

New Data Showcases Strong Career Outcomes for Columbia College Chicago Alumni

*96% of graduates become working creative professionals within a year;
20-year alumni average income outlook is \$100,000*

A study of Columbia College Chicago alumni career achievement found that 96 percent of graduates are employed or achieving success in creative practice within 12 months of graduation, and that alumni achieve a high level of professional and financial success.

The average salary for the five years following graduation is in excess of \$50,000, with Columbia graduates earning an average income of \$100,000 within 20 years of graduation.

Professional profiles and resumes with data encompassing 20-year work histories of 27,000 alumni found that Columbia alumni thrive in a breadth of fields, with alumni having worked at some of the most prestigious companies in the world. The largest creative-industry employers of Columbia graduates are Disney, NBC, Apple, CBS, Warner Brothers, and Netflix, with hundreds of employees at each company.

“The impressive professional achievements of Columbia graduates demonstrate that creative careers start at Columbia,” said Jerry Tarrer, interim president of Columbia College Chicago. “Regardless of students’ chosen creative discipline, Columbia prepares them with the analytical and real-world skills and the networking they need to make their mark and help shape and reshape industries.”

Career success is rapid upon graduation for most Columbia students; a survey of 2023 Columbia graduates found that 96 percent were employed or achieving success in creative practice within a year, with nearly 8 in 10 alumni reporting their employment at the 12-month mark aligns with their long-term career goals. Another 2 percent of the 2023 class enrolled in graduate school or other professional training, for a total of 98 percent actively engaged in the workforce or further education within a year of graduation.

The early and lasting success of Columbia alumni is driven in part by the fact that, for example, nearly two-thirds of the Class of 2023 benefited from at least one internship, which combines with in-class learning to make graduates impactful in the workplace. Columbia College’s alumni network is an added asset at all stages of alumni’s careers.

“As an employer of Columbia alumni myself, I bear witness to the fact Columbia College graduates immediately stand out because they are job-ready on Day One,” said Paul Garnes, a 1996 Columbia alum who is head of production for Array Filmworks and who was the executive producer of *Selma*, which garnered a nomination of the Oscar for Best Picture, among other accolades. Garnes also serves as chair of the Columbia College Chicago Board of Trustees’ student affairs committee. “Columbia was a driving force behind my success, and now more than ever, it continues to empower young creatives to live rewarding professional lives.”

The top five occupations for Columbia graduates are marketing manager, graphic designer, CEO/founder/owner, general manager/operations manager, and producers and directors. Also on the list of top alumni occupations are public relations specialist, first-line supervisor of office, professor, editor, art director, editor, and administrative support positions.

“I am proud to be part of Columbia College’s exceptional alumni network, which is tens-of-thousands strong and helps open the doors to success for new generations of students,” said Columbia College Chicago National Alumni Board President, Karen Jones, a 1986 Columbia graduate who serves as the executive director of global and graduate programs and adjunct professor at the University of Houston Law Center. “Each of us is one small part of the vast collective of contributions by Columbia alumni to our economy and our culture, and Columbia graduates’ connections to each other help sustain their success throughout their careers.”

The alumni study found that nearly 75 percent of alumni are located in three major hubs: the Chicago area (60%), Los Angeles area (9%) and New York/New Jersey (4%), a reflection of the creative career opportunities in those markets as well as the strong Columbia alumni networks in those markets and industries, and such applied-learning and relationship-building programs offered by Columbia, such as Semester in Los Angeles. Rounding out the top 5 locations with the highest concentrations of Columbia alumni were the Detroit and Denver metropolitan areas.

Staff and Faculty can explore more alumni career outcomes by school and academic program degree recipients through the newly launched Office of Institutional Effectiveness [Alumni Career Outcomes Dashboard](#) (VPN required off-campus). Contact Anna Ogier-Bloomer, Associate Dean of Career Development and Industry Relations to discuss how alumni career outcomes relate to academic programs and student career development.

For more illustrations of Columbia alumni success, please visit <https://www.colum.edu/academics/alumni/index>.

Columbia students looking to jump-start their career via an internship or with help connecting with full-time employment should visit www.colum.edu/career.

Employers looking to connect with Columbia’s talented and driven students can visit <https://www.colum.edu/campus-life/student-support/career-center>.