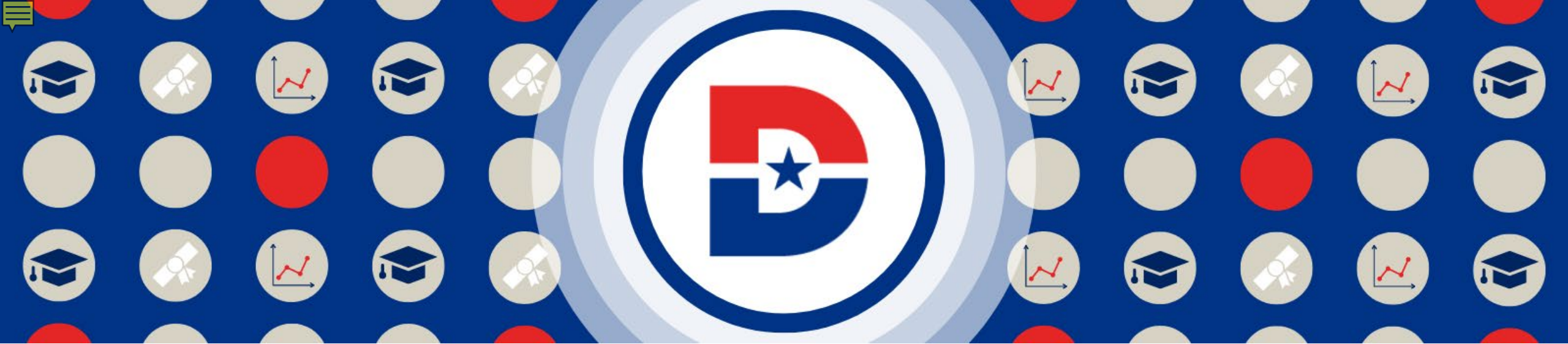




Boom or Bust – Exploring Postsecondary Programs with Uneven Earnings

Navi Dhaliwal, McKenna Griffin, & Dillon Lu

PSEO Coalition Showcase

August 18, 2026

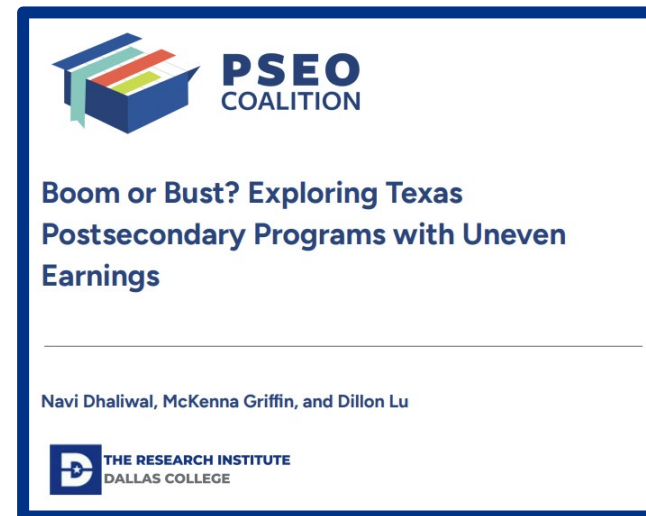




Project Purpose

How can institutions operationalize outcomes data **beyond the median?**

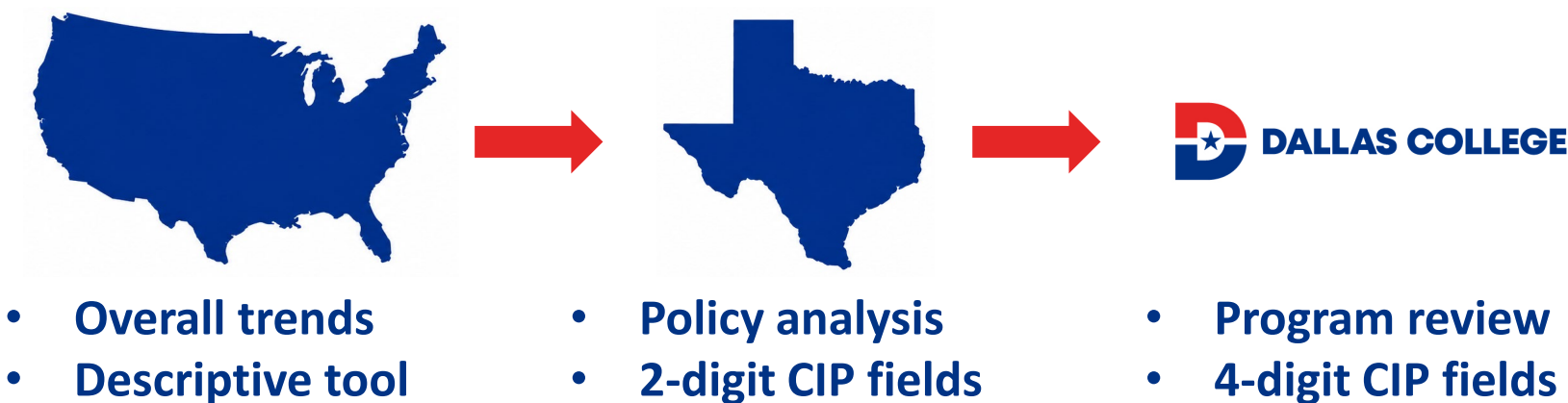
Passing a median earnings test is a coin flip that leaves the lower half of earners unexamined. We used PSEO data to further explore and describe this earnings variation.





