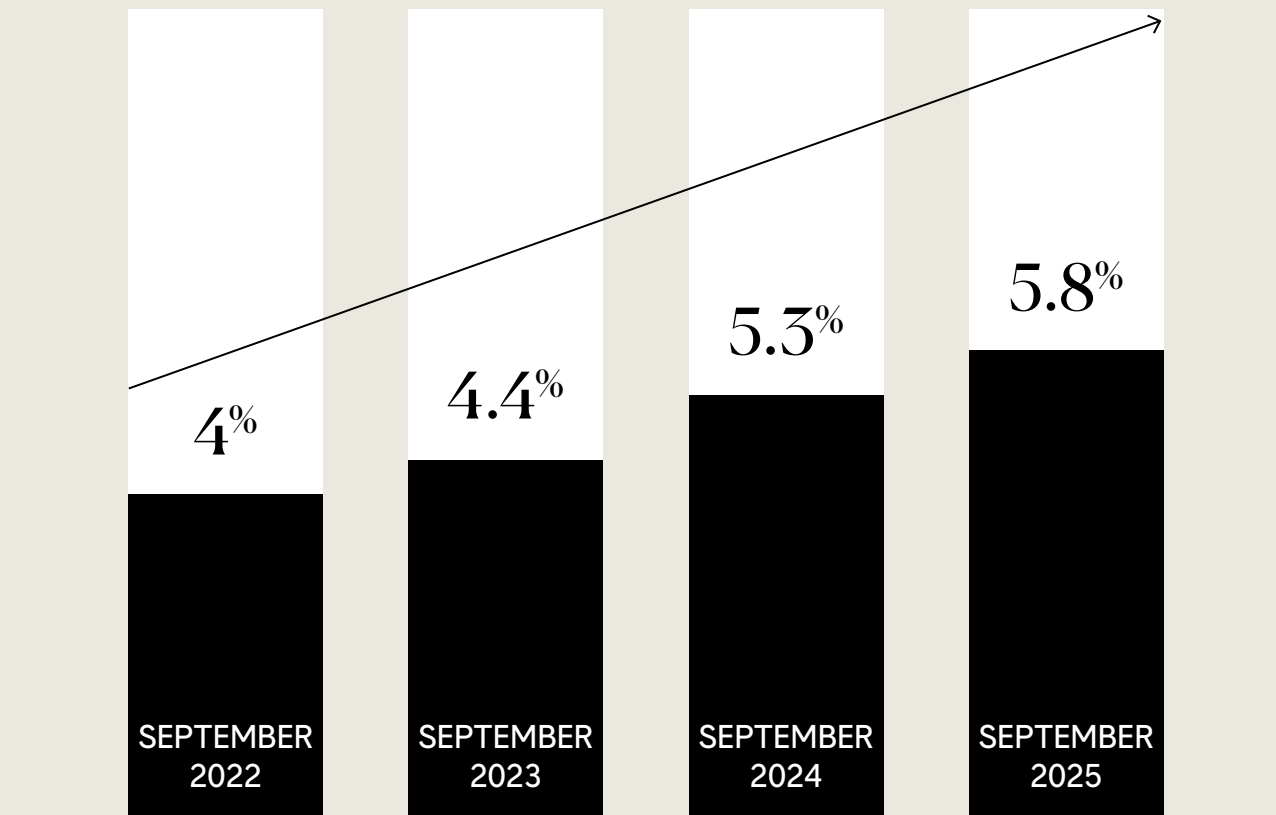
The entry-level market is tight. We have seen stagnation in entry-level job openings which, in part, is driving rising unemployment of recent graduates.

## STAGNATION IN ENTRY-LEVEL JOB OPENINGS



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

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR NEW GRADUATES (AGED 22-27) ON THE RISE<sup>4</sup>





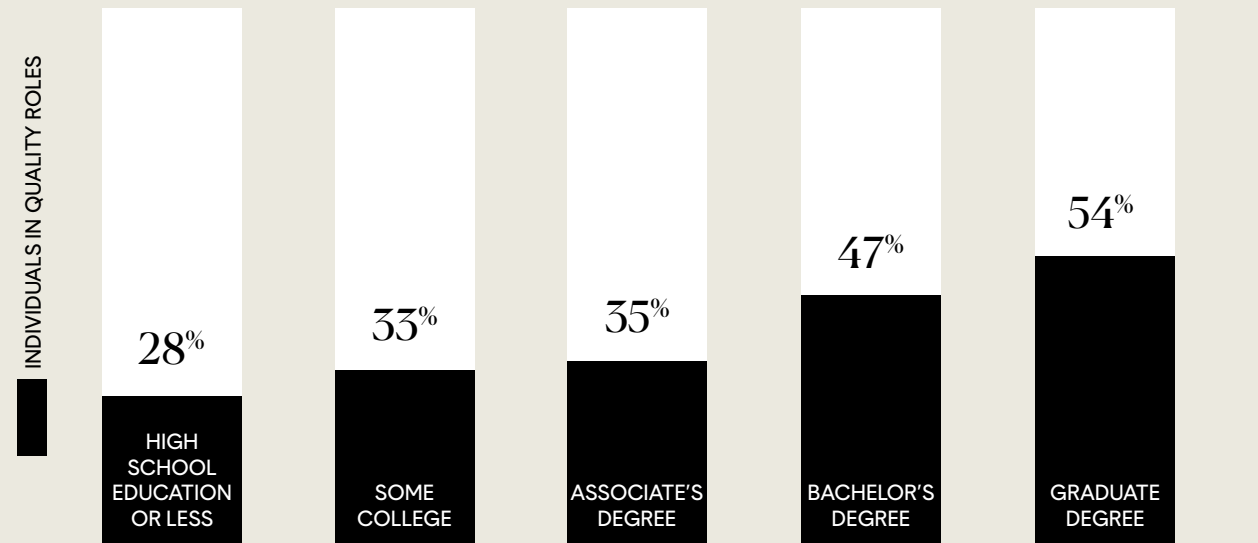
# Pursuing the bachelor's degree is still the surest path to economic mobility

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

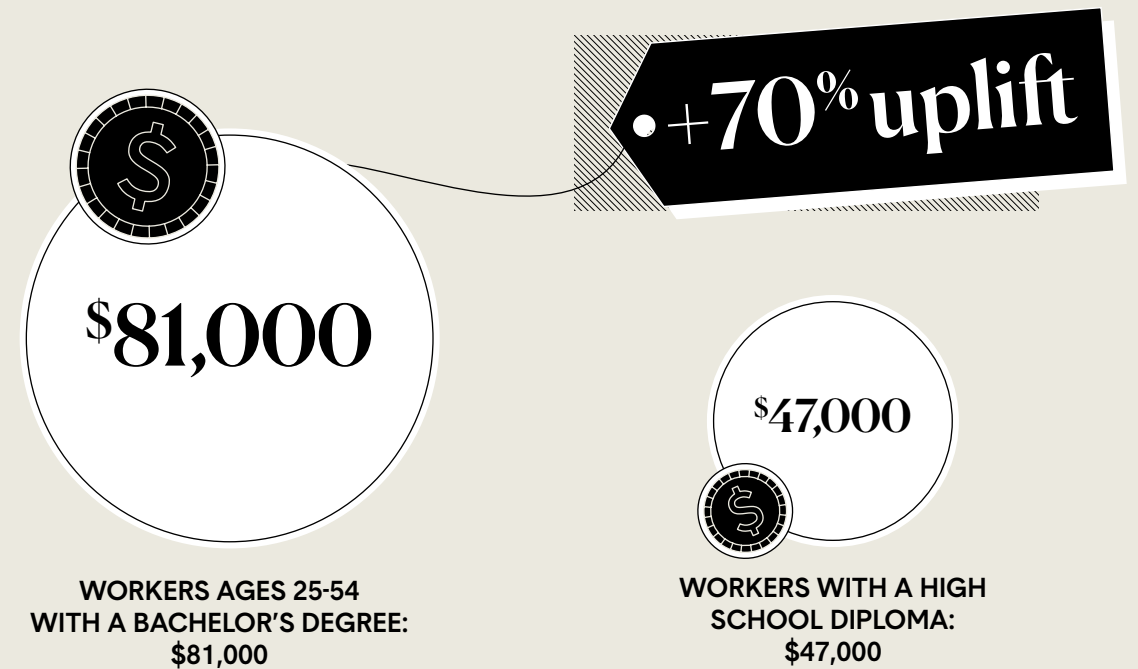
Employees with a four-year degree earn 70% more than workers with a high school diploma alone.

