

# New Federal Regulations and What They Mean for Your Graduate Programs



Regulatory Trends



Economic Context & Hiring Trends



Program Assessment



Culture of Career Readiness

# Trends in Federal Regulations

High costs and low ROIs of graduate degrees has become a bipartisan issue

## BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

### Financial Value Transparency

Alumni earnings measured 3 years post-graduation.

Dept. of Education evaluates debt-to-earnings ratios for every program.

IN EFFECT

## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

### Student Tuition & Transparency System

Programs evaluated on alumni earnings 4 years after graduation.

Graduate alumni must out-earn bachelor's degree holders — or programs lose federal loan eligibility.

PROPOSED

## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

### Accreditation, Innovation & Modernization

Accreditors must use student data to evaluate programs by return on investment, career outcomes, and placement rates.

EARLY STAGES

# Comparing the Two Frameworks

## Financial Value Transparency

All Title IV programs, including graduate programs at public & nonprofit institutions

---

**Debt-to-earnings ratio** — accounts for both what students earn AND what they borrowed

---

Transparency — help students make informed decisions

---

Public disclosure to inform student choice — no loss of aid eligibility

---

Program-level earnings & debt data published publicly

## Student Success & Taxpayer Savings Plan

All Title IV programs, including graduate programs at public & nonprofit institutions

---

**Earnings premium only** — graduates must out-earn bachelor's degree holders in their state

---

Accountability — penalize programs with poor earnings outcomes

---

Loss of Direct Loan eligibility after failing 2 of 3 consecutive years

---

Similar data collected, but debt not used for accountability consequences

# The Earnings Threshold in Detail

There are three proposed benchmarks to measure programs

## 1 Same-State Bachelor's

Median earnings of bachelor's degree holders aged 25–34 in the state where the institution is located.

## 2 Same-State, Same Field Bachelor's

Median earnings of bachelor's degree holders in the same field of study in the same state.

## 3 National, Same-Field Bachelor's

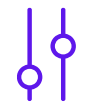
Median earnings of bachelor's degree holders in the same field of study nationally.

*Earnings data will come from alumni's IRS tax returns. Data for bachelor's degree holders will come from American Community Survey*

*Programs are compared against whichever of these three thresholds is LOWEST, except for programs where 50% or more students are from outside that state. Those outcomes will be national.*

# Limitations with the Proposed Rule

The Department's own proposed rule acknowledges significant data and methodology problems



## Blunt field-of-study data

Comparisons use broad 2-digit CIP codes — grouping very different programs together. A master's in social work and a master's in public health could be compared against the same benchmark.



## Small sample size problem

Fewer than 30 Census survey matches means the threshold can't be calculated — disproportionately affecting uncommon fields and less-populated states.



## No regional cost-of-living adjustment

A social work program in rural Colorado and one in Denver face the same benchmark, systematically disadvantaging regional and rural institutions.



## Some states have no threshold at all

Where Census data can't support the calculation, no earnings threshold exists. Programs are exempt from consequences, yet data is still published publicly.

# Legal and Political Headwinds

The rules are not likely to survive as written.

## PROCEDURAL

### Master Calendar Timeline

Department is running on a compressed timeline, which likely violates procedures established in the Higher Ed Act.

Clean litigation target.

## LEGAL

### Litigation Risks

Institutions that now face punitive consequences will likely challenge the ruling, tying it up in courts.

Master calendar violation gives courts easy procedural basis to delay.

## POLITICAL

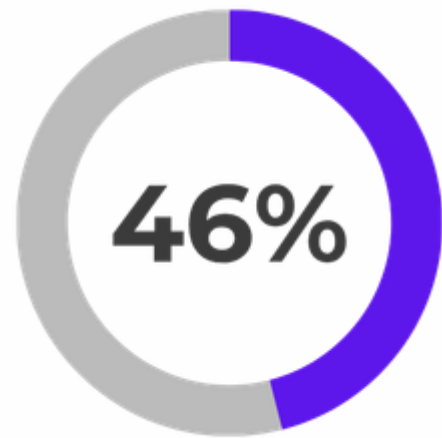
### Political Opposition

Democrats favor a debt-to-earnings ratio.

