



BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

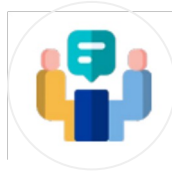
Continuing to Explore the Exodus from Higher Education

Year Two

Findings from Focus Groups and Surveys with High School Juniors and
Seniors and Non-Enrolled Adults

MARCH 2024

Research Process

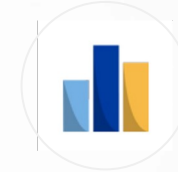


FOCUS GROUPS

JUNE 2023

10 virtual focus groups:

- 3 groups of high school juniors and seniors
- 7 groups of high school graduates who decided not to attend college or dropped out of a 2- or 4-year program
- Mix of gender, race, ethnicity, geography, first generation vs. not



NATIONAL SURVEY

SEP-OCT 2023

Online survey (total n=4848):

- n=1718 **high school** juniors and seniors
- n=3130 **Non-Enrolled**: High school graduates, ages 18-30, who had decided not to go to college or have dropped out of a 2-year or 4-year college program
- Oversamples of key audiences and states

Green/Red text throughout indicates **higher** and **lower** statistically significant differences across subgroups.

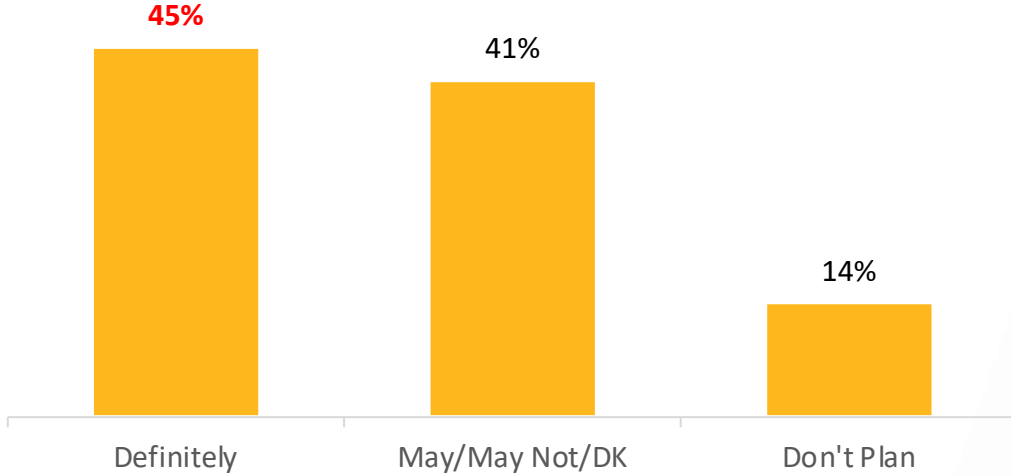
▲ ▼ indicate **higher** and **lower** statistically significant differences from 2022 survey.

Appendix:

State-by-State Breakdown

California – Not Enrolled

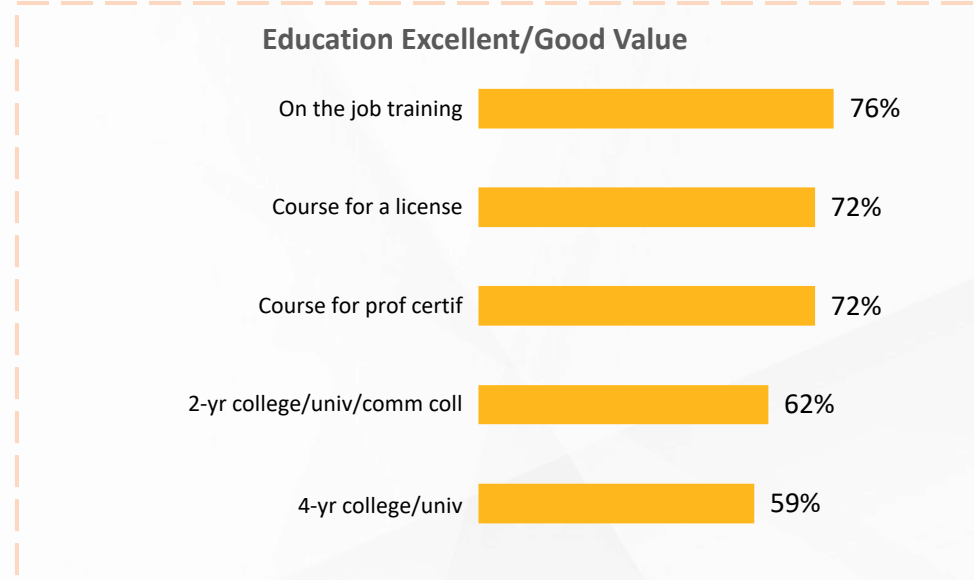
Future Degree Plans



56%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

37%
Ever Applied to College

39%
Employed Full-Time



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (38%) Learning salary potential (35%) Deciding what to study/major in (35%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (46%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (42%) Learning about different types of financial aid (37%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (43%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (43%) Selecting classes and a major (33%)

College Interest Index

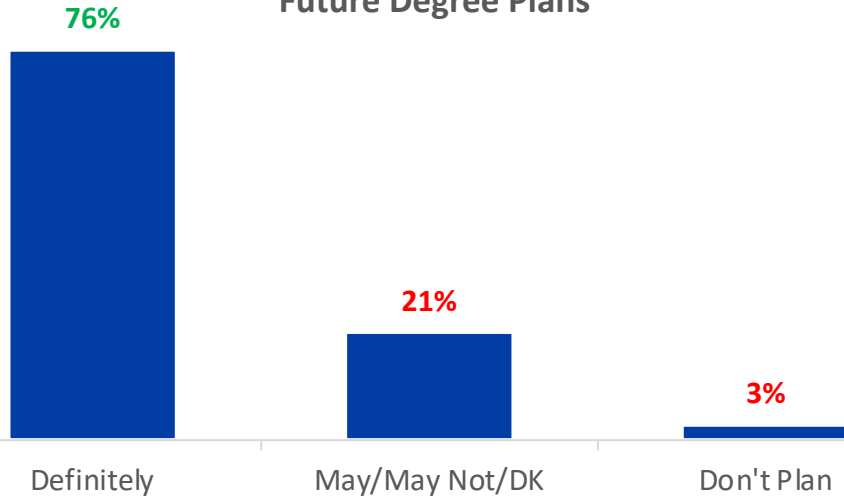
16% High
31% Moderate
53% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 49%
Expert in field to help with job market – 37%
Access to emergency aid – 36%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 35%
List of jobs in your area that are in high demand and steps to get a degree – 35%

California – High School

Future Degree Plans

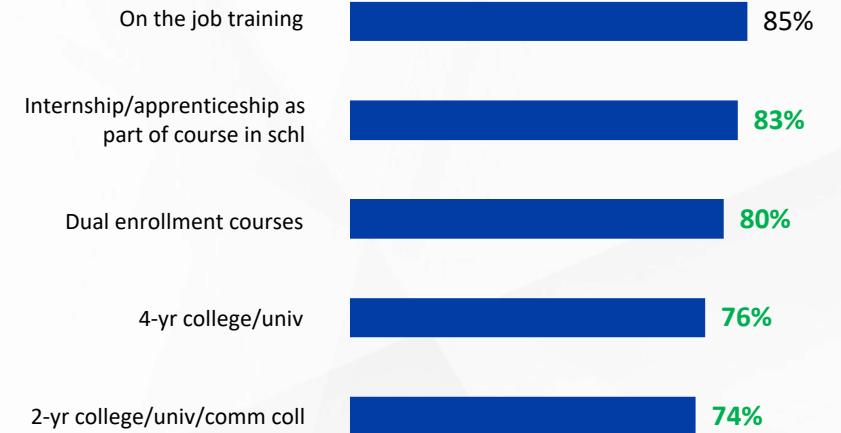


36%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

Plans Immediately After HS

- Bachelor's degree – 53%
- Associate's degree – 25%
- Trade/tech certify – 20%
- Enter workforce – 18%
- Gap year – 14%
- Enter military – 4%
- Other – 5%
- Not sure – 3%

Education Excellent/Good Value



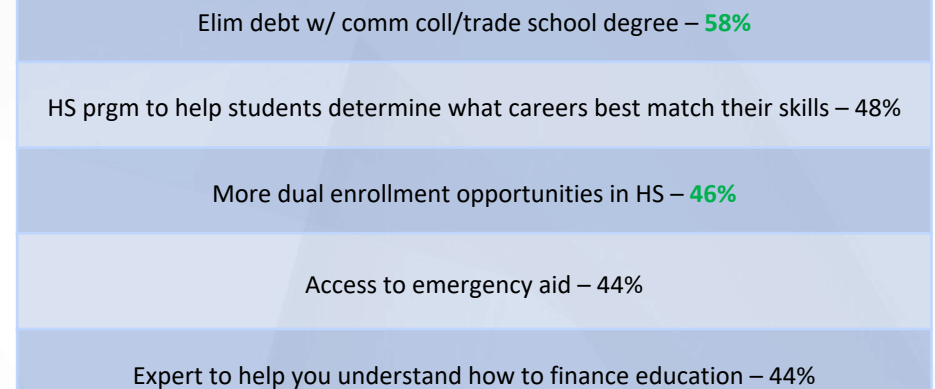
Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding what to study/major in (46%) • Being prepared socially and emotionally (30%) • Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (30%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how financial aid works (48%) • Understanding college cost/what you can afford (44%) • Learning about different types of financial aid (37%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (45%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (40%) • Selecting classes and a major (29%)

