

## Caution in Using the “Graduate Employment Outcomes” Tool

The tool allows for broad generalizations in analyzing the employment outcomes of Minnesota postsecondary graduates. Individual graduate records from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education were linked to Unemployment Insurance (UI) data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

- Graduates must be working for an employer that is covered by UI law; which includes 97 percent of employers in Minnesota. Wage data are not available for graduates who are self-employed, working for a federal agency or in military service.
- UI data is a census of employment and wages. The UI data does not contain the occupation of employees; only the industry of the employer. Therefore, it cannot always be assumed that graduates are employed in their field of study if found in the UI data or when looking at industry of employment. For example, all employees at a hospital (accountants, maintenance, nurses, etc.) regardless of their job duties or occupation are included in the “Health Care and Social Assistance” industry classification.
- Some graduates work for employers that have more seasonal or part-time work availability than others. For example, school teachers are not categorized as working full-time, year-round if they work only during the school year. Employees working in the entertainment business such as music or theater are employed as needed and may work in higher percentages part time.
- Data could only be linked on a social security number match between graduate and UI data. Not all graduate data contains a social security number.
- Graduates may have moved out-of-state between time of graduation and employment in Minnesota. They may also have re-enrolled in college to continue their education, or made other work/life decisions during this time frame decreasing the chances of finding the graduate in the UI data, or finding the graduate working full-time.
- Wage data are not shown if programs/majors had 10 or fewer graduates to protect confidentiality of graduates and individuals.
- This tool shows employment outcome and wage data for recent graduates within the first few years after graduating. This may not indicate the potential long-term earnings of all college graduates in every occupation.

Nevertheless, the highlighted employment and wage patterns are in line with nationally reported trends: overall, annual median wages increase with each higher level of education attained.<sup>1</sup> Graduates in engineering, science fields and health careers are paid premium starting wages. In other words earnings are a function not only of what level of education you have, but what type of degree you have.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Carnevale, Anthony P., Strohl, J. and Melton, M. (2011). *What It's Worth: The Economic Value of College Majors*. Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce. <http://cew.georgetown.edu/whatsitworth>.