



College Track's Findings on Outcomes After College

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Why measure upward social mobility?

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At College Track, we believe that a college degree is the gateway to a successful career, economic security, and unlocking the potential in every student. To that end, we survey our graduates to gain more insight into this assumption and to discover whether certain patterns in college correlate with more successful career outcomes. College Track's commitment of 10 years to each student gives us a unique advantage from many educational groups that do not yet follow students over this length of time - from the end of middle school to post-college careers. We measure upward social mobility in our students because equity matters, both in education and in the working world. We hope our findings about the factors that helped students reach better post-college outcomes can

benefit students beyond our cohorts and start a broader conversation about career opportunities for recent graduates.

Given that most of our alumni are recent college graduates, we define upward social mobility as the ability to find employment within six months of graduating college combined with economic security. In Winter 2016, we asked:

- ▶ **How long did it take you to get your first job?**
- ▶ **How much did you earn at that first job?**
- ▶ **Did you feel you earned enough to provide for your basic needs?**

To gain more insight on the factors that may have helped certain students reach better post-college outcomes, we also looked into:

- ▶ **Whether having a part-time job in college hampers career outcomes.**
- ▶ **Whether having several internships correlates with better career outcomes.**
- ▶ **The point at which debt negatively impacts a student's ability to repay.**

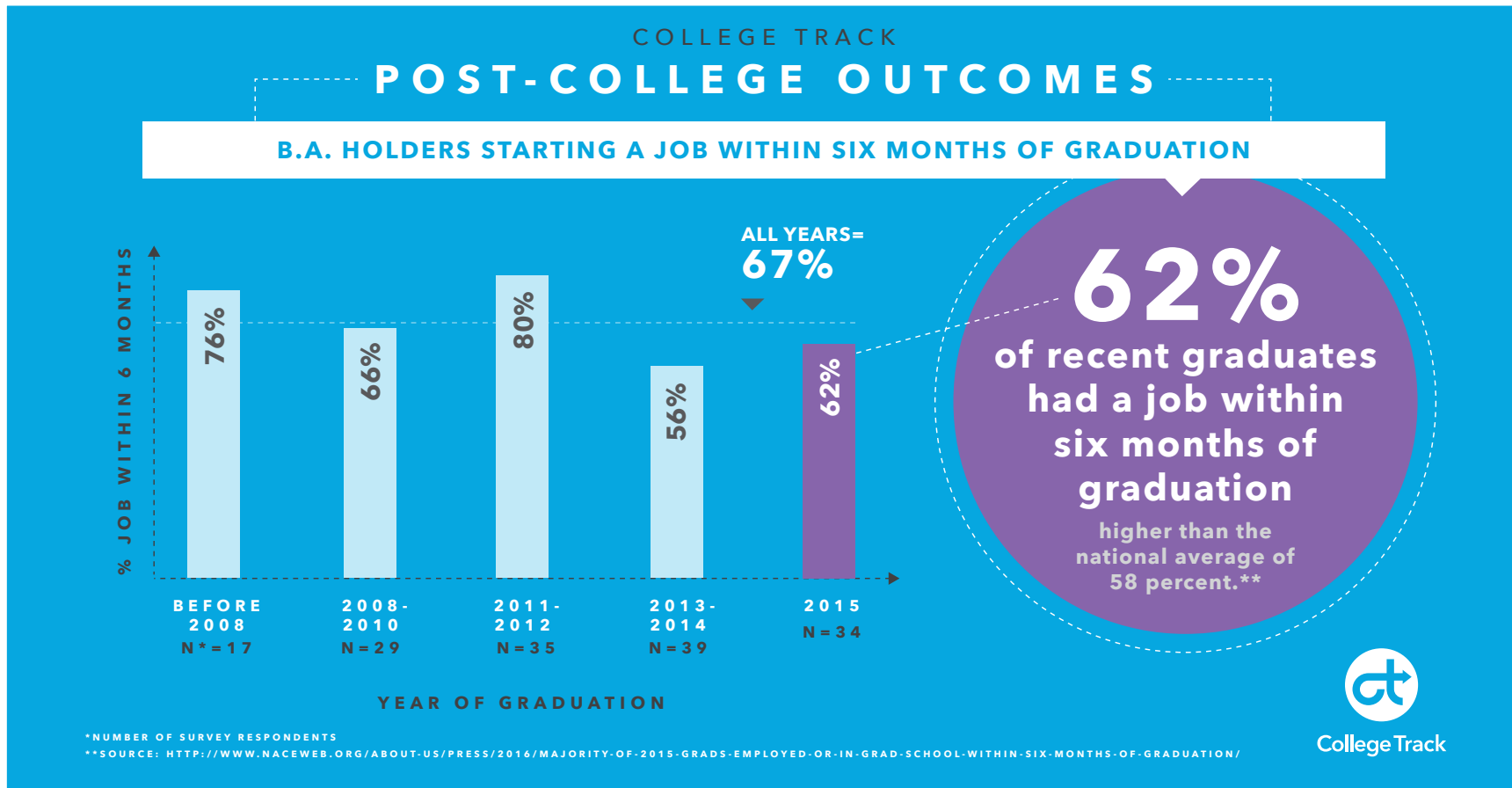
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Findings