College Interest Index

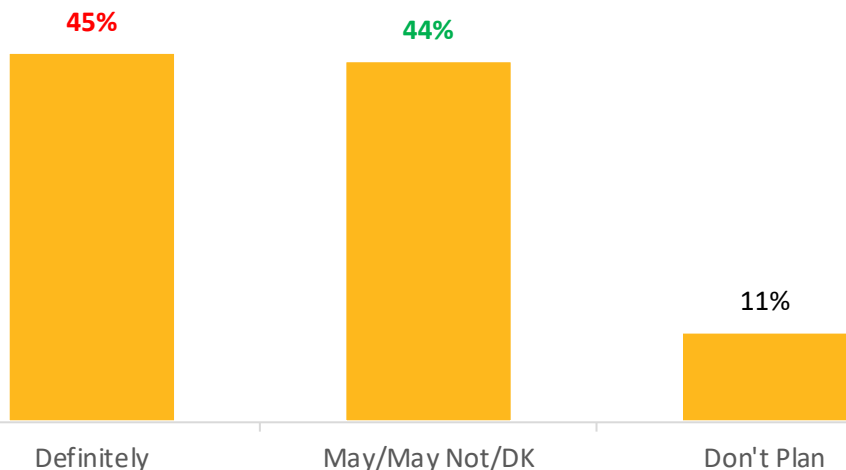
54% High
22% Moderate
24% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)



Florida – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



45%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

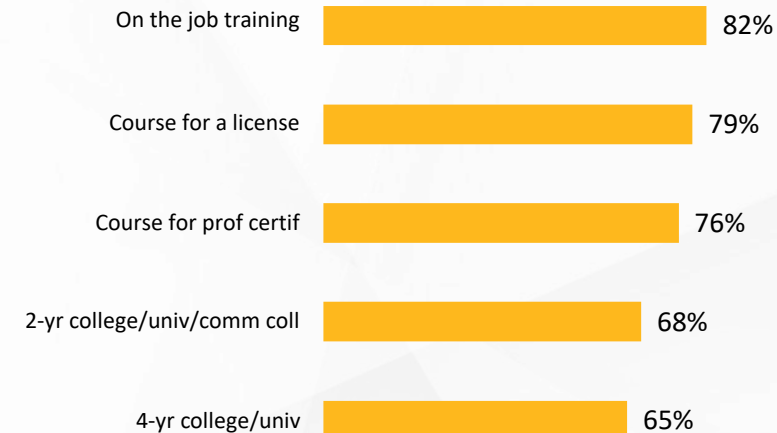
44%

Ever Applied to College

46%

Employed Full-Time

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (40%) Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (36%) Learning what careers best match skills and interests (28%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (46%) Learning about different types of financial aid (38%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (37%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (47%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (37%) Having social and emotional support (32%)

College Interest Index

23% High

25% Moderate

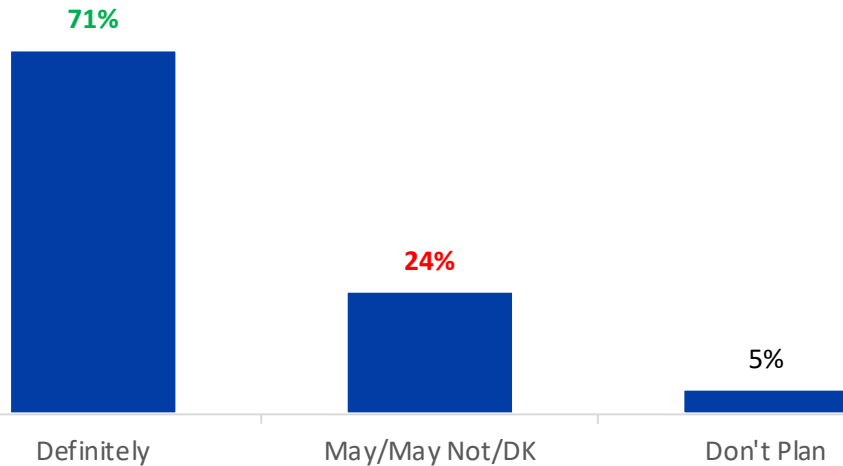
51% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 41%
Expert to help navigate college – 39%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 38%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 35%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 34%

Florida – High School

Future Degree Plans

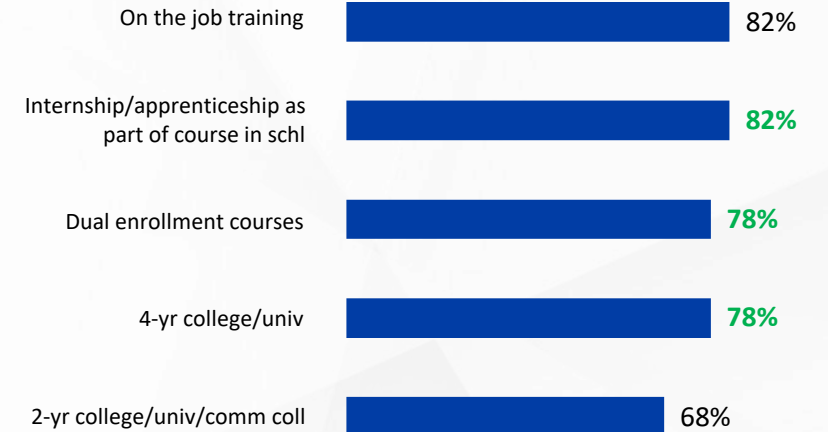


36%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

Plans Immediately After HS

- Bachelor's degree – 45%
- Associate's degree – 24%
- Trade/tech certify – 24%
- Enter workforce – 21%
- Gap year – 12%
- Enter military – 5%
- Not sure – 4%
- Other – 3%

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning salary potential (33%) • Deciding what to study/major in (31%) • Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (30%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how financial aid works (41%) • Understanding college cost/what you can afford (40%) • Understanding how to fill out financial aid forms (32%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (37%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (35%) • Having social and emotional support (25%)

College Interest Index

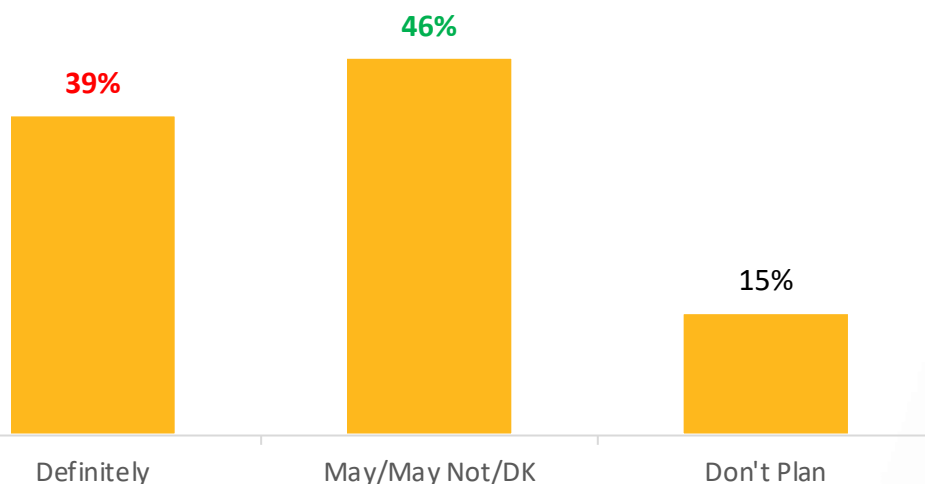
49% High
28% Moderate
23% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Expert to help navigate college – 54%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 51%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 47%
Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 47%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 47%