How We Leveraged PSEO Data

Three Scopes of Analysis



Three Primary Metrics

Earnings Metric	Definition
<i>Floor</i>	25th percentile earnings, one year after credential completion
<i>Dispersion</i>	75th minus 25th percentile earnings, one year after credential completion
<i>Growth</i>	Change in 25th percentile earnings from year one to five after credential completion



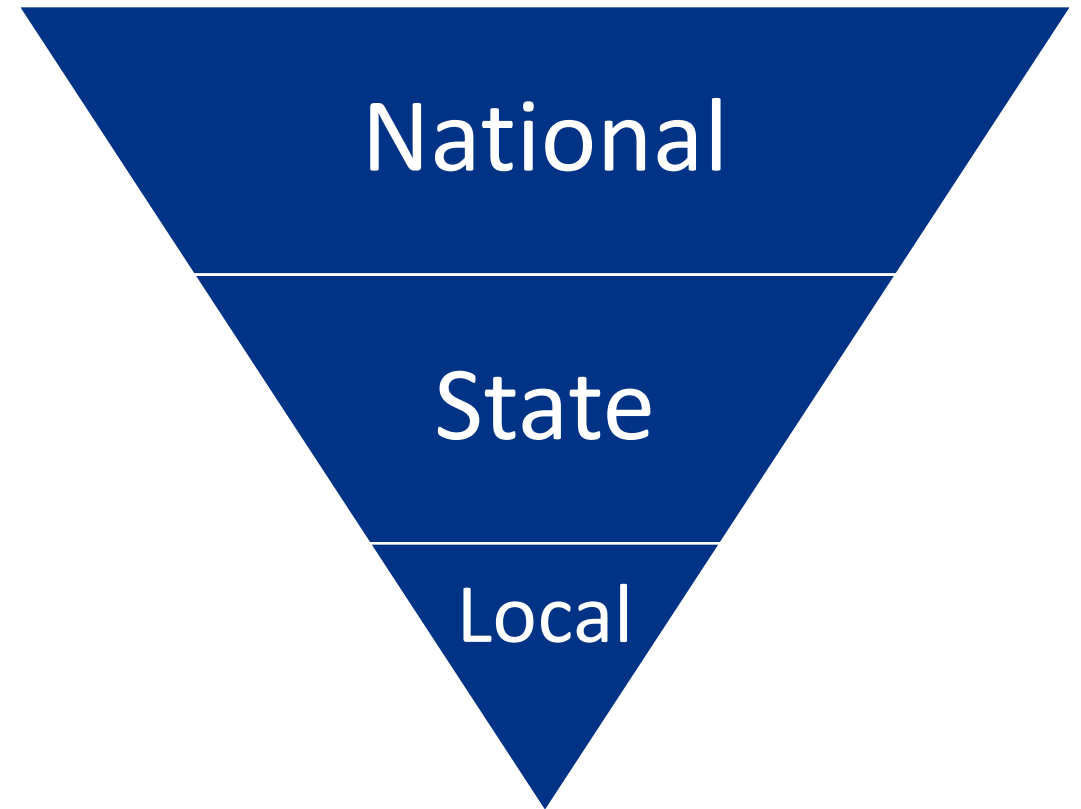


Snapshot of Findings

Nationwide, the bottom quartile of graduates don't catch up to where the median started within 5 years. Growth doesn't close the dispersion gap. Program mix is a factor, but this holds within broad areas of study.

