



# Public Colleges Whose Students Earn the Most After Graduation

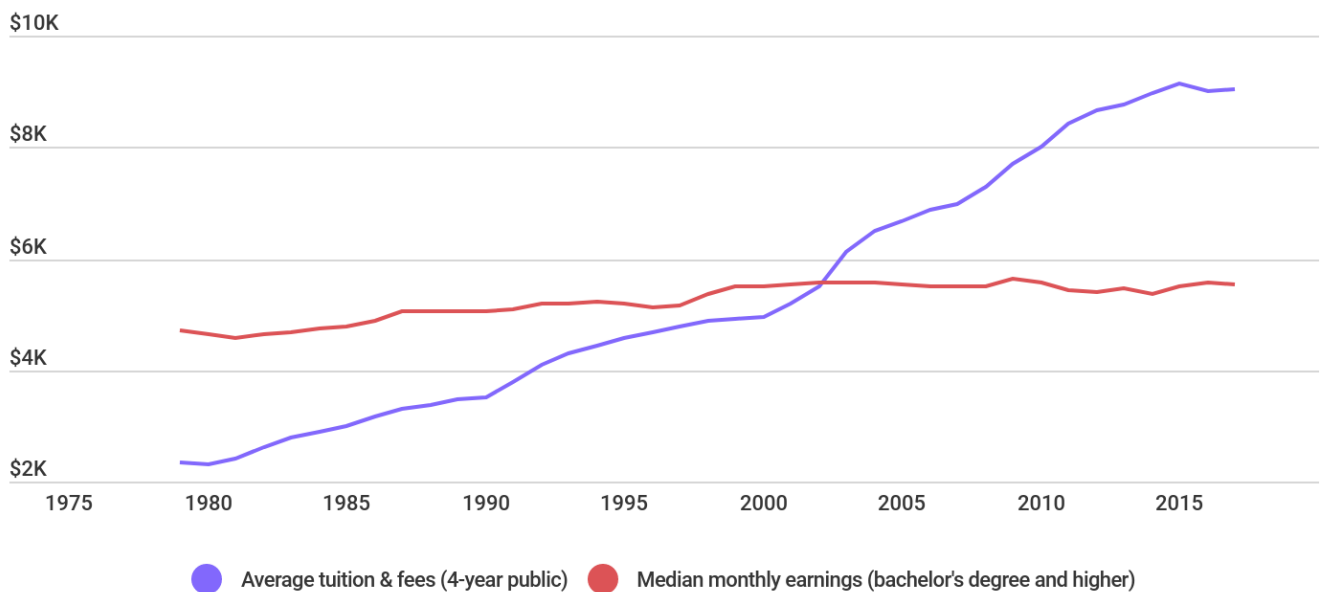
# Introduction

Higher education is a significant investment, and the cost of pursuing an undergraduate degree has grown exponentially over the past few decades. According to data from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), one year of undergraduate education today costs about the same as four years of undergraduate education did in 1980. Over the same time period, post-graduation earnings have remained relatively flat after adjusting for inflation. The combination of rising tuition and low wage growth has brought the value of higher education programs into question.