New York – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



46%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

44%

Ever Applied to College

35%

Employed Full-Time

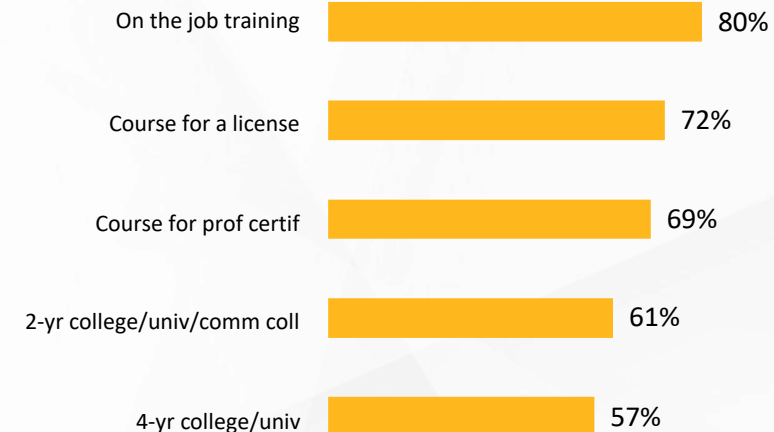
College Interest Index

20% High

25% Moderate

55% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision

- Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (34%)
- Deciding what to study/major in (32%)
- Being prepared socially and emotionally (28%)

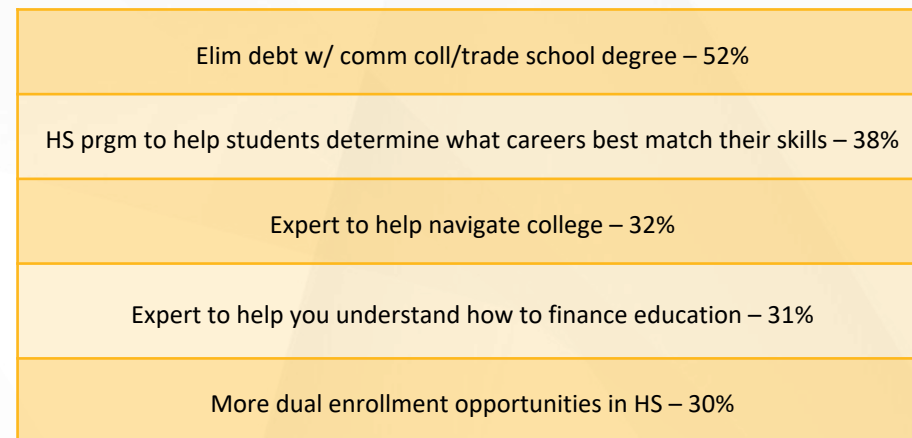
Paying for College

- Understanding how financial aid works (44%)
- Understanding college cost/what you can afford (37%)
- Learning about different types of financial aid (32%)

While in College

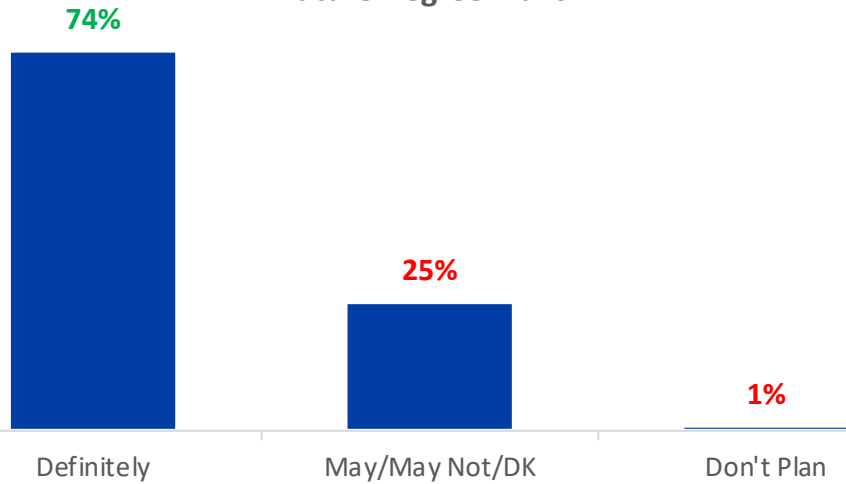
- Being able to cover expenses (45%)
- Balancing school with other responsibilities (41%)
- Having social and emotional support (28%)

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)



New York – High School

Future Degree Plans

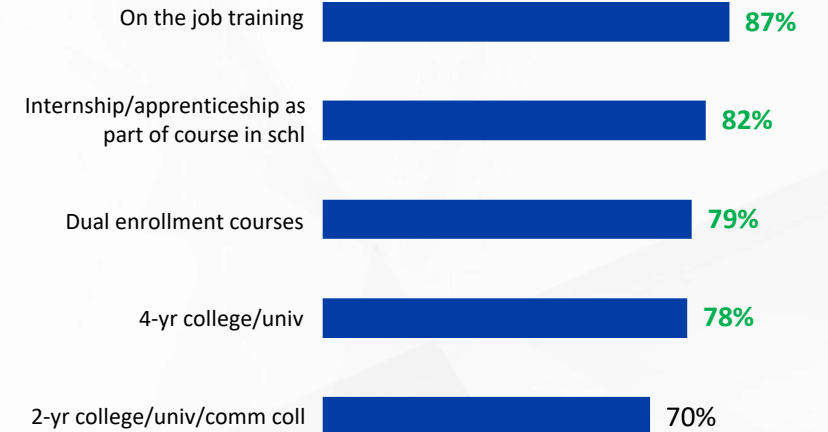


29%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

Plans Immediately After HS

- Bachelor's degree – 55%
- Trade/tech certify – 20%
- Enter workforce – 17%
- Associate's degree – 15%
- Gap year – 14%
- Not sure – 3%
- Other – 3%
- Enter military – 3%

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning salary potential (37%) • Deciding what to study/major in (34%) • Being prepared socially and emotionally (34%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how to fill out financial aid forms (46%) • Understanding college cost/what you can afford (45%) • Learning about scholarships/grants to help cost (44%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (53%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (38%) • Having social and emotional support (26%)

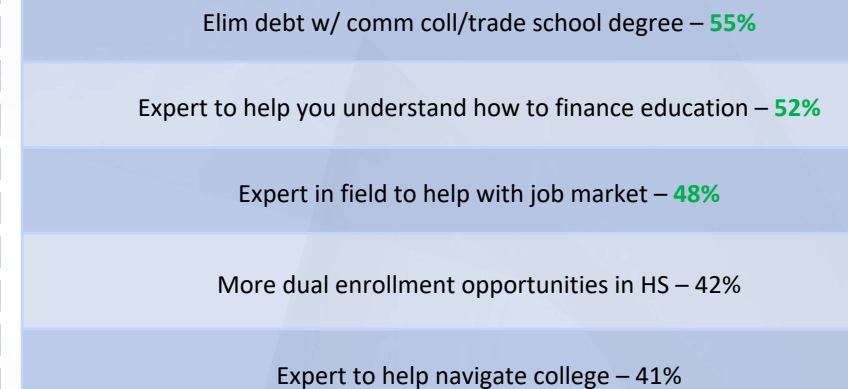
College Interest Index

49% High

34% Moderate

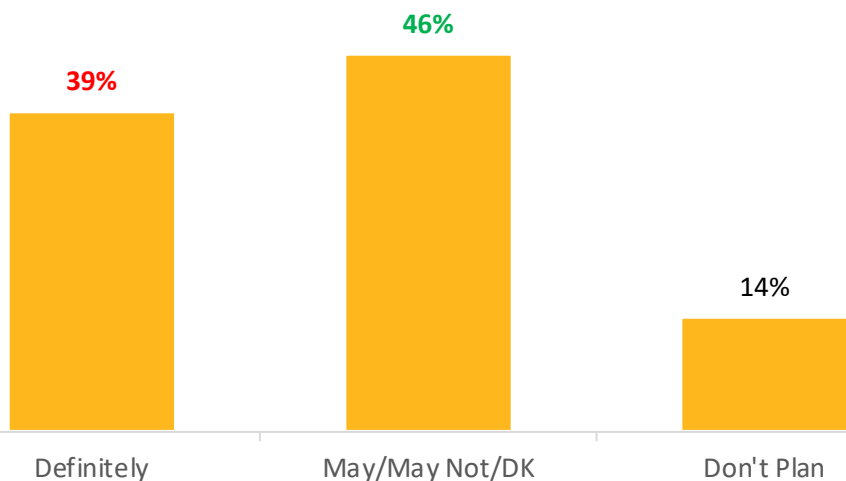
20% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)



Ohio– Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



46%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

37%

Ever Applied to College

43%

Employed Full-Time

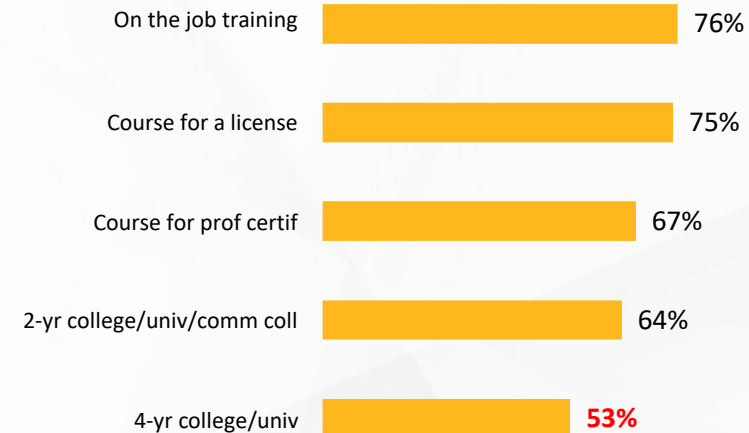
College Interest Index

18% High

23% Moderate

59% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision

- Deciding what to study/major in (34%)
- Being prepared socially and emotionally (31%)
- Learning what careers would best match your skills and interests (27%)

