

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 15,500¹ 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 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.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



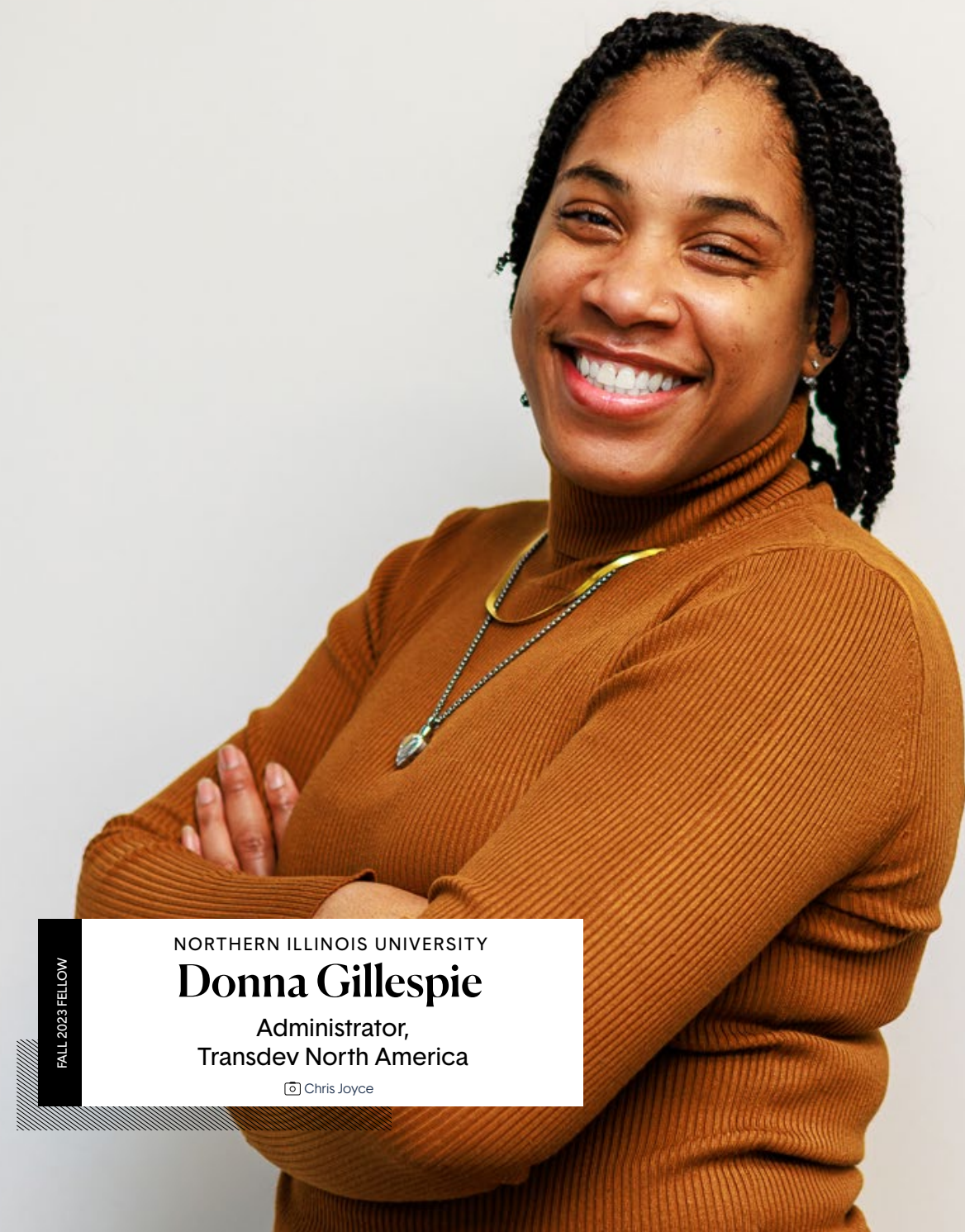
LOW-INCOME OR FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT ENROLLEES EACH YEAR

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.



FALL 2023 FELLOW
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Donna Gillespie
Administrator,
Transdev North America
Chris Joyce



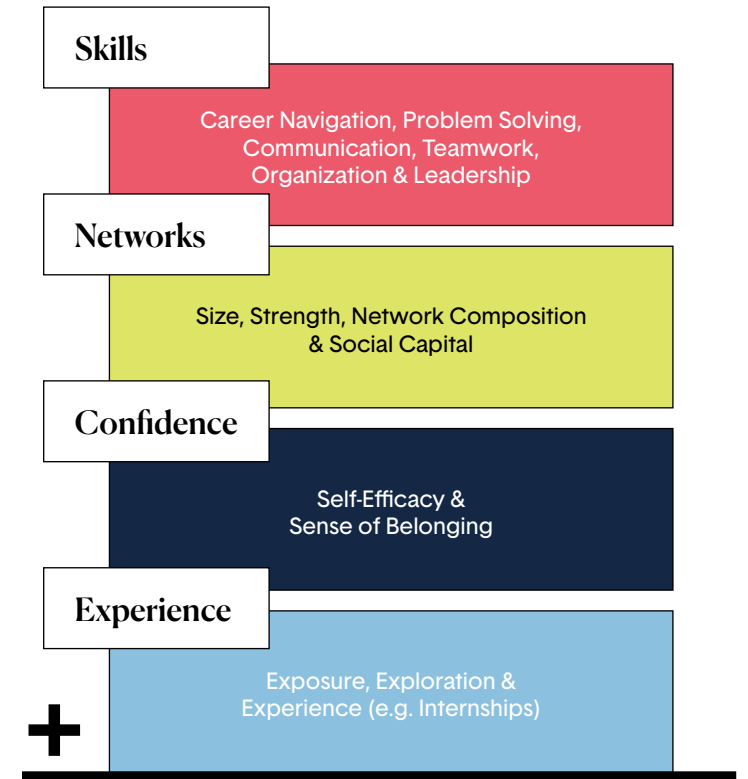
CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY
Abiodun Soneye
 Software Engineer,
 JPMorgan Chase
 Chris Joyce

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

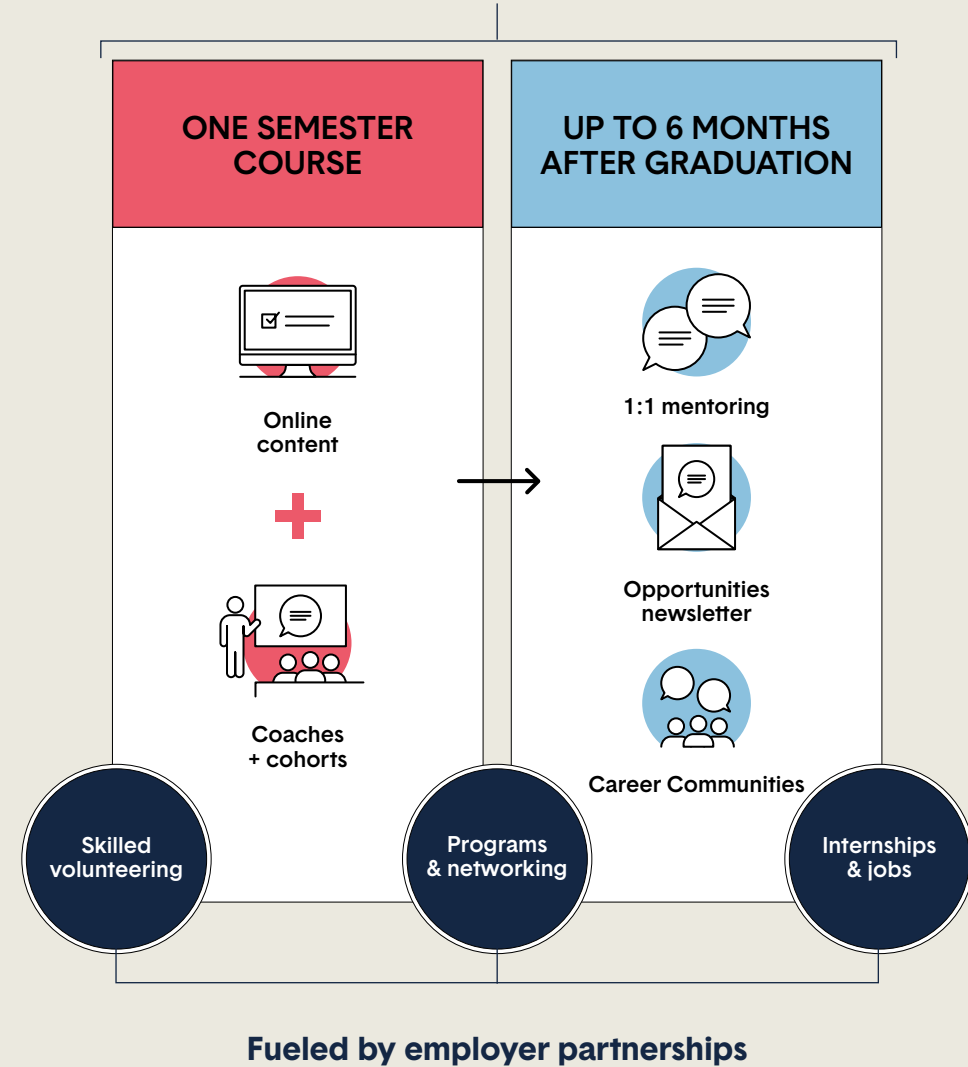
Braven equips promising college students on their paths toward quality economic opportunities through a semester-long, cohort-based course—developed with input from our higher education partners and faculty, employer partners, volunteers, and students—and support that extends beyond the course, continuing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

