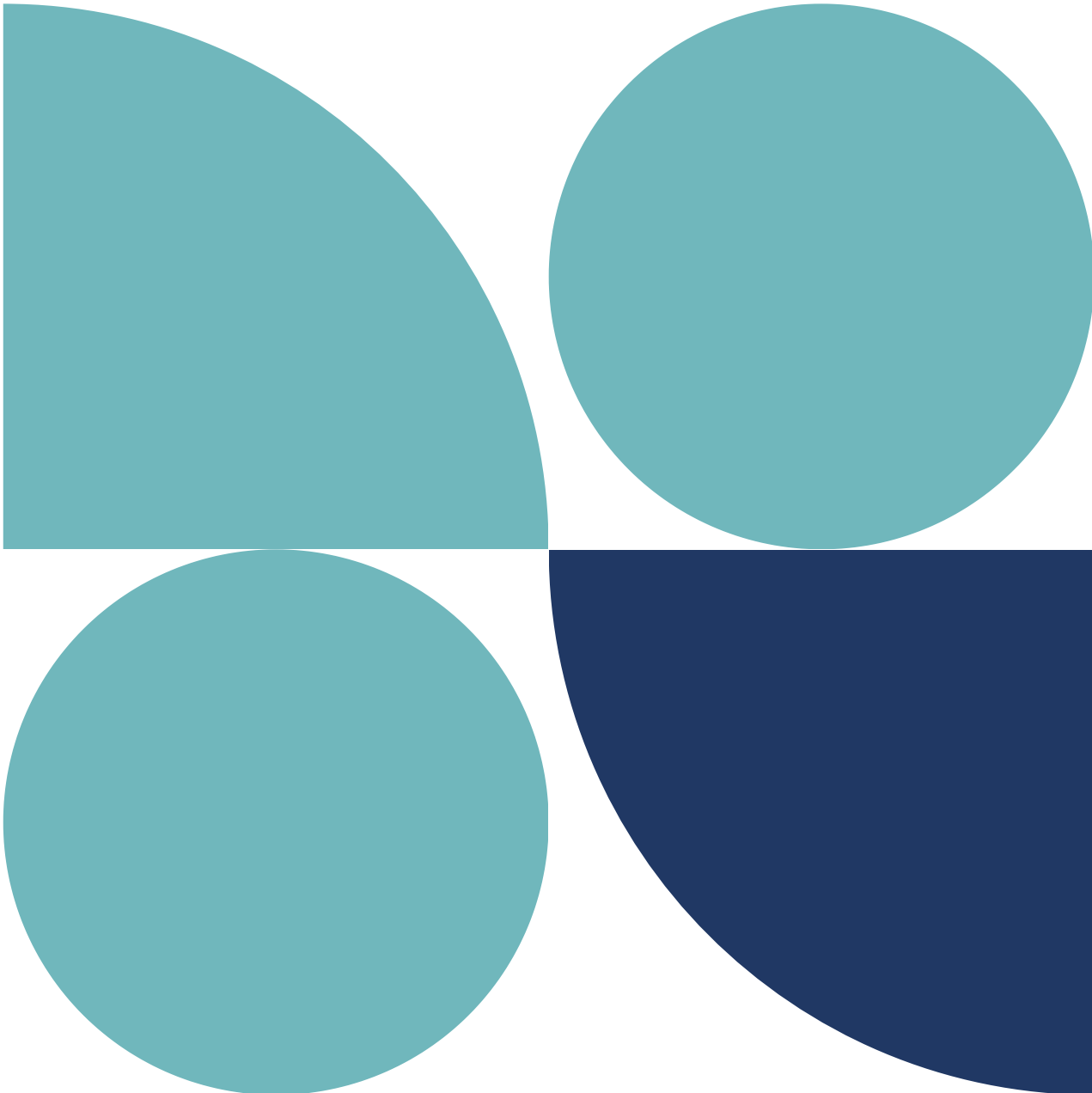


Pathways 2 Possibilities

Program Evaluation Over Time



Executive Summary

CERE
Pathways 2 Possibilities
Program Evaluation 2024

Pathways 2 Possibilities Mississippi (P2P) has demonstrated notable efficacy in guiding Mississippi's youth towards diverse career paths and educational pursuits. Through an evaluation conducted by the Center for Research Evaluation (CERE) at the University of Mississippi, several notable findings have emerged, underscoring the program's impact over time:

Impact on Educational and Career Aspirations: The survey data indicate that **a substantial majority of P2P participants attribute meaningful influence to the Expo in shaping their educational and career considerations**. Approximately four out of every five participants acknowledge the Expo's significance in informing their future aspirations, reflecting the program's success in providing guidance.

Participant Satisfaction: Feedback garnered from past participants reflects a **high level of satisfaction with the P2P Expo**. With 57% expressing being very satisfied and 37% indicating satisfaction, the positive sentiments underscore the perceived value and relevance of the event in facilitating career exploration and planning among Mississippi's youth.

Alignment with Job Market Trends: Notably, **some of the key interests expressed by P2P participants align with the state's projected job growth areas, particularly in Health Science**. This alignment reflects the program's ability to contribute to workforce development needs and to prepare students for an evolving job market.

P2P's mission lies in its capacity to empower individuals and contribute to the economic prosperity of Mississippi. By providing opportunities for career exploration and development, the program informs youth about aspects of the Mississippi workforce and exposes them to opportunities they may have not otherwise considered.

