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ABOR releases data demonstrating value of Arizona public university degrees to students and state

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

New data from the Arizona Board of Regents demonstrates the value of earning a higher education degree in Arizona as well as graduates' benefit to the state's economy.

The board's [Wages of Graduates](#) report indicates that Arizonans with an undergraduate degree earn a median wage that is approximately \$22,771 - 82 percent - more than individuals with a high-school diploma. The contrast is even greater among those with an Arizona graduate degree with median annual earnings that are \$11,555 – 23 percent more - than those with a bachelor's degree. The figures are according to the new 2017 Wages of Graduates Report, an analysis by the Arizona Board of Regents.

According to the report, median annual earnings for an Arizonan with a graduate degree were \$62,034, while bachelor's holders saw median earnings of \$50,479. By contrast, Arizonans with some college, but no degree, had median earnings of \$34,251. Those with a high school diploma had median annual earnings of \$27,708, a decrease from 2015 when high-school graduates earned \$27,947.

The 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.

"This data clearly demonstrated the value of earning a degree from our public universities for our graduates and for our state. As the largest producer of highly-qualified workers with bachelor's degrees and above in Arizona, this data demonstrates the benefit of higher education, not only in terms of earnings, but in our graduates' contributions to Arizona's economy," said Eileen Klein, president of the Arizona Board of Regents. "Our universities and our graduates have a fundamental and foundational role in Arizona. In fact, the universities contributed \$11.1 billion in economic impact and produced 102,000 jobs in our state in 2015 alone."

Cumulative data indicates that 284,554 graduates who earned bachelor's or graduate degrees from an Arizona public university between 1989-90 and 2015-16 earned nearly \$17.25 billion in wages. These same individuals paid approximately \$1.23 billion in combined state and local taxes, according to the report. Their annual average wage was \$60,608, compared to \$48,516 for all similar workers in Arizona, a difference of \$12,092 per graduate or 25 percent.

Earning a degree from a post-secondary institution is especially important today in Arizona since the earnings gap is widening. 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 82 percent, according to the 2017 report.

Median wages of majors are detailed in the new report with engineering at No. 1, followed by: computer and information sciences; engineering technologies/technicians; business management and marketing; and health professions and related clinical sciences. Median earnings range from \$87,556 for those with an engineering major to \$41,796 for communication technologies/technicians and support majors, according to the report.

“Our universities offer hundreds of majors for students, each that commands earnings specific to their field and market forces. It’s clear that earning a degree from Arizona’s public universities pays in the long term for graduates who have bright futures in terms of securing earnings,” said Bill Ridenour, board chair.

A portion of the data for this report was culled from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey.

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