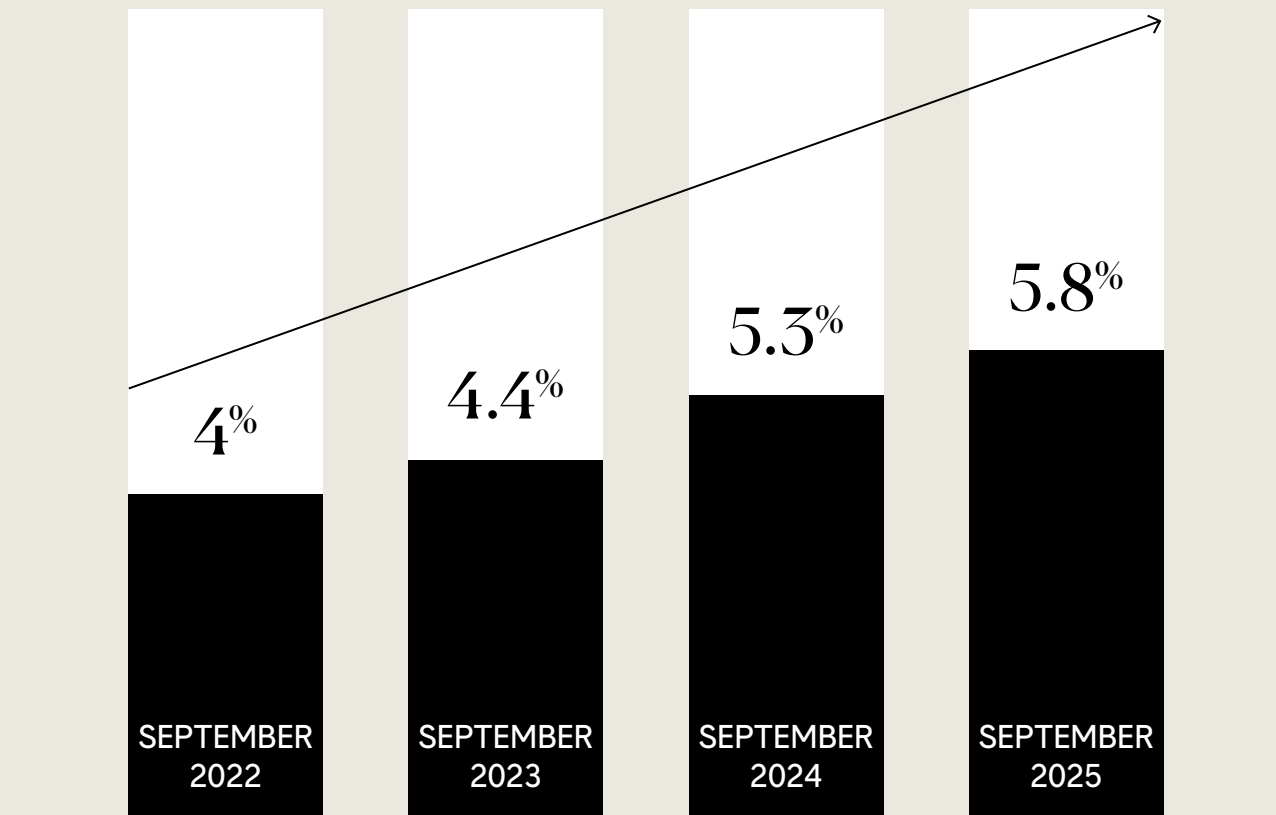
The entry-level market is tight. We have seen stagnation in entry-level job openings which, in part, is driving rising unemployment of recent graduates.

STAGNATION IN ENTRY-LEVEL JOB OPENINGS



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

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





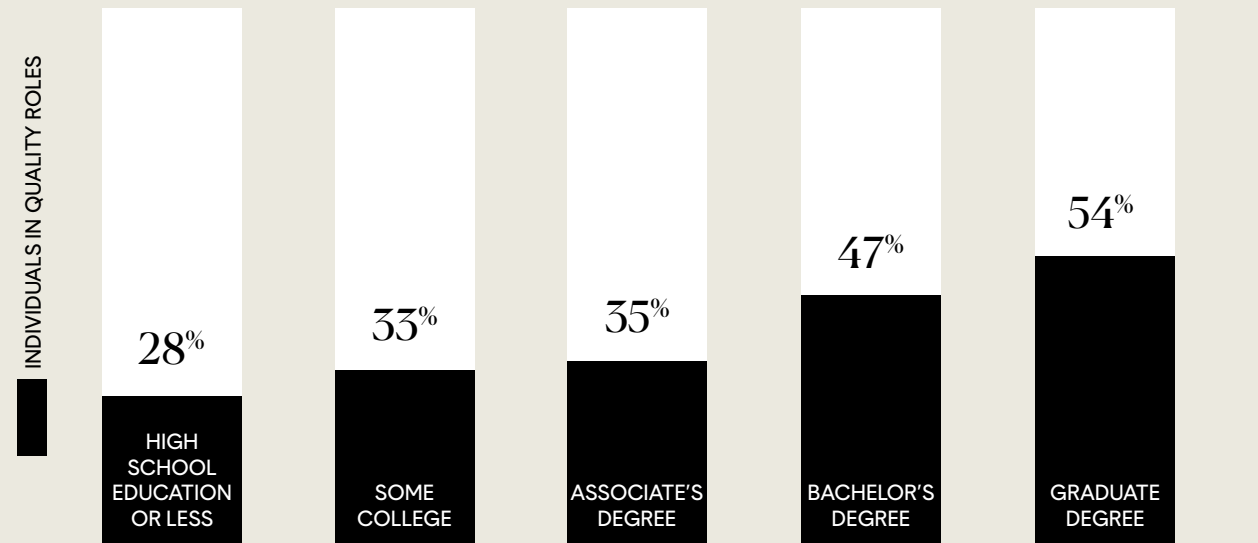
Pursuing the bachelor's degree is still the surest path to economic mobility

