

Life Beyond Graduation: Three-Year Follow-Up Study of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Recipients - Year Two Report

Background:

The early care and education (ECE) field is undergoing a major transition. With more research showing high-quality early childhood education as a major factor in a child's future success in school and life, and the need for a child's teacher to be well educated and competent, the field is coming under increasing scrutiny. [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8](#), a report from the Institute of Medicine and the National Academy of Science, recommends lead teachers in all settings should have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education as a foundation for their practice, basing this on the science of early childhood development. While the early childhood field is far from reaching this goal, progress is underway. The [final report](#) developed by the Power to the Profession Task Force calls for major investments in early childhood educators, including comprehensive strategies to make college degrees affordable and accessible for the incumbent workforce. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® (T.E.A.C.H.) Scholarship Initiative has a proven record as a way to make that happen, given the post-secondary education the workforce needs and the real career and wage mobility it deserves.

With the goal that every child in an early childhood setting has a teacher who is well educated and well compensated, T.E.A.C.H. provides an opportunity for incumbent early childhood educators to access an affordable college education, have adequate workforce support while pursuing that education, and earn fair compensation commensurate with their educational achievements. The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship consists of several components. These include financial support for tuition, books and other expenses, paid release time, annual compensation enhancements upon completion of required credit hours and a counselor who provides personalized support for scholarship recipients and their employers. Currently, T.E.A.C.H. scholarship programs operate in 23 states and D.C.

The T.E.A.C.H. state programs are supported by Child Care Services Association's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center (National Center). The National Center provides ongoing technical assistance and resources and accountability oversight to ensure that the state programs maintain fidelity to the basic design of the T.E.A.C.H. model. To support this mission, the National Center created an extensive database primarily for use as a scholarship management system. That database includes extensive information obtained at the time of scholarship application. Scholarship recipients' records are updated while they participate in the program. Because this information is monitored regularly and examined by National Center staff, it is quite useful in developing high-quality data for research and evaluation studies.

However, individual scholarship recipients are not routinely tracked in the T.E.A.C.H. database after they complete T.E.A.C.H. contracts and retention commitments. Hence, it has been difficult to conduct systematic assessments of T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients' careers, especially those who graduated from early childhood education programs with a college degree. This three-year study, initiated in 2018, was developed to fill this gap by surveying recent graduates who were supported by T.E.A.C.H. scholarships while completing two- or four-year degrees. These surveys, fielded every six months, inquire about employment, wages, career progress, professional development and other work and life situations. The resulting data allows a detailed description of T.E.A.C.H. graduates' accomplishments and experiences. This report is the second in a series of reports. The [first report](#) summarized developments over the first year after graduation. This report summarizes the findings from the second year after graduation. This study will continue over a third year, although the impact of the pandemic may make data collection and interpretation more difficult.

Key Research Questions:

We sought to document the trajectories of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® graduates using data collected from them over a three-year time period and to answer several specific questions. These include:

- After T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients complete their coursework and obtain their college degrees, do they continue working in the ECE field upon graduation? Do they continue working in the same early childhood educational settings where they were employed when they first obtained their T.E.A.C.H. scholarship support?
- Do these graduates experience career progress as indicated by increased earnings?
- Do these graduates advance in the ECE field along a career pathway by being promoted to higher positions in their work settings or by moving up into other full- or part-time positions in the field?
- Do these graduates become more engaged in the larger ECE professional development system by attending continuing education, seeking additional degrees or participating in other professional development and professional leadership activities?
- Do these graduates experience increased self-confidence consistent with a stronger identity as an early childhood professional?
- How do these various outcomes in the ECE professional development process—upward mobility, external engagement and internal development—vary for different subgroups? How is a T.E.A.C.H. graduate’s career trajectory affected by their demographic and early educational background, current employment situation and the type of degree they obtained?

