

**Ignite the Journey:
Using a Post-Graduation Success
Perspective to Transform Lives**

**Rural Guided Pathways Institute #3:
Workshop for K-12 Partners**



**NATIONAL
CENTER FOR
INQUIRY &
IMPROVEMENT**

**Rob Johnstone
March 12, 2026**

About NCII

Authentic, large-scale improvement begins with colleges rethinking how their policies, programs, and services come together to create the optimal student experience.

Focus Areas:

- **Guided Pathways**
- **Connection to Living Wage Employment**
- **Leadership Development**
- **Student Financial Stability**



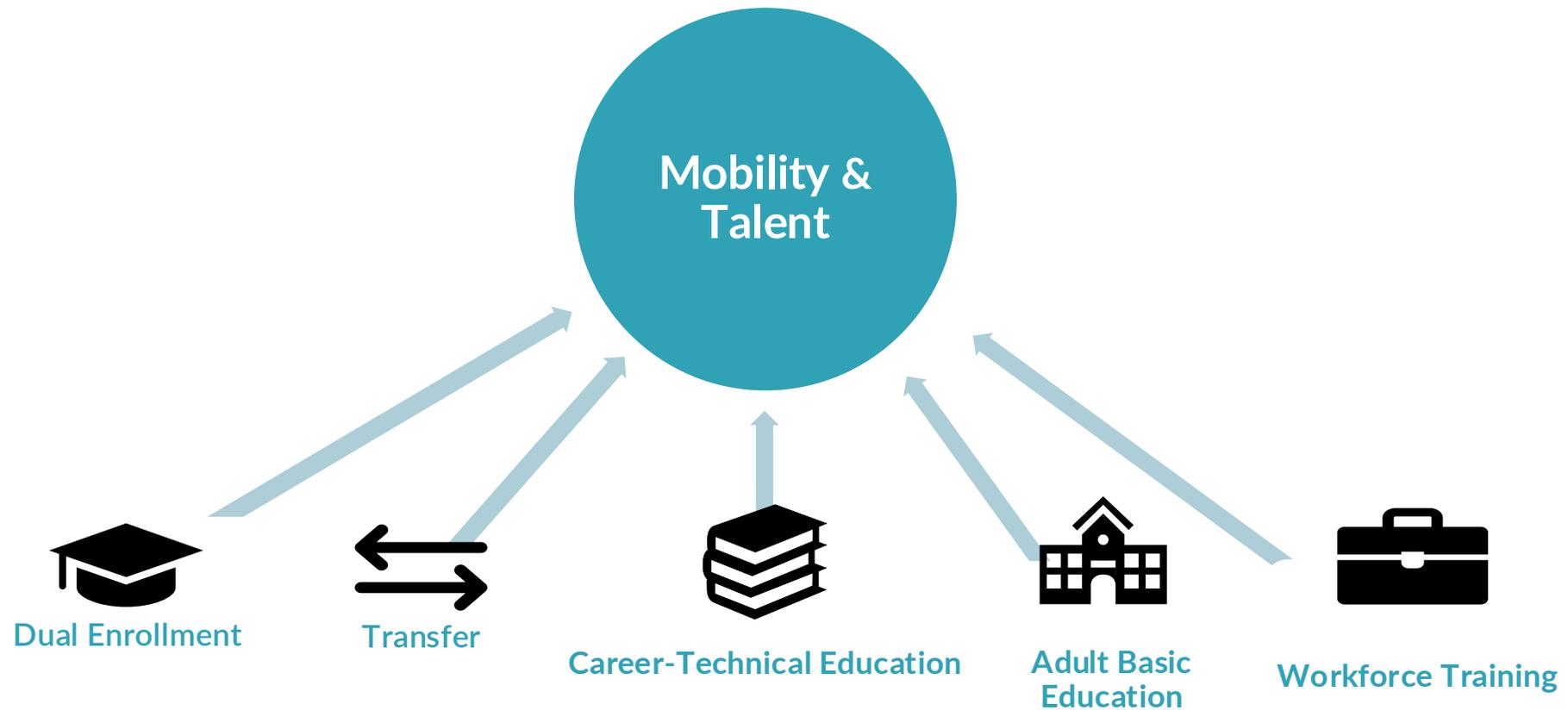
Session Agenda

- **Setting the Table for a Post-Graduation Success Lens**
- **NCII's Approach to Sharing Labor Market Data**
- **Scratching the Surface – Exploring Key Labor Market Data Slides at the 28 Project Colleges**
- **Wrap-up & Next Steps**



Section 1
More Essential Than Ever:
**Grounding Institutional Change Work in
Post-Graduation Success**

