



Young Oregon Certificate Recipients Can Double Earnings After Completion, Finds Georgetown University Research

Certificates help more established workers rebound from job losses or other setbacks to regain their footing in the job market

(Washington, DC, June 5, 2018) – Certificate recipients in Oregon ages 29 or younger reap sizable earnings gains, in some cases more than doubling their pay, as they build their skills and enter the workforce, according to a new analysis of community college programs in the state. The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center) report, *Certificates in Oregon: A Model for Workers to Jump-Start or Reboot Careers*, highlights the role of certificates for people seeking to enter the labor market, an issue that has drawn increasing attention from policymakers in Washington, DC and across the nation.

The new analysis is based on state-level data that sheds light on their labor market value by field of study and their impact on both college-age students entering the labor market and adults established in the workforce. It also shows the importance of major national and state investments in data systems that have allowed states like Oregon to track the earnings returns of particular credentials.

“The power of certificates with demonstrated labor market value should not be overlooked,” said Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center and lead author of the report. “The state-level data show that workers who invest in certificate programs carefully can experience meaningful earnings increases following completion.”

The career mobility and economic benefits of the state’s community college certificate programs varies for workers at different stages of their working lives. Certificates help more established workers rebound from job losses or other setbacks to regain their footing in the job market.

Workers who earn a community college certificate, on average, boost their earnings by almost \$5,000, or 19 percent, compared to their wages before they enrolled in a program. But the economic benefits vary widely based on field of study and the age at which workers complete these programs. Certificates in health generate the largest earnings gains of over \$10,000, while certificates in business offer the highest earnings post-completion (\$40,000).

Compared to traditional degree programs, certificate programs are more career-focused and serve an older and more experienced student population. Nationally, they are increasingly being used both as a direct pathway to employment and as a stepping stone toward an associate’s degree and beyond.

“College leaders across the nation have begun to recognize that new strategies are needed to reach adult learners,” said Neil Ridley, state initiative director at the Georgetown Center and co-author of the report. “Certificate programs provide a viable on-ramp for these learners to enroll in college and engage in education and training programs that expand their options in the labor market.”

Other key findings include:

- Students who receive federal Pell Grants boost their pay on average by nearly \$10,000 by earning a certificate.
- Men out-earn women, but women experience stronger earnings growth after they finish a certificate program.
- Certificate holders who switch industries often leave jobs in traditional blue-collar industries and become employed in fast-growing healthcare services.
- While certificate production at community colleges has increased, the number of certificates awarded at private, two-year institutions, including for-profit colleges, has declined.

Certificates in Oregon: A Model for Workers to Jump-Start or Reboot Careers can be accessed at cew.georgetown.edu/ORcertificates.

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