

# MAJOR DECISIONS: WHAT GRADUATES EARN OVER THEIR LIFETIMES

BY BRAD HERSHBEIN AND MELISSA KEARNEY  
THE HAMILTON PROJECT

**Appendix Table 1: Median Earnings at Various Career Points by Education Level and College Major**

Education Level or Major	Initial Earnings (\$000s)	Earnings at: Year 6 (\$000)	Earnings at: Years 11 to 15 (\$000)	Earnings at: Years 26 to 30 (\$000)
High School Degree or GED	9.7	20.0	26.2	32.2
Some College, No Degree	12.2	24.2	32.6	39.4
Associates Degree	18.2	31.4	38.7	44.4
Accounting and Actuarial Science	37.3	52.9	63.9	70.4
Advertising and Public Relations	25.5	45.2	56.0	59.2
Aerospace Engineering	39.9	71.4	90.5	111.7
Agricultural Economics	29.1	48.6	58.9	64.8
Animal Sciences	26.2	35.5	46.1	51.9
Anthropology and Archeology	19.2	32.1	43.0	46.2
Architecture	26.7	47.2	60.4	68.7
Area, Ethnic, and Civilization Studies	18.4	38.4	50.0	45.1
Art and Music Education	20.2	36.6	41.2	43.2
Art History and Criticism	23.4	35.5	43.7	44.9
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	26.4	48.9	65.3	74.6
Biological, Biomedical, and Environmental Engineering	36.9	61.0	80.5	73.6
Biology	23.3	42.7	55.1	61.0
Botany, Ecology, and Zoology	17.7	34.1	45.8	53.9
Business Management and Administration	30.4	46.4	57.4	65.1
Chemical Engineering	52.5	78.0	93.4	113.1
Chemistry	31.2	47.2	62.7	69.8
Civil Engineering	38.4	63.1	78.3	96.9
Commercial Art and Graphic Design	24.8	39.1	48.0	43.7
Communication Technologies	25.1	39.0	55.1	48.4
Communications	25.1	43.7	54.2	53.7
Composition and Speech	16.5	32.9	46.0	52.0
Computer Engineering	49.2	73.0	96.6	102.7
Computer Science	38.7	59.9	76.6	87.9
Construction Services	39.0	59.4	76.2	80.1

Education Level or Major	Initial Earnings (\$000s)	Earnings at: Year 6 (\$000)	Earnings at: Years 11 to 15 (\$000)	Earnings at: Years 26 to 30 (\$000)
Criminology and Criminal Justice	24.6	42.0	55.1	61.8
Drama and Theater Arts	15.6	31.0	38.4	48.2
Early Childhood Education	22.6	33.9	34.3	35.5
Earth and Other Physical Sciences	25.9	45.9	57.5	78.7
<b>Economics</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>76.3</b>
Electrical Engineering	53.9	68.5	88.3	104.1
Elementary Education	22.4	35.3	38.0	41.5
Energy and Extraction Engineering	50.3	78.3	85.1	111.8
Engineering Technologies	31.4	55.3	68.5	76.2
English Language and Literature	21.6	36.1	46.3	48.3
Environment and Natural Resources	20.3	39.9	52.8	63.3
Family and Consumer Sciences	23.1	33.9	38.0	38.8
Film, Video and Photographic Arts	18.9	35.9	44.7	50.2
Finance	38.3	58.2	72.6	81.0
Fine and Studio Arts	15.7	33.0	38.6	41.7
General Agriculture	26.8	43.8	48.7	54.5
General Education	25.2	37.8	40.9	44.6
General Engineering	47.2	68.7	80.0	85.1
Geography	30.0	43.4	53.8	61.4
Health and Medical Administration	21.2	40.1	50.4	58.4
History	20.8	40.2	52.8	55.0
Hospitality Management	29.8	37.9	50.4	56.7
Human Resources and Personnel Management	31.0	44.9	55.2	64.2
Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering	53.6	64.7	81.5	92.2
International Business and Business Economics	33.1	52.0	63.1	60.6
International Relations	27.2	49.6	65.0	
Journalism	25.2	40.4	52.0	55.8
Language and Drama Education	21.6	37.7	40.7	42.9
Liberal Arts	18.5	34.6	45.3	52.7
Linguistics and Foreign Languages	20.8	38.7	46.1	48.9
Marketing and Marketing Research	33.1	48.9	60.7	63.4
Mass Media	21.2	41.0	48.8	51.9
Math and Science Teacher Education	33.0	38.7	41.7	48.1
Mathematics and Statistics	32.1	47.8	67.7	79.6
Mechanical Engineering	49.0	69.5	85.0	103.7

Education Level or Major	Initial Earnings (\$000s)	Earnings at: Year 6 (\$000)	Earnings at: Years 11 to 15 (\$000)	Earnings at: Years 26 to 30 (\$000)
Medical Technologies and Assistance	29.7	46.1	49.5	54.2
Microbiology, Physiology, Genetics, and Neuroscience	24.0	43.5	57.2	62.4
Multidisciplinary Science	27.5	44.6	55.3	61.5
Music	17.5	33.0	40.9	41.3
Nursing	44.2	54.4	58.7	65.1
Operations and Logistics	44.4	59.8	75.2	83.7
Philosophy and Religious Studies	18.4	36.1	47.7	51.1
Physical and Health Education Teaching	16.9	36.7	42.8	50.6
Physical Fitness, Nutrition, and Sports Studies	18.7	38.6	48.2	47.0
Physics	32.0	50.0	78.2	88.7
Political Science and Government	25.9	46.8	61.8	66.0
Production and Transportation Technologies	24.1	54.9	70.6	78.4
Psychology	22.0	36.2	45.3	46.8
Public Administration and Policy	24.9	39.9	49.5	53.0
Secondary Teacher Education	23.7	37.3	44.2	51.2
Social Science or History Teacher Education	18.8	36.3	41.8	52.3
Social Work	20.6	33.0	37.9	38.0
Sociology	23.6	40.0	48.1	46.7
Special Needs Education	34.4	38.2	39.7	44.6
Theology and Religious Vocations	18.9	32.6	37.5	44.9
Treatment Therapy Professions	19.1	40.5	52.5	56.9
<b>ALL MAJORS</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>61.7</b>

NOTES: Earnings are in thousands of current dollars and represent people who worked at least one week in the preceding twelve months; the sample is **not** restricted to full-time workers. Earning by major are for individuals with exactly a bachelor's degree.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the American Community Survey, 2009–2012.

