



2026 Jobs Report



FALL 2023 FELLOW

RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY-NEWARK

Angelina Vertiz

BOLD Women's
Leadership Network
Fellow,
YWCA Northern
New Jersey

&

Founder,
LeadHer Roots

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.



SPRING 2025 FELLOW

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK

Oscar Alvarado

Compliance Examiner,
National Futures Association

Joshua Christie | Purpose Portraits

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



SPRING 2024 FELLOW

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK
Lance Simon
 Tax Consultant, Deloitte &
 Master of Science in Business Management,
 Rutgers University-Newark
 © Joshua Christie | Purpose Portraits

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

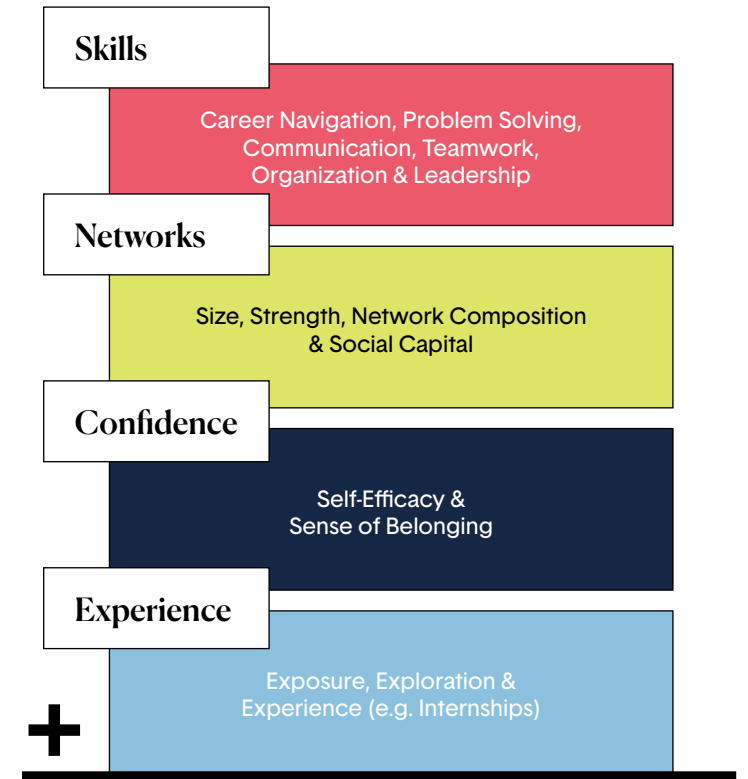
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK
Vaibhavi Patel
Field Operations Consultant,
McDonald's
Joshua Christie | Purpose Portraits

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK
Priyal Patel
 Program Integrity Analyst,
 Zigatek

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

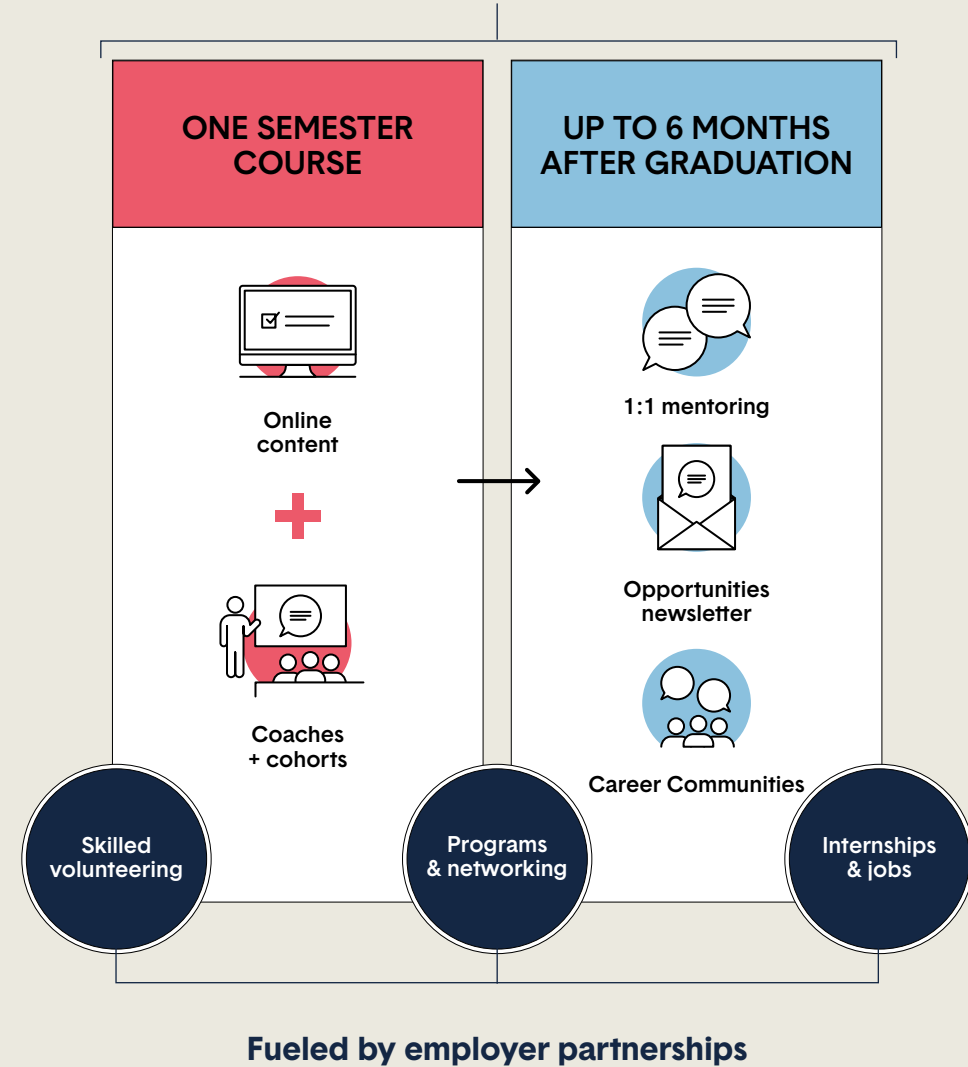
Braven equips promising college students on their paths toward quality economic opportunities through a semester-long, cohort-based course—developed with input from our students, volunteers, and higher education and employer partners—and support that extends beyond the course, continuing through six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



