

# The SkillsUSA Advantage

How SkillsUSA makes CTE work better.

Released in collaboration with the Student Research Foundation.



## SUMMARY

SkillsUSA members are more likely to benefit from career and technical education (CTE) than non-members says a new research report from the Student Research Foundation. This pattern — the SkillsUSA Advantage — holds true regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. SkillsUSA as a career and technical student organization (CTSO) is integral to instruction, and participation enriches the CTE classroom experience, regardless of occupational area.

The new report provides fresh evidence that speaks directly to the need for student organizations like SkillsUSA, one of nine CTSOs recognized at the high school level. One of the first post-pandemic looks (Fall 2021) at students in CTE classes, the report is based on a nationwide sample with responses from over 27,000 high school students.

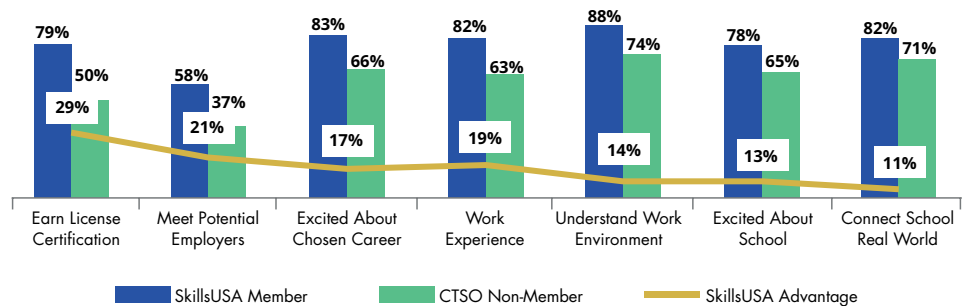
The survey showed that SkillsUSA members outperform non-CTSO members in achieving seven outcomes (shown in the graphic to the right). This SkillsUSA Advantage persists regardless of gender, race and school socioeconomics. The advantage does vary across demographic groups, suggesting greater equity among those groups may boost impact.

## KEY BENEFITS OF CTE

Through SkillsUSA and CTE, students can:

- Feel more excited about school
- Meet potential employers
- Get first-hand work experience
- Earn a license or certification
- Connect school and the real world
- Understand the work environment
- Feel more excited about your chosen career
- Career clarity

### SkillsUSA Members Are More Likely than CTSO Non-Members to Achieve the Seven General Outcomes



## AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLOSE THE SKILLS GAP

CTE offers an opportunity to close the skills gap that threatens U.S. economic growth, offers options to students beyond the traditional four-year college pathway and bolsters the career readiness of all students who participate, including those going on to college. The data suggests that CTE works, and it works even better when students are also members of SkillsUSA.



## CTE EQUITY

One of the greatest threats to CTE equity may be uneven access to membership in CTSOs. The SkillsUSA Advantage is observed across a variety of demographic groups, suggesting that if access to CTSOs were expanded, it could benefit a wider range of students.



## LEVERAGING SKILLSUSA MEMBERSHIP TO INCREASE THE BENEFITS OF CTE:

**Gender** —Fewer boys than girls said SkillsUSA and CTE helped them connect school with the real world or be excited about school. **Closing the gaps could elevate the impact of CTE.**

**Race x Gender** — All six demographic groups were more likely to report benefiting from CTE as members of SkillsUSA, but the SkillsUSA advantage was greatest among White students. **Understanding the roots of this gap and closing it could boost the impact of SkillsUSA.**

**Socioeconomic Status** — The SkillsUSA Advantage was sizeable regardless of Title I status, but the SkillsUSA Advantage was consistently weaker in Title I schools. **Understanding the cause of the gap and shaping ways to close it will elevate the impact of CTE and SkillsUSA.**

The challenges facing the education system are complex, with shared implications for the national economy. Bolstering CTSOs may not solve all our issues, but it's clear from this report that the positive outcomes they provide all students is a promising and verified step toward success.

**Career Clarity Among Members**  
As the graphic to the right indicates, a greater percentage of SkillsUSA members (seniors) reported that they plan to pursue the career they studied in their CTE program. CTE works — and it works better when combined with SkillsUSA.

**Outcome Achievement Rates and SkillsUSA Advantage by Membership Status, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity**

GENERAL OUTCOMES	Race/Ethnicity	Females			Males		
		SkillsUSA Member	CTSO Non-Member	SkillsUSA Advantage	SkillsUSA Member	CTSO Non-Member	SkillsUSA Advantage
<b>Excited About School</b>	Black	78%	64%	14%	63%	57%	6%
	Hispanic	83%	70%	13%	72%	66%	6%
	White	88%	67%	21%	79%	65%	14%
<b>Meet Potential Employers</b>	Black	59%	38%	21%	57%	38%	19%
	Hispanic	60%	37%	23%	64%	41%	23%
	White	51%	29%	22%	59%	37%	22%
<b>Work Experience</b>	Black	76%	61%	15%	75%	61%	14%
	Hispanic	84%	63%	21%	80%	67%	13%
	White	88%	60%	28%	85%	66%	19%
<b>Earn License Certification</b>	Black	69%	53%	16%	73%	53%	20%
	Hispanic	82%	52%	30%	78%	56%	22%
	White	80%	43%	37%	80%	51%	29%
<b>Connect School Real World</b>	Black	85%	74%	11%	69%	65%	4%
	Hispanic	86%	76%	10%	77%	68%	9%
	White	92%	74%	18%	83%	68%	15%
<b>Understand Work Environment</b>	Black	83%	78%	5%	82%	71%	11%
	Hispanic	89%	78%	11%	87%	76%	11%
	White	92%	74%	18%	90%	73%	17%
<b>Excited About Chosen Career</b>	Black	83%	71%	12%	68%	64%	4%
	Hispanic	84%	69%	15%	84%	68%	16%
	White	86%	64%	22%	84%	63%	21%

**Career Clarity.** After breaking the analysis down by race/ethnicity, gender, and graduating class (since Career Clarity is assessed only for Seniors), only two racial/ethnic groups have adequate cases for analysis: White students and Hispanic students.

**SkillsUSA Members Are More Likely to Achieve the Career Clarity Outcome, No Matter How It Is Measured**

