

## Differences in Salaries among Fall 2005 LaGuardia Freshman by Outcome and Council

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In August 2013 we completed an eight-year study of students who entered LaGuardia in Fall 2005: "Full Graduation Rate of the Fall 2005 New Student Cohort" (<http://laguardia.edu/IR/IR-facts/> Zhu and Dickmeyer, 2013). Currently, this is the only cohort where we have full transfer and graduation data from the National Student Clearinghouse. This cohort contained 2,080 first-time freshmen, of whom 1,778 had at least one quarter (three months) of recorded information in the New York State unemployment insurance wage record system.

As noted in Figure 1, 230 of these students received an associate's degree as their highest degree within the eight years. Most of these, but not all, graduated from LaGuardia. Another 203 went on, with or without an associate's degree, to receive a bachelor's degree as their final degree, and another 299 have not received a degree and are still attending college. Almost all the students in this final group are at four-year colleges. Finally, 1,046 were not attending and have not received a degree.

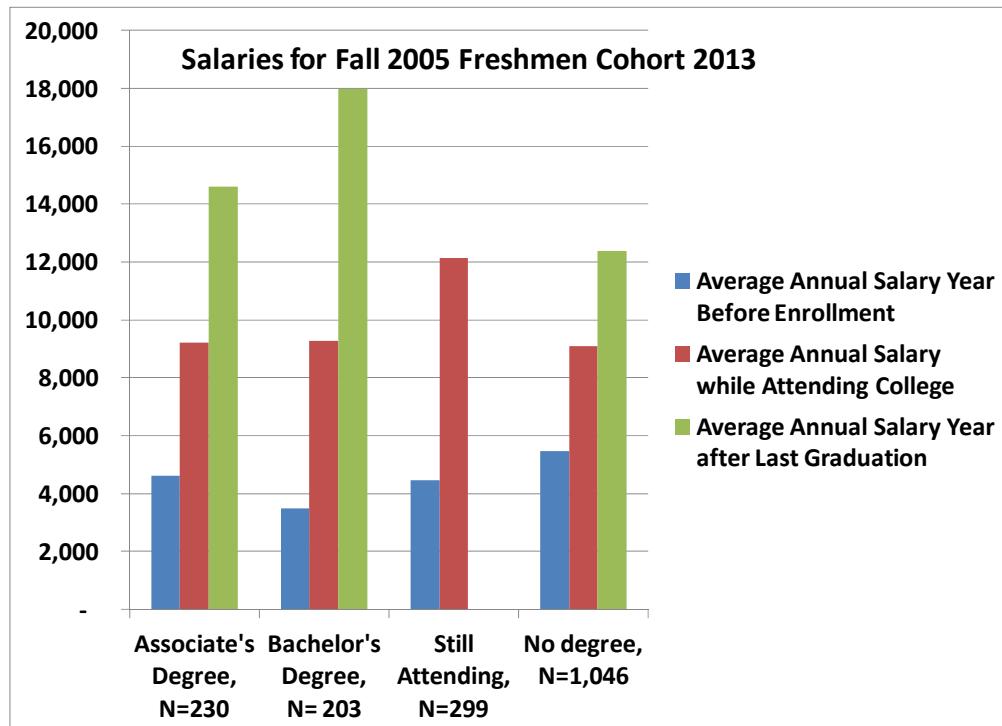


Figure 1

### **Salary calculations**

For this project we measured income over three periods in a student's career: before entering LaGuardia, during college attendance, and in the one year following the student's final degree. For the pre-college earnings the four quarters before Fall 2005 (that is, 2004 Q3 and Q4 and 2005 Q1 and Q2) were summed to give the salary in the year before the student came to LaGuardia.

For the in-school salary, the wages of every quarter starting with the two quarters of Fall 2005 through the last quarter of the semester of final attendance, whether because of final graduation or attendance, were summed, multiplied by 4 and divided by the number of quarters between Fall 2005 and the final attendance semester's quarter gave the average annual salary during attendance. (Note, if the student only attended Fall 2005, then the wages for 2005 Q3 and Q4 were summed and multiplied by two to give the average annualized salary for that student while in college. Periods of stop out were also included as part of the average for wages during attendance. No attempt was made to correct for inflation.)

Finally, the wages for the four quarters after the semester of final attendance were summed to give the wages for the year after last graduation or attendance. (Note, students still attending in 2013 had no wages after the final semester. Also, we would have preferred to have collected data for two and three years after degree receipt, but we would have lost too many recent graduates for whom such data would not yet be available.)