Community colleges are **more essential than ever** for their communities

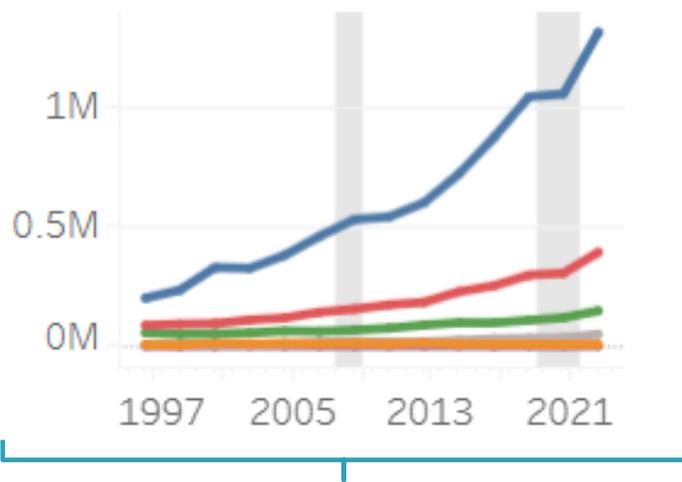


Community college enrollment decline ➡ Financial uncertainty

Fall Enrollment Trends by Sector and Age

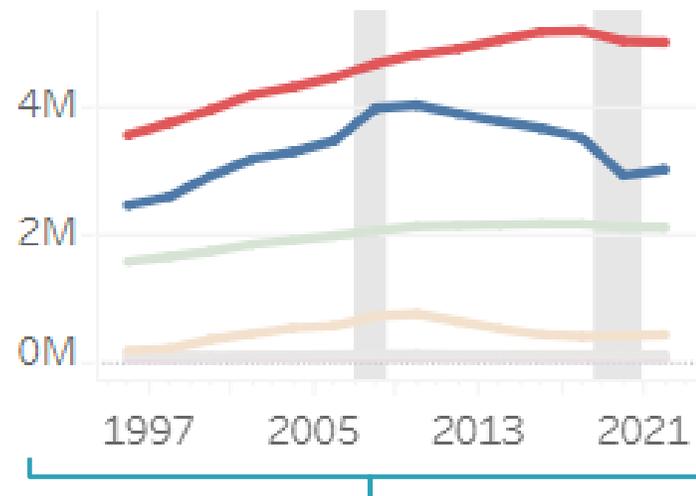
IPEDS Data, 1996-2023

Age: Under 18



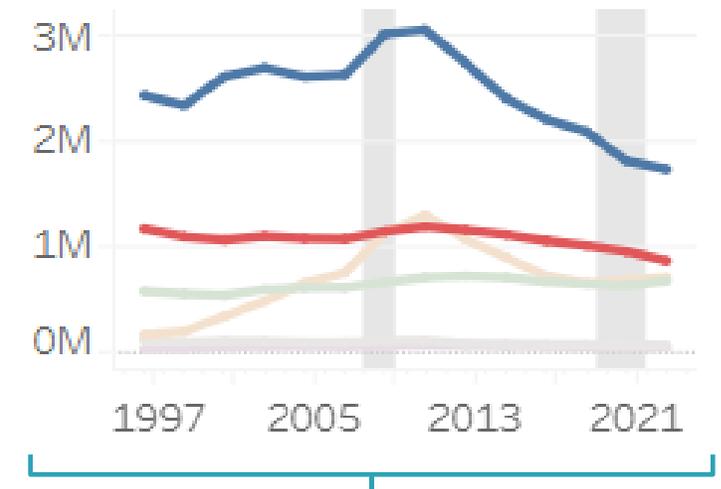
HS dual enrollment **only growing student segment**

Age 18-24



CCs have **lost market share** to public four-years

Age 25+



Older student enrollment at **historic lows**

■ Community colleges ■ Public four-years

Community College 3.0

Unlocking Opportunity Through Focusing on Post-College Success



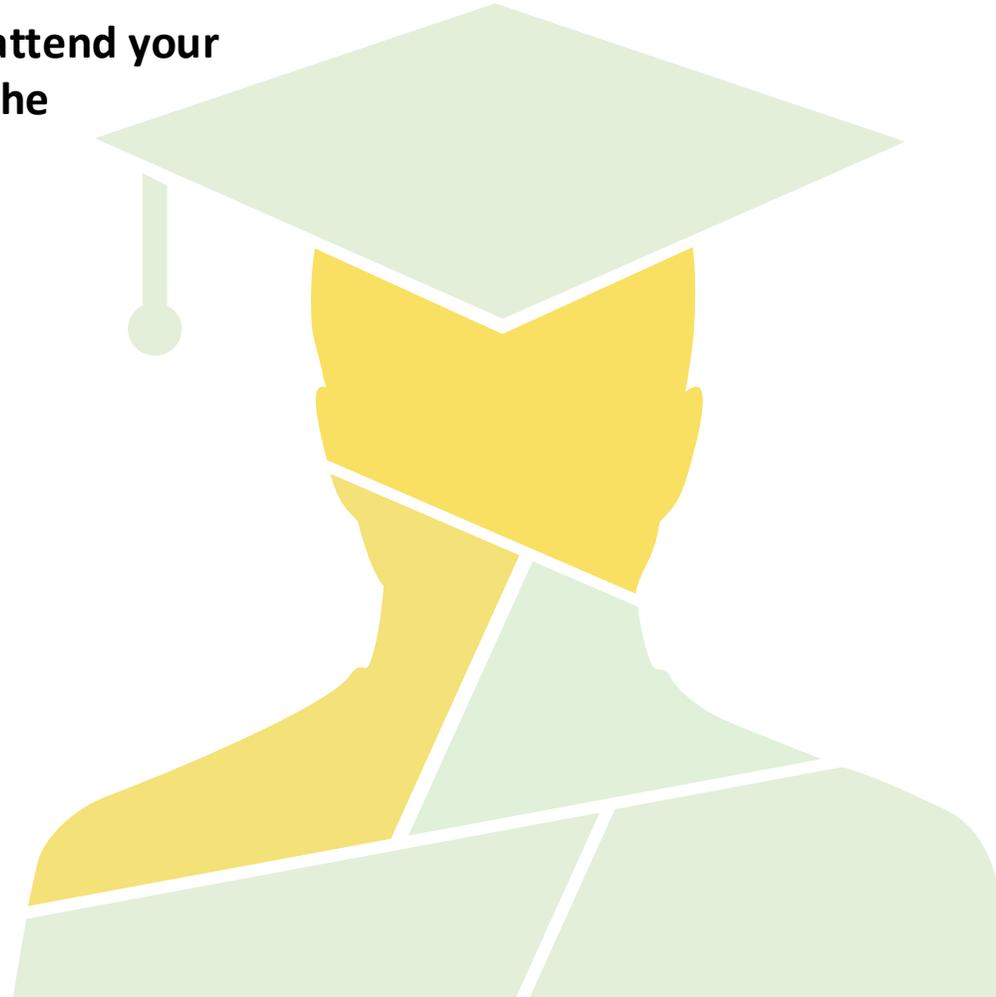
To our students...

It's true that to us higher education is about more than just economic mobility. But...

◆ What % of your students attend your college solely because of the love of learning?

◆ Doesn't mean liberal arts ed. isn't imp't. - might be more so

◆ Race & economic mobility – zip code analysis of net worth



◆ 98%+ of your students are "career focused"

◆ Economic mobility is particularly important to the lower half of the income spectrum

Our Value Proposition of Economic Mobility

If students are coming to us with a primary goal of advancing their quality of life and sustaining their families via economic mobility...



Then...

- We need to elevate the consideration of and strategy development around improving the post-graduation outcomes of our students in the workforce (and with transfer on the path to...)
- Doesn't diminish the other lenses with which we view CCs as important...but need to address the base of Maslow's need hierarchy for our students first...

Section 2: Introducing NCII's Labor Market Data Framework for College Improvement

Setting the Table...



The shift to a post-graduation success / community college 3.0 mindset requires college leaders and practitioners to delve into the ultimate success of their students via regional labor market data



For the past five years, NCI has worked to help colleges navigate the dizzying range of possibilities in accessing the data, the problems that can be addressed with the data, and how to infuse it into campus conversations and planning



NCI's helps colleges ground programs in labor market outcomes with support and structures for data exploration, design and implementation to make sure college work is current, applicable, and optimizes student success via employment outcomes

NCII's Labor Market Data Framework for College Improvement



Lens 1 - Grounding Change in Post-Graduation Success: Regional Labor Market Overview



Lens 2 - Starting with the End in Mind: Good Jobs in the Region



Lens 3 - Exploring Occupational Clusters in the Region: Jobs and Salaries in Top Clusters



Lens 4 - Mapping Occupational Pathways: Advancement from Entry-Level to Good Jobs in the Region



Lens 5 - Connecting College Programs to Career Opportunities



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Introduction to Labor Market Data Slides

NCII helps colleges ground their guided pathways work in students' post-graduation outcomes by...