## Average undergraduate tuition has soared while earnings have remained flat

Constant 2017 dollars



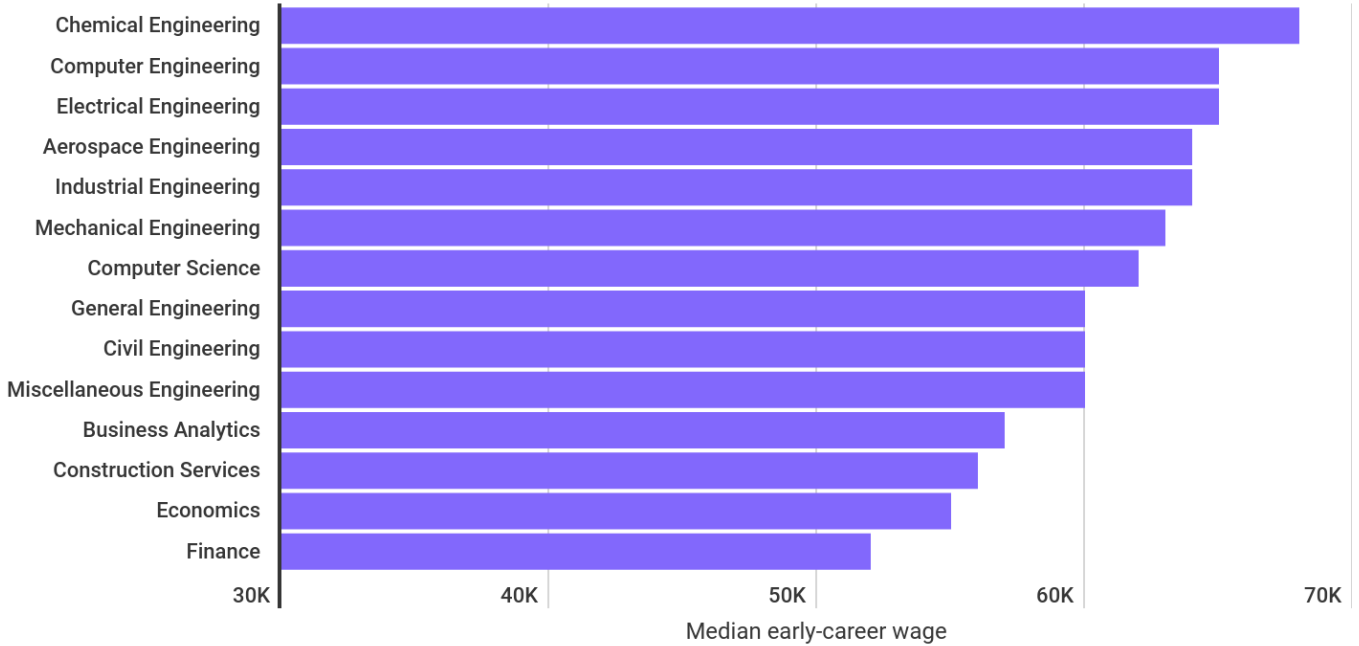
Source: National Center for Education Statistics; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis



Despite slow wage growth, certain college majors fare better in the labor market. Data from the [Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#) reveals that the median wage for 22- to 27-year-old bachelor's degree holders is \$40,000 per year, but degrees related to engineering, business, and computer science tend to command far higher salaries. By contrast, graduates of academic programs in the liberal arts, social sciences, and fine arts are likely to earn less than the national median. Similar data from the Department of Education reveals that the median earnings for public, four-year university graduates six years after *beginning* school is \$36,737.



## Highest-paying undergraduate degrees mostly in engineering, business, computer science



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York



In addition to academic major, another strong indicator of future career earnings is the college that awarded the degree. Earning potential varies significantly by institution. To find which public colleges have the best earnings outcomes for undergraduate students, researchers at Volusion analyzed data for more than 500 public colleges from the U.S. Department of Education. The researchers ordered schools based on the median annual earnings of its employed undergraduate students six years after starting school. For most students, this is between one and two years after graduation. To improve relevance, institutions were grouped into size cohorts based on undergraduate enrollment:

- Large schools: more than 20,000 students
- Midsize schools: 5,000 to 20,000 students
- Small schools: 1,000 to 5,000 students

Among the public colleges analyzed, the most common high-paying degrees were in disciplines related to engineering, computer science, business, and nursing. Here are the public colleges where students earn the most after graduation.



## Small & midsize public colleges with the highest median earnings

Midsize Public Colleges	Earnings	Small Public Colleges	Earnings
1. Georgia Institute of Technology	\$65,500	1. Maine Maritime Academy	\$75,200
2. Missouri University of Science & Technology	\$58,700	2. California State University Maritime Academy	\$73,100
3. Michigan Technological University	\$55,200	3. Colorado School of Mines	\$69,200
4. New Jersey Institute of Technology	\$53,600	4. Massachusetts Maritime Academy	\$66,300
5. University of Virginia	\$50,300	5. SUNY Maritime College	\$61,200
6. The College of New Jersey	\$49,200	6. Oregon Institute of Technology	\$54,400
7. University of Delaware	\$46,700	7. Augusta University	\$54,100
8. University of Connecticut	\$46,400	8. CUNY Graduate School & University Center	\$49,100
9. Thomas Edison State University	\$46,200	9. Virginia Military Institute	\$45,400
10. Binghamton University	\$45,300	10. Citadel Military College of South Carolina	\$44,600
11. CUNY Bernard M Baruch College	\$44,600	11. New Mexico Institute of Mining & Technology	\$43,500
12. University of Houston-Clear Lake	\$44,500	12. Charter Oak State College	\$43,300
13. James Madison University	\$44,400	13. University of Baltimore	\$41,300
14. The University of Texas at Dallas	\$44,000	14. The University of Texas of the Permian Basin	\$40,700
15. College of William and Mary	\$43,900	15. SUNY Polytechnic Institute	\$40,300





