



**Fostering Completion of Earnings-Enhancing Post-HS Programs
among Low-Income Individuals
by
Effectively Disseminating Vital Information about the
Connections Between School and Careers**

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Topics covered

- Why information & guidance deficits prevent low-income students from building earnings-enhancing skills.
- What students should know to improve outcomes.
- How information about career-enhancing programs can be created.
- Ways to effectively disseminate vital information:
 - Integrate career-planning into HS curricula and college success courses.
 - Expand access to career centers at colleges.
 - Provide assessment and counseling to financial aid recipients & adults returning to school.
- Altering incentives to ensure students improve their choices.
 - Rate HSs based on post-HS college and career success.
 - Give colleges a stake in student success by awarding bonuses for excellence, and paying some of the costs when students don't succeed.
 - Use outcome measures to license for-profit programs.

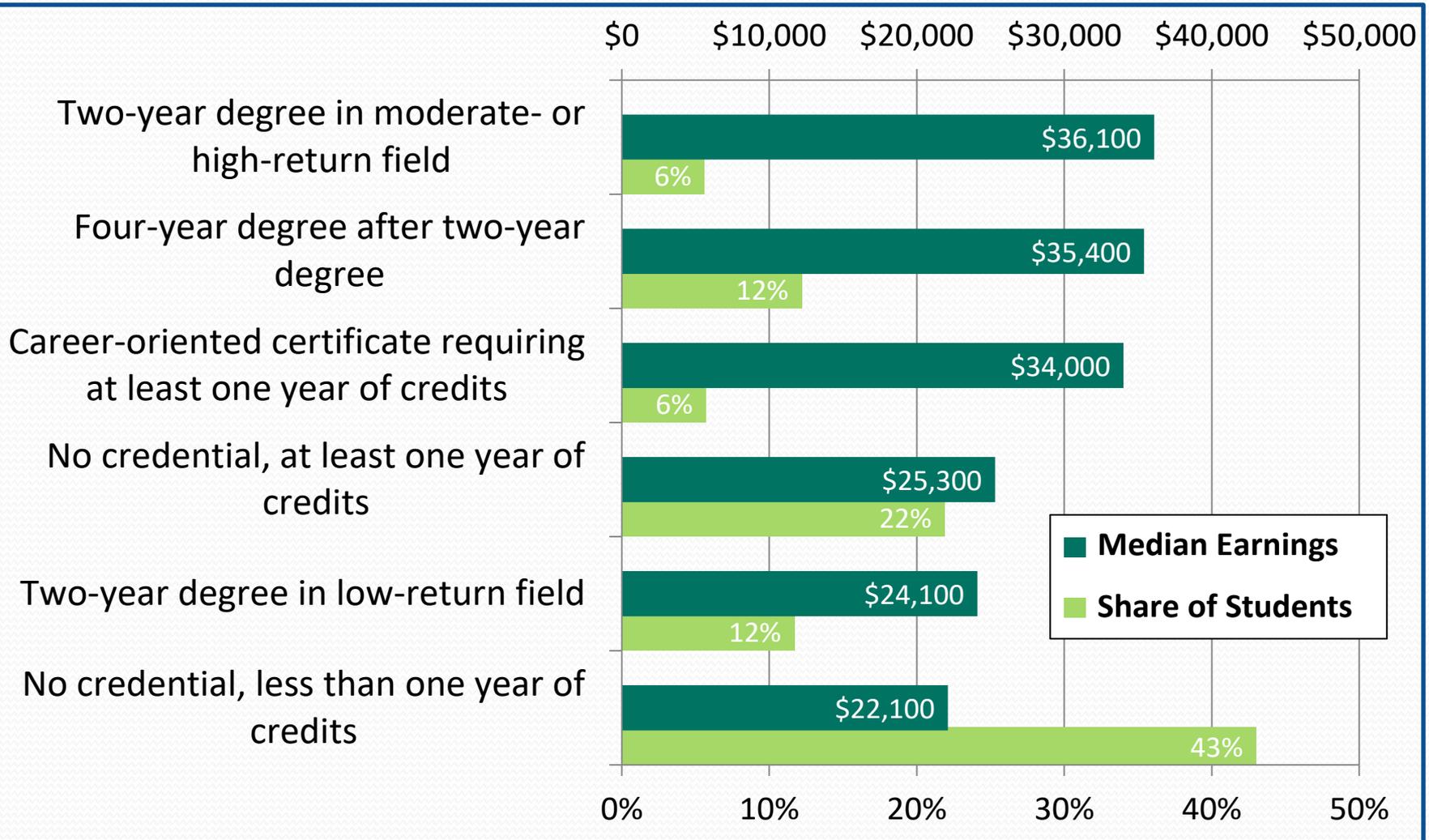
Why providing information about the connections between school and careers is vital

- There are career-enhancing pathways open to students regardless of their interests or HS-GPAs.
- But low-income individuals lack mentors, experience in making fact-based decisions, and information about:
 - The range of postsecondary academic and career programs.
 - The extent programs are earnings-enhancing.
 - The personal attributes associated with successful completion.
 - Characteristics of training-related jobs.
- As a result, many fail to find earnings-enhancing programs that engage their interests and are feasible to complete.