Section

1

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





New college graduates are experiencing an especially challenging labor market

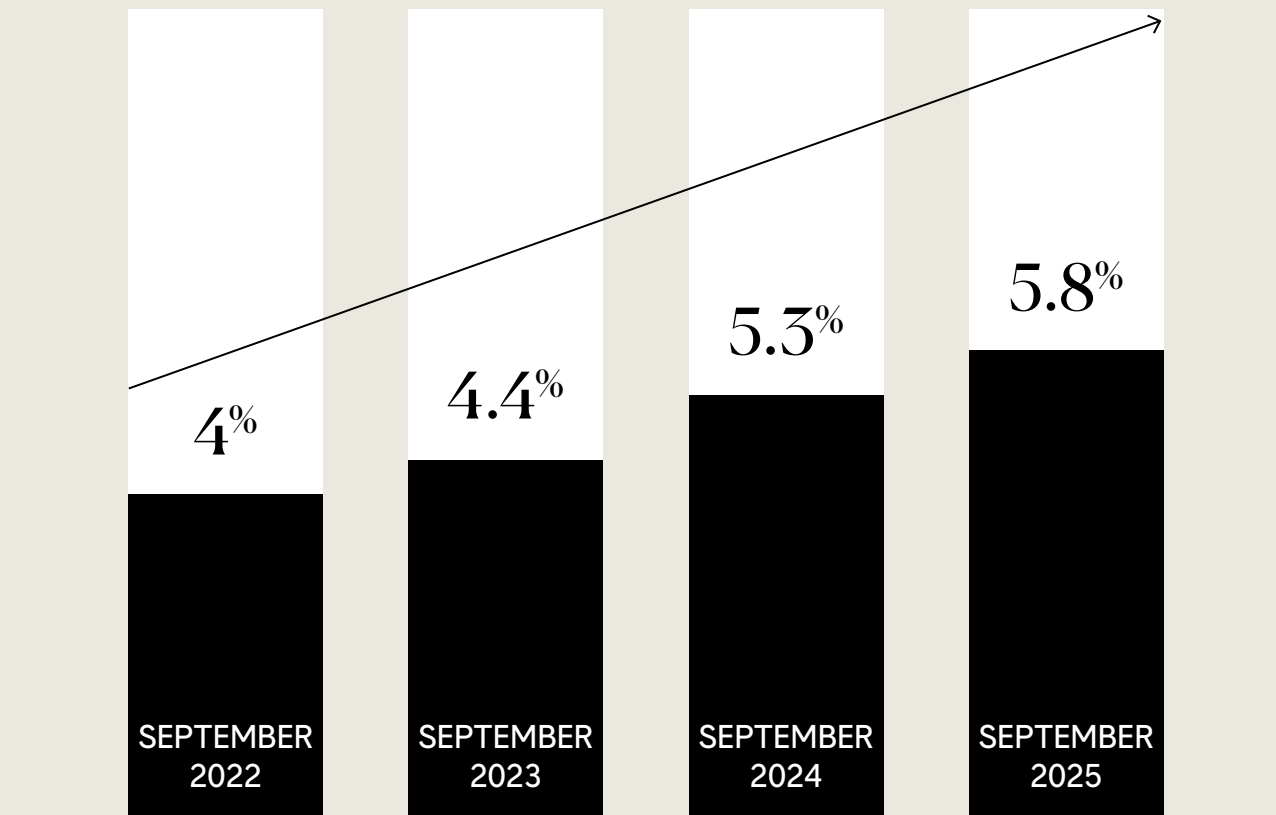
The entry-level market is tight. We have seen stagnation in entry-level job openings which, in part, is driving rising unemployment of recent graduates.

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





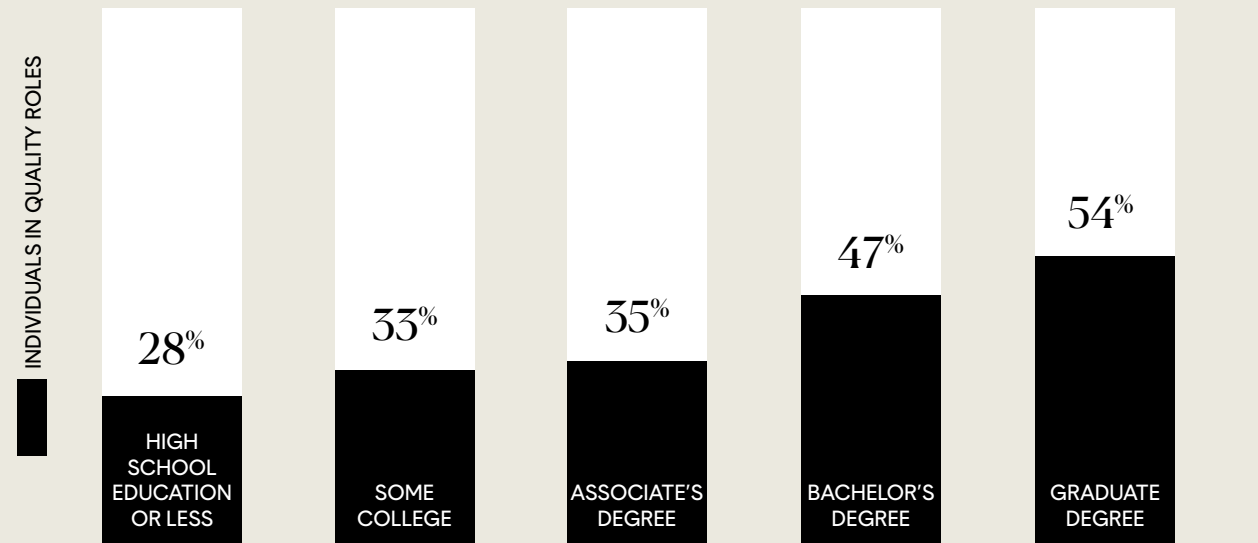
Pursuing the bachelor's degree is still the surest path to economic mobility