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.<sup>5</sup>



MEDIAN ECONOMIC OUTCOMES FOR WORKERS AGED 25-54 WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE<sup>6</sup>





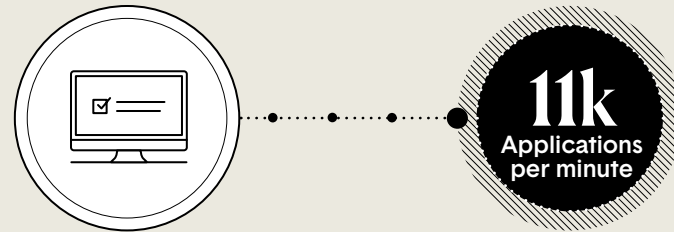
# AI reshapes expectations for early-career talent

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**.<sup>7</sup>

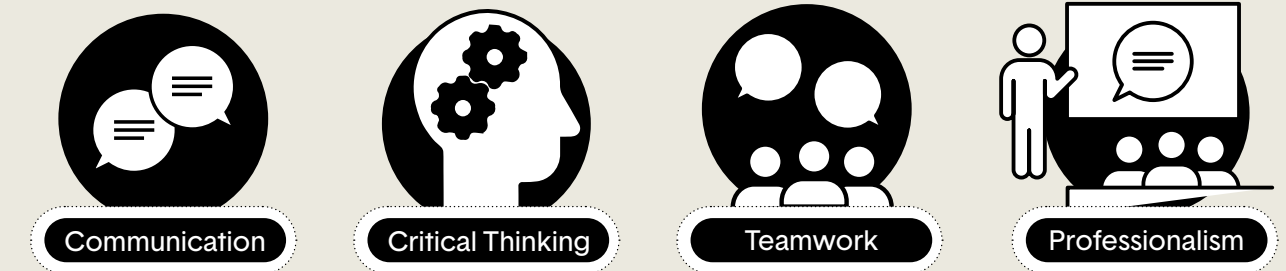


## AI's impact on job hunting

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%.<sup>7</sup>

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

These include:<sup>8</sup>



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

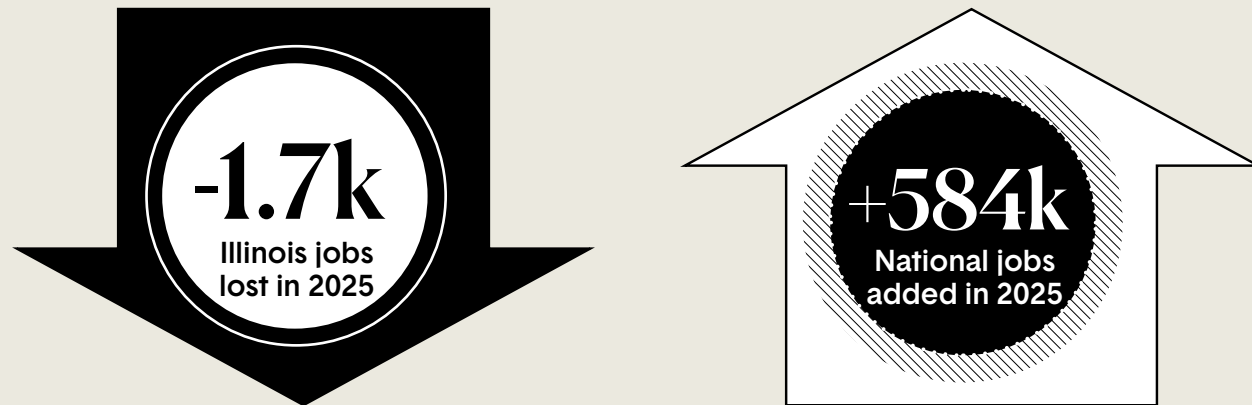


# Digging deeper: Chicago's lagging job market

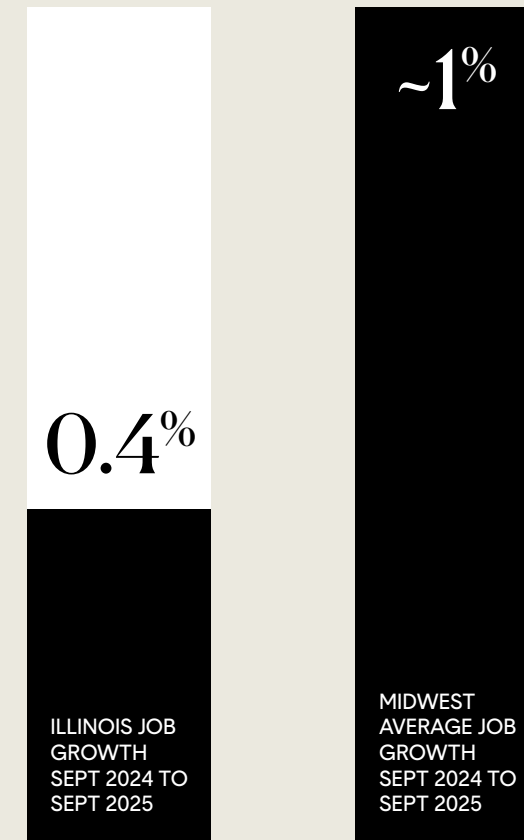
For context, this is less than half the Midwest average and trails all neighboring states.

Chicago-Area Fellows face compounding challenges in a regional labor market that continues to underperform.

## ILLINOIS EXPERIENCES WEAK JOB CREATION<sup>9</sup>



## INCREASE IN ILLINOIS JOB GROWTH OVER THE PAST YEAR<sup>10</sup>



Of the 192 Braven Fellows who graduated from Northern Illinois University in 2025,<sup>11</sup>

79%

are employed or enrolled in graduate school

65%

secured quality or pathway outcomes

FALL 2022 FELLOW

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Jesika Pabello

Registrar Associate,  
Adtalem Global Education

# The strength of roles that NIU Braven 2025 graduates secured



## 2025 NIU 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

41%  
QUALITY ROLES OR GRADUATE SCHOOL<sup>11</sup>

24%  
PATHWAY ROLES

14%  
NON-QUALITY

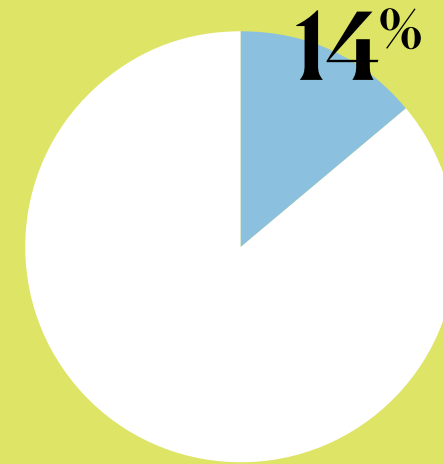
21%  
UNEMPLOYED

# NIU graduate school enrollment reflects first-generation and economic barriers

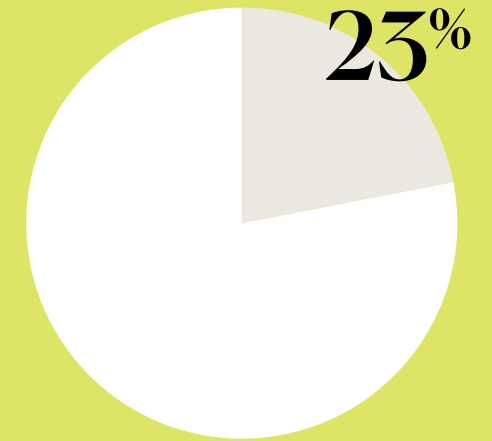
Northern Illinois University Fellows' graduate school enrollment rates are lower, which may reflect the economic realities facing NIU students:



70% of NIU students come from low-income backgrounds, and over half are first-generation college students.



NIU FELLOWS FROM THE CLASS OF 2025 WHO ARE ENROLLED IN GRADUATE SCHOOL



CLASS OF 2025 GRADUATES NATIONALLY WHO ARE GRADUATING FROM 4-YEAR COLLEGES AND ENROLLED IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

# NIU: Building career wealth & health



FALL 2022 FELLOW

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

## Juviny Noriega

Software Engineer,  
Bank of America

Chris Joyce

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, NIU Braven Fellows in the class of 2025 are outearning the national average salary for early college graduates.