- Looking at living-wage and *good job* data, customized to a college's service area.
- Exploring [Standard Occupational Classification](#) (SOC) codes used to classify workers into occupational categories.
- Adjusting data based on the region's cost-of-living (COL) index.

Counties included in your regional data: 134 counties covering all 28 Rural GP college service areas

Regional COL Index: 100.7 (1% above the national average)

All data from Lightcast Analyst™ for most current year available (2025)



Living Wages

- A “living wage” is dependent on a variety of factors, including cost-of-living adjustments, but even more importantly, family size and dynamics
- For individual students, advisors & faculty can use the MIT Living Wage Calculator available at the county level [here](#)
- In Ohio, the living wage estimates vary by family size and number of wage earners:
 - 1 adult, 0 children = \$42,000
 - 1 adult, 1 child = \$78,000
 - 2 adults, 3 children (1 adult working) = \$91,000
 - 2 adults, 3 children (2 adults working) = \$129,000 total



NCII's Salary Range Typology

Low Wage

Good Job*

COL-Adjusted Salary Range

\$0K - \$35K

\$35K - \$50K

\$50K - \$65K

Over \$65K

Actual Salary Range in All 28 Rural Colleges' Service Areas

\$0K - \$35K

\$35K - \$50K

\$50K - \$65K

Over \$65K

Key Cutoffs

\$50,000 COL = \$50,000 Actual

\$65,000 COL = \$65,000 Actual

***Note:**
Georgetown's CEW refers to a "good job" as having a salary of \$74K+ for workers aged 25-44; NCII's \$65K+ salary range is the starting point for these jobs

Section 3: Key Insight from the Labor Market

Lens 1 - Grounding Change in Post-Graduation Success: Regional Labor Market Overview

Lens 1. Grounding Change in Post-Graduation Success: Regional Labor Market Overview

Issues Addressed

- Engaging the entire college community in centering a post-graduation success mindset, expanding the focus beyond access and completion.
- Creating a baseline understanding of key regional labor market data to connect student success efforts to what happens after students complete certificates, degrees, and/or transfer.
- Mobilizing the institution for design, implementation, and improvement focused on students' post-graduation outcomes.

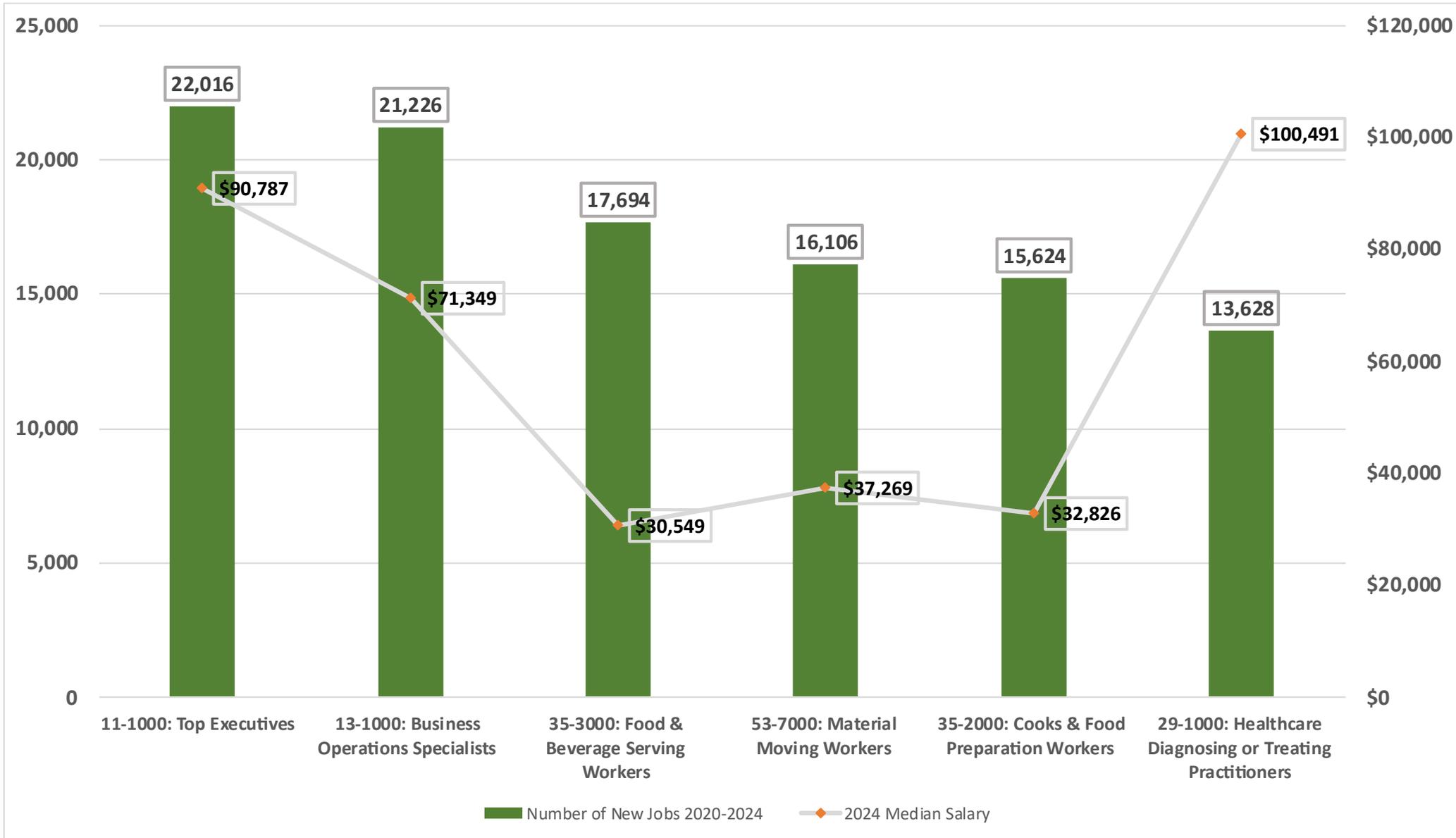
#1.1: What 5 Occupations had the Most Jobs in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas in 2024?