### **Basic Findings**

- In Figure 1 the highest average wages belongs to students the year after graduating with a baccalaureate. These students more than tripled their pre-college earnings in the year after graduation.
- The second highest average wages belongs to students in the year after earning an associate's. As defined above, these students did not later go on and receive a baccalaureate. The year after graduation these students made more than five times what they made in the year before initial matriculation.
- The students with the highest average wages in the year before Fall 2005 were the students who did not graduate. Those with the lowest pre-college earnings went on to get baccalaureates.
- Students who are still attending without a degree have made more, on average, while attending college than the other groups.

Students may not have a wage record in the NYS Unemployment System for any given quarter because they were employed outside of New York State, they were not employed, or they received "under the table" or bartered wages. Because of this, we recalculated the averages given in Figure 1, excluding students with zero wages for the periods shown.

Figure 2 gives these results, along with the numbers of students used in each of the calculations. For example, of the 230 students who went on to get only an associate's degree, only 77 had any wages in the year before Fall 2005.

Interestingly, excluding zero wages narrows the difference between the average earnings of associate's degree graduates (as their only degree) and baccalaureate degree graduates in the year after graduation. Associate's graduates with any wages averaged \$19,407 in their first year after graduation, while Baccalaureate graduates averaged \$21,407.

Excluding zero wage earners caused the pre-college earnings of those who failed to earn a degree to fall into line with those who earned a degree or are still attending, except for those who earned a baccalaureate. Students who went on to earn a baccalaureate still had the lowest wages before starting college, even excluding those who show no earnings. This may indicate the degree of educational focus of students who go on to pursue a baccalaureate.