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

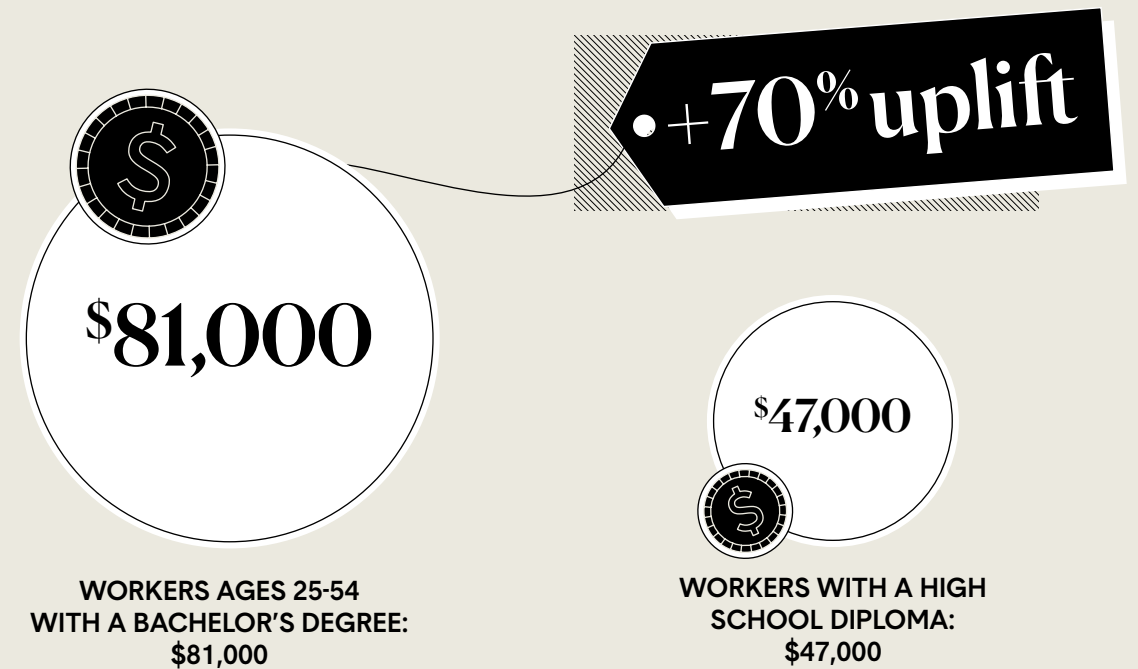
Employees with a four-year degree earn 70% more than workers with a high school diploma alone.

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





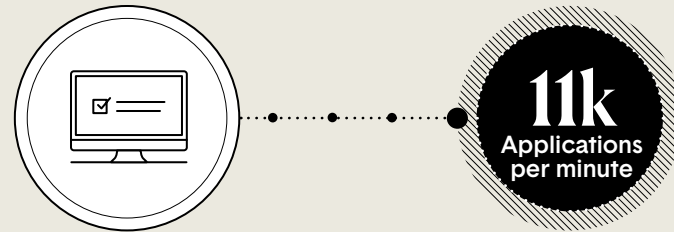
AI reshapes expectations for early-career talent

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

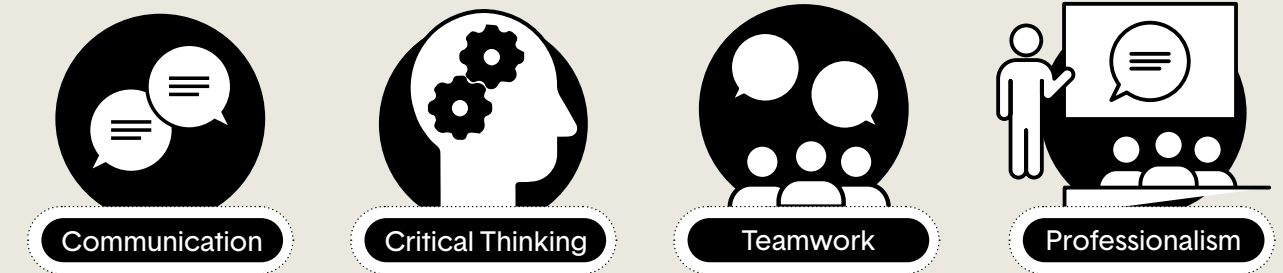


AI's impact on job hunting

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, 153
Braven Fellows
graduated from
Rutgers University-
Newark

SPRING 2025 FELLOW

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK

Sophia Estape

Staff Geologist,
Langan



RU-N Braven Fellows secured quality opportunities after college

24+
This new class is
outpacing their peers
nationally in quality
outcome attainment⁹
by 24 percentage
points (69%¹⁰ vs
45%¹¹) within six
months of graduation.

