Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) jobs are projected to grow, on average, between 9 percent and 11 percent from 2014 to 2024, compared to a 6.5 percent growth for non-STEM jobs. In general, STEM occupations that require either baccalaureate or sub-baccalaureate credentials tend to pay, on average, 29 percent more than other disciplines, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Some non-baccalaureate STEM occupations (see graph above) require a postsecondary education, but less than a bachelor’s degree. These jobs typically yield higher median annual earnings. For example, individuals with a postsecondary certificate working in health technologies earned an annual median salary of $41,800 in 2016, while industrial machinery mechanics earned $50,040. The education and workforce supply pipeline for STEM is slow and lags behind demand — even though many occupations such as healthcare pay good wages. According to Georgetown University research, early achievement gaps in science and math particularly affect students who don’t earn a high school diploma or matriculate into a STEM discipline. Additionally, students of color have even lower STEM educational outcomes than their white student counterparts. Community colleges are contributing to a STEM pipeline and overall higher education STEM outcomes.

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