

# ALASKA GRADS ten years later

78 percent of 2005 high school graduates went to college

By **YUANCIE LEE**

In a research partnership with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development studies high school students — starting with the nearly 7,000 who graduated in 2005 — to see where they attend college, whether they remain Alaska residents, and where they show up in the working world.

For this update, we were able to match data for about

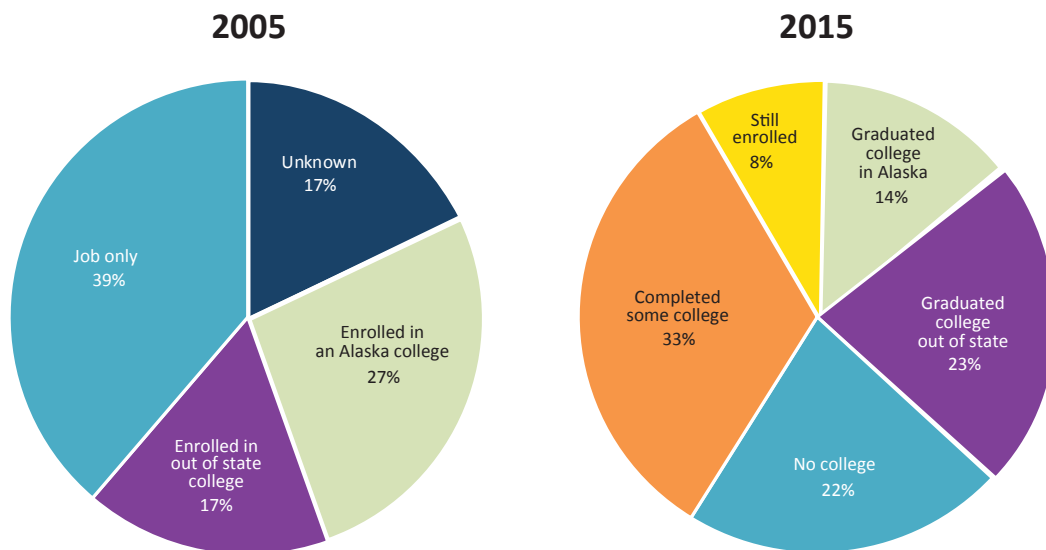
6,000 of the original students, who by 2015 had been out of high school long enough to have graduated college and spent several years developing careers, which allowed a more comprehensive look at their education and career paths. Our prior update, which looked at their progress in 2010, is available in the June 2012 issue of *Trends*.

## Majority attended college

About 44 percent of the 2005 high school graduates enrolled in college immediately, and the majority at-

## 1 Where 2005 Graduates Started Out and Where They Are Now

ALL ALASKA 2005 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



Note: "Graduated college" includes associate degrees.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

tended in Alaska.

By 2015, over 78 percent had attended college at some point, and 37 percent of all the students had an associate degree or higher. (See Exhibit 1.)

Of the 2,250 who had a degree in 2015, 59.5 percent had attended an Alaska college at some point: 38 percent received their degree in Alaska and 21.5 percent attended an Alaska college but graduated elsewhere.

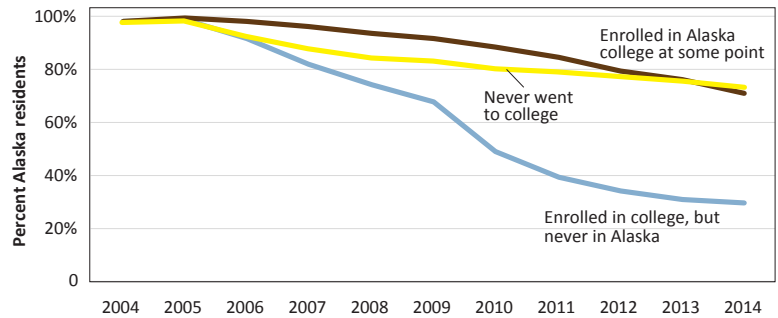
## Alaska college grads more likely to stay

While most of the college graduates who only attended outside the state are no longer residents, the majority of the Alaska college attendees were still Alaska residents in 2014, whether they got their degrees here or not.

Originally, those who had gone to college in Alaska at some point were more likely than those who never went to college to remain Alaska residents. By 2013, though, those who went to college in the state and those who didn't go to college at all were about equally likely to have remained residents. (See Exhibit 2.)

# 2 Residency Low Among Those Who Left

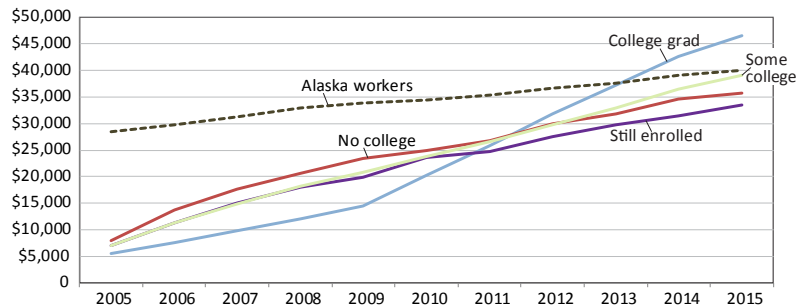
## 2005 GRADUATES' RESIDENCY STATUS THROUGH 2014