Methodology: Study Protocol

National Center staff identified 18 states currently operating a T.E.A.C.H. program that had a history long enough to yield alumni who graduated from associate or bachelor’s degree programs since fall 2017. The leadership of each qualifying state was invited to participate in the study, and all agreed to enroll graduates in the study. All T.E.A.C.H. associate and bachelor’s degree graduates in those states from fall 2017, spring 2018 and summer 2018 were invited to participate. Participation involved committing to answer online surveys every six months for three years. State programs contacted graduates they identified in their state and then followed up with emails from the initial request through Round 1. The National Center sent the surveys in Round 2 and beyond.

Individual respondents were tracked throughout the process using unique identifiers assigned by state programs. A uniform survey was designed by Center staff and administered via SurveyMonkey. Participants were sent an email reminder one week before the surveys were released. Then individuals were sent an email with a link to the survey. Potential survey respondents were sent three to four reminders in each round. Inducements for a prompt response included a chance in a raffle of gift cards for respondents. Eight gift cards were provided at the end of each round. There will be a total of six follow-up surveys over a three-year period following graduation.

Survey Response Overview

Study sample characteristics. More than 400 people in 18 states were invited to participate in the study and a relatively high number (N=272) responded to that invitation and agreed to enroll in the study. These individuals constitute our study sample. Participants are quite diverse geographically. They received college degrees from 137 colleges and universities across 18 states, distributed across the U.S. Of these individuals, approximately two-thirds (N=176) were graduates of an early childhood associate

degree program¹ and 96 were graduates of an early childhood bachelor's degree program.² So far, the number of people responding to at least one of the first four rounds of surveys (N=231) constitutes 85% of those who agreed to participate. The analyses in this report describe the situation of T.E.A.C.H. alumni through the second year after they attained their degree.

Second year survey sample definition. Most of the analyses in this report provide information from the most recent (Round 4) survey conducted in spring 2020. However, if an eligible individual did not respond to the spring 2020 survey, data from the previous survey, if available, were substituted to represent that individual's status in the second year after they had graduated from college. Survey data from the two most recent surveys (Rounds 3 and 4) yielded 189 unique individuals who constitute nearly 70 percent of the original 272 enrolled in the study. Most cases (N=160) came from spring 2020 Round 4 surveys; approximately 15% of the second-year sample (N=29) came from fall 2019 Round 3 surveys. All spring 2020 surveys were received between March 16, 2020, and April 8, 2020, reflecting the situation during the earliest stages of COVID-19.

Subsequent reports will continue to follow and report on the 272 original participants, enabling the observation of any changes that occur over the entire three-year post-graduation period, using data expected to be available from all six waves of post-graduation surveys.

Survey response patterns. It is important to assess how representative the second-year sample is of the population of T.E.A.C.H. graduates. This can be done by comparing the 189 respondents in the second-year to the original population of 272 graduates. Using the definition of survey response above, response rates were calculated for a number of population characteristics measured at baseline from the T.E.A.C.H. databases. Then these were compared to determine whether certain types of T.E.A.C.H. graduates were over- or under-represented in the second-year sample. We examined race/ethnicity, family type and educational background at the time when individuals applied for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to detect any response bias that might have occurred as a consequence of differences between survey respondents and non-respondents. Because certain demographic characteristics were collected when T.E.A.C.H. recipients applied for their scholarships, we can assess how representative the second-year survey sample is of the study's entire population.

Approximately two-thirds of the 189 second-year survey respondents had associate degree scholarships (N=119 or 63%), while 70 had bachelor's degree scholarships (N=70). The response rate from BA graduates (73%) is only slightly higher than the response from AS graduates (68%). These numbers are adequate for robust analyses of the entire sample and the two subgroups of AS and BA degree holders.

Characteristics of Study Sample and Second-Year Survey Respondents

Comparisons of second-year sample participants and the entire sample of T.E.A.C.H. graduates from participating states suggest that degree completers in this study sample are quite similar to T.E.A.C.H. graduates generally. For example, similar percentages of people of color and/or of Hispanic origin are found among all T.E.A.C.H. graduates and survey respondents. However, there is a slight underrepresentation of people of color among second-year survey respondents; approximately 27% of AS second-year respondents are people of color, compared to 31% of study participants (see Table 1).

