

# Measuring the Economic Success of Florida's Graduates

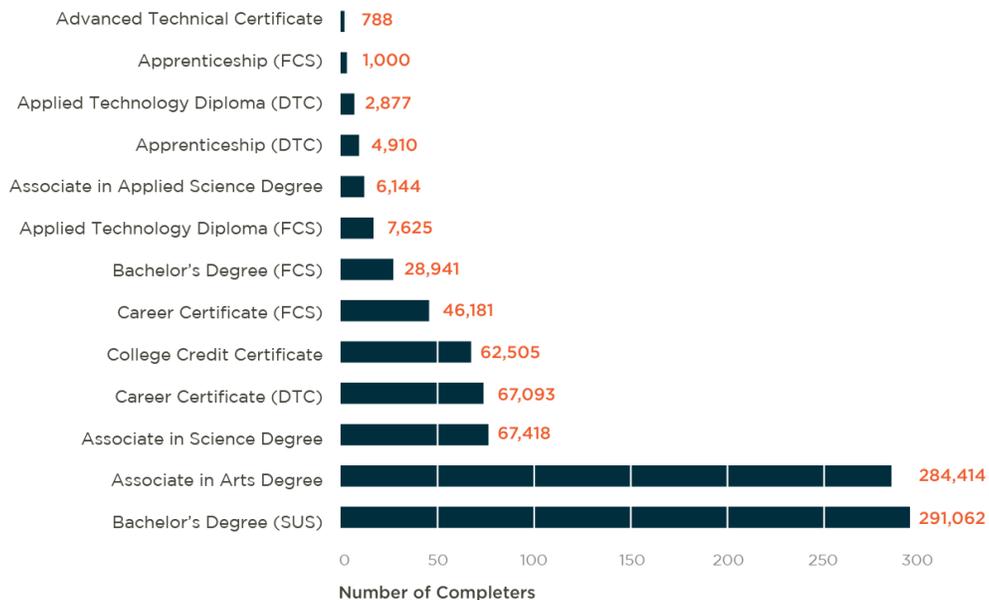


MAKING RESEARCH RELEVANT

Florida has a large and complex system of higher education. The *Economic Security Report* provides students, parents, and others with information on graduates of Florida's public institutions of higher education, including the State University System (SUS), the Florida College System (FCS), and the District Technical Centers (DTCs).<sup>1</sup> The figures in this summary show the number of completers and first-year earnings for a range of higher education credentials awarded for completers in their first year after graduation in the 5-year period from 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Figure 1 shows, the associate in arts degree (A.A.) is the second most commonly awarded postsecondary credential in Florida. Compared with an associate in arts degree, far fewer students completed career- and technical-oriented programs of study, such as the associate in science (A.S.) and the associate in applied science (A.A.S) degrees.

