

# Alaska's High School Graduates

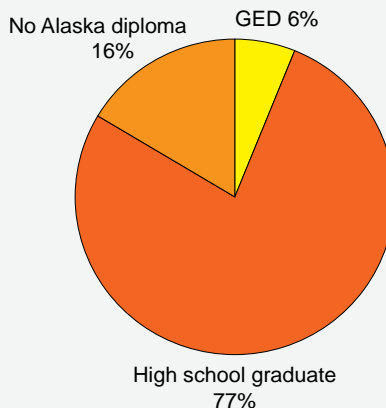
## An early look at where they go and what they do

What happens to the thousands of Alaska high school students after they leave school — whether as graduates or otherwise — is not just an educational question. It's also an economic issue for the state, given that much of Alaska's workforce will come from that pool of potential workers.

In a research partnership with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development began tracking high school students starting with the class of 2005 to see where they attended college, whether they remained Alaska residents, and where they showed up in the working world.

So far, nearly 64,000 students are being tracked.

### 1 Graduation Status Alaska, 2005 to 2011



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

That number includes students who graduated from Alaska high schools from 2005 to 2011, but also students who attended Alaska high schools and then left, regardless of the reason, without a diploma from an Alaska school. Some of them dropped out, some moved into home schooling programs, and some left the state so their graduation status was unknown. (See Exhibit 1.)

### The college track

A total of 49,000 students have graduated from Alaska high schools over the 2005 to 2011 period, and of that

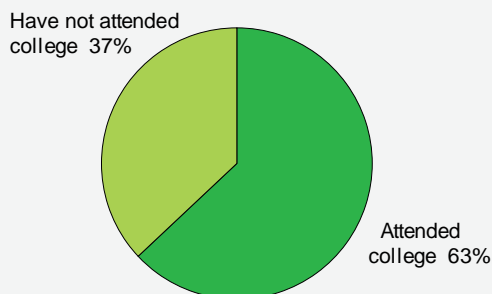
group, 63 percent have attended college so far. (See Exhibit 2.)

Not all high school graduates enroll in college at their first opportunity — typically the fall semester after a spring graduation. Of the seven classes the state is tracking, the most recent graduates in particular may not yet have enrolled in a college or university, though they will eventually. In other words, that 63 percent will likely increase in the coming years.

### Where Alaskans attend college

Slightly more than 60 percent of the high school graduates who have attended college enrolled in Alaska, and of those who left Alaska for college, many stayed in the Northwest. A combined 10 percent attended college in Washington or Oregon, and another 6 percent chose California or Arizona. (See Exhibit 3.)

### 2 College Attendance Alaska high school graduates, 2005 to 2011



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and National Student Clearinghouse

Alaska students attended college in all other states and the District of Columbia, as well. (See Exhibit 4.) Among states east of the Continental Divide, the largest concentration of Alaska graduates attended schools in Texas, Minnesota, Illinois, and Massachusetts.

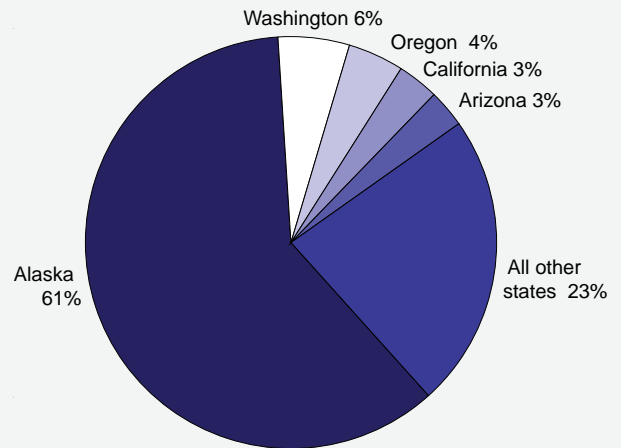
### Postsecondary job training

College is just one path to further education and preparation for a career. Of the 49,000 high school graduates being tracked, more than 21,000 have participated in some kind of job training program or apprenticeship. Examples range from certified nursing aides to flight training.

