

## Research Report No. 99-4

Washington State Board for Community and Technical  
Colleges; Education Division

# EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF NON-TRANSFERRING STUDENTS

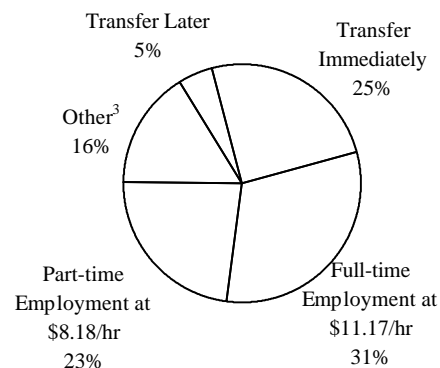
October 1999

## Introduction

At the close of the 1996-97 academic year, some 45,000 transfer-oriented students left the Washington community and technical colleges they had been attending<sup>1</sup>. Eleven thousand three hundred of these students transferred immediately to a four-year institution in Washington or Oregon with another 2,000 transferring a year later. More than half the students did not transfer but either stayed in the job held during college or gained employment after college.<sup>2</sup> It is the employment status of these non-transferring students that is described in this report.

All of the former students described here reported that their purpose for attending was to prepare for transfer. But not all students are the well-informed consumers that this declaration of transfer purpose might suggest. No doubt, some students enroll in community and technical colleges as a low cost way to find out about postsecondary education (Manski).

**Status of Self-identified Transfer Students  
6 to 9 Months After Leaving (Class of 1996-97)**  
(45,000 students with 10 or more credits  
completed at time of leaving)



<sup>1</sup> Students identify their goal as transfer at the time of their last quarter registration. These counts include graduates and students with some college credits. In addition, some 5,483 students with an apparent transfer goal left college almost immediately with fewer than 10 credits earned. Due to their short tenure at college, these students are excluded from this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Data on the employment status of 20,370 non-transferring students were available in the SBCTC Data Linking for Outcomes Assessment (DLOA) files based on matches with the unemployment insurance files in Washington and neighboring states. An estimated 4,000 additional students were likely self-employed, working for the federal government, or in states outside the Northwest.

<sup>3</sup> The "Other" group includes students transferring out of state, full-time homemakers, retired individuals and those seeking work.



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Given the options to declare a work related, personal interest or transfer goal, they may have picked the longest-term possibility – transfer. Others have a clear transfer goal, but intended to work for several years after their two-year college experience before they transfer. Given this diversity of purposes masked in the simple transfer declaration, knowing about how the college experience impacts the quality of employment of these former transfer-oriented students is important.

**Key Findings:**

**Quality employment is a key outcome for those enrolled with a declared transfer purpose:**

- While 30 percent of these students transfer to Washington four-year institutions shortly after leaving academic studies, the slight majority of former students (54 percent) are found not in four-year institutions, but in the state’s labor force. Those who were working after college earned \$9.92 an hour.
- More than one-half of that group (58 percent) were employed full-time after leaving college earning \$11.17 versus \$8.18 for part-time workers.
- The \$9.92 wage is competitive with graduates from middle wage vocational programs, the \$11.17 is competitive with graduates of middle and high wage vocational programs.

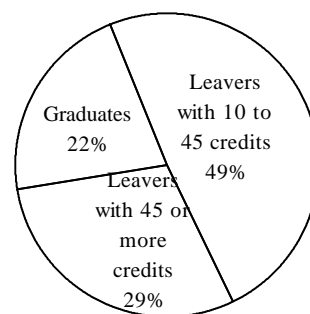
**The more education gained at community and technical colleges the greater the economic outcomes for these non-transferring students.**

- Graduates earned the most (\$10.50). Non-transferring students who completed a year or more earned higher median wages than non-transferring students who left with less than a year’s study (\$10.08 compared to \$9.37).
- Non-transferring students earned 39 percent more after leaving college than before enrolling (inflation adjusted). Non-transferring graduates realized a 50 percent increase. The increased wages are likely due to the opportunity to work in higher paying industries after training. The majority (54 percent) who worked in low paying retail trade or in temporary or personal services industries before college found work in other higher paying industries after leaving college. Students who switched industries after college had higher gains than those who stayed in the same industry before and after college.

