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How the Sunshine State Has Used Transparency and Innovation to Open Up New Workforce Pathways

Hayden Dublois
Data & Analytics Director

KEY FINDINGS



FLORIDA'S TAKE ON STUDENTS' RIGHT TO KNOW PROVIDES REAL TRANSPARENCY.



OTHER STATES ARE ALSO PAVING THE WAY IN HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSPARENCY.



FLORIDA'S INNOVATION HAS STRENGTHENED THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORKERS.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

MORE STATES SHOULD PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY TO STUDENTS.

Overview

Florida has long been a leader in higher education. Tuition relief measures and innovative methods to attract students have fostered one of the best higher education systems in the country. In fact, Florida has the lowest tuition for public four-year institutions while maintaining some of the best outcomes in the nation.¹ As costs in Florida fell by roughly 23 percent over the last two decades, enrollment has spiked by nearly 50 percent.²

New innovations in Florida's higher education system—under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis—are taking this solid foundation to the next level, such as through targeted tuition waivers and more online options.³ But one of the most important developments in Florida's higher education system has been increased transparency for families and students through the MyFloridaFuture tool, which showcases outcomes and costs by university, field of study, and degree level.⁴ This dashboard uses the concept of Students' Right to Know—a policy designed to provide prospective college students with as much information as possible so that they can make an informed decision about their future.⁵



**AS COSTS IN FLORIDA FELL BY ROUGHLY
23 PERCENT OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES,
ENROLLMENT HAS SPIKED BY NEARLY 50 PERCENT.**

But a traditional four-year degree program is not the right choice for everyone. Coupled with Florida's advancements in higher education transparency has been a greater emphasis on building the bridge between postsecondary education and the workforce. Innovative reforms designed to give students more workforce-oriented options after high school have complemented the state's rollout of comprehensive transparency for students.

Together, these two features—robust transparency and workforce-oriented policies—have expanded pathways for students and empowered families to make the best decisions about students' futures.