**Figure 1. Total Completers by Credential Level and System, Statewide**



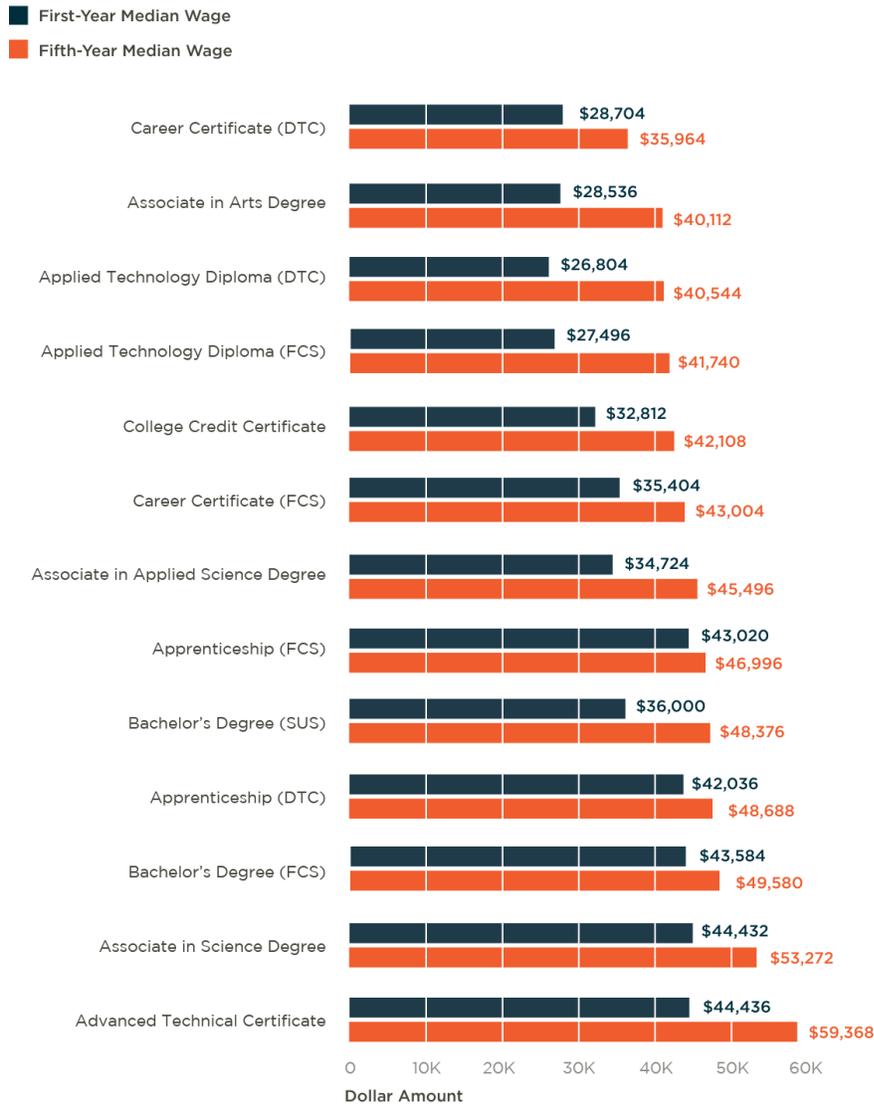
Note. N = 870,958. Completers in their first year after graduation in the 5-year period from 2011–12 to 2015–16.

<sup>1</sup>The data source for information in this summary report is the Florida Department of Education's Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program.

Figure 2 shows the median first- and fifth-year wage after degree completion associated with each career- and technical-oriented degree. The lowest first-year wage was associated with completers of an applied technology diploma. Some of these completers may be continuing their education while in the job market, thus lowering their earnings. With that in mind, the median first-year wages of completers with an associate in science degree were, on average, \$17,000 more than those of completers with an applied technology diploma and more than \$8,400 higher than those with a bachelor's degree from an institution in the SUS. The median first-year wage of those with an associate of science degree also was higher than those who completed the far less common associate in applied science degree.

Completers of certificate programs, on average, had higher first-year earnings than graduates with associate in arts degrees. The median first-year earnings of completers with this degree (\$28,536) were lower than those of completers with career certificates from Florida's colleges (\$35,404). However, completers of certificate programs, on average, had lower median first-year earnings than graduates with associate in science degrees (\$44,432). The highest median first-year earnings (\$44,436) were achieved by the 788 completers of advanced technical certificates. Such certificates are generally designed for individuals who have already completed a two-year associate degree and are seeking advanced, specialized preparation in a career field to supplement their degree.

