University of Illinois System Postgraduate Earnings and Economic Mobility Dashboard

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM | UNIVERSITY OFFICE FOR PLANNING AND BUDGETING

This project was funded by a grant from the Postsecondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) Coalition, made possible with support from Strada Education Foundation. The PSEO Coalition generates, analyzes, and shares employment data that demonstrates the value of higher education. The data are publicly available through a dashboard and downloadable dataset on the U.S. Census Bureau's website.

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Grant Brief Prepared by Cheyenne Galentine, 6.12.2026

This dashboard was created by the University of Illinois (U of I) System Office for Planning and Budgeting for a project funded by a grant from the Postsecondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) Coalition, made possible with support from the Texas Higher Education Foundation. The PSEO Coalition is a network of institutions and agency partners that generates, analyzes, and shares data for the U.S. Census Bureau's PSEO data product, which features publicly available employment data of graduates of partner colleges and universities across the country. The University of Illinois System Postgraduate Earnings and Economic Mobility Dashboard uses the PSEO earnings dataset to examine the earnings outcomes of U of I graduates and enables users to explore outcomes across the U of I System universities by year, earnings percentile, degree program, and in comparison to peer institutions. The dashboard can be accessed using this link: https://www.pb.uillinois.edu/reports-public/pseo/

Project Overview

The U of I System Office for Planning and Budgeting used PSEO data to examine how the earnings of U of I graduates changed over time and across lower, median, and higher-earning percentile groups. Specifically, this project utilized a new metric of 10-year earnings growth, calculated as the percent change in earnings from Year 1 to Year 10 postgraduation, as a standardized measure for comparing outcomes across institutions, earnings percentiles, and degree programs. Using earnings growth rate as the primary outcome measure allows the U of I System to assess long-term earning potential and economic mobility, rather than relying on static earnings figures at a single point in time. Unlike static earnings measures, an earnings growth rate also helps reduce biases associated with differences in starting salaries across degree programs, as some may have higher initial earnings but slower growth over time, while others may begin with lower earnings and offer greater long-term earning potential.

In this project, 10-year earnings growth was used as a proxy measure for economic mobility, the measure of how earnings grow over time (upward mobility) or fall over time (downward mobility) and how those changes are distributed across individuals or groups, as defined by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty. The 10-year growth rate percentage is used as a measure of absolute economic mobility, or the changes in dollar-to-dollar earnings over time within one specific population or group. For example, if graduates of a specific program earned an average of $30,000 in Year 1 and $60,000 in Year 10, the 10-year growth rate for these graduates is 100%, indicating strong absolute upward mobility. Analyzing growth rate across earnings percentiles allows for insight into relative economic mobility, or the changes in an individual's or group's position within the earnings distribution over time. For example, a graduate in the 25th percentile whose earnings increase substantially over ten years may demonstrate comparable or greater long-term economic mobility than a graduate in the 75th percentile with more modest earnings growth. Because the dashboard uses aggregated earnings by percentile group rather than individual longitudinal tracking, relative mobility reflects changes in group-level earnings positions rather than direct individual transitions across the distribution.

Data & Methodology

This dashboard used earnings data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) data product, which is publicly available and contains employment data for graduates of partner colleges and universities. The PSEO earnings data are produced by linking university transcript data with national employment records of partner institutions that have entered into a data sharing agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau. The earnings dataset provides aggregate graduate data at the 25^{th}, 50^{th}, and 75^{th} earnings percentiles and one, five and ten years after graduation, by institution, degree level, degree program, and graduation cohort. All earnings in the dataset have been adjusted to 2023 dollars using CPI-U.

To prepare the data for analysis and the dashboard, it was first transformed from a wide to a long format to standardize the structure for longitudinal analysis and dashboard visualizations. Then, the dataset was filtered to include only Bachelor's degree recipients who graduated between 2010 and 2012, which represents the most recent cohort for which 10-year postgraduation earnings data is available. Degree program data was only included at the 2-digit CIP level, and records with missing or partial data for earnings, graduate earners counts, or IPEDS cohort counts were also removed from the analysis dataset.

