

March 2, 2021
Special to the Salem Reporter
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According to a recent federal Census Bureau survey, two of every three Oregonians who had planned post-high school education last fall postponed going, for a number of reasons, all having to do with the effects of the pandemic.

If you are a mid-Valley resident who postponed education last year, or are a job seeker new to the labor market, you should know there's a wealth of information available to help plot a path to a good job.

The Employment Department's Research Division regularly projects how many job openings there will be in Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties, the workforce region of the mid-Valley, for about 500 occupations, over the next ten years. Occupational descriptions, requirements to enter the occupation, salaries, and current area openings are also provided.

The mid-Valley will have nearly 350,000 total job openings from 2019 to 2029, an 8.5 percent increase in openings over the ten-year period, according to the Employment Department. This is a down-sizing from the projections done two years earlier of a 12.2 percent increase, from 2017-2027. The slowing of the overall number of openings is undoubtedly due to the impact of the pandemic. That's still a lot of job openings.

An important point to understand about these openings is that there are two types, industry growth openings, and replacement openings. Health care, for example, is and will continue to be the fastest growing industry in the mid-Valley, Oregon and the U.S. A lot of job openings in health care occupations will be due to industry growth.

Other industries, such as manufacturing and financial activities, will grow more slowly. But all industries, even those not growing much or at all, will need replacement workers, for those retiring, moving, and so forth. In fact, most of the total openings over the ten-year period will be due to replacement needs, not growth.

How many of these openings will pay a good salary? What educational credentials will a job seeker need to enter an occupation that pays a good salary?

First, let's define a good salary as the median salary of all 500 occupations, where half pay more and half pay less. This median is \$50,000 – not a fortune, but decent.

Approximately 270 of the 500 occupations in the mid-Valley pay at least \$50,000 a year. About half of these require a bachelor's degree, and a handful a master's, for entry. These occupations include registered nurse, mechanical engineer, and financial analyst (bachelor's degree) and librarian and occupational therapist (master's degree). An

additional 23 occupations paying at least \$50,000 a year require a two-year associate's degree and these include radiology technician, dental hygienist, and respiratory therapist.

But a master's, a bachelor's, and even an associate's degree are large time commitments and they're expensive. So, what's next?

Approximately 80 occupations paying at least \$50,000 a year require high school or equivalent, and a few require in addition non-degree post-secondary training. Occupations include machinist, diesel mechanic, emergency vehicle dispatcher, wastewater treatment plant operator, and firefighter.

If we lower our salary requirements a bit, to between \$40,000 and \$49,000 annually, we find another 83 occupations paying in that range. Most of these require a high school diploma or equivalent, and a few, non-degree post-secondary training, usually short-term, to enter. These occupations include pharmacy technician, bookkeeper, dental assistant, metal fabricator, and insurance clerk.

But most occupations that pay more than \$50,000 require education beyond high school. Education pays, not only in salary, but in a smaller chance of being unemployed. (see chart)

However, entering an occupation that requires high school and non-degree post-secondary training, then maybe plotting a career path into an occupation that requires more education and training, can be a wise strategy to eventually earning a good salary. The Employment Department's occupational projections and career planning tools are a good place to start gathering information, and can be found here: [Link](#)

And finally, the effects of the pandemic are not being ignored. The federal labor statistics agency projects occupational openings for the U.S. as a whole, and has recently highlighted occupations that are, in their words, "highly uncertain" because of the pandemic.

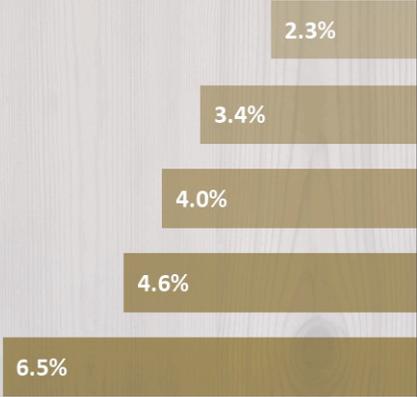
Not surprisingly, retail trade occupations are at the top of the list, followed by those in nonresidential building construction, hotels and air travel. Occupations expected to gain from pandemic effects include many computer-related occupations, and medical research. The agency plans more research on pandemic effects, to be released and published in early fall 2021.

There's been a lot written lately on what constitutes a good job and how to get one, in part because of the economic downturn that has overwhelmingly burdened the lowest income workers with long bouts of unemployment. We'll be looking at this issue in later columns, so stay tuned!

Pam Ferrara of the Willamette Workforce Partnership continues a regular column examining local economic issues. She may be contacted at pferrara@willwp.org

EDUCATION PAYS

PERCENT UNEMPLOYED



EDUCATION LEVEL

- FOUR-YEAR OR HIGHER DEGREE
- TWO-YEAR COLLEGE DEGREE
- SOME COLLEGE, NO DEGREE
- HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
- NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

AVERAGE HOURLY EARNINGS



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