



# Community College Baccalaureate Graduate Employment and Earnings

CCB DATA POINTS  
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*Research from four states provide important insights into how community college baccalaureate (CCB) graduates fare in the labor market over time, including how CCB graduate employment and earnings outcomes compare to associate and university graduates of similar programs.*

Emerging research in Florida, Washington, Texas, and California, four states awarding over [80 percent](#) of all community college baccalaureate (CCB) degrees in the U.S., provides important insights into the employment and earnings of CCB graduates. These studies, presented below, find sizeable increases in salary from before the time students enter CCB programs to after they complete their degrees and enter or progress in employment. Research also shows CCB graduates see a substantial increase in earnings compared to associate degree graduates in similar programs of study. Comparisons of the employment rates of CCB and university graduates in similar fields favor CCB graduates, but earnings show a more mixed picture, with variation by program and longevity in the workforce.

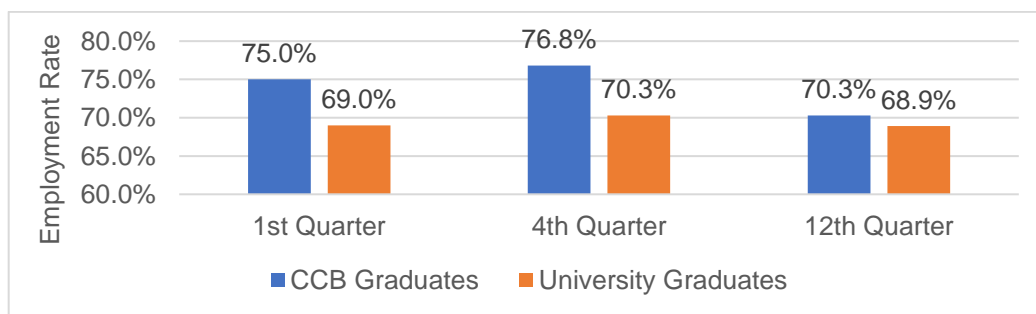
## Florida

[Researchers](#) compared the employment and earnings of CCB graduates in Florida to associate graduates and found the employment of CCB completers was 83 percent one year after graduation. They reported the annual earnings of CCB graduates were about \$10,000 higher than associate graduates. A more recent [study](#) confirmed a strong employment rate of 78 percent and median annualized earnings at \$51,520 for CCB graduates one year after completion, with varying results by program and demographic group. The study showed CCB graduates tended to enter “higher-paying sectors” than university bachelor’s graduates but earn less in median annualized income. Except for CCB nursing graduates, who earn about \$5,000 more per year than their university-trained counterparts, CCB graduate earnings lagged behind graduates of schools in the State University System (SUS) in all other fields, for example, by about \$5,700 in business and \$2,700 in education, both programs with many CCB graduates.

## Washington

[Research](#) was conducted on the employment and earnings of Washington community college and university baccalaureate graduates between 2009-2017. Results showed the employment rate of CCB graduates was higher than that of university graduates in similar programs in the first, fourth, and twelfth quarters after graduation, reaching a more comparable rate in the last measurement (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Employment Rate of CCB and University Graduates in Similar Programs



Another [study](#) showed higher annualized earnings in 2017 for CCB graduates in Washington compared to university graduates in business and computer science in the year of graduation and one year after graduation. In healthcare, the annualized earnings of university graduates exceeded CCB graduates in the year of graduation and one year post-graduation. Three years after graduation, annualized earnings of university graduates were higher in business and healthcare, but these differences are not statistically significant. The reasons for this finding are unclear but may be attributed to the greater work experience

of CCB graduates, giving them an initial boost in earnings relative to the less experienced university graduates, who see wages increase as their work history grows.

Table 1. Comparison of Annualized Earnings for CCB and University Graduates in 2017<sup>1</sup>

| Program area                    | CCB Graduates                              |   |  | University Graduates                       |   |  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|--|
|                                 | Annualized earnings the year of graduation | Annualized earnings one year after graduation | Annualized earnings three years after graduation | Annualized earnings the year of graduation | Annualized earnings one year after graduation | Annualized earnings three years after graduation |
| Business                        | \$40,000                                   | \$45,200                                      | \$49,200   | \$32,400                                   | \$42,000                                      | \$53,200   |
| Computer & Information Sciences | \$47,600                                   | \$52,000                                      | N/A  | \$42,400                                   | \$49,200                                      | N/A  |
| Healthcare, including Nursing   | \$50,000                                   | \$60,000                                      | \$68,400   | \$51,600                                   | \$66,000                                      | \$72,400   |

Newer [research](#) on graduates obtaining a baccalaureate degree from a Washington community college shows 83 percent of graduates are employed, with a median annual wage of \$68,000 within one year of graduation. Looking at median annual earnings by field of study, the report shows CCB graduate earnings range widely, from \$46,000 in Arts, AV, and communications to \$111,000 for nursing.

### California

A [survey](#) of 2018 California CCB graduates showed their annual salary was \$28,000 higher by September 2019 than their annual salary prior to enrollment. For 2019 graduates, annual salary averaged \$12,000 higher than before CCB enrollment. Two-thirds of graduates said their CCB degree helped them get their current job. A [2022 study](#) reported the average annual income of 2020 CCB graduates in California to be \$18,400 higher than their annual earnings before enrollment, indicating a 37 percent increase in income from pre-enrollment to post-graduation. A [recent study](#) showed Latino graduates' wage gains averaged \$22,600 from the start to completion of their CCB program, but this gain was less than what non-Latino graduates averaged at \$27,700, pointing to an inequitable economic outcome.

### Texas

A [study](#) using data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) found the median annualized wages of CCB graduates to be \$44,102 three years after graduation. This finding is based on a sample of 843 CCB graduates, but wages varied by race, age, gender, and whether the student received a Pell grant. It is important to note that three-quarters of these graduates were affiliated with South Texas College, which is one of three community colleges selected to pilot bachelor's programs soon after CCB legislation passed in 2004. While the median annual wage for CCB graduates appears low, partly because it is skewed toward graduates from a region of the state with a high poverty rate, the study concluded the annualized median income of CCB graduates "is comparable to Texans with bachelor's degrees writ large."

The results from these four states offer useful insights into CCB graduate employment and earnings, but more research is needed to fully understand the labor market outcomes of CCB graduates.

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<sup>1</sup> Data used in this table are derived from Meza, E., & Bragg, D. D. (2022). Scaling up community college baccalaureate degrees in Washington State: Labor market outcomes and equity implications for higher education Educational Policy Analysis Archives, Vol. 22, see Table 6.