While the majority of participants offered no suggestions for improvement, those who did recommended additions to career offerings and logistical enhancements for future events. Incorporating these insights can further refine the program's effectiveness and ensure its sustained positive impact on Mississippi's youth.

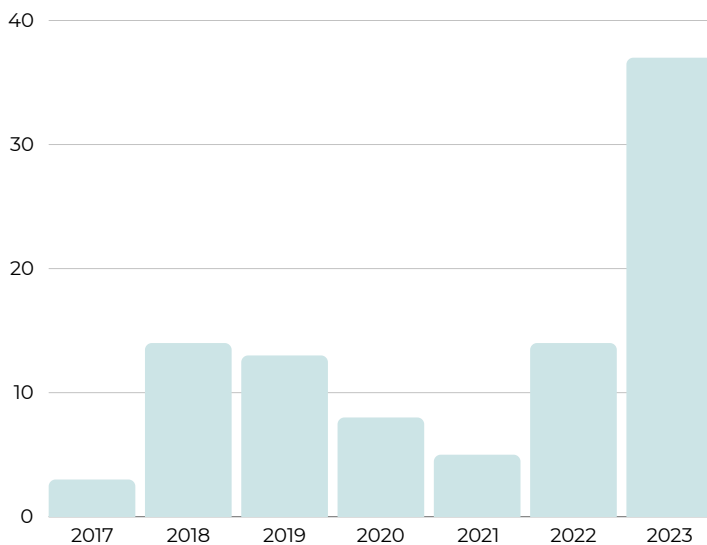
Findings

This report presents the results of an evaluation conducted by the Center for Research Evaluation (CERE) on Pathways 2 Possibilities Mississippi (P2P). P2P aims to help Mississippi's youth explore different career options and set their sights on bright futures. More information about the program is available at www.pathways2possibilities.org.

Methods

The Center for Research Evaluation at the University of Mississippi has conducted evaluations for Pathways 2 Possibilities (P2P) since 2015. CERE drew on its accumulated data from years of P2P events to amass a contact list of past participants, totaling 5,205 participant email addresses from years 2018 – 2023. In 2023, CERE reached out to this pool of past participants to conduct a web survey about their educational and career interests over time. The survey yielded a total of 133 responses, for a response rate of approximately 3% – while this rate is lower than average for web survey distribution samples, the age of the sample, age group of the participants, and the transitory nature of adolescent contact information led the research team to expect some practical limitations on response rate [1]. The survey results include responses from Expo attendees from a wide range of years. The largest share of people who took the survey were attendees of the 2023 Expo.

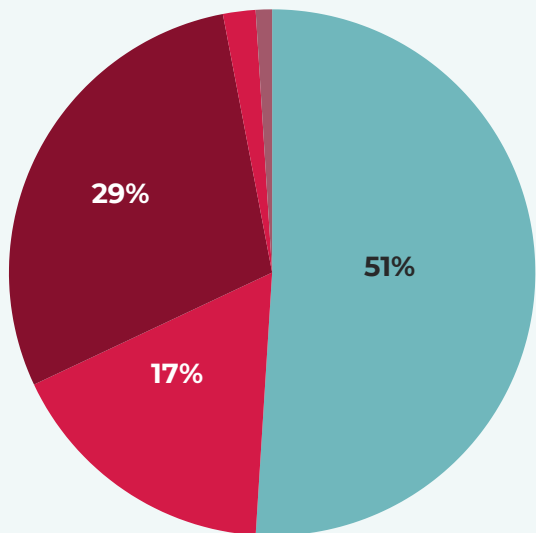
The survey results include responses from Expo attendees from a wide range of years. The largest share of people who took the survey were attendees of the 2023 Expo.



Findings from this survey cannot be understood to be representative of all P2P Expo attendees. Further, these cross-sectional data are only able to capture information about participants at a single point in time; the data cannot account for how a given individual may change from year to year. Even considering these limitations, however, the results provide useful insights about the students who attended the Expos, what they retained from the experience, and their later educational and career aspirations.

Most survey participants were still students in high school.

- I am a full time student in high school
- I have finished high school and am a student...
- I am employed (and am not a student)
- I am not employed, but I am looking for work
- I am not employed and not looking for work