If they retake Congress in 2026 or the White House in 2028, it is likely a new administration would resort to the FVT.

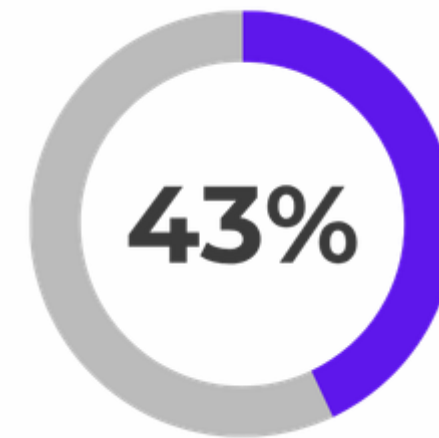
# External Studies Highlight Key Challenges

The data shows that many programs are already at risk



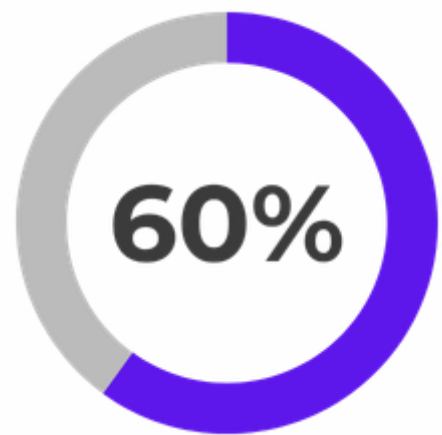
of federal student loan debt is held by graduate alumni, although they only make up 15% of student population.

Source: National Student Loan Data System



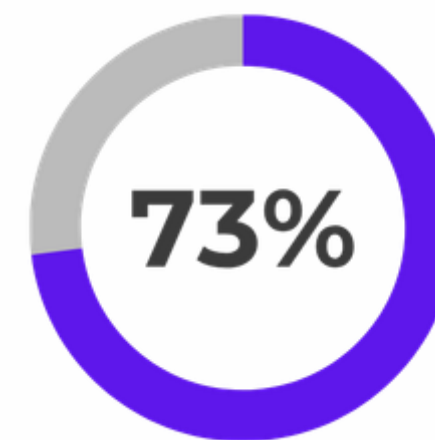
of in-person master's programs do not leave alumni able to out earn someone with a bachelor's degree in their state.

Source: Third-Way



of MBAs and 40% of master's degrees have a negative lifetime return on investment.

Source: FREOPP



of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and 34% of STEM PhDs have a negative lifetime ROI.

Source: FREOPP

Institutions can't control moving regulatory targets.  
**Graduate programs can invest in long-term solutions.**

