



**KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY**

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
Career Planning and Development

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A Letter from the Executive Director



Career readiness does not happen by chance. It is the result of intentional experiences, meaningful partnerships, and a shared commitment to student success. At Kennesaw State University, the Department of Career Planning and Development advances the university's Strategic Plan by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to thrive in an evolving workforce. This year, we strengthened our commitment to career readiness by design, creating intentional pathways that connect academic learning with career success and prepare every Owl for life beyond graduation.

We pursued this work during a year of continued change in higher education and a rapidly evolving employment landscape. As student needs grew more complex and employer expectations continued to shift, we remained focused on delivering innovative, collaborative, and data-informed career development that prepares students for long-term success.

Two strategic initiatives transformed our work this year and established a strong foundation for the future. We centralized our data practice to strengthen the collection, analysis, and reporting of student engagement and post-graduation outcomes, providing the insights needed to guide decisions and demonstrate impact. At the same time, we expanded an ecosystem approach to career development, strengthening partnerships across the university so that career readiness is embedded throughout the student experience rather than delivered through a single office. These efforts resulted in a graduate outcomes knowledge rate increase from 68.5% to 90%, giving KSU a more complete understanding of student success after graduation.

This progress is possible because of the collective commitment of our students, faculty, staff, employer partners, alumni, and campus collaborators. Together, we are creating a culture where career readiness is intentionally designed into the student experience and every Owl has the opportunity to achieve meaningful career success. Thank you for your partnership and continued investment in our students. We look forward to building on this momentum and expanding our impact in the years ahead.

Thank you,


Melanie Uken

A large, wireframe globe sculpture sits atop a grassy hill. The globe is tilted and features a grid of latitude and longitude lines. In the background, there are several trees and a building with a red roof. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

90%

KNOWLEDGE RATE

With a significant increase in verified first-destination outcomes, DCPD achieved a landmark knowledge rate of 90%, giving the University a more complete and reliable view of graduate success after commencement.



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Strategic Alignment

GOAL 1

Create a Learning Environment
Where Students Thrive

GOAL 3

Enhance and Inspire Our
Community

GOAL 4

Expand Institutional
Influence and Prominence

GOAL 5

Advance a Sustainable,
Adaptable, and Operationally
Efficient Institution

DCPD is focused on supporting KSU's Taking Flight Strategic Plan, which offers a series of institutional goals in alignment with the University System of Georgia. The following sections offer a snapshot of how the department is engaging with and strengthening the critical priorities outlined in the plan, as noted on the left.

Throughout the report, you'll find a "sticky note" callout marking out the high-level goal a project, process, or initiative is intentionally aligned with.

Strategic Overview

We are working to build career readiness into the ecosystem students already matriculate through, rather than expect that they seek us out. That idea drives every initiative in this report, in six connected ways.

Scaling Capacity and Impact While Prioritizing Student Success

We strengthened organizational capacity by clarifying staff roles and expectations, expanding Employer & Corporate Relations, and scaling student and peer staffing to extend our reach without proportionally increasing full-time staff.

Increased Consistency and Availability in Service Support

We expanded access through evening advising for Coles, Radow, and CCSE students, replaced generic programming with college-specific workshops, increased our presence at existing campus traditions, and strengthened support at the Marietta office to provide increased access to services.

Self-Led Resources Tailored to the Student Experience

We piloted Nest to Next, a four-year career development roadmap students can follow starting freshman year, and continued investing in self-service platforms like Steppingblocks, Focus2Career, BigInterview, and BigResume.

Building Career Readiness Into the Campus Community

We launched a Faculty Champions pilot, deepened partnerships with academic departments to embed career readiness into curricula, strengthened college relationships through leadership outreach, marketing, and tailored resources, and expanded collaboration with other departments, like Athletics, ResLife, Flight, and the Registrar's office, incorporating career readiness wherever students already spend their time, not just wherever they seek us out.

Employer Presence and Investment in Student Preparedness

We expanded employer engagement through workshops, increased employer participation in student-facing events and Owl Trek Site Visits and gathered direct feedback through the HireKSU focus group while measuring outcomes—from student turnout and candidate quality to internships and full-time hires—to ensure partnerships remain mutually beneficial.

Data-Informed Collaboration and Practice

We built the infrastructure to turn career readiness data into evidence leadership can act on: created dashboards, standardized naming conventions, strengthened compliance and quality reporting, and deepened alignment with Institutional Research and Data Strategy, all so our numbers hold up under scrutiny and colleges work from the same figures.

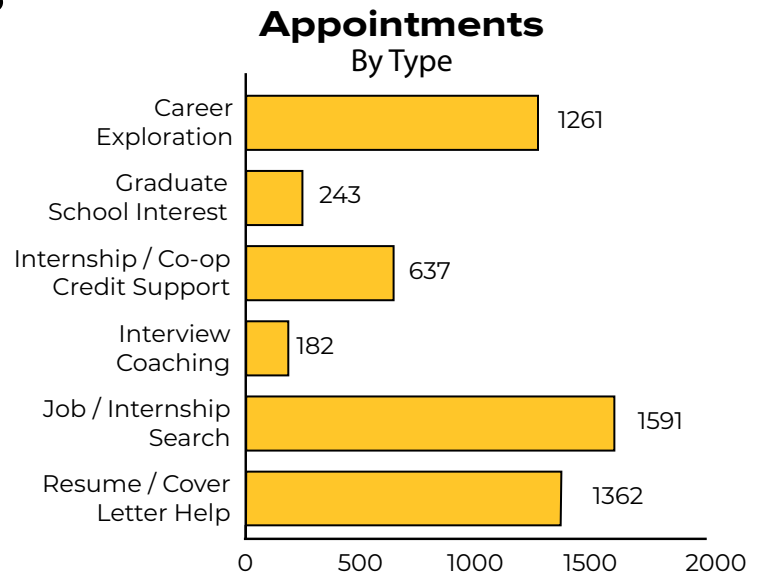
Together, these priorities reflect a shift from career services as a destination students must seek out to career readiness embedded throughout the student experience. The initiatives that follow demonstrate how this approach is shaping programs, partnerships, and systems that make career development more available, more intentional, and more sustainable.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND REACH

Advising Appointments

Career advising remains central to the support we provide. Across both campuses, career consultants conducted 5,398 individual appointments this year—an average of 34+ per instructional day—covering every stage of the career journey, from self-discovery and résumé development to job search strategy, interviewing, and offer negotiation.

New drop-in support for internship credit and an evening advising pilot serving the Graduate College, Bagwell, and Wellstar extended access to when and where students need it most.