69% 2025 RU-N BRAVEN
GRADUATES¹⁰

45% GRADUATES WITH A BACHELOR'S
DEGREE FROM PEER INSTITUTIONS
WITH A SIMILAR CONCENTRATION OF
PELL GRANT RECIPIENTS¹¹

49% GRADUATES NATIONALLY WITH A
BACHELOR'S DEGREE¹²



RU-N BRAVEN CLASS OF 2025 DEMOGRAPHICS

80%
students from
low-income
backgrounds¹³

65%
first-generation
college
students¹⁴

Of the 153 Braven Fellows who graduated from Rutgers University-Newark in 2025,

88%

are employed or enrolled in graduate school

84%

secured quality or pathway outcomes

SPRING 2024 FELLOW

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK

Diana Serquen

EOF Student Support Assistant,
Essex County College

The strength of roles our 2025 graduates secured



2025 RU-N 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

69%

QUALITY ROLES OR GRADUATE SCHOOL

15%

PATHWAY ROLES

4%

NON-QUALITY

12%

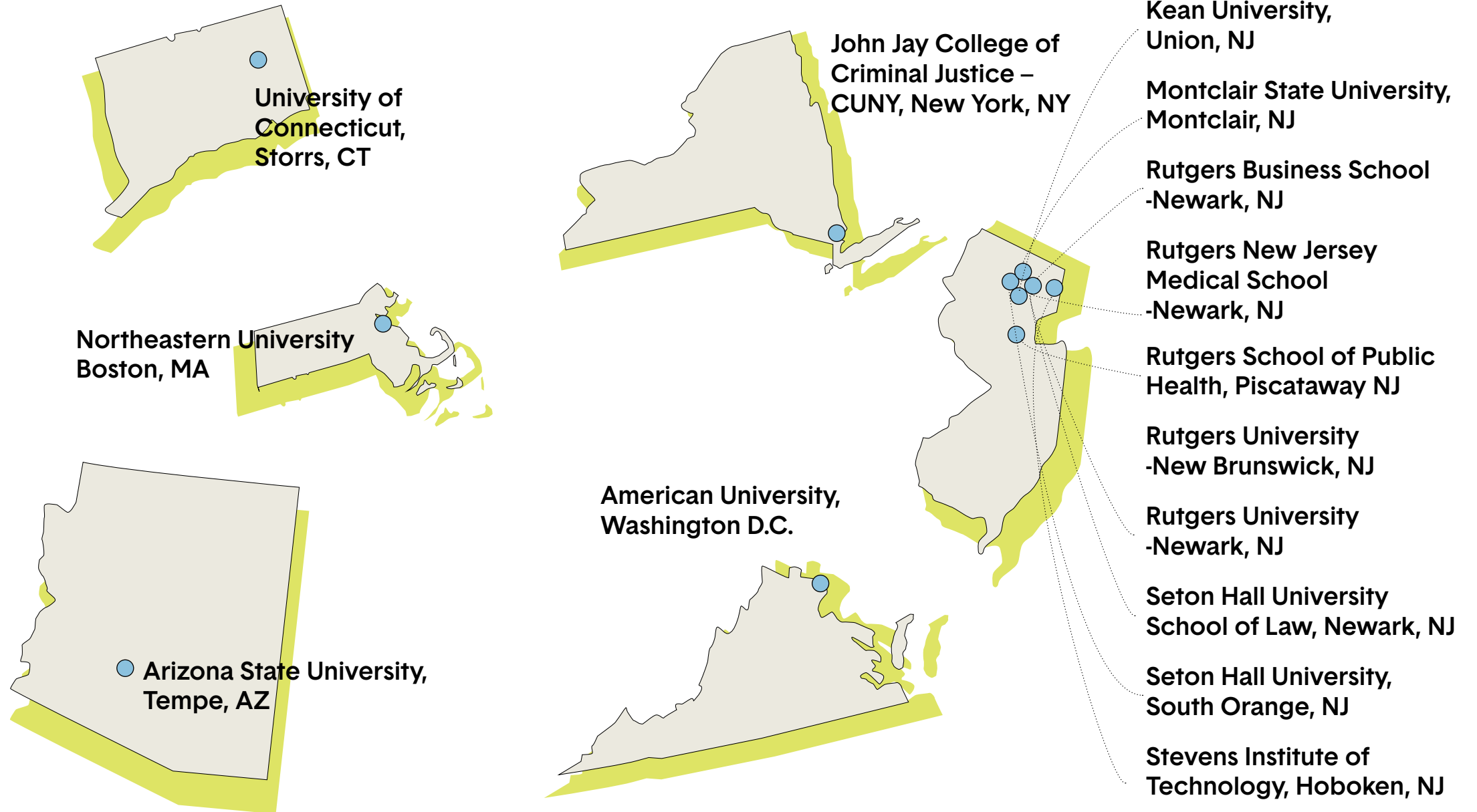
UNEMPLOYED

RU-N Fellow enrollment in graduate school

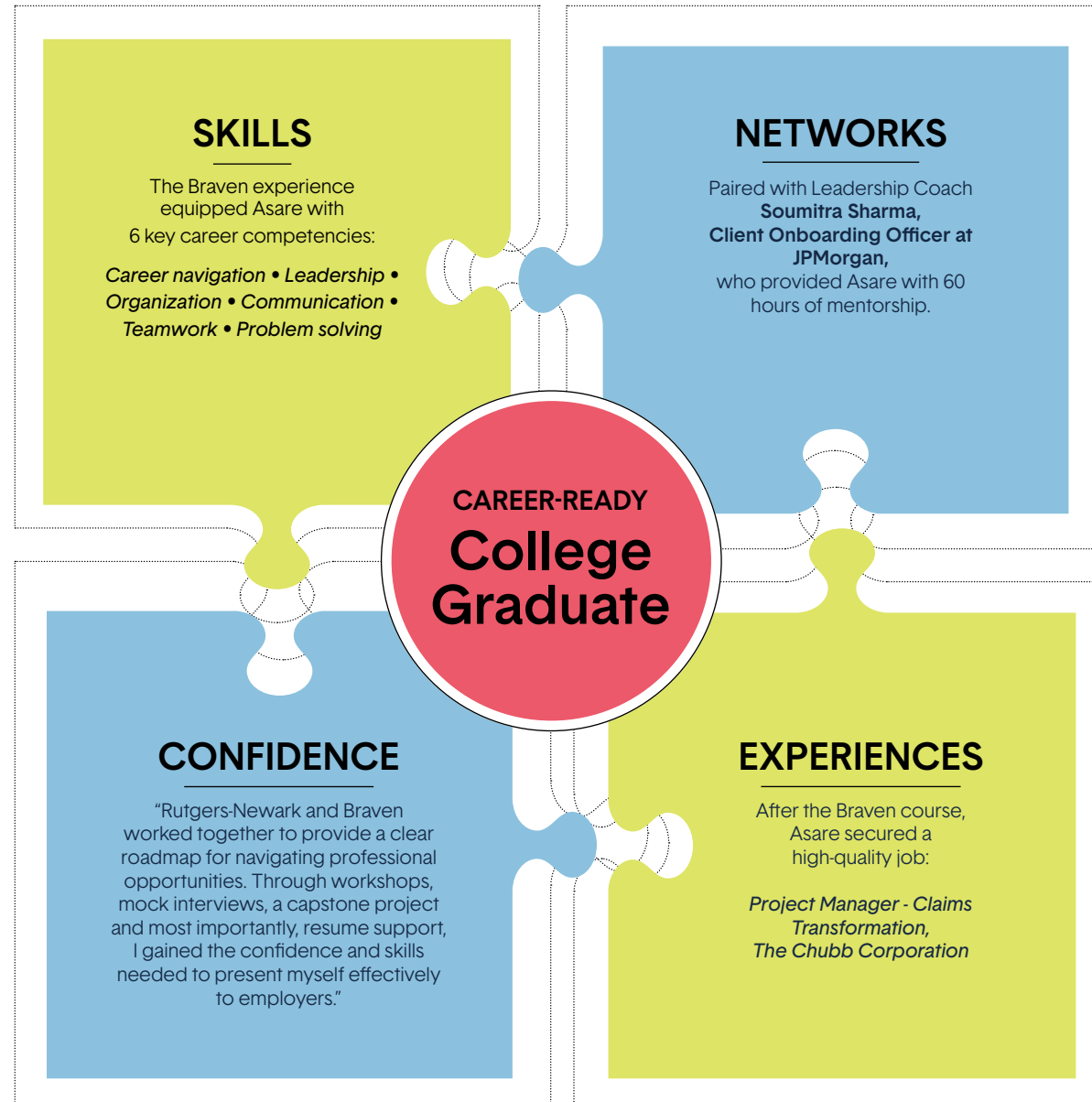
Enrollment in graduate school is one of the ways Braven defines a quality outcome.

21%

21 percent of our 2025 Rutgers University-Newark graduates went on to graduate school within six months of graduation.¹⁵