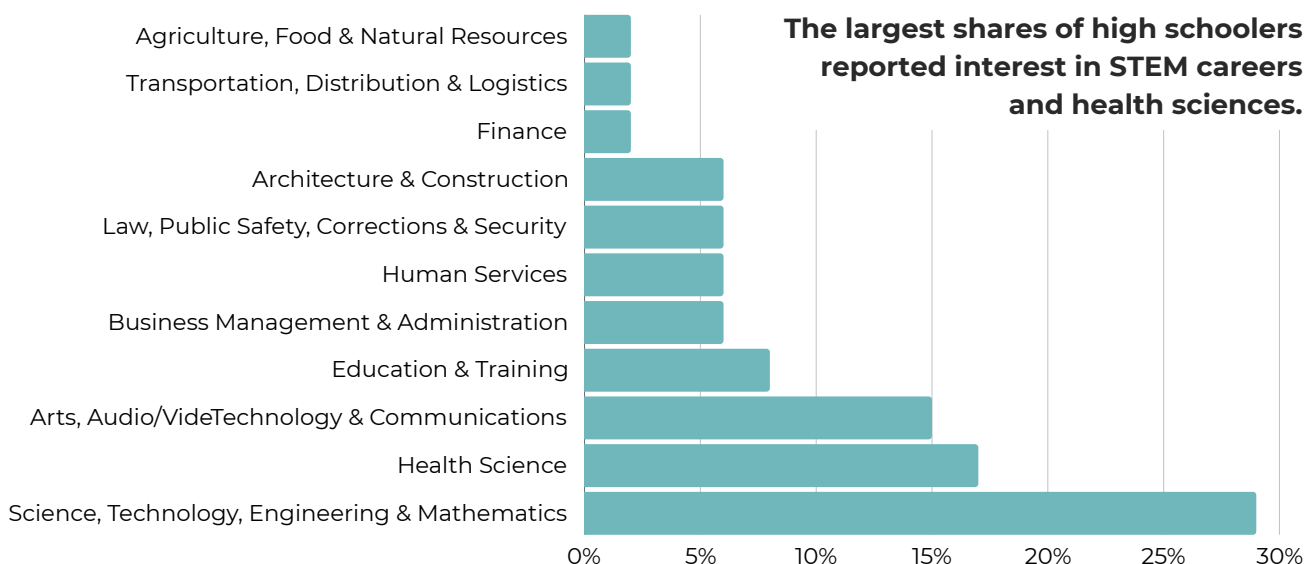
What are past P2P students doing now?

Most (51%) of the survey participants were still students in high school. The next largest shares of participants were currently employed and no longer students (29%), followed by college students (17%). For the purposes of analysis, this report divides survey participants into two groups: **current high schoolers** (n=48) and **high school graduates** (n=46).

Current High Schoolers

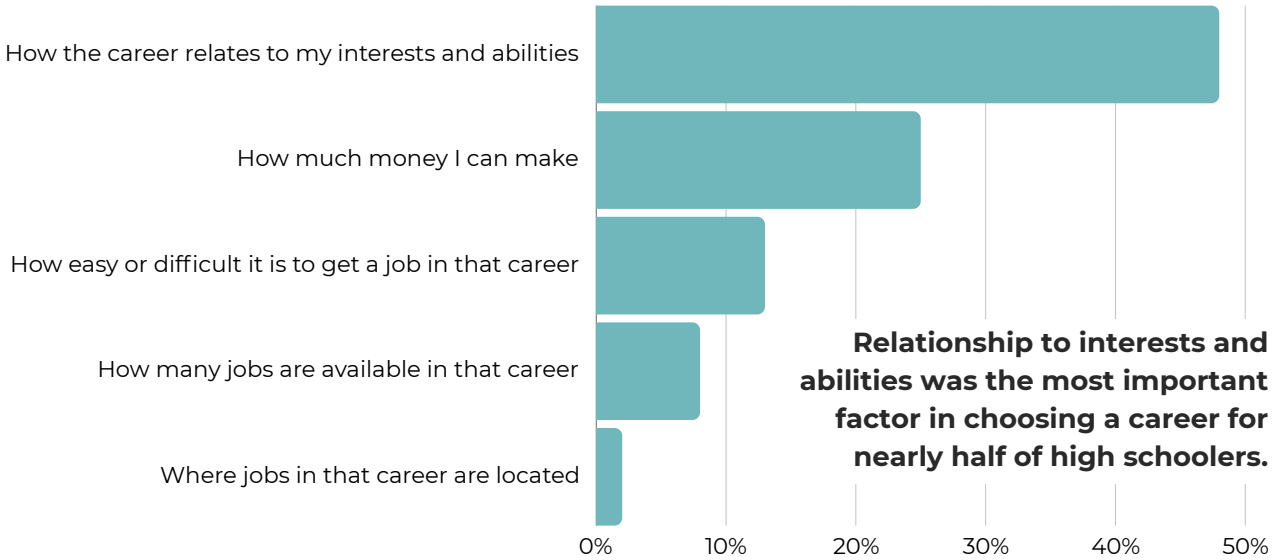
The vast majority of high schoolers – 81% – reported that their plan after graduating was to attend college. An additional 13% reported planning to join the military immediately upon graduation. Very few students reported plans to attend technical school or to start working immediately (4% and 2% respectively).

Survey participants reported their career fields of interest. CERE categorized these according to the 16 career clusters established by Advance CTE [2]. Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) has the highest percentage at 29%, followed by Health Science at 17%. Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications make up 15% of the students, while Education & Training account for 8%. Business Management & Administration, Human Services, Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security, and Architecture & Construction each have 6%. Transportation, Distribution & Logistics, Finance, and Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources have the lowest percentage at 2% each.