5,000+

total student appointments

18

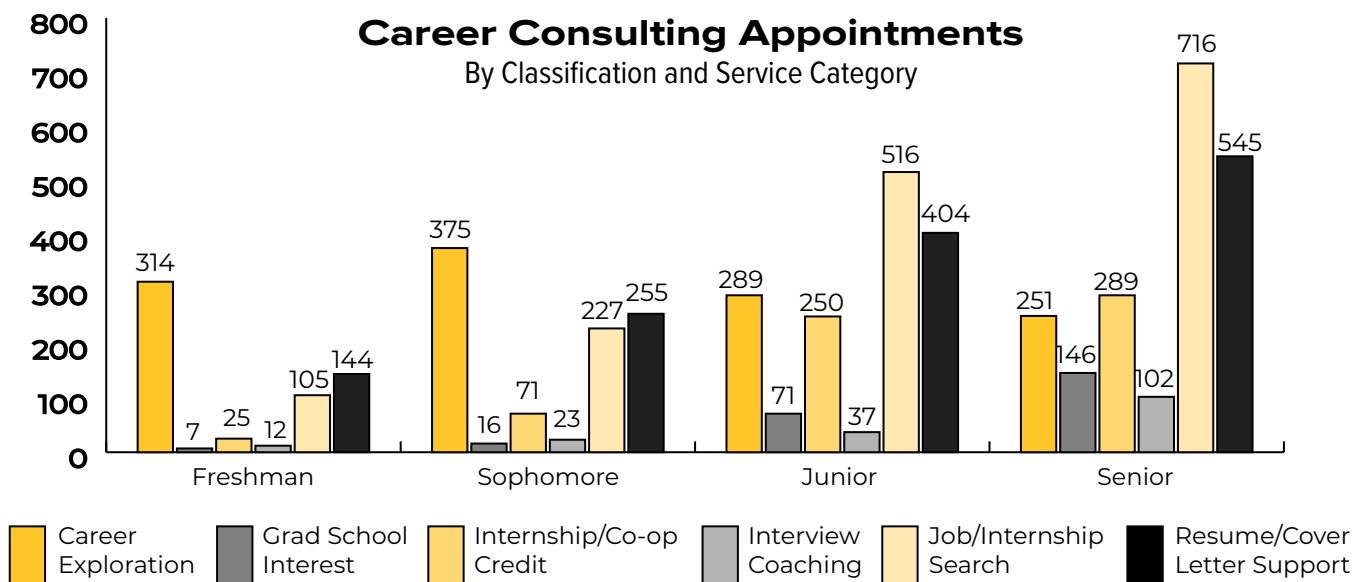
total advising staff

95%

of surveyed students were satisfied or better

59%

of appointments were requested as virtual



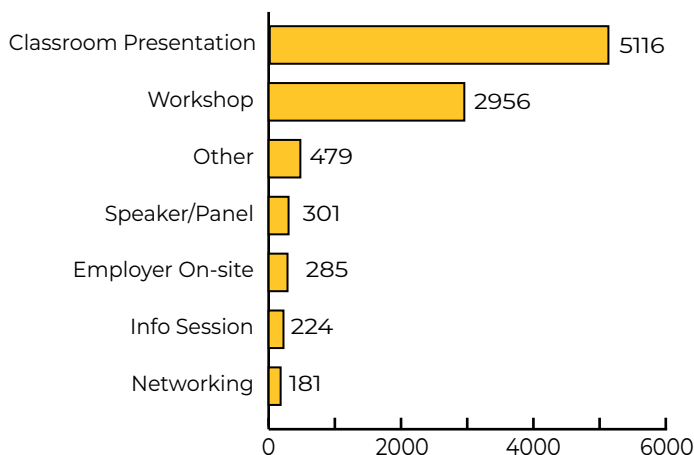
Events & Workshops: Integration at Scale

GOAL 1.5

Career development at DCPD doesn't wait for students to come looking for it; it meets them where they already are. This year the department hosted 255 unique events reaching 9,542 students, spanning a wide range of topics and formats while building multiple points of contact with each student.

Over half of all event attendance came from classroom presentations, as we work to weave career development into the academic experience itself rather than an optional add-on students must seek out on their own.

Event Attendance
By Event Type



Joey Van Sickle

Major: Marketing

Master of Business
Administration
Auburn

Joey was accepted as an MBA candidate at Auburn University's Harbert College of Business.



Heather Owens did an absolutely amazing job talking me through an internship decision last year, which helped me make a major decision that led me where I am today!

27,517 total undergraduate engagement instances

9,542 students attended career events & workshops

255 career events & workshops

The Classroom as a Primary Touchpoint

Classroom Invitation

Classroom presentations are where DCPD connects most deeply with academic programs, bringing career support directly into coursework rather than asking students to seek it out.

125
classroom presentations

Leading BUSA Courses

Our advising staff serving the Coles College of Business also lead the BUSA 3150 courses: 4 sections each semester, covering topics like professionalism, communication, resumes, interview prep, and more.

1,386
students taught by advising staff



2,956 workshop attendees

62 student interns supported via Intern-ventions Week

GOAL 1.5

18 employers and alumni participated in *Owls@Work*

Experiential Learning Events

For students already in the middle of their internship experience, DCPD launched Intern-ventions Week, a dedicated week of programming timed halfway through the semester for students in internship credit-bearing courses, addressing the real-time questions that come up only once a student is on the job.

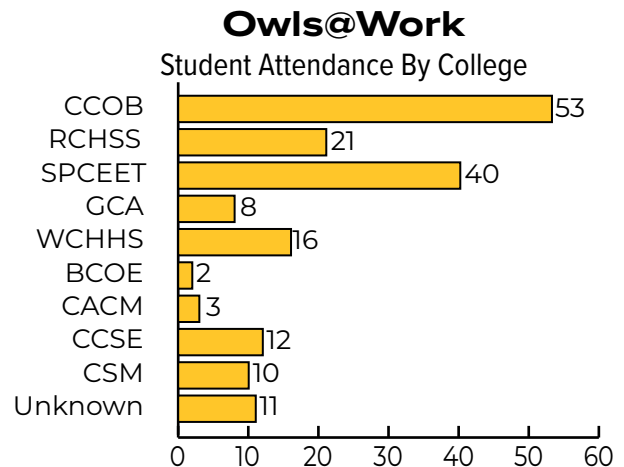
DCPD also brought new voices into the room this year through *Owls@Work*, a panel series connecting students directly with alumni working across a wide range of industries and sectors. Panelists represented organizations including GE Vernova, Coca-Cola, UPS, Emory University, Piedmont, and the American Cancer Society, among others; they gave students a firsthand look at the paths available to them, told by the people who've walked them.

Workshops Built Around Readiness

Workshops drew 2,956 attendees, each designed around what students are ready to tackle and when. Offerings like *Beyond the Basics: Advanced Resume & CV Strategies* and *How to Build Your Career This Summer* name concrete skills and concrete moments, meeting students' immediate needs while building longer-term preparedness.