In Texas, all large ($N \geq 500$) associate degree programs pass a self-sufficient wage threshold (\$36,000). But only 12/28 (43%) do at the bottom quartile.

At Dallas College, we find distributional differences, even within field of study clusters, that lead us to think more deeply about portfolio choice (e.g., healthcare).





Boom or Bust?

Exploring Uneven Earnings by State in a National Context



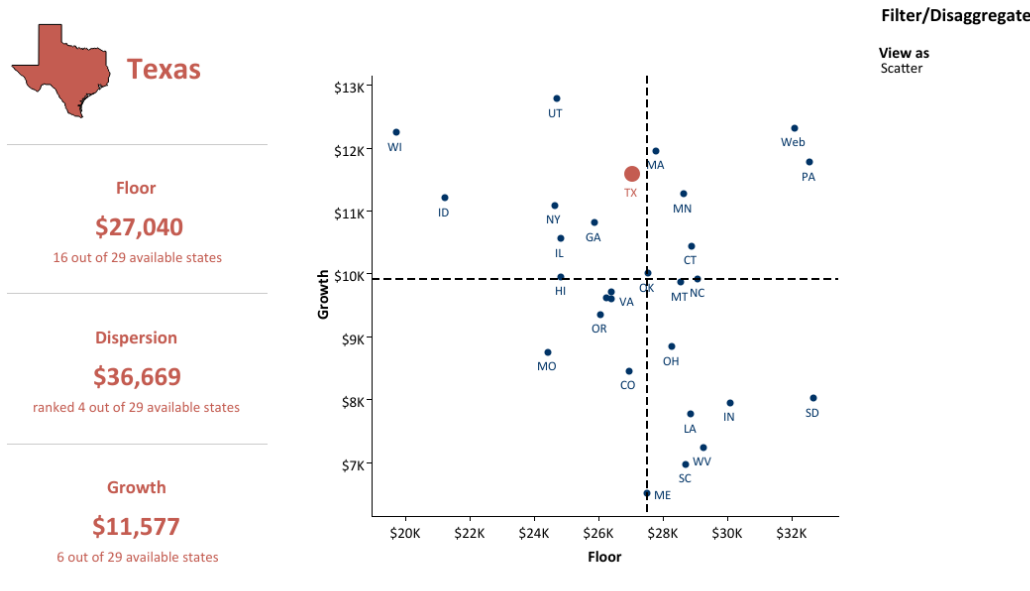
Select a Degree Level and State to Use in All Figures Below