**Figure 2. First-Year and Fifth-Year Median Wages by Credential Level and System, Statewide**



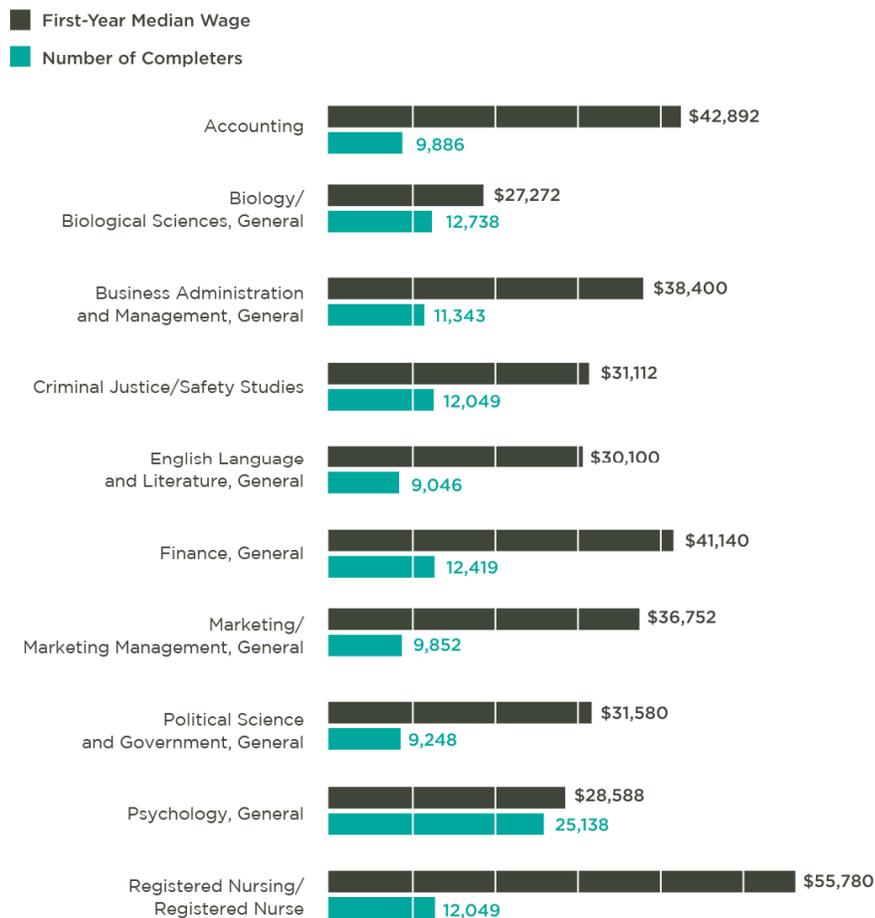
Note. First-year median wages refer to completers in their first year after graduation in the 5-year period from 2011–12 to 2015–16. Fifth-year median wages refer to completers in the 2011–12 cohort 5 years after completion.

Now consider the bachelor's degree, the most commonly awarded degree in Florida. As shown in Figure 3, the median first-year earnings varied considerably between the lowest and highest paying fields. Graduates with degrees in biology or general biological sciences had the lowest first-year earnings, approximately \$8,700 less than \$36,000,<sup>2</sup> the statewide median.<sup>3</sup> Graduates with degrees in four other fields (general psychology, general English language and literature, criminal justice/safety studies, and general political science and government) also were less than the statewide median.

<sup>2</sup> Data obtained from Florida's *Economic Security Report 2018*: Table 13 First-Year Outcomes Among Bachelor's Completers by System.

<sup>3</sup> Graduates with degrees in biology had low median first-year earnings, but they often experienced high rates of growth in earnings. Several years after graduation, the average earnings of graduates with degrees in biology often are higher than the earnings of graduates in other fields who may have earned more immediately after graduation.

**Figure 3. First-Year Median Wages Among Completers of the Most Popular Bachelor's Programs, State University System Institutions Only**



*Note.* First-year median wages refer to completers in their first year after graduation in the 5-year period from 2011–12 to 2015–16.

Graduates who majored in business-related fields (general business administration and management, general finance, and accounting) were among the highest first-year earners. Graduates with degrees in accounting were the highest paid among these popular business-related programs. Graduates with degrees in registered nursing had average first-year earnings that were more than \$19,500 higher than the statewide median, which places them among the highest paid graduates in the state.

Although success reflects a variety of factors—such as background, the local job market, and where the person chooses to live—[Launch My Career Florida](#) and the *Economic Security Report* provide valuable information for students and parents to consider when exploring education and career choices. Furthermore, the Launch My Career online tool provides students, parents, and others with graphs, charts, and tables of outcome information on employment and earnings of Florida graduates from public institutions of higher education.