**Non-transferring students had substantial labor force attachment before and during college as well as after college.**

- Half of the non-transferring students were employed in Washington before they came to college. Some 45 percent worked full-time. The typical worker earned \$8 an hour in that pre-college job.
- More than half the students worked while enrolled in college (58 percent) and of that group the slight majority (53 percent) worked full-time.
- Work during college benefited non-transfer students after college. For non-transfer students, working during college results in higher wages after college, \$10.47 compared to those who had no work experience (\$9.09).

**Distribution of Non-transferring Students by Exit Status**  
N = 28,205



**Non-transferring Student Characteristics**

The majority of non-transferring students left college before graduating. Many of these students stayed only long enough to complete a quarter or two of credits. Just 22 percent graduated with a transfer or general studies degree.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A small number of transfer oriented students completed vocational certificates in 1996-97 but did not complete an associate degree (450).

Non-transferring students were very similar to the general college population in terms of gender, race and ethnic background, disability status and prior education. At the time of leaving college, most were between 20 and 24 years of age, as is typical for transferring students. Those who stayed until they graduated were, on average, two years older than non-graduates, consistent with their extended time at college.

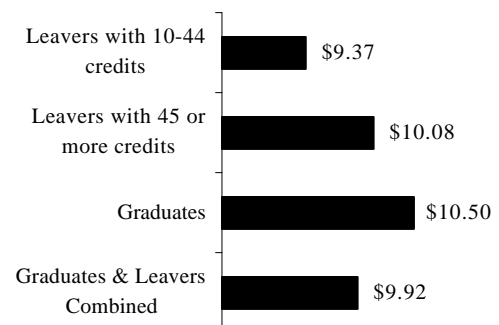
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>% of 28,205 Non-transferring Students</b>	<b>% of All Students</b>
Female	56%	57%
Male	44%	43%
African American	5%	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6%	9%
Hispanic	4%	8%
Native American	2%	2%
White	78%	75%
Less Than High School	10%	14%
GED or High School Diploma	43%	45%
Some College	30%	19%
Certif., Associate, or Bachelor's Degree +	12%	14%
Other	6%	8%
Disabled	4%	5%
Age at time of leaving:		
Under 20	20%	14%
20-29	52%	46%
30-39	17%	21%
40 and over	11%	19%
Median Age--Leavers	24	29
Median Age--Graduates	26	29

Those who eventually graduated started college with more education than leavers upon entering the two-year college system. Nearly 50 percent of graduates began their two-year experience having either some prior college education or a previously earned certificate or degree (compared to 39 percent of leavers).

**Employment Outcomes for Non-transferring Students**

Students who prepare for transfer, but leave for work instead, gain economically from their course taking and the gains are greatest for graduates. The typical non-transferring student earned \$9.92. For those working full-time the rate was \$11.17.

**Median Wages of Non-transferring Students Matched with UI Wage Files**



The \$10.50 wage for all non-transferring graduates (working full- or part-time) is comparable to the wages earned by vocational graduates of middle wage programs.\* Non-transferring graduates earned slightly more than job preparation students who left without degrees or certificates (leavers). Non-transfer leavers, however, earned less than students leaving job preparatory training (\$9.68 compared to \$10.02).

In general, females earned median wages lower than males (\$9.59 for females and \$10.25 for males), with female graduates earning just a little better than the median wage for male leavers (\$10.11 to \$10.02).

