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Wages of Graduates report demonstrates value of Arizona public university degree to students and state

Arizona public university graduates have increased earning power, more career mobility

PHOENIX – Graduating from an Arizona public university pays off through higher wages earned, benefitting individuals and the state.

Arizonans with an undergraduate degree earn a median wage that is approximately \$20,000 more each year than their peers with a high-school diploma. The contrast is even stronger among those with an Arizona graduate degree with median annual earnings that are approximately \$33,000 more than individuals with no college education. The figures are according to the new [2016 Wages of Graduates Report](#), an analysis by the Arizona Board of Regents.

“This compelling data underscores the value of our public universities – not only to our graduates, but to Arizona’s overall workforce and economy. It also reflects success for our students that is achieved through strong partnerships with community colleges that enable seamless transfers to our universities,” said Eileen Klein, president of the Arizona Board of Regents. “Moreover, the data contained in this report demonstrates the long-term benefits that come with investing in an Arizona public university education – including improved earnings potential and a strengthened Arizona tax base. Arizona’s public universities continue to be a primary economic driver for our state and individual prosperity.”

Total earnings were nearly \$15.7 billion among the 271,197 Arizonans who earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from an Arizona public university between 1990 and 2015, according to the report. These same individuals have paid approximately \$1.1 billion in combined state and local taxes.

The new wages of graduates report documents overall earnings of Arizona university graduates, comparing earnings to individuals with a high school degree or with some college. Earnings history was examined for graduates from Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University

and the University of Arizona. According to the report, median annual earnings for an Arizonan with a graduate degree were \$60,884, while bachelor's holders saw median earnings of \$49,801. By contrast, Arizonans with some college, but no degree, had median earnings of \$33,632. Those with a high school diploma had median annual earnings of \$27,947.

Higher education matters more today in Arizona with the earnings gap widening in recent years. In 2007, an Arizonan with a bachelor's degree earned a median wage that is 70 percent more than someone with a high school diploma. The difference has now increased to 78 percent, according to the 2016 report.

The report details careers that earn the highest median wages with engineering at the top followed by health and related occupation and business, management and marketing. Median earnings range from \$86,443 for those with an engineering major to \$40,281 for those with a major in area such as ethnic, cultural and gender studies.

"The marketplace does not reward all degrees equally, but this report makes clear that – on the whole – graduates of Arizona's system of public universities have markedly better prospects for a good-paying career," said Greg Patterson, ABOR chair. "It's imperative that we work to ensure that every qualified student in Arizona is able to access higher education to meet workforce needs of the future when the majority of jobs by 2020 will demand skills beyond high school." Data for the report was culled from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey.

The board also released this week the 2015-16 [High School Report Card](#), demonstrating improved academic preparedness among university freshmen who graduated a year earlier from an Arizona high school. The report shows that approximately 87 percent of students attending an Arizona public university were admitted without academic deficiencies; that compares to 84 percent in fall 2014 and 80 percent in fall 2011. The first-year GPAs among these students were slightly higher – averaging 3.0 for the 2015-16 college freshman class compared to 2.9 for each freshman class in the past five years.

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