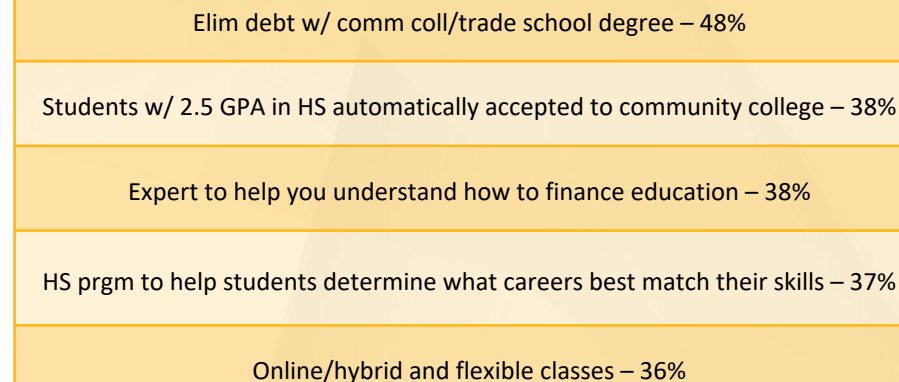
Paying for College

- Understanding college cost/what you can afford (41%)
- Learning about different types of financial aid (40%)
- Understanding how financial aid works (39%)

While in College

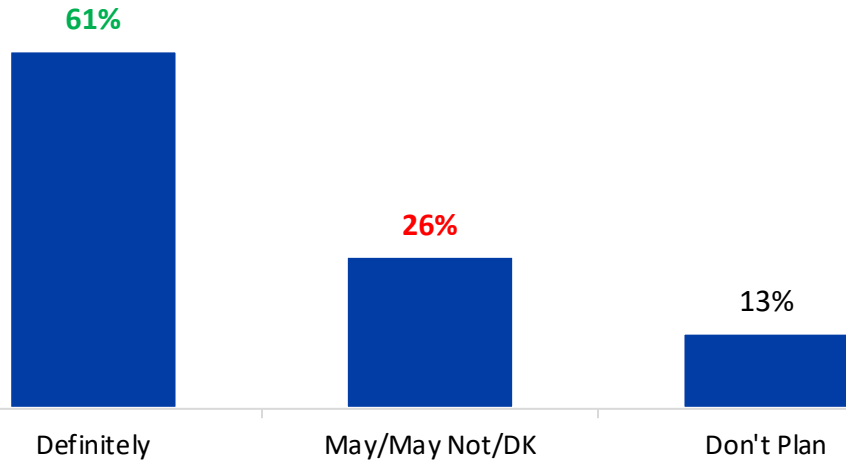
- Being able to cover expenses (50%)
- Balancing school with other responsibilities (50%)
- Having social and emotional support (38%)

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)



Ohio– High School

Future Degree Plans

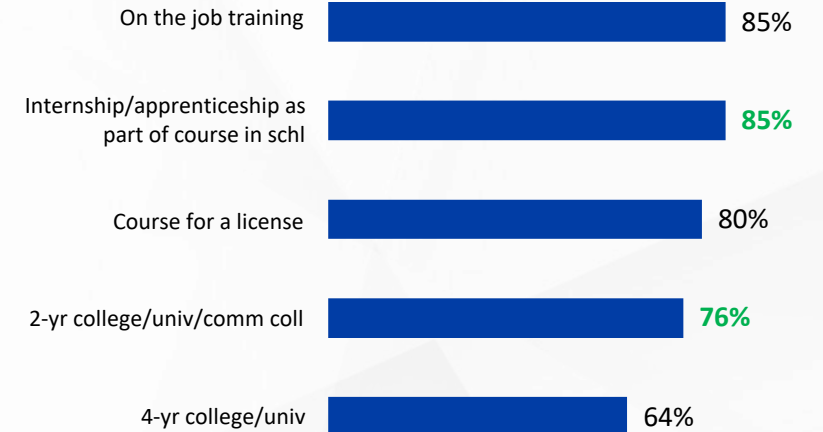


33%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

Plans Immediately After HS

- Bachelor’s degree – 43%
- Trade/tech certify – 26%
- Enter workforce – 26%
- Associate’s degree – 14%
- Gap year – 12%
- Not sure – 7%
- Enter military – 4%
- Other – 2%

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding what to study/major in (33%) • Being prepared socially and emotionally (31%) • Deciding where to apply to college (29%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding college cost/what you can afford (42%) • Learning about different types of financial aid (40%) • Understanding how financial aid works (37%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (42%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (32%) • Maintaining any financial aid received (25%)

College Interest Index

43% High

22% Moderate

35% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 44%

Expert in field to help with job market – 42%

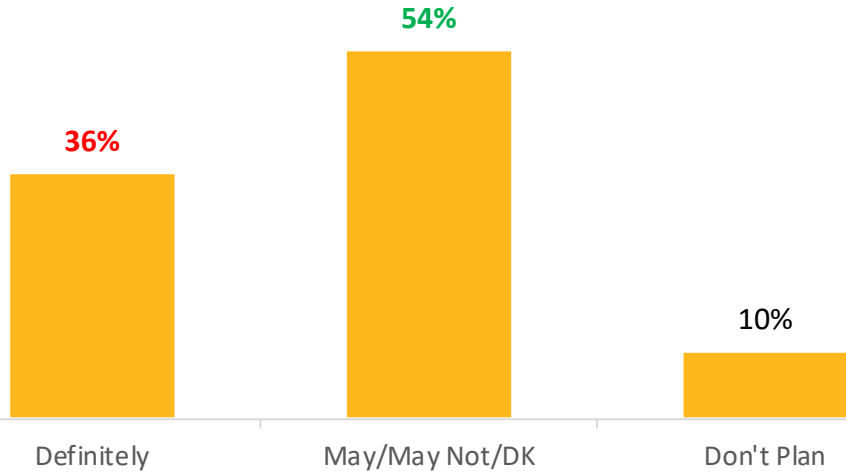
Access to emergency aid – 41%

List of jobs in your area that are in high demand and steps to get a degree – 41%

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 39%

Tennessee – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (40%) Deciding what to study/major in (38%) Being prepared socially and emotionally (34%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (44%) Learning about different types of financial aid (44%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (40%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing school with other responsibilities (49%) Being able to cover expenses (43%) Having social and emotional support (33%)

53%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

43%

Ever Applied to College

48%

Employed Full-Time

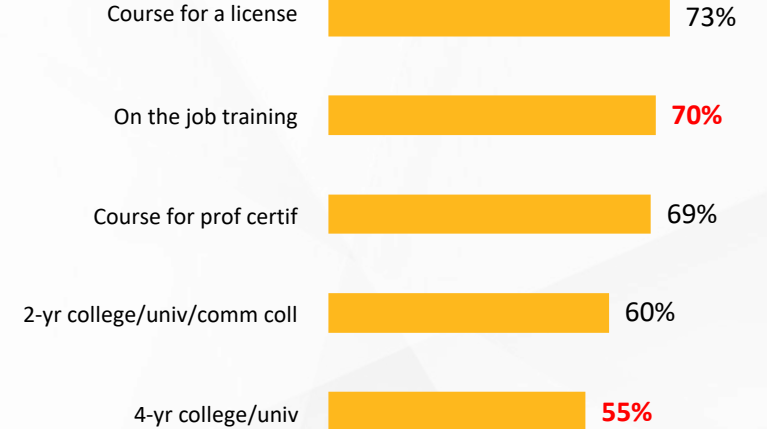
College Interest Index

11% High

27% Moderate

62% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value

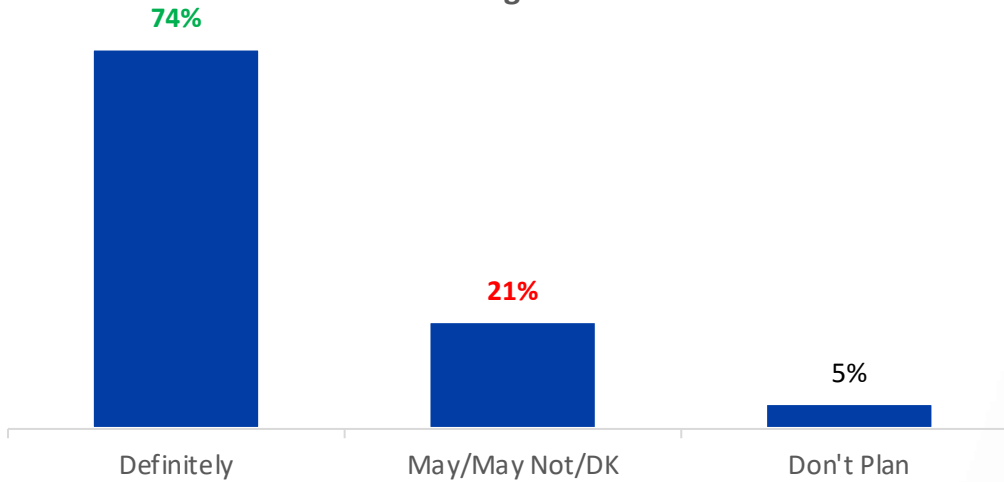


Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 50%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 46%
Expert in field to help with job market – 42%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 40%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes – 39%