SOC	Description	2024 Jobs	Median Salary	COL Median Salary
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	294,176	\$43,523	\$43,220
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	257,409	\$32,028	\$31,805
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	230,250	\$39,893	\$39,616
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	227,923	\$34,958	\$34,715
51-0000	Production Occupations	186,797	\$44,427	\$44,118
	All Two-Digit Occupations	2,632,745		

Note:
Adjusted COL Index in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas is 100.7

Occupations based on Two-Digit SOC codes, of which there are 22

#1.6: What Occupations Had the Greatest Job Growth in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas from 2020 to 2024?



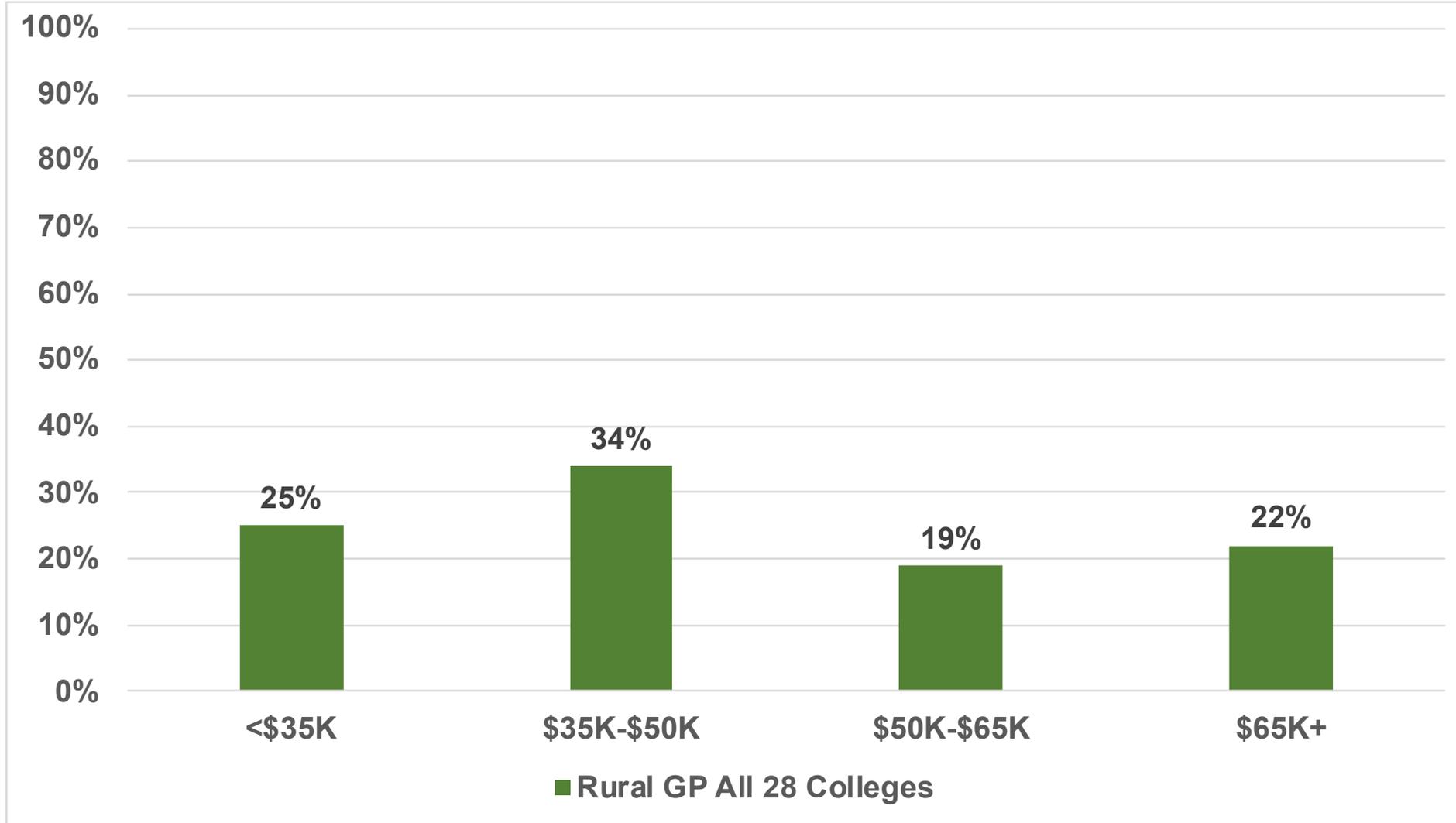
Note:
Adjusted COL Index in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas is 100.7

A "Good Job" has a Median COL-Adjusted Salary of \$65K+ which equates to \$65K+ in this region

Occupations Based on Three-Digit SOC codes, of which there are about 100



#1.10: What Percentage of Workers in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas are in Each COL-Adjusted Salary Range?