### \$54,861

Mean salary of employed 2025 NIU Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation<sup>14</sup>

Compared to a national average of \$43,018 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who were employed in 2024<sup>16</sup>

+\$11.8k

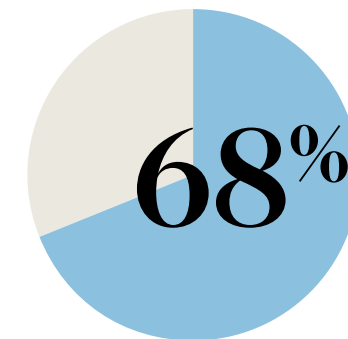
### \$66,397

Mean salary of full-time employed 2025 NIU Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation<sup>15</sup>

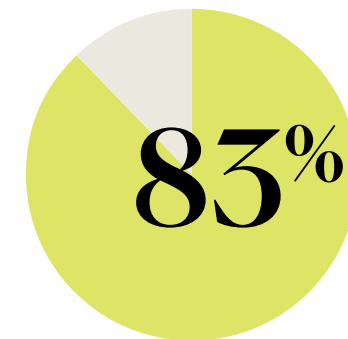
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024<sup>16</sup>

+\$15.9k

### RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST<sup>17</sup>



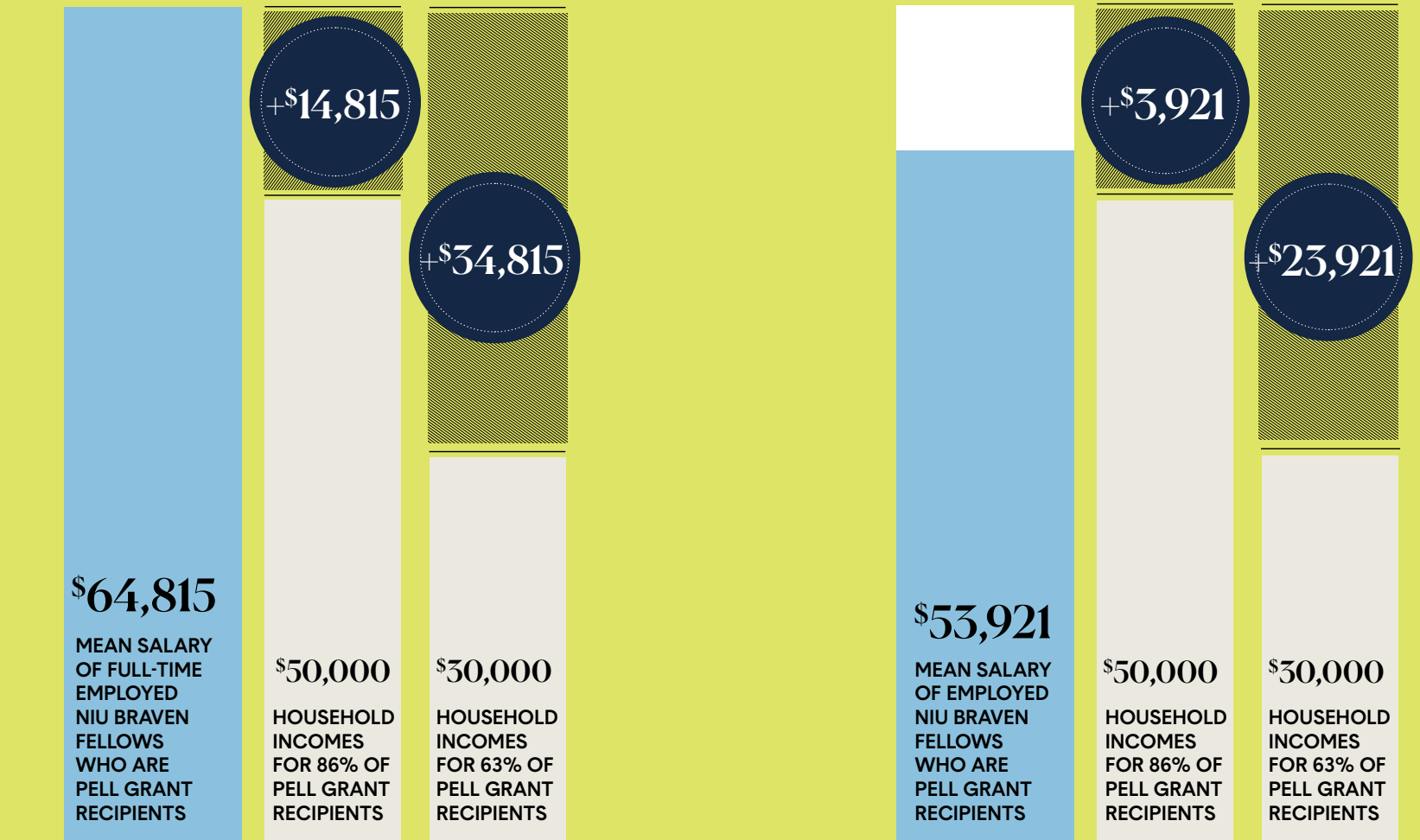
HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS<sup>17</sup>

# The American Dream in action for NIU students

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.<sup>20</sup>

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

**62%**  
NIU Braven 2025 graduates are Pell Grant recipients



## MOST POPULAR INDUSTRIES FOR NIU BRAVEN FELLOWS



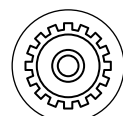
HEALTH



RETAIL



BANKING & FINANCE



MANUFACTURING



EDUCATION

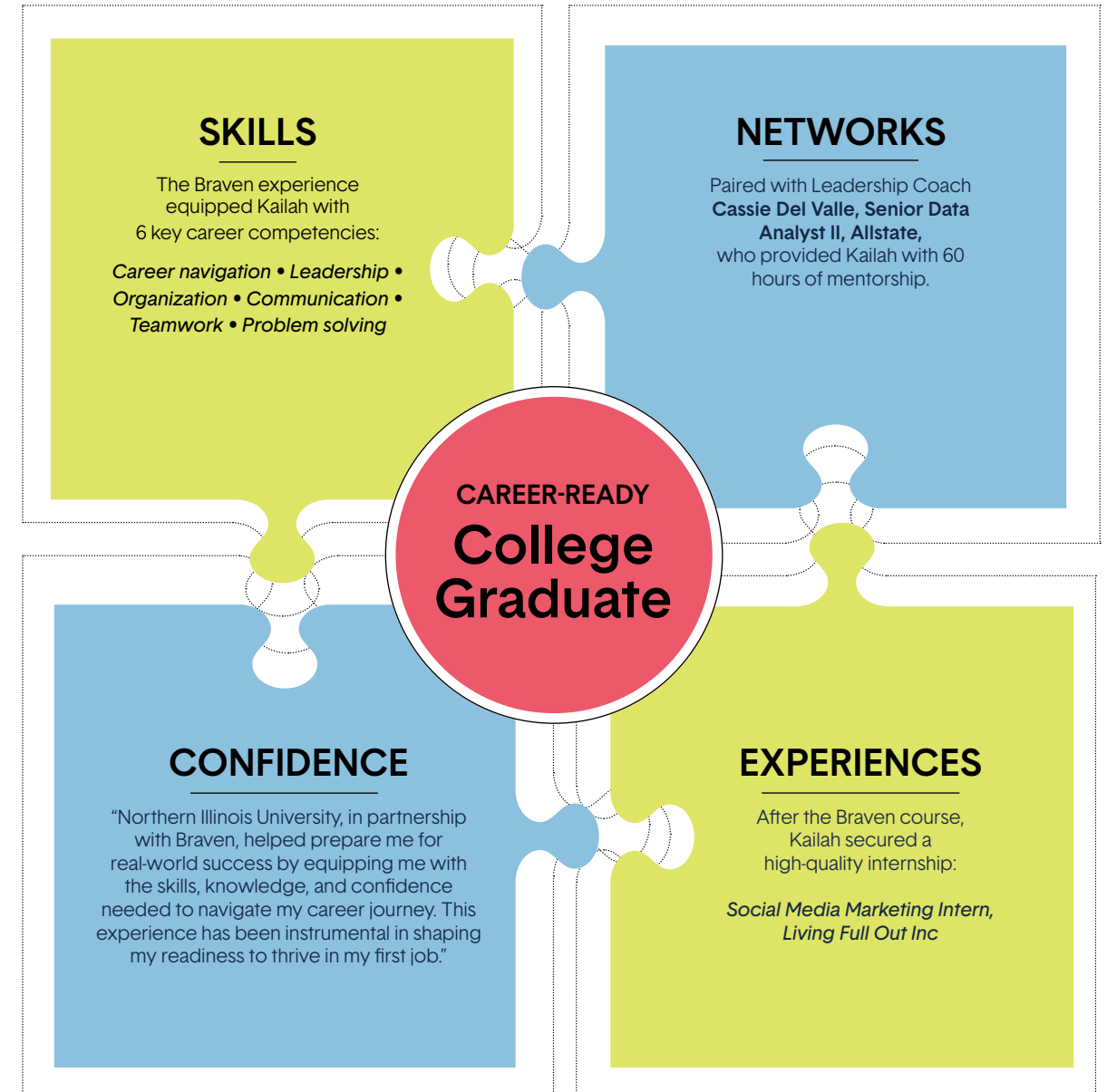
# NIU: The Braven Equation in action



SPRING 2024 FELLOW

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
**Kailah Stewart**  
 Public Relations Assistant,  
 Cook County Sheriff  
 © Chris Joyce

## With Braven's help, Kailah Stewart built the foundation to get on the path to the American Dream.



Of the 97 Braven Fellows who graduated from National Louis University in 2025,<sup>12</sup>