Tennessee– High School

Future Degree Plans

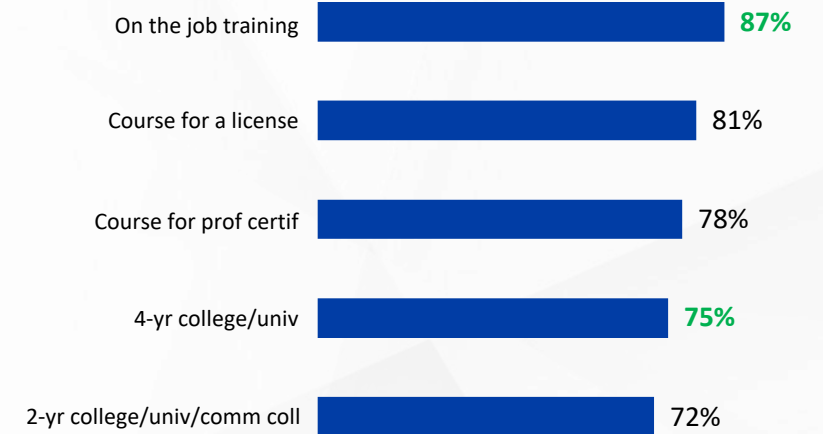


42%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

Plans Immediately After HS

- Bachelor’s degree – 48%
- Enter workforce – 28%
- Associate’s degree – 21%
- Trade/tech certify – 17%
- Gap year – 11%
- Enter military – 5%
- Not sure – 5%
- Other – 2%

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being prepared socially and emotionally (41%) • Deciding what to study/major in (38%) • Deciding where to apply to college (37%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how financial aid works (51%) • Understanding how to fill out financial aid forms (40%) • Learning about different types of financial aid (36%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (46%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (42%) • Having social and emotional support (28%)

College Interest Index

53% High

22% Moderate

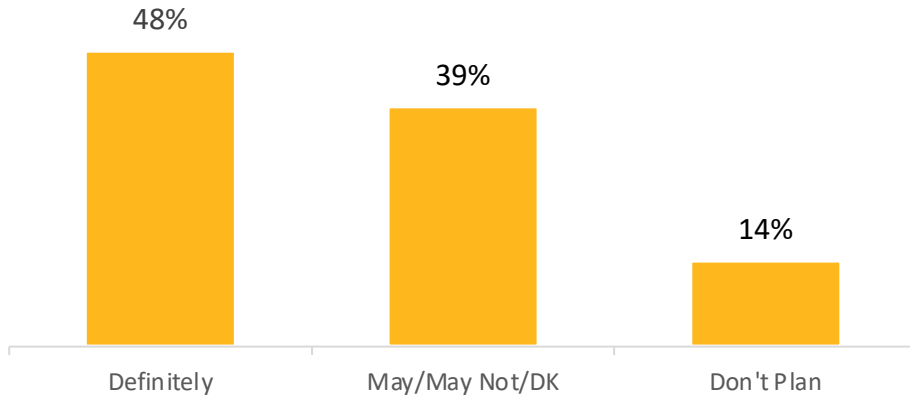
25% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 54%
More dual enrollment opportunities in HS – 43%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 43%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 37%
Expert to help navigate college – 35%

Texas – Not Enrolled

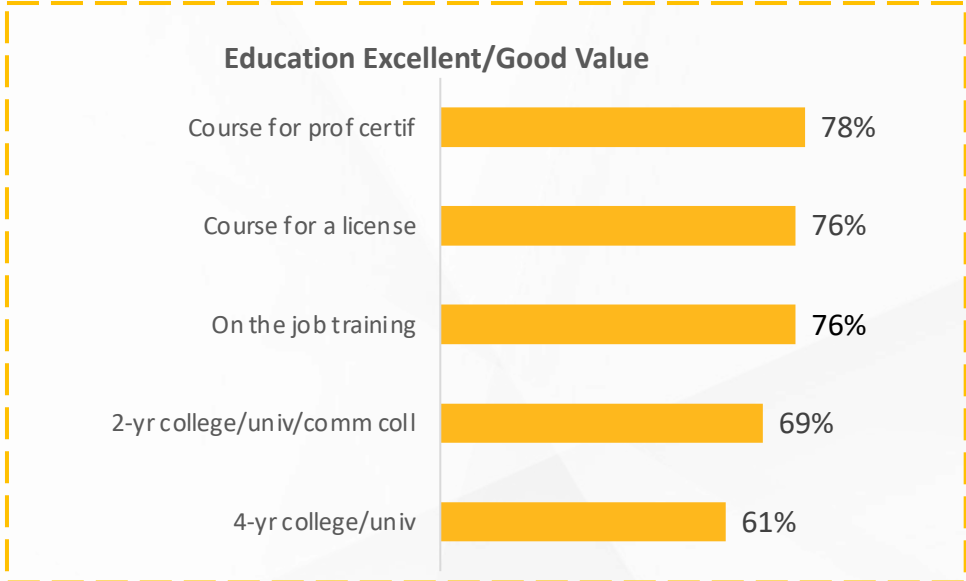
Future Degree Plans



49%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

39%
Ever Applied to College

38%
Employed Full-Time



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (42%) Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (35%) Learning salary potential (32%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (41%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (39%) Learning about different types of financial aid (39%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (45%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (41%) Having social and emotional support (32%)

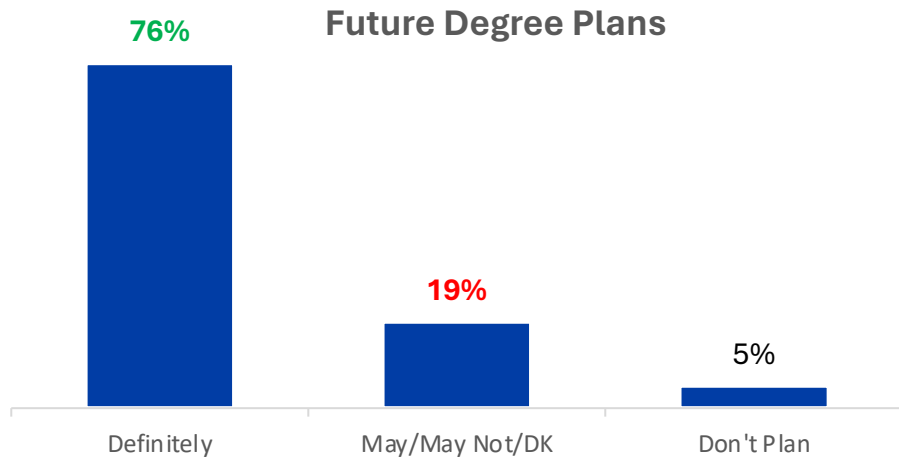
College Interest Index

25% High
28% Moderate
47% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

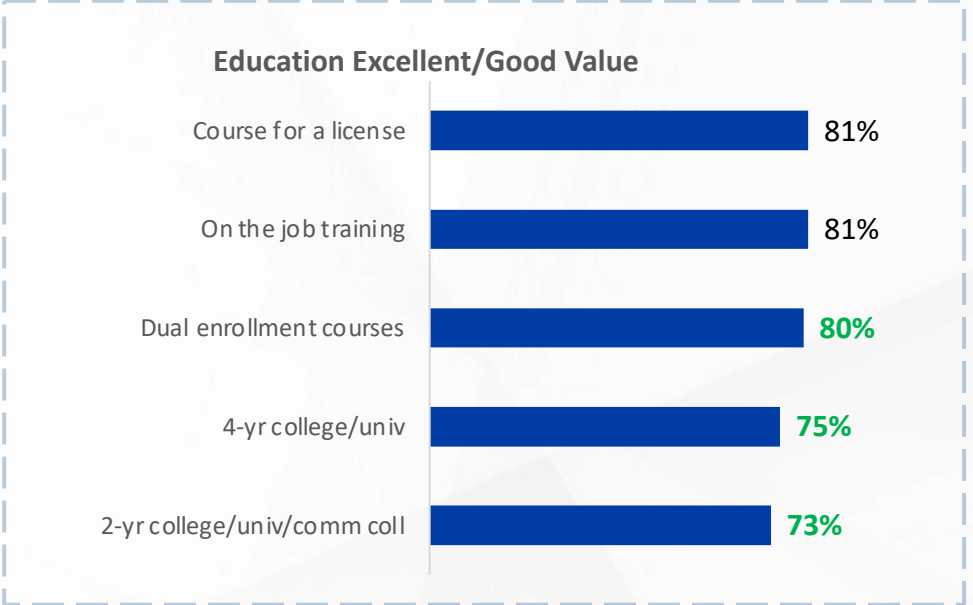
Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 44%
Expert to help navigate college – 42%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 41%
Access to emergency aid – 41%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes – 41%