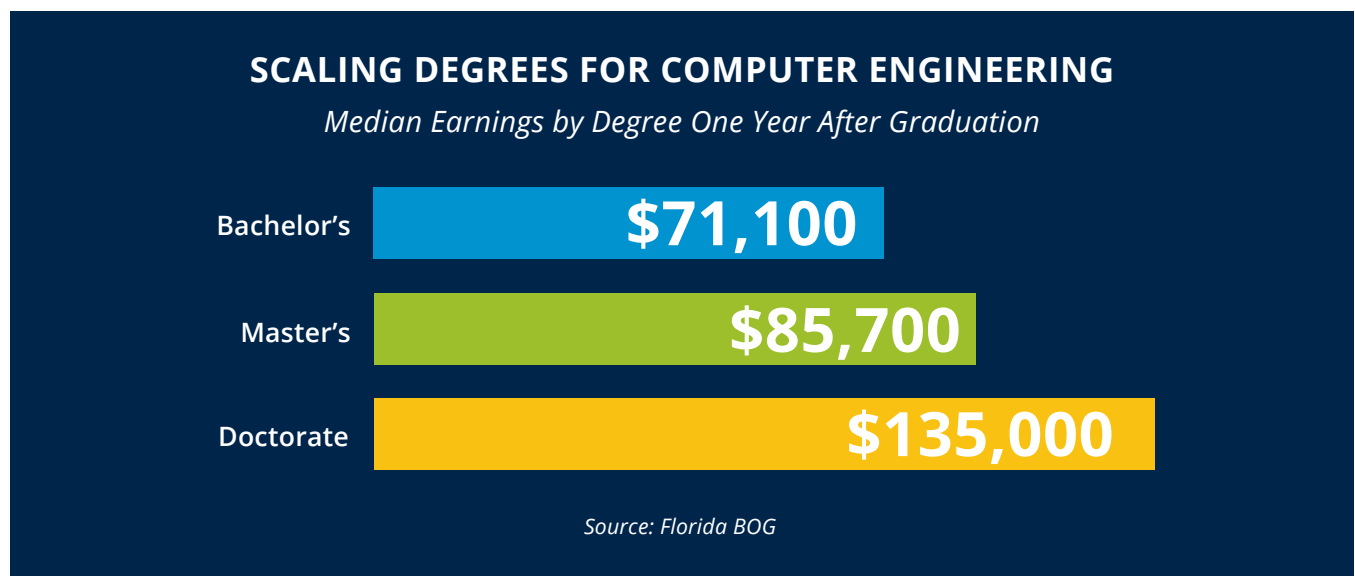
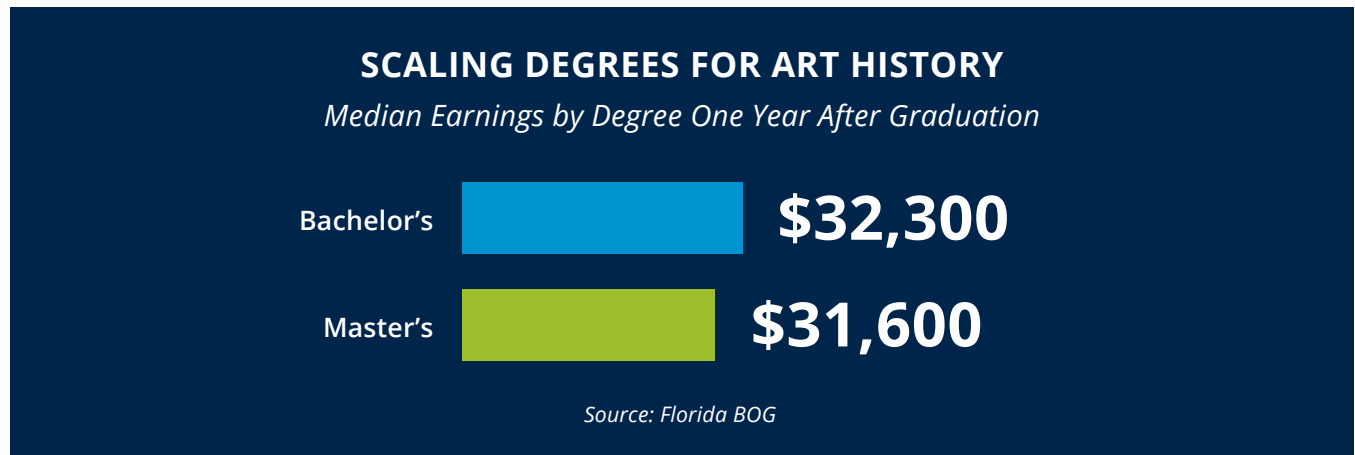
Florida's take on Students' Right to Know provides real transparency

In 2022, Florida launched the MyFloridaFuture tool—a free, online dashboard providing students with a wide array of information to help them make informed decisions about their future.⁶ The dashboard allows students to examine different degree levels, majors, and universities and predict employment outcomes, earnings, and student loan balances under countless scenarios.⁷



**FLORIDA LAUNCHED THE MYFLORIDAFUTURE TOOL—A
FREE, ONLINE DASHBOARD PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH
A WIDE ARRAY OF INFORMATION TO HELP THEM MAKE
INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.**

For example, a student interested in art history would find that **the median salary one year after graduation with a bachelor's degree is actually more than the median salary one year after graduation with a master's degree**—suggesting that an advanced degree in this field may not be worth the extra time and expense.⁸ In contrast, a computer engineering major would see their earnings jump by more than 20 percent as they move from a bachelor's to a master's, and then by another 58 percent as they move from a master's to a doctorate.⁹ And depending on which university they are interested in attending, their median earnings could rise even more.¹⁰ The tool also shows that a computer engineering degree is overall far more lucrative than an art history degree.¹¹