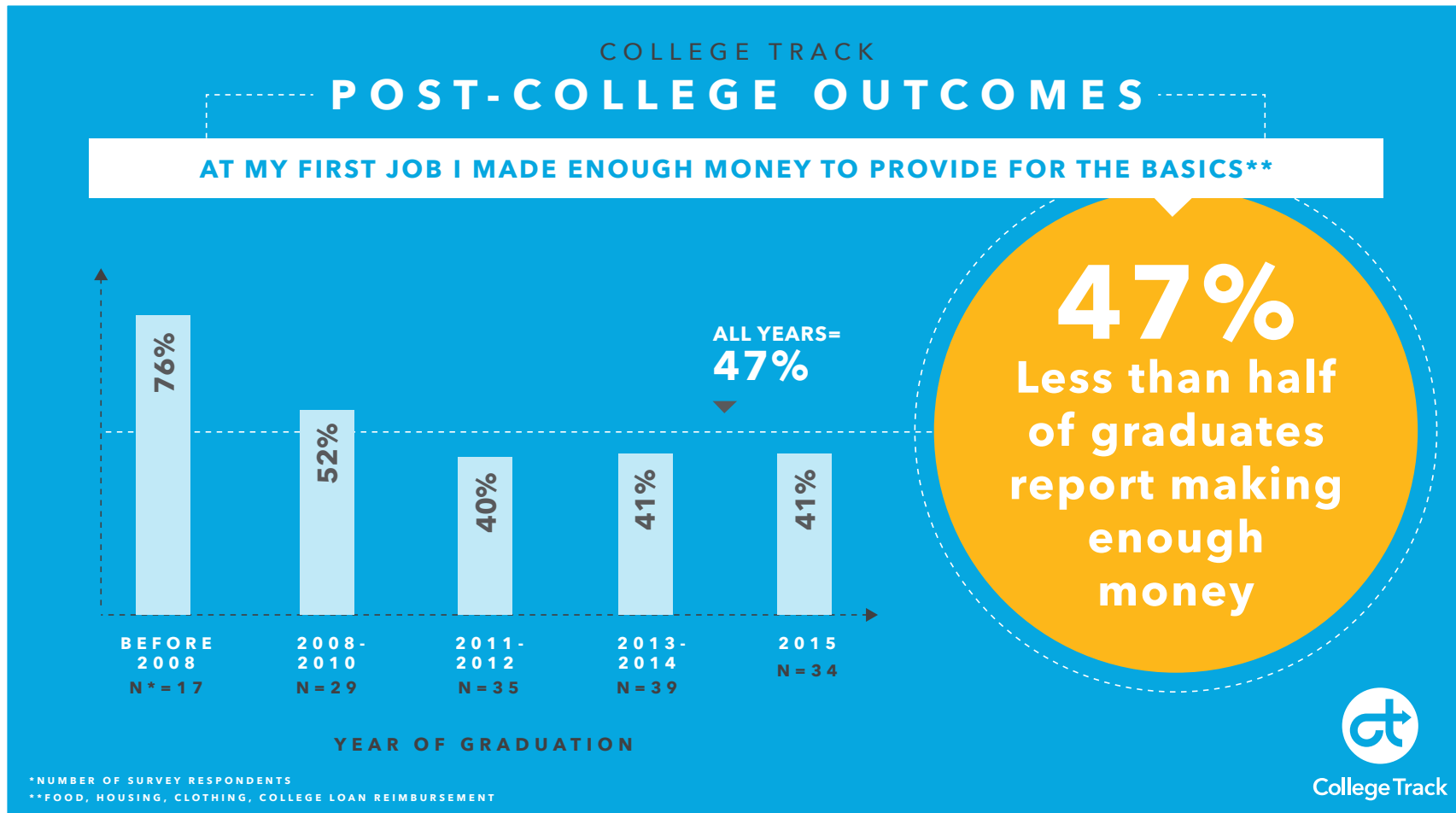
Findings

College Track graduates find jobs faster than students across the nation!

In our most recent cohort of college graduates, 62 percent had a job within six months of graduation, slightly higher than the national average of 58 percent.




When we asked about feelings of economic security, our students reported struggling to pay for their basic expenses.



