

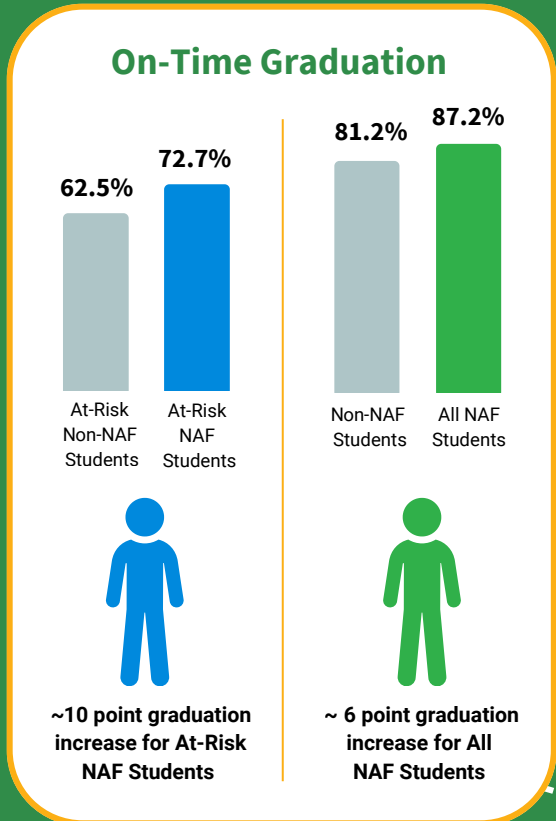


# Tracing the Path After High School: NAF Outcomes & Learnings

For more than 45 years, NAF has been a leader in career-connected education that expands access to real-world learning opportunities for high school students. NAF engages with long-term, independent research partners to track high school results, college enrollment, degree attainment, and workforce outcomes of NAF students to validate impact and share what is working.

In 2017, NAF partnered with the independent research firm ICF to examine on-time high school graduation outcomes for NAF and non-NAF students. **We learned the NAF design benefits all students – and those at-risk to graduate on time the most – leading to higher on-time graduation rates.**

Following that study, NAF set out to study how our alumni fared further along in their career journey by tracing their path after high school. Since 2021, alongside American Institutes for Research (AIR) and university research partners, NAF has used data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) and a statewide database connecting K-12 records with college enrollment and employment data to explore postsecondary and workforce outcomes for NAF alumni. Explore what we learned in the following pages.



Learn more at [NAF.org](https://www.naf.org)



## Higher College Enrollment Rates

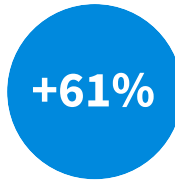
Completion of NAF's program of study, participation in a high school internship, or participation in a dual enrollment course independently **increased** the likelihood of college enrollment for NAF students. Participation in any one of these elements is associated with a measurable boost in post-secondary enrollment one year after high school graduation.

### PROGRAM OF STUDY COMPLETION



more likely to enroll in college within one year

### INTERNSHIP COMPLETION



more likely to enroll in college within one year

### DUAL ENROLLMENT COMPLETION

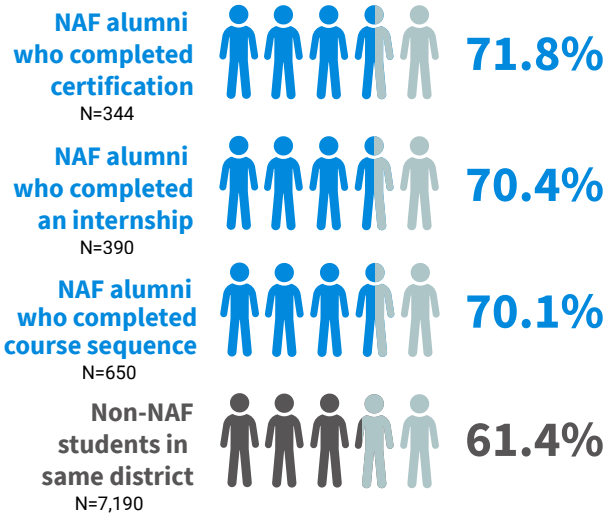


more likely to enroll in college within one year

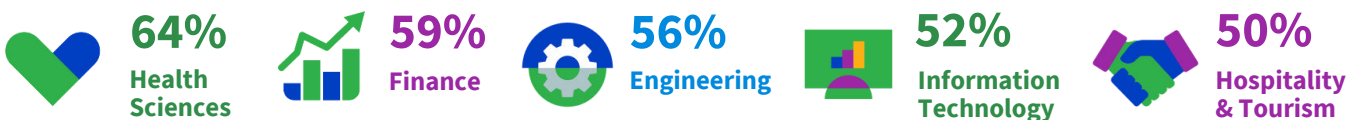
NAF **compared** program alumni against similar non-NAF peers in the same school district. The results showed that NAF alumni who completed NAF's program of study, completed an internship, or completed both, which qualifies them to become NAFTrack Certified\*, enrolled in college within two years at higher rates than non-NAF peers.

Completion of one of these three program elements independently increased the likelihood of college matriculation for NAF alumni while also considering factors such as: gender; race/ethnicity; special education status; bilingual status; economic status; and English and math achievement scores of NAF and non-NAF students before high school.

### % ENROLLING IN COLLEGE WITHIN TWO YEARS



When looking at verified college enrollment by pathway, the majority of NAF students are enrolling in college within one year of high school graduation, with health sciences students having the highest rate of college enrollment.



