

# Understanding Work-Based Learning: National Trends & Insights

SCHEV Council Meeting  
July 15, 2025

**strada**

EDUCATION FOUNDATION

# Today's objectives

1

Provide an overview of work-based learning best practices

2

Examine the latest research on the impact of work-based learning for students and employers

3

Explore innovative models and other state leaders

# About Strada

Our North Star is to collaborate with learners, educators, employers, and policymakers across the U.S. to bring to life a postsecondary education and training ecosystem that provides pathways to opportunity

1 Clear Outcomes

← Strada focuses on increasing access to practices that work: →

2 Quality Coaching

3 Affordability

4 Work-Based Learning

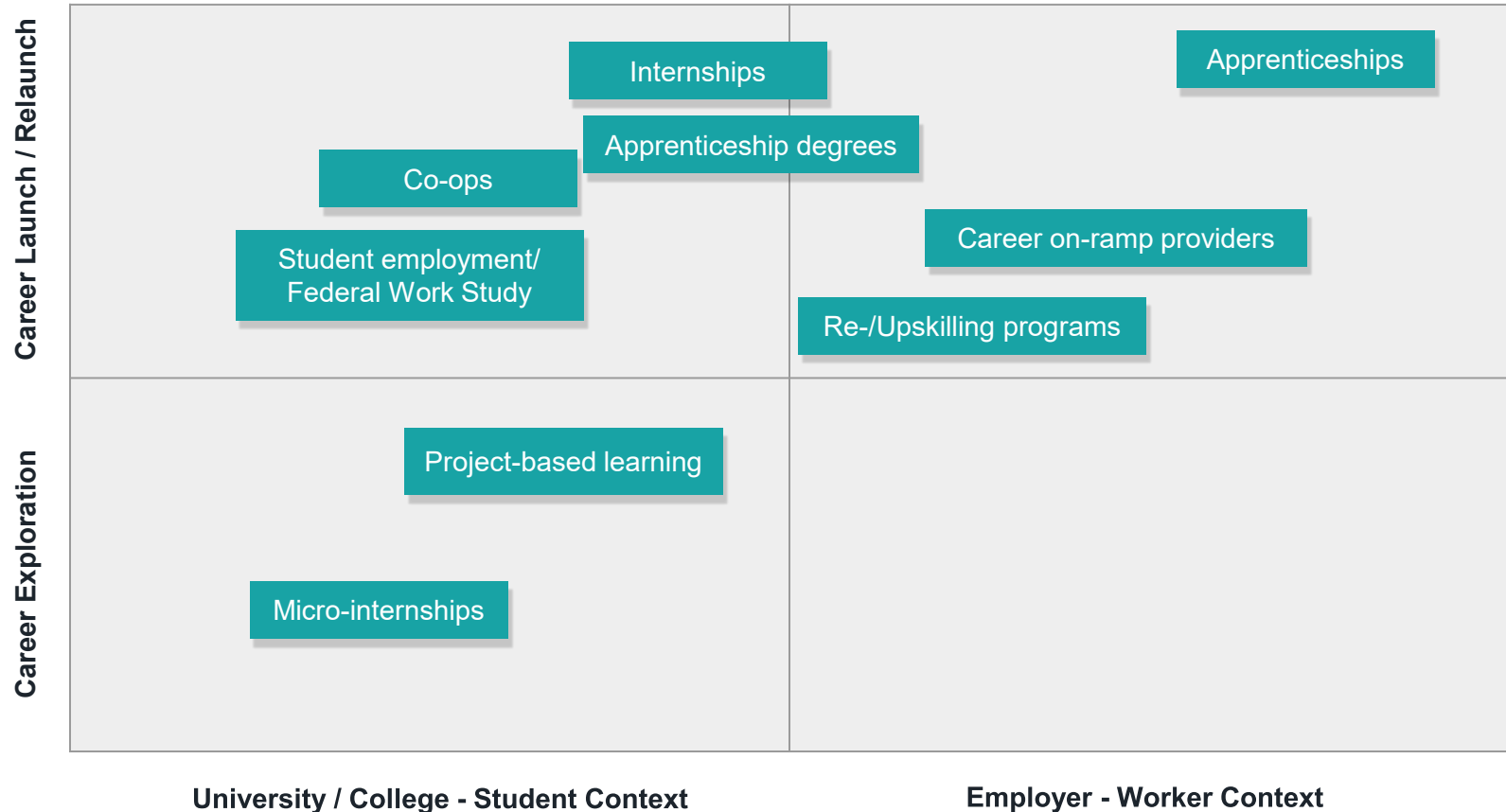
5 Employer Alignment

# OUR VISION

All learners should have access to work-based learning experiences, including paid internships and apprenticeships, that help connect their education to their career aspirations.

# Work-Based Learning Models & Best Practices

# Institutions and employers offer multiple WBL models



# Students are finding value across WBL models

Please rate the extent to which your experience makes you a **stronger candidate for the kind of job you want**

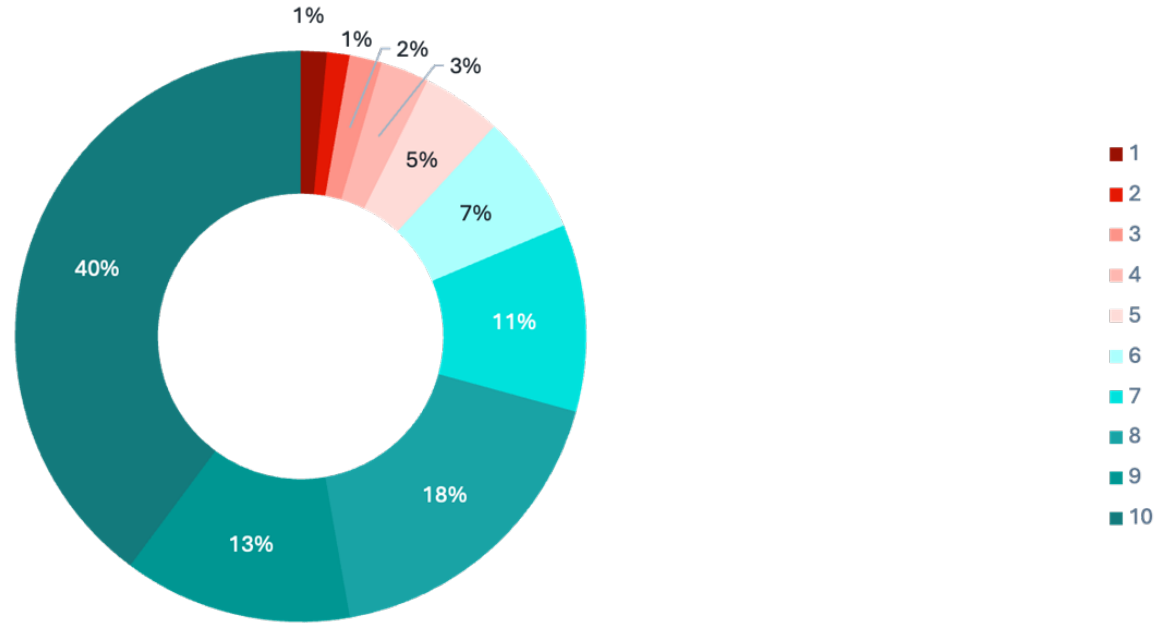
Use a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = *Not At All* and 10 = *A Great Deal*



# And believe they will be a stronger candidate as a result

Please rate the extent to which your experience makes you a **stronger candidate for the kind of job you want**

Use a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = *Not At All* and 10 = *A Great Deal*





# Key elements of quality WBL models

- **Pay:** The gold standard is an employer-paid, quality internship or work-based learning experience that is both affordable and accessible to a wide range of students.
- **Credit:** Ideally, all internships and work-based learning experiences should be for credit and/or embedded into a course and aligned to the student's major and field of study.
- **Mentorship & coaching:** Students should have supervised, human-supported mentorship and coaching from both the educational institution and the employer that includes guidance, feedback, and career planning.
- **Skills and competencies:** Internships and work-based learning experiences should provide in-demand, transferable skills and related disciplinary knowledge that connect to a student's education and career goals, as well as their talents and interests.
- **Accessibility:** Internships and work-based learning experiences should be designed so they are accessible to all interested individuals, regardless of the financial or logistical barriers they face.
- **Employer engagement:** Quality internship and work-based learning opportunities are sourced from and designed by employers with current or future workforce needs in mind.