Students mentioned certain economic trade-offs, such as living at home (“**I couldn’t afford to pay rent and live on my own so I had to live with my family for one and a half years before making enough to feel confident to move out**”) or postponing college loan repayments (“**I could pay [for everything] except my student loan payments, something I am still having an issue with today**”). Both the speed of finding the first job and the feeling of economic security worsened after 2008, likely due to the Great Recession, with a slight up-tick last year.

Our graduates also reported lower than average starting salaries. This is consistent with national research showing that graduates from lower income families have lower starting salaries than those from higher income backgrounds¹. There is a silver lining: College Track graduates are earning more than the average graduate from a low-income background².

We have mixed feelings about our graduates’ post-college outcomes. We can compare ourselves to the national average and be reassured; or we can compare ourselves to our ideals and be disappointed. The strength of this information is in shaping the way we serve current college students.



¹ BARTIK & HERSHBEIN (2016), DEGREES OF POVERTY: FAMILY INCOME BACKGROUND AND THE COLLEGE EARNINGS PREMIUM, W.E. UPJOHN SOCIETY FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH, NEWSLETTER, VOLUME 23 NUMBER 3.

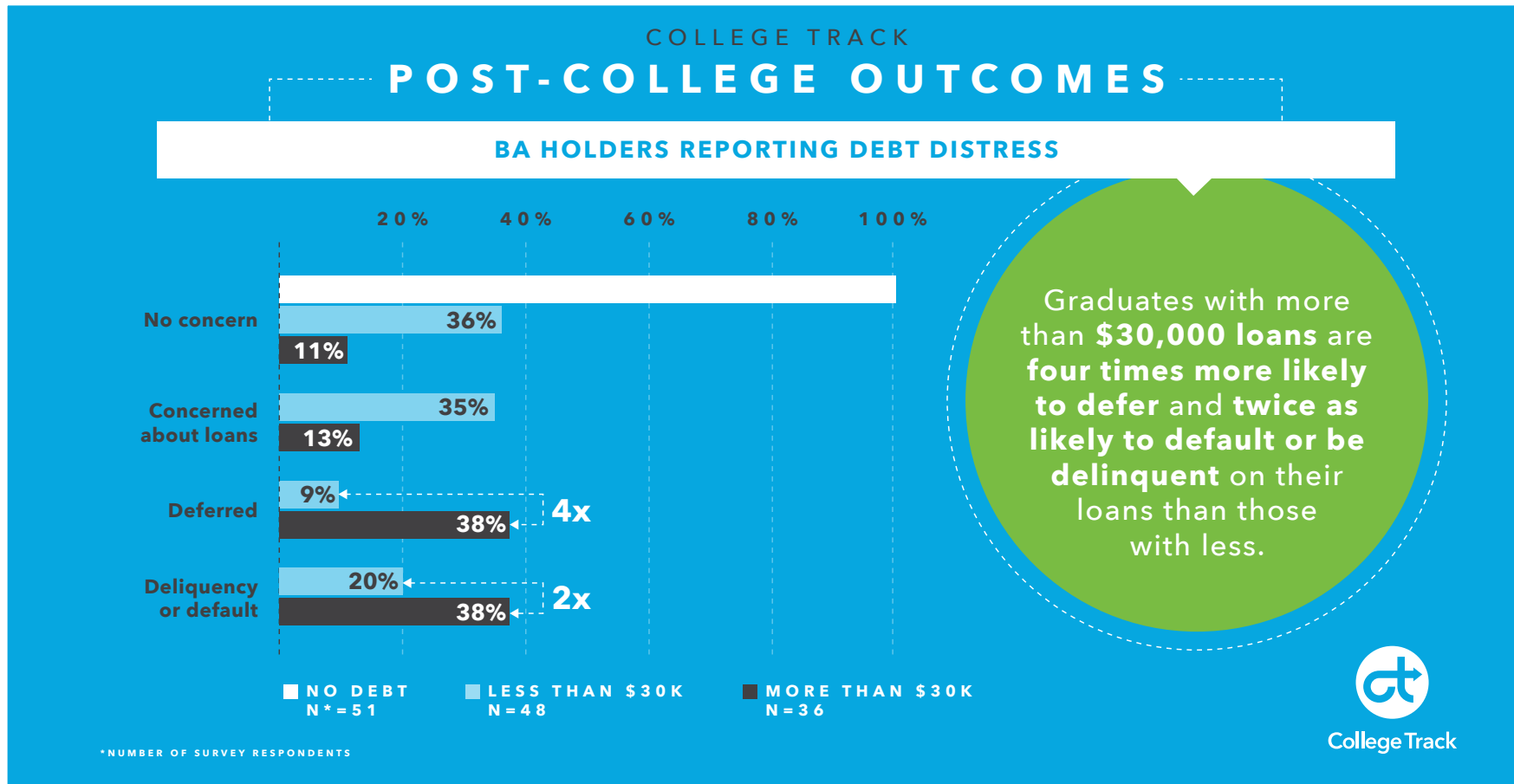
² NATIONALLY, LOW INCOME STUDENTS EARN ONE THIRD LESS THAN THEIR HIGH INCOME PEERS; WHEREAS COLLEGE TRACK STUDENTS APPEAR TO BE EARNING ONLY ONE QUARTER LESS.