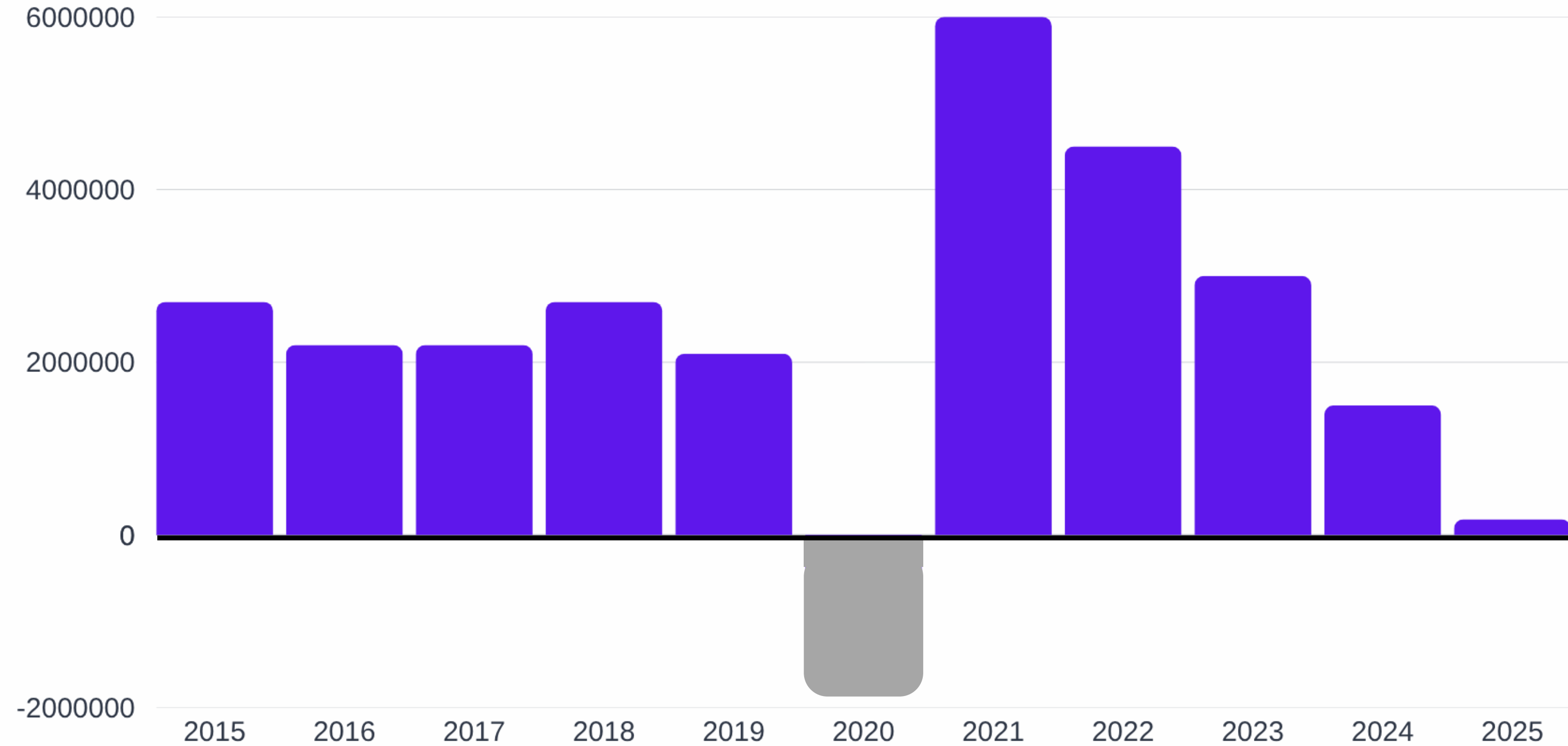


# Economic Context & Hiring Trends

Graduate students are facing one of the most difficult job markets in a decade, while simultaneously being inundated with misinformation. AI is changing how employers hire.