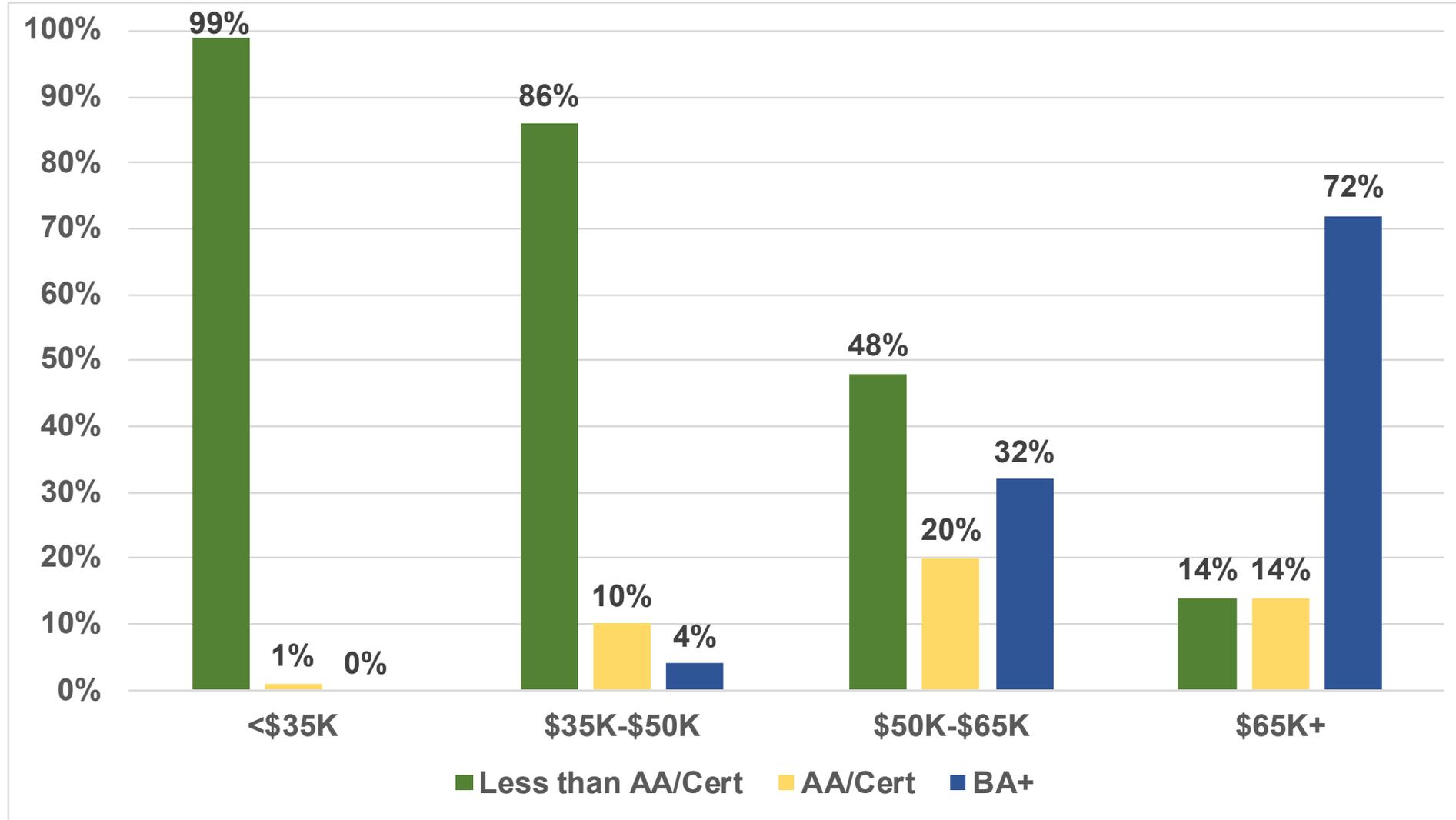


Note:
Adjusted COL Index in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas is 100.7

A "Good Job" has a Median COL-Adjusted Salary of \$65K+

Level of Analysis is Six-Digit SOC Codes, of which there are about 800

#1.11: What Level of Education Do People Need to Get Jobs in Different Salary Ranges in All 28 Rural GP Colleges' Service Areas?



Note:
Adjusted COL
Index in All 28
Rural GP
Colleges' Service
Areas is 100.7

A "Good Job"
has a Median
COL-Adjusted
Salary of \$65K+

Level of Analysis
is Six-Digit SOC
Codes, of which
there are about
800

Lens 2 - Starting with the End in Mind

Lens 2. Starting with the End in Mind: Good Jobs in the Region

- **Issues Addressed**

- Deepening awareness of the connection between a community college education and good jobs.
- Zeroing in on good jobs students can get with an associate degree/certificate or bachelor's degree post transfer.
- Highlighting the opportunity to develop educational pathways that move front-line workers in low-wage employment to good jobs as front-line supervisors (across multiple occupational clusters).

#2.3: What are the Occupations that Lead to “Good Jobs” with the Most Openings in All 28 Rural GP Colleges?

SOC	Description	2024 Openings	Median Salary	Concentration Index
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	6,117	\$89,223	0.97
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,207	\$52,712	1.21
29-1141	Registered Nurses	3,747	\$90,527	0.95
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office & Admin Workers	2,475	\$62,008	0.92
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed	2,160	\$60,234	1.22
41-4012	Sales Reps, Wholesale & Manufacturing, non-Tech/Sci	2,019	\$63,721	0.85
13-2011	Accountants & Auditors	1,834	\$74,631	0.74
47-2111	Electricians	1,747	\$59,810	1.12

Notes:

1. Adjusted COL Index in All 28 Rural GP Colleges is 100.7

2. A “Good Job” has a Median COL-Adjusted Salary of \$65K+ which equates to \$65K+ in this region; min salary \$50K to be included on this slide

3. Occupations are based on Six-Digit SOC codes, of which there are about 850; a minimum of 100 jobs in SOC code to be included on the list.

#2.5: Top 8 Jobs in Region by Number of Openings for “Good Jobs”, No Long-Term Certificate or AA+ Degree Typically Needed

Occupation	Median Salary	2024 Jobs	2028 Jobs	2024 Openings	Growth 2024-2028
43-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Office & Admin Workers	\$62,008	23,323	23,928	2,475	3%
41-4012: Sales Reps, Wholesale & Manufacturing, non-Tech/Sci	\$63,721	18,521	19,700	2,019	6%
47-2111: Electricians	\$59,810	14,050	15,540	1,747	11%
41-3091: Sales Reps, Services, Except Adv, Ins, Financial & Travel	\$60,101	12,840	13,979	1,602	9%
51-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	\$66,446	14,178	14,913	1,592	5%
47-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Construction & Extraction	\$73,203	15,003	16,083	1,522	7%
47-2073: Operating Engineers & Construction Equipment Operators	\$54,288	11,677	12,259	1,206	5%
47-2031: Carpenters	\$52,336	11,796	12,508	1,172	6%

Notes:

1. A “Good Job” has a Median COL-Adjusted Salary of \$65K+ which equates to \$65K+ in this region; min salary \$50K to be included on this slide

2. Occupations are based on Six-Digit SOC codes, of which there are about 850

3. These occupations typically require do not require further education past a high school degree

#2.6: Top 8 Jobs in Region by Number of Openings for “Good Jobs”, Associate Degree or Long-Term Certificate Typically Needed

Occupation	Median Salary	2024 Jobs	2028 Jobs	2024 Openings	Growth 2024-2028
53-3032: Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$52,712	42,596	44,928	5,207	5%
29-1141: Registered Nurses	\$90,527	53,260	55,877	3,747	5%
29-2061: Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$60,783	13,196	13,480	1,204	2%
49-9021: HVAC Mechanics & Installers	\$54,072	7,255	7,956	844	10%
33-2011: Firefighters	\$54,743	7,123	7,511	652	5%
23-2011: Paralegals and Legal Assistants	\$53,236	3,901	3,991	445	2%
31-2021: Physical Therapist Assistants	\$67,864	2,325	2,573	423	11%
29-1292: Dental Hygienists	\$92,285	3,699	3,978	339	8%

Notes:

1. A “Good Job” has a Median COL-Adjusted Salary of \$65K+ which equates to \$65K+ in this region; min salary \$50K to be included on this slide