These types of programs offer a range of opportunities to those who decide not to go to college, and they can also lead to highly paid jobs. Most students take these programs in addition to college, though — close to three-quarters were also enrolled in a college or university at some point after graduating from high school.

## Where They Attend College 3

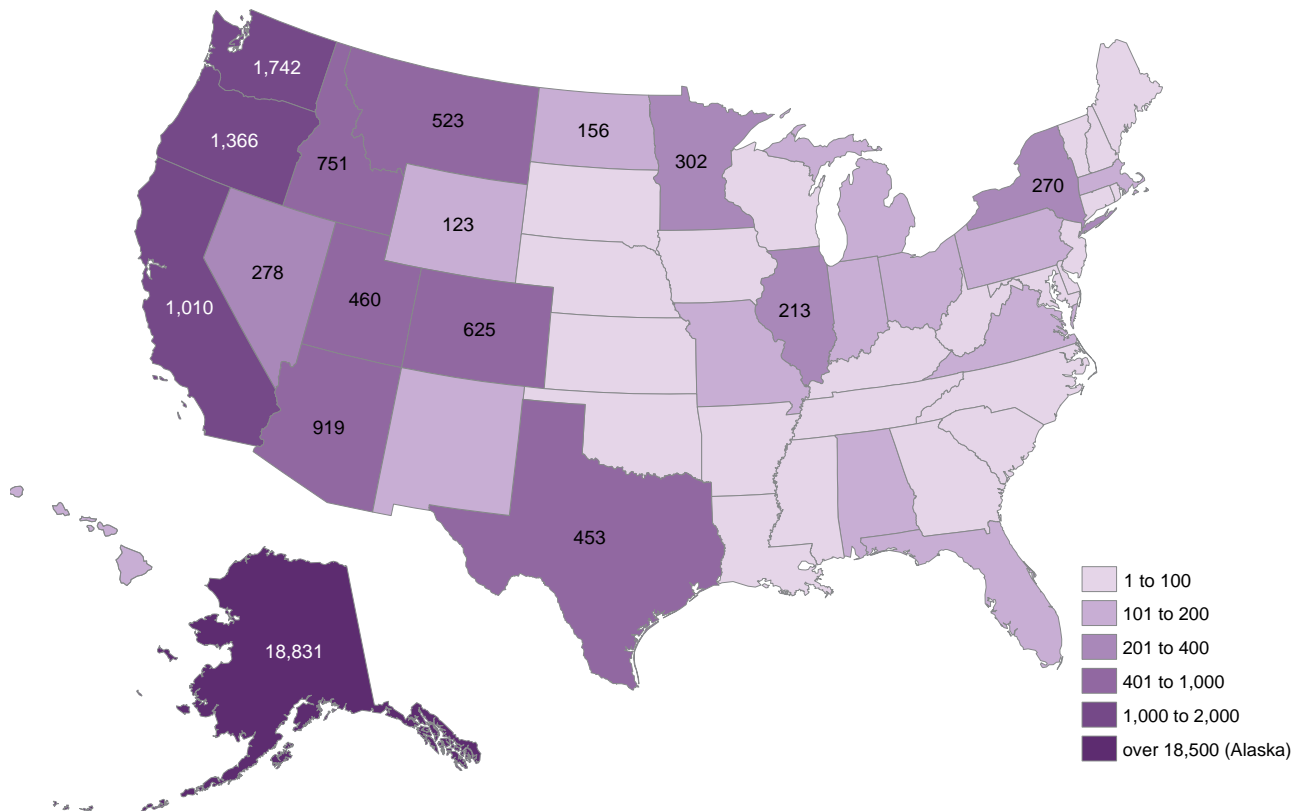
Alaska high school graduates, 2005–11



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and National Student Clearinghouse