# Worst Job Market in a Decade

Job growth in the United States from 2015 through 2025



# Over 1 Million Jobs Were Cut in 2025

Key sectors that employ master's and doctoral students saw layoffs



Federal Government

**-310,000**

jobs lost



Technology

**-145,000**

jobs lost



Finance

**-50,000**

jobs lost



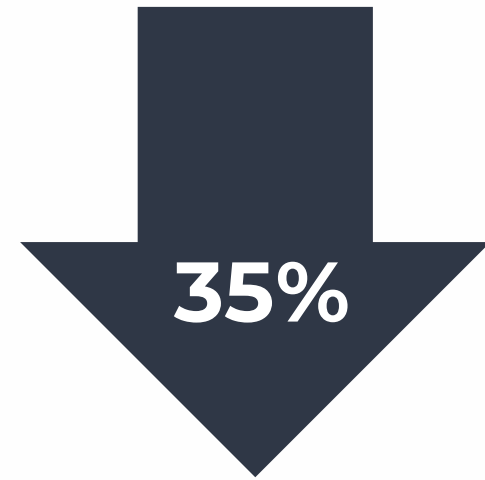
Pharmaceutical

**-25,000**

jobs lost

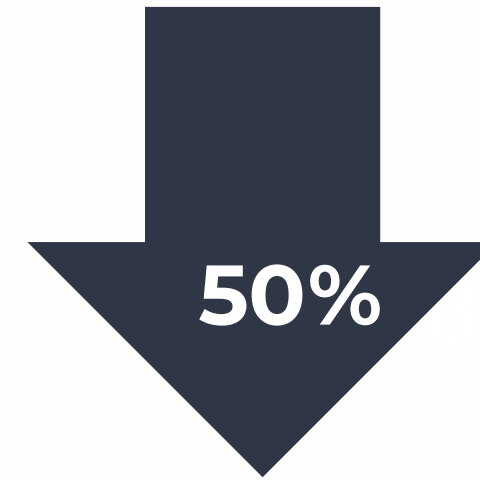
# Decline in Entry-Level Positions

AI is creating uncertainty in once stable careers for graduate students



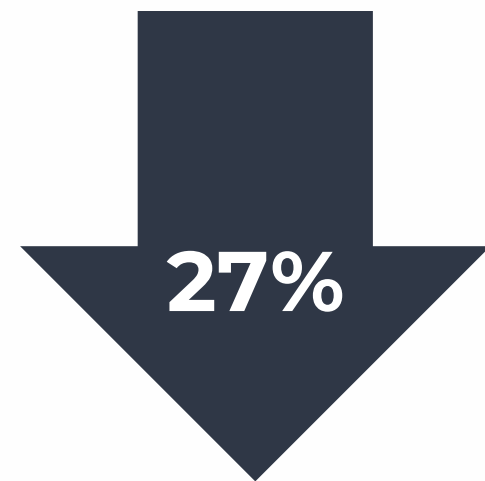
Decline in entry-level jobs in the US since January 2023.

Source: Revelio Labs



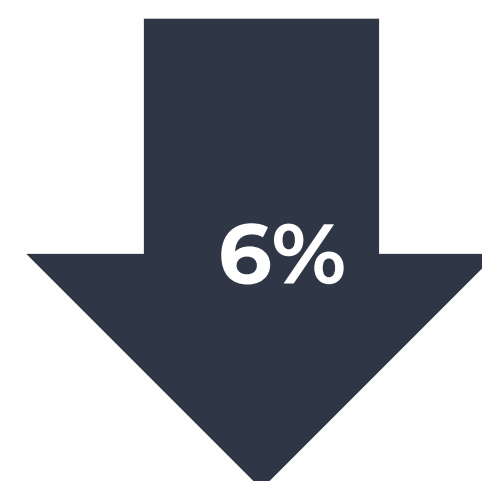
Decline in jobs in tech for people with less than 1 year of experience since 2019.

Source: SignalFire



Decline in computer programmer roles since ChatGPT arrived. Now the lowest level since before 1980.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Decline in employment of entry-level workers in AI-exposed occupations, compared to a 9% growth in experienced workers.

Source: Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI

# Bad Advice and Tools

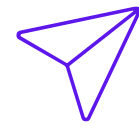
Graduate students are hurting their job search by how they use AI.



RESUMES

**Generic and inaccurate**

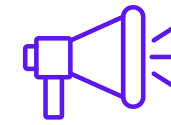
Resumes written by AI are often generic and simply mirror the job description. Are often inaccurate.



APPLYING

**Volume over quality**

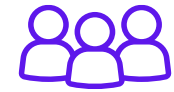
Use AI platforms to submit hundreds, if not thousands, of resumes to online job postings.



INTERVIEW PREP

**False confidence**

AI is overly affirmative and can provide a false sense of confidence in interview prep.



INTERVIEWS

**Dishonest and detectable**

Some students rely on AI during interviews to craft answers. Dishonest and generic.

# Employers Are Overwhelmed by AI Sludge

**45% more applications** per LinkedIn job posting in the past year — **11,000 submitted every minute**

---

**90% of recruiters report an increase in low-effort or AI-generated applications.** It's difficult to identify candidates from the bots.

---

**78% of companies now actively check for AI-generated content.**

---

**62% of hiring managers will reject candidates** who submit resumes generated by AI without personalization.

---

**Only 13% of job seekers in 2025 landed a job by submitting resumes** to online job portals, compared to 60% who secured positions through personal or professional networks.

Institutions can't control the economy.  
**They can control how prepared their students are.**

# A Successful Job Search is More Than Resumes

Most students do not know how to effectively job search



## **Evaluate**

Students need to identify their marketable skills and key workplace values.



## **Research**

Then they will need to identify possible career pathways and research target organizations.



## **Connect**

One of the key steps students will need to take is building a community of professionals who can help them in their job search.