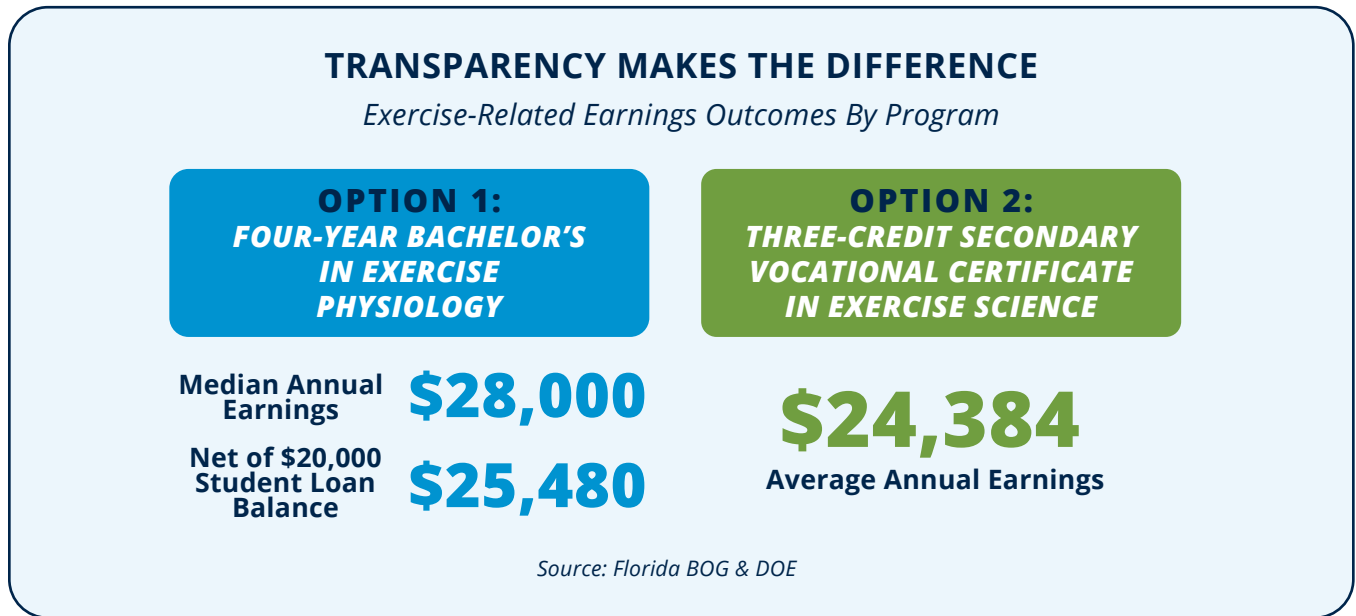
Not only can this tool be used to help determine which four-year path is the right one for a student, but it can also help assess whether an alternative postsecondary path may be more appealing. This is especially true when the dashboard is compared with public data from the Florida Department of Education on outcomes in secondary and postsecondary vocational programs.

For example, a high school student interested in exercise science or exercise physiology is faced with two very different paths.

Option one would be to follow the traditional four-year degree path and get a bachelor's in exercise physiology, earning an estimated \$28,000 one year after graduation while paying more than \$2,500 per year on a \$20,000 student loan balance, for net earnings of \$25,480 per year.¹²

Option two would be to take three exercise science courses, earn a secondary vocational certificate, and earn \$24,384 per year—nearly as much as a bachelor's would secure—without having to worry about student loan debt or spending four years studying.¹³

The choice is clear thanks to the power of transparency.