Texas – High School



33%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

- ### Plans Immediately After HS
- Bachelor’s degree – 49%
 - Associate’s degree – 25%
 - Trade/tech certify – 18%
 - Enter workforce – 17%
 - Gap year – 12%
 - Not sure – 5%
 - Enter military – 4%
 - Other – 2%



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being prepared socially and emotionally (39%) • Deciding what to study/major in (39%) • Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (32%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how financial aid works (47%) • Understanding how to fill out financial aid forms (42%) • Understanding college cost/what you can afford (39%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (50%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (38%) • Finding internships and other job opportunities (33%)

College Interest Index

52% High

27% Moderate

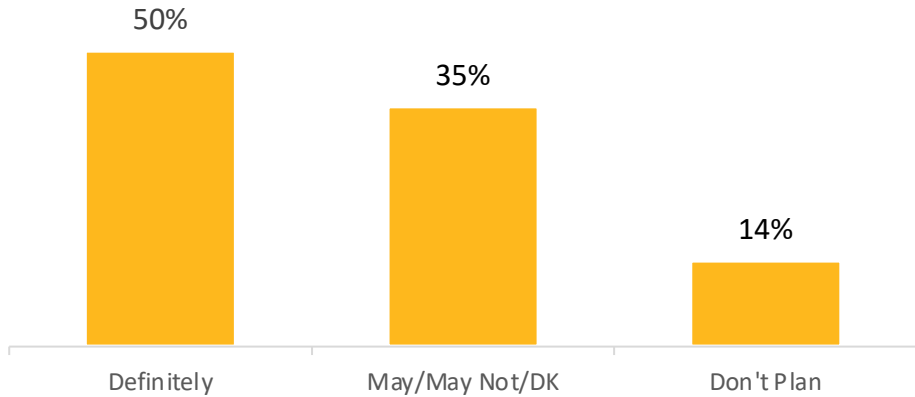
20% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Expert to help navigate college	55%
Expert in field to help with job market	54%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills	53%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes	46%
Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree	44%

Washington – Not Enrolled

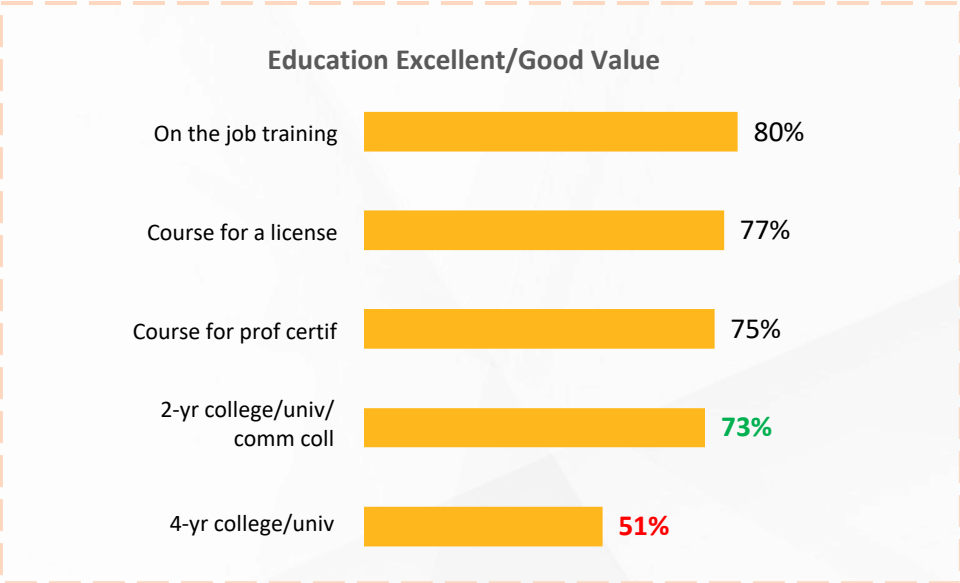
Future Degree Plans



49%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

39%
Ever Applied to College

39%
Employed Full-Time



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (50%) Deciding where to apply to college (35%) Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (34%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (50%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (43%) Learning about different types of financial aid (40%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (55%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (44%) Succeeding academically (33%)

College Interest Index

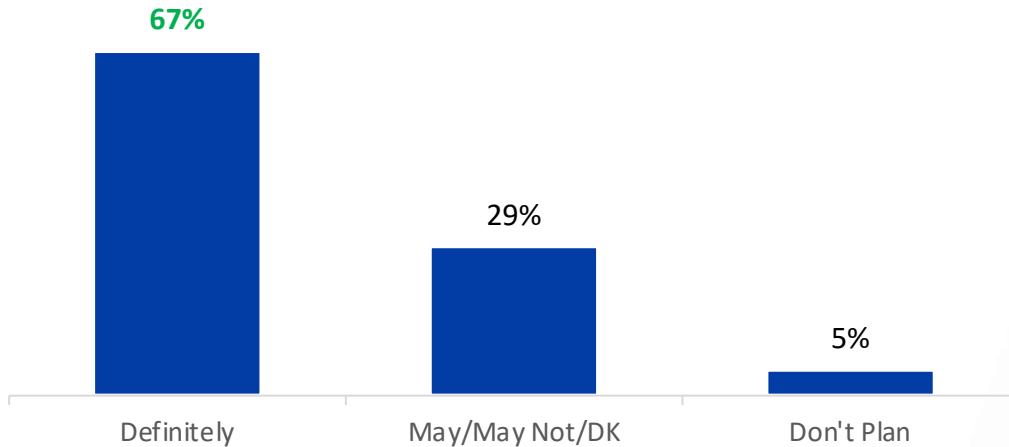
18% High
29% Moderate
54% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 53%
Access to emergency aid – 44%
Expert to help navigate college – 44%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes – 40%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 40%

Washington – High School

Future Degree Plans

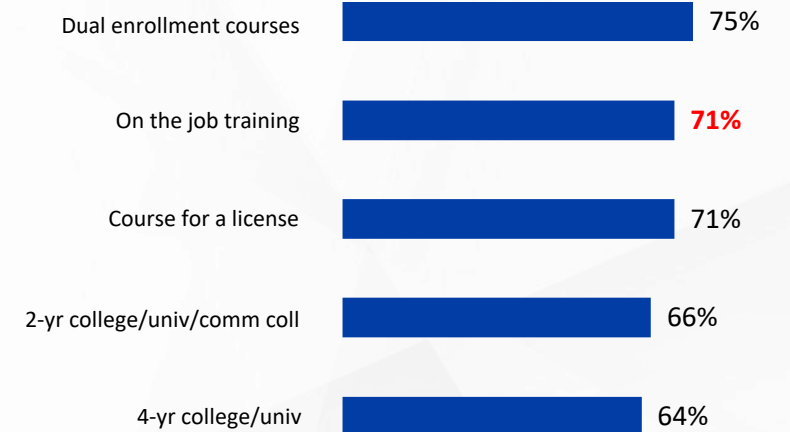


32%
Parents Did NOT Attend College

Plans Immediately After HS

- Bachelor’s degree – 45%
- Trade/tech certify – 20%
- Enter workforce – 19%
- Associate’s degree – 18%
- Not sure – 11%
- Gap year – 7%
- Enter military – 4%
- Other – 3%

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding what to study/major in (37%) • Being prepared socially and emotionally (36%) • Learning salary potential (35%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about different types of financial aid (43%) • Learning about scholarships/grants to help cost (42%) • Understanding how financial aid works (42%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to cover expenses (57%) • Balancing school with other responsibilities (43%) • Fitting in with other students and faculty (36%)