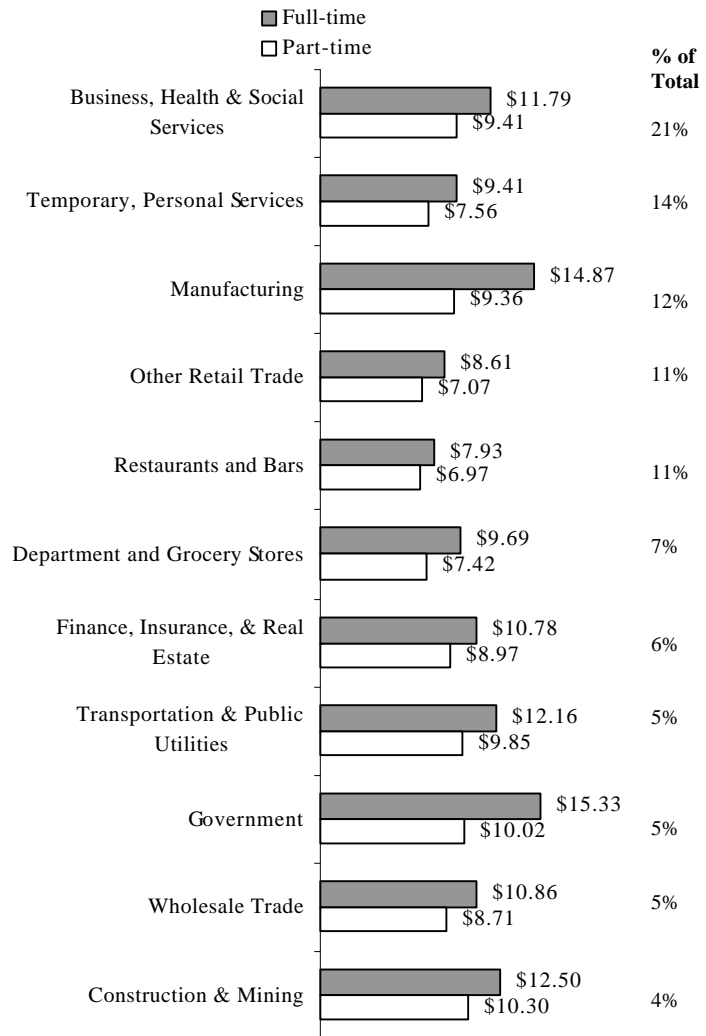
### Where Do Non-transferring Students Work After College?

Former non-transferring students were mostly likely to work in the high paying business, health, social services, and manufacturing sectors and the low paying temporary and personal services sector and retail trades, including restaurants and bars, and department and grocery stores (76 percent).

Most students worked full-time (58 percent) after leaving college. Some 61 percent of graduates worked full-time versus 57 percent of leavers. As shown in the graph, full-time workers earned substantially more per hour than part-time workers in most industries.

On average, former students working full-time earned \$11.17 an hour. Part-time workers earned \$8.18. Restaurants and bars employed more workers on a part-time basis than any other industry (65 percent). Conversely, manufacturing employed the highest percentage of full-time workers (83 percent).

**Median Wages of Non-transferring Students by Employment Status within Industry**



\* SBCTC classifies vocational programs as high, low and middle wage based on the earnings level of their graduates. Middle wage programs are those where the median wage of graduates is above \$9 an hour but below \$11.