Some overall findings from these transparency resources include:

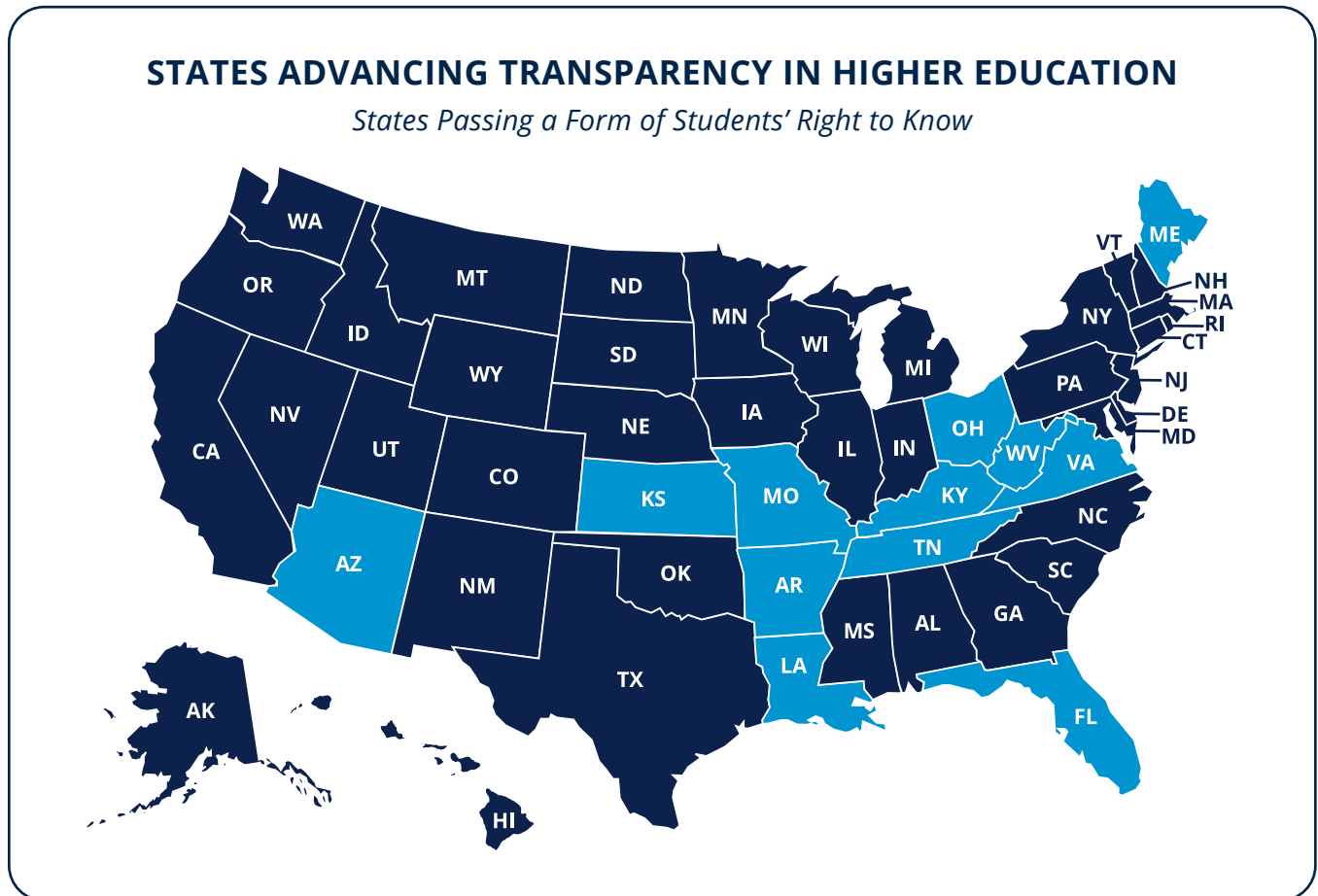
- Scaling between different degree levels often makes the difference in accelerating earnings, but at the cost of additional time and resources;
- Field of study is hugely influential in determining earnings and employment outcomes;
- Many low-cost, low-time commitment secondary and postsecondary programs are appealing alternatives to four-year degrees in similar fields of study—and often produce similar levels of typical earnings;
- Student loan amounts can make or break the difference between a degree in a particular field being “worth it”; and
- The specific school of attendance for a four-year degree does have implications for cost, quality, and post-education outcomes like earnings and employment.