2. Occupations are based on Six-Digit SOC codes, of which there are about 850

3. These occupations typically require an AA degree or a long-term certificate

#2.11: Wage Gains between Top 8 Supervisor Jobs and Top Front-Line Jobs

Occupation (FLS = First Line Supervisors)	Median Salary	* SOC for Largest feeder Job	Feeder Job Med. Salary	** Gain
35-1012: First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep & Serving Workers	\$38,459	35-2021: Food Preparation Workers	\$31,474	\$6,985
41-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	\$44,481	41-2031: Retail Salespersons	\$32,307	\$12,174
43-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Office & Admin Workers	\$62,008	43-6014: Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, General	\$43,016	\$18,992
47-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Construction & Extraction	\$73,203	47-2061: Construction Laborers	\$42,534	\$30,669
51-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	\$66,446	51-9111: Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	\$39,791	\$26,655
49-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	\$74,092	49-9071: Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	\$46,974	\$27,118
53-1047: First-Line Supervisors of Transport & Material Moving Workers	\$58,645	53-7062: Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	\$37,508	\$21,137
37-1011: First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping & Janitorial	\$46,620	37-2011: Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	\$34,766	\$11,854

Notes:

- Adjusted COL Index in All 28 Rural GP Colleges is 100.7
- Occupations are based on Six-Digit SOC codes
- There are 19 First Line Supervisor SOC codes; these are the 8 with the greatest number of jobs in 2024 in the region

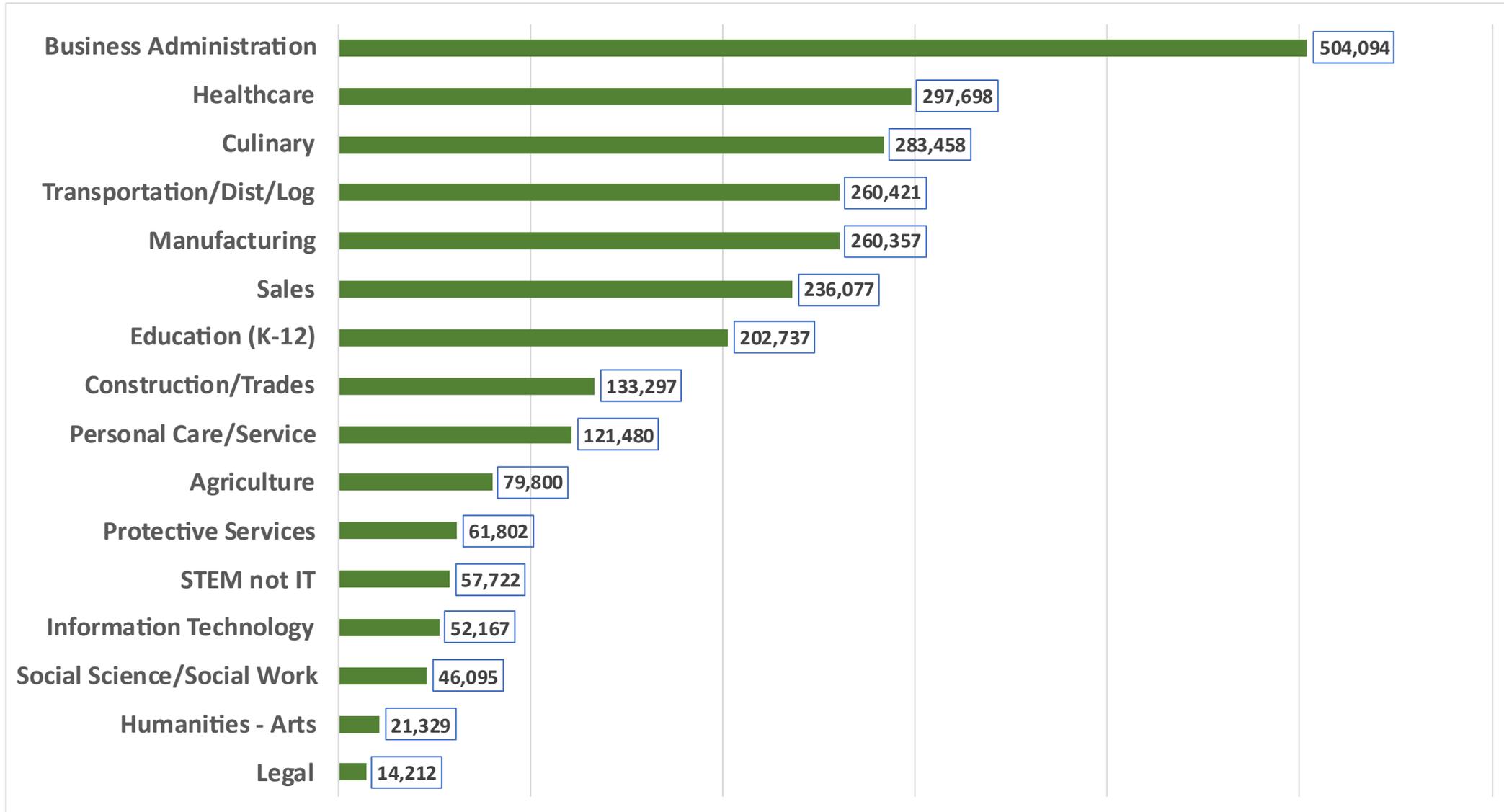
Lens 3 - Exploring Occupational Clusters: Jobs and Salaries in Top Clusters

Lens 3. Exploring Occupational Clusters in the Region: Jobs and Salaries in Top Clusters

Issues Addressed

- Understanding the jobs in the region's top occupational clusters, including the demand for those jobs and how they pay.
- Previewing opportunities to develop educational pathways that move graduates from low-wage employment to good jobs in an occupational cluster.
- Exploring how to...
 - Share complicated info on jobs, wages, and educational paths to good jobs with students, personnel, and the community.
 - Boost advisor capacity to infuse this info across students' entire college experience.

#3.1: What Career Fields Have the Most Workers in them in All 28 Rural GP Colleges?