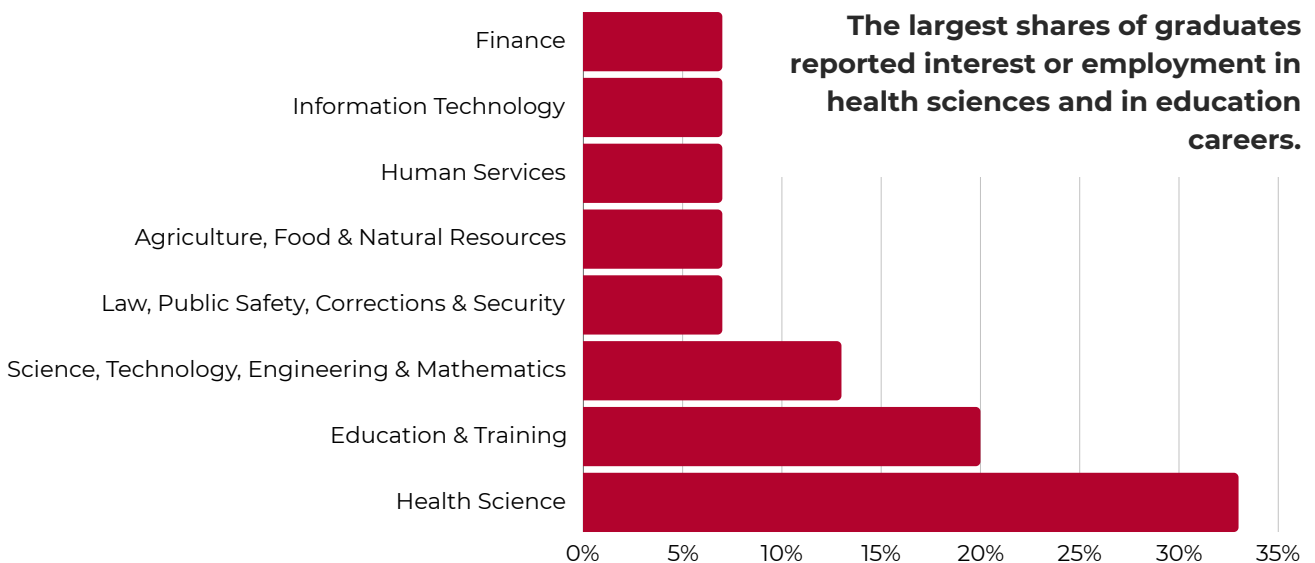
Current High Schoolers (cont.)

High school students also reported what factors were most important to them in their career decision making. For the largest share of these students (48%), the most important factor was “how the career relates to my interests or abilities.”



High School Graduates

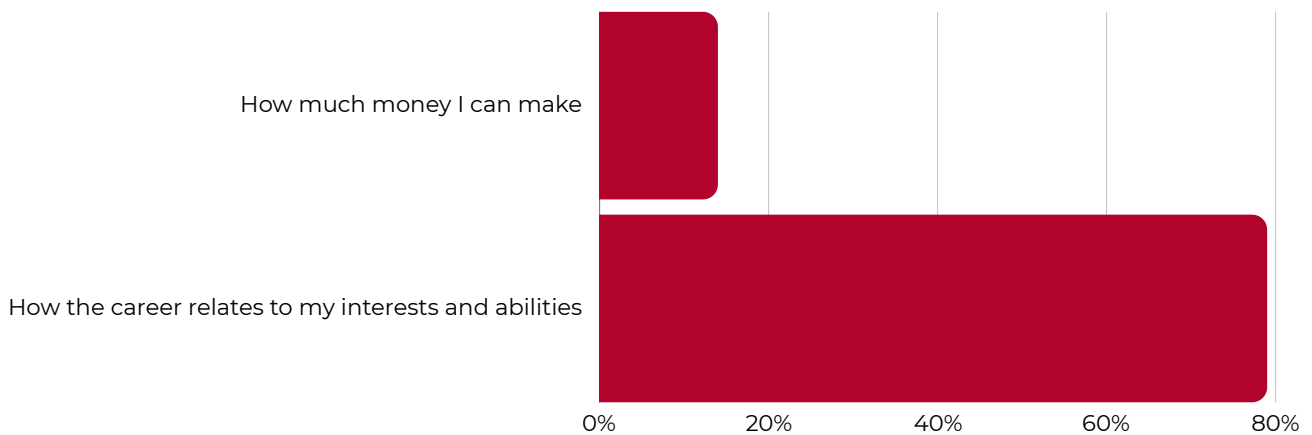
High school graduates were asked to report their career field of interest (for college and technical school students) or their present career field (for current employees). Health Science represents the largest segment at 33%, followed by Education & Training at 20%. Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) accounts for 13% of the graduates. Finance, Information Technology, Human Services, Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, and Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security each comprise 7% of the graduates.



High School Graduates (cont.)

High school graduates reported what factors were most important to them in their career decision making. An overwhelming majority of graduates (79%) report that the most important factor was “how the career relates to my interests or abilities.” Earnings potential was the second most commonly cited factor, at only 14% of graduates. No other response options were selected by any graduate survey participants.

Relationship to interests and abilities was the most important factor in choosing a career for most graduates.



