OFFICE OF EDUCATION THROUGH EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

December 2025

Earnings and Return on Investment of a University of the District of Columbia (UDC) Bachelor's Degree

This analysis examines the economic return of earning a degree from the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). It uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) dataset to analyze graduate earnings, compare outcomes across majors, and calculate the return on investment (ROI).

Key Findings

UDC bachelor's degree graduates earn $1.9 million more in their lifetimes than their peers with only a high school diploma.

UDC bachelor's graduates are predicted to earn **$3.7 million** in their lifetime, compared to $1.4 million for high school graduates in DC.

This equates to approximately **$47,500 more per year** in earnings during a typical 40-year career.

Earnings for UDC bachelor's graduates are **competitive to** DC bachelor's holders overall.

A UDC bachelor's degree meets the standard for minimum economic return as defined by the Postsecondary Value Commission, meaning the degree is a smart investment and pays for itself with increased earnings over time.

UDC graduates completing their bachelor's degree within the median **5.2 years**[1] will recoup the total net price of their education in **fewer than 10 years**.

UDC students who complete their bachelor's degree within **four years** will recoup the net price even faster – within **six to seven years**.

All scenarios **meet or exceed** the minimum economic return threshold as defined by the Postsecondary Value Commission.

One year after graduation, graduates of 82% of UDC bachelor's programs have median earnings that exceed the living wage threshold for a single adult without dependents.

Graduates from **18 of 22 programs** have median wages above a living wage one year after graduation.

One year after graduation, UDC bachelor's graduates in programs focused on health, computer and information sciences, engineering, education, accounting, and information technology experience the **highest median earnings**.

UDC nursing graduates report the highest report the highest median earnings one year after graduation – **more than $85,000**.

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[1] 5.2 years is the national median time to completion for a bachelor's degree.

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Key Findings

UDC bachelor's degree graduates see 42% wage growth in the five years after graduation.

This wage growth slightly **outpaces graduates from other universities** across the country and demonstrates that UDC graduates see strong progression early in careers.

UDC nursing bachelor's graduates earn **$8,000 more annually** than other registered nurses in DC over their first five years.

Wage growth is particularly high – **up to 72%** – in computer and information sciences programs.

Next Steps

Overall, the findings affirm that a UDC degree delivers a strong economic return, particularly in high-demand fields.

Continue to support degree completion and expand capacity in high-wage fields.

Monitor earnings and trends to align UDC programs with evolving labor market needs.

The ROI in this analysis is measured by lifetime earnings, economic mobility, and the ability to meet or exceed local living wages.

Findings are based on the PSEO dataset, which links education records with unemployment insurance wage records.

The data excludes jobs not covered by UI, such as independent contractors and certain federal employees.*

* Federal government workers excluded are White House officials, Members of Congress, certain national security agencies, members of the armed forces, and U.S. Postal Service workers.