# Impact of Internships for Students

# TALENT DISRUPTED

College Graduates, Underemployment,  
and the Way Forward

FEBRUARY 2024

## Research Question

To what extent does a terminal bachelor's degree provide access to a different set of jobs and careers than someone would be able to get with less education?

# Students who participated in a paid internship are more likely to find jobs requiring their degree and be satisfied with those jobs and career progress

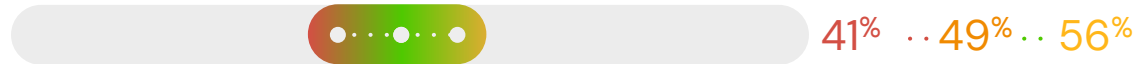
FIRST JOB REQUIRED A DEGREE



SATISFACTION WITH FIRST JOB



SATISFACTION WITH PROGRESS  
TOWARD LONG TERM CAREER GOALS



- No Internship
- Unpaid Internship
- Paid Internship

## Internships are proven to launch students into more successful first jobs

Students who participate in internships are less likely to face underemployment

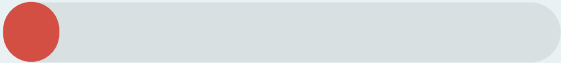
- **49% lower odds of underemployment for graduates with internships than those without internships**, controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and institutional characteristics constant
- Consistently lower rates of underemployment **across degree fields for graduates** with internships
- **\$3,096 earnings boost one-year post-graduation, growing to a \$7,500 earnings boost four-years post-graduation** is associated with having a paid internship, controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and field of study.



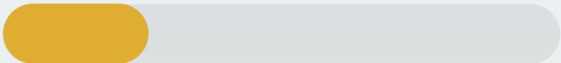
# Barriers to Expanding Access

# Only 1 in 4 Graduates Complete a Paid Internship

Nationally, only about a quarter of students at four-year institutions and 10 percent of students at two-year institutions participated in a paid internship.