## Numbers of Alaskans in College, By State 4

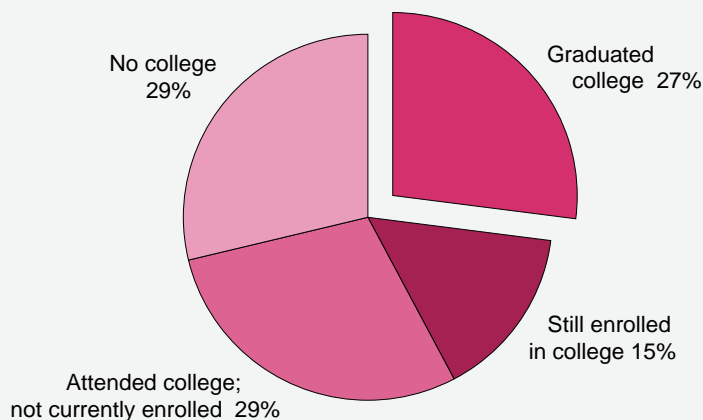
Students who graduated from Alaska high schools from 2005 to 2011



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and National Student Clearinghouse

## 5 Percent With College Degrees

### 2011 status of Alaska high school class of 2005



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and National Student Clearinghouse

Those numbers suggest there isn't a clear line between high school graduates who are college-bound and those committed to job training programs exclusively. Rather, many high school graduates take a more winding path to a career through a combination of college and job training courses.

### How many are still in Alaska

In the years the state has followed them, Alaska's high school graduates have left the state and given up their resident status at a rate of about 3 to 5 percent a year. Students who attended college out of state or joined the military but maintained their Alaska residency for Permanent Fund Dividend purposes were not counted among the 3 to 5 percent who leave.

Status as an Alaska resident can be fluid, however, and a certain percentage of Alaska high school graduates who left the state and gave up residency will make their way back in future years.

Their rate of return will become more apparent as the state continues to track them. As with any longitudinal tracking project, conclusions become firmer and more patterns emerge with time.

Another key point is that Alaska consistently attracts more residents from other states who are in

## Tracking Alaska's students

Since 2009, the Alaska departments of Labor and Workforce Development and Education and Early Development have worked together to study Alaska's students — what they do after high school, and if they join Alaska's workforce.

The Department of Labor has combined various data sources with the Department of Education's student data, including Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend records and information on Alaska GEDs, employment and wages, job training, and national postsecondary education.

The earliest data available are from the 2004–2005 academic year. This means many of the students in this article are just entering the labor force or are still in college or postsecondary job training, and some who left high school in the last few years may still be earning a GED. More about their career paths will become clear in future years.

their 20s and 30s than it loses. So while some Alaska graduates seek opportunities elsewhere, a significantly larger number of people in that age group come from other states in search of work — or in many cases, the distinct lifestyle available here.

### Zeroing in on the class of 2005

Graduates from the class of 2005 are of special interest, because they have now been tracked for six years — long enough for many to have finished college or job training and moved into the workforce.

Out of about 6,200 high school graduates in 2005, 27 percent have already obtained a college degree. (See Exhibit 5.) Another 29 percent have attended college but were not still enrolled as of 2011, and 15 percent were still enrolled but had not yet obtained a degree. About 29 percent had never enrolled in college between 2005 and 2011.

### Typical jobs by education

About 5,770 of the 6,200 Alaska high school graduates from 2005 have shown up on Alaska employers' payrolls at some point since graduating. (This group does not include military, federal workers, or the self-employed.)