Relationship to Job Market Projections

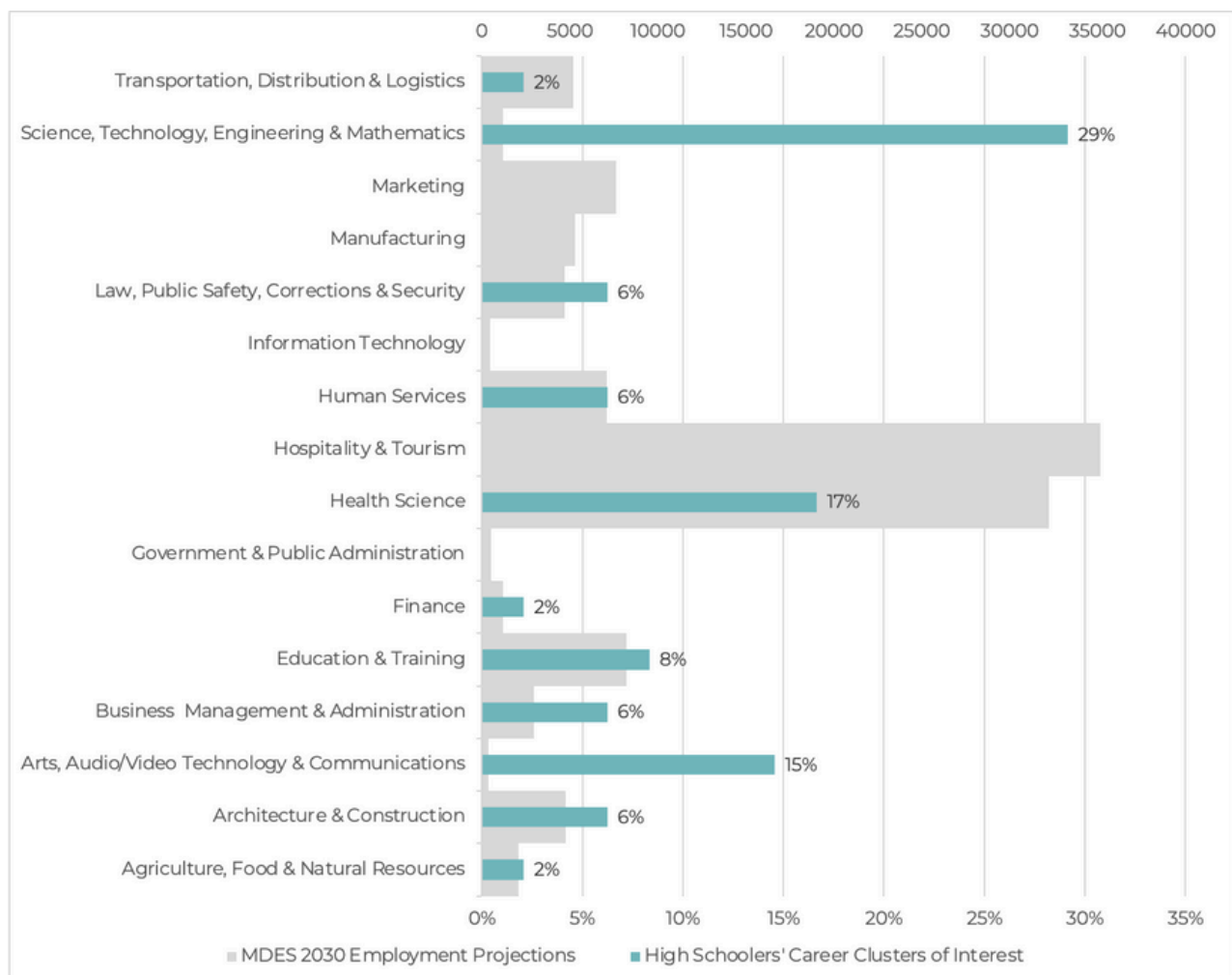
Across both groups of participants, the most important factor in career selection was the career’s relationship to their own interests or abilities. For both groups, this factor was cited as important more often than were earning potential, availability of job openings, or locations of available jobs.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security releases long term employment projections for occupations in the state. The most recent data available include occupational projections through the year 2030 [3]. CERE classified these projections according to career clusters [4].