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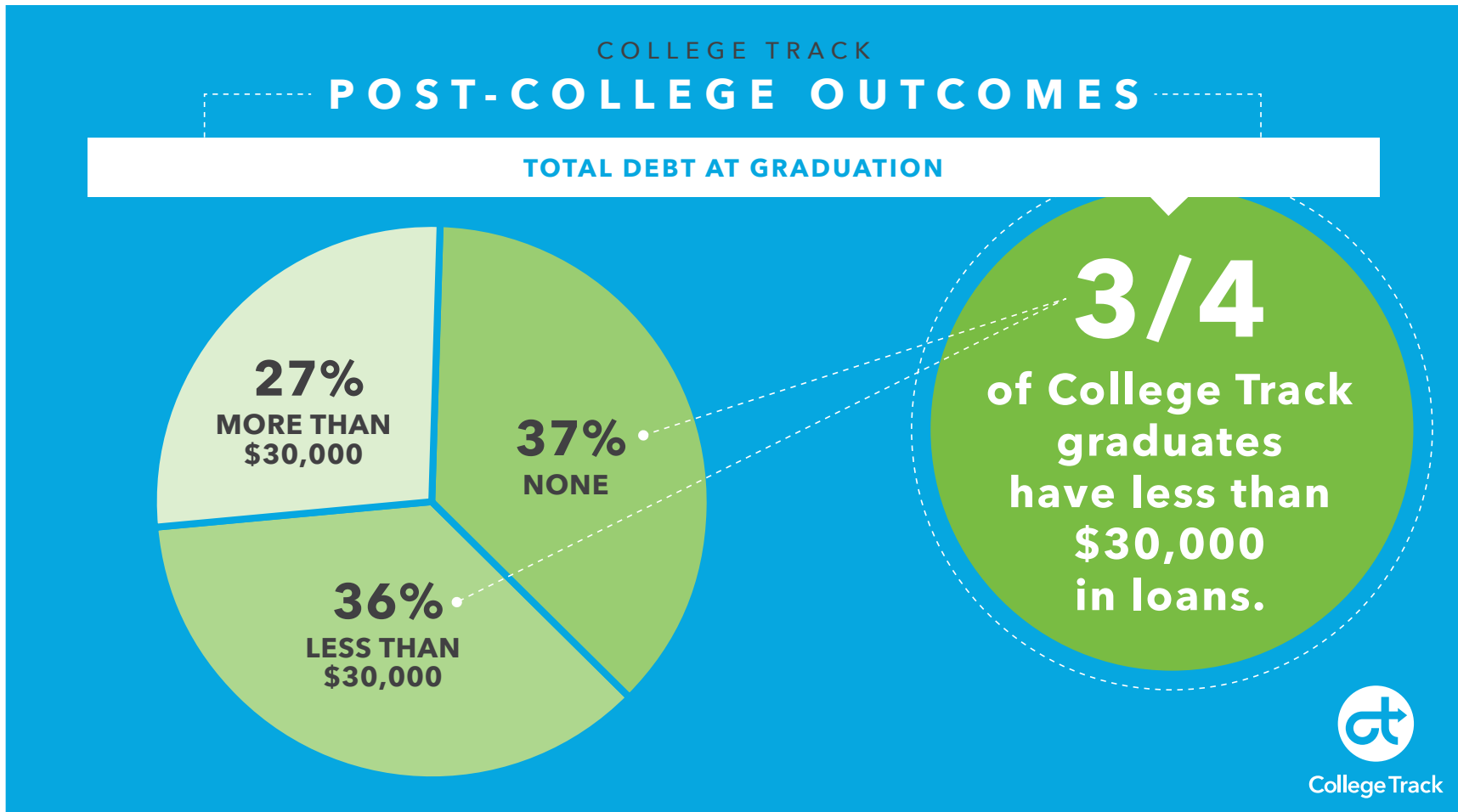
**Four steps any student can
take to increase the value
of their college degree**

1. Loans

Loans are helpful to pay for college, yet there is a threshold where they exert too much financial pressure. Graduates who borrow more than \$30,000 default and defer at considerably higher rates.



This finding moves us beyond the question about whether loans are desirable towards a more pragmatic approach emphasizing the right amount of loans. The good news is that three quarters of College Track graduates report less than \$30,000 in total loans.