Filter to a Degree Level
Associate Degree

Highlight a State
Texas

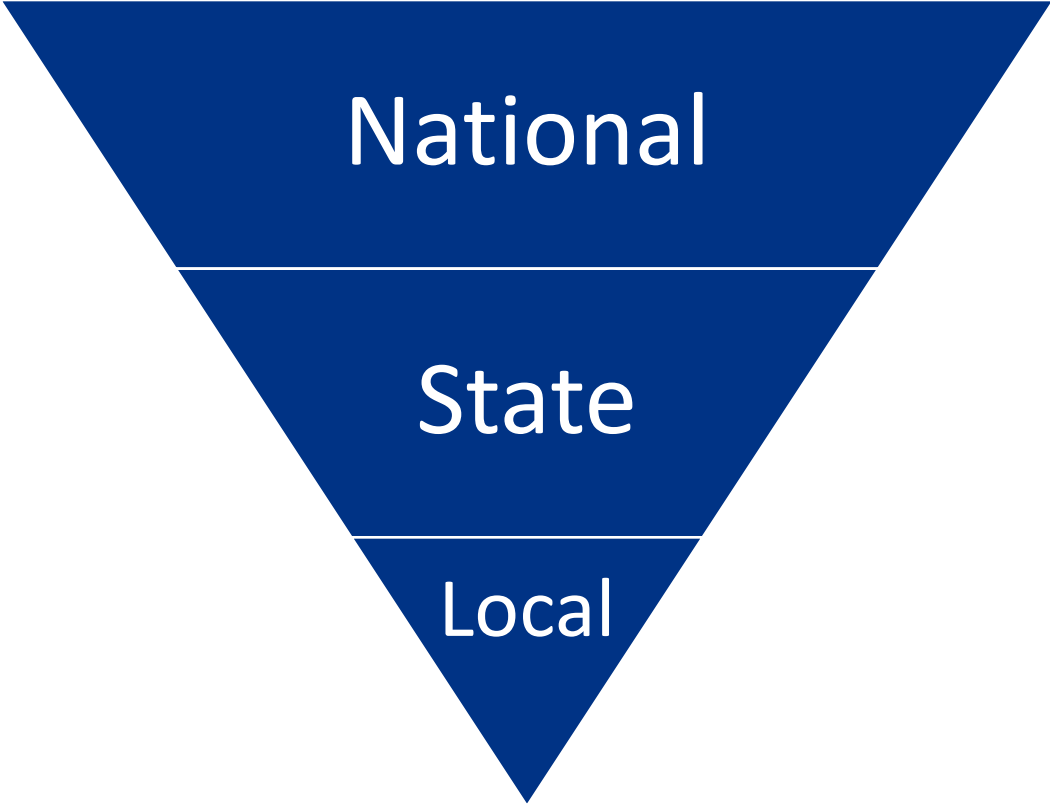
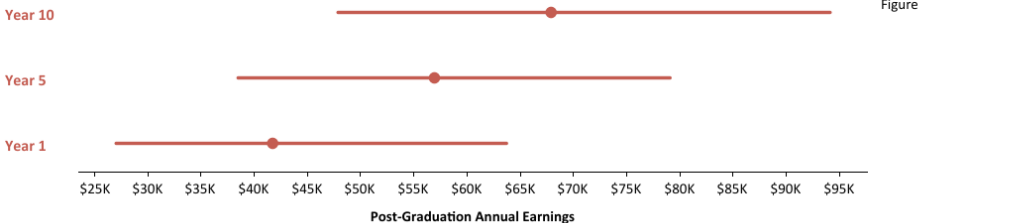
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Jobs With High Floors Followed by High Growth are Ideal



Growth Rarely Surpasses Dispersion

In most cases, the bottom quartile of earners are not able to "catch up" to their higher-earning peers within the first 5 years of graduating.





Finding 1:

We identify fields with high **floors** and **growth**

Dallas College

Compared Across Available
Institutions Offering an Associate
Degree in Any Instructional Program
(All)