# Large Public Schools With the Highest Median Earnings

## 15. University of California - San Diego

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$43,400
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer Science (\$80,800)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$14,018
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$42,032
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$15,000



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## 14. Rutgers University - New Brunswick

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$44,300
- **Highest-paying degree:** Electrical, Electronics and Communications Engineering (\$72,100)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$14,638
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$30,579
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$18,750

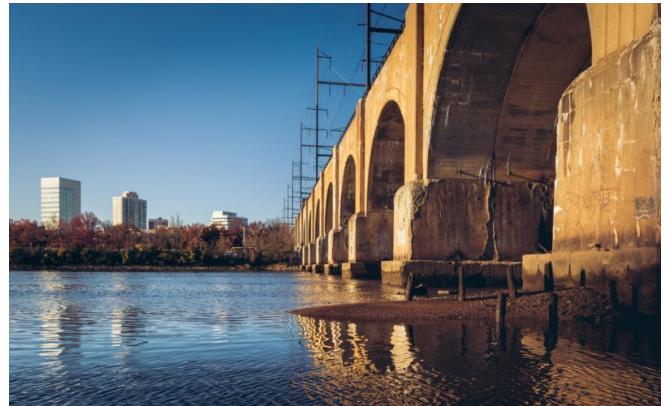


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## 13. University of California - Los Angeles

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$44,500
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer and Information Sciences (\$102,100)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$13,261
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$41,275
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$14,385



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## 12. Purdue University - Main Campus

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$44,800
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer Science (\$84,800)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$9,992
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$28,794
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$15,750



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## 11. George Mason University

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$44,900
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer Science (\$69,400)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$11,924
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$34,370
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$16,750



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## 10. University of Washington - Seattle Campus

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$44,900
- **Highest-paying degree:** Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions (\$114,900)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$10,974
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$35,538
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$12,750



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## 9. University of Wisconsin - Madison

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$45,000
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer Engineering (\$76,900)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$10,533
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$34,783
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$18,750



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## 8. The University of Texas at Austin

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$46,000
- **Highest-paying degree:** Chemical Engineering (\$78,400)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$10,398
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$36,744
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$18,118

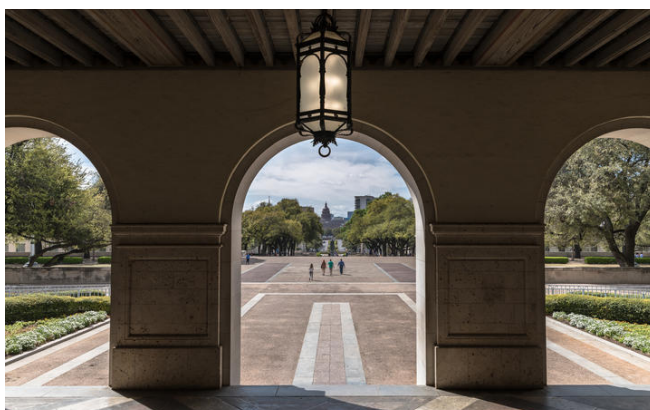


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## 7. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$47,100
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer Science (\$92,200)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$15,074
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$31,194
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$15,500



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## 6. University of Maryland - College Park

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$47,200
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer and Information Sciences (\$81,300)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$10,399
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$33,606
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$15,750



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## 5. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$48,000
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer and Information Sciences (\$83,600)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$13,230
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$31,014
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$20,500