2. Internships

Multiple internships in a student's field of study open more doors after college. While 70 percent of College Track graduates had at least one internship in college, only 33 percent had two or more. The students who held at least two internships in college were more likely to be employed within six months and have a starting salary above \$50,000³. One College Track graduate explains the importance of lining up internships in pursuit of employment:

³ 75% OF GRADUATES WITH MORE THAN ONE INTERNSHIP HAD A JOB WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF GRADUATION, COMPARED TO 67% WITH ONE AND 58% WITH NONE; THEY WERE ALSO 10% MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A STARTING SALARY ABOVE \$50,000 COMPARED TO STUDENTS WITH ONLY ONE INTERNSHIP.

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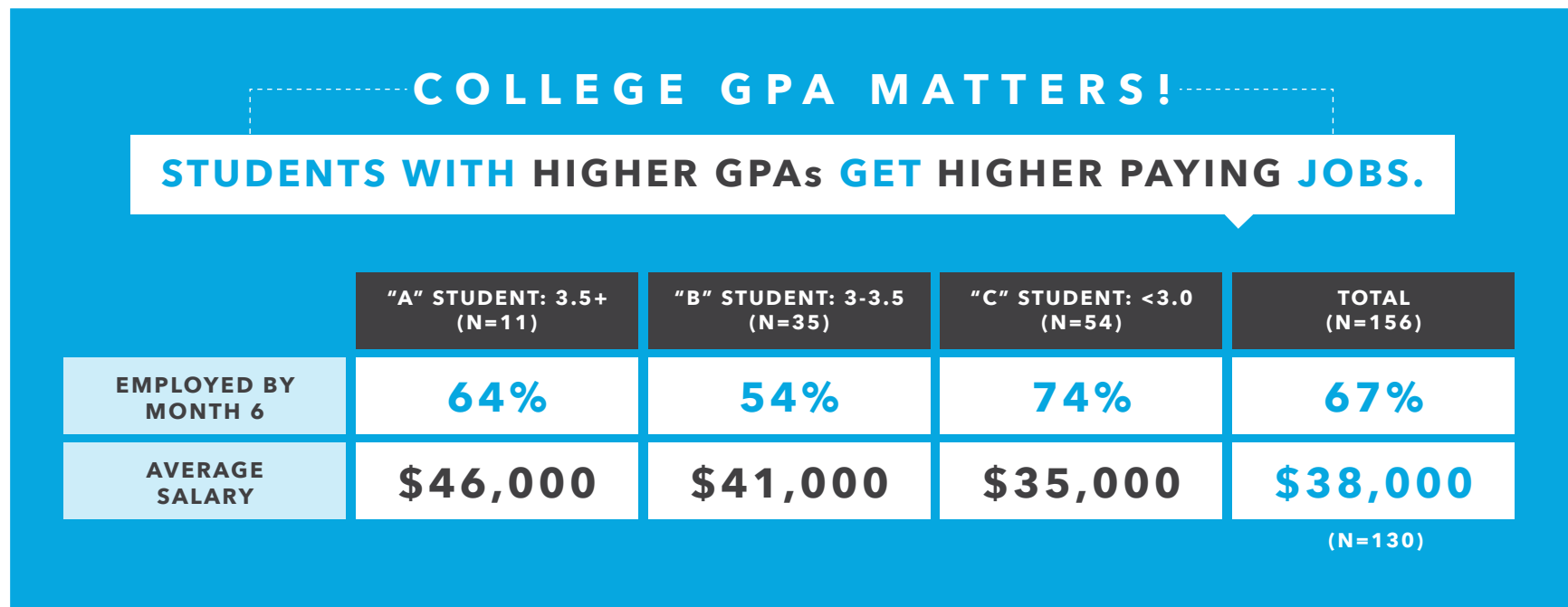
During my first few years in college, I worked 30 hours a week as a laborer and had no time for internships, clubs or business competitions, though I saw other students doing them. My father suggested I ask my uncle to intern in his small construction business and this gave me exposure to the industry. When I then visited the internship fair, I was able to answer specific questions from the engineering firms (“What’s the real size of a two by four?”) and this helped me get an internship for my last semester in college, which then turned into a job as a project engineer.