Floor

\$35,907

5 out of 68 available institutions

Dispersion

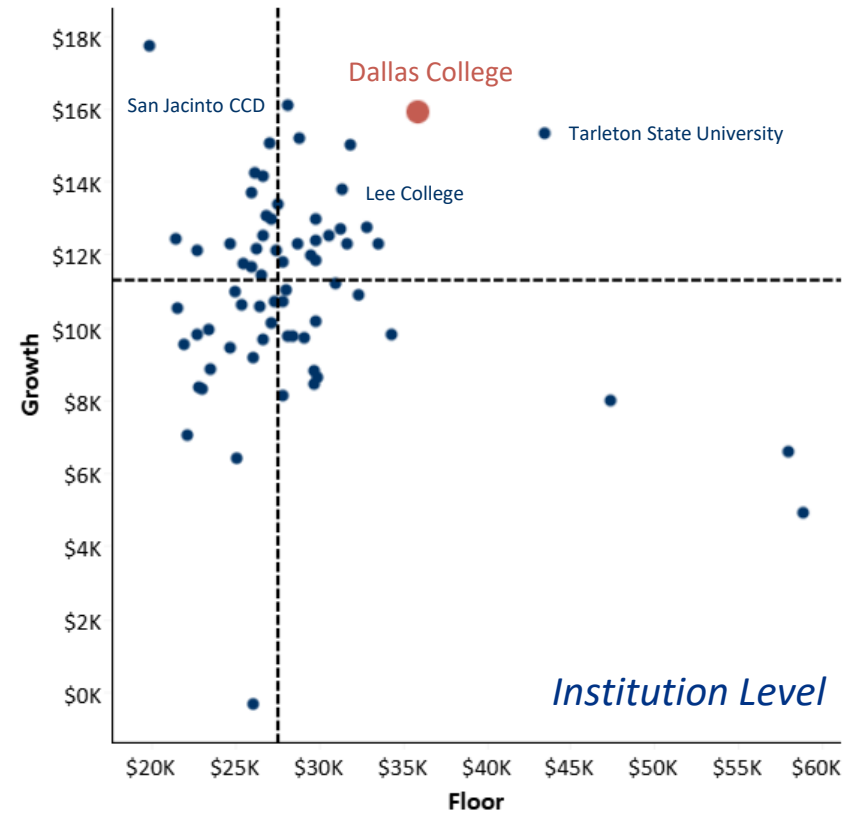
\$38,141

24 out of 68 available institutions

Growth

\$15,898

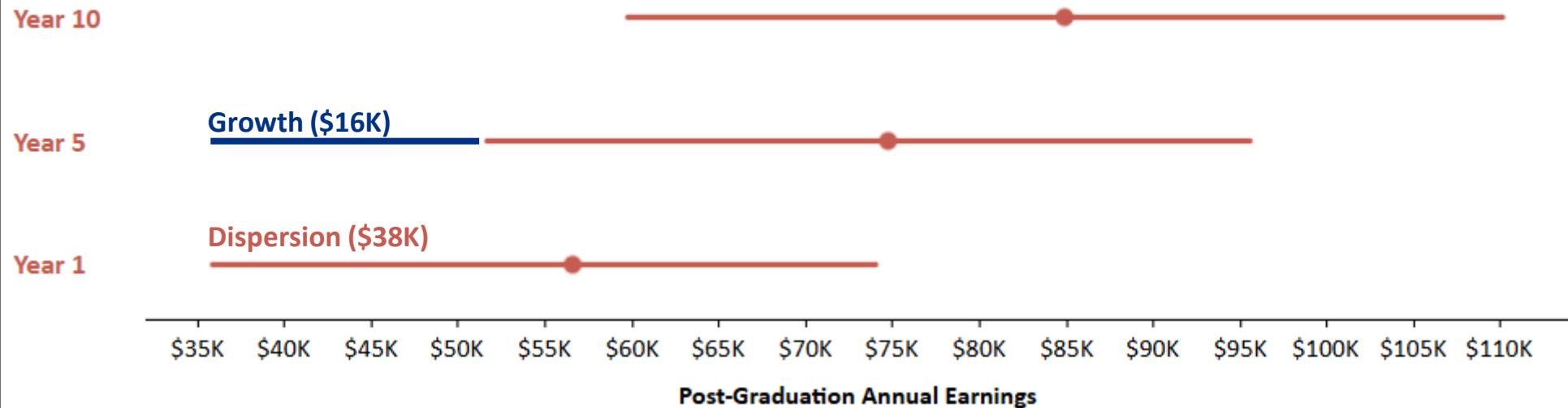
3 out of 68 available institutions