## **Apply**

After building these foundational steps, students then move on to actively submitting tailored resumes to specific positions. They will need multiple resumes.



## **Interview**

Finally, students will need to learn how to communicate their value and highlight qualifications during in-person interviews.

# Supporting the Unique Needs of Graduate Students

Master's and doctoral students have unique challenges and require specialized resources

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

### Finding their careers

- Broad exploration; testing different fields
- Primary focus: "What do I want to do?"
- Benefit from self-reflection and experiential testing (variety in internships, projects, coursework).

## MASTER'S STUDENTS

### Building their careers

- Focused on earning a credential to advance in a chosen career field
- Primary focus: "How do I turn this credential into a real job?"
- Need foundational knowledge of effective job search strategies.

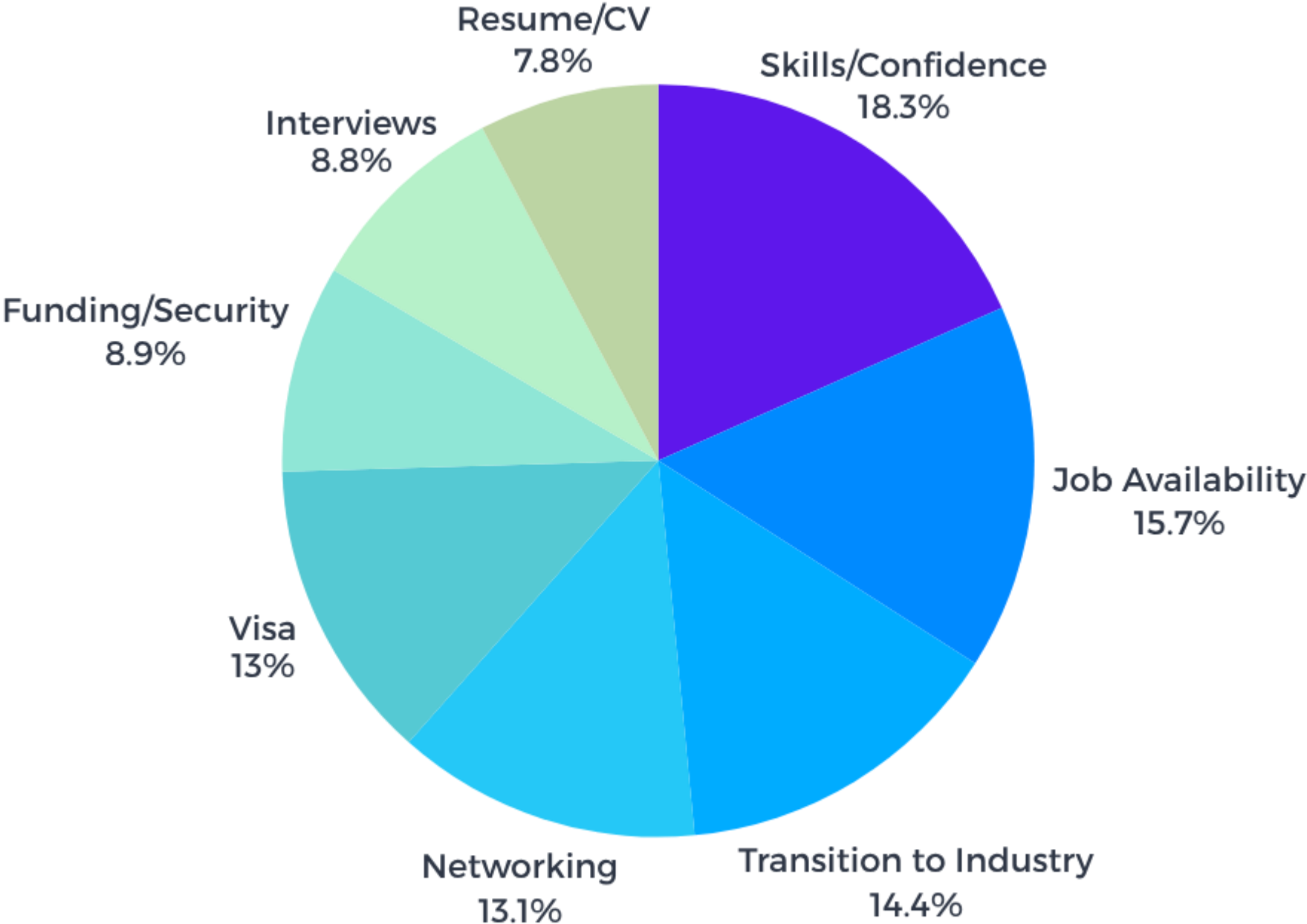
## DOCTORAL STUDENTS

### In career transition

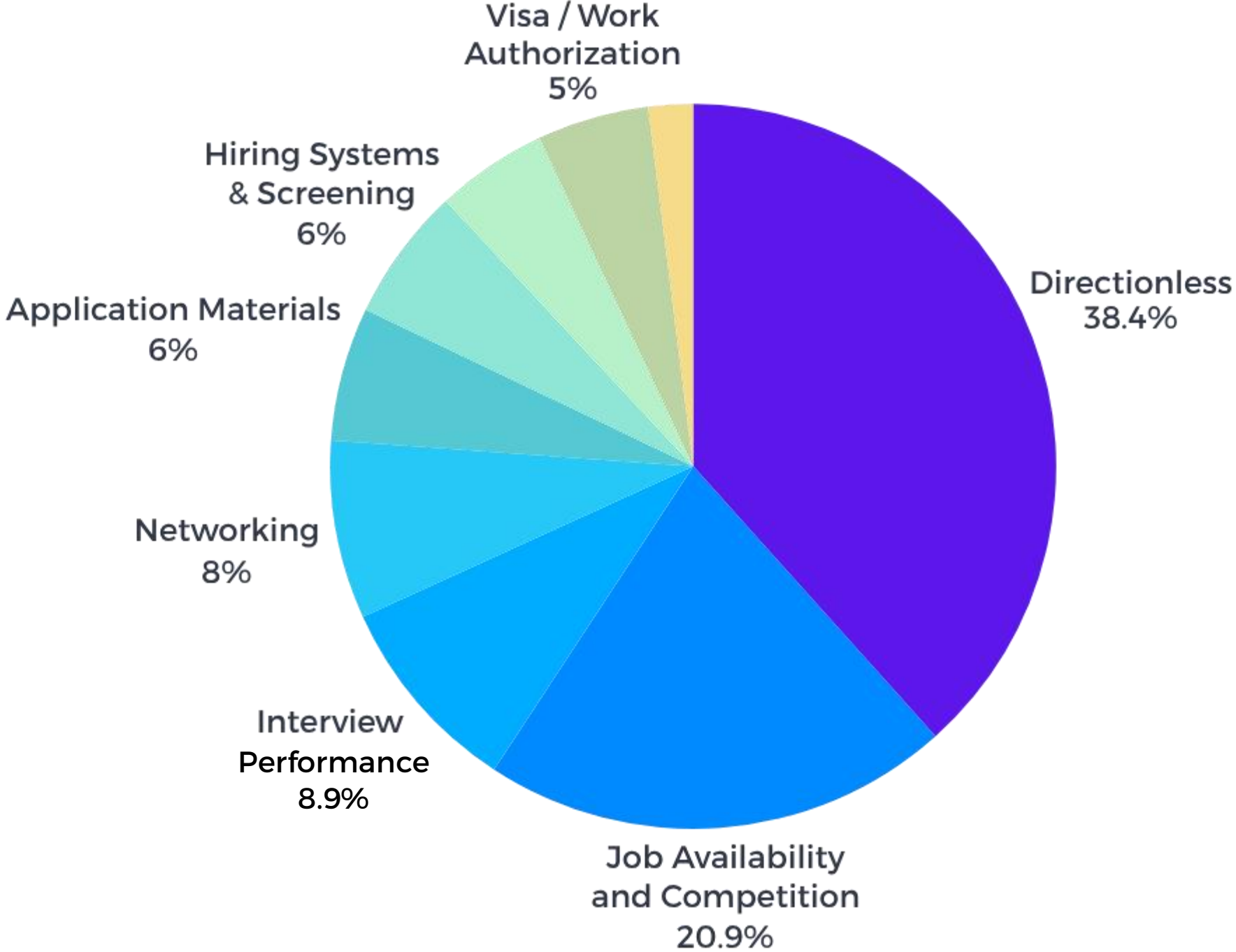
- Pursuing their studies for the love of discipline and subject matter
- Primary focus: "What Can I do with my PhD?"
- Need structured support to help them reposition their expertise for careers outside of academia.