This year also marked a shift toward meeting students in the context of their specific field of study, not just their class year, with new workshops addressing topics tailored to a student population's anticipated field:

- Choosing Your Own Lane in Business (CCOB)
- From Design to Done (CACM)
- Managing the Business of Being an Independent Artist (GCA)
- Planning for Grad School in Health & Human Services Pathways (WCHHS)



Featured Alumni From:

- GE Vernova
- Northwestern Mutual
- Enercon
- Pond & Co.
- Coca-Cola
- Heuer Design Collective
- Mckenneys
- SouthState Bank
- UPS
- Ridgeview Institute
- Emory University
- Piedmont Hospitals
- ID8
- American Cancer Society
- KNAPP, Inc.
- and more

Employer Investment and Presence

GOAL 4.1

DCPD continued to expand employer presence on campus through employer-led events—including Networking Nights, spotlight panels, and on-campus recruiting and information sessions—that gave students direct, smaller-scale access to professionals and hiring insights, complementing larger recruiting efforts like career fairs and reflecting sustained employer investment beyond traditional recruiting cycles.

66 employers participated in events serving students

Participating Employers Include:

- Google
- Lockheed Martin
- Gulfstream
- King's Hawaiian
- Cox Enterprises
- Dolby
- Disney
- Southern Company

Kateleen Henderson

Major: Finance

Commercial Real Estate Intern
Coro Realty

Kateleen landed a real estate internship with Coro Realty.



I've attended career fairs and employer networking events organised by the department, which allowed me to interact directly with industry professionals and learn about internship opportunities in finance and commercial real estate.... These resources helped me understand what employers look for and increased my confidence in handling the internship and job search process.

Students take notes at the Interview Prep Workshop on algorithms hosted in collaboration with CCSE and Google.

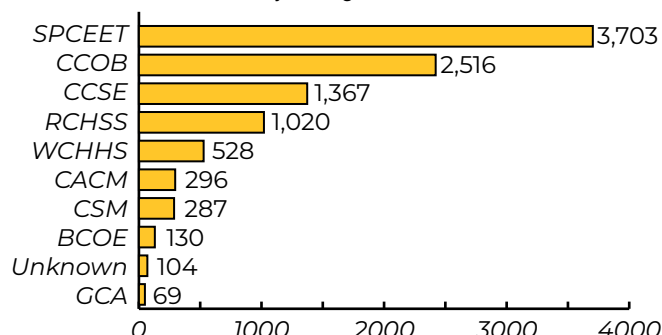


Career Fairs: Flagship Student/Employer Engagement

Career fairs are DCPD's flagship employer engagement experience, bringing students directly to employers to explore internships and full-time opportunities across industries. Hosted across the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses, these events require close coordination between DCPD, academic colleges, and hundreds of employer partners, all aligned around one goal: connecting KSU students with high-quality career opportunities.

Career Fair Attendance

By College



Fair Portfolio: Targeted Access Across Pathways

The career fair portfolio is intentionally structured by major and career interest, so students engage with the most relevant employers for their goals. STEM fairs draw the largest share of participation, reflecting strong demand from engineering, computing, and technical fields, while All-Majors fairs provide broad access for business, liberal arts, and interdisciplinary pathways. Specialized fairs—Government & Non-Profit, Education, and Part-Time Employment—round out the portfolio for more targeted needs.

10,020

total student attendance

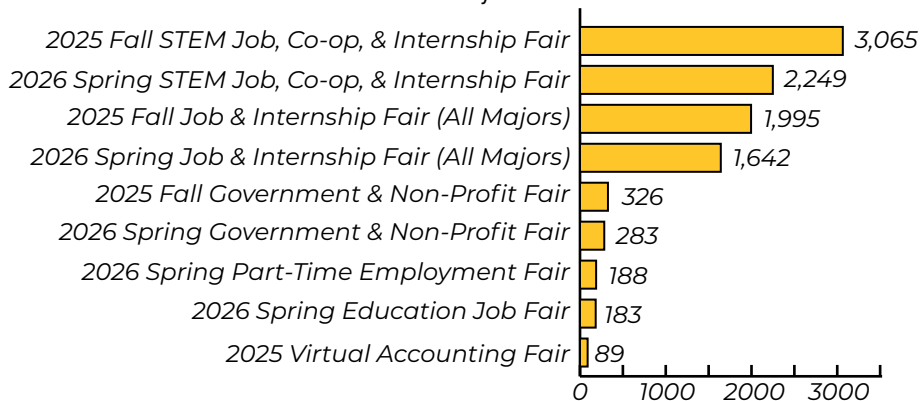
738

employer booths at fairs

GOAL 1.5

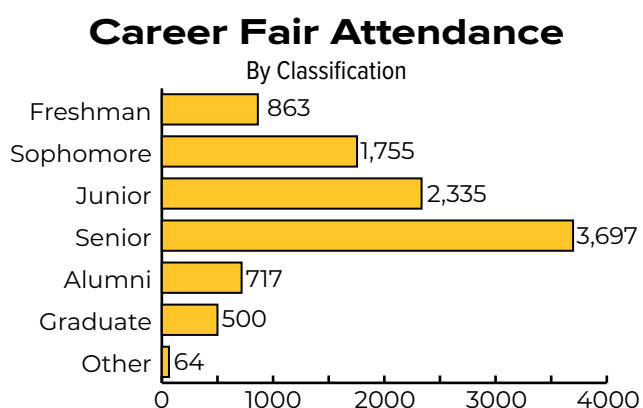
Career Fair Attendance

By Event



Fair Experience: Reducing Barriers to Engagement

Each career fair is designed to remove friction from the job search process. Services like professional headshots through the IRIS Booth, BigResume review, advising, and interview prep are integrated into pop-up events so students can strengthen their materials and confidence in real time, while programs like HireACT support equitable access through early entry and accommodations.



Brandon Stanley

Major: Cybersecurity

Junior IT Analyst Intern
Reliance Worldwide

Brandon was hired for an IT internship with Reliance Worldwide at the Marietta STEM Fair.



I... attended every career fair during my sophomore year. Each event helped me improve how I talk to recruiters, learn what employers are looking for, and feel more confident about finding opportunities in the tech field.

87% of surveyed employers identified candidates to follow up with

Additional Career Fair Hiring Success Stories

Heidi Hernandez



Major: Marketing

Social Media Marketing Intern
Globe Life

Heidi was hired for her internship with Globe Life at the Spring All-Majors Fair.

Creston Mapes



Major: Sports Management

Thermal Sales Engineer
Southern Heat Corp.

Creston was hired full time with Southern Heat at the Fall STEM Fair.

Chloe Vinson



Major: Marketing, Professional Sales

Marketing Specialist Intern
NCR

Chloe was hired for her internship with NCR at the Spring All-Majors Fair.

Specialized Population Support

DCPD serves students at different life stages and with different constraints, and the engagement data shows how intentional support for each population builds both scale and impact.

Undergraduate Students: *Building Careers Into the College Ecosystem*

For most undergraduates, college still happens in the classroom — so that's where DCPD is meeting them. Launched in March 2026, Faculty Career Champions is a pilot cohort of faculty equipped to bring career preparation directly into their courses and advising, giving students access to career resources without requiring every student to make the first move.

This builds on a classroom presence already underway: 125 classroom presentations delivered this year, plus career content taught directly through BUSA coursework by Coles advisors, alongside touchpoints that bookend the undergraduate experience, from move-in and Freshman Runout to Snow the Globe and the Senior Cookout.