Furthermore, the demographic background and life experiences study sample participants reported

¹ An early childhood associate degree may be an AS, AAS or AA depending on the college; for this report the abbreviation AS will be used.

² An early childhood bachelor's degree may be a BA or BS; for this report the abbreviation BA will be used.

when they applied for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships resemble the profile of college students who are at a relatively high risk for delayed degree completion. All participants are working and are part-time students. Nearly all T.E.A.C.H. alumni are women (98.9%) and many have family responsibilities. Two-thirds are mothers and more than one in five are single parents. The one-third of those without children are in various stages in a family life cycle— fewer than one in ten appear to be empty nesters.

Table 1				
Comparison of Second-Year Survey Respondents to All T.E.A.C.H. Graduates Enrolled in the Multi-Year Study				
Characteristics of EC Educators when they applied to T.E.A.C.H. Program	Type of ECE diploma awarded to T.E.A.C.H. graduate			
	AS Graduates		BA Graduates	
	2nd-Year Sample [N=119]	All Study Participants [N=176]	2nd-Year Sample [N=70]	All Study Participants [N=96]
<i>Background Demographics</i>				
Single parent	20%	19%	20%	20%
Person of color	27%	31%	26%	31%
Average age	32.9	33.0	38.7	36.9
<i>Educational Background</i>				
First generation in college	47%	47%	40%	46%
<i>Educational Achievement</i>				
HS diploma/GED only	55%	55%	13%	18%
HS complete + some credits	25%	28%	21%	23%
One-year certificate	4%	4%	0%	0%
Associate degree	9%	7%	54%	49%
Bachelor's degree	7%	6%	11%	10%
<i>Job at ECE Program</i>				
Director/administrator/owner	10%	9%	16%	17%
EC teacher: Birth-5yrs	44%	45%	43%	42%
Assistant teacher/floater	31%	31%	30%	31%
Other job	1%	1%	0%	0%
Family child care home operator	14%	14%	11%	10%
2020 hourly wage	\$12.03	\$11.53	\$12.88	\$12.83

The extent of participants' familiarity with higher education and their own prior college experiences was documented when they applied for their scholarships and was recorded in the T.E.A.C.H. database. At that time, one-third of the graduates had neither parents nor siblings who attended college and slightly less than half (47%) had neither parents nor siblings who graduated from college. These percentages

were similar for AS and BA scholarship holders. However, these first-generation scholarship recipients are slightly under-represented in our second-year BA scholarship group (40% vs. 47%) (see Table 1).

Not surprisingly, when they applied for their T.E.A.C.H. scholarships, graduates with AS scholarships differed from those with BA scholarships in terms of their individual educational background and preparation. Among those on AS scholarships, more than half (55%) had only a high school diploma or GED, while another one-third (32%) had some college credits in addition to their high school diploma (28%) or had a one-year certificate (4%) (see Table 1). In contrast, 18% of those with BA scholarships had only a high school diploma or GED, while another 23% had some college credits, suggesting they were already on their way to completing the associate degree typically required for a BA scholarship. Relatively few AS scholarship graduates already had an associate (7%) or bachelor's (6%) degree. In contrast, half (49%) of the BA degree scholarship graduates had an associate degree when they applied for their scholarship, and 10% had a bachelor's degree in another field. Second-year survey respondents with a BA scholarship are slightly more likely than BA scholarship graduates in the entire sample (65% vs 59%) to have had a college degree at baseline.

The average age that people applied for an AS scholarship (32.9 yrs.) was, not surprisingly, younger than for BA scholarship applicants (36.9 yrs.), and second-year survey respondents resembled all study participants. Yet there was a wide range of ages, reflecting the variation in ages at which people reach different points along their educational pathways. The median years of participation in the T.E.A.C.H. program for these graduates was three years and did not differ between AS and BA graduates. This is not surprising since some program applicants may have had some college credits before applying for a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. Further, BA applicants typically would have completed an AS degree in an ECE-related field to qualify for a BA scholarship. Given that most participants would have taken about two years of coursework if they had been going to school full time, the progress of these part-time students is remarkable, especially with their ongoing work and family responsibilities.