# 6 Typical Jobs According to Education Level

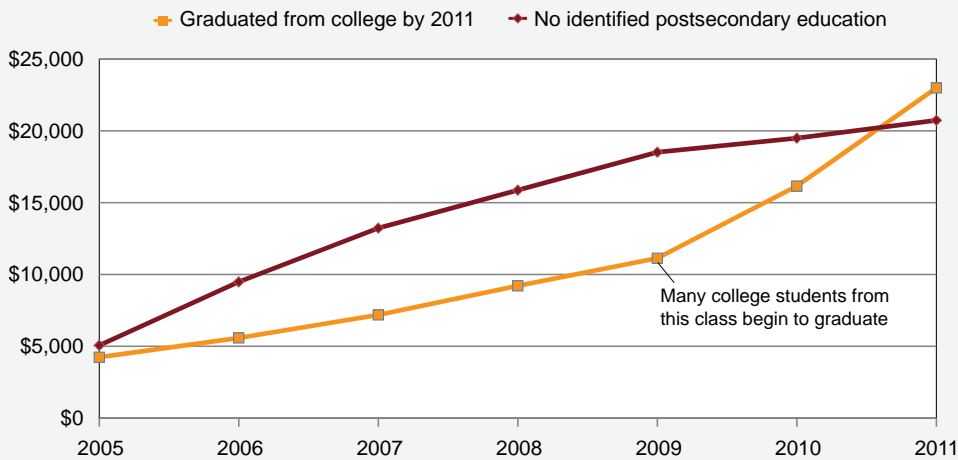
## 2011 employment and earnings of Alaska's class of 2005

Education status	Top occupations	Employed	Total earnings	Average earnings
All 2005 high school graduates	Construction Trades Workers	311	\$12,304,036	\$39,563
All 2005 high school graduates	Retail Sales Workers	299	\$4,456,186	\$14,904
All 2005 high school graduates	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	257	\$5,568,064	\$21,666
All 2005 high school graduates	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	219	\$2,751,613	\$12,564
All 2005 high school graduates	Information and Record Clerks	207	\$4,712,868	\$22,767
All 2005 high school graduates	Financial Clerks	136	\$3,026,342	\$22,253
All 2005 high school graduates	Material Moving Workers	111	\$2,125,691	\$19,150
All 2005 high school graduates	Other Health Care Support Occupations	108	\$2,508,622	\$23,228
All 2005 high school graduates	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	108	\$1,492,488	\$13,819
All 2005 high school graduates	Material Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	91	\$1,625,898	\$17,867
College degree	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	95	\$1,993,608	\$20,985
College degree	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	57	\$704,251	\$12,355
College degree	Information and Record Clerks	47	\$887,818	\$18,890
College degree	Retail Sales Workers	47	\$573,852	\$12,210
College degree	Financial Clerks	41	\$907,226	\$22,127
College degree	Health Technologists and Technicians	33	\$903,531	\$27,380
College degree	Counselors, Social Workers, and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	31	\$676,125	\$21,810
College degree	Engineers	28	\$1,485,865	\$53,067
College degree	Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	28	\$1,218,365	\$43,513
College degree	Other Teachers and Instructors	28	\$203,375	\$7,263
Job training only	Construction Trades Workers	79	\$3,767,671	\$47,692
Job training only	Retail Sales Workers	45	\$820,455	\$18,232
Job training only	Other Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	29	\$1,218,913	\$42,031
Job training only	Material Moving Workers	28	\$519,894	\$18,568
Job training only	Matl Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	24	\$541,010	\$22,542
Job training only	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	21	\$276,396	\$13,162
Job training only	Vehicle and Mobile Equipment Mechanics, Installers, Repairers	21	\$914,028	\$43,525
Job training only	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	18	\$419,270	\$23,293
Job training only	Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	17	\$244,996	\$14,412
Job training only	Extraction Workers	17	\$892,104	\$52,477
No postsecondary	Retail Sales Workers	66	\$845,538	\$12,811
No postsecondary	Construction Trades Workers	54	\$1,701,863	\$31,516
No postsecondary	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	34	\$407,469	\$11,984
No postsecondary	Information and Record Clerks	33	\$661,184	\$20,036
No postsecondary	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	27	\$622,289	\$23,048
No postsecondary	Material Moving Workers	25	\$391,884	\$15,675
No postsecondary	Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	23	\$329,002	\$14,304
No postsecondary	Matl Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	21	\$373,695	\$17,795
No postsecondary	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	21	\$274,097	\$13,052
No postsecondary	Financial Clerks	19	\$326,216	\$17,169
Some college	Construction Trades Workers	114	\$4,927,156	\$43,221
Some college	Retail Sales Workers	89	\$1,581,944	\$17,775
Some college	Information and Record Clerks	71	\$1,830,529	\$25,782
Some college	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	64	\$768,982	\$12,015
Some college	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	64	\$1,637,036	\$25,579
Some college	Financial Clerks	43	\$1,029,830	\$23,950
Some college	Other Health Care Support Occupations	39	\$986,080	\$25,284
Some college	Material Moving Workers	35	\$790,406	\$22,583
Some college	Other Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers	33	\$411,010	\$12,455
Some college	Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	31	\$477,691	\$15,409
Still enrolled	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	53	\$895,861	\$16,903
Still enrolled	Retail Sales Workers	52	\$634,396	\$12,200
Still enrolled	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	43	\$594,516	\$13,826
Still enrolled	Information and Record Clerks	39	\$922,631	\$23,657
Still enrolled	Construction Trades Workers	38	\$1,153,357	\$30,352
Still enrolled	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	23	\$169,563	\$7,372
Still enrolled	Financial Clerks	22	\$471,331	\$21,424
Still enrolled	Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	21	\$472,561	\$22,503
Still enrolled	Other Health Care Support Occupations	18	\$336,873	\$18,715
Still enrolled	Material Moving Workers	16	\$321,542	\$20,096