## Changes in Employment Before and After Training

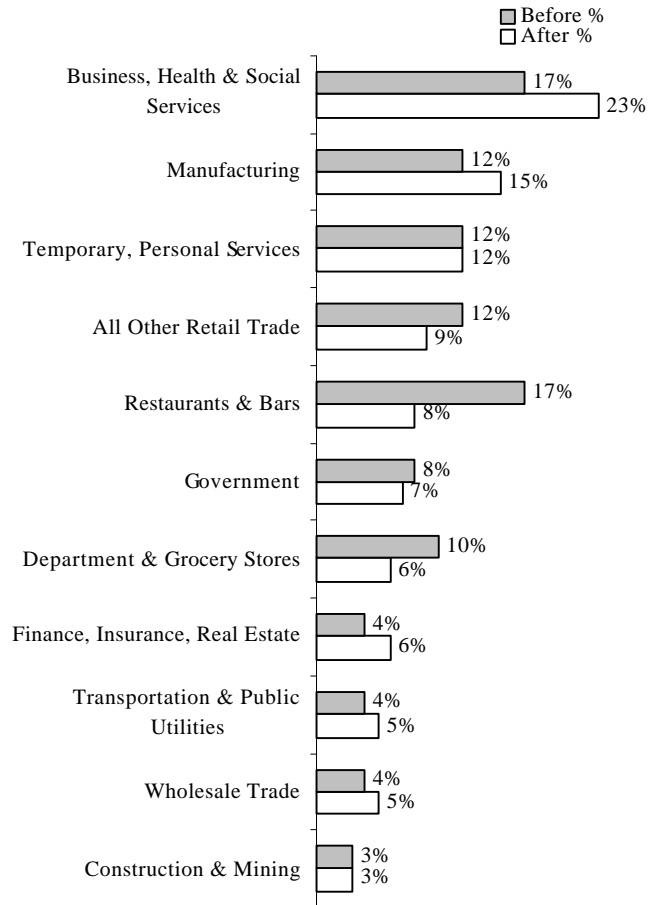
Half of the non-transferring students worked in Washington before college. Most worked part-time (55 percent). Prior to college, more non-transferring leavers and graduates worked in retail trade than any other single industry. The median before-college wage for non-transferring students was \$8.07. Before college, those who eventually graduated earned \$7.04 an hour versus \$9.17 median wage for those who eventually left college without a degree.

More than one-half of the students who had worked in retail trade and nearly two-thirds of those in temporary or personal services left those industries to work elsewhere after college. It is the movement away from lower-paying industries into higher-paying industries that most impacted increased post college earnings. Students who worked in higher wage government, manufacturing, and business and social services jobs before college tended to stay in those same industries. In addition, the business, health and social service sector gained appreciably from workers shifting industries.

As a result of these shifts, non-transferring students increased their hourly earnings by 39 percent above their pre-college level. The gains were largest for graduates, 50 percent compared to leavers, 31 percent.

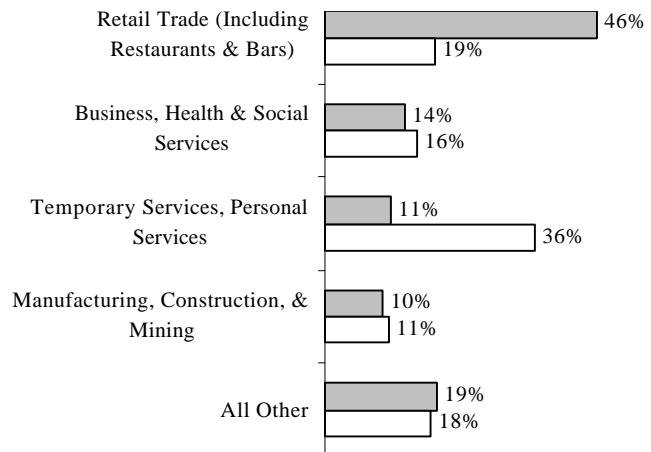
	<b>Hourly Wage Change</b>
All	39%
Graduates	50%
Leavers	31%

## Industries of Non-transferring Students Before and After College



## Industry After College for Those In Low Paying Industries Before College

- % Formerly in Retail Trade (including Restaurants, Bars, Department and Grocery Stores)
- % Formerly in Temporary Services



## Employment During College

Students who worked during college, and about 58 percent did so, earned \$9.38 an hour. About 53 percent of those who worked did so full-time while enrolled. Some 55 percent of graduates worked during college while 61 percent of leavers worked.

