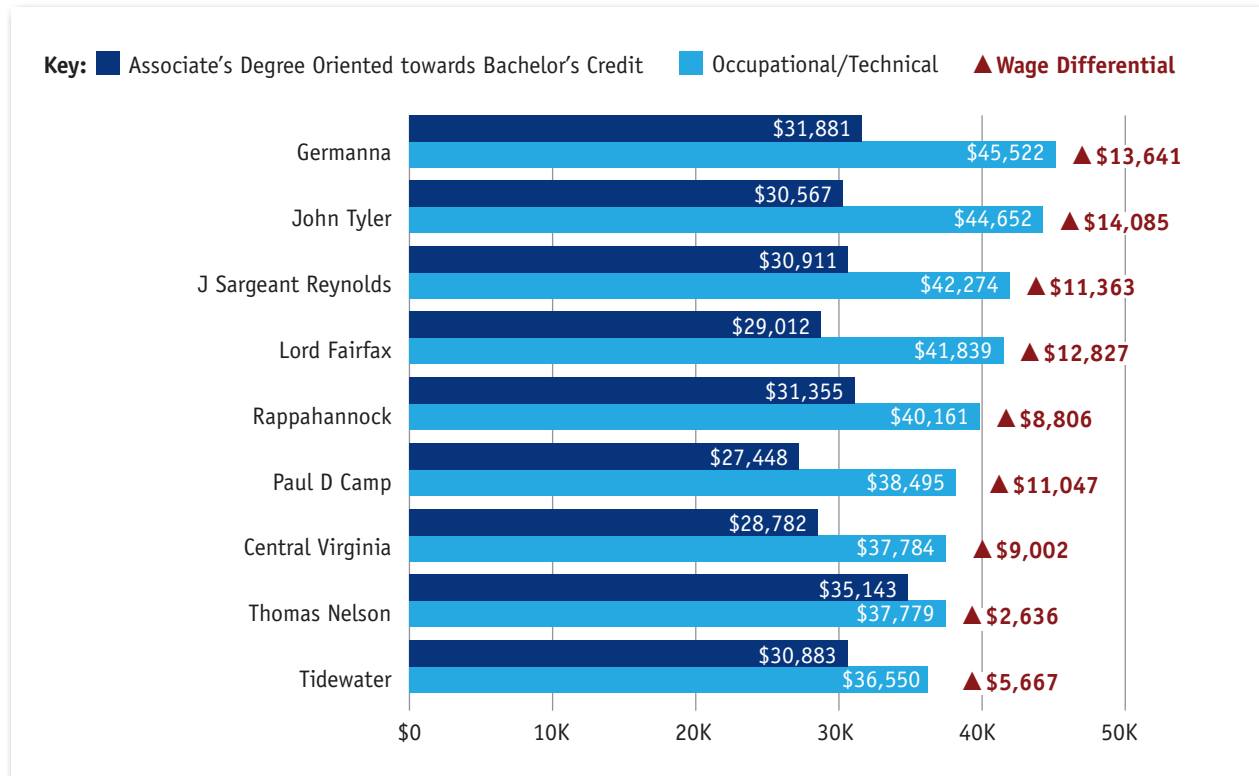


Figure 3: Average First-Year Wages for Occupational vs. Bachelor's-Credit Associate's Degree Programs, by Institution



We found substantial variation among the community colleges in average first-year wages of graduates from associate's degree programs oriented toward obtaining bachelor's credit, with graduates from two community colleges (Paul D Camp and Central Virginia) earning less than \$29,000 and graduates from two other community colleges (Thomas Nelson and Jefferson) with average first-year wages exceeding \$35,000.

Average first-year wages for graduates from only two occupational/technical programs fell below \$30,000 (Eastern Shore and Danville), whereas graduates from eight occupational/technical associate's degree programs averaged more than \$40,000 (Rappahannock, Piedmont Virginia, Lord Fairfax, J Sargeant Reynolds, John Tyler, Germanna, Northern Virginia, and Norfolk State).

Note that the difference in first-year wages between the technical versus bachelor's-credit associate's degrees ranges from approximately \$2,500 at Thomas Nelson to more than \$12,000 at Lord Fairfax, Germanna, and John Tyler. A key to understanding these variations in wages is to keep in mind the local nature of community colleges and that wages of graduates are likely driven by the strength of the local economy as much as any other factor.

SCHEV's data indicate that approximately half of graduates from the academically oriented programs transfer to four-year institutions within Virginia the year following graduation. Additional students transfer one year after that. Thus, although these programs may not generate wage outcomes comparable to those of the occupational/technical programs, they should not be expected to do so as they represent a different pathway for individuals to follow.

Variation by Program

Figure 4 displays the average first-year wages of graduates from associate's degree programs oriented toward earning bachelor's degree credit. Even in this category of associate's degree, students who focused on nursing, or business earned more than students with degrees in the other programs.