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; and National Student Clearinghouse

## 7 Yearly Earnings by Education Level

### Alaska high school class of 2005



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Much of their employment so far has been in occupations that new high school graduates and part-time or full-time students often work, although two different strands have emerged.

The first includes typically full-time work with relatively higher earnings in construction, administrative support, and health care support occupations. The second comprises jobs that are typically part-time with flexible hours and lower average earnings — such as work in retail and restaurants — that are common among college students and those in postsecondary training programs. (See Exhibit 6.)

### Patterns of annual earnings by education level

Although the 2005 high school graduates who have since earned college degrees are just beginning their post-college careers — and some are now pursuing advanced degrees — they provide an early peek at what college means for earnings.

Predictably, the 2005 high school graduates who would eventually obtain college degrees made less on average while enrolled than those who did not pursue any postsecondary education or

training and could presumably work full time. (See Exhibit 7.)

In 2006, for example, the students who were on the college track made just \$5,578 on average — considerably less than the \$9,481 earned by those who didn't enroll.

The earnings gap reached its widest point four years after high school graduation, when many in college were close to finishing or had just graduated. In that year, they earned an average of \$11,131, compared to \$18,513 for the group who had been out of school and presumably in the workforce for four years.

In 2010, the fifth year after high school, earnings increased sharply for those who were at or near college graduation, narrowing the earnings gap significantly. Earnings also increased from 2009 to 2010 for those who didn't further their formal education, but by a much smaller amount.

In 2011, the lines crossed and for the first time since high school, earnings were higher among college graduates.

### College graduates in and out of state

Of the 1,685 high school graduates from 2005 who have already obtained college degrees, 40 percent did so in Alaska and 60 percent graduated outside Alaska. Over 80 percent of the graduates of Alaska colleges worked for an Alaska employer in 2011, as did about 37 percent of those who graduated elsewhere.

One caveat with this comparison is that some of the Alaska college graduates may have worked part-time while in school, and the non-Alaska college graduates might have worked similar jobs in their respective states. A larger percentage will likely show up on Alaska companies' payrolls in future years.

Again, as these students continue to be tracked, more information will emerge about earnings and which postsecondary paths are most likely to result in Alaska employment.

## **Future research opportunities**

Although this article has focused primarily on Alaska high school graduates, a growing body of information is also available on the career paths of high school students who didn't graduate. Some in that category obtain General Equivalency Diplomas — or GEDs — sometime after leaving high school.

High school dropouts, which are a difficult group to precisely identify, are also important to track as they make their way into careers. Future data will shed more light on how their earnings compare to those who obtain degrees or complete other postsecondary training. As the state gathers more information over time, these data will help educators, training providers, and policy makers understand student paths and how they relate to Alaska's economy.