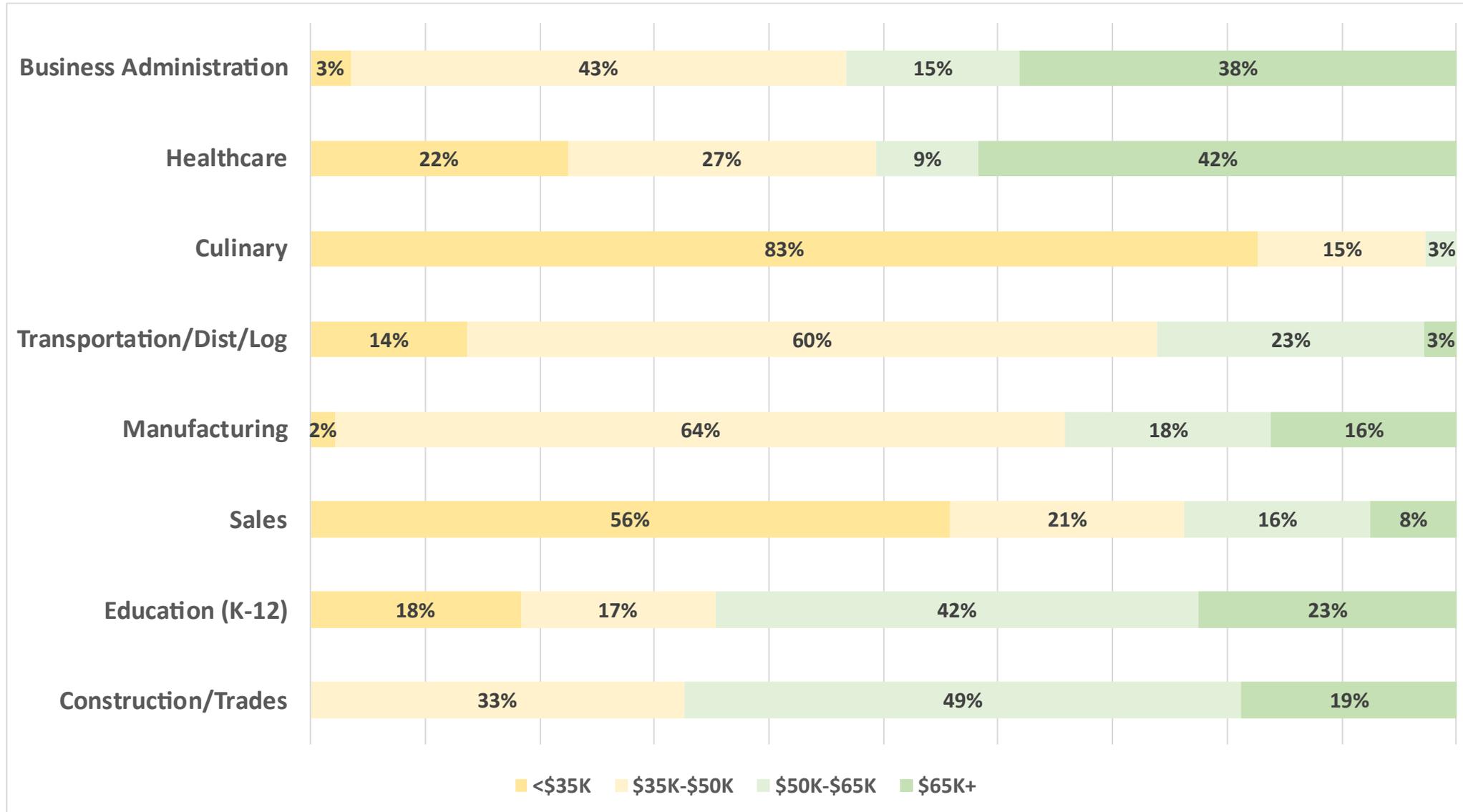


Notes:

NCII has coded these career areas from the 800+ Six-Digit SOC Codes

Note that these fields represent where workers are employed, not their academic program.

#3.2: What is the Percentage of Workers in Each COL-Adjusted Salary Band for the Top Eight Career Fields in All 28 Rural GP Colleges?



Notes:

NCII has coded these career areas from the 800+ Six-Digit SOC Codes

Note that these fields represent where workers are employed, not their academic program.

#3.5: Top 5 Jobs in Each COL-Adjusted Salary Range in All 28 Rural GP Colleges – Business

Less than \$35K

1. Receptionists & Information Clerks - 15,291
2. Library Assistants, Clerical - 2,042

1. Office Clerks, General - 42,889
2. Customer Service Representatives - 36,715
3. Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, General - 28,995
4. Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks - 26,901
5. Shipping, Receiving & Inventory Clerks - 14,772

\$35K to \$50K

\$50K to \$65K

1. First-Line Supervisors of Office & Admin Workers - 23,323
2. Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists - 8,649
3. Training & Development Specialists - 6,319
4. Executive Secretaries & Executive Admin Assistants - 5,719
5. Postal Service Mail Carriers - 5,649

1. General & Operations Managers - 59,311
2. Accountants & Auditors - 18,522
3. Business Operations Specialists, All Other - 14,635
4. Project Management Specialists - 12,422
5. Human Resources Specialists - 11,937

More than \$65K

Notes:

Using 6-digit SOC codes, of which there are 800+

COL Index is 100.7

#3.9: Top 5 Jobs in Each COL-Adjusted Salary Range in All 28 Rural GP Colleges – Healthcare

Less than \$35K

1. Home Health & Personal Care Aides - 63,246
2. Veterinary Assistants & Laboratory Animal Caretakers - 2,123
3. Physical Therapist Aides - 816
4. Dietetic Technicians - 544

1. Nursing Assistants - 25,807
2. Medical Assistants - 14,040
3. Pharmacy Technicians - 8,228
4. Dental Assistants - 6,639
5. Emergency Medical Technicians - 3,663

\$35K to \$50K

\$50K to \$65K

1. Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses - 13,196
2. Clinical Laboratory Technologists & Technicians - 4,267
3. Paramedics - 2,204
4. Surgical Technologists - 1,878
5. Massage Therapists - 1,595

1. Registered Nurses - 53,260
2. Medical & Health Services Managers - 9,369
3. Nurse Practitioners - 5,135
4. Pharmacists - 5,112
5. Physicians, All Other - 5,098

More than \$65K

Notes:

Using 6-digit SOC codes, of which there are 800+

COL Index is 100.7

If <5 listed there are no more jobs with 10+ workers in category

#3.12: Top 5 Jobs in Each COL-Adjusted Salary Range in All 28 Rural GP Colleges – Manufacturing

Less than \$35K

1. Laundry & Dry-Cleaning Workers - 3,450
2. Sewing Machine Operators - 1,605
3. Pressers, Textile, Garment & Related Materials - 307
4. Shoe & Leather Workers & Repairers - 220
5. Textile Bleaching & Dyeing Machine Operators & Tenders - 97

1. Miscellaneous Assemblers & Fabricators - 30,999
2. Maintenance & Repair Workers, General - 28,777
3. Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers - 11,028
4. Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers - 10,719
5. Packaging & Filling Machine Operators & Tenders - 7,741

\$35K to \$50K

\$50K to \$65K

1. Industrial Machinery Mechanics - 9,596
2. HVAC Mechanics & Installers. - 7,255
3. Machinists - 5,343
4. Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines - 4,305
5. Water & Wastewater Treatment Plant & System Operators - 3,529

1. First-Line Supervisors of Production & Operating Workers - 14,178
2. First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers & Repairers - 11,149
3. Industrial Production Managers - 4,839
4. Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers - 2,552
5. Facilities Managers - 2,100

More than \$65K

Notes:

Using 6-digit SOC codes, of which there are 800+

COL Index is 100.7

If <5 listed there are no more jobs with 10+ workers in category

Lens 5: Connecting College Programs to Career Opportunities

Lens 5. Connecting College Programs to Career Opportunities

Issues Addressed

For select community college programs...