Finding 2: Earnings **growth** never closes the initial gap (**dispersion**) for low earners

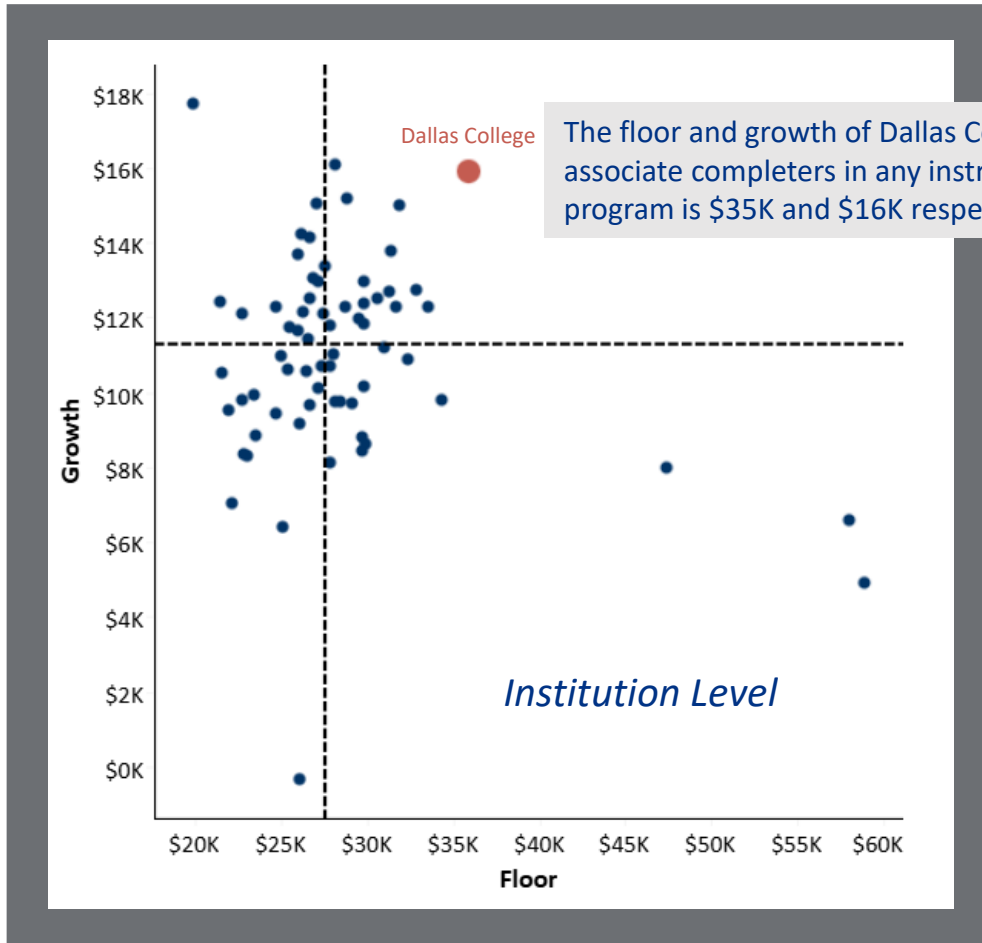
In most cases, the bottom quartile of earners are not able to "catch up" to their higher-earning peers within the first 5 years of graduating.