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

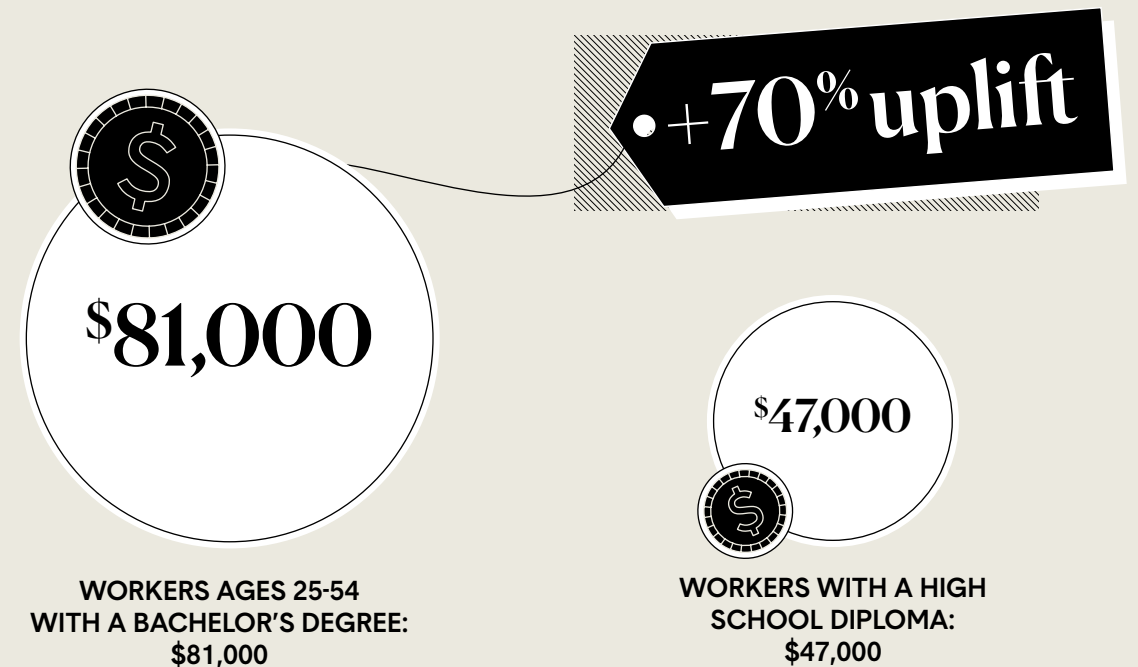
Employees with a four-year degree earn 70% more than workers with a high school diploma alone.

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





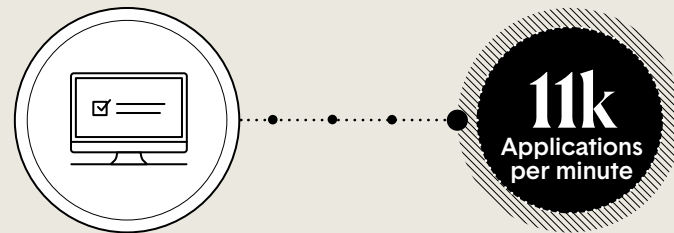
AI reshapes expectations for early-career talent

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

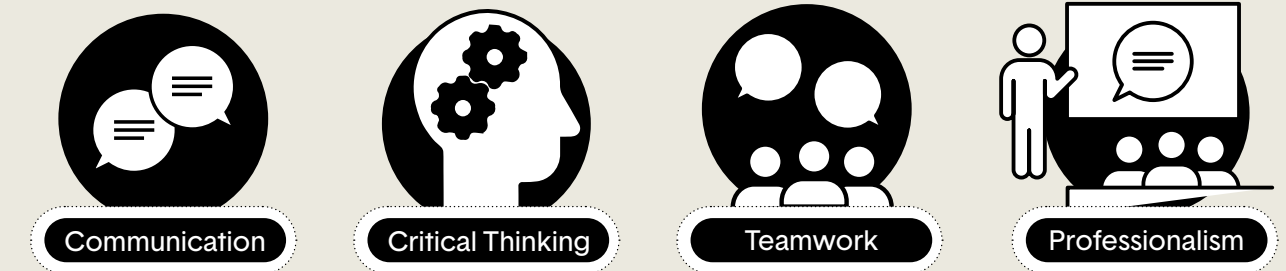


AI's impact on job hunting

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

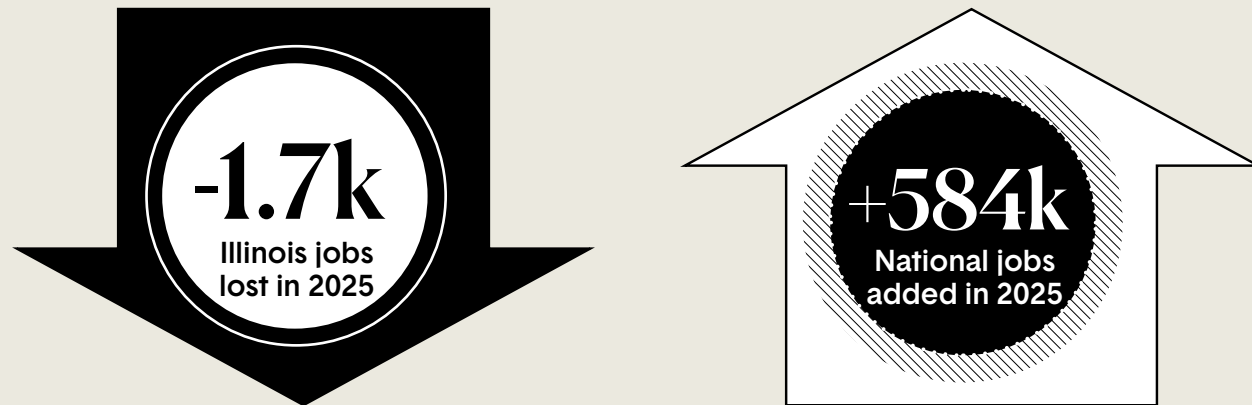


Digging deeper: Chicago's lagging job market

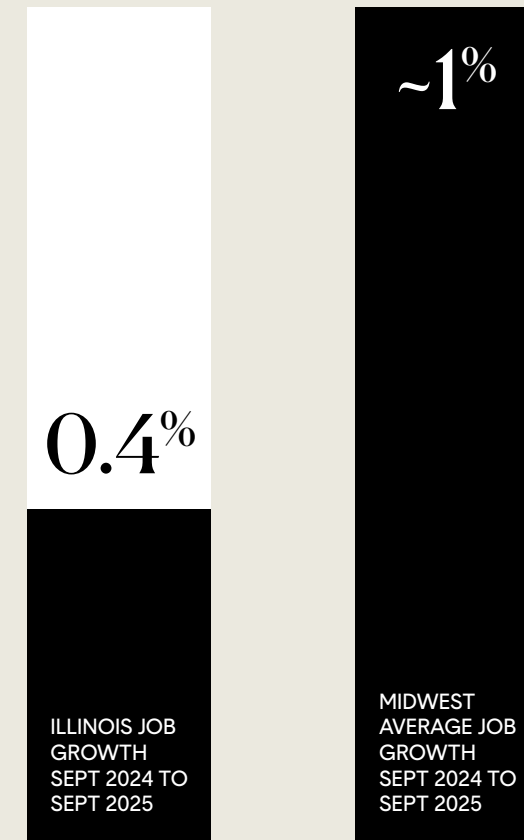
For context, this is less than half the Midwest average and trails all neighboring states.

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

ILLINOIS EXPERIENCES WEAK JOB CREATION⁹



INCREASE IN ILLINOIS JOB GROWTH OVER THE PAST YEAR¹⁰



Of the 192 Braven Fellows who graduated from Northern Illinois University in 2025,¹¹

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 SCHOOL¹¹

24%
PATHWAY ROLES

14%
NON-QUALITY

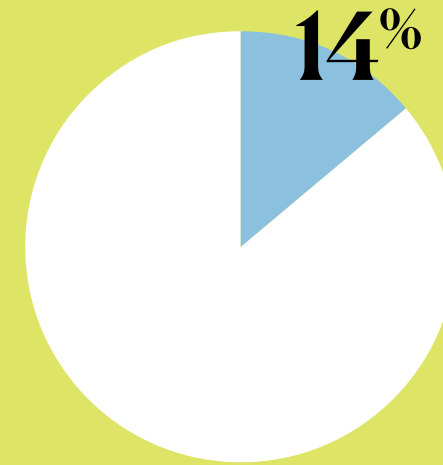
21%
UNEMPLOYED

NIU graduate school enrollment reflects first-generation and economic barriers

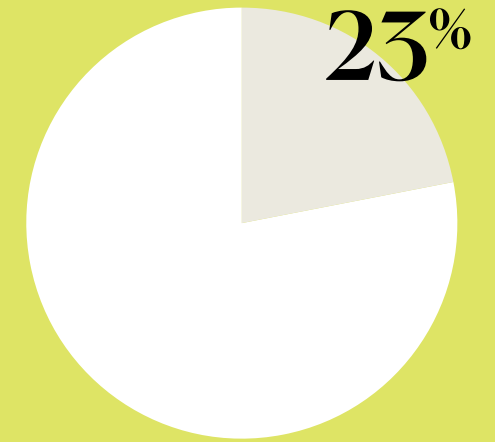
Northern Illinois University Fellows' graduate school enrollment rates are lower, which may reflect the economic realities facing NIU students:



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

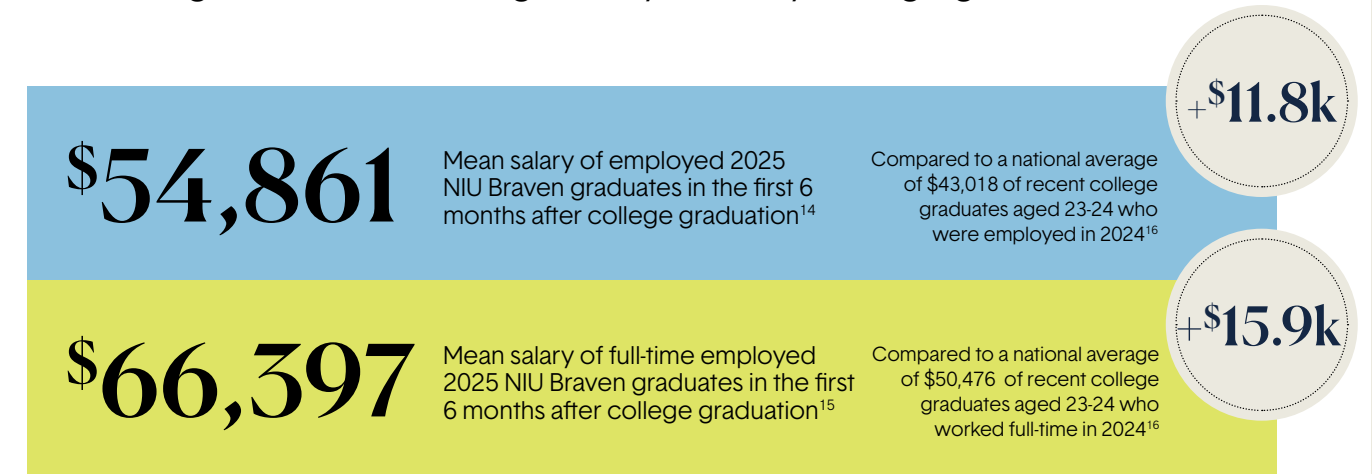
Juviny Noriega

Software Engineer,
Bank of America

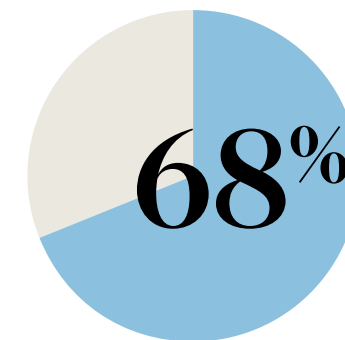
Chris Joyce

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.

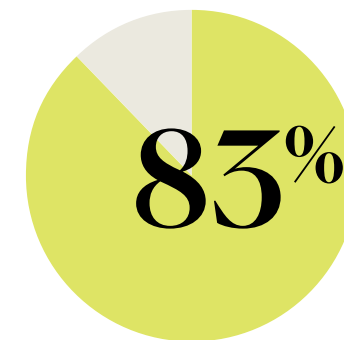
Six months post-graduation, NIU Braven Fellows in the class of 2025 are outearning the national average salary for early college graduates.



RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST¹⁷



HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS¹⁷

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.²⁰

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



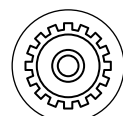
HEALTH



RETAIL



BANKING & FINANCE



MANUFACTURING



EDUCATION

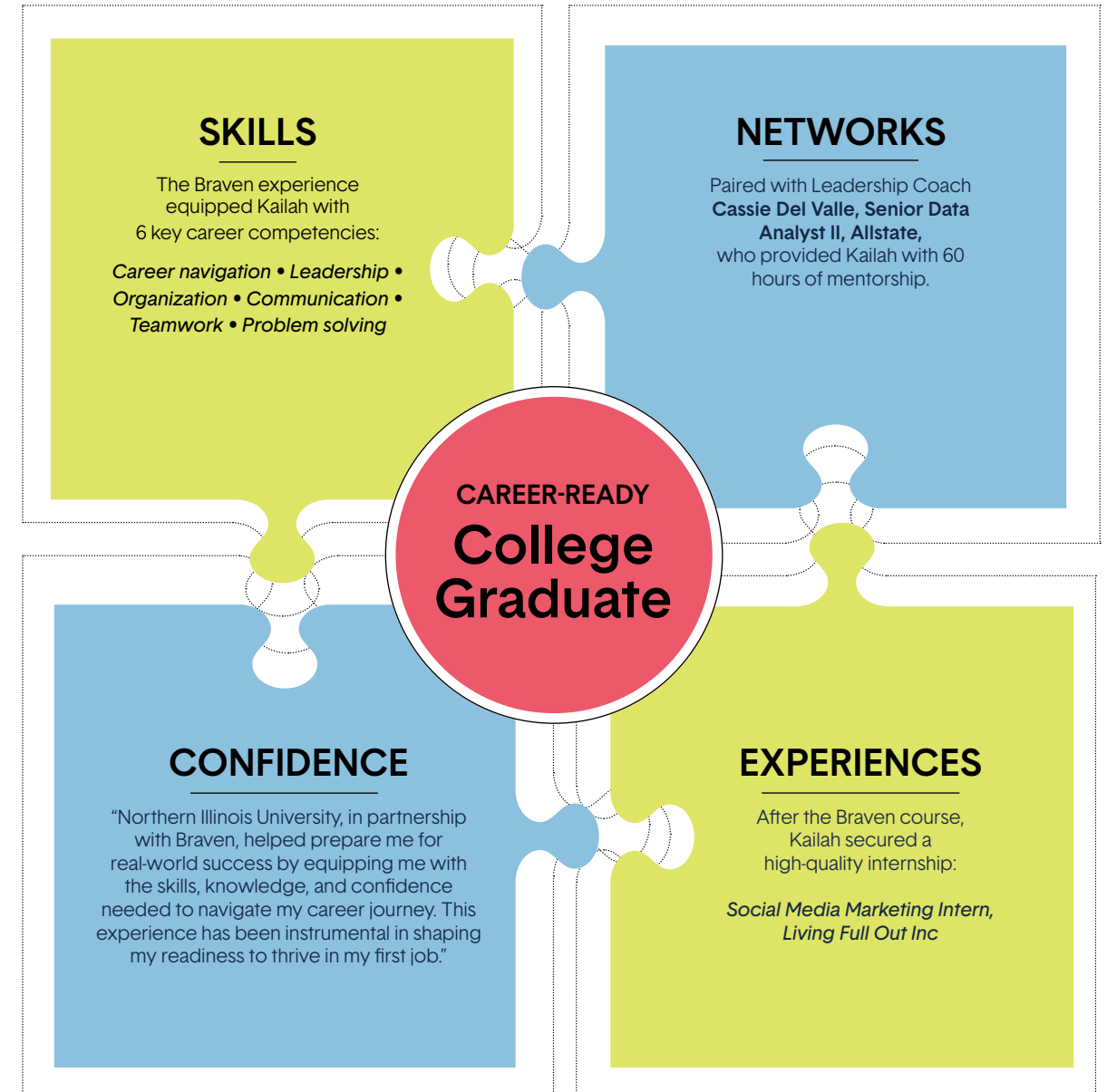
NIU: The Braven Equation in action



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 2025,¹²

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 SCHOOL¹²

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

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, 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 graduation¹⁸

Compared to a national average of \$43,018 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who were employed in 2024¹⁶

+\$7.5k

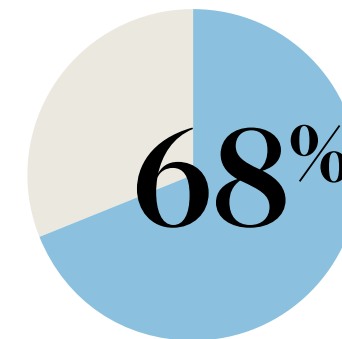
\$64,254

Mean salary of full-time employed 2025 NLU Braven graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation¹⁹

