

EDUCATION

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Ranked: America's 20 Lowest-Paying College Degrees



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AMERICA'S LOWEST PAYING COLLEGE DEGREES

Education

Social
Sciences

Health

Arts

Hospitality

Sciences

Rank

Major

Early Childhood Education

\$52k

Mid-Career
Median Wage

Elementary Education

\$55k

General Education

\$56k

Special Education

\$56k

Miscellaneous Education

\$60k

Social Services

\$60k

Secondary Education

\$62k

Family and Consumer Sciences

\$65k

Anthropology

\$65k

Theology and Religion

\$66k

Health Services

\$67k

Nutrition Sciences

\$70k

Treatment Therapy

\$70k

Psychology

\$72k

Fine Arts

\$72k

Liberal Arts

\$75k

Leisure and Hospitality

\$75k

Earth Sciences

\$75k

General Social Sciences

\$75k

Performing Arts

\$75k

Performing Arts

Source: New York Fed. Based on 2024 data.

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Ranked: America’s 20 Lowest-Paying College Degrees

The lowest-paying college degrees can have a significant impact on lifetime earnings. While salary is only one factor when choosing a field, some fields consistently generate lower wages than others.

This visualization, created in partnership with Terzo as part of the Markets in a Minute series, ranks America's lowest paying college degrees based on median mid-career wages. The data comes from the New York Fed and highlights which majors have the lowest earning potential in 2024.

Education Degrees Make Up Half the List

Education majors account for many of the lowest paying college degrees in America. Early childhood education ranks last overall, with a median mid-career wage of \$52k.

Rank	Major	Mid-Career Median Wage (\$k)
1	Early Childhood Education	52
2	Elementary Education	55
3	General Education	56
4	Special Education	56
5	Miscellaneous Education	60
6	Social Services	60
7	Secondary Education	62
8	Family and Consumer Sciences	65
9	Anthropology	65
10	Theology and Religion	66
11	Health Services	67
12	Nutrition Sciences	70
13	Treatment Therapy	70
14	Psychology	72
15	Fine Arts	72
16	Liberal Arts	75
17	Leisure and Hospitality	75
18	Earth Sciences	75
19	General Social Sciences	75
20	Performing Arts	75

Elementary education, general education, special education, and secondary education also appear in the lowest-earning list. Despite this, these professions play a critical role in developing future generations.

Lowest-Paying Social Science Majors Face Lower Earnings

Several social science majors also rank among the lowest-paying college degrees. Social services, anthropology, theology and religion, psychology, and liberal arts all appear on the list.

These fields often lead to careers in public service, nonprofits, education, or community organizations. While demand remains steady, compensation tends to lag behind more technical professions.

Arts and Health Fields Also Feature

Fine arts and performing arts both rank among the lowest-paying majors, with median mid-career wages of \$72k and \$75k, respectively.

Several health-related degrees also make the list. Health services, nutrition sciences, and treatment therapy all report median mid-career wages below \$71k.

What the Lowest Paying College Degrees Mean for CFOs

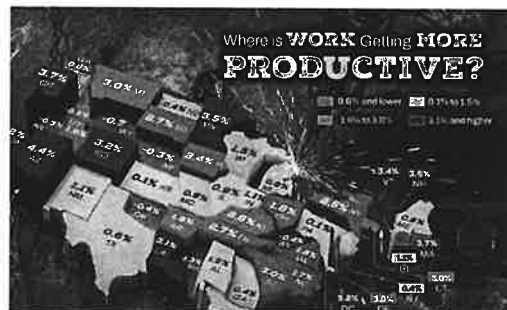
Compensation varies widely across industries and occupations. Understanding long-term earning trends can help finance leaders benchmark labor costs, evaluate talent markets, and better understand workforce dynamics.

In a market where success increasingly depends on maximizing existing assets, contract data has become an important source of untapped value. NirvanAI helps businesses unlock insights hidden within their contracts, turning complex data into actionable intelligence. For that means faster decisions, lower risk, and a clearer view of opportunities across the organization.

Curious about the highest-paying college degrees? Check them out here.

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