37 faculty career champions in the pilot cohort

1,335 students reached through campus community events



GOAL 1.2

Graduate Students: *Meeting Evening Schedules*

Graduate students carry a different load, often balancing coursework with full-time jobs, research, or family. This year their engagement totaled 857 instances: 84 appointments, 243 event attendees, and 500 career fair attendees. New evening advising hours, offered in partnership with CCSE, Radow, and Coles, met these students on their own schedules rather than asking them to rearrange their lives around a 9-to-5 office.



28 evening advising appointments held in pilot program

DoubleOwl Students: *A High-Impact Pipeline*

Double Owl students (undergraduates already taking graduate coursework) are a unique and growing group. Of the 796 students in this population, DCPD engaged 361 this year, a 45% engagement rate. That number tells a story of steady progress: engagement has climbed from 32% two years ago to 40% last year to 45% today, reflecting both a maturing program and growing student trust.

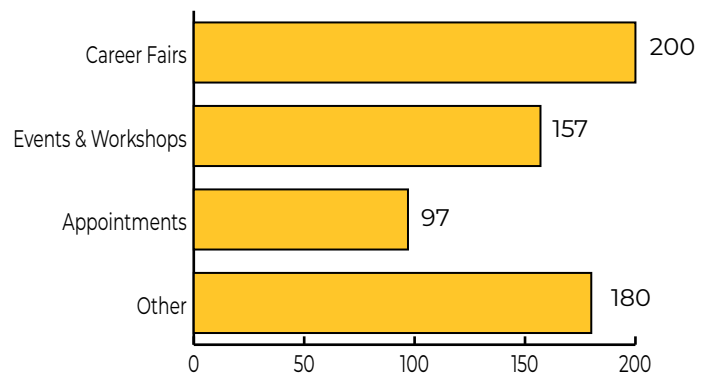
These students often connect through multiple pathways: 97 appointments, 157 events, 200 career fairs, and even 9 at Snow the Globe. Juggling advanced study alongside undergraduate work calls for flexible, accessible support that fits a complicated schedule. Watching that engagement rise year over year is the clearest sign the department is reaching them where they are.

KSU & SPSU Alumni: *A Focus for the Future*

Alumni made up 7.2% of career fair attendance (717 now-working professionals) and 1.6% of appointments (85). Their presence points to an emerging opportunity, and one we intend to invest in through a growing and deepening relationship with Alumni and Constituent Engagement: alumni as mentors, employers, and advocates. When a KSU graduate returns to a career fair to recruit or network, they extend the department's reach and carry the university's name further into the professional world. These relationships turn former students into partners—amplifying both student outcomes and KSU's standing.

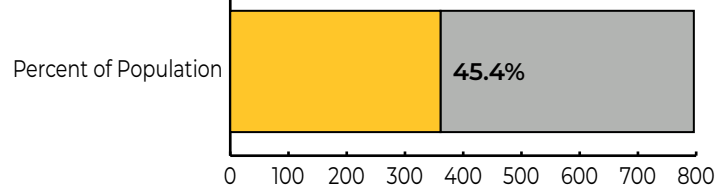
GOAL 1.2

DoubleOwl Engagement By Event Type



361 DoubleOwl students served

Engagement Percentage Of Double-Owl Population



GOAL 3.3

Christen Corbett: Double Owl

Major: Criminal Justice

Criminal Investigation Unit - Intern

Cobb County DA Office

Christen was hired to intern in the Cobb County DA's office.



[The department's] welcoming and supportive environment made it easy to ask questions, connect with others, and explore different career paths.

Resource Utilization: Reach Beyond Events/Advising

Not every student who engages with career development sits down for an appointment. A growing share of that engagement happens independently, through digital tools students use on their own time to explore options and take next steps. This section looks beyond scheduled interactions to capture that fuller picture, using platform usage data to understand how students engage with career development outside of advising and events.

GOAL 5.1

Career Resources & Digital Tools

Career development doesn't happen only during advising appointments. DCPD provides a growing suite of digital resources that let students explore careers, build application materials, and prepare for interviews whenever they need it, extending the department's reach throughout their academic journey.

Supporting Self-Directed Career Development

Students used a variety of platforms this year to prepare for their next career step, from exploring majors and occupations to refining resumes, practicing interviews, and researching labor market trends. Together, these resources support every stage of career development while allowing students to make progress independently and at their own pace.

45%

of Focus2 users did not appear in any other DCPD engagement

Digital & Self-Directed Resources:

- *Focus2Career*
- *Steppingblocks*
- *Iris Photo Booths*
- *What Can I Do With This Major?*
- *BigInterview*
- *BigResume*
- *Handshake*

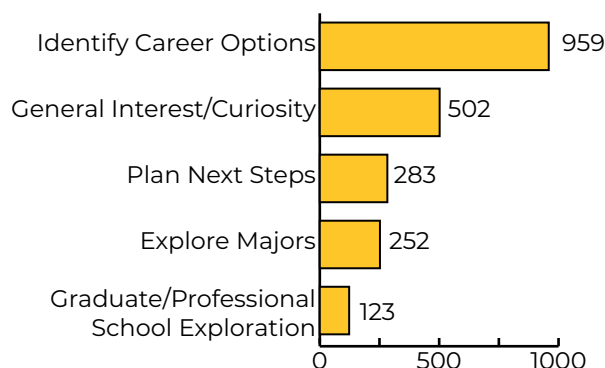
22,548 active handshake users

2,909 total IRIS booth sessions

13,895 all-time Steppingblocks engagements

2,658 registered Focus2 Career users

Focus 2 Career Reason for Utilization



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND REAL-WORLD CONNECTION

Credit-Bearing Experiential Learning

GOAL 1.5

Experiential learning helps students bridge the gap between classroom learning and professional practice. Through internship credit processing, cooperative education oversight, and experiential learning support, DCPD helps students turn workplace experiences into academic and career development.

During AY 2025–2026, DCPD supported 2,228 experiential learning enrollments, helping students gain hands-on experience, build professional skills, and prepare for post-graduation success—connecting them with work-based learning opportunities, including many paid experiences that make career exploration more financially accessible.

Calvin Crose

Major: Software Engineering

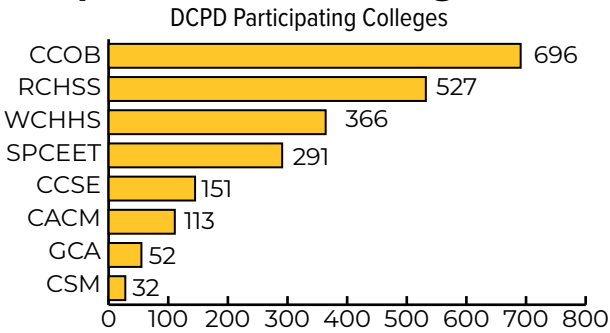
Software Engineering Intern
AMI Inc.

Calvin landed an internship at AMI after attending a KSU career fair.