Students in NAF schools that often experience obstacles to opportunities have higher 4-year college enrollment rates than students from similar schools nationally, averaging 6 percentage points higher over a four year period.

\*NAFTrack Certification is a credential that serves as NAF's seal of college and career readiness

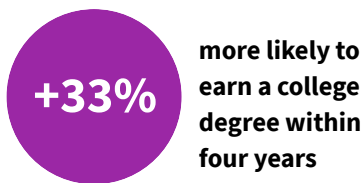


## College Majors & Completion Rates

When it comes to college majors, NAF alumni were **statistically more likely** to choose a college major related to their pathway, indicating early exposure to career-themed curricula and work-based learning opportunities help shape postsecondary academic choices. This stands in sharp contrast to national trends, where only 13% of Gen Z teens feel **prepared** to choose their path after high school, highlighting how uncommon early clarity and guidance are for most high school students.

Analysis of the NSC data indicate that completing NAF’s program of study, participating in an internship, or participating in a dual enrollment course increased the likelihood of a NAF alumni earning a college degree within 4 years.

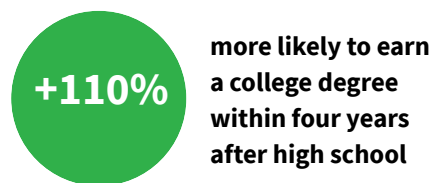
### PROGRAM OF STUDY COMPLETION



### INTERNSHIP COMPLETION



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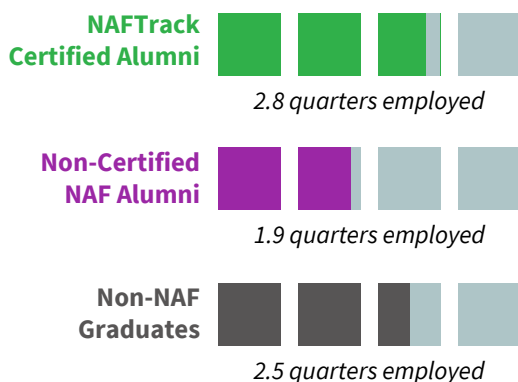
## Employment & Earnings

Through a statewide longitudinal data system connecting K-12 records with college enrollment and employment data, NAF and AIR examined alumni employment rates and earnings over the two years following high school graduation. NAFTrack certified alumni who did not attend college had trending higher employment rates (more quarters employed) than non-NAF graduates from their same districts over a two-year period.

NAFTrack certified alumni wage earnings were slightly higher than non-NAF alumni over a two-year period following high school graduation. In 2026, NAF will complete an analysis of these students' employment and earnings outcomes in the five years after high school.

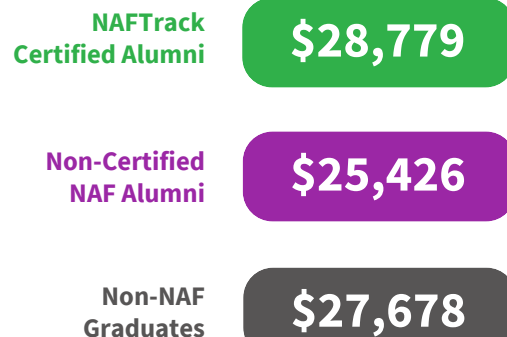
### EMPLOYMENT AMONG THOSE WHO DIDN'T ATTEND COLLEGE

*Two Years Following High School*



### WAGE EARNINGS AMONG THOSE WHO DIDN'T ATTEND COLLEGE

*Two Years Following High School, Avg. Two-Year Wage*



## What NAF Students and Alumni Are Saying

NAF annually surveys our students and alumni, routinely receiving 20,000+ responses from across our national network. While national trends show that generally high school students feel unprepared for college and the workforce, this is what NAF students and alumni are reporting about their experience:

**68%**

of NAF student respondents indicated their academy is *preparing them for college*. (n=24,319)

**70%**

of NAF student respondents indicated their academy is *preparing them for the workforce*. (n=24,342)

**73%**

of NAF senior respondents indicated they are satisfied with the guidance from their academy regarding *preparation for the future*. (n=6,258)

**66%**

of NAF alumni respondents indicated their academy is *preparing them for college*. (n=666)

**65%**

of NAF alumni respondents indicated their academy is *preparing them for the workforce*. (n=667)

**68%**

of NAF alumni respondents indicated they *learned skills that they use daily in their work or professional life*. (n=720)

## Our Learnings

### 1 STRONGER OUTCOMES

Completion of NAF's program design elements **demonstrate stronger outcomes**, including increased college enrollment, higher rates of degree attainment, and trends towards improved early-career wages in the two years after high school.

### 2 A MORE LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

NAF programs in schools that often experience obstacles to opportunities show greater benefits to NAF students compared to similar non-NAF peers, **reflected in higher on-time high school graduation rates and increased college enrollment rates**.

### 3 SHAPING FUTURE CHOICES

NAF academy pathways are closely aligned with students' declared college majors, suggesting **early career-exposure help shape postsecondary choices**.

### 4 CAREER PATHWAY SUCCESS

**Pathways work!** National trends show there is more interest from high school students in exploring career paths. NAF's findings support expanding the scope of pathway programs to not only result in higher college attainment and wages but to also result in deeper industry engagement, thereby supporting the future workforce demands of the local community.

## About NAF

NAF is a national education nonprofit that brings real-world careers into public high schools – connecting students to industry and hands-on learning so they graduate prepared for college, careers, and economic mobility.

Learn more at [NAF.org](https://naf.org) • [policy@naf.org](mailto:policy@naf.org) • Follow us on      #befutureready