

November 2013 Newsletter

Two Year Degrees Can be Lucrative

Students who earn associate's degrees and occupational certificates often earn more in their first year out of college than those with four-year college degrees, according to a new study examining the average salaries of graduates in five states. For the study, College Measures, a partnership between the American Institutes for Research and Matrix Knowledge Group, worked with Arkansas, Colorado, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia to obtain data on how much graduates from two- and four-year colleges in those states earned in their first year after graduation.

What's a Tree Worth?



Pittsburgh approved a master plan for maintaining and expanding its tree canopy over the next 20 years. The decision came after a nonprofit group called Tree Pittsburgh used [i-Tree](#) to determine that the trees planted along sidewalks and medians throughout the city provided \$2.4 million worth of environmental and aesthetic value every year. Since the city spends only \$850,000 a year on street planting, that's quite a return on investments: Pittsburgh gets about \$3 in benefits for every dollar it invests in trees.

i-Tree works by calculating the "leaf surface area" of a city and assigning the canopy an economic value. The value comes from the environmental services trees provide, such as how much ozone, particulates and nitrogen are removed from the air; how much carbon is stored; the effect on building heating and cooling costs; and tree's effect on hydrology, among other factors.

One especially neat feature is a module that links to Google Maps. It helps city foresters, homeowners and other users see the effects a tree would have if planted in a specific place. Researchers want the next version, which will likely be released in 2014, to enable modeling of trees, and their benefits to ecosystems 30 to 50 years into the future.

For now, i-Tree is just a basic calculator that helps proponents make an economic case for why trees should be in the budget. A growing body of knowledge on the benefits of trees, however, could make i-Trees job even easier. Research has already shown that trees increase property values (see "Where the Birds Are," *Governing*, July 2012). And now, a new study has found that living near trees dramatically improves health.

Conducted over 18 years, research from the U.S. Forest Service has found a correlation between tree loss and human mortality. According to their findings, the loss of trees was associated with about seven additional deaths per year from respiratory causes and almost 17 additional deaths per year from cardiovascular causes per 100,000 adults. That, say researchers, comes out to more than 21,000 deaths in total. It seems trees have a value that goes far beyond dollars and cents.

In Portland, Oregon the city declared that for every dollar spent on a tree, an estimated \$3.80 worth of benefits are returned.

Governing 8-13

Northeast Ohio Experiencing Burst in High-tech Job Growth



Northeast Ohio is a hot spot for high-tech job growth. The Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor area saw a 9.1 percent increase in the number of high-tech jobs created from 2010 to 2011, according to Engine Advocacy, a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that aims to help technology businesses thrive. Nationwide, the average growth rate was 2.6 percent.

Ohio ranks seventh among all states, with a 4.6 percent average growth rate.

The study shows that more jobs are being created in high-tech fields than in the rest of the labor force. Engine Advocacy commissioned the Bay Area Council Economic Institute to analyze Bureau of Labor Statistics data in efforts to identify communities that are experiencing significant job growth in the high-tech sector.

Lake County experienced a 22 percent growth in high-tech jobs from 2010 to 2011, while Cuyahoga County had a 7.5 percent increase in the same period and Lorain County a 1.6 percent rise.

The average salary of a high-tech worker in Northeast Ohio was \$76,825 per year, according to the study.

The study also shows the region is among the highest-growth metro areas in the past five years with a 7.1 percent increase in high-tech jobs from 2006 to 2011. Michael McGeary, a senior strategist for Engine Advocacy, said the research confirms what he sees every day across the country.

“The trajectory for job growth and the higher incomes of tech workers, combined with the job multiplier effect, make the high-tech sector a key driver of economic growth,” he said in a prepared statement.

High-tech job growth is projected to outpace the job growth of the economy as a whole throughout the decade, expanding by 16.2 percent between 2011 and 2020.

Marcia Pledger, PD 12-7-12

A Pleasant Surprise

To chart America’s recovery, the Martin Prosperity Institute ran the numbers on the change in average wages, and salaries for more than 350 U.S. metro areas between 2009 and 2012, based on federal data. Among large metros, Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor posted the seventh-largest increase in wages during that timeframe, rising to average wages of \$45,310 in 2012 from \$41,930 in 2009, an increase of \$3,380, or 8.1%.

Large metros with the biggest average increases in wages and salaries, 2009-2012

<u>Rank, Metro</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>Increase</u>
1. Washington	\$60,090	\$64,690	7.7%
2. Seattle	\$53,240	\$57,560	8.1%
3. San Francisco	\$61,940	\$66,070	6.7%
4. Houston	\$44,880	\$48,850	8.8%
5. Cleveland-Elyria Mentor	\$41,930	\$45,310	8.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data compiled by the Martin Prosperity Institute;
tinyurl.com/ky8bog8