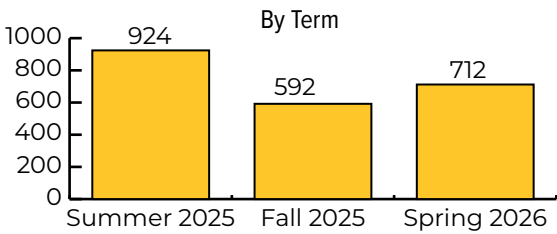


I [made an appointment] to learn about all the resources.... It was a very informative session and by the end of it I had scheduled an appointment for professional headshots and interviewing prep.

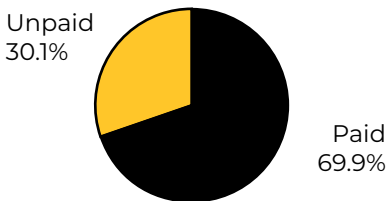
Experiential Learning Credit



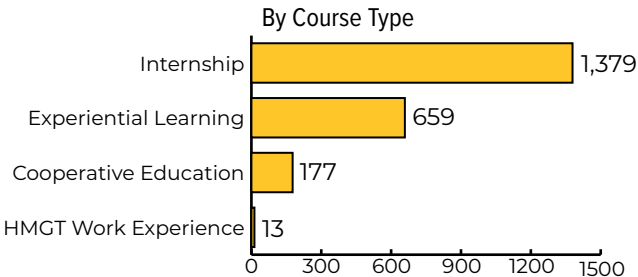
Credit Enrollment



Paid vs. Unpaid Internships



Credit Enrollment



Note: Counts included are DCPD processed experiences and not representative of all KSU credit-bearing courses.

Owl Trek Site Visits

Owl Trek Site Visits give KSU students behind-the-scenes exposure to employers, extending learning beyond the classroom into real workplace environments. Students observe daily operations, engage directly with professionals, and build a clearer understanding of workplace culture and industry expectations.

In 2025–2026, students completed 8 site visits with 140 total participants (a 600% increase over the 2024–2025 pilot year) with employers including Norfolk Southern, Gray Construction, Brasfield & Gorrie, and Georgia Transmission Corporation.

Students consistently cited direct engagement with employees, exposure to authentic work environments, and networking with professionals, including KSU alumni in industry roles, as the most valuable elements.

8 site visits

140 total student participants



GOAL 1.5



The presentations given by select employees in an actual board room really illustrated what a "normal" day in office would look like.

— Becca Patton, Gray Construction Visit

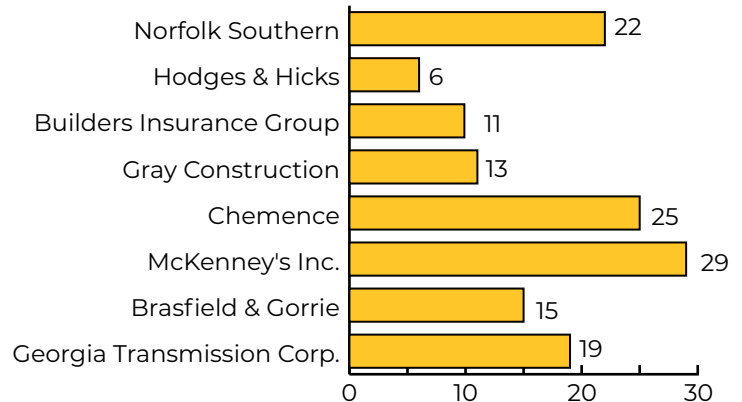


I valued the opportunity to network—not only with fellow students but also with professionals from Norfolk Southern. Everyone I interacted with was positive, welcoming, and genuinely passionate about their work.

— Tyreike Butler, Norfolk Southern Visit

Owl Trek Site Visit

Attendance



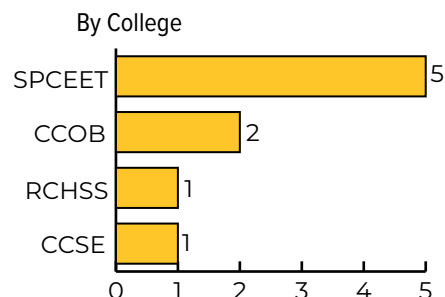
OwlXperience: KSU Department Job Shadow Days

OwlXperience is a department-based job shadow program that lets students explore career paths across KSU by spending a day inside university units related to their major or career interest. In a low-barrier setting, students observe daily work and engage with staff — helping clarify interests, confirm intended pathways, or surface new directions they hadn't considered.

Participating departments have included the Office of Undergraduate Research, Strategic Communications and Marketing, KSU Athletics, and University Information Technology Services (UITs), among others.

4 host departments
60 program applicants
9 OwlXperience Interns

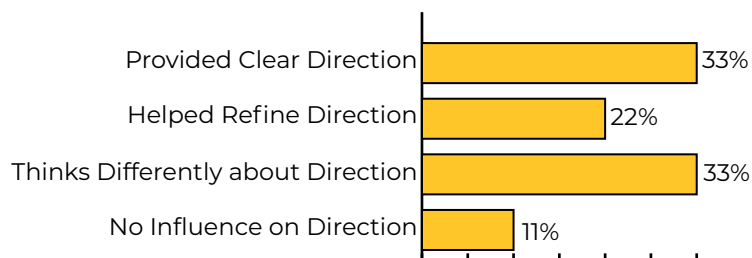
Attendance



GOAL 3.1

Impact on Direction

After Attendance



After this experience, I see [IT] differently. It's not that far from what I already love.... just in a different context.

— Samuel Florez Garcia, UITs Attendee



Seeing what people in those roles do on a day-to-day basis gave me insight into different career paths and opened my mind to more options.

— Rahel Abshiro, Strategic Communications & Marketing Attendee



Being able to intern with OwlXperience solidified my position on conducting undergraduate research.

— Jillianne Larkin, Office of Undergraduate Research Attendee



Georgia Legislative Internship Program

For political science and international affairs majors, few experiences rival stepping inside the Gold Dome itself. Through the Georgia Legislative Internship Program (GLIP), DCPD places students full-time alongside lawmakers and legislative staff across more than 40 House and Senate committees throughout the spring session, where they track bills, prepare policy briefs, and engage directly with the constituents those decisions affect.

Behind every successful placement is a deliberate DCPD process: dedicated interview-prep workshops, personal application review, and one-on-one consultant meetings that ensure each candidate walks into interviews ready—building a pipeline of KSU students prepared not just to participate in state government, but to contribute to it.



GOAL 4.1

Shana Johns

Major: Political Science

GLIP Intern
Georgia General Assembly

Shana Johns landed an internship at the Capitol through the Georgia Legislative Internship Program.



Between attending committee meetings, learning the atmosphere and ins and outs of creating policies, speaking with constituents and gaining insight into real issues in my community... the knowledge and skills that I am bound to acquire will be ones that I carry with me long after my internship concludes.