**FIELD OF STUDY IS HUGELY INFLUENTIAL
IN DETERMINING EARNINGS AND
EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.**

Other states are also paving the way in higher education transparency

Other states have taken steps to infuse greater transparency into their higher education systems. In total, 12 states have passed some form of Students' Right to Know, providing transparency to nearly three million students per year.¹⁴



But not all of these states have taken the steps to launch a public-facing dashboard like the MyFloridaFuture tool. These states can and should do more by emulating Florida's success with supercharging transparency in higher education.

Florida's innovation has strengthened the next generation of workers

In addition to its radical higher education transparency, online tuition waivers, tuition waivers for grandchildren of Florida residents, and more, under Governor DeSantis, Florida has taken steps to build pathways for students that choose an alternative to a four-year college degree.¹⁵

STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE EDUCATION

In 2019, Florida passed a law which, among other things, required colleges to create regional career pathways that guarantee college credit to those who graduate from a career center, and opened

up new opportunities for students to explore innovative fields—like computer science—at the high school level.¹⁶ These policies better align postsecondary pathways for students, regardless of what path they choose to take after high school.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO WORK

In 2020, Florida prohibited state entities from denying, suspending, or revoking occupational licenses on the basis of defaulting on student loans or being delinquent with payments.¹⁷ Instead of taking away the means of students to repay their loans, lawmakers ensured that government could not stand in the way of a young professional and their future prosperity.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DUAL ENROLLMENT AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In 2021, Florida expanded funding flexibility for the Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program, which creates higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities.¹⁸ The legislation also helped advance the success of the state’s dual enrollment program—which allows advanced high school students to take college courses—by reimbursing colleges for certain dual enrollment expenses.¹⁹ Together, these two policies helped build a stronger foundation for more students.

EXPANDING WORKFORCE OPTIONS FOR VETERANS

Also in 2021, Florida waived certain postsecondary requirements for veterans and active-duty service members seeking employment, while also enhancing hiring preferences to veterans.²⁰

Coupled with other reforms to support veterans with employment and training, this will help smooth the transition from service to civilian life through better workforce-driven supports.

REVAMPING WORKFORCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Florida lawmakers passed a significant overhaul of conventional thinking around workforce education in 2021.²¹ The legislation created the Reimagining Education and Career Help Office in the Governor’s Office to align Florida’s workforce development system, added new accountability measures to workforce entities, launched the “Money-Back Guarantee program” that requires certain Florida schools to refund tuition if students cannot get a job within six months of completing certain workforce programs, and much more.²² This comprehensive package was designed to coordinate the state’s higher education system with its workforce needs.

Each of these laws has laid the groundwork for a stronger postsecondary educational system and a more robust workforce. When coupled with additional transparency, these workforce initiatives become even more useful for Floridians.

THE BOTTOM LINE: More states should provide transparency to students.

Transparency and innovation in higher education should not end with Florida and its 11 state counterparts. Lawmakers around the country should provide students with real outcomes-oriented data on their postsecondary options to ensure students make the right choices for their needs. And by coupling traditional college transparency with transparency in outcomes for vocational programs—as Florida did—lawmakers can truly ensure that students and their families are making decisions with the most useful information at their disposal.

APPENDIX 1: TOP THREE HIGHEST-PAYING PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA FOR EACH CERTIFICATE/DEGREE LEVEL*

PROGRAM	ESTIMATED EARNINGS	PERCENT EMPLOYED FULL-TIME
Secondary Vocational		
1. Correctional Officer	\$48,184	79%
2. Advanced Manufacturing Technology	\$32,460	31%
3. Air Conditioning, Refrigeration, and Heating Technology	\$32,008	40%
Postsecondary Vocational		
1. Elevator Constructor Mechanic Apprenticeship (APPR)	\$103,664	84%
2. Heavy Equipment Operator APPR	\$91,276	80%
3. Fire Fighter APPR	\$75,208	100%
Bachelor's		
1. Public Administration and Social Services	\$99,300	94%
2. Fire Science/Firefighting	\$85,700	95%
3. Laser and Optical Engineering	\$77,200	85%
Master's		
1. Dental Clinic Services	\$151,100	77%
2. Psychiatric/Mental Health Services/Nursing	\$124,100	90%
3. Computer and Information Sciences	\$103,900	94%
Doctoral		
1. Laser and Optical Engineering	\$168,800	79%
2. Business Management	\$144,000	92%
3. Computer Engineering	\$135,000	98%