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**-HECTOR I.
B.S., CIVIL ENGINEERING
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY**

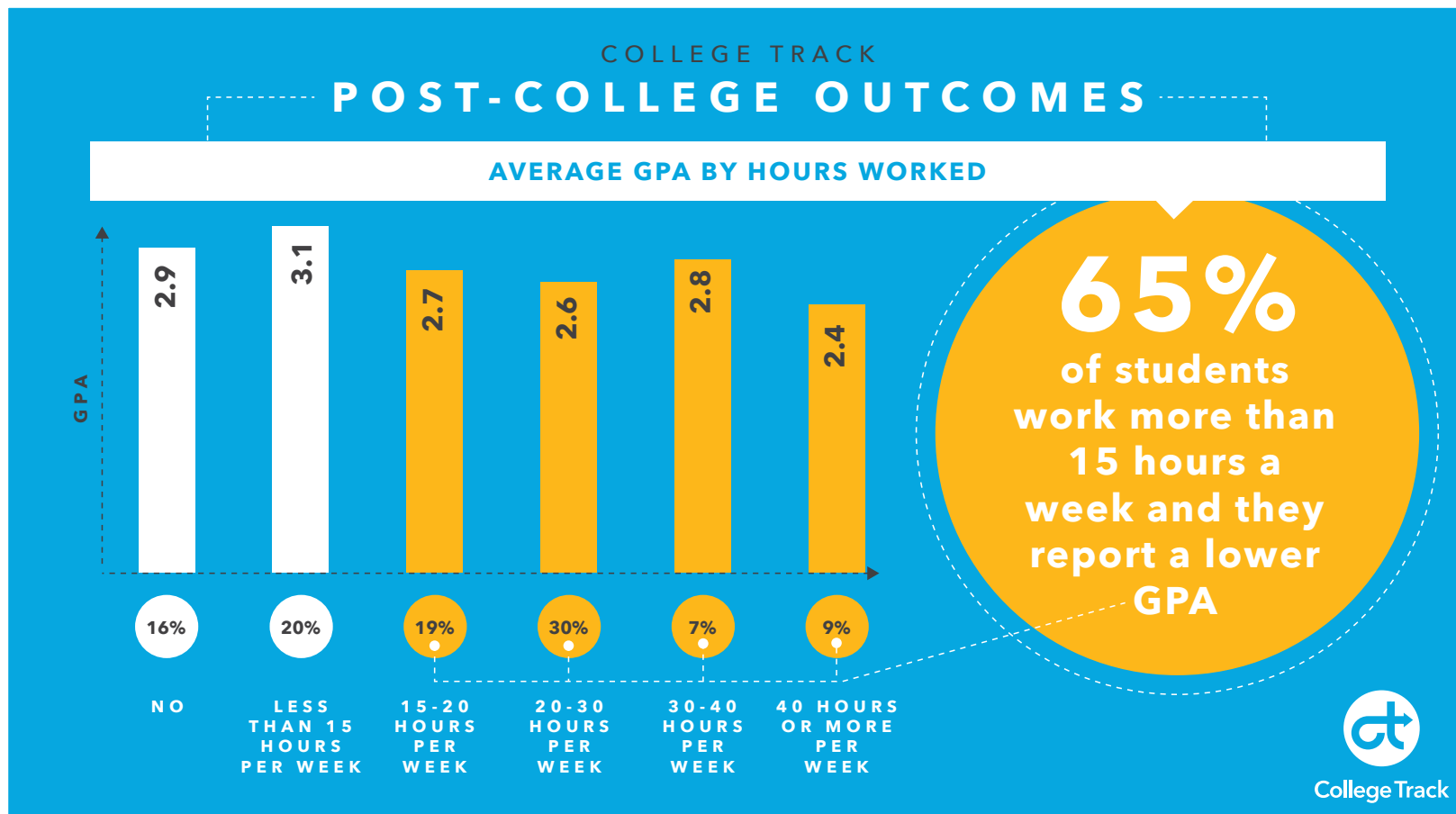
3. GPA

Graduates with lower GPAs in college have lower salaries after graduation. An A student earns \$10,000 more at their first job than a C student. While the C student finds employment faster, we don't yet have enough data on grades for all college students, nor on their job titles to really compare. We intend to obtain this in subsequent years.



4. Hours Worked

It appears that hours worked correlates with GPA. Students who work more than 15 hours a week have a harder time maintaining a B average or higher. Given that the majority of our graduates report having worked more than 15 hours, this shows the tension between working to afford and finish college and having enough time to get the grades that will earn a better job.



Rather than unequivocally promoting or discouraging loans or part-time work in college, we see the importance in finding a realistic balance of the financial, academic, and social-emotional levers that affect college graduation.



