

New Study Tells Students the Worth of Their Undergraduate Majors

By Kathy Matheson
Of The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP)— The choice of undergraduate major in college is strongly tied to a student's future earnings, with the highest-paying majors providing salaries of about 300 percent more than the lowest-paying, according to a study released Tuesday.

Based on first-of-its-kind Census data, the report by Georgetown University in Washington also found that majors are highly segregated by race and gender.

College graduates overall make 84 percent more over a lifetime than those with only high school diplomas, the study said. But further analysis of 171 majors shows that various undergraduate majors can lead to significantly different median wages.

Petroleum engineering majors make about \$120,000 a year, compared with \$29,000 annually for counseling psychology majors, researchers found. Math and computer science majors earn \$98,000 in salary while early childhood education majors get paid about \$36,000.

"It's important that you go to college and get a (bachelor's degree), but it's almost three to four times more important what you take," said Anthony Carnevale, director of Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce. "The majors that are most popular are not the ones that make the most money."

"What's it Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors" analyzes data from the 2009 American Community Survey, whose

results were released last year. It's the first time the Census asked individuals about their undergraduate majors, enabling researchers to tie in salary data, Carnevale said.

The study found that white men are concentrated in the highest-earning majors, including engineering and pharmaceutical sciences, while women gravitate toward the lowest-earning majors like education, art and social work.

The report also categorized the 171 majors into 15 fields, discovering different majors led to different industries. About 43 percent of law and public policy majors end up in public administration, but only 13 percent of social science majors do. A higher portion of social science majors end up in finance, researchers found.

Other findings:

— The most popular major group is business, accounting for 25 percent of all students. The least popular are industrial arts and agriculture, with 1.6 percent each.

— White men have higher median earnings across all fields except three. Asians pull down the top median salaries in law and public policy (\$55,000), psychology and social work (\$48,000), and biology and life science (\$53,000).

— The field with the highest concentrations of whites is agriculture and natural resources (90 percent), while the highest concentration of Asians is in computers and

mathematics (16 percent). Law and public policy has the highest concentration of African-Americans (14 percent) and Hispanics (10 percent).

— Fields with virtually no unemployment: geological and geophysical engineering, military technologies, pharmacology and school student counseling.

Nobody ever tells you when you go to college what happened to the other people who took it before you

— Fields with the highest unemployment, ranging from 16 percent to 11 percent: social psychology, nuclear engineering, and educational administration and supervision.

The data is important considering the high cost of a college degree and the significant loan burdens taken on by some students to obtain one, Carnevale said.

"We don't have a system in the United States where we align what you take with career prospects," Carnevale said. "Nobody ever tells you when you go to college what happened to the other people who took it before you."

The researchers' longitudinal look at lifetime earnings seems to echo a more short-term analysis of the job market by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The Bethlehem, Pa.-based group reports that engineering majors account for seven of the top 10 highest-paying majors for the class of 2011. The other three are computer

science, information science and business systems networking/telecommunications.

Chemical engineering heads the list with an average salary offer of nearly \$67,000, according to the group's spring survey.

Still, Rachel Brown, director of the career center at Temple University in Philadelphia, noted that the average person changes careers three to five times in a lifetime. And while median salary is certainly something students should be aware of, it shouldn't be the deciding factor, she said.

"Take that into consideration, but look at the whole picture," Brown said. "What are you doing every day? What are the job responsibilities? What are the values of the occupation in general? Advancement potential?"

Answering those kinds of questions is how Drexel University junior Meaghan Donchak chose her major of corporate communication and public relations.

Donchak, 22, of East Windsor, N.J., said she knew her strengths were reading, writing and communicating. But even after settling on public relations, her own research showed such work at nonprofits paid less than corporate or government work, and she adjusted her track accordingly.

Donchak hopes her career will allow her to travel, meet people and live comfortably. The Georgetown study found communications and journalism majors earn \$50,000 annually, rising to \$62,000 with a graduate degree.

"The most important thing is not the money. It's really hard to convince people of that, especially people our age," Donchak said. "It's doing what you love to do. You don't want to wake up every day dreading going to work."

Shifting Economy Leads Middle School Trend in Chinese Language

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — As Tennessee's economy shifts to businesses with ties to China, students as early as middle school are taking an interest in learning the language that could help their careers.

Tennessee industries export \$1.87 billion in goods to China, a trend that is nationwide, and in response, more public schools are offering classes in Chinese language.

Spanish still ranks as the most popular foreign language taught in schools across the nation, with 2 million students enrolled. But a recent report from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages showed Chinese is the fastest growing language course offered in public schools.

Students studying Chinese grew 195 percent between 2005 and 2008, while the number of Spanish students grew by just 2 percent in the same period.

The Tennessean reports about 1,200 students in eight Nashville schools are learning Mandarin Chinese and other counties offer it as part of after-school programs.

One of those students is Jerry Nelson Jr., a Hillsboro High School junior, who plans to study physical therapy in college and minor in international business.

Before his school offered an introductory Mandarin course that launched in the fall, Nelson tried to learn from books in the public library. He's now watching a Chinese film with English subtitles in his classroom.

"I follow in bits and pieces," Nelson said.

Marty Abbott, director of education at the council, noted there was a boom in Russian language courses after Russia launched the first satellite in space and a similar increase in Japanese in the 1980s when the Japanese economy was strong.

"If you look at our history of language learning, we always react to another economy threatening our position," Abbott said.

The increase in businesses that export or do business in China both in Tennessee and nationwide is likely what is causing the boom in interested students, Abbott said.

"Now, they are looking at China as the next big econ-

omy that will challenge the U.S. economy, and coupled with that, the Chinese government is interested in promoting Chinese," Abbott said.

Tennessee Chinese Chamber of Commerce President Ming Wang said the state ranks sixth in the nation in exporting goods to China.

"There are tons of jobs for Americans who speak Chinese," Wang said. "Understanding the language opens opportunity."

Hillsboro Principal Terry Shrader said offering the class through the school's International Business Academy could help students who want to work in trade with China.

"Certainly, our students that are working in international business would have a leg up on their competition if they could speak Mandarin," he said.

The high school is partnering with the University of Memphis at their Confucius Institute, which promotes the language, gives proficiency tests and provides teacher training and exchange programs.

Lincoln City
Central Oregon Coast

ALWAYS NEVER THE SAME
TRY SOMETHING NEW HERE

Like . . . a cooking class, flying a kite, or blowing your very own glass float!

FINDERS KEEPERS
From October 16, 2010 to May 31st, 2011, 2011 hand blown glass floats will be hidden on the beach for you to find and keep!

► June 11: Art Sea Street Fair
June 11-19: Soundwaves Music Festival
June 25-26: Summer Kite Festival

541-996-1274 © 800-452-2151
www.oregoncoast.org