*Earnings are shown at approximately one year after program completion. For vocational programs, earnings are based on arithmetic mean incomes. For traditional degree programs, earnings are based on median incomes.
Source: Florida Board of Governors and Department of Education

APPENDIX 2: TOP 30 HIGHEST INCOME EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND FIELD OF STUDY

FIELD OF STUDY	EDUCATION LEVEL	AVERAGE EARNINGS: FULL-TIME WORKERS	PERCENT WORKING FULL-TIME
Correctional Officer (Traditional Correctional BRTP)	Secondary Vocational	\$48,184	79%
Advanced Manufacturing (and Production) Technology	Secondary Vocational	\$32,460	31%
Agricultural Manufacturing Technology	Secondary Vocational	\$32,460	31%
Air Conditioning, Refrigeration, and Heating Technology	Secondary Vocational	\$32,008	40%
Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing	Secondary Vocational	\$31,772	29%
Electricity	Secondary Vocational	\$30,880	37%
Professional Culinary Arts and Hospitality	Secondary Vocational	\$29,464	40%
Customer Service Representative	Secondary Vocational	\$29,108	16%
Technical Agriculture Operations	Secondary Vocational	\$28,969	40%
Hospitality and Tourism	Secondary Vocational	\$28,708	13%
Agricultural Communications	Secondary Vocational	\$28,600	25%
Building Construction Technologies	Secondary Vocational	\$28,448	30%
Welding Technology Fundamentals	Secondary Vocational	\$28,312	29%
Java Development and Programming	Secondary Vocational	\$28,044	11%
Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair/ Technician	Secondary Vocational	\$27,888	32%
Carpentry	Secondary Vocational	\$27,648	29%
Global Finance	Secondary Vocational	\$27,376	19%
Building Trades and Construction Design Technology	Secondary Vocational	\$27,312	19%
Hospitality Administration/Management/ Hospitality and Tourism Management	Secondary Vocational	\$27,136	14%
Agricultural Biotechnology	Secondary Vocational	\$27,040	21%
Accounting/Accounting Applications	Secondary Vocational	\$26,766	18%
Customer Assistance Technology	Secondary Vocational	\$26,744	18%
Animal Science/Animal Science and Services	Secondary Vocational	\$26,680	24%
Global Logistics and Supply Chain Technology	Secondary Vocational	\$26,680	19%
Automotive Collision Technology/Technician	Secondary Vocational	\$26,552	33%
Finance, General	Secondary Vocational	\$26,380	12%
Agritechnology	Secondary Vocational	\$26,356	25%
Game/Simulation/Animation Visual Design	Secondary Vocational	\$26,252	14%
Horticultural Science/Horticulture Science and Services	Secondary Vocational	\$26,244	20%
Network Systems Administration	Secondary Vocational	\$26,220	18%