What students should know about earnings outcomes

- Field-of-study has a stronger influence on earnings than the type of credential earned.
 - Earnings from certificates in high-return fields are greater than from BAs in low-return fields.
 - Overall, certificates lead to comparable earnings as BAs.
 - AAs in low-return fields generate high earnings only if they lead to BAs.

Evidence from the Florida HS Class of 2000: Only 24% of CC students achieve high-returns



Returns by Field-of-Study

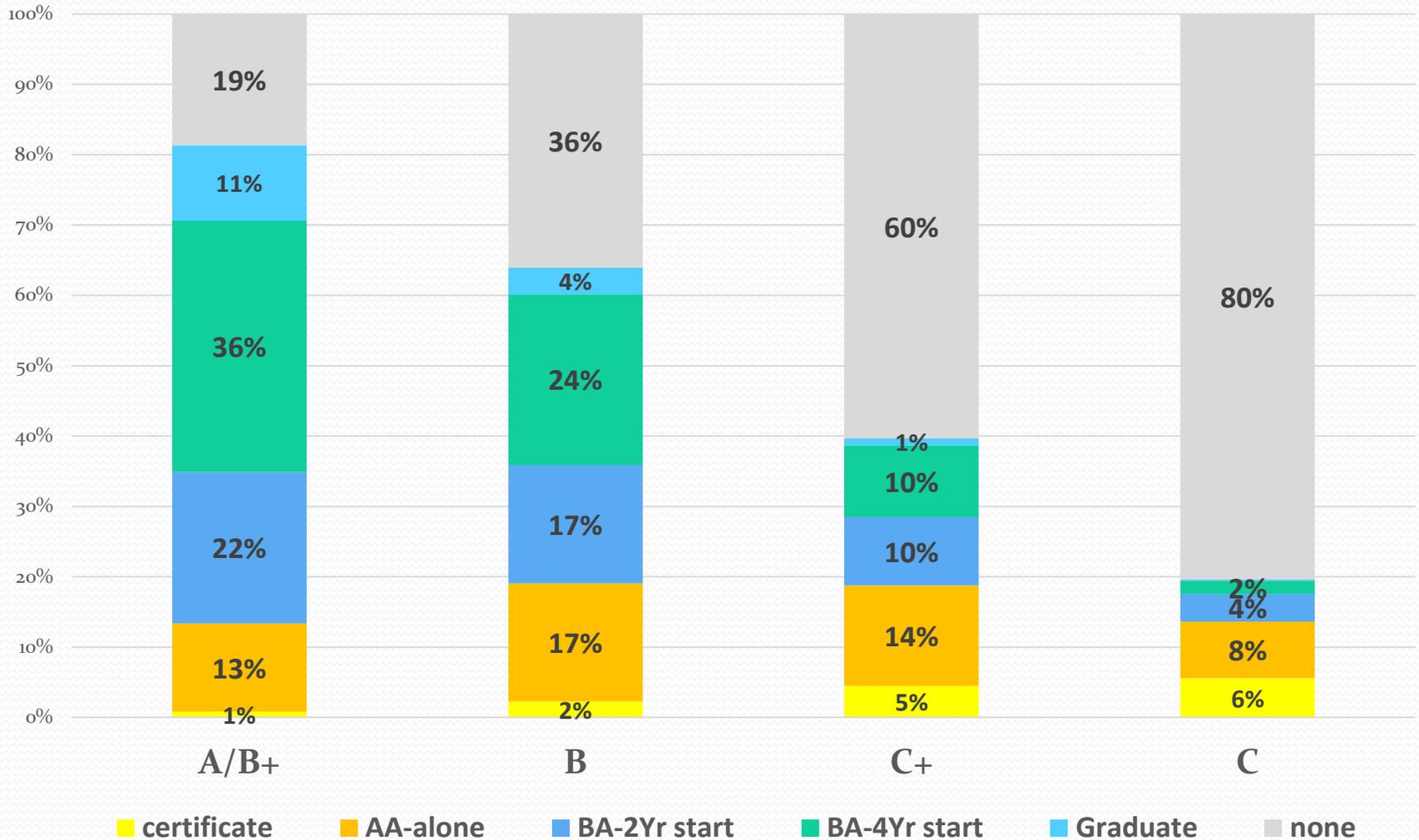
- **Very high return -- \$60K** (annually after 7 years)
Healthcare—nurses, medical technicians
- **High return -- \$54K**
Business, education, engineering.
- **Medium return -- \$49K**
Building trades, protective services (fire, police, TSA),
technical support and repair.
- **Low return -- \$42K**
Humanities, sales, personal services.

