

SECTION SIX

Summary and Conclusions

While it is in the interest of the Commonwealth to assure that every resident obtains as much education as they need to pursue the best job opportunities available, this research has revealed that nearly two-thirds of current jobs are held by workers who have no more than some college or an associates degree from a community college and fully one-third of the current workforce has no more than a high school diploma. This reflects the fact that despite common perceptions, a clear majority of the Commonwealth's jobs are in fields that require less than a college degree. While there may be some increase in job requirements between now and 2022, most of the job openings will be in fields that require no more than an associates degree, particularly since approximately two-thirds of all expected job openings will be available for new workers as replacements for those retiring, leaving the state, or transferring into other occupations. The top four broad occupation groups in terms of projected job openings are:

- Food Preparation and Servicing Related Occupations
- Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- Sales and Related Occupations
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations

Altogether, these four broad occupations account for 43 percent of all expected job openings between 2012 and 2022 across all twenty-two broad occupation clusters in the Commonwealth.

In Food Preparation and Servicing Related Occupations, 55 percent of workers have no more than a high school degree along with on-the-job training and another 34 percent have some college or an associates degree. In Office and Administrative Support Occupations, the respective percentages are 36 and 41 percent. In Sales and Related Occupations, those with no more than high school account for 36 percent of all current workers with another 34 percent

with some college or an associates degree. In the Health Care field, an even larger proportion of workers have no more than an associates degree: 86 percent with 40 percent having no more than a high school degree.

There are other occupations where the net growth in employment will be negative or negligible, but the need for replacement workers is substantial. This is true in Production Occupations, Architecture and Engineering, Protective Services, and Installation and Repair jobs. More than 90 percent of the projected openings in Production and in Installation and Repair Services will require no more than an associates degree while the same is true of 74 percent of Protective Services jobs. Even 29 percent of Architecture and Engineering jobs will require no more education than this.

At current levels of enrollment, the graduates of regional vocational schools and vocational programs in comprehensive high schools are poised to fill about 12 percent of all the projected job openings between now and 2022. Their graduates, a majority of whom go on to further education, are expected to fill nearly one in six (15.7%) jobs requiring no more than high school; 11 percent of jobs requiring some college; and nearly 23 percent of jobs now filled by workers with an associates degree.

Our survey of administrators in the Commonwealth's regional vocational schools and in vocational programs within comprehensive schools suggests that, in general, they are well aware of the trend in future job openings based on projected industry demand and a knowledge of the need for replacement workers in critical industries. As such, their desire to expand current vocational programs or add new ones are generally in line with the occupational projections we have generated from U.S. Department of Labor employment projections.

All of this suggests that while the Commonwealth must continue to invest in its colleges and universities, it needs to recognize the important role of vocational education and community colleges and assure continued, if not increased funding, for these institutions that will continue to train the majority of the state's workforce.