This Quick Look report is an Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) education outcomes research publication, reporting an overview of employment and wages of Iowa community college students. This research is a cooperative effort between IWD and the Iowa Department of Education (IDE).

The focus of the analysis in this report is to provide a snapshot of employment and earnings in the 2011 fiscal year (July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011) for each of the collective Iowa community college graduating classes between 2000 and 2010 — where graduate is defined as any student that received an award (Associate’s, certificate, diploma, etc.). This is accomplished by matching IDE student records with Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records, which include wage information. Some basic summary statistics for each of the graduating classes are shown in Table 1. The UI wage records used do not cover other states, so the statistics in this report are limited to wages earned in the state of Iowa.

Illustrated in Figure 1 is a count of the number of graduates in Iowa community colleges (the entire bar). Also shown is the number of graduates that earned wages in Iowa during the 2011 fiscal year (the dark portion of the bar). The number of graduates per class has grown over the last decade, peaking in 2009-10 with 14,506 unique individuals (some earned more than one award). More recent graduating classes, however, had higher proportions of graduates earning wages in the state of Iowa in the 2011 fiscal year. As an example, 63.9 percent of 2000-01 graduates were employed in Iowa in FY2011, while 80.1 percent of 2009-10 graduates were employed in Iowa during the same period. This trend suggests that Iowa community college graduates trickle out of the state over time, a tendency supported by past studies conducted by IWD and IDE.

The wages of Iowa community college graduates in the 2011 fiscal year show a strong pattern, as well. Figure 2 shows the median 2011 gross fiscal year wage for each academic class. The classes who graduated more recently have lower median wages than those that graduated earlier in the decade. An obvious explanation for this is that those who graduated earlier have, on average, more work experience which usually leads to higher wages. Recent graduates are also more likely to be enrolled in a four-year university and not working full-time. The median 2011 gross fiscal year wage for the 2009-10 graduating class was $15,569, while the median wage for the 2000-01 graduating class was $35,865.

Graduates who received awards from Iowa community colleges in the last decade earned wages of over $2.7 billion in Iowa in the 2011 fiscal year.
Figure 3: Total gross wages earned in the 2011 fiscal year by each academic class. Wages shown are limited to those that are earned in Iowa.

While Figure 2 illustrates the median 2011 wages of Iowa community college graduates, Figure 3 shows the total 2011 gross wages earned by all Iowa community college graduates in the state of Iowa for each academic class. Two major factors have to be considered when thinking about the total wages earned; while classes that graduated earlier typically earn higher wages, a higher proportion of them have migrated out of the state as well. As a result, the 2004-05 graduating class collectively earned the most wages in Iowa in the 2011 fiscal year, with $313.5 million.

As an addition to summary wage information, analyzing the distribution of a class’ wages can be very informative. Figure 4 shows the distribution of 2011 fiscal year wages for each graduating class, with blue lines to indicate the class’ median wage. There is a clear pattern between the classes; more recent classes have lower median wages and generally have a much larger number of graduates with wages between $0 and $20,000. Classes that graduated earlier have higher medians and more spread out wages that follow a symmetric distribution. All classes have at least a small peak close to $0 earned; this could correspond to graduates that only spent a small portion of the year in Iowa earning wages. Also, there are a number of graduates in each class that earned more than $100,000 that aren’t shown in Figure 4; Table 2 has the number in each class that earned as much.

Table 2: Number of Graduates Earning More than $100,000 in FY2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Technical Note
The UI wage records used to generate the summaries in this report do not have perfect coverage. The state UI program does not cover federal employees, members of the armed forces, the self-employed, proprietors, unpaid family workers, church employees and railroad workers covered by the railroad unemployment insurance system, as well as students employed in a college or university as part of a financial aid package. The UI program does provide partial information on agricultural industries and employees in private households. Therefore, the retention rates and total gross wages reported are under-estimated.

Contact Information:
Regional Research & Analysis Bureau
Labor Market & Workforce Information Division
Iowa Workforce Development
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Telephone: (515) 281-8118
E-mail: Ulstats@iwd.iowa.gov