



Notes on Assigning Forecasted Job Openings to Degrees, by SRA Categorization

1.11.2024

Goal: to investigate the match of EWU current degrees with the projected levels of regional job openings, by occupation

Fundamental assumptions

- The overriding mission of EWU is to educate the youth of our region, s.t. they improve their own material circumstances
From the draft vision statement of the current strategic plan: “...*providing an education rooted in the liberal arts & focused on preparing students to meet regional challenges & opportunities, creating pathways for social mobility, & supporting a diverse generation of innovative leaders through student-centered applied learning in high demand fields.*”
- The “assignment” of occupation(s) with a degree is possible for most degrees

Two primary data sources, both from WA Employment Security Department

- *Projections*
- *Occupations and Wage Survey (OEWS)*

Two measures of interest:

- Forecasted average annual job openings
 - Over period 2026-2031
 - So for work done for Spokane & Tri Cities, amounting to about ½ of population in Eastern WA
- Degrees considered – Bachelors, Masters & one Applied Doctorate
 - Minors & certificates not examined
 - Degrees from programs “scheduled to be discontinued” not considered

Principles in assignment

- Used Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook* to determine what level of education is “typically” required for the occupation or to “enter” the occupation

INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY & ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Catalyst Building | 601 E Riverside | Spokane, WA 99202 | 509.828.1246 | ewu.edu/policyinstitute

EWU expands opportunities for personal transformation through excellence in learning.



- When possible, used departments' own statements of likely occupations from their web pages
 - No attempt was made to evaluate those statements
- Some assignments are straightforward, or 1:1, such as engineers, therapists
- Typical finding: most degrees claimed more than one occupation
- Managers/administrators - >generally assigned to graduate programs
 - Exceptions: Communications, HR, Engineering

Missing in coverage from occupations that require a Bachelor's+

- Nursing (not covered by SRA eval) – the top-ranked occupation in demand in both Spokane & Tri Cities
- Certain occupations b/c degrees not offered at EWU
 - All engineering except ME, EE & computer
 - Pharmacy
 - Architecture
 - Agriculture-related
 - All higher ed (post-secondary) teaching positions

Minor data issue: Lack of complete correspondence in the two data sources

- Example: "School psychologists" occupation is available in the OEWS but not in the forecast; likely found under "other psychologists."
- Example: "Project management" occupation is also available in the OEWS but not in database of forecasted occupations

Resulting assessment: a necessary but not sufficient case for academic programs

- Need to consider also the likely number of future EWU grads, by degree vs. projected openings by occupations
- Must account for the number of grads from "competing" institutions of higher ed by degree by occupation
 - Only Eastern WA colleges & universities?
 - Include (somehow) degree "production" from relevant online institutions, such as WGU, ASU, others?
- Assuming that an EWU degree enjoys a competitive position, the program must break even.