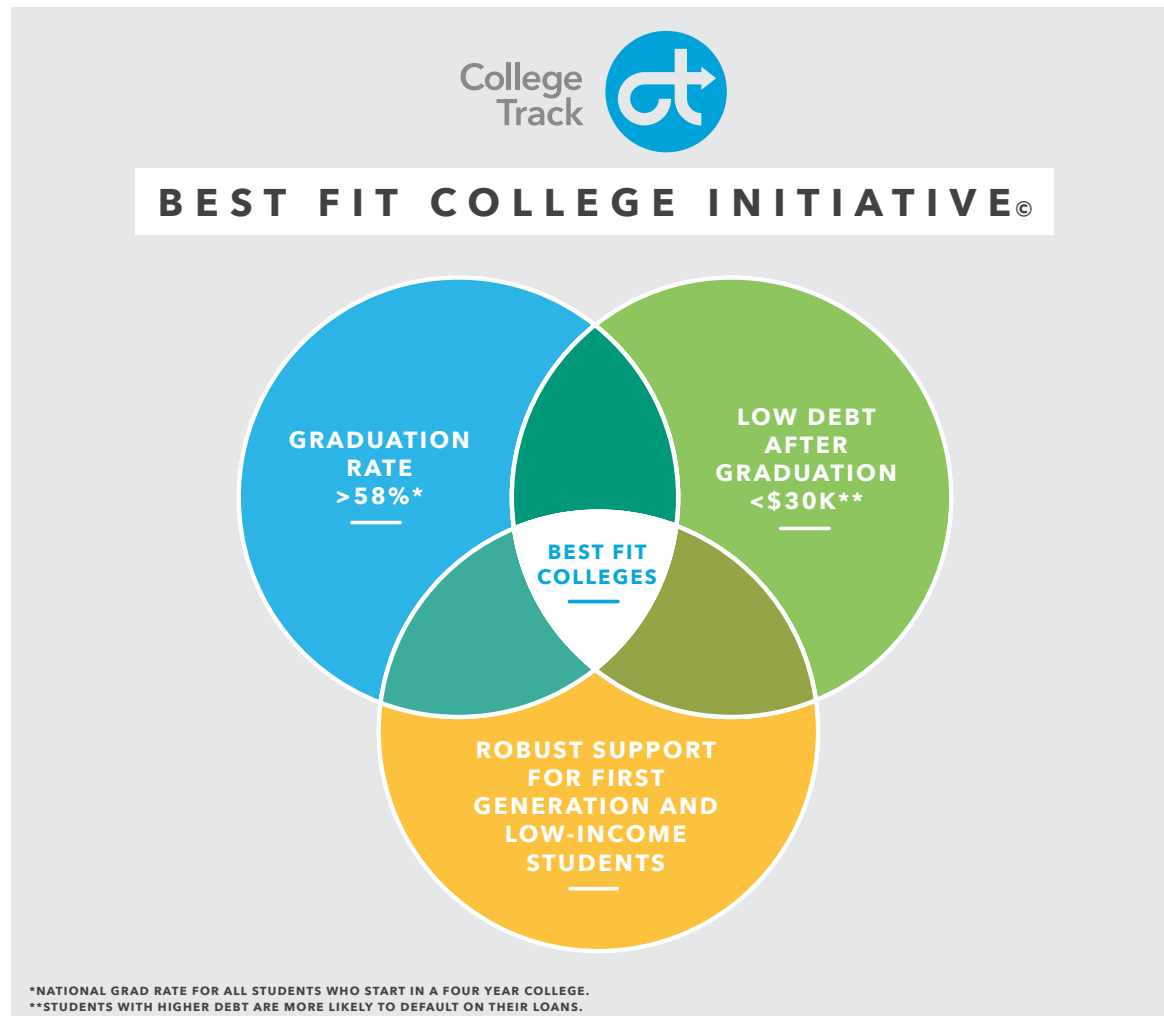
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College Track's Contribution

1. Best Fit College Initiative

College Track has developed a framework to guide students towards colleges that will set them up for long-term success. The Best Fit College Framework encourages students to evaluate a college in three ways:

1. Does it have a graduation rate above the national average?
2. Is the average student debt below \$30,000?
3. Does it have robust support services for first generation college students?



2. Tips

For students in college, we also share these “tips” to help them increase the value of their degree.



TIPS FOR INCREASING THE VALUE OF YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE

1

**KEEP YOUR LOANS
LESS THAN \$30,000**

2


**GET TWO
INTERNSHIPS**

3

**A HIGHER GPA
MEANS A HIGHER
SALARY**

4

**WORK FEWER
THAN 15 HOURS
PER WEEK**



When students are equipped with a more complete view of collegiate demands, they will make better decisions for college and their personal and professional future.

How you can help

1. Do you know a student applying to college? Tell them about the best fit framework
2. Do you know a student in college? Share our tips with them.

