What Is Measured?
Average wages in the first year after graduation for students employed in the state of Virginia

Who Is Counted?
Students who earned an associate degree in Virginia Community Colleges from 2005-06 through 2009-10
What It Tells Us

Comparing the two types of degree programs, those who graduated from occupational/technical programs had higher average wages overall ($38,600) than those who graduated from bachelor's credit programs ($32,800). Among those who completed bachelor's-credit associate degrees, students in registered nursing programs had the highest average earnings ($49,100), whereas students in physical sciences programs had the lowest average earnings ($26,000). Among those who completed occupational or technical associate degrees, those in registered nursing programs again had the highest average earnings ($45,300), while those in business operations support and secretarial services programs had the lowest ($23,400).

Why It's Important

ABOUT THE DATA

Virginia separates associate degree programs into two classifications: "career/technical oriented programs," which are directed toward employment, and "bachelor's credit programs," which are directed toward future enrollment in a bachelor's degree program. The data do not include non-degree-seeking students. Data from students who graduated from 2005-06 through 2009-10 were combined into one cohort. The average first-year earnings represent the average of the earnings from Quarters 3 through 6 for each student in the cohort after they graduated. Earnings for the graduates from each earlier year (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09) are not adjusted for inflation to the earnings of the 2009–10 academic year graduates. Student-level education data were matched with unemployment insurance wage data gathered by the state. As a result, the data do not capture employment information for graduates employed outside Virginia, graduates who are federal employees, and graduates who are self-employed (and other nonwage employees). Program areas are reported by Classification of Instructional Programs code. The five most popular program areas for bachelor's-credit associate degrees and occupational/technical associate degrees are included in this indicator.

DATA SOURCE