With Braven's help, Asare Bampoe-Parry built the foundation to get on the path to the American Dream.



The Braven Equation in action



FALL 2023 FELLOW

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK
Asare Bampoe-Parry
 Claims Examiner, The Chubb Corporation & Graduate Student, Master of Science in Business of Fashion, Rutgers Business School

Building career wealth & health



SPRING 2024 FELLOW

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK

Nicholas Rios

Web Developer,
GS-LSAMP Rutgers University-Newark

Joshua Christie | Purpose Portraits

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, Rutgers University-Newark Braven Fellows in the class of 2025 are outearning the national average salary for early college graduates.

\$67,333

Mean salary of employed 2025 RU-N 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

+\$24.3k

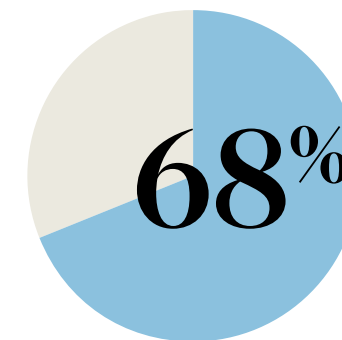
\$72,808

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

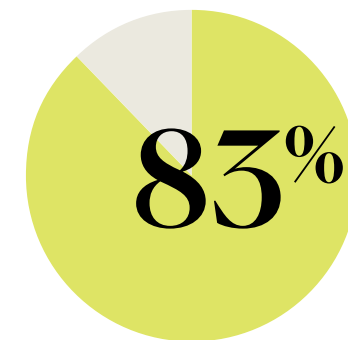
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024

+\$22.3k

RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST¹⁹



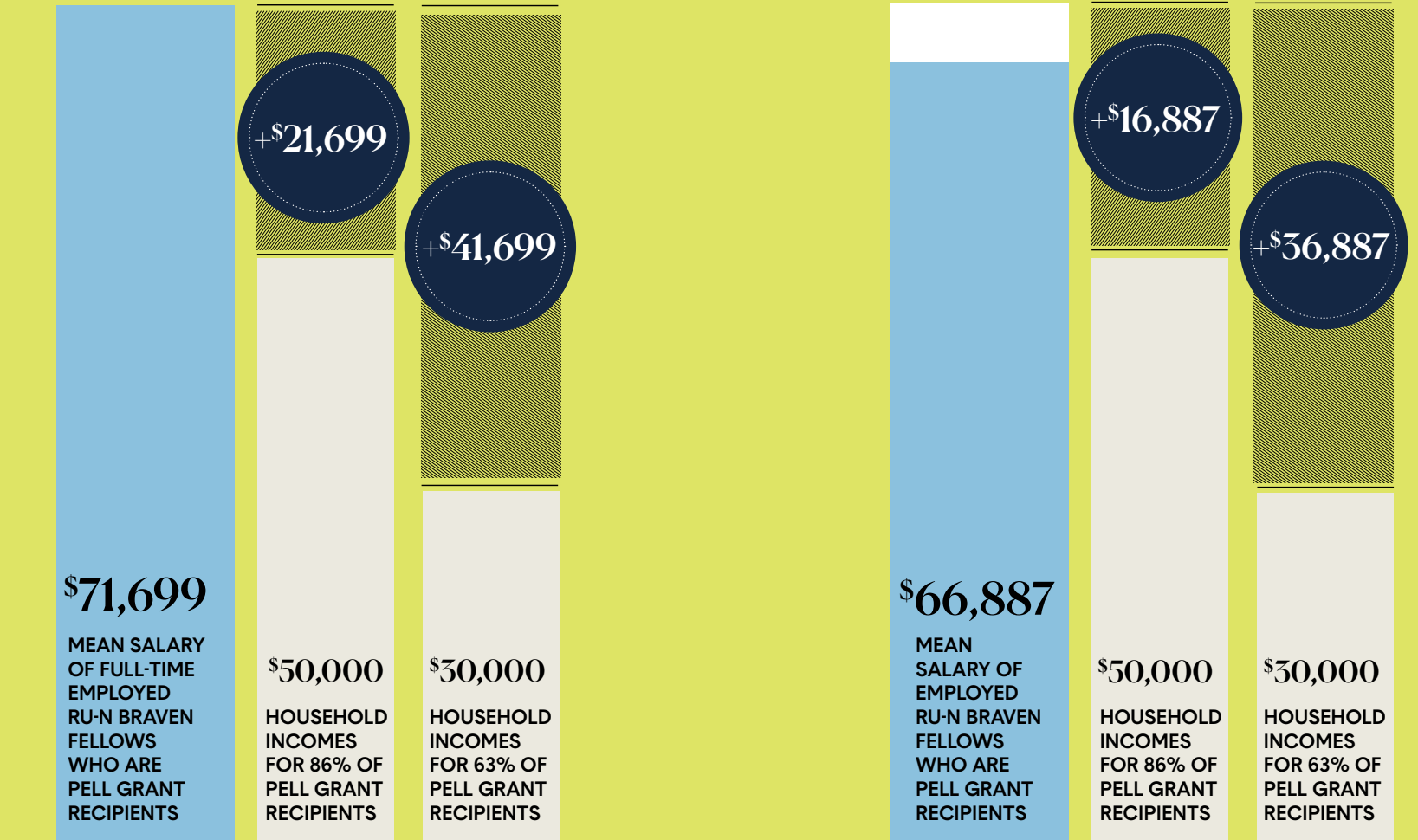
HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS¹⁹