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

# 3 College Grads' Earnings Turned a Corner

## ALASKA 2005 HIGH SCHOOL GRADS' WAGES, 2005 TO 2015



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

# 4 Most Common Jobs After Graduation and Now

## ALL ALASKA 2005 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Top Occupations in 2005 After Graduation	Workers	Avg wage in 2005	Top Occupations in 2015	Workers	Avg wage in 2015
Retail Sales Workers	976	\$6,545	Construction Trades Workers	247	\$57,540
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	486	\$5,480	Retail Sales Workers	187	\$21,885
Construction Trades Workers	284	\$11,006	Other Office and Admin Support Workers	182	\$35,651
Information and Record Clerks	275	\$6,475	Information and Record Clerks	165	\$32,800
Material Moving Workers	275	\$7,147	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	117	\$16,729
Other Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers	231	\$5,822	Financial Clerks	111	\$31,348
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	205	\$6,340	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	110	\$34,527
Other Personal Care and Service Workers	148	\$5,500	Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	98	\$54,321
Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	147	\$5,503	Other Health Care Support Occupations	86	\$31,912
Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	146	\$6,220	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	75	\$23,115

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## Earnings increased faster for those with a degree

The group who had a college degree by 2015 earned less on average while in school than their classmates who started working right out of high school, likely because they weren't working or were part-time while continuing their education.

In 2006, for example, the students who were on the college track made just \$7,666 on average — considerably less than the \$13,848 earned by those who didn't enroll. The earnings gap reached its widest point four years after high school graduation, in 2009, when many in college were close to finishing or had just graduated. That year, they earned an average of \$14,444, compared to \$23,405 for the group who had been out of school and presumably in the workforce for four years. (See Exhibit 3.)

That changed between 2009 and 2010, at about the time the group started finishing college. The average earnings for college graduates began increasing faster, and by 2011 they were earning more on average than those without any college experience. Three years later, their earnings surpassed the average wage for all Alaska workers, and by 2015, they were making 16 percent more.

Wages for those who didn't go to college or had some college experience also continued to rise, but as of 2015 these groups were still making less on average than Alaska workers overall.

## Typical occupations varied by educational level

In 2005, most of the recent high school graduates worked in a narrow range of jobs, mostly in retail sales, food services, and construction. Sixty-six percent worked in just 10 occupations right after high school.

By 2015, their career options had broadened with years of experience or education, although 43 percent were still working in the original top 10 occupations they'd held right after high school. Exhibit 4 shows the 10 most common jobs and earnings for these students right after high school and 10 years later.

Those who had some college experience by 2015 worked in many of the same top occupations as those who never went, and for both those groups, the top two categories were construction trades and retail sales. (See Exhibit 5.)

For those who held a college degree in 2015, the most

## About the data

Since 2009, the departments of Labor and Workforce Development and Education and Early Development have collaborated to study what Alaska's students do after high school and whether they join Alaska's workforce, beginning with those who graduated in 2005.

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

For this article, a college graduate is someone who received a degree at a college recognized by the National Student Clearinghouse, and includes those with an associate degree. "Some college" includes those who enrolled at some point but didn't receive a degree, and "no college" includes those who participated in career and technical training programs or obtained other nondegree certifications.

Only rough estimates are available on the percentage of high school graduates who pursue most noncollege training programs. About 900 people begin registered apprenticeships each year, and that number is growing as Alaska expands the number and types of apprenticeships available. Other graduates pursue postsecondary training in everything from learning to fly float planes to becoming a chef.

common occupational category was health diagnosing or treating practitioners, primarily nurses. Other top occupations for college graduates included work in health care, education, and engineering.

One noteworthy occupation is oil extraction, which was one of the highest-paying occupations for all educational levels in 2015, including for those who didn't go to college. However, many of those students had completed training programs that focused on skills necessary for construction and oil-related jobs.

While more college graduates held the higher-paying occupations, we found former students with every level of education in a variety of high-paying jobs. We found college graduates earning more than the state average in 29 occupational groups. For comparison, those who had some college were earning more than the statewide average in 26 occupational groups and those with no college experience earned more in eight.

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## Most Common Occupations in 2015 by Education Level

ALL ALASKA 2005 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Top 10 occupation group	Education status	Workers	Avg wage
Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	College grad <sup>1</sup>	71	\$61,524
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	College grad	48	\$47,162
Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers	College grad	45	\$49,057
Engineers	College grad	42	\$79,054
Information and Record Clerks	College grad	37	\$38,452
Counselors, Social Workers, and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	College grad	36	\$42,781
Drafters, Engineering Technicians, and Mapping Technicians	College grad	30	\$71,525
Financial Specialists	College grad	28	\$67,377
Other Health Care Support Occupations	College grad	28	\$36,348
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	College grad	28	\$41,376

Top 10 occupation group	Education status	Workers	Avg wage
Construction Trades Workers	Some college	106	\$58,158
Retail Sales Workers	Some college	58	\$26,663
Information and Record Clerks	Some college	58	\$36,983
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	Some college	48	\$32,104
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	Some college	43	\$35,322
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	Some college	34	\$19,832
Financial Clerks	Some college	33	\$37,658
Other Health Care Support Occupations	Some college	29	\$33,582
Material Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	Some college	29	\$45,801
Other Personal Care and Service Workers	Some college	28	\$25,869

Top 10 occupation group	Education status	Workers	Avg wage
Construction Trades Workers	No college <sup>2</sup>	73	\$62,177
Retail Sales Workers	No college	44	\$21,009
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	No college	30	\$30,115
Vehicle and Mobile Equipment Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	No college	26	\$66,326
Information and Record Clerks	No college	25	\$30,861
Material Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	No college	24	\$25,742
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	No college	23	\$14,959
Financial Clerks	No college	22	\$25,870
Other Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	No college	21	\$62,600
Extraction Workers	No college	19	\$105,555

<sup>1</sup>Includes associate degrees

<sup>2</sup>Includes career and technical training programs and other nondegree certifications

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section