College Interest Index

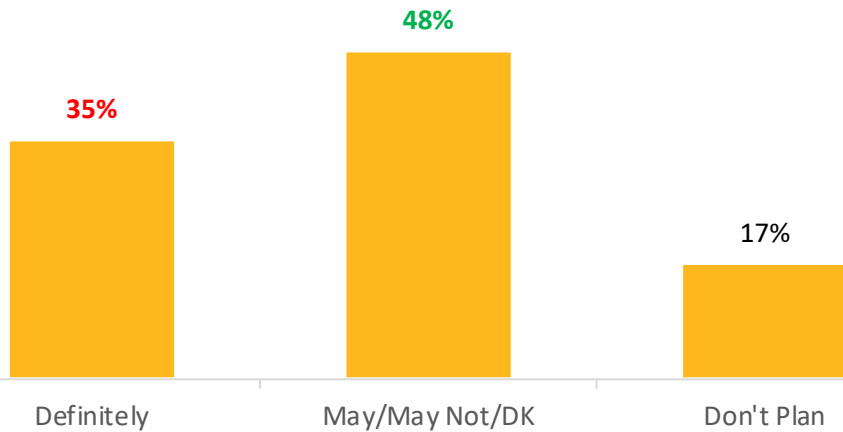
40% High
26% Moderate
35% Low

Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 51%
Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 45%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 41%
Expert to help navigate college – 39%
Access to emergency aid – 36%

Colorado – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (47%) Learning what careers best match skills and interests (36%) Learning salary potential (35%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (45%) Learning about different types of financial aid (41%) Learning about scholarships and grants help cover cost (38%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (45%) Succeeding academically (42%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (40%)

36%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

41%

Ever Applied to College

42%

Employed Full-Time

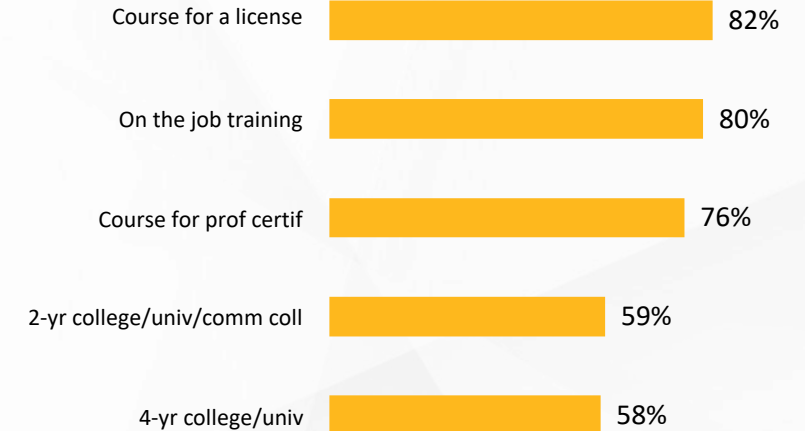
College Interest Index

15% High

27% Moderate

59% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value

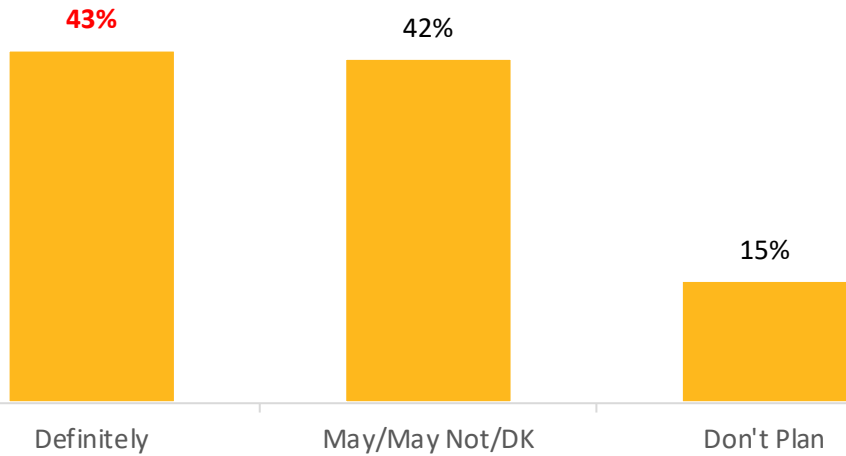


Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 46%
Access to emergency aid – 40%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes – 39%
More dual enrollment opportunities in HS – 36%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 35%

Illinois – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (34%) Learning what careers best match skills and interests (33%) Learning salary potential (28%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (46%) Learning about different types of financial aid (45%) Learning about scholarships and grants help cover cost (38%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing school with other responsibilities (48%) Being able to cover expenses (48%) Maintaining any financial aid received (34%)

47%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

49%

Ever Applied to College

37%

Employed Full-Time

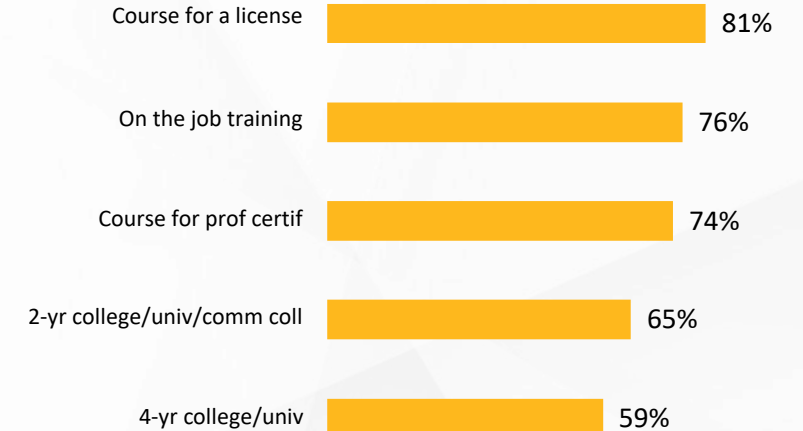
College Interest Index

22% High

22% Moderate

56% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value

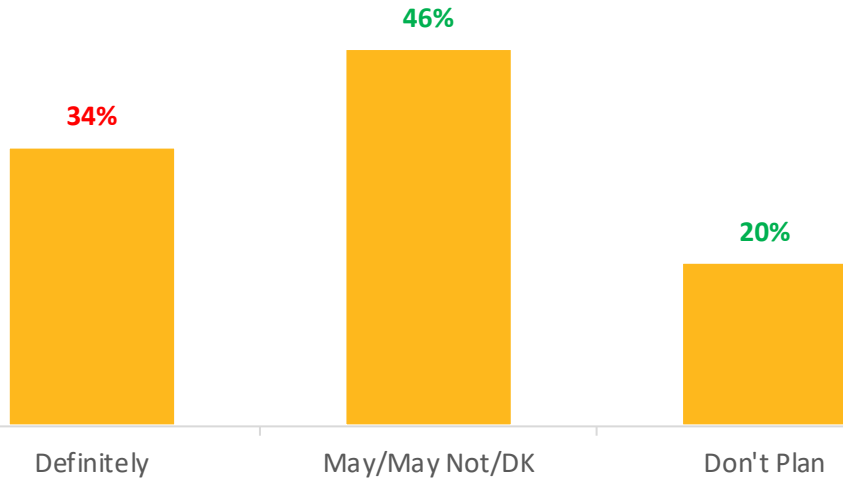


Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 53%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 49%
Access to emergency aid – 44%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 41%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes – 36%

Kentucky – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning salary potential (39%) Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (30%) Deciding what to study/major in (28%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (41%) Learning about different types of financial aid (36%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (35%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (39%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (39%) Having social and emotional support (38%)

62%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

48%

Ever Applied to College

37%

Employed Full-Time

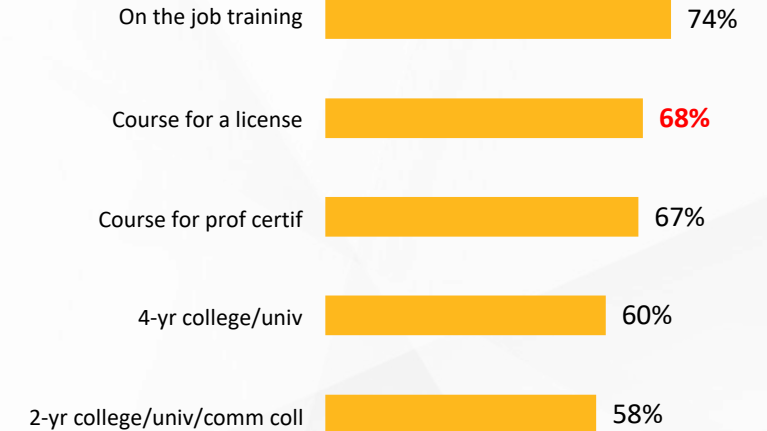
College Interest Index

17% High

23% Moderate

60% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value

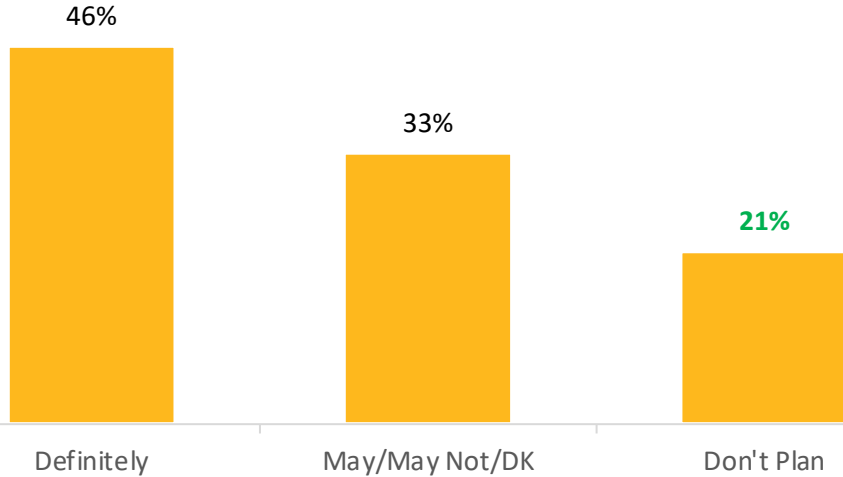


Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 53%
Access to emergency aid – 46%
More dual enrollment opportunities in HS – 42%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 41%
Expert to help you understand how to finance education – 37%