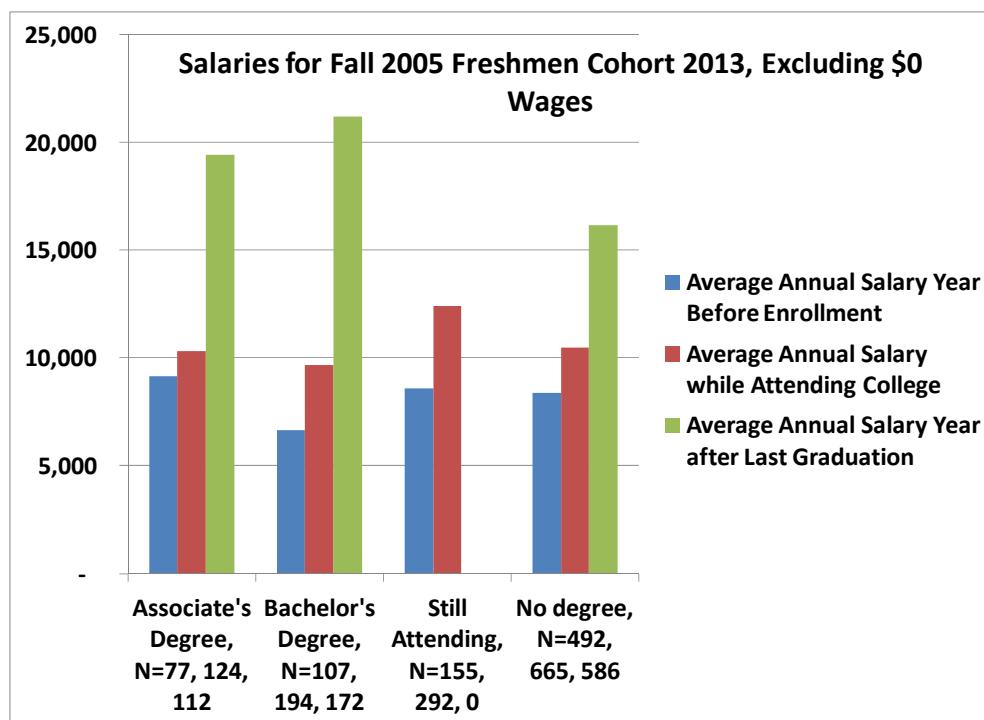
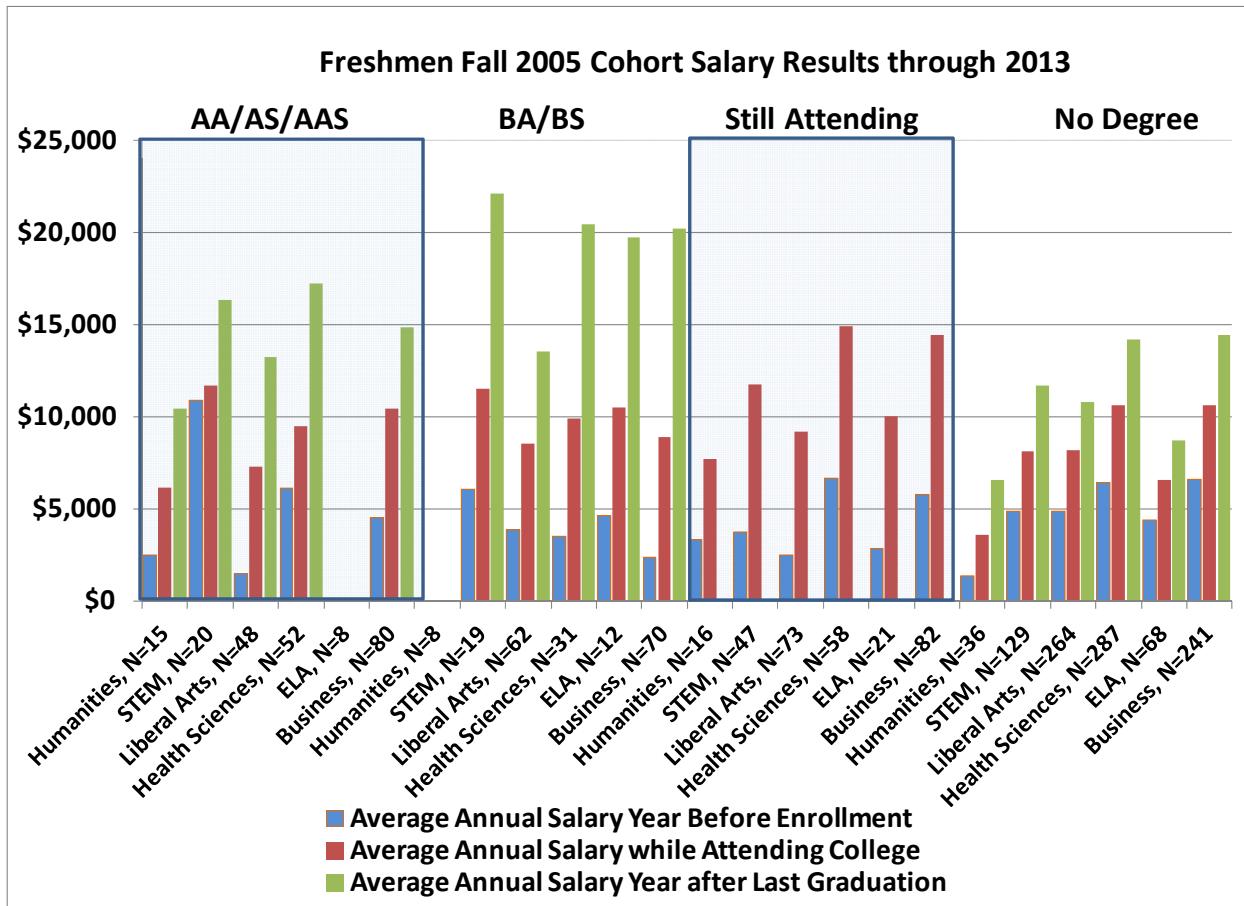


Figure 2

We looked at the results by students' final major at LaGuardia and found few majors with enough students to publish the data. We then grouped the majors by council. The 2005 cohort did not produce sufficient students in the Social Science council, however, for display. No data is displayed for councils with results from fewer than ten students, including ELA associates graduates and Humanities baccalaureate graduates.

Figure 3 includes salaries for students with zero wages.

- Highest salaries one year after graduation were earned by STEM majors.
- Lowest salaries among graduates were for Humanities associates.
- Liberal arts majors had nearly equal salaries after graduation for associate's and baccalaureates.
- In every council, students who did not graduate earned less than those who did in the year after leaving school.
- In-college salaries of students without degrees who were still in school were only slightly below the salaries of associate's graduates the first year after graduation.