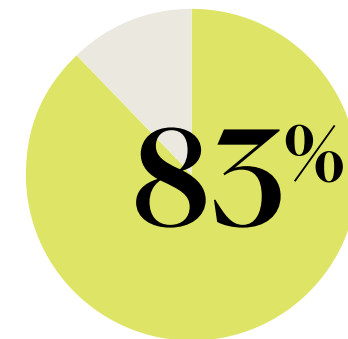
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024¹⁶

+\$13.8k

RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST¹⁷



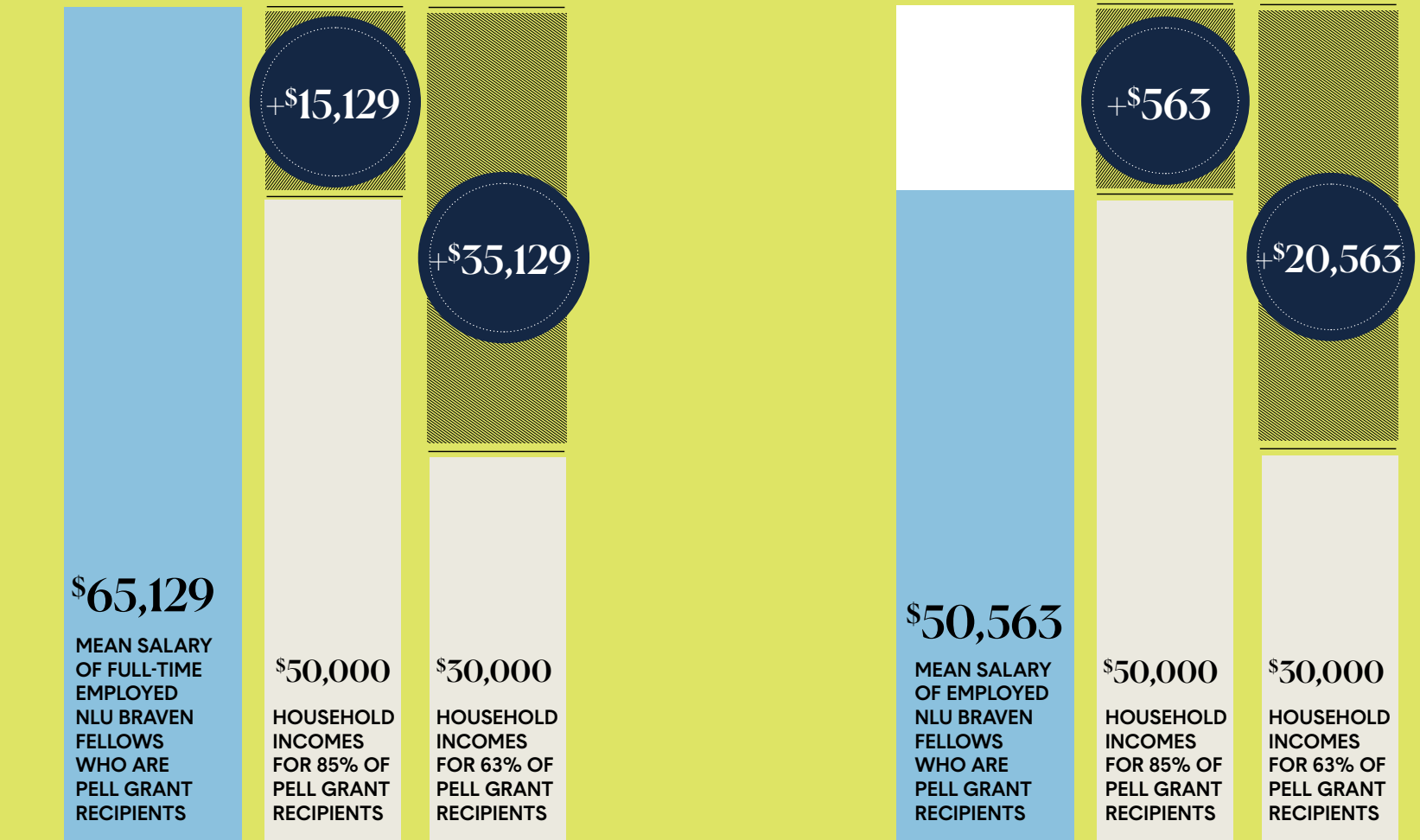
HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS¹⁷