PARTNERSHIPS: EMPLOYER AND CAMPUS RELATIONS

Employer Partnerships

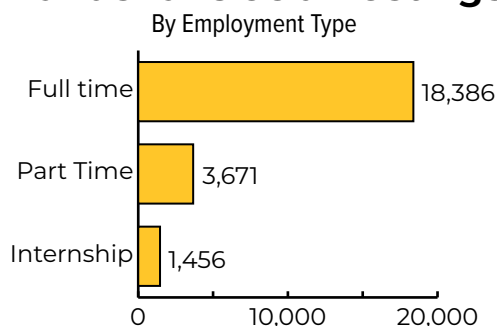
DCPD strengthens relationships with employers by creating multiple pathways to recruit KSU talent. Through Handshake, career fairs, and on-campus recruiting, the department connects students and employers throughout the year, expanding access to internships, part-time employment, and full-time careers while supporting employers' talent acquisition needs.

823 new employer connections

24,373 jobs on Handshake

42,969 active connected employers

Handshake Job Postings



Expanding Capacity to Serve Employers

To support growing employer demand, DCPD expanded its Employer Relations team and introduced college-specific Handshake job pools, giving employers more targeted access to students while helping colleges promote relevant opportunities, with more intentional outreach to employers in high-growth industries aligned with KSU's academic strengths.

Just as important, the team invested significant time in rethinking and level-setting its strategy, revisiting roles and titles to ensure the team's structure matched its growing scope of work. That groundwork makes this a cornerstone year for Employer Relations, one that sets the foundation for continued growth in the years ahead.

GOAL 4.1

738 employer booths at career fairs

41 employer recruitment/networking engagements on campus

Targeted Outreach

The Employer & Corporate Relations team identified and pursued 197 new employers from key strategic priority industries, including film & media, the arts, healthcare, and small business.

Segmented Job Pools

The Marketing team created evergreen links to pre-filtered job pools by industry and major on Handshake, and offered OwlTV marketing to each college to share with students.

Listening to Employers to Improve Student Outcomes

Employer feedback remains central to DCPD's strategy. Through career fair evaluations and the inaugural HireKSU Employer Focus Group, the department gathered insight into employer hiring priorities and workforce needs—conversations that continue to shape engagement efforts and strengthen the connection between student preparation and industry expectations.

That feedback is also shaping how DCPD structures its events, refining offerings to bring together students and employers with the strongest alignment for a successful match.



87% of surveyed employers identified candidates to follow up with

99% of employers rated their fair experience as satisfied or better

HireKSU Takeaways

Targeted Outreach

Student preparedness “eager, teachable, and a desire to contribute” is valued most among employers; students scored lower on preparedness metrics compared to professionalism, communication, and resume quality.

Awareness Gaps

Program and degree awareness gaps, not program quality, block employer trust in the University. Lack of knowledge about programs, KSU not surfacing to leadership in target discussions, limited experience with KSU grads were consistently cited.

KSU's Identity is Still Unformed

The University's identity varies wildly among different employers; a regional commuter school, a fast-growing university, a nursing/business powerhouse, Southern Poly successor, Atlanta-adjacent talent pool. We have no coherent identity.

ROI is the Universal Language

The eternal question employers ask themselves, is, “Can I pull students consistently?” at all levels of the conversation, whether individually at job fairs, or from a pipeline perspective among hiring leadership.

Campus Community Investment

GOAL 3.1

Career readiness works best when it meets students where they already are, rather than asking them to seek it out. This section reflects that principle in practice: showing up in campus life, building staff knowledge across the university, and deepening partnerships that make support easier to find and access.

Event Engagement

DCPD expanded its campus presence by meeting students in high-traffic and celebratory spaces rather than expecting them to seek out services—tabling at rec center involvement fairs, the student success fall festival, and post-commencement celebration, plus signature traditions like the freshman tailgate and, in collaboration with Flight, senior celebrations on both campuses.

Staff Education of Campus Resources

DCPD staff has taken regular half-day field trips to offices and centers around campus to learn about what they do and gain a view to the scale and scope of the work KSU does to support its students and community.

Partnership with Student Success and Support Offices

The Nest to Next four-year career development plan was built out at scale, tying in campus resources across multiple divisions to give students more ways in and out of support wherever a specific need arises.

DCPD also worked with Academic Advising to stand up a student referral process, ensuring higher-need students are followed up with rather than slipping through the cracks.

1,559 students engaged at collaborative events



Inter-Department Connections:

- ↗ Athletics Administration (Football, Baseball)
- ↗ Research Field Station
- ↗ Hatchbridge Incubator
- ↗ Global Education
- ↗ Sustainability programs
- ↗ University Advancement

108

student advising appointments made via referral

Owl Swap & Professional Dress

Owl Swap is KSU's campus closet initiative providing students free access to professional and everyday clothing. DCPD partners with Owl Swap to support access to professional dress, particularly during career fair seasons and other high-visibility recruitment events.

During career fairs, Owl Swap provides on-site access to professional attire and changing space, helping students engage confidently with employers regardless of financial barriers to professional dress.

DCPD also contributes ongoing clothing donations and fundraising, raising \$400 through an April Giving Day campaign to expand the closet's inventory of career-ready attire.

This partnership helps remove a key barrier to career readiness—the cost of professional clothing—while reinforcing a shared commitment across campus to equitable access and student success in professional settings.



GOAL 1.5

Investing in Students' Career Readiness

The Career Services Scholarship Fund helps reduce the financial barriers that can accompany a successful job search, supporting expenses like professional attire, travel, and interview preparation. Funds are applied directly to students' university accounts, giving recipients flexibility to use them where needed most.

During AY 2025–2026, DCPD awarded approximately \$12,500 in scholarship funding to 25 students, with individual awards of \$500. These investments help ensure that financial circumstances do not prevent students from pursuing career opportunities or presenting themselves confidently in the hiring process.



DATA-INFORMED PRACTICES AND MEASUREMENT

Career readiness is only as strong as the evidence behind it. This year, DCPD established data and assessment as a core departmental function, investing in staffing, infrastructure, and partnerships to better track engagement, measure outcomes, and inform decisions. The result: a more rigorous, transparent picture of student success and a foundation to build on.

GOAL 5.1

Investing in Data Capacity

In 2025, DCPD made a strategic investment in the people behind its data, hiring a Senior Research and Assessment Specialist to lead departmental data strategy, reporting, and analytics infrastructure, and bringing on a graduate assistant for the 25-26 year to support day-to-day data and operational work. This investment freed staff time previously spent on manual data pulls and positioned the department to build the dashboards, standardize reporting, and deepen its data partnerships described below.

Building the Systems to Measure and Improve Impact

This year, DCPD strengthened its operational and analytics infrastructure to provide clearer insight into student engagement, career outcomes, and departmental performance, equipping both the department and university leadership with the data needed to make informed decisions.

Expanding Data Visibility

DCPD developed and published interactive dashboards tracking advising appointments, experiential learning participation, and First Destination Survey outcomes, giving staff real-time access to key performance indicators and trends. The department also shared First Destination Survey outcomes with campus leadership, providing actionable data to support institutional planning and demonstrate post-graduation success.