FIELD OF STUDY	EDUCATION LEVEL	AVERAGE EARNINGS: FULL-TIME WORKERS	PERCENT WORKING FULL-TIME
Elevator Constructor Mechanic APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$103,664	84%
Heavy Equipment Operation APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$91,276	80%
Fire Fighter APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$75,208	100%
Millwright APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$62,104	55%
Paramedic	Postsecondary Vocational	\$60,122	87%
Heavy Equipment Service Technican	Postsecondary Vocational	\$59,080	48%
Heavy Equipment Mechanics APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$56,846	92%
Industrial Pipefitter APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$56,808	96%
Crossover from Correctional Officer to Law Enforcement Officer	Postsecondary Vocational	\$56,476	81%
Plumbing Technology APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$54,996	84%
Fire Sprinkler System Technology APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$54,740	78%
Electrician APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$54,648	84%
Florida Law Enforcement Academy	Postsecondary Vocational	\$53,876	85%
Air Conditioning, Refrigeration, and Heating Technology - APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$52,376	87%
Structural Steel Work APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$51,552	75%
Carpentry - APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$49,196	82%
Computer Systems Analysis/Analyst/ Computer Systems & IT	Postsecondary Vocational	\$47,684	37%
Commercial Vehicle Driving	Postsecondary Vocational	\$47,240	42%
Painting and Decorating--APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$47,000	40%
Aviation Powerplant Mechanics	Postsecondary Vocational	\$46,980	55%
Medium & Heavy Duty Truck and Bus Technician	Postsecondary Vocational	\$45,852	41%
Fire Fighter I/II	Postsecondary Vocational	\$45,352	68%
Welding Technology Advanced	Postsecondary Vocational	\$44,288	52%
Commercial Class B Driving	Postsecondary Vocational	\$43,946	50%
Practical Nursing	Postsecondary Vocational	\$43,340	67%
Machining Technologies	Postsecondary Vocational	\$43,252	62%
Surgical Technology	Postsecondary Vocational	\$42,840	80%
Pre-Apprenticeship APPR	Postsecondary Vocational	\$41,368	56%
Avionics Systems Technician	Postsecondary Vocational	\$41,320	37%
HVAC Refrigeration	Postsecondary Vocational	\$40,996	43%

FIELD OF STUDY	EDUCATION LEVEL	AVERAGE EARNINGS: FULL-TIME WORKERS	PERCENT WORKING FULL-TIME
Public Administration and Social Service Professions, Other	Bachelors	\$99,300	94%
Fire Science/Firefighting	Bachelors	\$85,700	95%
Laser and Optical Engineering	Bachelors	\$77,200	85%
Systems Engineering	Bachelors	\$75,000	89%
Computer Engineering, General	Bachelors	\$71,100	89%
Nuclear Engineering	Bachelors	\$70,300	79%
Chemical Engineering	Bachelors	\$69,200	86%
Materials Engineering	Bachelors	\$68,900	87%
Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical/Space Engineering	Bachelors	\$68,800	86%
Electrical and Electronics Engineering	Bachelors	\$68,000	90%
Computer and Information Sciences, General	Bachelors	\$67,400	88%
Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering Technology/Technician	Bachelors	\$67,300	81%
Construction Engineering Technology/Technician	Bachelors	\$64,600	93%
Mechanical Engineering	Bachelors	\$63,900	88%
Industrial Engineering	Bachelors	\$63,800	91%
Structural Engineering	Bachelors	\$63,600	100%
School Psychology	Bachelors	\$63,000	96%
Public Health, Other	Bachelors	\$62,200	87%
Management Science	Bachelors	\$61,500	69%
Actuarial Science	Bachelors	\$60,500	88%
Civil Engineering, General	Bachelors	\$60,500	92%
Engineering Technology, General	Bachelors	\$60,300	93%
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	Bachelors	\$60,200	95%
Biological/Biosystems Engineering	Bachelors	\$59,900	82%
Computer Software and Media Applications, Other	Bachelors	\$58,200	87%
Ocean Engineering	Bachelors	\$57,600	84%
Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Administration, Other	Bachelors	\$57,300	88%
Environmental/Environmental Health Engineering	Bachelors	\$57,200	90%
Cyber/Computer Forensics and Counterterrorism/Applied Cybersecurity	Bachelors	\$56,600	84%
Surveying Technology/Surveying	Bachelors	\$55,400	91%