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.²⁰

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

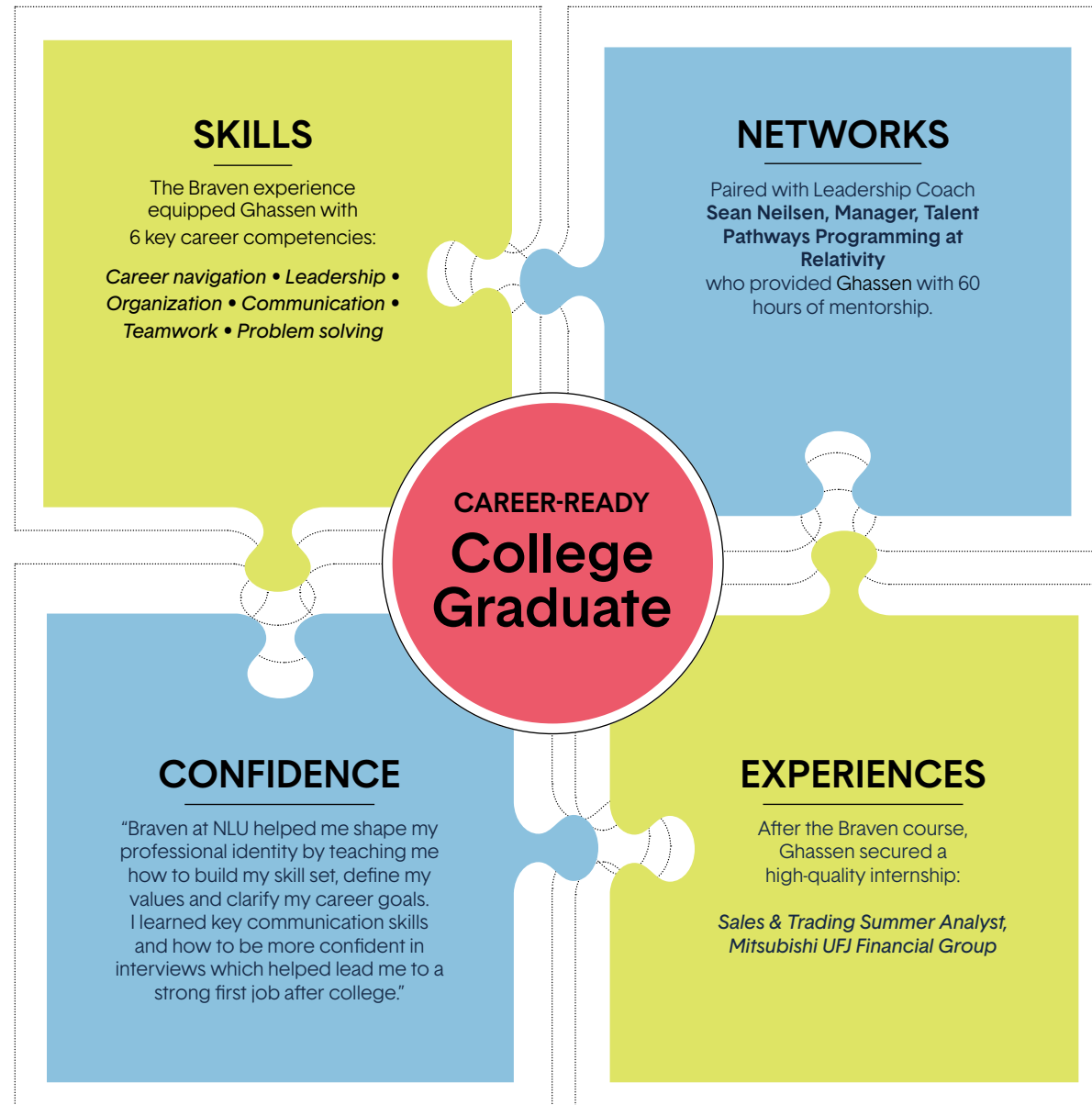


TECHNOLOGY



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

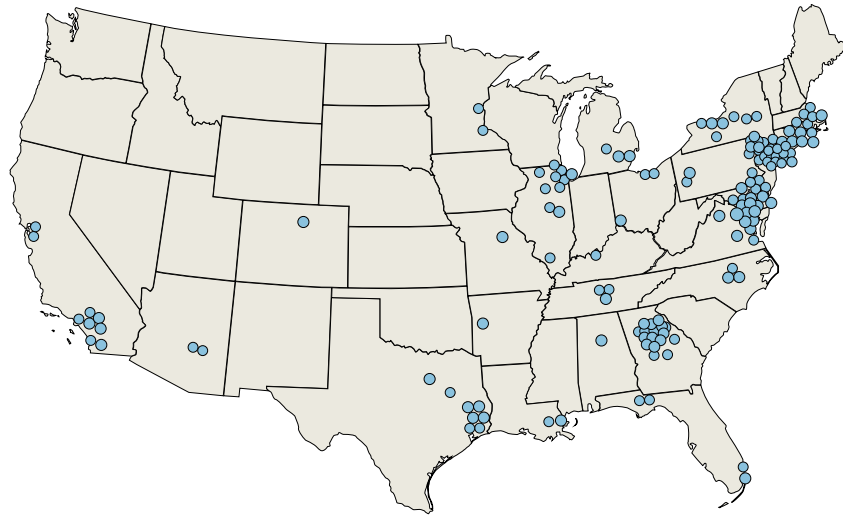
NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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.¹³

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

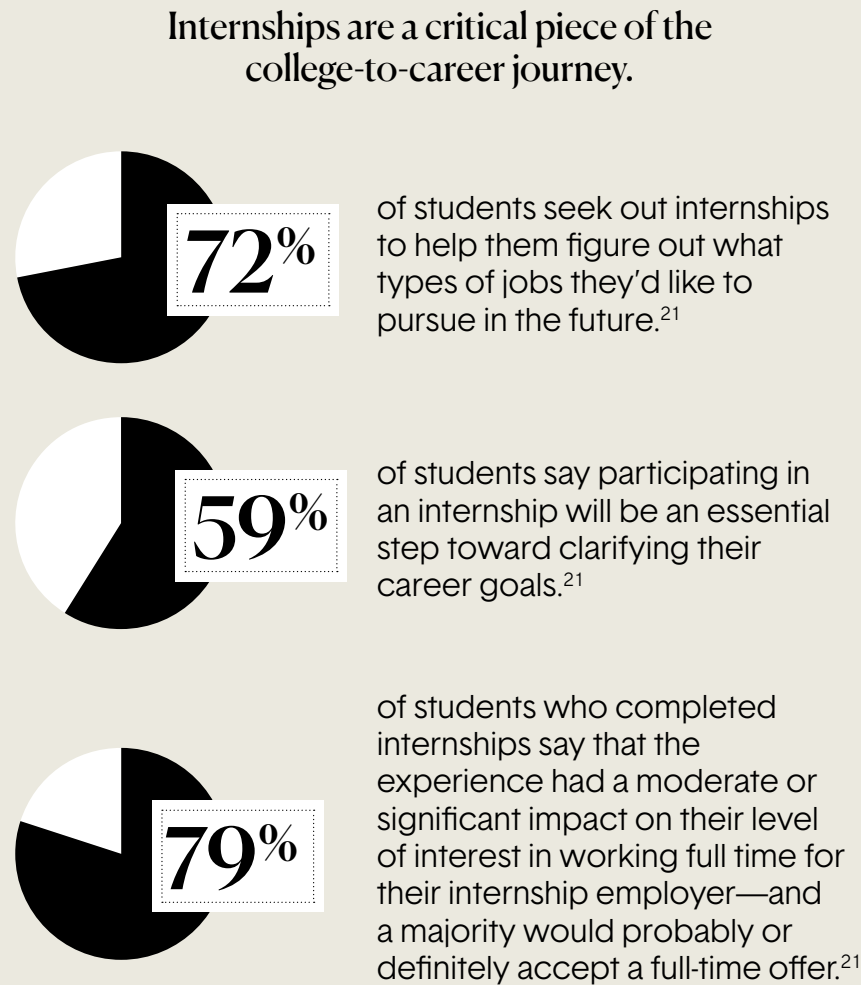




Students are facing greater competition for internships

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

According to Handshake's Internship Index 2025:

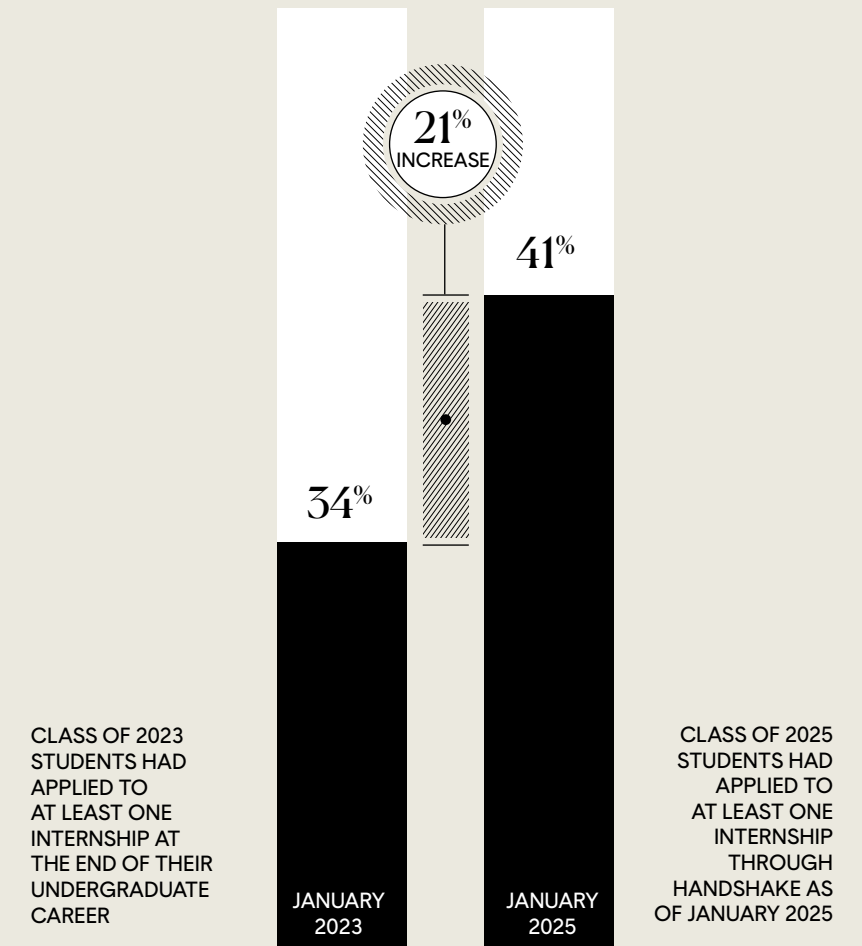


Internship demand is outpacing availability.

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



INCREASE IN INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED²¹





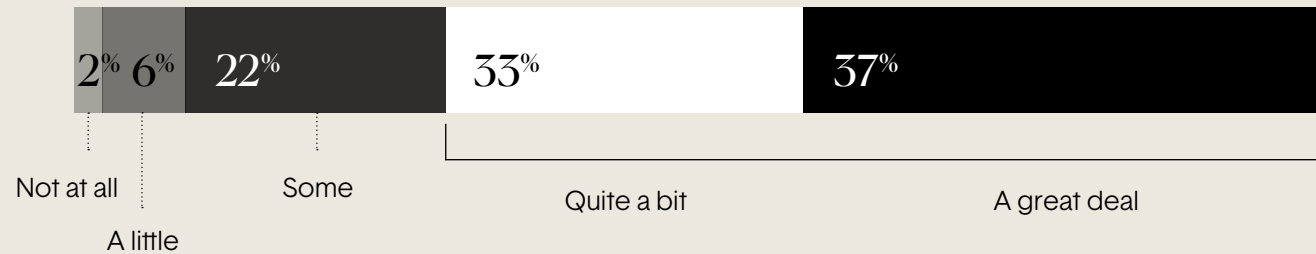
Paid internships increase networks & mentorship

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?