Improving Data Quality and Decision Making

Additional improvements included standardized naming conventions for more accurate reporting, enhanced operational tracking, expanded marketing analytics, and closer collaboration with Institutional Research, Enrollment, Curriculum Support, and Data Strategy. Together, these investments have improved the quality of departmental data and strengthened DCPD's ability to evaluate programs, identify opportunities, and make evidence-based decisions that support continuous improvement.

First Destination Survey Overview

The First Destination Survey (FDS) collects detailed insights into the paths KSU students pursue after graduation. Our survey follows National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and MBA Career Services & Employer Alliance (MBACSEA) guidelines, tracking outcomes from graduation through 180 days post-graduation for undergraduate and graduate students alike.

This year, DCPD made significant investments in survey infrastructure — including a targeted completion campaign (prize incentives, coordinated text and email outreach), a new data-sharing partnership with the Registrar's office, and a new FDS dashboard that enables us to share outcomes in real time with university leadership, deans, and academic partners. The result was a 32% increase in data received, taking outcomes reporting from 68.5% to 90.2%, our highest-ever knowledge rate.



Key Outcomes

90% overall knowledge rate

75% overall success rate

\$66,596 avg. base salary

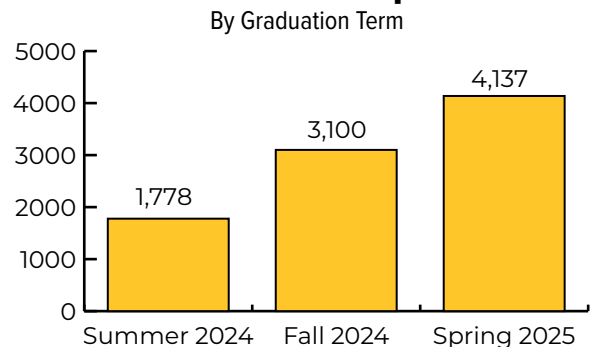
Terminology and Definitions

Knowledge Rate is the percentage of graduating students for whom we have credible and verifiable information about post-graduation career plans. The higher the knowledge rate, the more accurate the success rates will be. Most institutions strive for a minimum knowledge rate of 65%.

Success Rate is the percentage of students who are doing one of the following within 180 days of graduation:

- ▣ Full or part-time employment
- ▣ Enrolled in a graduate program
- ▣ Participating in a program of voluntary service
- ▣ Serving in the U.S. Armed Forces