# Job Search Concerns: Doctoral Students vs. Master's

**DOCTORAL STUDENTS**



**MASTER'S STUDENTS**



Graduate students want and need career support.  
**But they struggle to find on-campus resources.**



# Program Assessment

What can Graduate Programs control? Program risk evaluation and how to determine your preparedness.

# On-Campus Resource Scan

What career and professional development resources are available to graduate students?

## Tailored career resources

Are there resources (courses, workshops, advisors) that are specific to graduate students?

Are master's and doctoral students grouped together, or are there resources tailored to their unique needs?

Are resources designed primarily for undergrads?

## Just-in-time learning opportunities

A job search is multi-faceted. Students will think about the job search at different times in their programs and throughout the year.

They benefit from having access to comprehensive resources that they can access on their own time.

## Scalable resources

There are not enough staff hours in a day to meet the needs of all your graduate students.

Which resources on your campus can be scaled? What are cost-effective ways to maximize staff time?

## Flexible

Doctoral students are working in the labs, traveling to conduct fieldwork, and teaching courses.

Master's students are juggling work, life, and studies, increasingly online.

What resources are available after hours?

# Communicating and engaging students

Master's and doctoral students have unique challenges and require specialized resources

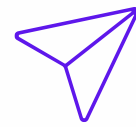


## Email First

University websites are bloated and difficult to navigate.

Students will not find resources passively listed on a website.

Email is still the best form of communication.



## Go Through Departments

Students look to their departments first for information about careers.

Communicate regularly with department staff, graduate directors, and faculty.

Provide time-sensitive information to share with students.



## Build Career Readiness Culture

Graduate students (especially master's) are transient. It's difficult for central offices to build deep relationships.

Focus on building relationships with staff, faculty, and other officers, who regularly interface with students.

# Best Practices for Strategic Communication

**Email should come from a person, not a generic email address.**

People are more likely to open messages from someone they know.

**Students have lower email fatigue**, and emails are typically informative, not asks. They have less “email trauma” than faculty and staff.

**Newsletters create decision fatigue.** They also have lower open rates and click-through rates than emails with one ask.

**Consistency is key.** Communicate with departments/faculty a couple of times a year about resources to support their students. Email students regularly, too.

**Promote events.** People are more likely to take action on time-sensitive events than “hey, here’s some resources.” Share additional resources during live workshops/webinars.