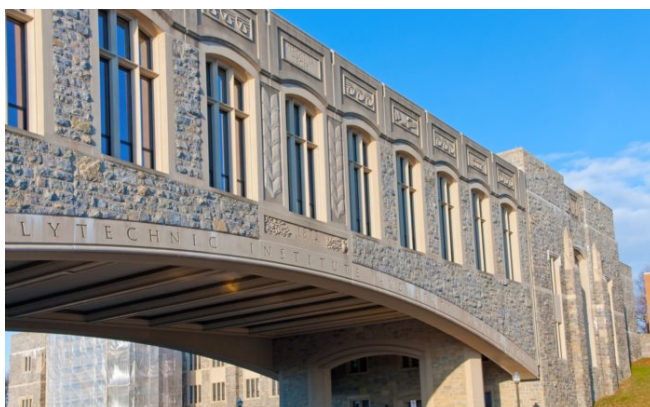


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## 4. Texas A&M University - College Station

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$48,600
- **Highest-paying degree:** Petroleum Engineering (\$81,800)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$11,234
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$36,606
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$15,000



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### 3. University of California - Berkeley

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$48,700
- **Highest-paying degree:** Electrical, Electronics and Communications Engineering (\$116,600)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$14,170
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$42,184
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$12,612



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### 2. University of Michigan - Ann Arbor

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$49,800
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer and Information Sciences (\$86,900)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$14,826
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$47,476
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$15,459



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### 1. California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo

- **Median annual earnings after graduation:** \$52,100
- **Highest-paying degree:** Computer and Information Sciences (\$115,000)
- **In-state tuition and fees:** \$9,432
- **Out-of-state tuition and fees:** \$21,312
- **Median debt after graduation:** \$17,000



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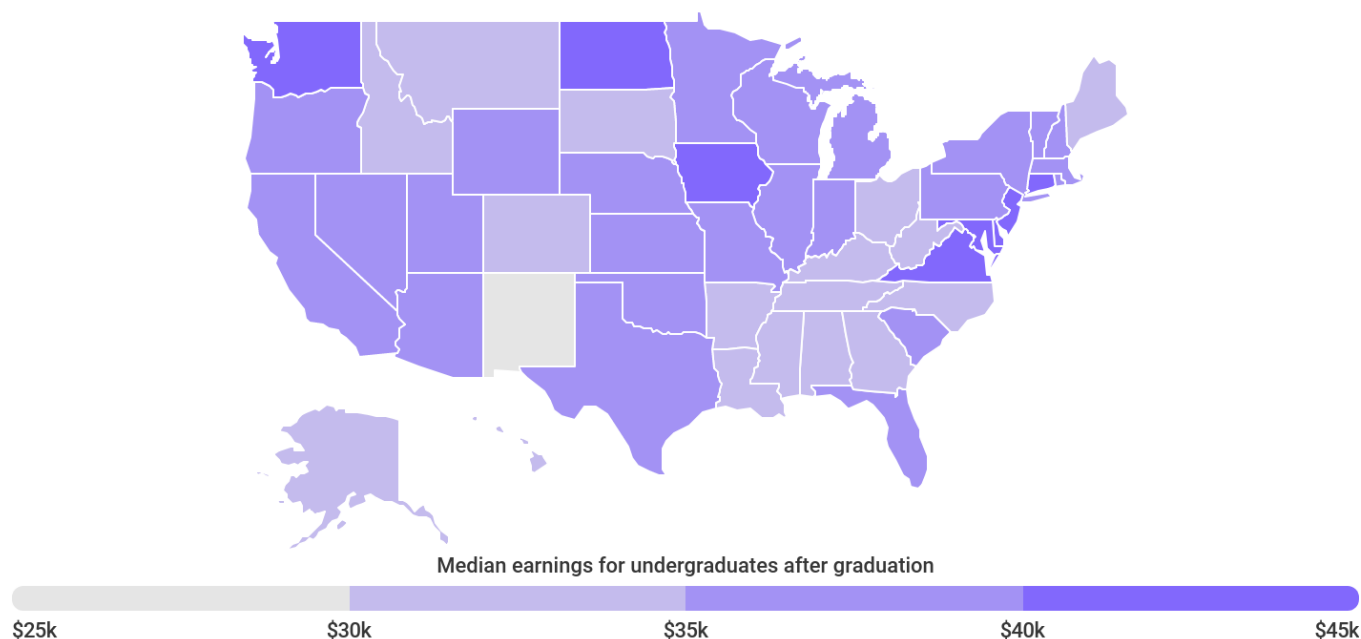


## Methodology & Detailed Findings

The public colleges where students command the highest salaries post-graduation are geographically diverse, but those where graduates tend to earn the least are clustered in the Southeast or scattered across the Northwest.