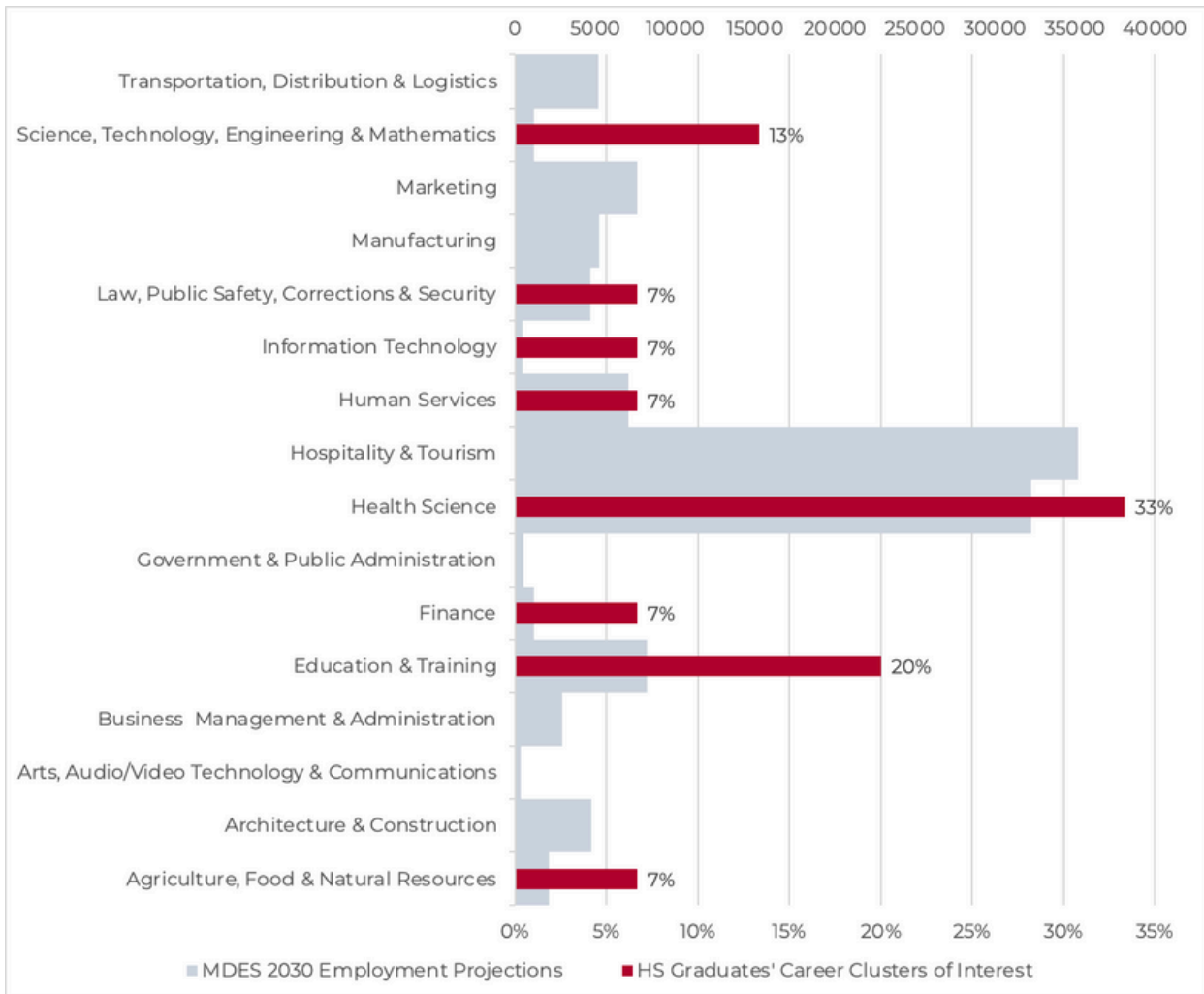
Cluster	2020 Employment Estimate	2030 Employment Projection	Projected Growth (Number of Jobs)	Projected Growth (Percent Growth)
Hospitality & Tourism	141000	176170	35170	25%
Health Science	167820	200070	32250	19%
Education & Training	79920	88140	8220	10%
Marketing	125400	133040	7640	6%
Human Services	56070	63180	7110	13%
Manufacturing	127540	132830	5290	4%
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	75350	80540	5190	7%
Architecture & Construction	74210	78950	4740	6%
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	44260	48970	4710	11%
Business Management & Administration	164020	166970	2950	2%
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	24010	26110	2100	9%
Finance	31700	32900	1200	4%
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	31030	32210	1180	4%
Government & Public Administration	9290	9800	510	5%
Information Technology	9980	10440	460	5%
Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications	13420	13780	360	3%

As illustrated in the table above, the career clusters expected to create the largest number of new jobs are Hospitality & Tourism, Health Science, and Education & Training. Career cluster preferences from P2P Expo participants align with two of these top three fields (Health Science, and Education & Training). For current high school students, the large share of interest in STEM career fields may be reflective of educational trends over the past decade to prioritize STEM and STEAM education paths. While STEM career fields are not among the fastest growing occupational fields in the Mississippi economy, the high transferability of STEM skills can be an asset to a wide range of high-need career fields. The second largest share of high schoolers reported an interest in health sciences careers and the third largest share reported an interest in education and training careers. These fields are the second and third (respectively) fastest expanding career fields in the state. The charts below illustrate the distribution of projected job openings in 2030 and the distribution of career field interest for current high schoolers and high school graduates.

The large share of current high schoolers interested in Health Sciences aligns with the state’s second-largest projected job market.



The largest share of high school graduates report career interests in Health Sciences, which aligns with the state’s second-largest projected job market.



Impact of the Expo on Careers and Planning

Survey participants were asked about the impact that P2P Expo attendance had on their educational and career aspirations. **Overall, a large share of participants reported that the Expo had a significant impact of some kind on their educational or career plans.** A significant majority, four out of every five participants, agreed or strongly agreed that "The Expo was meaningful for my career or education plans," indicating a positive outcome. Further, roughly three out of every four participants agreed that something they learned at the Expo influenced their career or educational goals.



Most participants agreed with the statement: "Something I learned at the Expo influenced my education goals."



Most participants agreed with the statement: "Something I learned at the Expo influenced my career goals."



Most participants agreed with the statement: "The Expo was meaningful for my career or education plans."

The survey data indicate a high level of satisfaction with the Career Expo event, with 57% of respondents reporting being very satisfied, followed by 37% expressing satisfaction, while only a minority expressed neutral or negative sentiments.



Among Current High Schoolers

93%

report being Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the Expo



Among Current College Students

100%

report being Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the Expo



Among Non-Student Adults

89%

report being Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the Expo

Feedback from past attendees

“ It helped me decide my college major.”
- from a 2019 attendee

“ I wouldn't change a thing bc it helped me with choosing.”
- from a 2023 attendee

“ Let me go a second time.”
- from a 2018 attendee

Finally, past participants were asked what changes they might recommend for future students to benefit from the P2P Expo. CERE evaluators coded these open-ended responses into emergent categories. Approximately half of participants reported that they would change nothing about the Expo. Among participants who did offer suggestions, the most commonly reported suggestions were requests to add specific careers or proposed changes to the logistics of the event. The full text of open-ended responses are available in the appendix.