NATIONAL TWO-YEAR: **10%**

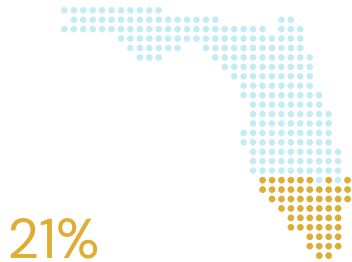


NATIONAL FOUR-YEAR: **26%**



25%

CALIFORNIA FOUR-YEAR



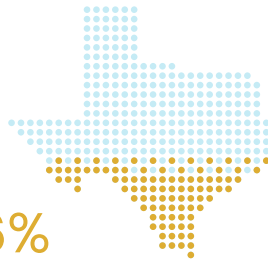
21%

FLORIDA FOUR-YEAR



24%

NEW YORK FOUR-YEAR



26%

TEXAS FOUR-YEAR

Leading

61-100%

Advanced

41-60%

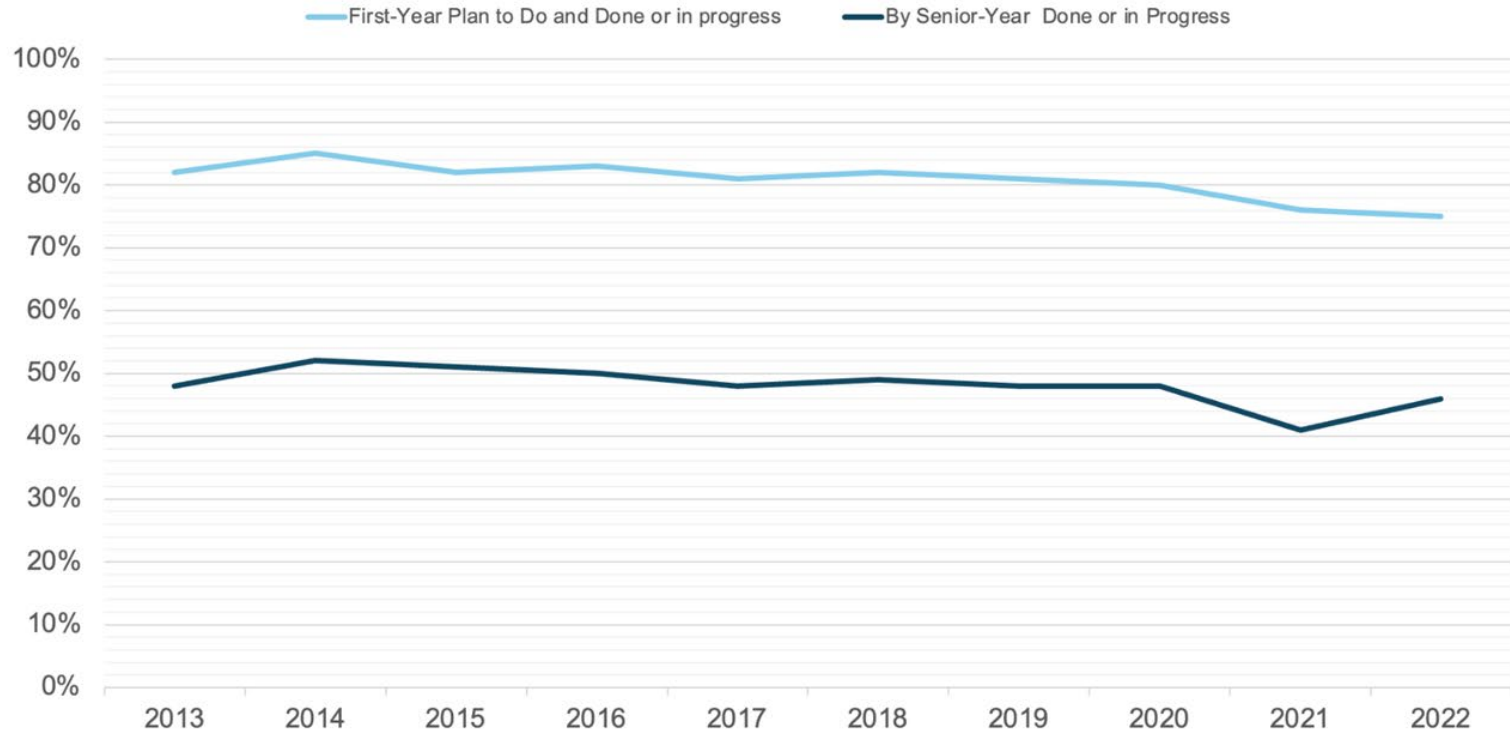
Developing

21-40%