Finding 3:

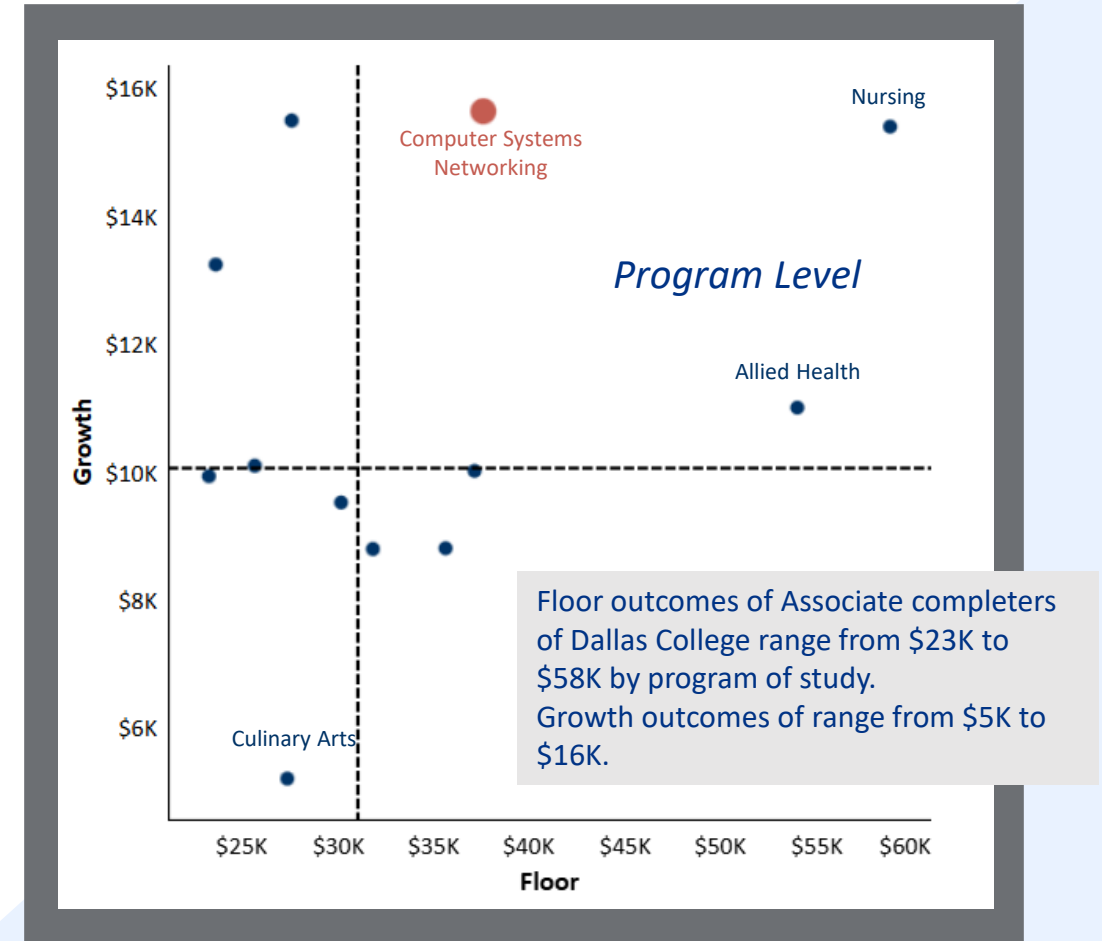
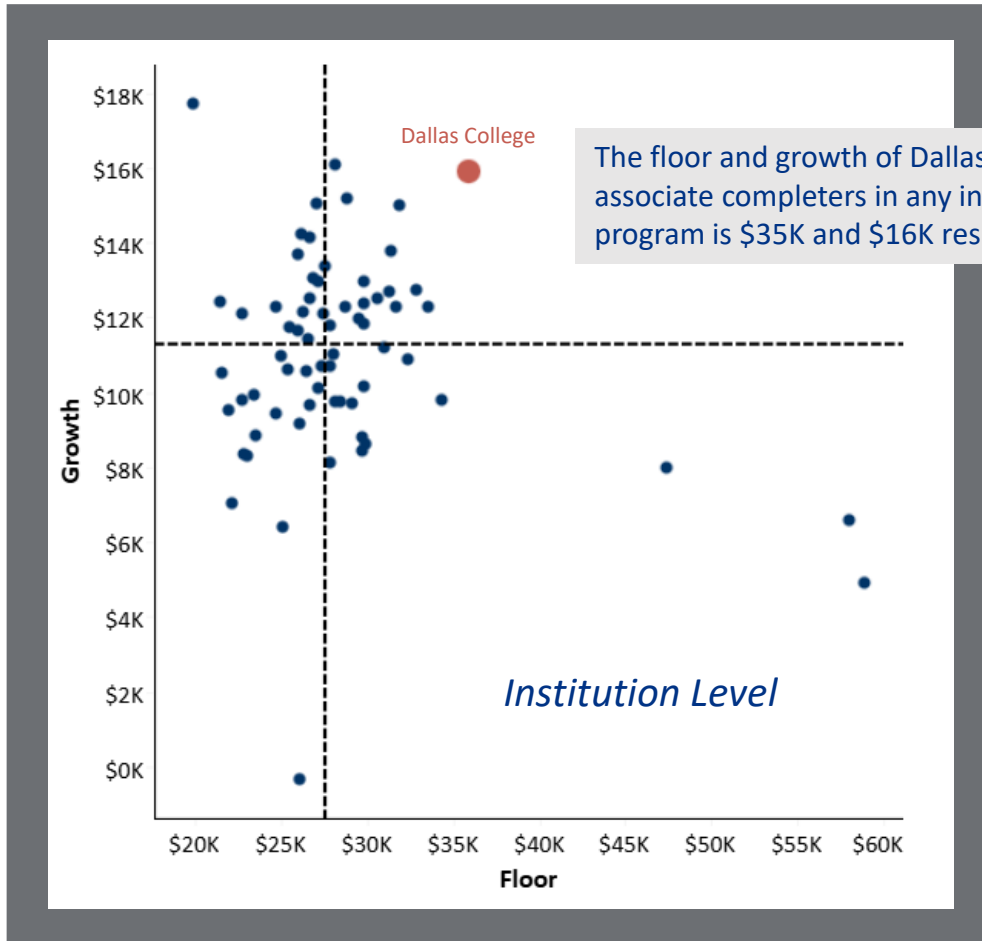
Program choice often matters more than state





Finding 3:

Program choice often matters more than state





Impact and Next Steps

- Integrate PSEO data and outcomes dispersion into program profiles used for program review.
- Highlight floor earnings outcomes in conversations with industry and labor market partners.
- Narrow scope of comparison institutions to peers of interest at the request of internal stakeholders.





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[Military and Veteran Students at Dallas College](#)

This brief analyzes where veterans live, how their educational outcomes differ across counties, and highlights enrollment patterns, program preferences, and key industries where veterans are employed. The brief also focuses on the veteran population at Dallas College with insights on academic pathways and challenges that affect student success based on qualitative research findings.



[Living Wages and Community College: Dallas College Over the Decades](#)



[Alumni Outcomes from Strada Survey](#)



[State of Texas Mental Health Playbook](#)



[Mapping the P-TECH Landscape in the Dallas College Region](#)



[Economic Impact Study 2026](#)



[Do No Harm: How Federal Earnings Test Would Impact Texas Institutions of Higher Education](#)