Finally, T.E.A.C.H. scholarship graduates held a variety of jobs, and the second-year sample respondents fairly represented the different types of ECE professionals (see Table 1). Approximately one-quarter of scholarship recipients were center directors or family care home owners (AS: 23%; BA: 27%). Nearly half were teachers (AS: 45%; BA: 42%) and about one-third were assistant teachers (AS: 31; BA: 31%). Second-year survey respondents were remarkably similar to the overall study population in their distribution across these job categories.

Second Year Outcomes

Retention in the field and in current work setting. *After T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients complete their coursework and obtain their college degrees, do they continue working in the ECE field upon graduation? Do they continue working in the same early childhood educational settings where they were employed when they first obtained their T.E.A.C.H. scholarship support?*

Nearly all of the graduates (177 of 189 or 94%) are still working in early childhood two years after the completion of their degree. This high retention rate is characteristic of AS graduates (113 of 119 or 95%) and BA graduates (64 of 70 or 91%). Some individuals who are still working the ECE field (27 of 177 or 15%) changed jobs in the past year and are employed currently in a different setting than where they were working when they graduated. T.E.A.C.H. graduates' job change rates were similar for those with an AS scholarship (16 of 113 or 14%) and a BA scholarship (11 of 64 or 17%). The extent of retention in the ECE field and the likelihood of changing employers was compared for different sub-groups of T.E.A.C.H. graduates with various background characteristics. Neither outcome—overall retention in the ECE field nor changes in employment setting—was systematically related to any of the individual

demographics examined. Thus, it appears that T.E.A.C.H. graduates are strongly committed to the ECE field and exhibit substantial employment stability regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, first generation college student status, family structure or educational background.

Upward Mobility: Wage Gains, Promotions and Career Advancement. *Do these graduates experience career progress as indicated by increased earnings? Do these graduates advance in the ECE field along a career pathway by being promoted to higher positions in their work settings or by moving up into other full or part-time positions in the field?*

Table 2
Wage Levels and Wage Growth of
T.E.A.C.H. Graduates by Type of Scholarship and Initial Job Title*

Job Titles at Graduation with a T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship	N	Mean Hourly Wage		Hourly Wage Growth			
		When Starting T.E.A.C.H.	Two Years After Graduating	Mean Hourly Wage Growth	Std. Error Mean	Stat. sig. at p<.10	Relative Wage Gain [#]
Both types of degrees – All job titles	169	\$11.76	\$14.47	\$2.71	\$0.52	Yes	23%
AS scholarship							
<u>All Job Titles*</u>	106	\$11.26	\$13.86	\$2.59	\$0.69	Yes	23%
Director	11	\$15.27	\$18.00	\$2.74	\$1.18	Yes	18%
ECE teacher	45	\$10.67	\$11.88	\$1.21	\$0.58	Yes	11%
Assistant teacher	35	\$10.90	\$11.86	\$0.96	\$0.45	Yes	9%
Family child care home operator	14	\$10.21	\$21.81	\$11.60	\$3.92	Yes	114%
BA Scholarship							
<u>All Job Titles*</u>	63	\$12.59	\$15.50	\$2.91	\$.80	Yes	23%
Director	10	\$14.56	\$19.05	\$4.50	\$2.86	No	31%
ECE teacher	26	\$13.17	\$14.10	\$0.93	\$1.08	No	7%
Assistant teacher	20	\$12.28	\$15.76	\$3.47	\$1.17	Yes	28%
Family child care home operator	7	\$8.46	\$14.86	\$6.40	\$2.65	Yes	76%

*All wage data have been adjusted by the cost of living index to reflect 2019 dollars. Totals include one “other” job title not included in breakouts. “Director” includes directors, assistant directors, administrators or owners of child care centers. “ECE teacher” includes teachers working with children from birth to 5 years. “Assistant teacher” includes assistant teachers and floaters. Family child care home operators are defined by self-report.