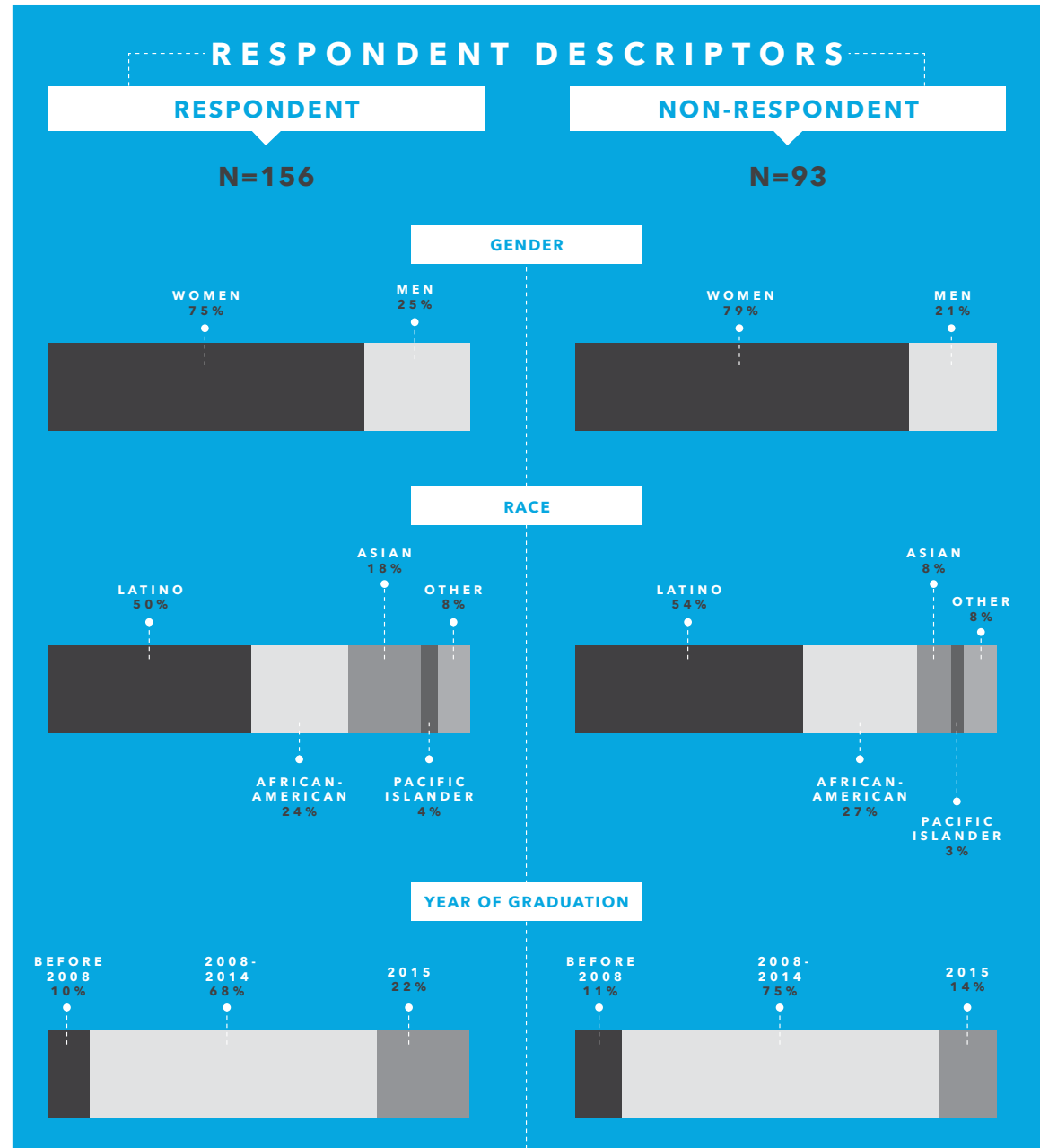
More to come

This analysis is just a first step in our investigation of social mobility. In the next few years, we will see considerable increases in our number of college graduates. We are committed to learning more about our students' lives post-college.

If you have any questions about this research and findings please contact Cristel de Rouvray, Entrepreneur in Residence at cristel@collegetrack.org

Methodology Notes

At the time of the survey, we had 249 college graduates and 156 responded (63 percent). The respondents resembled the overall graduate population from diverse racial backgrounds and mostly women. More recent graduates were better represented than older ones.



Survey questions discussed in this report:

How long after earning your degree did it take you to secure a job?

What was your starting salary after college?

At the time of your first job out of college, would you say that you made enough money to provide for the basic things (such as food, housing, clothing, college loan reimbursement) for yourself and your dependents to live an acceptable life?

At any point during college, did you have a job to help you pay the bills that was not directly linked to your studies or future career plans?

At any point in college did you have an internship (or co-op, or work-study, or job) that was related to your studies or

future career plans?

How much do you and/or your parents have in student loan debt from your education?

Have you experienced any of the following with your student loans? (loan deferment, loan default, loan delinquency).

Survey design and analysis were the fruit of collaboration between College Track and Entangled Solutions.





College Track

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