77%

are employed or enrolled in graduate school

55%

secured quality or pathway outcomes

WINTER 2024 FELLOW

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

**Olga Subtselnaia**

MS Power Platform Consultant,  
Ashling Partners

Chris Joyce

# The strength of roles that NLU Braven 2025 graduates secured



## 2025 NLU BRAVEN GRADUATES

27%

QUALITY ROLES OR GRADUATE SCHOOL<sup>12</sup>

28%

PATHWAY ROLES

22%

NON-QUALITY

23%

UNEMPLOYED

### 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

# NLU: Building career wealth & health



SPRING 2023 FELLOW

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

## Lyna Haddad

Digital Marketing Specialist,  
ServiceMaster Brands

Chris Joyce

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

### \$50,580

Mean salary of employed 2025 NLU Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation<sup>18</sup>

Compared to a national average of \$43,018 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who were employed in 2024<sup>16</sup>

+\$7.5k

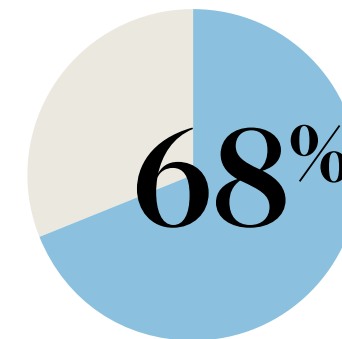
### \$64,254

Mean salary of full-time employed 2025 NLU Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation<sup>19</sup>

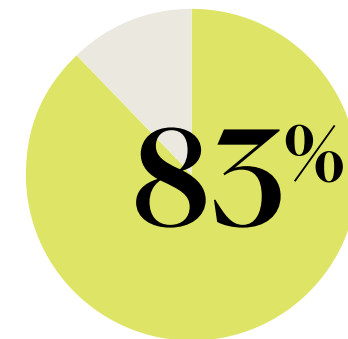
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024<sup>16</sup>

+\$13.8k

## RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST<sup>17</sup>



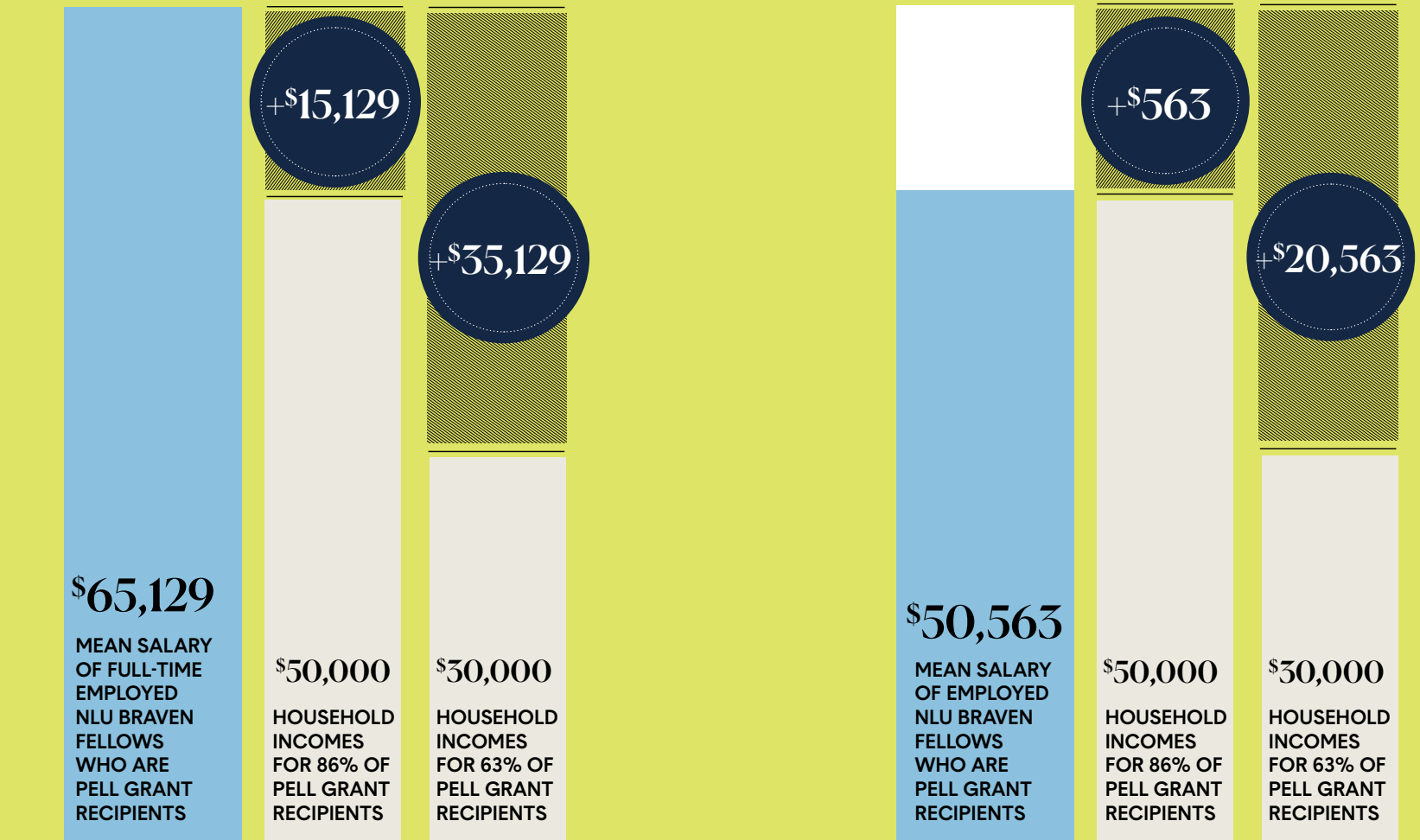
HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS<sup>17</sup>