**Figure 3**

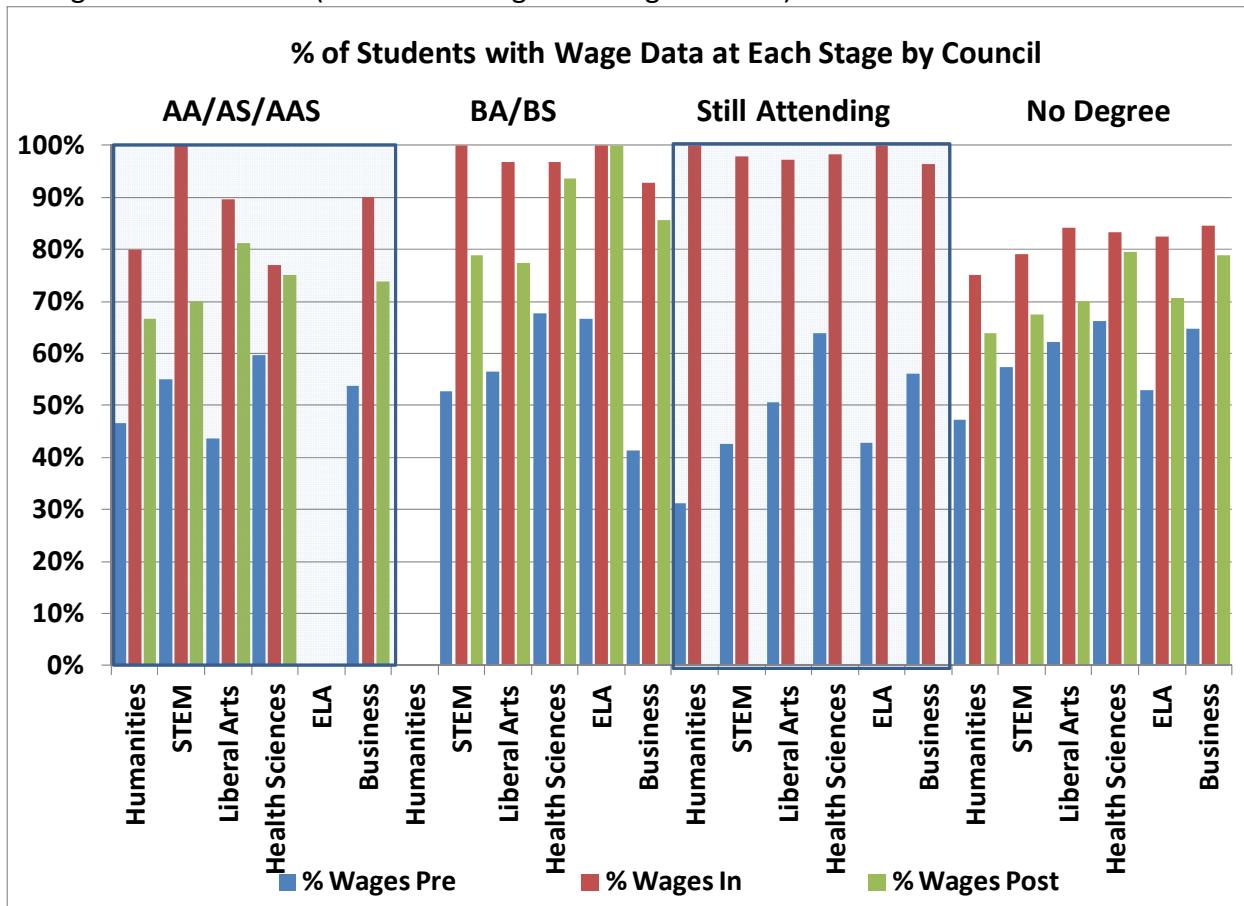
Figure 4 shows the percentage of students in each category, excluding categories with under 10 students, who had non-zero wages over the period covered.

The red bars are for the period of time when students were considered in school. In most cases the high percentages indicate that nearly all students had at least one quarter of earnings during time between first enrollment and last enrollment.

The blue bars indicate that students were much less likely to have wages in one of the four quarters before Fall 2005.

Each of the 12 students in the ELA and STEM groups with baccalaureate degrees had wages in at least one of the quarters after his or her graduation (BA/BS red bars = 100%).