Figure 4: Average First-Year Wages for Bachelor's-Credit Associate's Degrees, by Program

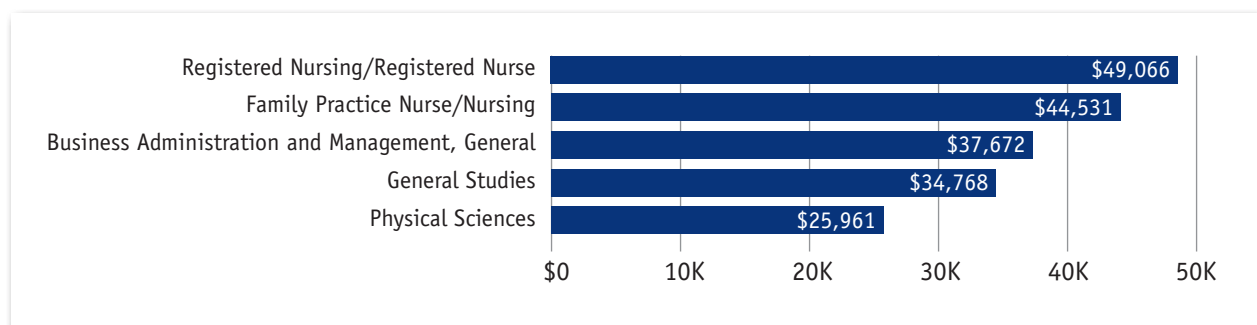
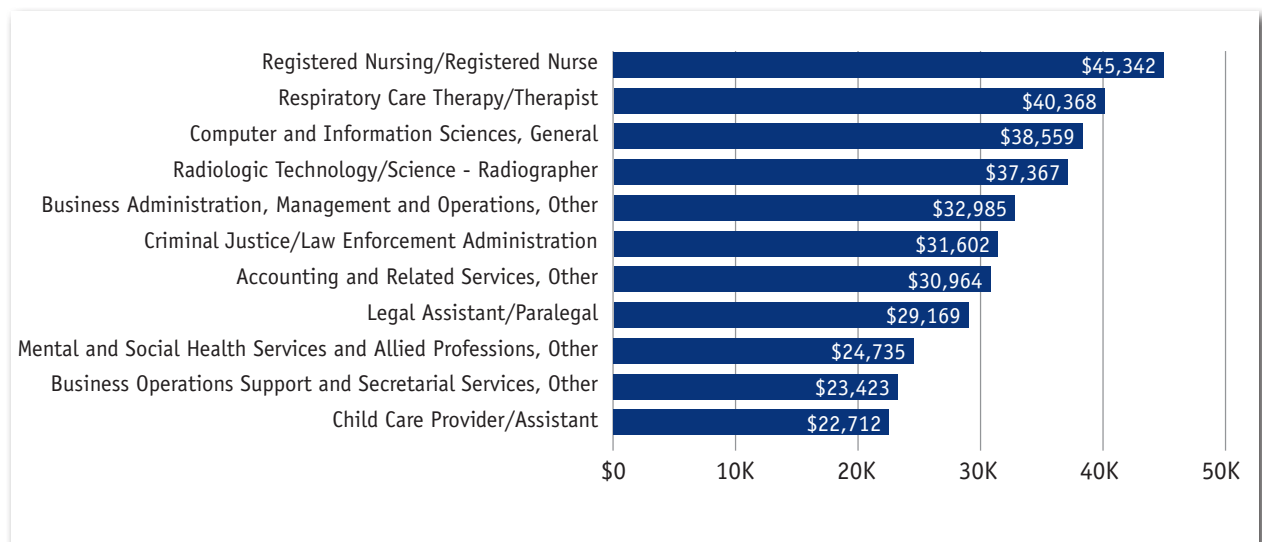


Figure 5 shows the average first-year wages for larger career-oriented associate degree programs of study. Graduates from four programs of study (registered nursing, respiratory care therapy, computer and information sciences, and radiological technology) averaged more than \$35,000, whereas graduates from three programs (Mental and social health services, business operations support/secretarial, and child care provider) had average starting wages of less than \$25,000.

In short, although graduates with career and technical degrees average higher wages in their first year than do students with bachelor’s-credit degrees who are in the job market, the range in wages across these degrees is substantial.

Figure 5: Average First-Year Wages for Occupational/Technical Associate’s Degrees, by Program



Variation by Program and Institution

Among the most popular occupational/technical oriented associate's degree programs in Virginia are registered nursing and computer and information sciences. Thirteen community colleges across the state offer both degrees, and the first-year wages of graduates from both programs are displayed in Figure 6.

There is substantial range in starting wages. Nursing graduates from John Tyler Community College show average first-year wages of approximately \$51,000, whereas graduates from New River Community College have average first-year wages of under \$42,000.

Turning to computer and information sciences, we again find a large range in average first-year wages for associate's degree holders. Northern Virginia Community College is clearly producing graduates with the highest average first-year wages, at \$53,810, which is approximately \$11,500 more than graduates from the same program at Germanna Community College, which has the second highest earning graduates. Indeed, graduates from Southside Virginia Community College and Patrick Henry Community College have average first-year wages that are close to half the first-year wages of graduates from the same program at Northern Virginia Community College. This is clearly indicative of differences in the economic strength of the region served by a community college.

Note that registered nursing graduates from 12 of these colleges have higher average first-year wages than graduates with computer and information sciences degrees—the exception is Northern Virginia Community College. Also note that the size of the gap in the average first-year wages of graduates from these two programs varies widely, from a negative \$5,720 at Northern Virginia Community College (where the salary for graduates of the computer and information sciences program earn higher average first-year wages than graduates from the registered nursing program) to \$23,283 at Southside Virginia Community College.

Figure 6: Average First-Year Wages of Associate's Degree Graduates From Two Large Programs, by Institution