# The American Dream in action for NLU students

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.<sup>20</sup>

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

**65%**  
NLU Braven 2025 graduates are Pell Grant recipients



## MOST POPULAR INDUSTRIES FOR NLU BRAVEN FELLOWS



EDUCATION



HEALTH



FOOD & BEVERAGE

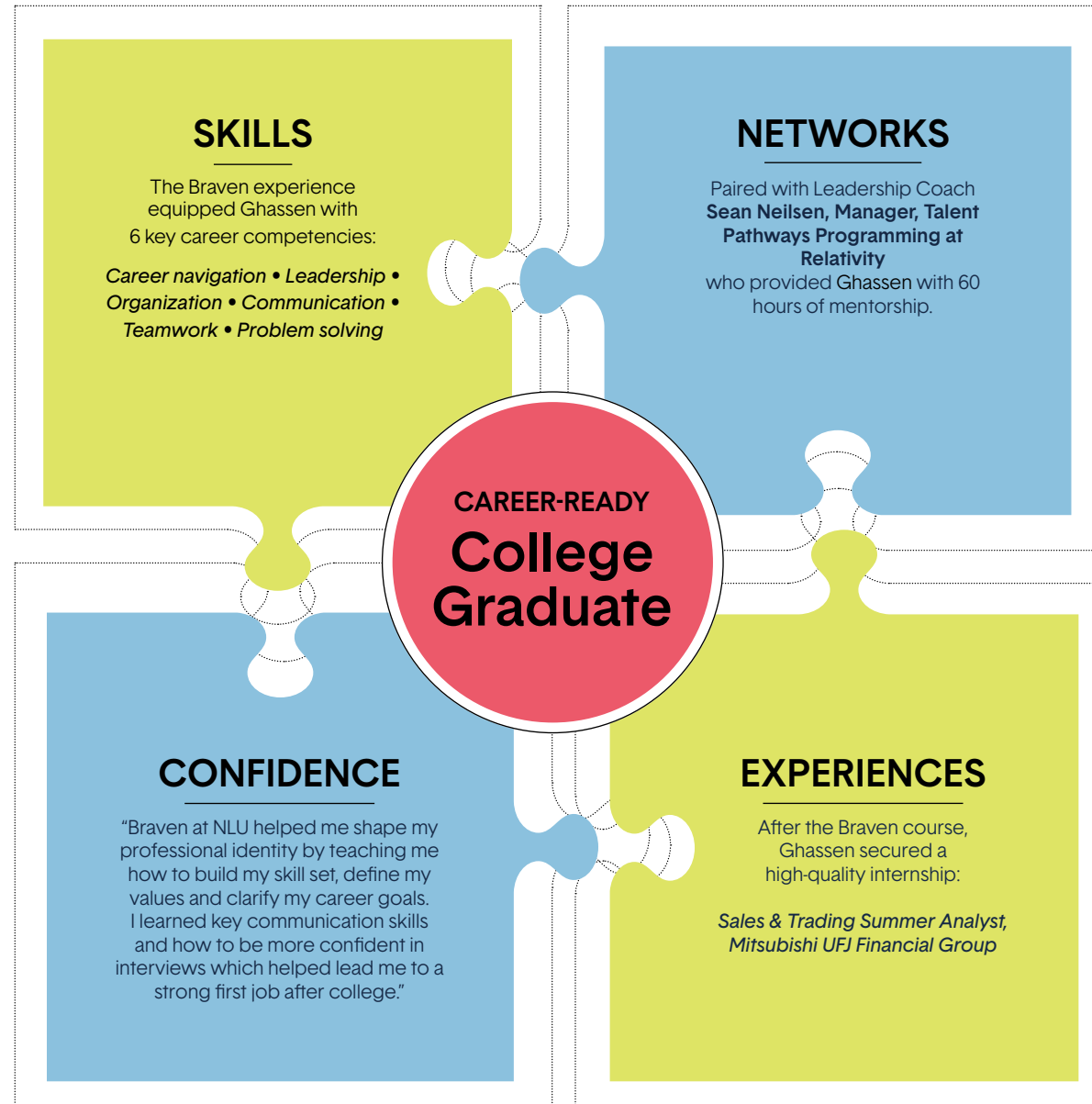


TECHNOLOGY



RETAIL

# With Braven's help, Ghassen Hattab built the foundation to get on the path to the American Dream.



# NLU: The Braven Equation in action

SPRING 2024 FELLOW

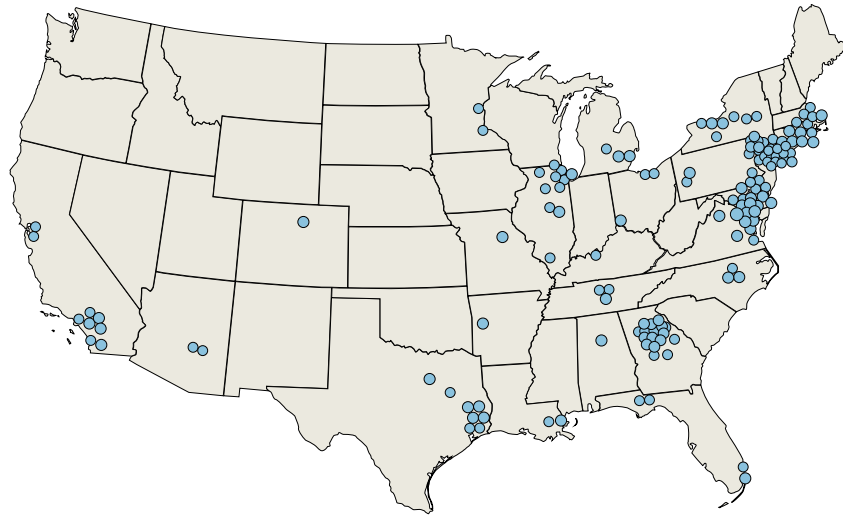
NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

## Ghassen Hattab

Business Development Representative,  
Shamrock Trading Corporation

Chris Joyce

# Fellow enrollment in graduate school



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

**27%**

27% of the 2025 graduates nationally went on to graduate school within six months of graduation.<sup>13</sup>

1. Agnes Scott College
2. Alfred University
3. American University
4. Arizona State University
5. Augusta University
6. Aurora University
7. Bank Street College of Education
8. Barry University
9. Baruch College
10. Baylor University
11. Boston University
12. Brooklyn College
13. Brown University
14. California State University, Long Beach
15. Capella University
16. Carnegie Mellon University
17. Case Western Reserve University
18. Central Georgia Technical College
19. City University of New York
20. Clark Atlanta University
21. Columbia University
22. DePaul University
23. Drexel University
24. Duke University
25. Emory University
26. Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing
27. Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
28. Emory University School of Medicine
29. Faulkner University
30. Fisk University
31. Florida A&M University
32. Florida State University
33. George Washington University
34. Georgetown University
35. Georgetown University Law Center
36. Georgia College & State University
37. Georgia Institute of Technology
38. Georgia State University
39. Grand Canyon University
40. Harvard University
41. Howard University
42. Howard University School of Law
43. Hult International Business School
44. Illinois Institute of Technology
45. Illinois State University
46. Johns Hopkins University
47. Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
48. Kean University
49. Kennesaw State University
50. La Sierra University
51. Lamar University
52. Lehman College
53. Loyola University Chicago
54. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
55. Meharry Medical College
56. Mercer University
57. Mercy University
58. Michigan State University
59. Mitchell Hamline School of Law
60. Montclair State University
61. Morehouse College
62. Morehouse School of Medicine
63. Morgan State University
64. National Louis University
65. New Jersey Institute of Technology
66. New York University
67. New York University Tisch School of the Arts
68. Newman University
69. Northeastern University
70. Northern Illinois University
71. Northwestern University
72. Old Dominion University
73. Palo Alto University
74. Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
75. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
76. Rice University
77. Russell Sage College
78. Rutgers Business School
79. Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
80. Rutgers School of Public Health
81. Rutgers University-New Brunswick
82. Rutgers University-Newark
83. Saint Joseph's University Philadelphia College of Pharmacy
84. San Diego State University
85. San Jose State University
86. Savannah College of Art and Design
87. Seton Hall University
88. Seton Hall University School of Law
89. Sotheby's Institute of Art
90. Southern Illinois University - Carbondale
91. Southern University Law Center
92. Spalding University
93. State University of New York at Brockport
94. Stevens Institute of Technology
95. Stony Brook University
96. Syracuse University
97. Teachers College, Columbia University
98. Temple University
99. Texas Southern University
100. The City College of New York
101. Towson University
102. Tufts University
103. Tufts University School of Medicine
104. Tulane University
105. University of Alabama at Birmingham
106. University of Arkansas
107. University of California, Irvine
108. University of California, Los Angeles
109. University of California, San Diego
110. University of Cincinnati
111. University of Colorado Boulder
112. University of Connecticut
113. University of Delaware
114. University of Georgia
115. University of Houston
116. University of Houston Law Center
117. University of Illinois at Chicago
118. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
119. University of Maryland
120. University of Maryland, Baltimore County
121. University of Massachusetts Boston
122. University of Miami
123. University of Michigan School of Public Health
124. University of Michigan, Ann-Arbor
125. University of Missouri
126. University of Mount Saint Vincent
127. University of North Carolina Adams School of Dentistry
128. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
129. University of Pennsylvania
130. University of Pittsburgh
131. University of Rochester
132. University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry
133. University of Southern California
134. University of Texas at Dallas
135. University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
136. University of the District of Columbia
137. University of Virginia
138. Vanderbilt University
139. Virginia Commonwealth University
140. William & Mary
141. Yale Law School
142. Yale School of Public Health
143. Yale University

**INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**

144. Alliance Manchester Business School
145. Imperial College London
146. King's College
147. McGill University
148. Nanjing University
149. St. Matthew's University
150. University of Kent
151. University of Manchester
152. University of Oxford

# Are we supporting Fellows on the path to internships?

Section  
**2a**

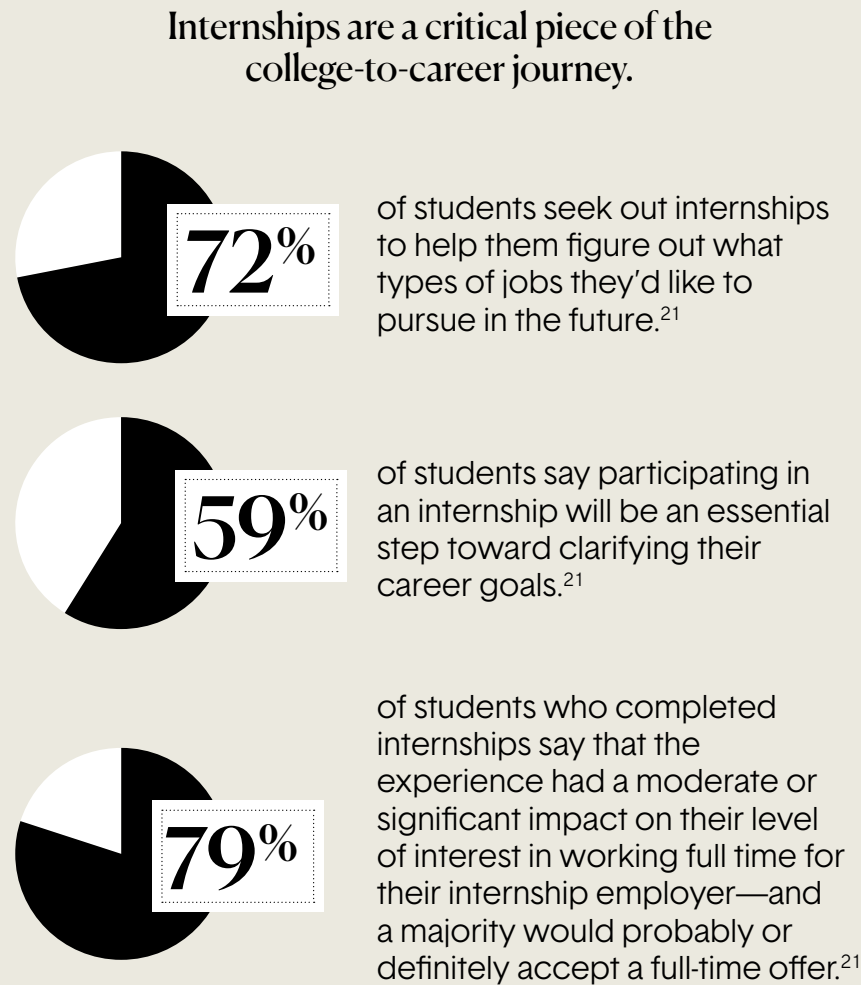




# Students are facing greater competition for internships

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

According to Handshake's Internship Index 2025:

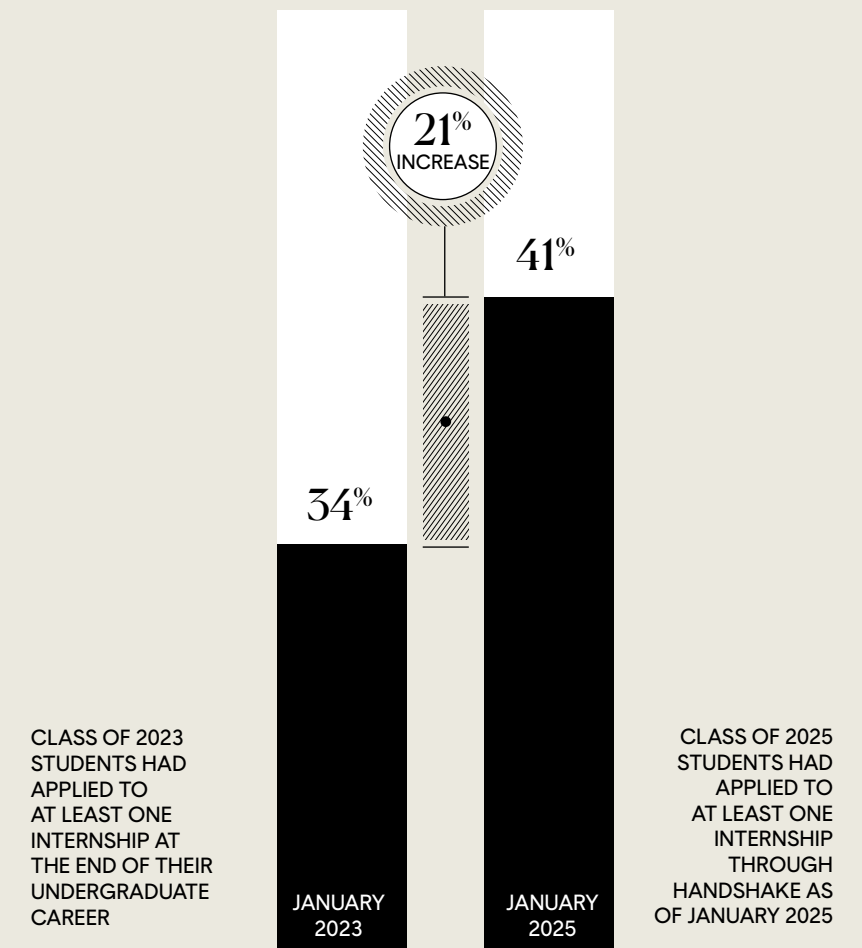


Internship demand is outpacing availability.

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



INCREASE IN INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED<sup>21</sup>





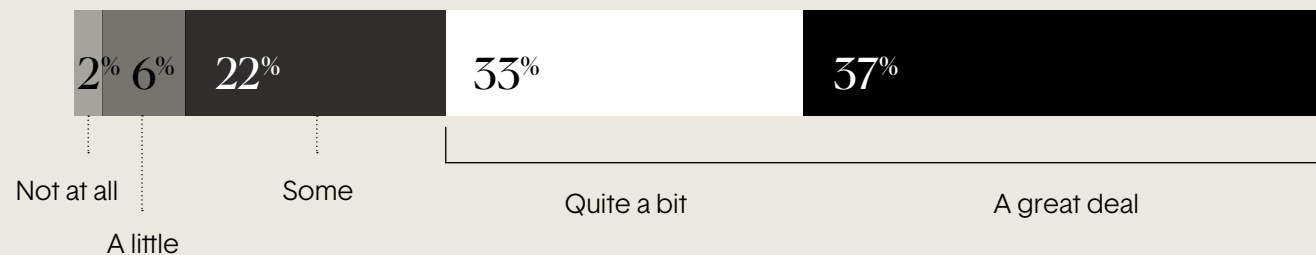
# Paid internships increase networks & mentorship

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?

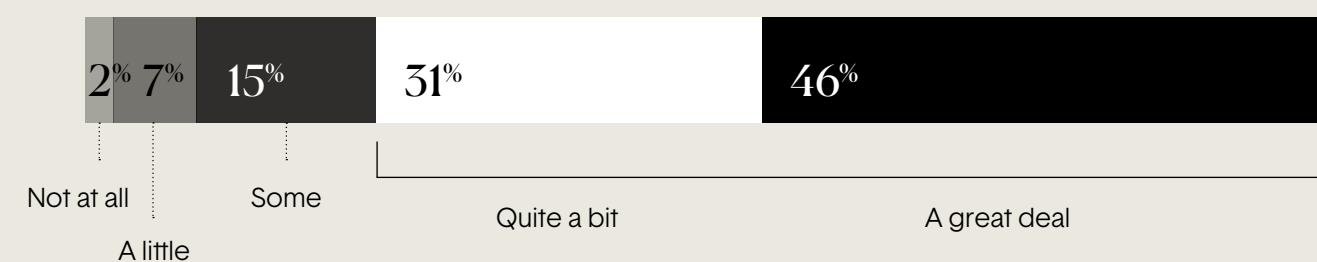


Seven in 10 students reported that paid internships substantially expanded their professional networks<sup>22</sup>

## 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 mentorship<sup>22</sup>

# Encouraging levels of internship attainment for NIU Braven Fellows

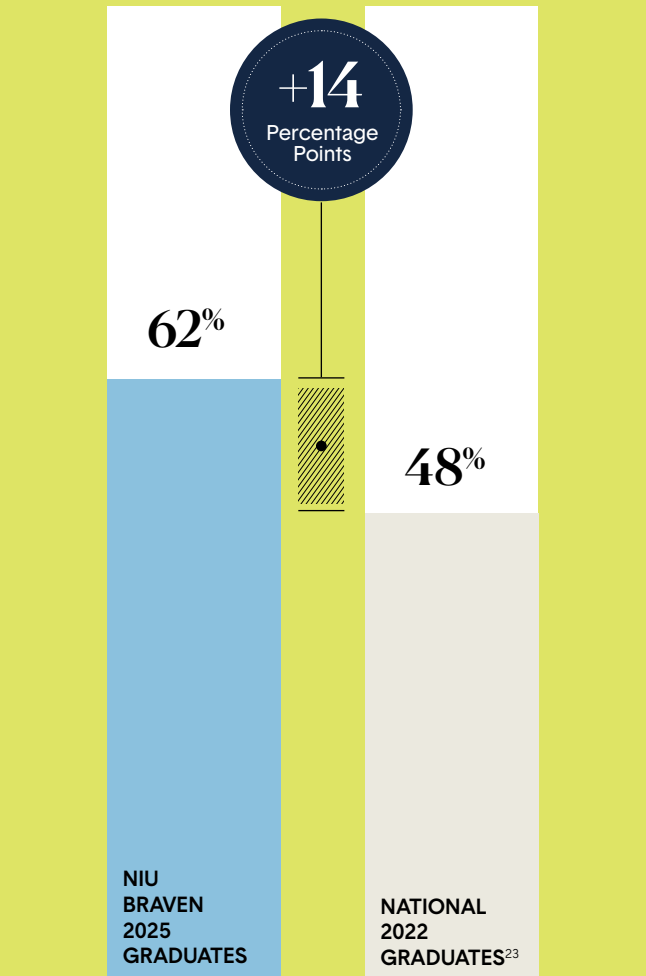


SPRING 2025 FELLOW  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
**Amrita Chowdhury**  
QCIPU Intern,  
Fermilab  
Chris Joyce



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

Compared with graduates nationally, Northern Illinois University Braven 2025 graduates were 14 percentage points more likely to have at least one internship during their college experience.