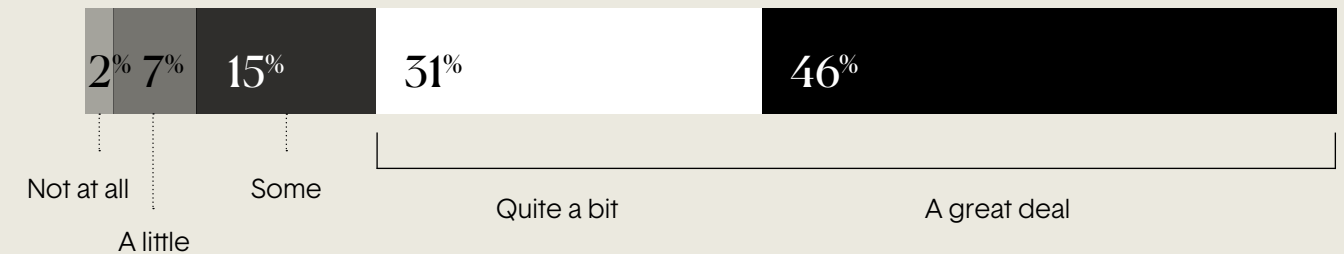


Seven in 10 students reported that paid internships substantially expanded their professional networks²²

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 NIU Braven Fellows

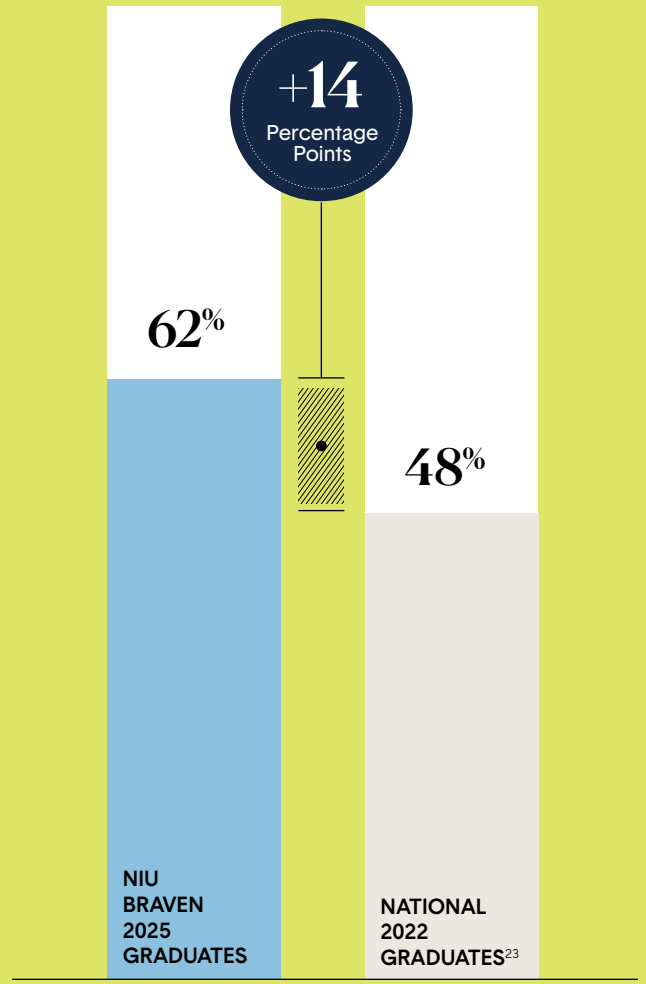


SPRING 2025 FELLOW
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Amrita Chowdhury
QCIPU Intern,
Fermilab
Chris Joyce



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

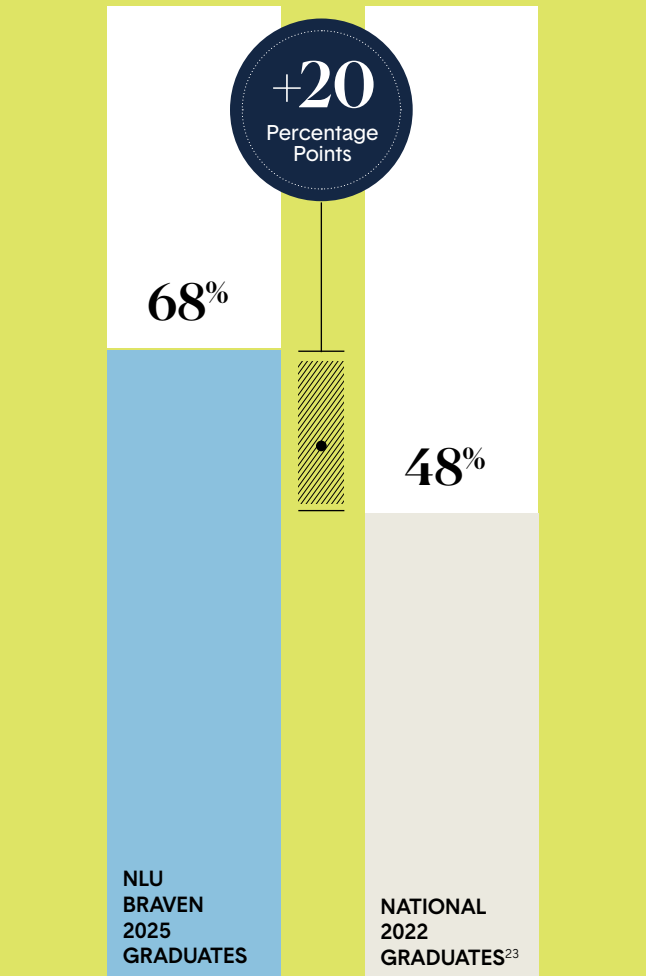


SPRING 2022 FELLOW
NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY
Angie Jaral
Intern,
Chicago News Weekly
Chris Joyce



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



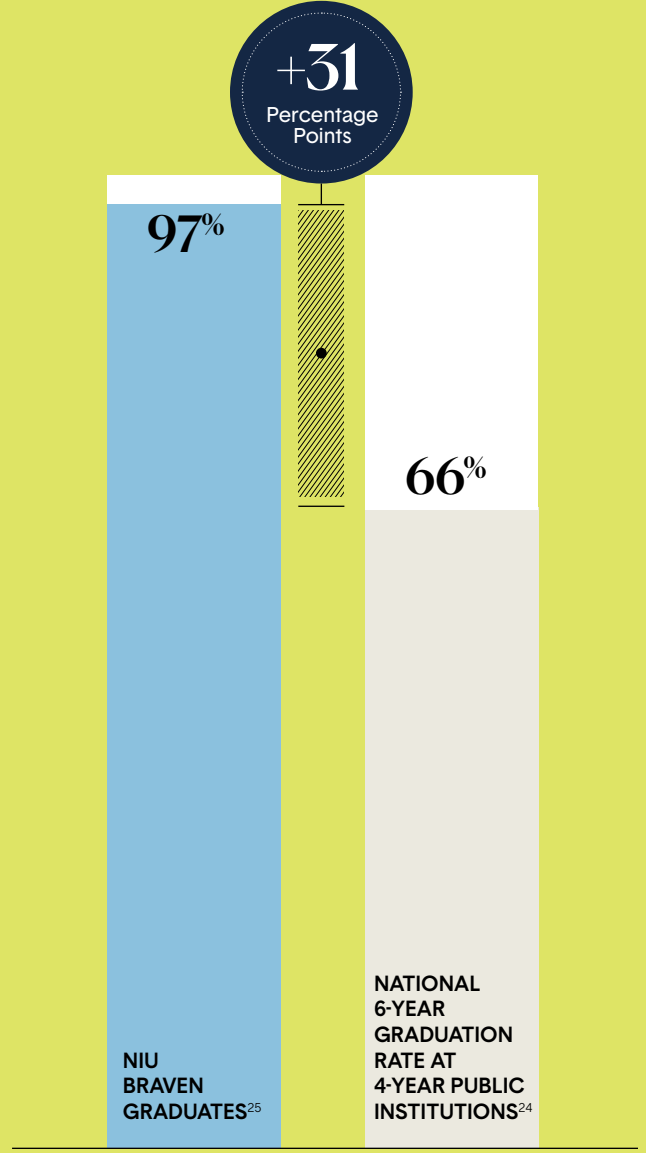
SPRING 2023 FELLOW
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DeOndre Saunders
Summer Intern,
The Garnette Report
Joe Mazza



Nationally, less than 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.

