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New Salary Surfer Website Shows Median Earnings for Those Who Earn Certificates and Associate Degrees at California Community Colleges

Chancellor Brice W. Harris says data show tremendous return on investment

El Cajon, Calif. -- A new online tool released today by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office allows students and the public to view aggregated median earnings of those who complete a certificate or degree in a specific community college discipline and then enter the workforce.

Salary Surfer, which can be viewed at salarysurfer.cccco.edu, displays median annual incomes for those who complete 179 of the most widely enrolled program areas and do not transfer to a four-year institution. The data show the median earnings for community college graduates two years prior to earning the award, then two years and five years after earning either a certificate or degree.

An analysis of the data contained on Salary Surfer shows that students who complete an associate degree more than double their annual pre-degree earnings after two years in the workforce and nearly triple their pre-degree earnings after five years in the workforce.

"This groundbreaking tool validates that California community colleges produce a tremendous return on investment for our state," said Brice W. Harris, chancellor of the California Community Colleges during a news conference at Grossmont College in El Cajon. "While future earnings should not be the sole determiner in choosing an educational program, students and the public deserve to know what monetary return they can expect from their investment. Salary Surfer provides that, and California becomes one of the few states in the nation to offer these results publicly."

Nearly 45 percent of students who graduated with an associate degree and did not transfer earned more than \$54,000 annually five years after getting their degree. For comparison purposes, that is the median wage of someone with a bachelor's degree living in California, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Salary Surfer also provides information on which of the system's 112 colleges offer programs in a specific

discipline.

Wage information comes from an agreement between the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the California Employment Development Department. For privacy purposes all results are aggregated across campuses statewide and over five years. Additionally, all wages displayed have been indexed to current year dollar figures.

Not all graduates earning wages will be found in Salary Surfer. Excluded are individuals who were employed by the federal government, those who are self-employed or employed out of state.

California Community Colleges Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Economic Development Van Ton-Quinlivan said the data once again shows that earning a certificate or degree translates to real value in the labor market.

"There are some powerful numbers to be gleaned from this site," Ton-Quinlivan said. "For instance, someone with a certificate as a diagnostic medical sonographer can hope to attain a median income of \$85,319 five years after graduation and we have multiple campuses throughout the state offering that certificate program. Our community colleges train 80 percent of the state's law enforcement personnel, firefighters and emergency medical technicians and police academy certificate holders are earning a median annual wage of \$70,520 after five years in the field."

With the release of Salary Surfer and the earlier release of the on-line data tool called the Student Success Scorecard, which measures student outcomes at all 112 colleges, the California Community Colleges becomes the most transparent and accountable system of public higher education in the nation.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation. It is composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.4 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills courses in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

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Regards,

Van Ton-Quinlivan, Vice Chancellor

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