# Encouraging levels of internship attainment for NLU Braven Fellows

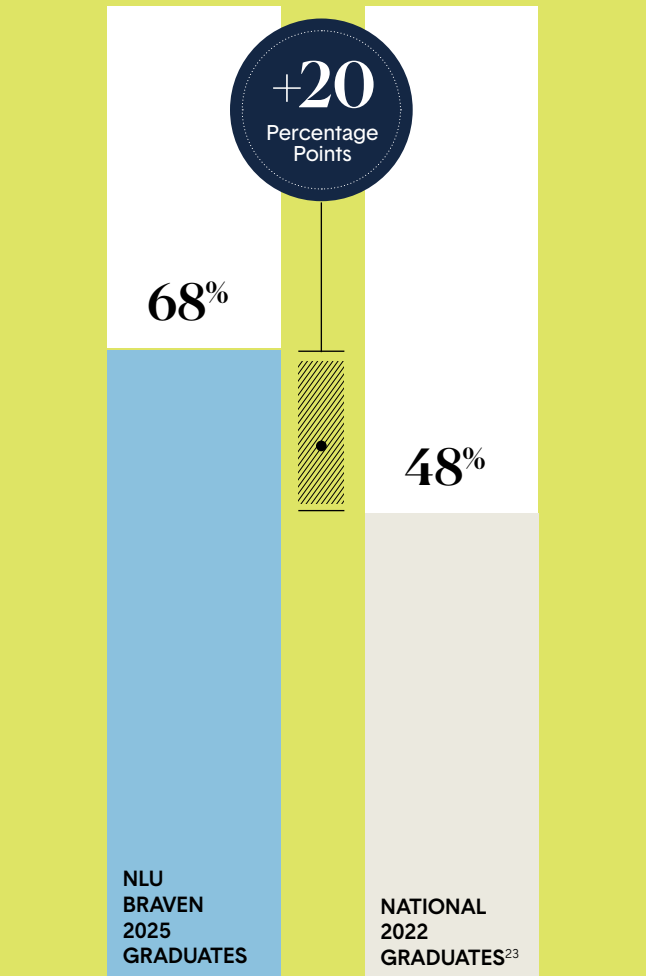


SPRING 2022 FELLOW  
NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY  
**Angie Jaral**  
Intern,  
Chicago News Weekly  
Chris Joyce



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

Compared with graduates nationally, National Louis University Braven 2025 graduates were 20 percentage points more likely to have at least one internship during their college experience.



# Are we supporting Fellows on the path to college completion?

Section  
**2b**



# Encouraging levels of persistence for NIU Braven Fellows



SPRING 2023 FELLOW

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
**DeOndre Saunders**

Summer Intern,  
The Garnette Report

📷 Joe Mazza

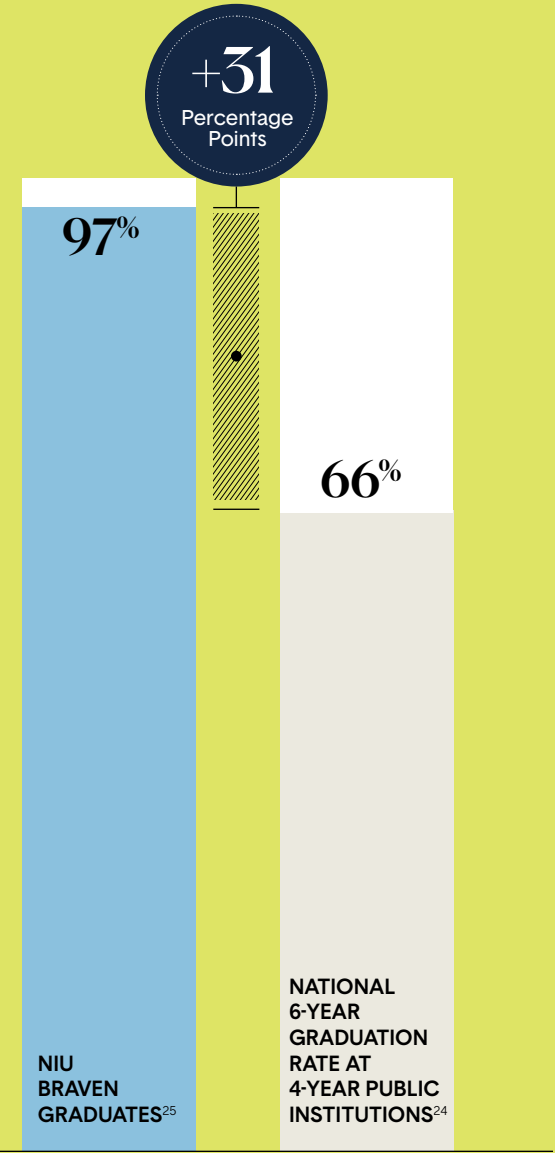


Northern Illinois University

Nationally, less than 7 in 10 students graduate within six years of college enrollment.<sup>24</sup>

Braven Fellows, who typically join us during their sophomore or junior year, are graduating at encouraging rates.

97% OF NIU BRAVEN FELLOWS ARE PERSISTING IN COLLEGE OR HAVE GRADUATED<sup>32</sup>



# Encouraging levels of graduation for NLU Braven Fellows



NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY  
**Juan-David Cardona Londoño**  
 Master in Business Administration,  
 DePaul University  
 Chris Joyce

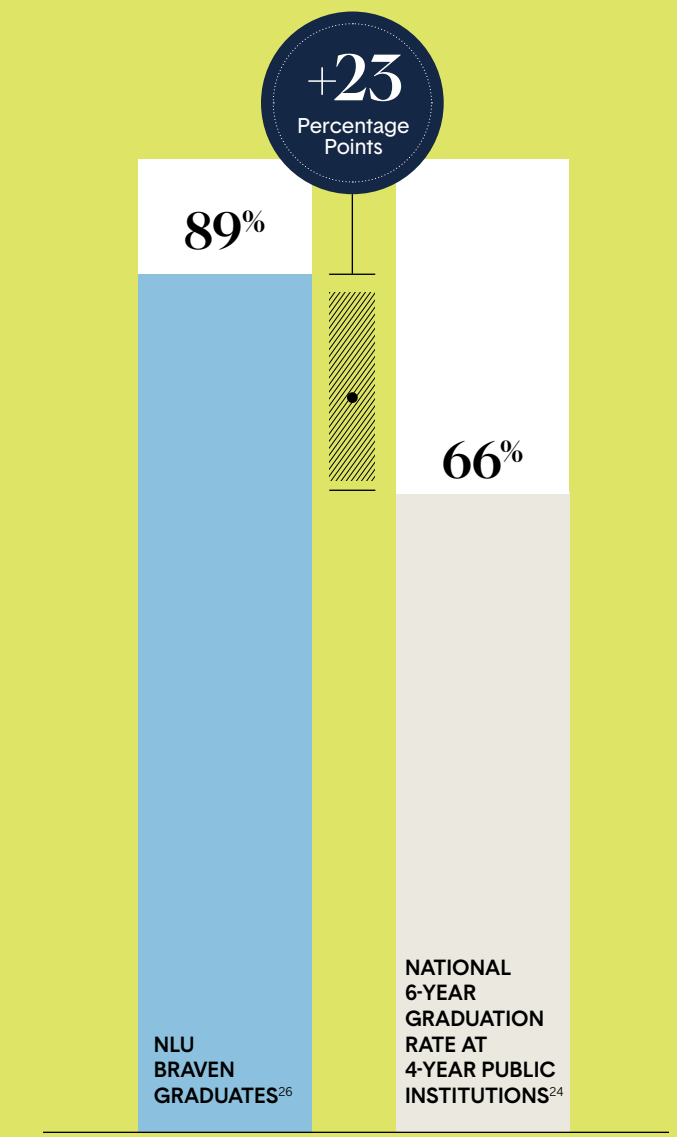
SPRING 2022 FELLOW



Nationally, less than 7 in 10 students graduate within six years of college enrollment.<sup>24</sup>

Braven Fellows, who typically join us during their sophomore or junior year, are graduating at encouraging rates.

NLU BRAVEN FELLOWS ACHIEVED A 89% SIX-YEAR ON-TIME GRADUATION RATE



## 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  
Apollo Opportunity Foundation  
Barclays  
Blackstone Charitable Foundation  
Capital One  
Deloitte  
JPMorgan Chase Foundation  
LinkedIn  
Morgan Stanley  
NBA Foundation  
Prudential Foundation

### ANCHOR

*(\$100K+ and programmatic support)*  
Allstate  
Brooks Brothers & The Golden Fleece Foundation  
CIBC Foundation  
Cognizant US Foundation

The College Board  
Salesforce  
San Jose Sharks Foundation

### KEYSTONE

*(\$25K+ and programmatic support)*  
Audible  
Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance  
Blackbaud  
CBRE  
CME Group Foundation  
Cornerstone Research  
Nerdwallet  
Northern Trust  
nvp  
Panasonic North America  
Pathward N. A.  
PwC  
Ripple  
Silver Lake  
Taco Bell Foundation  
UBS  
United Airlines

### INNOVATION

*(\$10K+ and programmatic support)*  
Anonymous  
Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey  
J&L Companies  
M&T Bank  
Neuberger Berman

### IMPACT

*(\$5K+ and/or programmatic support)*  
1Huddle  
Bain and Company  
Brown Advisory  
Carvertise  
Catalina  
Chicago Sky Foundation  
Choose New Jersey  
Cisco  
City Year  
Cramer-Krasselt  
Devil's Youth Foundation

Enkey.ai  
Equal Space  
Exelixis  
Goodman Theatre  
Google  
Hacker Dojo  
Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment  
Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley  
IQVIA  
Jacobs Levy Equity Management  
Medline  
Micron Technology, Inc.  
National Black Arts Festival  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women  
NetApp  
NJPAC  
Northwestern Medicine  
Philadelphia 76ers  
SAP Americas  
San Francisco Chamber of Commerce  
Staffmark  
Student Leadership Network  
Sutter Health  
Synchrony  
Teach For America  
Texas Instruments  
Unacast  
Vanguard  
Visa  
Wells Fargo  
Wu Yee Children's Services  
Young Invincibles

## PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORTERS (\$10K+)

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Charles Ashby Lewis & Penny Bender Sebring  
Charter School Growth Fund  
Chicago Community Trust  
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The Joseph Pedott Charitable Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation  
The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation  
Vivo Foundation

### A big thank you to our Chicago Board of Directors:

Sarah Berghorst  
Mara Botman  
David Cohen  
Joan Evans  
Betty Fleurimond  
Kelly Mannard  
Ron Sonenthal  
Elizabeth Thompson

# BravenX overview



# BravenX program & impact

BravenX is a 14-week virtual fellowship experience that equips participants with the skills, networks, confidence, and experience necessary to launch a strong career.