Foundational

0-20%

# The participation - interest gap has been consistent



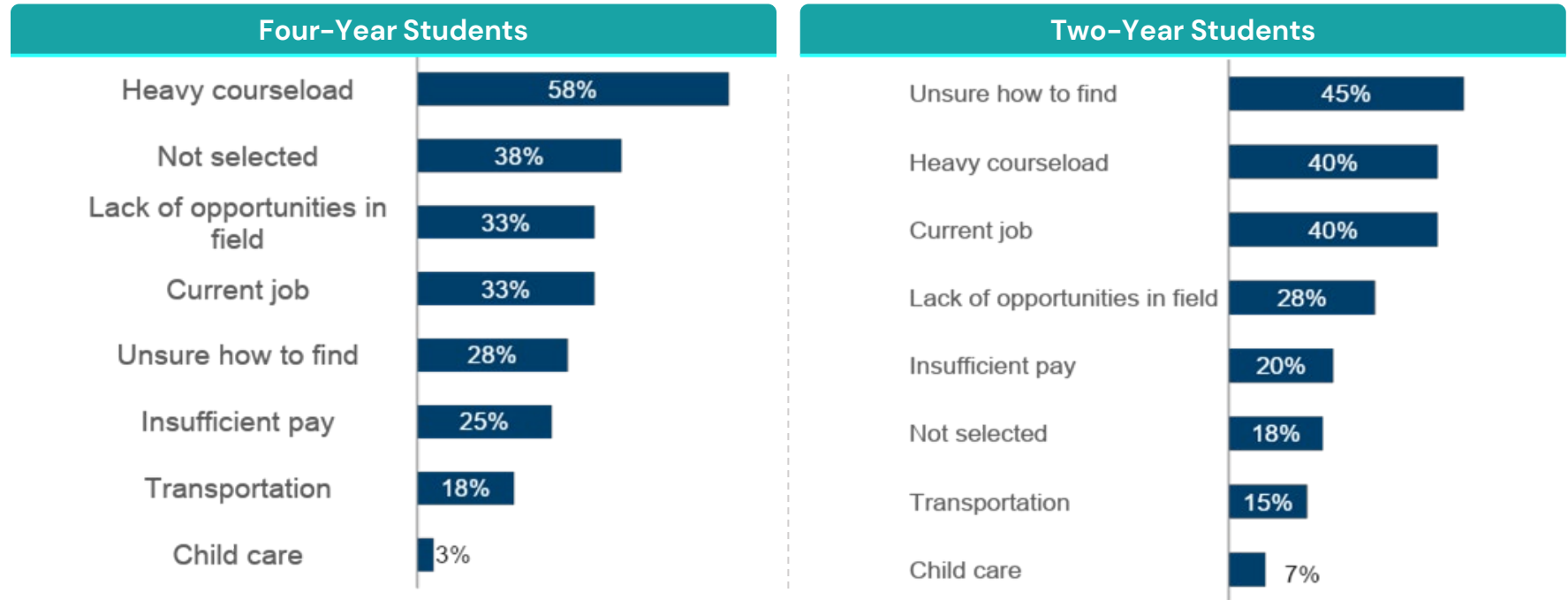
Source: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2013-2022.

n= 2013: 115,420; 2014: 164,146; 2015: 138,965; 2016: 138,245; 2017: 138,117; 2018: 129,043; 2019: 133,152; 2020: 152,337; 2021: 89,758; 2022: 108,443.