This dashboard includes a new metric of 10-year earnings growth, measured as the percent change in earnings from Year 1 to Year 10 after graduation. Positive values indicate an increase in earnings, negative values indicate a decrease, and a value above 100 indicates earnings more than doubled. Finally, partner institutions were grouped into predefined peer comparison groups that are used for benchmark comparisons against U of I System universities. Peer comparison groups were not fully represented in the PSEO dataset, and a list of non-partner institutions was made available in each dashboard view.

There are some limitations of the PSEO dataset that should be considered when analyzing and interpreting the data in the dashboard. PSEO data only includes data from graduates who earn at least the full-time equivalent of minimum wage and work three quarters of the year or more. The data does not capture all types of employment, including self-employment, federal government jobs and informal or contract work. The PSEO data are only available at the institution level for post-secondary institutions whose transcript data have been made available to the Census Bureau through a data sharing agreement.

Interpretation & Intended Use

This dashboard is designed to support ease of interpretation of PSEO data by U of I System executive leadership and to support evidence-based institutional and strategic planning. It is also available to the public for use in analyzing trends in graduate earnings over time, within earnings percentiles, across degree programs and in comparison to peer institutions. The primary purpose of this dashboard is to support consistent comparisons across institutions and programs rather than to serve as a causal evaluation of postsecondary outcomes. Earnings only serve as one indicator of postsecondary outcomes data, and interpretations made from the dashboard should consider the limitations of the underlying data.

This dashboard is meant to serve a variety of analytical needs and end users of various experience levels. To help users become familiar with the data included and the purpose of each view, there is a Dashboard Overview Page, Table of Contents, and Data Dictionary. In each view, there is an information icon in the top righthand corner that provides an explanation of the data visualizations, how to read and interpret them, and associated key research questions. Interactive filters in the lefthand panel allow users to filter the data by U of I System university, earnings percentile, and degree program so that the results can be customized to the population of interest. A population summary is also available in the lefthand panel that shows what percentage of the total graduate cohort is represented in the filtered data.

There are four views in the dashboard, each designed to answer specific questions about graduate earnings outcomes.

1. Economic Mobility Quadrant Dashboard: This scatterplot explores the relationship between average 10-year gross earnings and 10-year earnings

growth rate. Reference lines divide the chart into four quadrants of low/high earnings and low/high growth combinations. Users can choose to analyze the data by degree program at one university or across institutions in a peer comparison group.

2. Peer Comparison Dashboard: This view compares average graduate earnings and earnings growth rates for a selected U of I university against a defined peer comparison group. By providing peer benchmarks, the dashboard helps identify areas where graduate earnings outcomes are stronger, weaker, or consistent with peer institutions
3. Earnings Overview Dashboard: This dashboard displays earnings outcomes by degree program for a selected institution and allows users to identify the variation in long-term earnings outcomes among offered degree programs.
4. 25th Percentile Highlight Dashboard: The 25th earnings percentile represents graduates who begin their career earning less than their peers in the same degree program. This dashboard allows users to analyze the differences in earnings outcomes across percentiles and to identify which degree programs have the highest earnings growth for graduates in the 25th percentile.

Relevant Links

1. University of Illinois System Earnings Outcome Dashboard: https://www.pb.uillinois.edu/reports-public/pseo/
2. University of Illinois System Office for Planning & Budgeting: https://www.pb.uillinois.edu/
3. Postsecondary Employment Outcomes Coalition: https://pseocoalition.org/
4. Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes U.S. Census Bureau: https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/pseo_experimental.html
5. Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes Technical Documentation: https://lehd.ces.census.gov/doc/PSEOTechnicalDocumentation.pdf
6. University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty Economic Mobility Definitions: https://www.irp.wisc.edu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Economic-Mobility-Memo-1-Definitions-and-Trends-April-2020.pdf