97% OF NIU BRAVEN FELLOWS ARE PERSISTING IN COLLEGE OR HAVE GRADUATED³²



Encouraging levels of graduation for NLU Braven Fellows



SPRING 2022 FELLOW

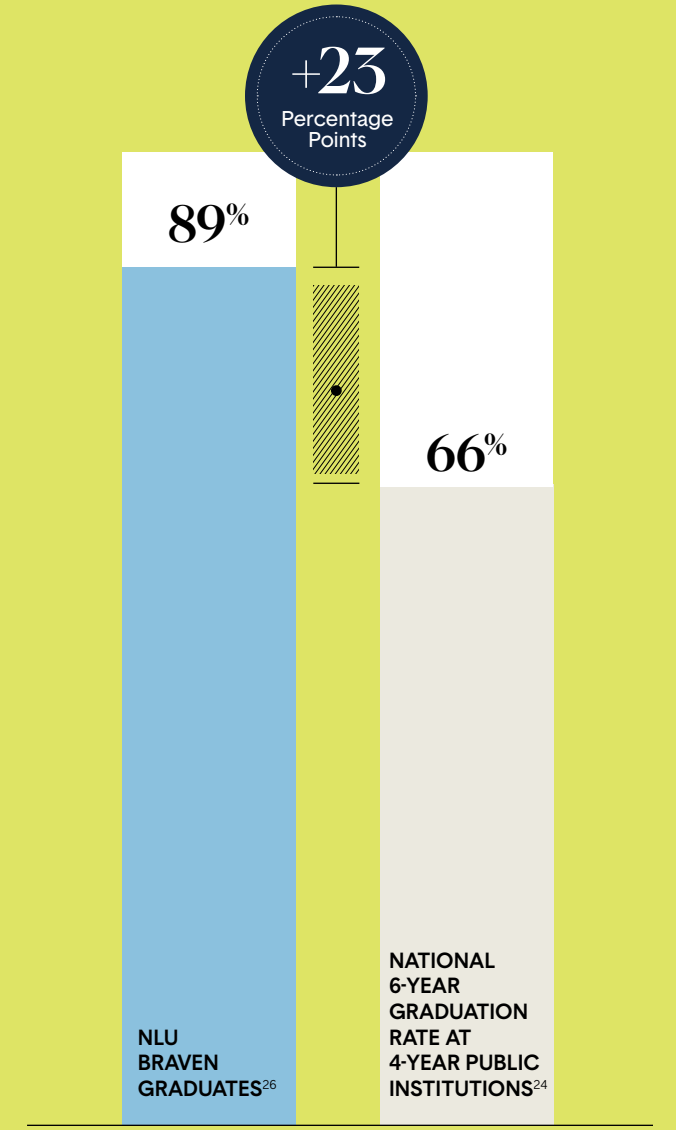
NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY
Juan-David Cardona Londoño
 Master in Business Administration,
 DePaul University
 Chris Joyce



Nationally, less than 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.

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+)

Anonymous x4
A Better Chicago Fund, a Fund of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Charles Ashby Lewis & Penny Bender Sebring
Charter School Growth Fund
Chicago Community Trust
Crankstart Foundation
Crown Family Philanthropies
David Cohen & Kristen Argo
Deloitte Foundation
Ellie's Foundation Fund
Finnegan Family Foundation
Mansueto Foundation
Marc and Jeanne Malnati Family Foundation
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Osa Foundation
Prosper Road Foundation
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The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation
Vivo Foundation

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Sarah Berghorst
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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

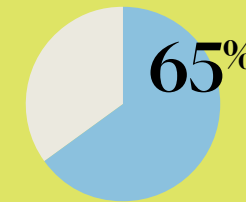
Native Speaking Teacher,
HESS International Educational



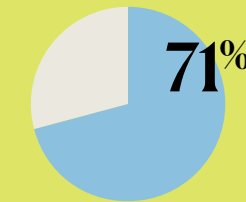
2025 BRAVENX GRADUATES

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 OUTCOMES²⁷



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 graduation²⁸

Compared to a national average of \$43,018 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who were employed in 2024¹⁶

+\$14.9k

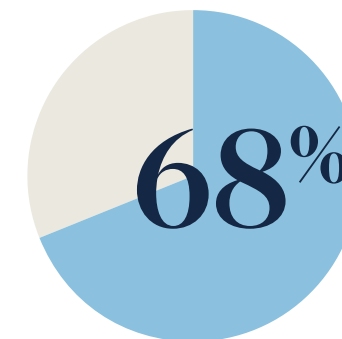
\$63,940

Mean salary of full-time employed 2025 BravenX graduates in the first 6 months after college graduation²⁹

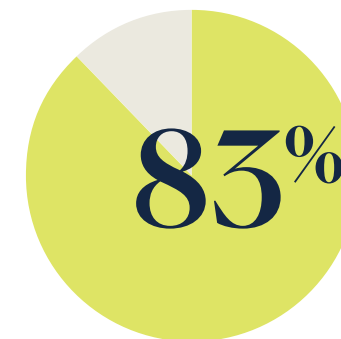
Compared to a national average of \$50,476 of recent college graduates aged 23-24 who worked full-time in 2024¹⁶

+\$13.5k

RECENT BRAVEN GRADUATES NATIONALLY



ARE IN ROLES ALIGNED WITH THEIR LONG-TERM CAREER INTEREST¹⁷



HAVE A JOB WITH EMPLOYER PROVIDED BENEFITS¹⁷

Encouraging levels of internship attainment for BravenX Fellows

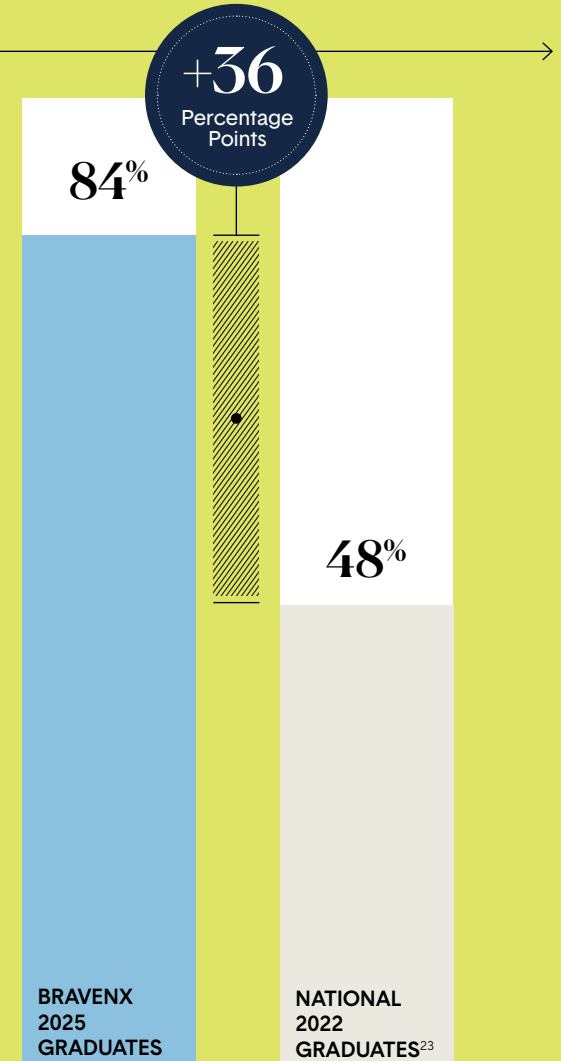


UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO
Tania Garcia
 Corporate Strategy & Business Development
 Intern, CME Group
 Chris Joyce

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.
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. Illinois Policy Institute. "Illinois Loses 1,700 Jobs in 2025 While Nation Adds 584,000." Illinois Policy Institute, 30 Jan. 2026, www.illinoispolicy.org/illinois-loses-1700-jobs-in-2025-while-nation-adds-584000/.
10. Illinois Policy Institute. "Illinois Job Growth Less Than Half of Midwest's in Past Year." Illinois Policy Institute, 17 Dec. 2025, www.illinoispolicy.org/illinois-job-growth-less-than-half-of-midwests-in-past-year/.
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. 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 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.

Notes