FIELD OF STUDY	EDUCATION LEVEL	AVERAGE EARNINGS: FULL-TIME WORKERS	PERCENT WORKING FULL-TIME
Dental Clinical Sciences, General	Masters	\$151,100	77%
Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse/Nursing	Masters	\$124,100	90%
Computer and Information Sciences, General	Masters	\$103,900	94%
Adult Health Nurse/Nursing	Masters	\$103,200	86%
Tax Law/Taxation	Masters	\$98,800	97%
Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services, Other	Masters	\$96,300	85%
Physician Assistant	Masters	\$96,200	96%
Systems Engineering	Masters	\$93,600	93%
Computational Science	Masters	\$90,100	94%
Insurance	Masters	\$88,600	95%
Family Practice Nurse/Nursing	Masters	\$87,600	90%
Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical/Space Engineering	Masters	\$86,500	91%
Electrical and Electronics Engineering	Masters	\$86,200	90%
Computer Engineering, General	Masters	\$85,700	93%
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	Masters	\$85,000	93%
Pediatric Nurse/Nursing	Masters	\$84,500	94%
Nuclear Engineering	Masters	\$84,200	83%
Laser and Optical Engineering	Masters	\$83,300	57%
Engineering/Industrial Management	Masters	\$83,100	91%
Systems Science and Theory	Masters	\$80,800	91%
Industrial Engineering	Masters	\$77,800	88%
Critical Infrastructure Protection	Masters	\$77,100	93%
Medical Informatics	Masters	\$77,100	95%
Management Information Systems, General	Masters	\$76,700	91%
Computer Science	Masters	\$76,600	97%
Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Levels and Methods, Other	Masters	\$76,200	88%
Chemical Engineering	Masters	\$76,100	80%
International Real Estate	Masters	\$75,400	72%
Computer Systems Analysis/Analyst/Computer Systems & IT	Masters	\$75,400	95%
Materials Engineering	Masters	\$75,100	81%

FIELD OF STUDY	EDUCATION LEVEL	AVERAGE EARNINGS: FULL-TIME WORKERS	PERCENT WORKING FULL-TIME
Laser and Optical Engineering	Doctoral	\$168,800	79%
Business Admin & Management, General/ Business Management & Analysis	Doctoral	\$144,000	92%
Computer Engineering, General	Doctoral	\$135,000	98%
Computer and Information Sciences, General	Doctoral	\$134,500	93%
Business/Commerce, General	Doctoral	\$129,700	100%
Systems Science and Theory	Doctoral	\$114,100	100%
Statistics, General	Doctoral	\$109,600	98%
Electrical and Electronics Engineering	Doctoral	\$106,200	93%
Nursing Practice	Doctoral	\$105,700	94%
Public Administration and Social Service Professions, Other	Doctoral	\$99,300	94%
Chemical Engineering	Doctoral	\$98,600	92%
Bioengineering and Biomedical Engineering	Doctoral	\$96,100	93%
Pharmacy	Doctoral	\$95,900	89%
Dentistry	Doctoral	\$93,400	84%
Nursing Science	Doctoral	\$92,800	92%
Materials Engineering	Doctoral	\$90,800	98%
Mechanical Engineering	Doctoral	\$90,100	85%
Economics, General	Doctoral	\$88,000	93%
Higher Education/Higher Education Administration	Doctoral	\$85,600	91%
Agricultural Teacher Education	Doctoral	\$81,800	88%
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	Doctoral	\$80,700	80%
Computational Science	Doctoral	\$79,100	91%
Veterinary Medicine	Doctoral	\$77,500	95%
Civil Engineering, General	Doctoral	\$77,300	99%
Social Work	Doctoral	\$77,200	100%
Horticultural Science / Horticulture Science and Services	Doctoral	\$76,500	100%
Educational Leadership and Administration, General	Doctoral	\$76,000	90%
Audiology/Audiologist and Speech- Language Pathology/Pathologist	Doctoral	\$75,500	92%
Industrial Engineering	Doctoral	\$74,100	100%
Public Administration	Doctoral	\$74,100	95%

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Appendix-Data_Florida-Education-Programs-Outcomes.pdf

Source: MyFloridaFuture Dashboard and FETPIP

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15275 Collier Boulevard | Suite 201-279
Naples, Florida 34119
(239) 244-8808

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