



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

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New California Community Colleges Accountability Metric Reveals Nearly \$500 Million in Wage Gains by Students Who are “Skills Builders”

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Students who take career technical education courses to maintain or add to their job skills experience median wage increases of 13.6 percent, or \$4,300, according to a new student performance measurement developed by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

Statewide, total wage gains for these students measured in 2013-14 were \$498 million, which benefited not only the students and their families but the California economy. Previously, these students had not been counted in state and federal accountability systems because they did not earn a certificate, degree or transfer to a four-year institution.

“These students come to us seeking to keep their skills current or move ahead in their careers and after finishing a few courses reap significant rewards,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice W. Harris. “We finally have a way to measure these successes and demonstrate the tremendous return on investment that these courses provide. A wage gain of \$4,300 for courses that cost \$46 a unit is a phenomenal value for students and the state.”

"California's work on skills builders leads the nation in innovation and cutting-edge thinking," said Jeff Strohl, director of research at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. "State after state has been focusing on understanding sub-baccalaureate education, but very few, if any, have jumped into evaluating the population of non-completers in this way. The work on skills builders — the identification of how course clusters bring significant value to individuals and the state — is forcing a pause and reset in how we think about college dropouts by revealing that many students have figured out how to effectively engage the postsecondary system at low cost with high returns."

A new cohort definition for these students, dubbed “skills builders,” will be added next month to the California Community Colleges’ [Student Success Scorecard](#), which provides the public with easy to read performance outcomes for all 113 community colleges. The general definition of a skills builder is a student who wants to improve their professional skills for ongoing employment. Most skills builders tend to be older and take only one or two career technical education courses.

“This new metric reveals a more comprehensive view of how community colleges are enhancing workers’ skills in discreet and tactical ways that pay significant dividends for students and businesses,” said David Rattray,

executive vice president for education and workforce development for the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. “We now have another window into the economic benefits that community colleges provide our state.”

Many students saw significant earnings gains after taking only a couple of courses. Skills builders are commonly found in fields such as administration of justice (7.7 percent median wage gain); child development education (15.7 percent gain); accounting (20.8 percent increase); fire technology (12.5percent gain); business and commerce (25.4 percent wage gain); information technology (18.4 percent gain).

The addition of the skills builder metric to the Student Success Scorecard advances a goal of the Board of Governors’ Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy, which calls for measuring student progress against common metrics among and improving the quality and accessibility of student outcome and labor market data.

For a complete breakdown of the skills builder median salary changes by colleges and job fields, please visit: http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/DocDownloads/skillsbuilder_top_feb16.xls

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 113 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills education and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor’s Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/>.

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