[#]Relative gain is the mean hourly wage gain divided by the baseline wage expressed as a percentage.

Wage Gains. Table 2 shows the hourly wages from all graduates in the sample with available wage data for two points in time. Fortunately, wage estimate data for the second-year sample were available for nearly 90% (169 of 189) of all individuals reporting. All the dollar values have been adjusted for inflation and are expressed in 2019 dollars. For these 169 individuals, the average real wage (adjusted for inflation) increased substantially from \$11.76 to \$14.47. This \$2.71 average increase in hourly wage is

substantial (23%) over the period. For AS graduates, the average hourly wage went from \$11.26 per hour to \$13.86. This sizeable and highly statistically significant wage gain averages \$2.59 per hour or a 23% increase from the baseline wage. BA graduates who started the T.E.A.C.H. program with an average hourly wage of \$12.59 experienced an increase to \$15.50 per hour in the second year after they graduated. This represents a gain of \$2.91, the equivalent of a 23% wage gain and is statistically significant.

Table 2 also shows starting hourly wages, 2020 wages and wage gains for AS and BA graduates broken down by their initial job titles (directors, teachers and assistant teachers) and estimates of hourly compensation for family child care home operators. These positions were those that survey respondents reported at the time of their initial application for a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. Current wage levels may reflect wage increases, promotions and/or employment changes, which will be discussed below. They also reflect a wide variety of job settings and auspice types.

Starting with AS degree recipients, we can observe a relative hourly wage gain of \$2.74 or 18% for **directors**, while **teachers** experienced an increase of \$1.21 per hour or 11% average hourly wage gain. A more modest but still significant wage increase was reported by **assistant teachers** with an AS degree who saw their hourly wages increase by about \$0.96 or 9%. For BA degree holders, **directors** saw an average wage gain of \$4.50 or 31%. **Teachers'** average hourly wage increased by \$0.93 or 7%. Assistant teachers earned on average \$3.47 more per hour, a relative gain of 28%. While some of the wage gains for the small numbers of BA recipients did not reach statistical significance, they clearly suggest that all three categories of ECE professionals employed in ECE centers or programs experienced sizeable wage gains, regardless of the degree they attained.

Family child care home operators with an AS degree experienced a sizeable \$11.60 increase (or 114%) in their estimated hourly compensation. If they had a BA degree, they averaged a more modest but still sizeable \$6.40 (or 76%). We have less confidence in the accuracy of hourly wage estimates for family child care homes because they are not reported or calculated as easily. However, given the magnitude of the estimated wage gains, it seems plausible that most child care home operators experienced some income growth over the observation period.

Promotions. In order to assess career progress in terms of **promotions**, graduates were classified according to their initial job title. If we examine the career progress of the 189 respondents in our second-year sample, there is clear evidence of widespread upward mobility in terms of changes in job titles (see Table 3). Most of these early childhood educators worked in child care programs when they applied for their T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. At the start of the observation period there were 23 directors, assistant directors, administrators or owners of child care centers. Eighty-two were ECE teachers and 58 were assistant teachers or floaters. Promotions were evident two years after degree completion, especially for teachers and assistant teachers. Of the 82 teachers, 12 (15%) had moved up to director positions while another two (2%) were operating their own family child care homes. An overwhelming share of the assistant teachers (84%) had been promoted to teachers and another 2% had attained a director position in the two years after obtaining their college degree.