# Part of the gap is driven by students struggling to find internships or having adequate time to participate

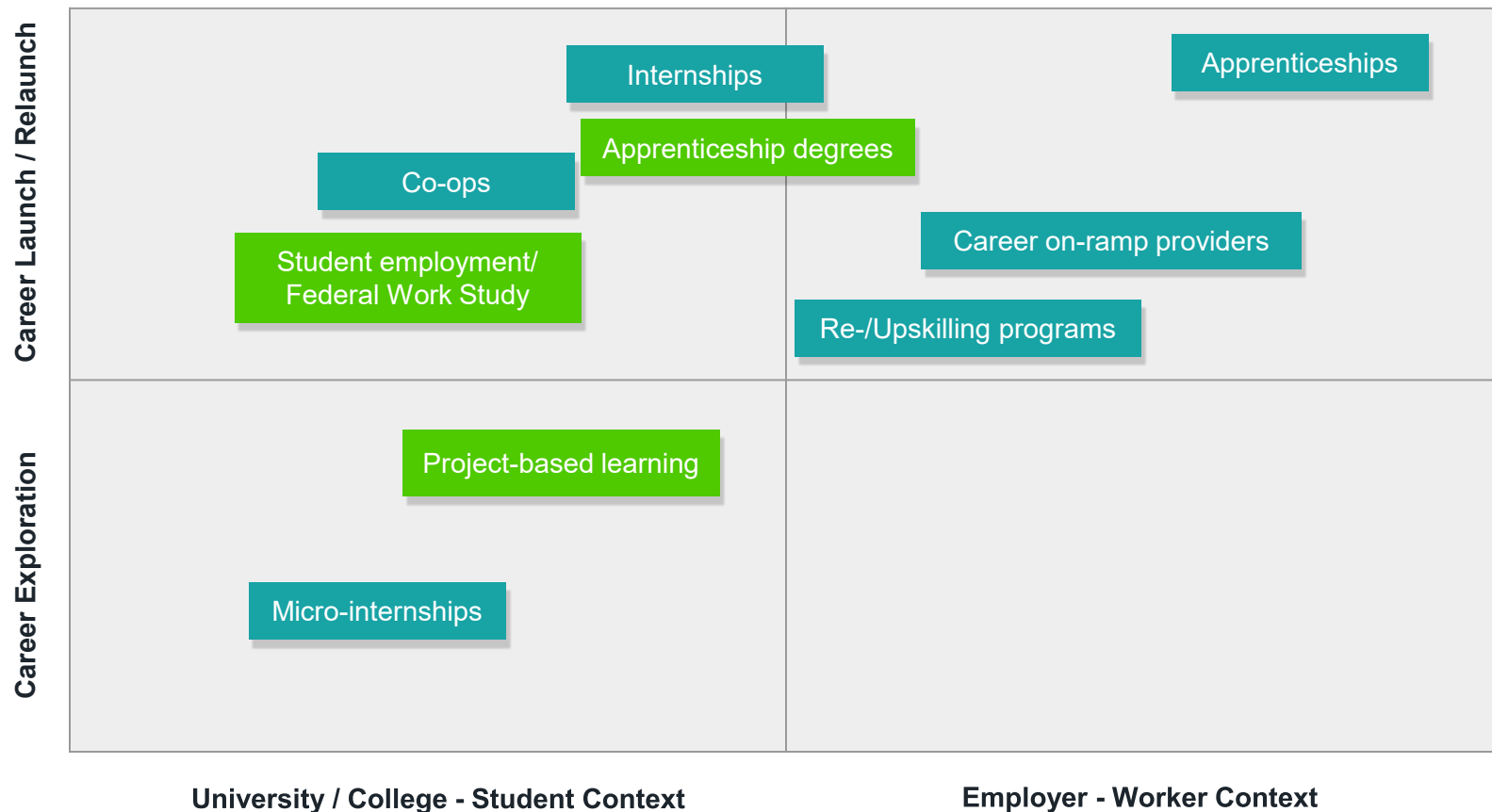
Reasons students were unable to participate in an internship



Source: Strada Education Foundation: National Survey of College Internships 2023, Weighted two-year n= 2531, four-year n=2824

# **Innovative Models and States: A National Lens**

# Newer models are gaining traction nationally



# Project Based Learning: The Council of Independent Colleges

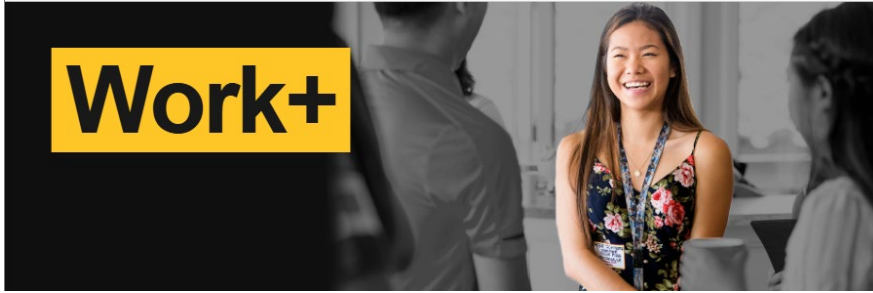


## Council of Independent Colleges Launches Consortium for Work-Based Learning



- **Who:** 25 CIC member institutions
- **What:** Partnered with Riipen to integrate work-based learning opportunities into 375 courses led by 125 faculty members
- **Goal:** Equip up to 11,250 liberal arts students with in-demand skills through employer projects

# Student Employment: ASU Work+



- **Who:** Arizona State University in partnership with The Work+ Collective Institute
- **What:** Integrated career readiness support into 1,000s of existing, paid student jobs
- **Goal:** Enable students to simultaneously gain professional work experience and better articulate their transferable skills, while earning a wage