Suggested change:	Share of participants who suggested this change:
Add specific careers/activities	24%
More hands-on/interactive	11%
Changes to logistics	30%
Expand the event	18%
Add more time	7%
Other	4%

In conclusion, the evaluation of Pathways 2 Possibilities Mississippi (P2P) conducted by the Center for Research Evaluation (CERE) illuminates the program's success in guiding Mississippi's youth towards diverse career paths and educational pursuits. With a strong emphasis on participant satisfaction, meaningful impact on educational and career aspirations, and alignment with some of Mississippi's projected job market trends, P2P stands as a valuable experience for equipping youth with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the workforce. As P2P continues to evolve and refine its offerings based on participant feedback, it remains poised to make enduring contributions to the future prosperity of Mississippi and the aspirations of its young citizens.



References

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Program Evaluation 2024

[1] Wu, M.-J., Zhao, K., & Fils-Aime, F. (2022). Response rates of online surveys in published research: A meta-analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 7, 100206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100206>

[2] <https://careertech.org/resource/career-clusters-forecasting-demand-for-high-school-through-college-jobs-2008-2018/>

[3] https://mdes.ms.gov/media/389796/oep_lt_state.pdf

[4] https://careertech.org/sites/default/files/Perkins_IV_Crosswalk_Table_5_SOC-ONET-Nontrad-Cluster-Pathway.xls

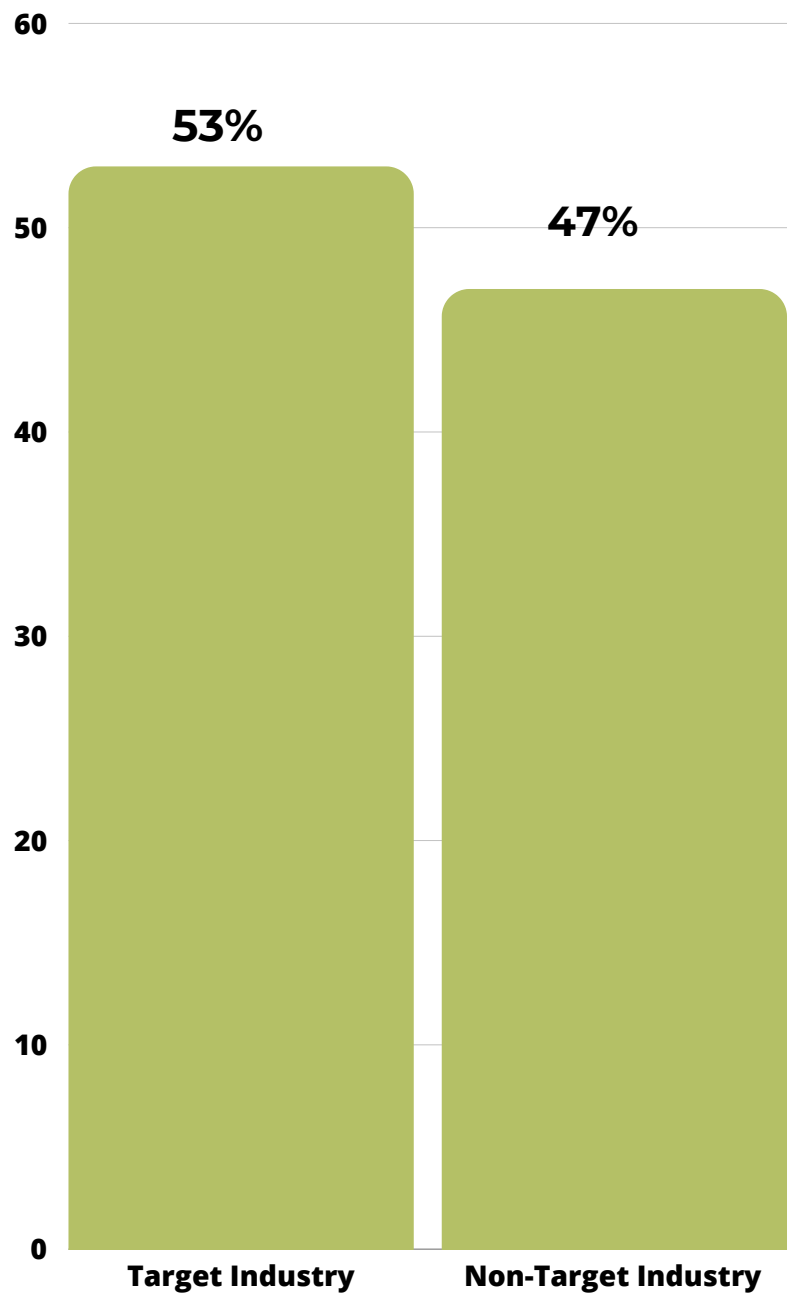
P2P Participants Career Interest Detail

Expo survey participants were asked to specify the career paths they were most interested in pursuing. Among participants, **53% identified a career field that aligns with a target industry** identified by the Mississippi Development Authority.

