

## Tracking Wages of California Community College Completers

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### **What is the source of the wage data?**

California Community College student record data of award earner is matched with California Employment Development (EDD) Unemployment Insurance (UI) data, which are reported quarterly by employers for unemployment insurance tax payment purposes. .

#### **What are the limitations of the data?**

Not all student's earning wages will be found in the EDDUI wage data. EDDUI data only contains wages for those who were employed in an occupation covered by UI in California. This excludes individuals who were employed by the military or federal government, self-employed, employed out of state, unemployed, or not in the workforce after completion of an award. Students are required to have a Social Security Number (SSN) since we are matching to EDDUI wage files students. Students without valid SSNs were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, students who subsequently transferred to any baccalaureate-granting institution (in or out of state) or were still enrolled anywhere in the California Community College system after receiving an award were not included in the wage calculations.

#### **What does this data tell us?**

This data are reflective of the employment experiences of California Community College graduates who remained in California and entered the workforce upon graduation. These data can be used to understand the dynamics of earnings at various points in time (i.e. two years or five years after award) as well as different degree levels and among various disciplines.

#### **What conclusions should not be drawn from the data?**

Data reflect only the earnings outcomes of award earners who remained in California and had earnings from employment that was covered by the California UI Program. Region or locale may have a significant impact on wages, users should take caution when comparing earnings from different parts of the state. Wages are not necessarily from a job associated with a particular award discipline, reported earnings are included for any type of job a graduate may have had. These short term wage outcomes should in no way be used for any measure of institutional effectiveness or quality. There may be other factors besides earnings that could motivate a student earn an award in a specific discipline, these decisions are likely individual and varied.

#### **Are wages adjusted for inflation?**

Yes, earnings are adjusted for inflation using the California Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

**Why can't I select a specific year for wages in the datamart modules?**

Wages do not represent a specific year of wages and students with awards. Instead wages are calculated for five years (system) or eight years (by college) of aggregated award earners. This was necessary because in some instances there were very few awards in a specific Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) code or discipline in a given year. In order to get a meaningful number of award earners with a specific award type and discipline matched with wages, we had to aggregate multiple years of award earners.

**Why are there no data for the award type by TOP code I am looking for?**

Award/TOP code combinations with fewer than 10 people having wages display as 'N/A' to ensure confidentiality. Award/TOP codes with less than 10 students having an award will not be shown in the Datamart.

**Why were wages only reported for those completers over 21 years old?**

Wages were filtered for those 21 years old and under to ensure that artificially low wages for those in high school and just entering college would not be counted. Examination of the data showed that wages were much more stable for those over 21 years old than those who were just out of high school.

**What was the reasoning behind tracking wages 2 years after and 5 years after the award?**

The two year after award wage time point was seen as a snapshot that allowed for the examination of what earnings looked like for recent graduates entering the workforce in their respective field. The intent was that two years after award would allow the student at least one year to find employment after graduation and begin earning wages. The five year after award time point measures wages for students who have had time to advance in their occupation and reach their higher earning potential.

**What is the difference between the wages reported in the Salary Surfer and Wage Tracker Tools on the Datamart?**

The median wages reported in the Salary Surfer and the System Wage Tracker tool are the same. The System wage tracker tool allows the user to view the N's behind each wage median as well as export and customize the output. The College Wage Tracker tool uses a different methodology (eight years of award earners) and provides only one time point with median wages (three years after award).

**Why are some wages higher for certificates compared to degrees in the same discipline?**

Programs within a given discipline may vary by degree type and college. Some certificate programs might have a more direct connection to a select industry, occupation or employer or meet a certain credentialing standard which may be reflected in a higher level of earnings. There are also regional economic and workforce composition effects that may create a wage differential among degree types in the same discipline if a certain degree type/discipline is concentrated in a specific locale.

**What is the difference between the System Wage Tracker (Salary Surfer) and the College Wage Tracker?**

The System Wage Tracker combines the wages of five years of award earners and displays median wages two years before earning an award, two years after award and five years after award. The College Wage Tracker tool uses a different methodology (eight years of award earners) and provides only one time point with median wages (three years after award). For more information see the following document which compares the difference in methodology between the System and College Wage Tracker.

**What is the source of the programs listed in the Salary Surfer?**

The Salary Surfer pulls data from the Chancellor's Office Inventory of Approved Programs (<http://curriculum.cccco.edu/>)