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, RU-N Braven Fellows are individually outearning most families who receive the Pell Grant.

74%
of RU-N Braven 2025 graduates are Pell Grant recipients



MOST POPULAR INDUSTRIES FOR RU-N BRAVEN FELLOWS



BANKING & FINANCE



TECHNOLOGY



HEALTH



PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELING



LAW



EDUCATION

Are we
supporting
Fellows on
the path to
internships?

Section

2a

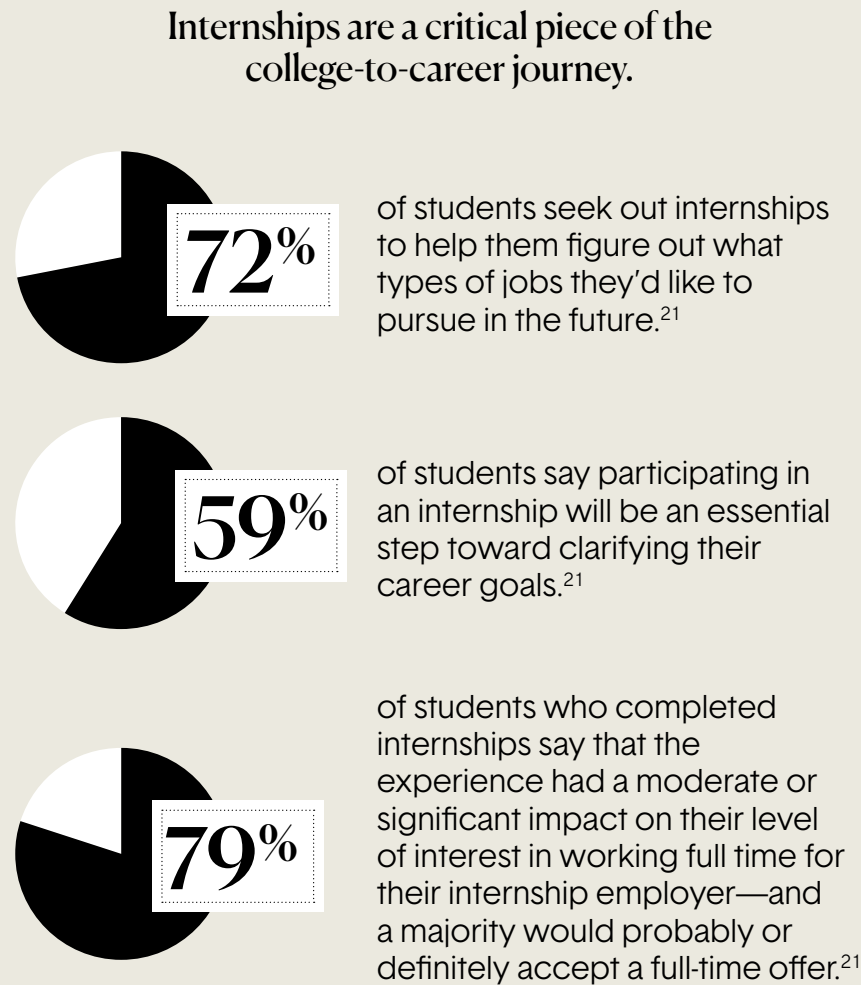




Students are facing greater competition for internships

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

According to Handshake's Internship Index 2025:

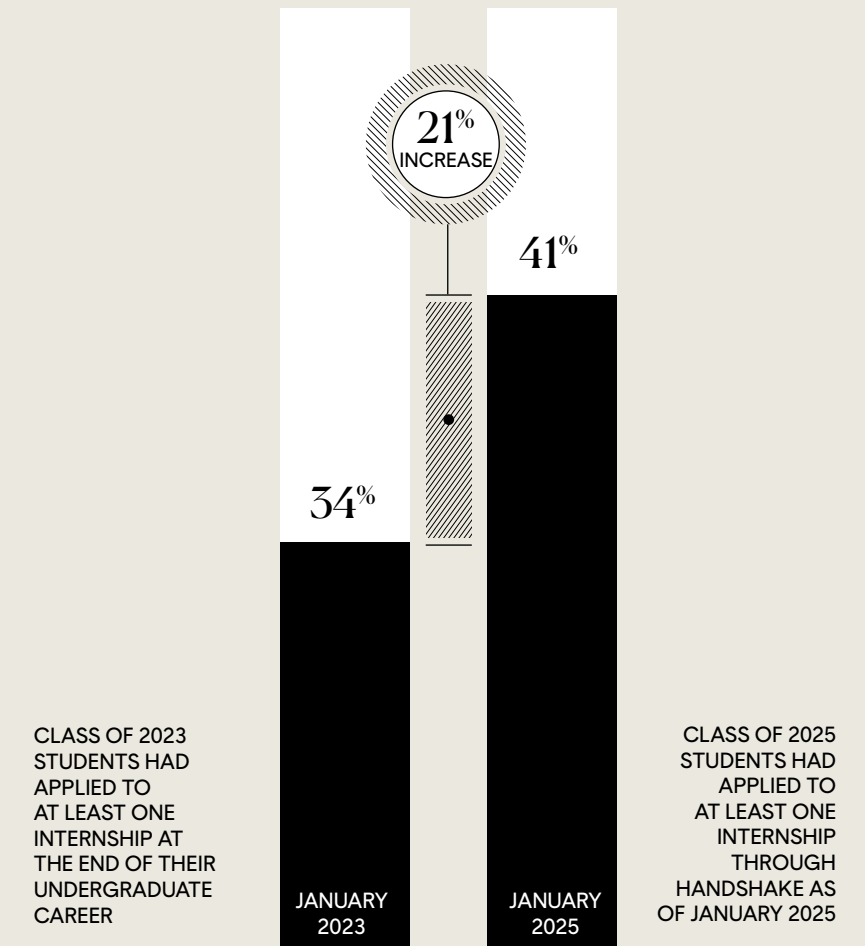


Internship demand is outpacing availability.

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



INCREASE IN INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED²¹





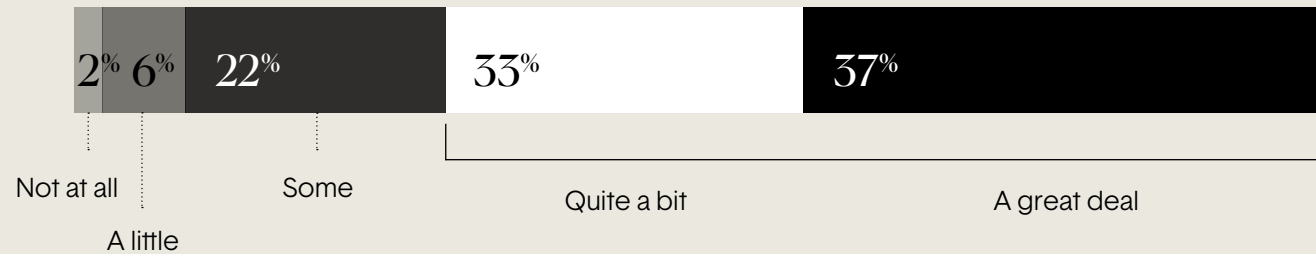
Paid internships increase networks & mentorship

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?

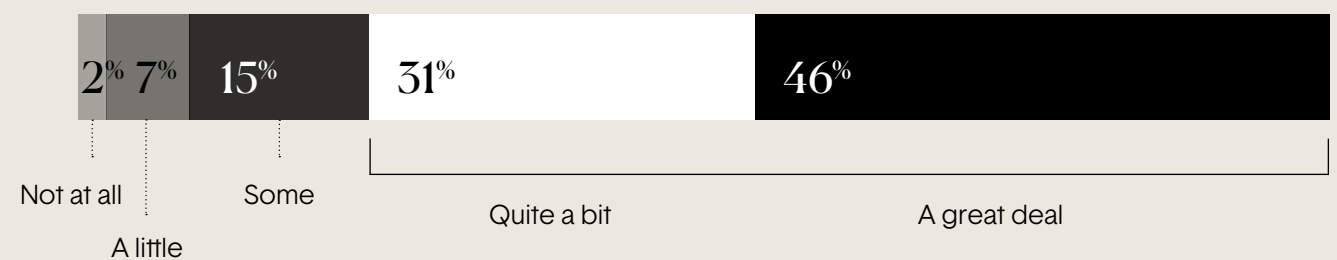


Seven in 10 students reported that paid internships substantially expanded their professional networks²²

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 RU-N Braven Fellows



SPRING 2025 FELLOW

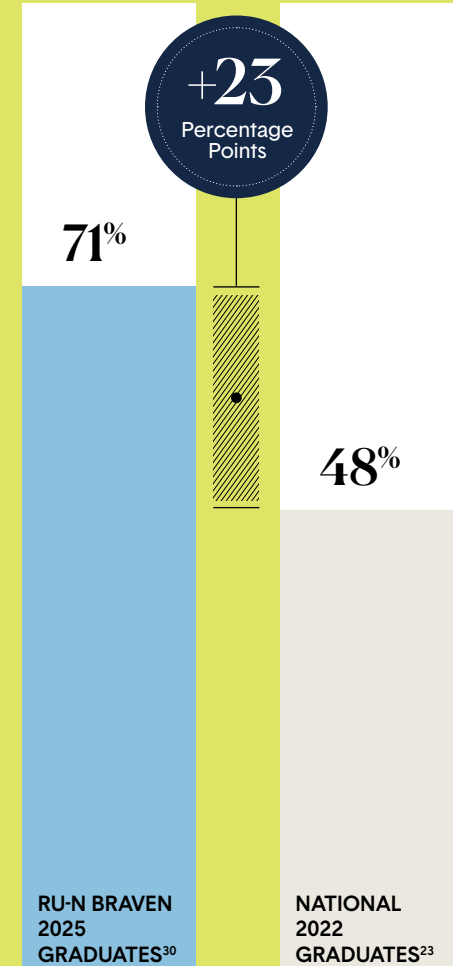
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK
Victoria Alegunlade

Tax Discovery Intern,
Deloitte

Joshua Christie | Purpose Portraits

Compared with graduates nationally, Rutgers University-Newark Braven 2025 graduates were 23 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.



Are we supporting Fellows on the path to college completion?