FALL 2021 BRAVENX FELLOW

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

**Julianna Wilson**

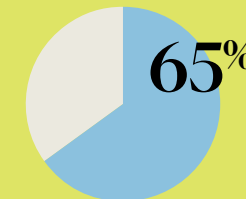
Native Speaking Teacher,  
HESS International Educational



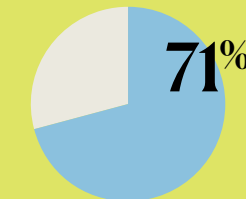
## 2025 BRAVENX GRADUATES

This program is fully virtual and identical in length, content, and cohort structure as our for-credit university model. However, it is made possible through partnerships with college access and success organizations.

Braven helps empower their college students to build the foundation for their careers. BravenX Fellows earn a financial stipend upon completion of the program in lieu of academic credit. In some cases, BravenX is added as a scholarship requirement.



BRAVENX GRADUATES SECURED QUALITY OR PATHWAY OUTCOMES<sup>27</sup>



BRAVENX GRADUATES EMPLOYED OVERALL OR ENROLLED IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

51%  
QUALITY ROLES OR GRADUATE SCHOOL

14%  
PATHWAY ROLES

6%  
NON-QUALITY

29%  
UNEMPLOYED

# BravenX: Building career wealth & health



WINTER 2025 FELLOW

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

## Naja Thompson

Outreach Intern,  
Cook County Department of Human Rights and Ethics

Chris Joyce

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, BravenX Fellows in the class of 2025 are outearning the national average salary for early college graduates.

### \$57,940

Mean salary of employed 2025 BravenX graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation<sup>28</sup>

Compared to a national average of \$43,018 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who were employed in 2024<sup>16</sup>

+\$14.9k

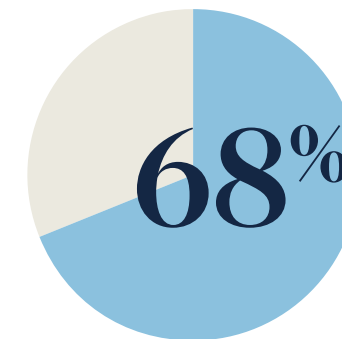
### \$63,940

Mean salary of full-time employed 2025 BravenX graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation<sup>29</sup>

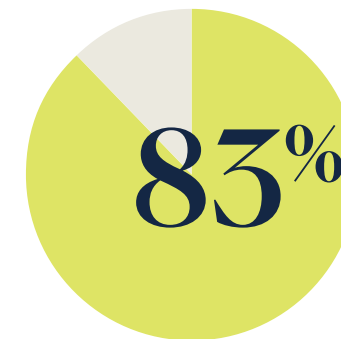
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024<sup>16</sup>

+\$13.5k

### RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST<sup>17</sup>



HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS<sup>17</sup>

# Encouraging levels of internship attainment for BravenX Fellows

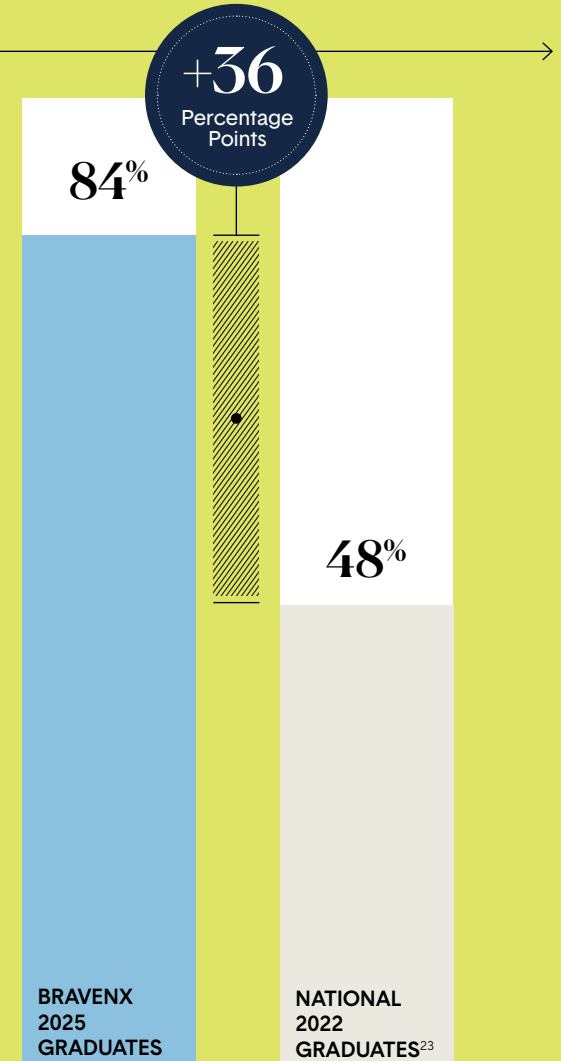


UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO  
**Tania Garcia**  
 Corporate Strategy & Business Development  
 Intern, CME Group  
 Chris Joyce

SPRING 2025 FELLOW

Compared with graduates nationally, BravenX 2025 graduates were 36 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.



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.
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11. 41% is the percentage of NIU Fellows who secured a quality job or enrolled in graduate school. All outcome percentages are based on NIU Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (77% or 147 out of the total 192 Fellows' outcome is known).
12. 27% is the percentage of NLU Fellows who secured a quality job or enrolled in graduate school. All outcome percentages are based on NLU Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (80% or 78 out of the total 97 NLU Fellows' outcome is known).
13. 27% is the percentage of Fellows who enrolled in graduate school. This percentage is based on Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (87% or 1136 out of the total 1306 Fellows at core sites' outcome is known).
14. Braven employed salary average is the approximated salary average for Class of 2025 Braven Fellows at NIU who secured any job (quality, part-quality, or not quality).
15. Braven full-time employed salary average is the approximate salary average for Class of 2025 Braven NIU Fellows at core sites who secured a quality job.
16. 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>.
17. Data is based on 380 Post-Accelerator Fellow survey responses pooled from Fall 2021 - Fall 2025 across both core and non-core sites.
18. Braven employed salary average is the approximated salary average for Class of 2025 Braven Fellows at NLU who secured any job (quality, part-quality, or not quality).
19. Braven full-time employed salary average is the approximate salary average for Class of 2025 Braven NLU Fellows at core sites who secured a quality job.
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](https://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/2024_National_Profile.pdf). Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
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24. The National Comparison represents the six-year graduation rate for the 2018 cohort of full-time, first-time Pell Grant recipients at four-year public Title IV institutions. This rate is adjusted to account for year-over-year persistence from freshman through junior year. Data is synthesized from the NCES IPEDS Data Explorer (2024), the Digest of Education Statistics (2021), and American Institutes for Research (2023).
25. Six-year graduation rate of NIU Braven Fellows includes students who enrolled as first-time freshmen, not including those who took Braven as seniors, transfers, or international students. NIU is included in the six-year graduation rate calculation because the university reached a threshold of graduates to date (200+) for which we have both valid enrollment and graduation data.
26. Six-year graduation rate of NLU Braven Fellows includes students who enrolled as first-time freshmen, not including those who took Braven as seniors, transfers, or international students. NLU is included in the six-year graduation rate calculation because the university reached a threshold of graduates to date (200+) for which we have both valid enrollment and graduation data.
27. 51% is the percentage of 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 (70% or 209 out of the total 298 BravenX Fellows' outcome is known).
28. Braven employed salary average is the approximated salary average for Class of 2025 BravenX Fellows who secured any job (quality, part-quality, or not quality).
29. Braven full-time employed salary average is the approximate salary average for Class of 2025 BravenX Fellows at core sites who secured a quality job.

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# Notes