These target industries include:

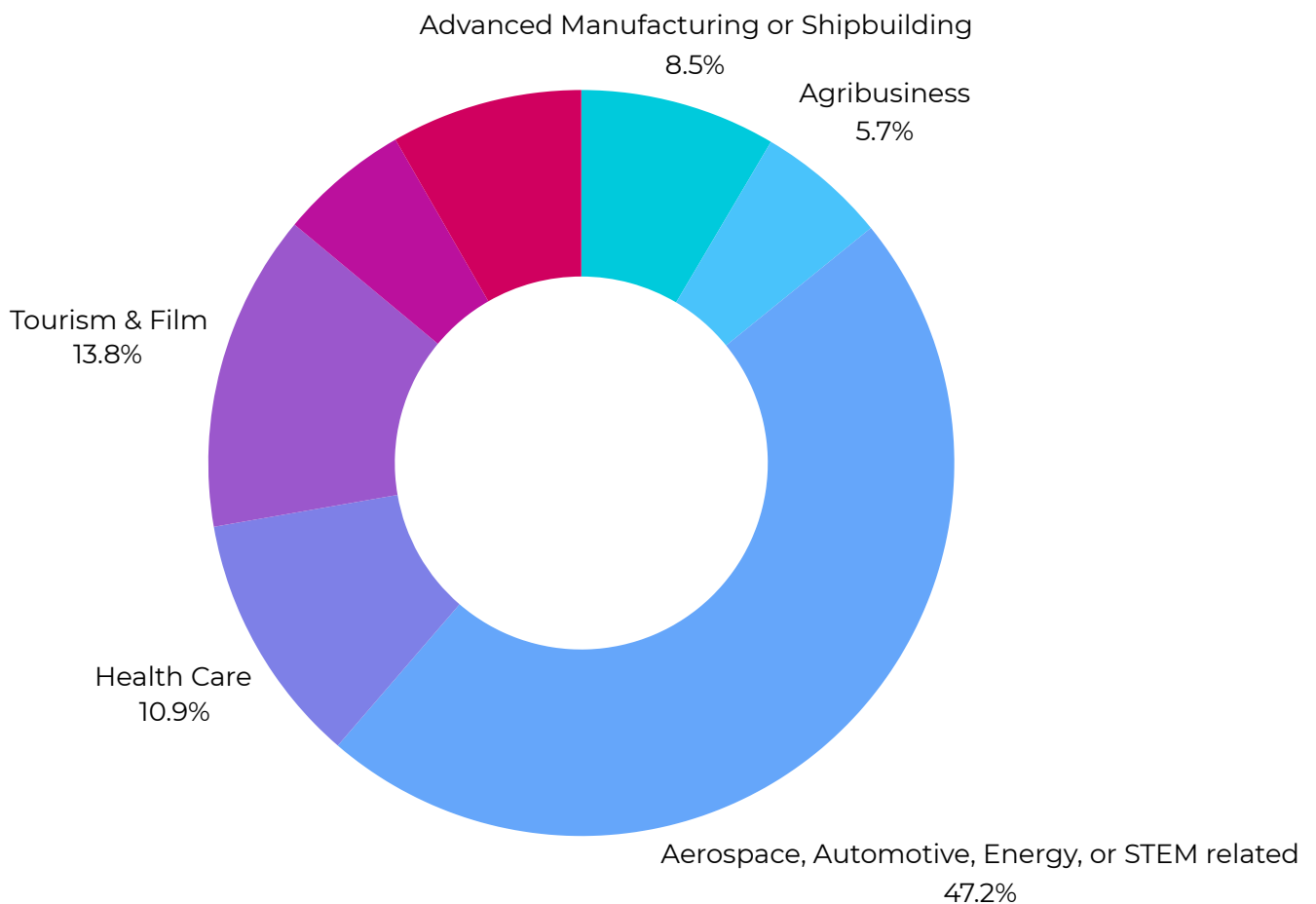
- Advanced Manufacturing and Shipbuilding
- Agribusiness
- Aerospace, Automotive, Energy, or STEM related
- Health Care
- Tourism & Film
- Distribution & Warehousing
- Information Technology

Career preference data from former P2P Expo participants indicate that **most P2P participants are interested in a target industry** or related career field.



P2P Participants Career Interest Detail

Among participants with career interests in target industries, the largest share reported career fields aligned with Aerospace, Automotive, Energy, or STEM related industries.



P2P Participants

Career Interest Detail

The list below identifies career interest categories as reported by participants and the alignment between these fields and target industries. More detail about participant career interests is available on pages 7 - 8 of this report.

- **Target Industry: Advanced Manufacturing and Shipbuilding**
 - **4.5% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Design/Pre-Construction, Construction, Printing Technology
- **Target Industry: Agribusiness**
 - **3.0% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Natural Resources Systems, Agribusiness Systems
- **Target Industry: Health Care**
 - **5.8% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Health Informatics, Biotechnology Research and Development
- **Target Industry: Tourism & Film**
 - **7.3% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Visual Arts, Performing Arts
- **Target Industry: Distribution & Warehousing**
 - **3.0% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Maintenance/Operations, Transportation Operations
- **Target Industry: Information Technology**
 - **4.4% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Business Information Management, Programming and Software Development
- **Target Industry: Aerospace, Automotive, Energy, or STEM related**
 - **25.0% of all participants**
 - Reported career fields among participants: Science and Mathematics, Engineering and Technology