## The Opportunity

**<50%**

Less than half of college graduates succeed in finding purposeful work (Gallup)

**11%**

Only 11 percent of business leaders strongly agreed that college graduates have the skills employers need (Gallup)

**7/10**

7 out of 10 ASU students work while at school

# Apprenticeship Degree: Reach University

- **Who:** Reach University in partnership with 419+ school partners
- **What:** Deliver Apprenticeship Degree programs, which interconnect employers, state agencies, and higher education institutions so that participants earn a degree while completing a teaching apprenticeship
- **Goal:** Increase access to highly in-demand teaching careers that require a degree



## Efficiency

Half of the learning arises from on-the-job work.



## Flexibility

Seminars/tutorials are held after work on nights and weekends.



## Relevance

Curriculum is 100% job-embedded, connecting theory with practice.



## Affordability

Learners are paid to earn a degree or certificate and take on zero student debt.



## Professional Capital

Grads ascend within their workplace to fill professional vacancies.

# State Spotlight: Louisiana Board of Regents is focused on expanding WBL into new fields of study



## Learnings



This initiative was initially supported with a \$400K grant from Strada

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LA Board of Regents provides guidance on evidence-based models (e.g. paid internships) but allows degree programs flexibility in design  
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The agency serves as a partner in the transformation and convenes institutions for peer learning, sets guiding policy, collects data, and measures results  
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Board of Regents is now developing a stronger connection to the business community directly, with plans to make changes to degree programs only in response to labor market need and business voice



## Challenge

The Louisiana Board of Regents was seeking a way to encourage institutions to embed WBL into fields of study that do not currently require it for graduation.



## Bold Action

The Board of Regents launched an RFP process to solicit proposals from public institutions in the state committed to building new work-based learning opportunities. Two- and four-year institutions, big, small, rural, and urban, submitted applications. Ultimately, 19 degree programs at 15 institutions were selected. Each is now in the process of embedding different types of work-based learning into their curricular offerings.

# State Spotlight: Pennsylvania is expanding different forms of WBL across the PASSHE system



## Learnings



PASSHE's initiative was initially supported with a \$750K grant from Strada; additional \$400k secured from other funders in last 12 months

Develop common definitions and reporting templates across universities to capture opportunities for collaboration & learning

Involve university & academic leadership in developing the strategy for building employer partnerships; implement with a cross-functional team at each university

Integrate career services into first year experience to ensure all students maximize university's assets & social capital



## Challenge

The PASSHE system, one of the largest providers of higher education in the Commonwealth with over 80,000 students, is piloting models for providing students with high quality work-based learning opportunities across its 10, state-owned, small and mid-sized institutions.



## Bold Action

Each pilot university (a total of 5) is leveraging its assets to implement different WBL models:

- Federal Work Study redesign, aligned with student major/career interests and NACE competencies
- Faculty champions & employers are co-creating course elements
- Career services is being integrated into first year experience
- Progressive WBL framework built into majors, to engage students from freshman to senior year
- In development: For-credit course to support humanities majors in understanding and promoting their competencies/skills/value in the job market



# Key action steps and progress in Virginia

## State leaders

- ☐ Set statewide goal for WBL.
- ☐ Measure baseline and determine data collection approach.
- ☐ Convene institutional and employer champions who will lead the way.
- ☐ Create intermediary and technology infrastructure that simplifies employer engagement.



## Employers

- ☐ Convene employers by region and industry to establish needs and commitments.
- ☐ Embed work-based learning into business goals and talent pipeline strategies.
- ☐ Ensure experiences of value by offering pay, strong supervision, skill development, and mentoring.
- ☐ Consider both traditional and "lower dose" models (e.g. micro-internships) to meet varying needs.



## Educators and Institutional Leaders

- ☐ Design a plan for every student to obtain at least one type of work-based learning experience.
- ☐ Prepare students to secure and thrive in WBL.
- ☐ Designate specific staff and faculty capacity to focus on work-based learning.



# Q & A