Career progression is also indicated from the 25 owner operators of family child care homes. Sixteen of the 25 continued to operate family child care homes, while two expanded operations to become center owners. Nine family child care operators became teachers. They evidently experienced some career progress because their average hourly earnings in the most recent year was \$21.60, which compared favorably to \$19.05 average hourly earnings of the 16 individuals who remained FCH operators. This

Table 3
Job Transitions of T.E.A.C.H. Second-Year Sample

Position at Graduation With a T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship*	Position in Second Year after Graduating						
	N	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Other EC position	Family Child Care Home Operator	Not in ECE or Not Working
Director	23	15	6	0	2	0	0
Teacher	82	12	55	2	2	2	9
Assistant teacher	58	1	49	4	1	0	3
Other ECE position	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
FCC home operator	25	2	9	0	0	14	0
Totals at end of second year after graduating	189	30	119	6	6	16	12

*“Director” includes directors, assistant directors, administrators or owners of child care centers. “Teacher” includes EC teachers working with children from birth to 5 years. “Assistant teachers” include assistant teachers and floaters. Family child care home operators are defined by self-report.

difference suggests these family child care home operators transitioned to more financially stable settings

It is not surprising that wage gains and promotions might have occurred among T.E.A.C.H. graduates in the first year after attaining their ECE degree. However, if T.E.A.C.H. graduates continue to receive promotions in subsequent years, this would suggest a more extensive trajectory of career progress. In order to find out if this occurred, we arrayed the second-year survey respondents according to their current job title and calculated the percentages of those in each type of job who reported a promotion at any time during the previous year. The results are encouraging. Ten percent of directors,³ 12% of teachers and 20% of assistant teachers reported promotions in the previous year, while 6% of directors reported promotions. Among those early childhood professionals who continue in supportive roles in other ECE-related settings, one-third reported promotions in the previous year. Finally, among those few individuals (N=12) who moved out of the ECE field altogether, 17% reported having received a promotion, suggesting an early childhood education degree has some value in the broader labor market.

External Engagement. *Do these graduates become more engaged in the larger ECE professional development system through attending continuing education, taking college courses, seeking an additional degree or participating in other types professional development and professional leadership activities?*

T.E.A.C.H. alumni continue to be highly engaged in continuing their higher education. Of the 189 second-year respondents, 63 (33%) reported taking college courses during the second year. Forty-four (23%) of these individuals were working toward a BA degree in ECE, and the overwhelming share of these ECE

³ These include assistant directors in larger programs being promoted to directors.

professionals (84%) were doing so with T.E.A.C.H. support. Another group of nine individuals (5%) were seeking ECE master’s degrees, and one of these was on a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship.⁴ These numbers are similar to those found in the Year 1 T.E.A.C.H. alumni follow-up study, suggesting that many T.E.A.C.H. graduates are continuing their educational journey.

Survey respondents reported their participation in each of six types of professional development activities during the previous six months (see Table 4). More than half of the T.E.A.C.H. alumni (58%) reported attending at least one ECE professional meeting in the previous year and more than one-third (35%) joined or renewed their membership in an ECE professional association. Less prevalent were other activities such as service on an ECE advisory board or committee (19%), attendance at statewide or local advocacy event (18%), advocacy for ECE policies or funding for ECE programs or services (16%) or presentations at an ECE workshop/conference at the local, state or national level. A small number of respondents (5%) reported participating in additional professional development activities not identified above. On average, T.E.A.C.H. alumni reported participation in 1.63 professional development activities. Widespread participation in professional development activities was found among both types of degree holders and educators with various job titles.

Table 4 T.E.A.C.H. Second-Year Sample Participation in Professional Development Activities April 2019 through March 2020	
Professional Development Activity	Percent Participating
Attended ECE professional meeting at the state or national level	58%
Joined or rejoined an ECE professional association	35%
Served on an ECE advisory board or committee	19%
Attended a statewide or local EC advocacy event	18%
Advocated for ECE policy or program funding or services	16%
Presented at an ECE workshop or conference: local, state or national level	13%

Commitment to the ECE field is also suggested by the small number individuals (N=7 or 4%) employed part time in addition to their ongoing teaching or administrative responsibilities in their primary ECE-related work setting. Part-time positions include work as an ECE technical specialist, community college instructor, professional development specialist, early childhood consultant or other part-time work directly involved with children, including pre-K ministry at a church. This pattern confirms that professional engagement continues for T.E.A.C.H. alumni.