Louisiana – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (43%) Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (28%) Learning what careers best match skills and interests (27%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding college cost/what you can afford (37%) Learning about different types of financial aid (35%) Understanding how financial aid works (34%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing school with other responsibilities (48%) Being able to cover expenses (46%) Maintaining any financial aid received (29%)

54%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

59%

Ever Applied to College

38%

Employed Full-Time

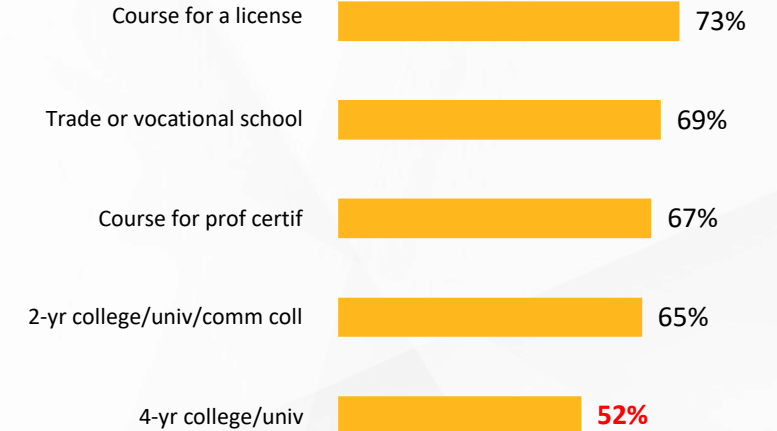
College Interest Index

17% High

25% Moderate

57% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value

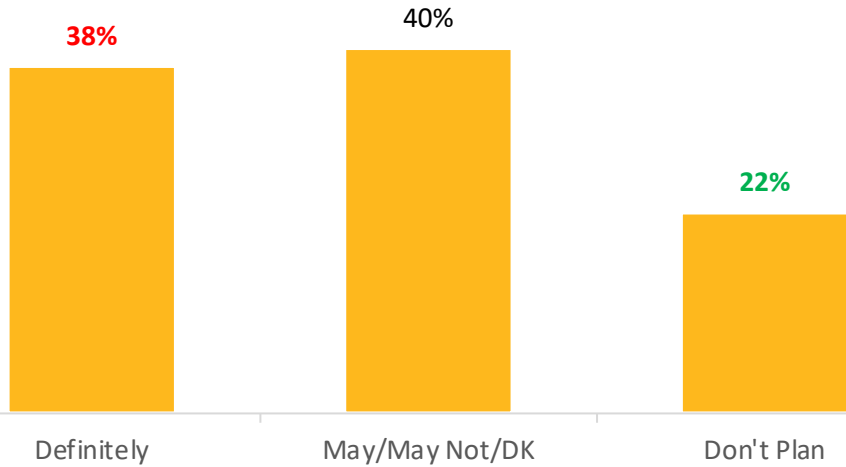


Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 49%
Expert in field to help with job market – 49%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 48%
Access to emergency aid – 42%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 42%

Michigan – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (36%) Deciding what to study/major in (33%) Learning what careers best match skills and interests (30%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (43%) Learning about different types of financial aid (41%) Learning about scholarships and grants help cover cost (39%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (41%) Having social and emotional support (40%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (38%)

43%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

39%

Ever Applied to College

54%

Employed Full-Time

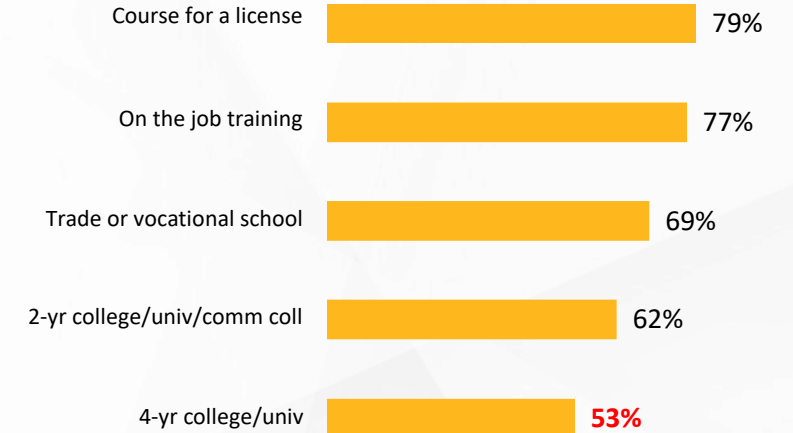
College Interest Index

14% High

20% Moderate

66% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value

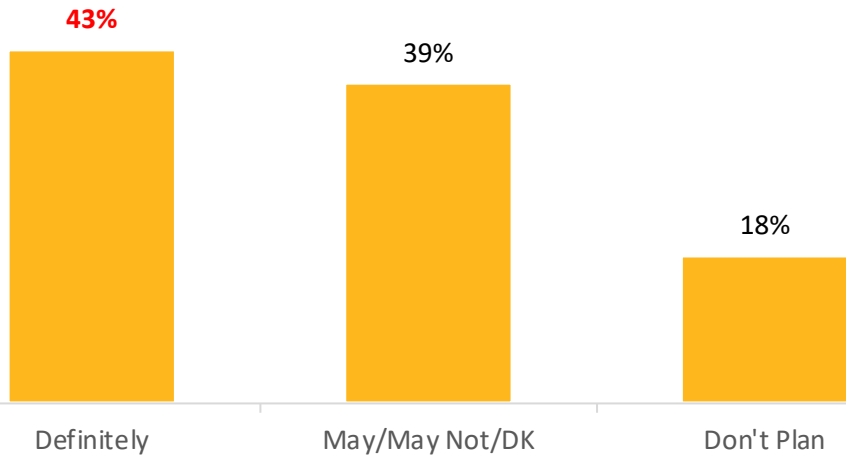


Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 49%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 44%
Online/hybrid and flexible classes – 42%
Expert in field to help with job market – 41%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 40%

Virginia – Not Enrolled

Future Degree Plans



Top Challenges

Making the Decision	Paying for College	While in College
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding what to study/major in (42%) Understanding options in HS that lead to high demand jobs (32%) Deciding where to apply to college (25%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how financial aid works (40%) Learning about different types of financial aid (38%) Understanding college cost/what you can afford (36%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to cover expenses (43%) Balancing school with other responsibilities (38%) Maintaining any financial aid received (33%)

47%

Parents Did NOT Attend College

43%

Ever Applied to College

46%

Employed Full-Time

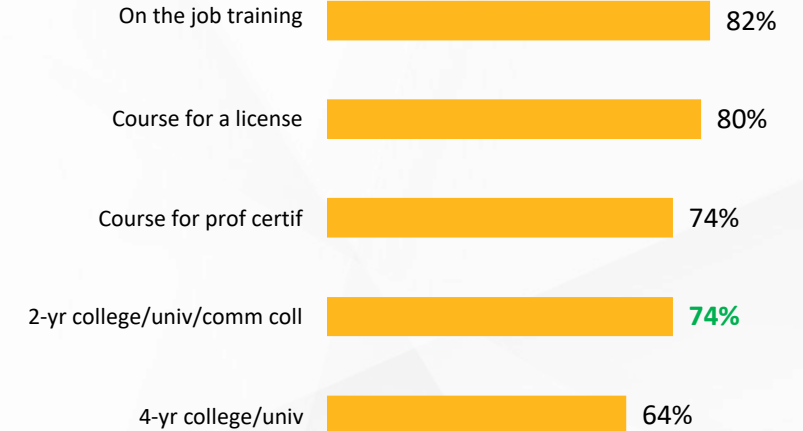
College Interest Index

21% High

24% Moderate

55% Low

Education Excellent/Good Value



Top Supports (% Extremely Helpful)

Elim debt w/ comm coll/trade school degree – 50%
List of jobs in your area that are in high demand and steps to get a degree – 43%
Students w/ 2.5 GPA in HS automatically accepted to community college – 38%
Access to emergency aid – 36%
HS prgm to help students determine what careers best match their skills – 34%