What students should know about completion probabilities

HS-GPA strongly affects completion of academic degrees, but NOT completion of career-oriented certificates.

- Among students attending college, the probability an A/B+ student obtains a BA degree is:
 - 1.5 times greater than for B students
 - 3 times greater than for C+ students
 - 10 times greater than for C students
- CCs are a steppingstone to BAs.
- High proportions of C+/C students entering certificate programs complete them.

Credential Attainment by GPA for College Attendees



Producing Report-Cards with Vital Information about Earnings and Completion

- States received over \$600M in Federal grants to develop data warehouses.
- Florida, Washington, and a few other states have created Report-Card websites using administrative data stored in warehouses that describe:
 - Average earnings after 1-year, % of starters completing program.
 - Plus: Program, program cost, duration, where to get additional information.
- The White House advocates all states have Report Cards, but confidentiality concerns must be overcome.
- Bob LaLonde and I describe a plan to do this in a Hamilton Project paper: *“Using Data to Improve the Performance of Workforce Training”*.
- Our view is that moving forward is a “no-brainer”.

Key differences between “ideal” and existing Report Cards

Information missing from existing systems:

- Factors affecting completion & time-to-completion:
 - Academic preparation.
 - Full versus part time attendance.
- How earnings change over time.
- A means to assess academic readiness, especially for adults returning to school.
- A means to learn about the characteristics of training-related jobs.

Why Career Planning is Important

- Developing solid plans to build career-enhancing skills is complex.
- Creating report-cards is necessary, but not sufficient, to develop sound plans—students need mentoring, as well as academic advising.

Why Career Planning should start in Middle or HS

- Many low-income, low-GPA, students lack plans + college-ready skills **AND motivation** to attend college.
- HSs focus on helping motivated students boost academic skills, NOT disengaged students see connections between school and careers.
- Integrating planning into HS curriculum would motivate disengaged students to develop skills **AND** attend college.

Developing an understanding of the connections between high school, college, and careers

Starting in grade-8, planning units in English courses should ask students to:

- Describe their career and college interests.
- Research requirements to enter careers and enter post-HS programs needed to achieve careers goals.
- Read literature about students like themselves entering fulfilling careers.
- Share their views with other students to obtain a broad view of:
 - Career and schooling options.
 - Factors to consider in making sound choices.

Improving Career Plans for Adults returning to College

- Adults seeking retraining benefit from assistance from America's Job Centers (AJCs).
- In Florida, 95% of individuals obtaining AJC training-vouchers complete earnings-enhancing programs, and 65% obtain jobs related to their training.
- AJC funded training is effective because applicants:
 - Develop written plans, similar to college applications, describing goals, objectives, and qualifications.
 - Have plans reviewed by experienced counselors who help applicants compare their goals and attributes to those required to complete specific programs of interest.
- Similar services should be provided by CC career centers and success courses to **all students**.

The Need to Create Incentives for Schools to Ensure Sound Plans Are Developed

- School performance is rated on test scores, completing advanced courses, and obtaining credentials-- giving no weight to success in college and careers.
- Northern European schools have broader goals -- ensuring students are either well-prepared for college or careers.
- As a result, US systems “leave behind” roughly one-third of their students – those who are disengaged from school and poorly prepared either for college or for careers, most of whom come from low-income families.

Create incentives to ensure program participants develop sound plans

- Expand HS performance measures to include those correlated with college and career success:
 - Workplace skills--basic reading/math, working cooperatively.
 - Engagement and motivation.
 - Sound post-HS plans.
- Require college financial aid recipients obtain assessment and counseling.
- Give colleges bonuses for excellence, but have them pay some of the costs when students don't succeed.
- Use outcome measures to license for-profit programs.

Summary

- Lack of information and guidance is a major reason low-income students fail to complete earnings-enhancing post-HS programs.
- Information deficits can be removed by producing accurate report cards about local programs.
- Guidance deficits can be removed by effectively disseminating report card information.
- Incentives should be created to ensure program participants develop sound plans.