To understand the earnings of college graduates, we combine data sets including the job histories and educations of workers from Lightcast worker history profiles as well as salary data from Glassdoor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS). We match estimated salaries to individuals' job histories using available information on job titles, occupational classification, employer, state, and year. Glassdoor wage data coverage begins in 2010.

We then assess the relative outcomes of graduates from different universities in a variety of job fields. These fields were constructed using available information on the jobs where graduates had worked including Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, and the text contained in job titles. The exact information used varied by field. We restrict attention to individuals in the first ten years after graduating college. We also trim the top and bottom percentiles of individuals by salary for each school within a field to reduce the influence of extreme outcomes.

For a given set of salary outcomes in a particular field, we model wages using a generalized linear model, controlling for graduation year, years of experience, and the school where an individual's bachelor's degree was obtained. Then, to compare outcomes by school, we use the model to estimate the earnings of a student who graduated in 2012 over each of the first ten years of their career. We identify the estimated annual earnings for the median student, which is a student from the weighted median school, where the weights are the number of students from each school in our matched sample for that field. The premiums are measured as the difference between the average annual salary of a student from each school relative to the mediant student.

For a given field, many schools have a very small number of graduates. Therefore, we exclude schools from the rankings where the number of graduates falls below a particular threshold. For most fields, we use the thresholds of 100 for private schools and 500 for public schools, since they are generally larger. Because of the composition of the categories for lawyers and engineers, we use a threshold of 300 for both private and public.