

# Degrees of Freedom



*Statistics continue to confirm that education pays!*

The relationships between people's educational attainment, employment security, and earnings are well documented. As individuals gain more education, they are less likely to experience unemployment and more likely to earn higher wages, on average. For many, a Bachelor's degree is the postsecondary educational pathway through which these economic advantages are secured. Approximately 29% of Utah's population age 25 and older has attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. Using data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), we can identify how fields of study are distributed among Bachelor's degree holders in Utah.

Table 1 depicts the concentrations of grouped fields of study among Utahns ages 25 and older who have a Bachelor's degree. The ACS data

Table 1: Grouped Field of Bachelor's Degrees for First Major Age 25 and Over in Utah • 2010	Degree Holders	
	Estimate	Percentage
Total:	465,141	100%
Science and Engineering		
Computers, Mathematics and Statistics	20,475	4.4%
Biological, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences	29,230	6.3%
Physical and Related Sciences	13,697	2.9%
Psychology	21,448	4.6%
Social Sciences	34,771	7.5%
Engineering	31,549	6.8%
Multidisciplinary Studies	3,139	0.7%
Science and Engineering Related Fields	41,036	8.8%
Business	87,197	18.7%
Education	69,927	15.0%
Arts, Humanities, and Other		
Literature and Languages	24,621	5.3%
Liberal Arts and History	16,920	3.6%
Visual and Performing Arts	16,914	3.6%
Communications	19,058	4.1%
Other	35,159	7.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, Table B15010

used to populate Table 1 represents one major per Bachelor's degree holder, although about 10% of this population has earned more than one degree.

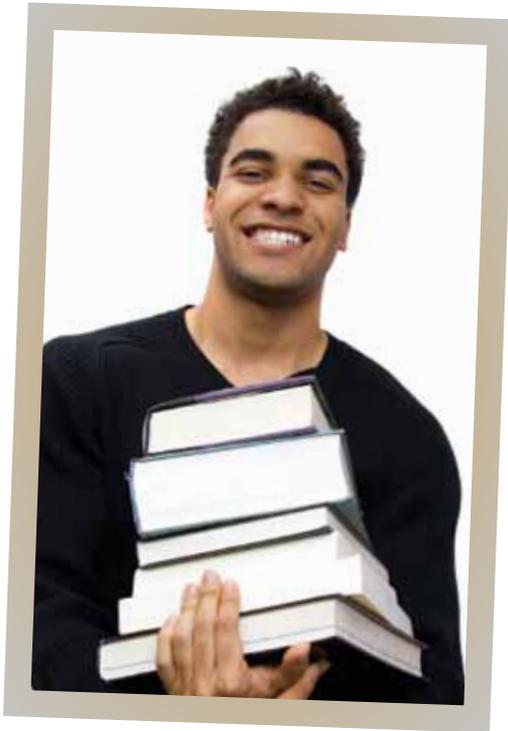
Just over one third of all Utah undergraduate degree holders majored in a business or education field, which is nearly identical to the national statistic. In fact, most of the grouped fields of study seen in Table 1 are similarly represented among college graduates on a national scale.

Beyond grouped fields of study, we can analyze the prevalence of, and earnings associated with, detailed

majors acquired by Utahns. For example, within the grouped field of business, the most popular majors are accounting, business management and administration, and general business studies. Likewise, earnings for those whose college careers were in a business field were highest in the majors of accounting, general business and finance. Tables 2 and 3 reflect the most common first majors and the highest wage or salary earnings by first major in Utah, during the year 2010. When viewing these tables, however, consider that not all Bachelor's degree holders are employed in occupations that relate to their education, and at least some

are probably not employed at all. Further, many of the high wage earners in Table 3 have attained education beyond their Bachelor's degree, and it is their postgraduate education that allows them to earn higher wages (for example, health sciences are common undergraduate majors of those who go on to become medical doctors).

Whether you're evaluating a Bachelor's degree major by number of recipients, the earnings of recipients, or some other criteria, rest assured that there are many majors from which to choose that offer a unique field of knowledge and skill sets. Simply exercise your freedom to choose one. 



*Rest assured that there are many majors from which to choose that will appeal to you and your interests.*

Table 2: Most Common First Majors Age 25 and Over in Utah • 2010	Degree Holders Estimate
Elementary Education	26,795
Accounting	22,401
Business Management and Administration	21,981
Psychology	21,429
English Language and Literature	17,610
General Business	14,638
Nursing	14,547
General Education	14,083
Family and Consumer Sciences	12,537
Computer Science	11,931

Table 3: Highest Wage or Salary Earnings by First Major Age 25 and Over in Utah • 2010 (Minimum 500 cases)	Wage Estimate
Molecular Biology	\$144,647
Statistics and Decision Science	\$89,524
Biochemical Sciences	\$85,295
Zoology	\$81,464
Microbiology	\$80,725
Physiology	\$77,667
Chemical Engineering	\$77,036
Chemistry	\$76,902
Computer Science	\$72,759
Pre-Law and Legal Studies	\$72,437