Internal development. *Do these graduates experience increased self-confidence consistent with a stronger identity as an early childhood professional?*

⁴ T.E.A.C.H. scholarships for master’s degrees are only available in a few states.

Of the 189 T.E.A.C.H. recipients in the second-year sample, 96 or 51% said they “feel more confident in their knowledge and skills in early childhood education.” This increased confidence was widespread and about half of all respondents reporting this increased sense of confidence regardless of the type of job they currently held or the type of degree earned.

In order to assess what personal characteristics and circumstances might be associated with increased confidence, we examined a number of background characteristics and concurrent activities and measured the percent of T.E.A.C.H. graduates expressing enhanced professional confidence in each subgroup. After an extensive examination of these background characteristics, we found that race, ethnicity, age, family status, individual educational achievement at the time they applied for a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship or type of scholarship were not associated with increased professional confidence. The only background characteristic with a statistically significant association with increased confidence was first generation college student status. Overall, only 42 percent of T.E.A.C.H. alumni who were first-generation college students reported increased professional confidence. In contrast, 58 percent of T.E.A.C.H. alumni whose families of origin contained college graduates expressed increased professional confidence.

Then we examined a range of concurrent experiences and circumstances that occurred during the second year that might be associated with enhanced professional confidence. Interestingly, neither promotions, raises, nor actual dollar wage gains were found to be associated with increased confidence. There was no systematic difference in increased professional confidence across various job titles. Similarly, most of the professional development activities described in the survey were not associated with increased confidence. Only two specific activities reported during the second-year survey were significantly associated with increased confidence. These were: (1) having joined or rejoined an ECE professional association in the previous year; and (2) current enrollment in one or more college courses in the ECE field.