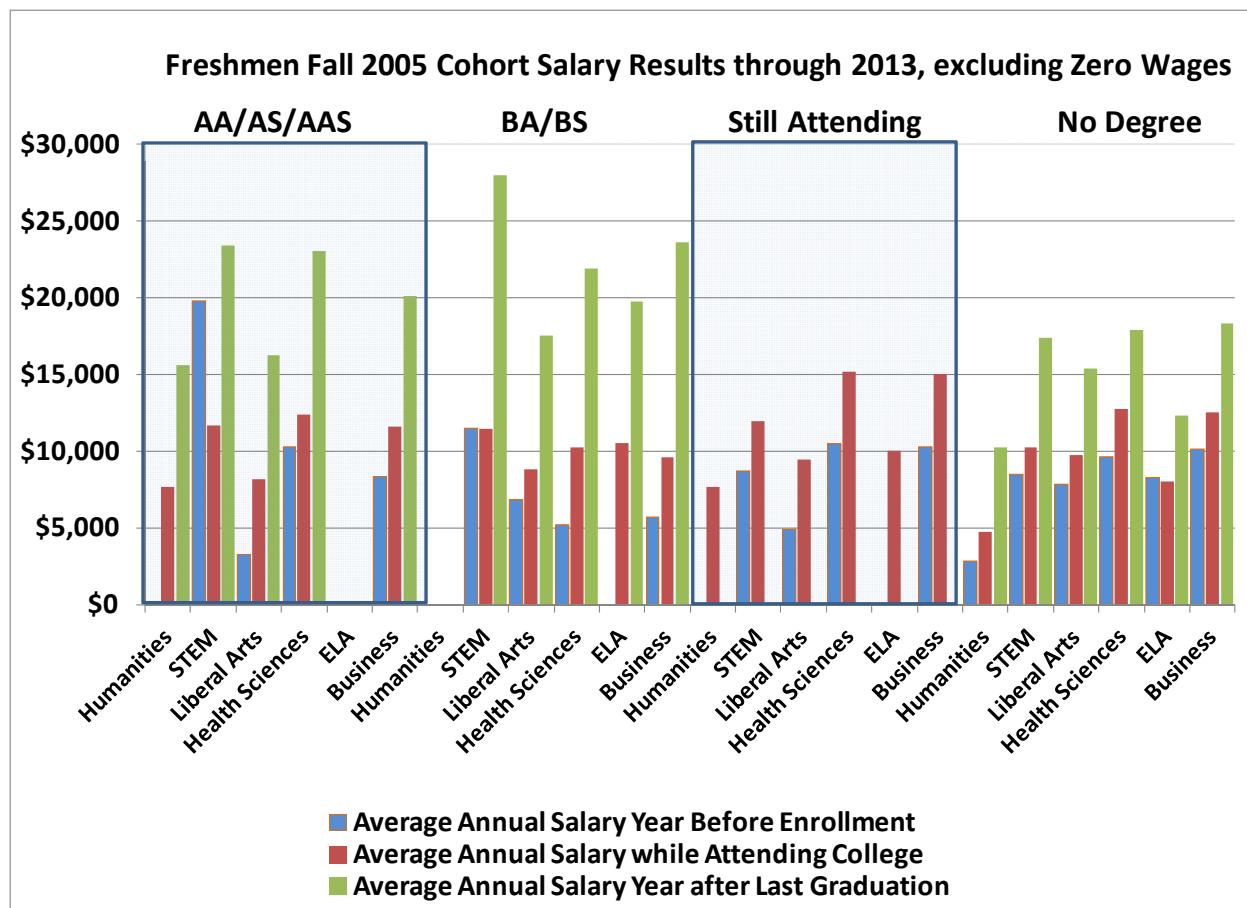
In general, students with no degree were less likely to have wages after their last semester than during their enrollment (red bars are higher than green bars).



**Figure 4**

Figure 5 gives, within wages in each category, the average wages only for those students with more than zero earnings. Several bars are missing because there were fewer than ten students in that category.

Interestingly, out of the 20 STEM students who received an associate's degree, the 11 who had wages the year before beginning LaGuardia earned on average over \$19,000 (blue bar-STEM-AA/AS/AAS), almost as much as the \$23,391(green bar-STEM-AA/AS/AAS) earned by the 14 STEM associates graduates who earned wages in the year after graduation.



**Figure 5**

### Conclusion

The highest wages go to STEM graduates, especially those with a baccalaureate. Those with the most certainty of getting a job after a degree appear to be ELA graduates with a baccalaureate (and these are probably teachers). Finally, unless you are a STEM major, you ought to focus on education, not making money before or during college.