During college, students were most likely to work in the high paying business, health and social service occupations. Overall these working students earned \$9.38 during college. By comparison, the typical community college student earned about \$7.41 an hour while enrolled (WSIPP study of Higher Education Student's Off-campus Work Patterns, January 1999). The higher wage may be due to the full-time work status of so many of these students.

After college, some 46 percent of students who worked in retail trades stayed in that same industry sector after college. The majority moved to other sectors. Some 36 percent of students who had worked in temporary and personal services stayed in that sector after college.

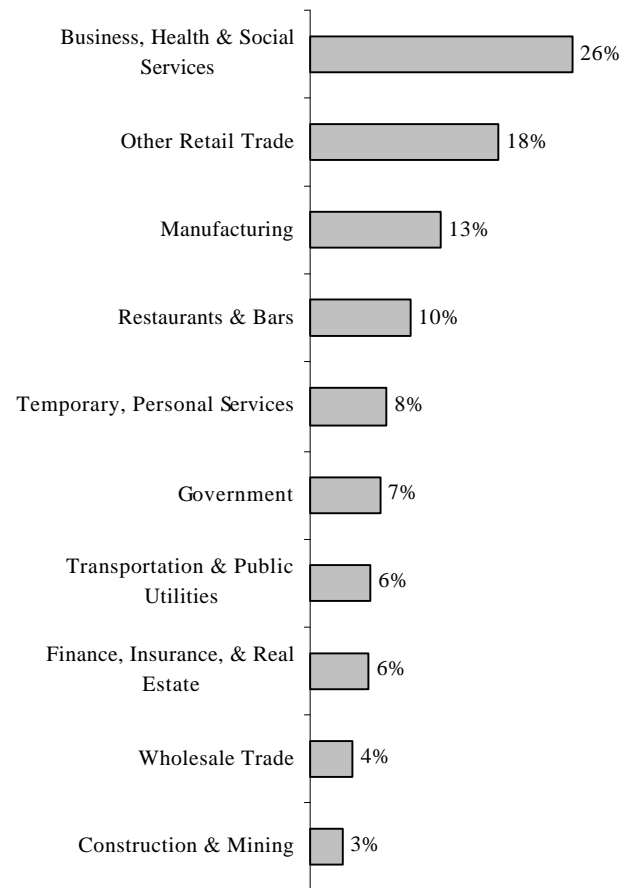
Those who worked during college earned \$10.48 after college, somewhat more than the typical after college wage (\$9.92).

## Summary and Conclusions

Each year about 45,000 students with an apparent transfer goal complete classes and then leave the college. About 30 percent of these students enroll in four-year institutions in Washington either immediately after college or within the next year. Most of the students do not transfer. These students apply their academic skills in the job market. How should this transition to work, or continuation of work, be regarded? Is it a sign of a failure to achieve an intended goal or the sign of the value of completing academic courses?

This analysis suggests that transfer-oriented college students who do not transfer are employed in quality jobs paying wages higher than are generally available to those without postsecondary training. The pay-off is consistent with national research findings which show a positive economic return for students completing a year or more of credits regardless of whether that training was in academic or vocational courses (Kane and Rouse, Grubb). Returns to education for those completing fewer credits are more questionable (Grubb). This analysis found substantial hourly wage gains for non-transferring students with greater gains for those who had completed more credits. Not only did students work at jobs with wages equal to those leaving vocational programs, but they also moved out of low wage industries into higher paying industries.

**Industries of Employment for Non-transfer Students During College**



The analysis also suggests that many “transfer-oriented” students maintain a strong labor force connection before, during and after college. Work is a central part of the life of many of these students. The traditional assumption that a student will transfer immediately after leaving college may be inappropriate when applied to these students. For this group, the normative behavior may be periods of college attendance combined with work, followed by periods exclusively devoted to work, followed by a return to college.

## References

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