### Public universities with the highest earnings after graduation are geographically diverse

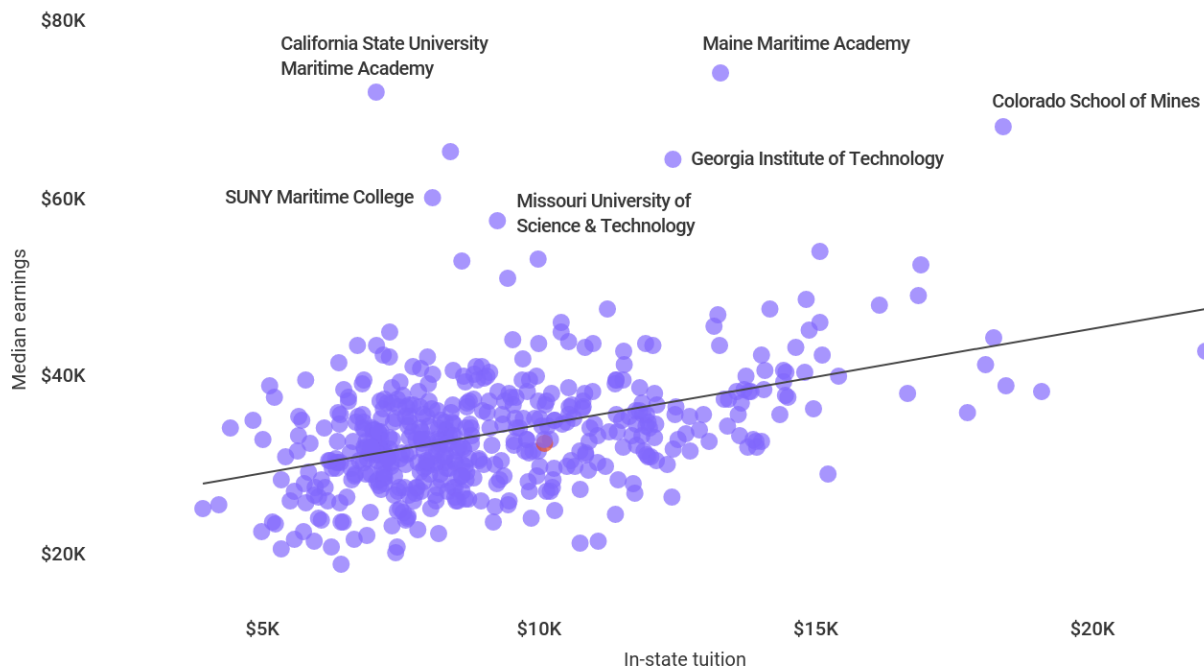


Source: U.S. Department of Education

Graduates from public colleges with higher tuition tend to have slightly higher salaries. For example, certain flagship public universities like University of Virginia, University of Massachusetts, University of Michigan, and University of Illinois have above-average in-state tuition, but also above-average earnings. Notable exceptions with low in-state tuition and high salaries are maritime colleges, such as SUNY Maritime College or the California State University Maritime Academy.



## Slight positive correlation between tuition and median earnings after graduation



Source: U.S. Department of Education

One limitation of the Department of Education data is that it only includes wages immediately after graduation. Earnings for some academic programs (for example, pre-med) might start with lower salaries and increase significantly over time. Other factors that could influence a graduate's salary include employment location, pursuit of an advanced degree, and the industry in which the graduate chooses to work.

Information about school performance was obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's College ScoreCard data set. Institutions were included if they were main-campus public schools that had more than 1,000 undergraduate students enrolled and predominately awarded bachelor's degrees. Schools were ranked based on the median income of students six years after graduation, and ties were broken based on the median salary of the highest-paying degree from each school.

View the full results of the study [here](#).



## About Volusion

Volusion is an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps entrepreneurs build and manage successful online businesses. Since 1999, our dedicated team of developers, marketers, designers, and technical support experts have been passionate about helping merchants operate and grow their stores, whether startup or established. Two decades later, Volusion has earned dozens of accolades and powered over 150,000 successful online businesses.

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