- Identify the top related jobs and review their education requirements, median salary, job count, 5-year outlook, current openings, and expected growth
- Zero in on select good jobs to identify top employers in the region, the job titles they are hiring for, and the skills they are seeking
- Exploring the competition from other educational institutions in the region to determine if starting or expanding a program is warranted

5.3: Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics Program: Select Good Jobs Related to the Program

Source: Lightcast™ for Salt Lake County

**Mobile Heavy Equipment
Mechanics Program
(CIP Codes 47.0302)**

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graph LR; A([Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics Program (CIP Codes 47.0302)]) --> B[49-3031: Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists]; A --> C[49-3042: Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines];
```

**49-3031: Bus and Truck Mechanics
and Diesel Engine Specialists**
2025 Jobs = 1,506
Job Postings in Last Year = 292
Median Salary = \$64,000

**49-3042: Mobile Heavy Equipment
Mechanics, Except Engines**
2025 Jobs = 1,021
Job Postings in Last Year = 470
Median Salary = \$66,000

5.4. Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics Program: Top Employers and Job Titles for Good Jobs

Source: Lightcast™ for Salt Lake County

COL Index = 110.0

Unique Postings Last 12 months = 762;
3/1/25 – 2/28/26

Rank	Employer	Unique Openings Last 12 Months
1	Summit Materials	29
2	GPAC	25
3	Rush Enterprises	19
4	Arnold Machinery Company	18
5	Penske	18
6	RDO Equipment	13
7	Staker Parson Companies	13
8	Herc Rentals	13

Rank	Job Title	Unique Openings Last 12 Months
1	Diesel Mechanics	83
2	Heavy Equipment Mechanics	48
3	Field Service Mechanics	27
4	Diesel Technicians	27
5	Diesel Mechanic Technicians	22

Notes:

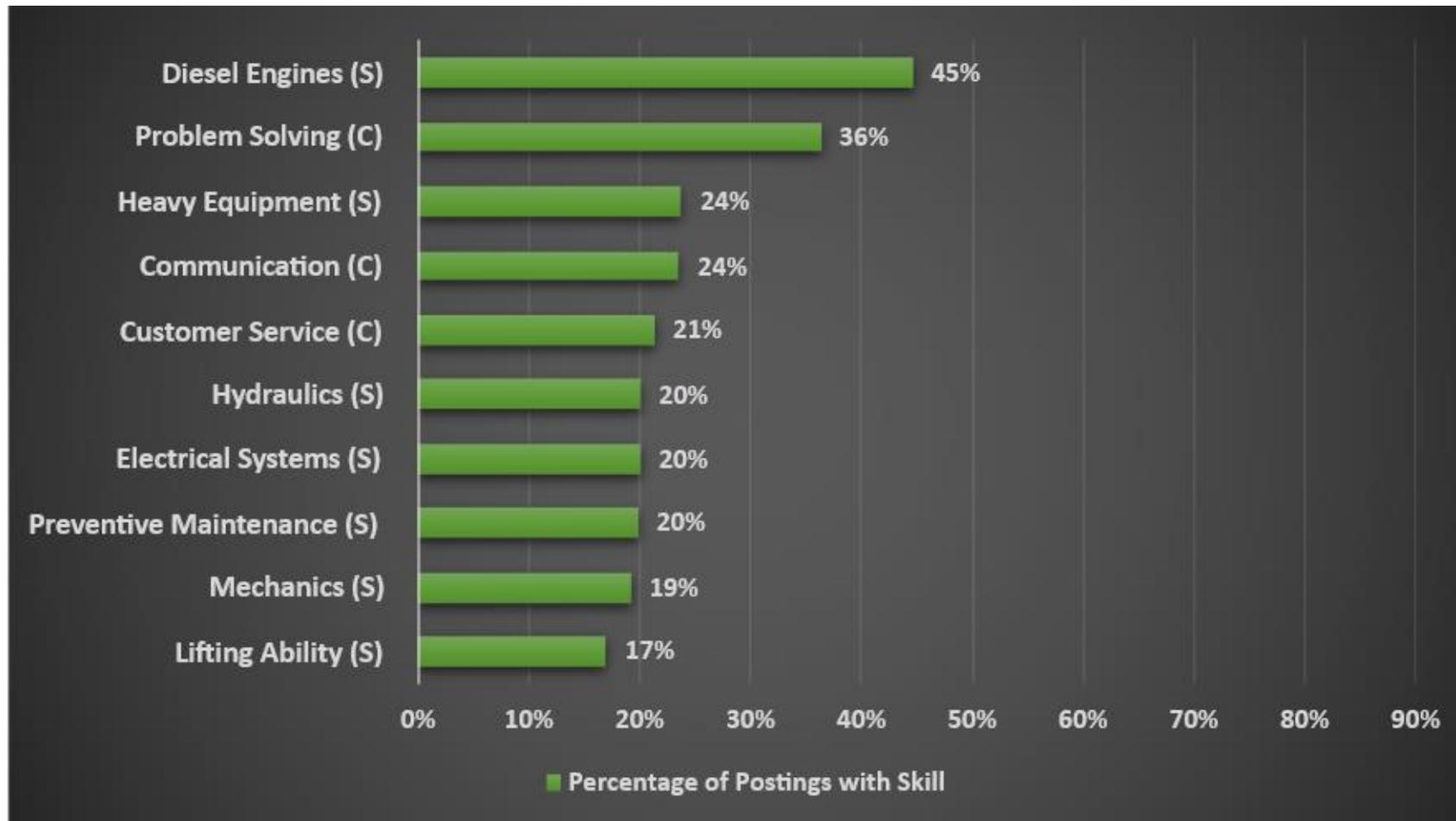
Select Good Jobs:

- 49-3031: Bus / Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists
- 49-3042: Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines

5.5. Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics Program: Top Skills Required for Good Jobs

Source: Lightcast™ for All United States

Unique Postings = 144,543



Notes:

Select Good Jobs:

- 49-3031: Bus/Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists
- 49-3042: Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines

Skills codes:

- (C) = common
- (S) = specialized

Link & QR Code to Dropbox Folder

- You can find each college's service area ppts from Fall 2025, along with voice-over walkthrough videos of Lenses 1-3 here:
 - <https://tinyurl.com/NCII-RuralGP-Fall2025-LMldata>



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