Section
2b



Encouraging levels of graduation



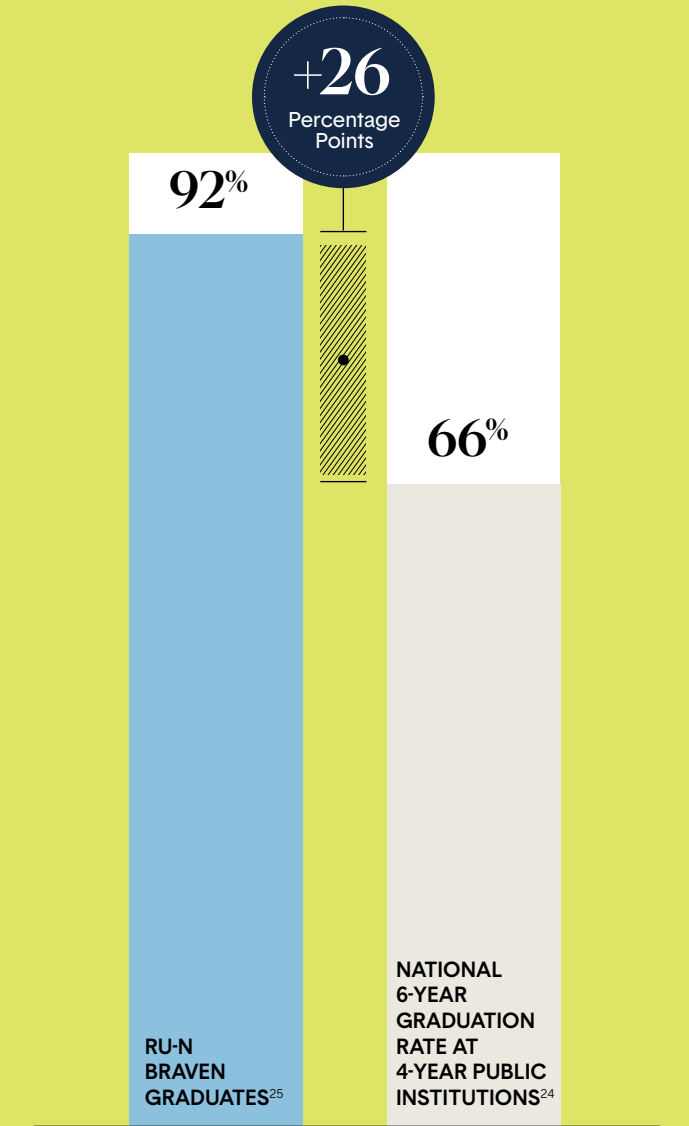
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK
Eboni Bugg
 Senior Program Coordinator,
 Rutgers University Newark myRUN
© Joshua Christie | Purpose Portraits

SPRING 2023 FELLOW

Nationally, only about 7 in 10 students graduate within six years of college enrollment.²⁴

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

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK BRAVEN FELLOWS ACHIEVED A 92% 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
 Deloitte
 JPMorgan Chase Foundation
 LinkedIn
 Morgan Stanley
 NBA Foundation
 Prudential 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
 nvp
 Panasonic North America
 Pathward N. A.
 PwC
 Silver Lake
 Taco Bell Foundation
 UBS
 United Airlines

INNOVATION

(\$10K+ and programmatic support)
 Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey
 J&L Companies

IMPACT

(\$5K+ and/or programmatic support)
 Bain and Company
 Brown Advisory
 Catalina
 Cisco
 Devils Youth Foundation
 Equal Space
 Harris Blitzler Sports & Entertainment
 IQVIA
 Jacobs Levy Equity Management
 Micron Technology, Inc.
 NJPAC
 Philadelphia 76ers
 Synchrony
 Teach For America
 Unacast
 Vanguard
 Visa

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORTERS (\$10K+)

Anonymous
 Arbor Rising
 Barberry Foundation
 Deloitte Foundation
 Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
 Impact100 Essex
 John & Wendy Cozzi
 Leon and Toby Cooperman Family Foundation
 Linda & Brian Sterling
 Lisa & Joseph Amato
 Lynn Selassie
 Nicholas Colucci
 M&T Weiner Foundation
 Schultz Family Foundation
 Susan & Thomas Dunn
 The MCJ Amelior Foundation
 Victoria Foundation

A big thank you to our New Jersey Board of Directors:

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 Rina Desai
 Susan Dunn
 Ryan Hill
 Matt Iversen
 Harry Li
 Jackie Rider
 Lynn Selassie
 Solomon Steplight

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, nacweb.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. 69% is the percentage of Rutgers University-Newark Fellows who secured a quality job or enrolled in graduate school. All outcome percentages are based on Rutgers University-Newark Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (80% or 123 out of the total 153 Rutgers University-Newark 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. 27% is the percentage of Rutgers University-Newark Fellows who enrolled in graduate school. This percentage is based on Fellows for which their post-graduation outcome is known (80% or 123 out of the total 153 Rutgers University-Newark Fellows' outcome is known).
16. Braven employed salary average is the approximated salary average for Class of 2025 Braven 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 Fellows at core sites who secured a quality 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.
21. Handshake Internships Index 2025. Handshake, Mar. 2025, joinhandshake.com/themes/handshake/dist/assets/downloads/network-trends/Handshake-Internships-Index-2025.pdf. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
22. Building Better Internships: Evidence from the National Survey of College Internships. Strada Education Foundation / University of Wisconsin-Madison, June 2024, cdn.prod.website-files.com/6777c52f82e5471a3732ea25/679a75b6bb2ab5a398044a74_Building-Better-Internships-Full-Report-Updated-June-2024.pdf. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
23. Clayton, Dave, et al. From College to Career: Students' Internship Expectations and Experiences. Strada Education Foundation, 17 May 2023, www.strada.org/reports/from-college-to-career-students-internship-expectations-and-experiences. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.
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 RU-N Braven Fellows includes students who enrolled as first-time freshmen, not including those who took Braven as seniors, transfers, or international students. RU-N 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.