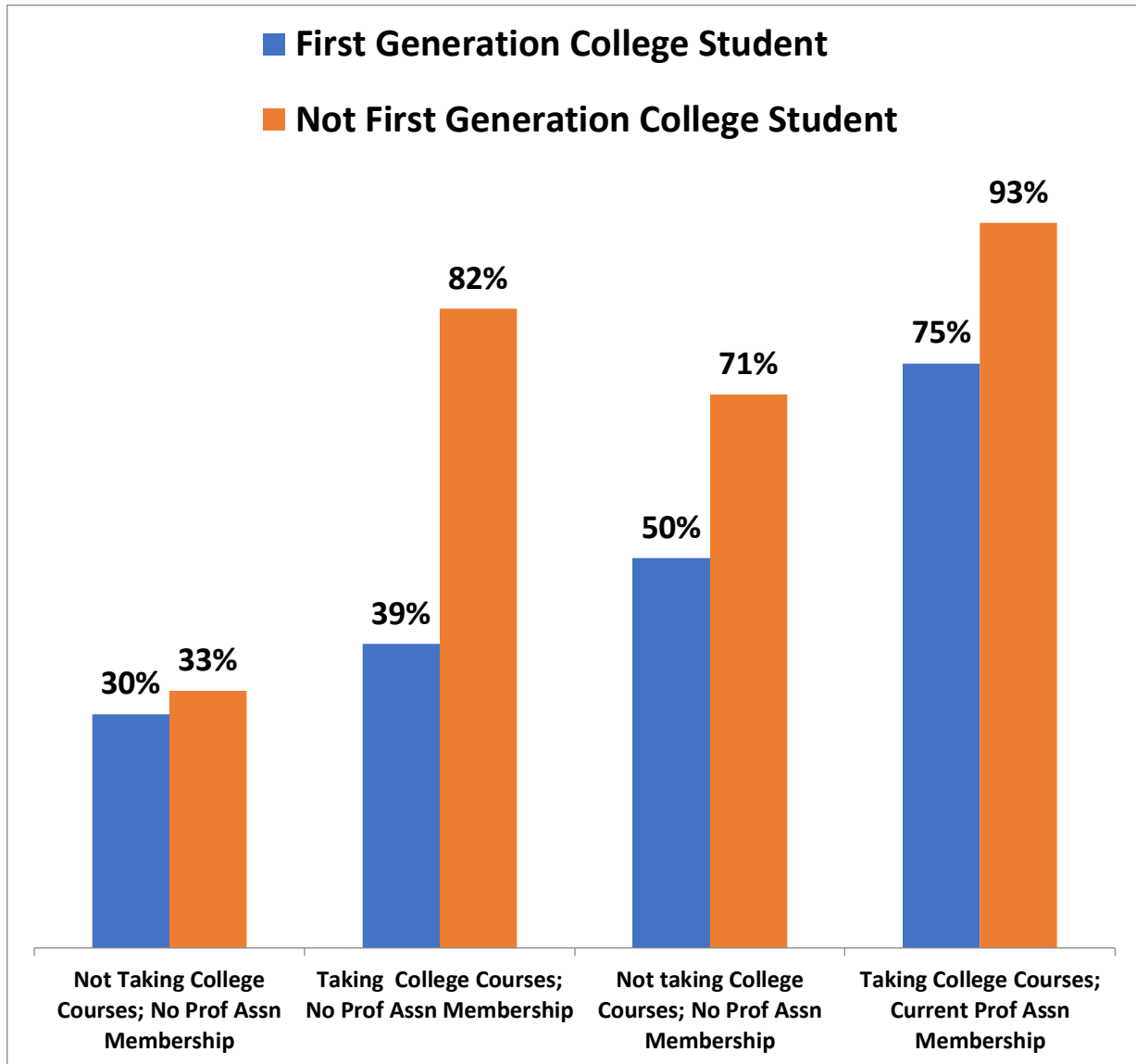
Next, we sought to examine the impact these predictors might have on the enhancement of professional self-confidence for T.E.A.C.H. graduates. Since a large proportion of T.E.A.C.H. alumni and the entire ECE workforce come from families with a limited familiarity with the college experience, it seemed particularly important to identify how to strengthen first-generation college students’ professional self-confidence. Consequently, how does a reported increase in professional self-confidence vary with professional association membership and current ECE college course enrollment?

Figure 1 shows the results. These data suggest that the often-reported challenges of first-generation college students persist even in the second year after obtaining a college degree. However, ongoing professional development through activities such as membership in a professional association and continuing enrollment in college courses while working can improve the professional self-confidence of first-generation alumni substantially, perhaps contributing to a strengthened professional identity and firmer commitment to the ECE field.

Study Limitations

Even though we have a high response rate and a motivated set of respondents, we need to be cautious in drawing conclusions. This study population contains only those who agreed to participate. While participants (N=272) likely constitute more than half of the total number of people who would have been eligible to participate, it is possible that individuals who declined to participate may have different characteristics than survey respondents. Interpretations of the data presented here are subject to

Figure 1
Percent of T.E.A.C.H. Second-Year Sample Reporting Increased Professional Confidence
by Professional Association Membership and Current Enrollment in College Courses
Comparing First-Generation College with Not First-Generation College Students



caution for two reasons: (1) people who moved out of the field or who have not made much career progress might be less likely to answer the survey, causing us to underestimate how many may have left; and (2) there may be some inconsistencies or imprecisions in job descriptions, especially among people who are in family care homes or have administrative roles.

Despite these limitations, there are several strengths of this study design and database: (1) the initial data on the T.E.A.C.H. database were audited for accuracy and timeliness; and (2) the eventual

availability of up to six follow-up studies will yield multiple opportunities to augment or clarify imprecisions or inconsistencies in this longitudinal database.

Future Follow-ups

The next round of surveys was distributed in fall 2020. Because the observation period for the Round 5 survey ranges from March through September 2020, data from this round will be especially critical because it can be used to document the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the career progress and employment situations of T.E.A.C.H. alumni. The final round of surveys is scheduled for spring 2021, when a final three-year summary analysis will be conducted.

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