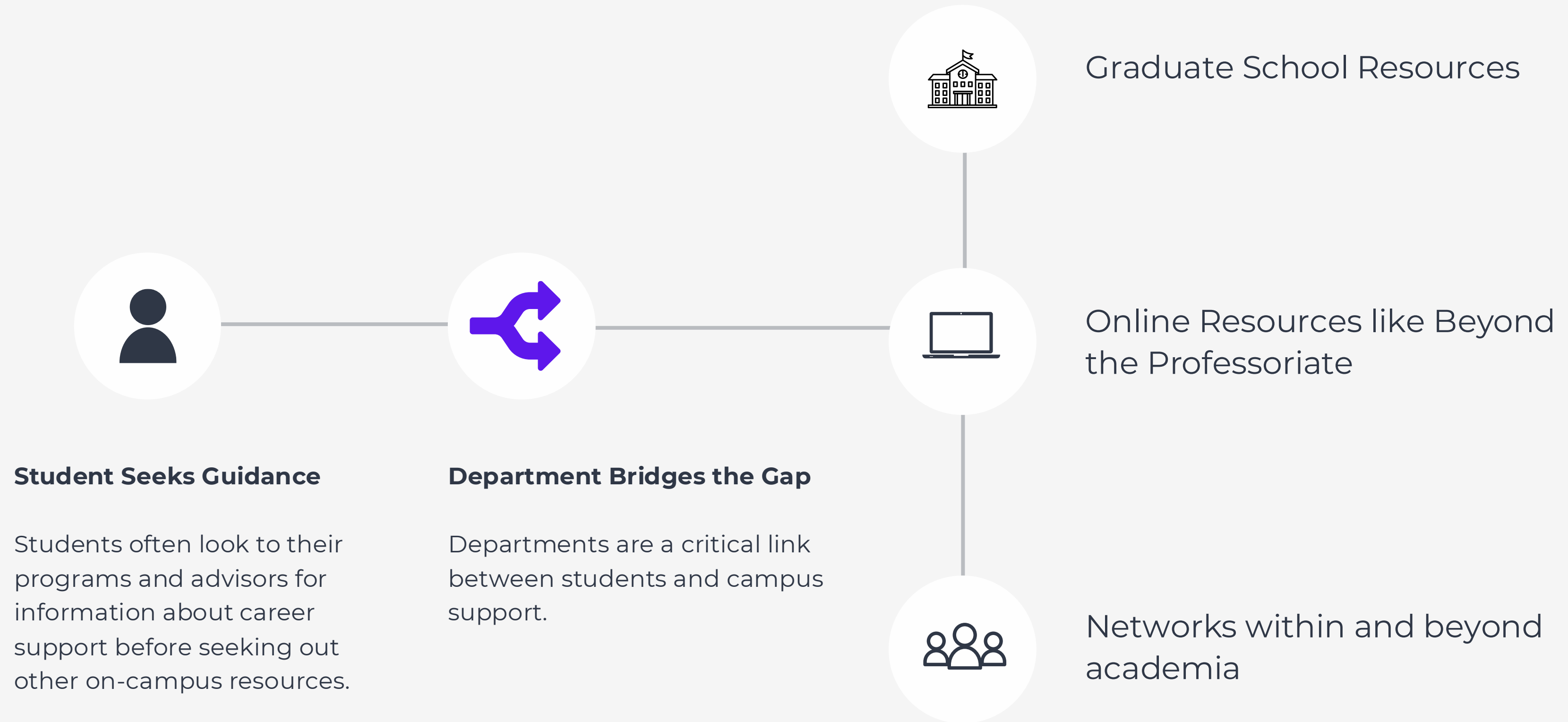
Building a culture of career readiness takes time.  
**Create a strategic plan with clear measurable goals.**



# Culture of Career Readiness

How institutions are building scalable career support strategies.

# Engaging Faculty and Departments



# Beyond Prof & Beyond Graduate School

Providing ready-made resources tailored to graduate students to help you scale



## Live Events

Attend live events throughout the year to become familiar with the job search process and keep up-to-date on job market trends.



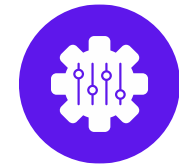
## On-Demand Video Lessons

Video lessons, workbooks, and assessments, will help students explore career options and learn proven job search strategies for launching an academic OR non-academic career.



## Career Video Library

Hear from other PhD and master's alumni to learn how they built their careers after earning their degree.



## Tailored Content

Each platform is designed to meet the unique professional development needs of graduate students: Beyond Prof for PhDs and Beyond Graduate School for master's.

# Supporting Partner Offices

We're a small but mighty team that can support your staff, students, and faculty

## Subscription

At a fraction of the cost of a full-time staff member, we help partners scale and engage graduate students.

## Comprehensive and Tailored Career Support

Provide master's and doctoral students with curriculum designed to meet their unique needs and challenges.

## Live Webinars

We create and deliver 60 live webinars each year, allowing your staff to focus on other priorities.

## Marketing Support

From customized launch plans, to event emails, and resources to engage faculty, we're here to help!

# Book an Information Session

[institutions@gradcareersuccess.com](mailto:institutions@gradcareersuccess.com)

## STEP 1

### Platform Tour

Tour our platforms and see how partner institutions use our resources to scale career support for graduate students and postdocs.

## STEP 2

### Discuss Pricing

Cost is determined by the size of your graduate student and postdoc population.

## STEP 3

### Onboarding & Implementation

Students access platforms via Single Sign-On. Full onboarding and implementation typically takes 3 - 6 months.

## STEP 4

### Trial Access

We can provide your office and a select number of students with a two-week trial to evaluate the platforms.