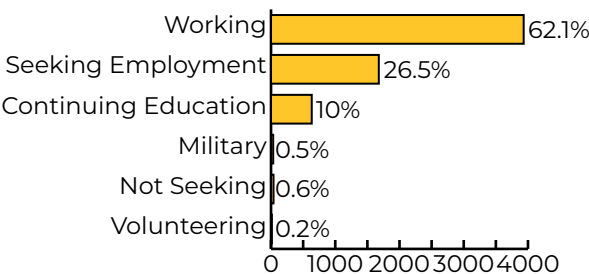
2024-25 FDS Respondents



FDS Survey - General Insights

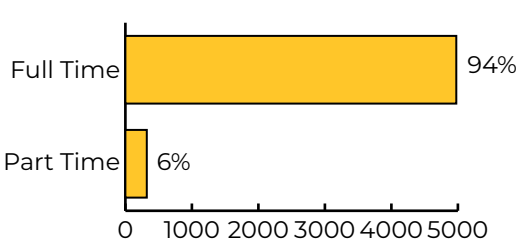
First Destination Activity

Across All Degree Levels



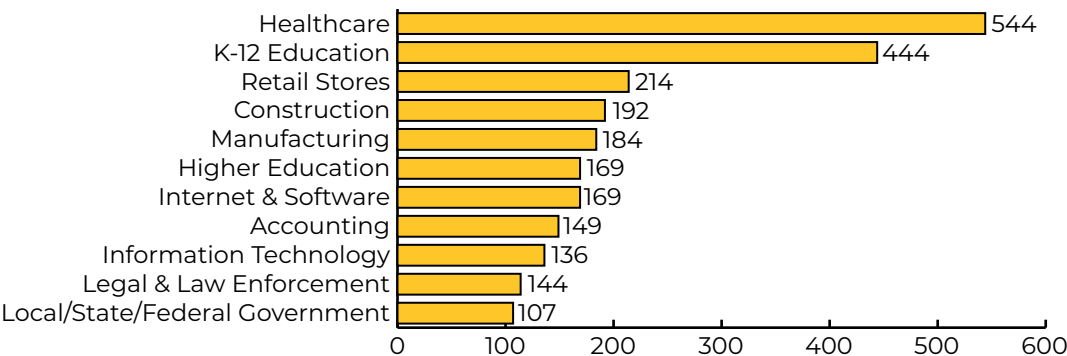
2024-25 FDS Respondents

By Employment Type

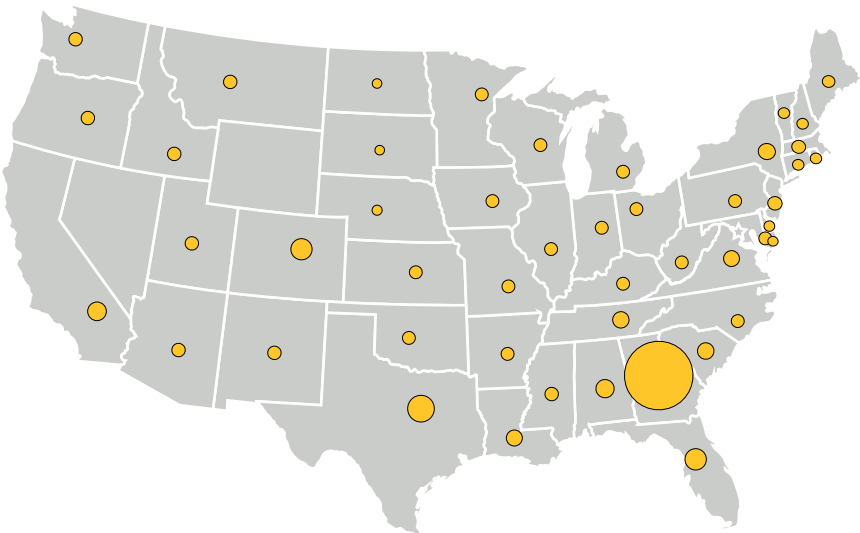


Top Known Industries

Among Working Graduates

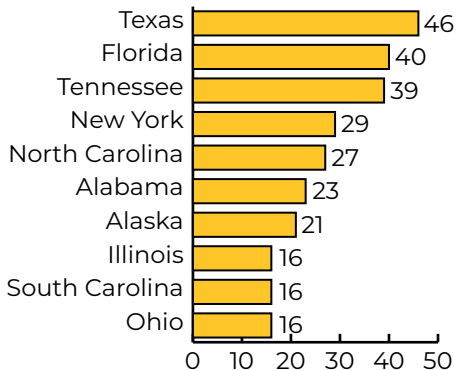


Geographic Placement

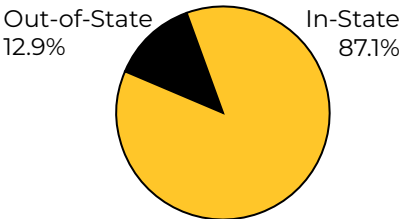


Top Out of State Placements

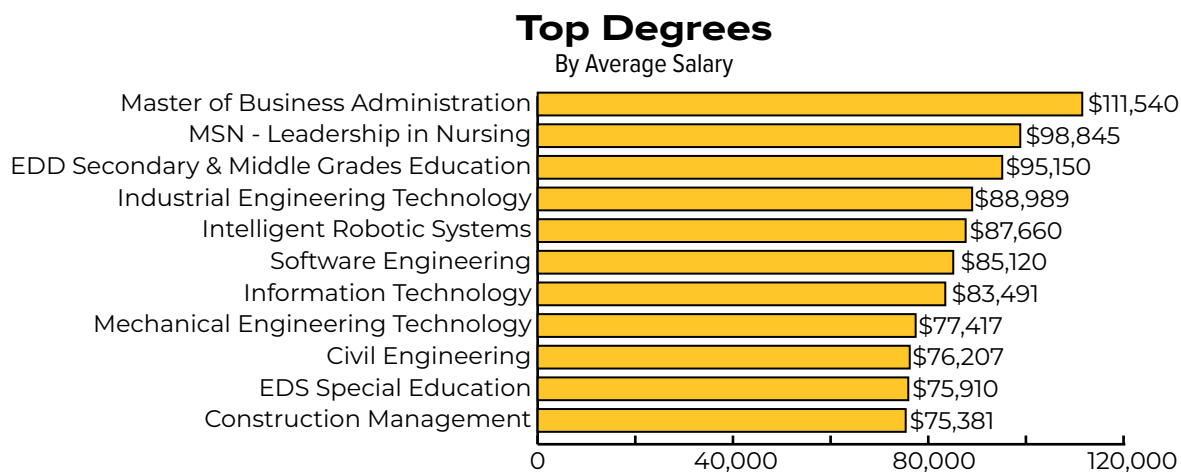
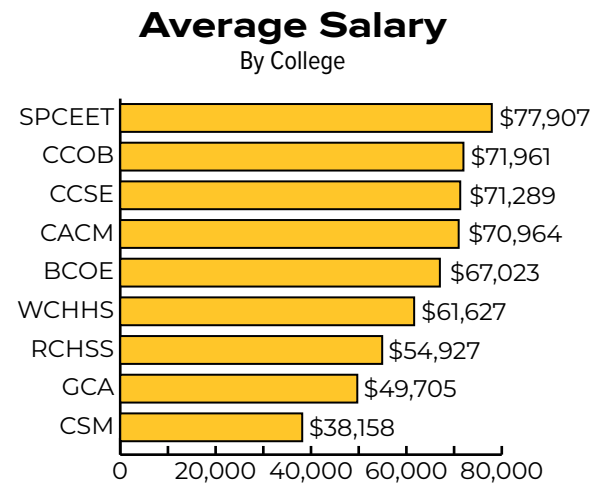
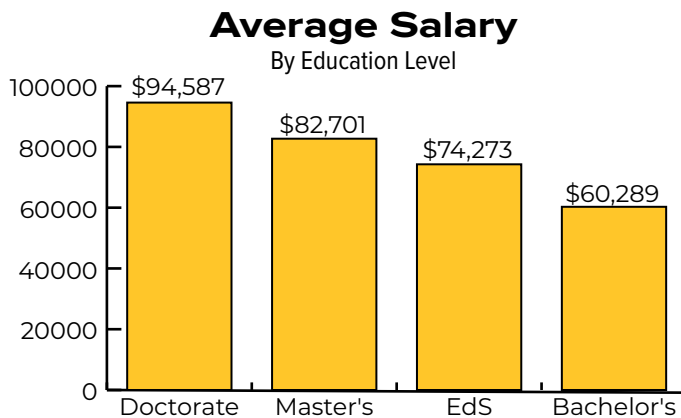
Among Working Graduates



Job Location



Salary Data

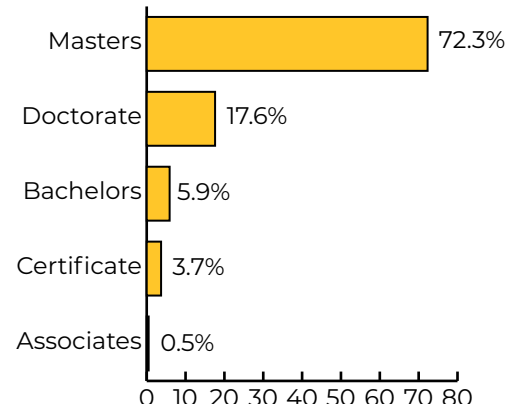


Continuing Education Outcomes

Top 10 Destination Institutions

- Kennesaw State University
- Georgia State University
- University of Georgia
- Mercer University
- Augusta State University
- Emory University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- University of West Georgia
- Auburn University
- Boston University

Degree Level Pursued



LOOKING AHEAD

This year's growth was never just about the numbers, though the numbers tell part of the story. It was about proving, appointment after appointment and classroom after classroom, that when students get support early and often, they don't just find a job. They build a career. That distinction sits underneath everything on the pages before this one, and it's the same distinction that will guide DCPD into next year.

None of it happens by one team alone. This year's expanded reach reflects an organization that's grown smarter about scale, not just bigger: Career Consultants deepening relationships across colleges, Faculty Career Champions bringing career readiness into the classroom, and Career Ambassadors and Graduate Professional Assistants extending our reach in ways no single office could manage alone. DCPD works because we work together, with faculty who open their classrooms, employers who show up for students, staff who keep raising the bar, and students who bring their ambition and their trust.

In AY 2026–27, we will:

- **Scale Nest to Next** so it becomes less of a resource students discover and more of a habit they build from their first semester on.
- **Increase appointment activation** by re-introducing drop-in advising hours, lowering the barrier to that first conversation, so more students find the support they need at the moment they need it.
- **Expand the Faculty Career Champions Program** beyond its founding cohort, bringing more colleges and more classrooms into the career conversation.
- **Build college-specific experiential learning pathways**, so a student's path to hands-on experience reflects their major and their goals, not a one-size-fits-all model.
- **Continue closing the preparedness gap** through hands-on investment in the skills employers ask for: professional headshots, interview readiness, and the soft skills that turn a candidate into a hire.
- **Advance and prioritize data-decision-making**, strengthening how we collect and use outcomes data to guide decisions and demonstrate impact.
- **Deepen alumni engagement**, connecting current students to mentors, employers, and career consultants who've walked the path before them.

DCPD is proud to support the University's Taking Flight strategic plan, and we remain committed to doing our part to advance student success alongside it. As Kennesaw State continues to grow and evolve, we will grow with it, deepening the reach, relationships, and results that help every student move from finding a job to building a career.



None of this work would be possible without the dedicated efforts of a careers staff that truly cares for and is committed to the success of all KSU students. We acknowledge and thank them for their work.



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