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**Report highlights increased earning potential of MCG graduates**

A new report on higher education in Georgia shows that recent graduates of University System of Georgia colleges and universities earn an average of \$14,000 a year more than high-school graduates and - not surprisingly - that differential is even higher for graduates of the state's health science university.

The analysis showed additional annual earning power attributed to a college degree ranged from \$5,706 for graduates of a two-year college up to \$19,362 for graduates of the Medical College of Georgia. The MCG graduate income differential was based on data from 1998 on an average of the earning potential of graduates from MCG's five schools, Allied Health Sciences, Dentistry, Graduate Studies, Medicine and Nursing.

The report, commissioned by the USG's Intellectual Capital Partnership Program, analyzed the annual earnings of nearly 90,000 University System of Georgia students who graduated between 1993 and 1997.

MCG Provost Barry Goldstein said the differential for many MCG graduates today is even higher because the figures are several years old, demand for many health care professionals is at an all-time high and some professionals educated at MCG, such as physicians and dentists, traditionally have high earning potential because of their expertise.

As an example of today's climate for health sciences, graduates of four-year nursing programs such as MCG's can expect to start their careers earning nearly \$40,000 a year, a figure that has increased about 25 percent over the last five years because of increasing disparities in supply and demand, according to some area nurse recruiters.

Also, a recent Bureau of Labor Statistics analysis of job growth in the Augusta area from September 2002 to September 2003 showed that health services followed the professional and business services sector as the second-largest area of growth.

"This report reiterates that the challenging, rewarding education students receive at MCG will help them contribute to society on many levels," Dr. Goldstein said.

The study, which also looked at related issues such as careers that offered the greatest financial reward found - again not surprisingly - that the programs with the greatest earning potential are dentistry, medicine and law. Business administration, nursing and

teaching are the programs with the greatest total economic impact, due to the large number of students who graduate with these majors, the study found.

The study, “Value of University System of Georgia Education” was conducted by researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology. The researchers said that the increased earnings resulting from college degrees added \$1.25 billion to the state’s economy during 1998 – the most recent year for which data was available. These graduates had widespread impact on the state, bringing at least \$1 million per year in additional economic impact to more than half of Georgia’s 159 counties.

“The economic value of college graduates is so massive, so widespread and so long-lasting that we tend to take it for granted,” said Dr. Bill Drummond, a professor in Georgia Tech’s City and Regional Planning Program, who collaborated with Dr. Jan Youtie, a researcher in Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute, in preparing the report. “It is one of the huge, but hidden, drivers of Georgia’s rapid economic growth, which is the envy of most other states in the country.

“As our funding partners struggle with grave budget issues, I would encourage them not to harm this generator of economic health,” said University System Chancellor Thomas C. Meredith. “Georgia so far has resisted the trend we see in many states to reduce substantially the state’s investment in higher education,” he noted. “Our economy has benefited from that decision, and as this study has shown, those benefits will continue to increase in the decades to come.”

Previous studies of the economic impact of the University System (released in 2002 and 2000) have been calculated on expenditure data, including the cost of constructing buildings and employing workers, and purchases made by students, Dr. Youtie said. While these data are useful, “Universities are not in the business of spending money. They are in the business of educating people. So the methodology we used, comparing the annual earnings of higher-education graduates to the annual earnings of high-school graduates, is uniquely appropriate to measure the value of education.”

Dr. Youtie cautioned that comparing earnings of college graduates to high-school graduates can be problematic because of the difficulty in accounting for individual differences in energy, creativity and intelligence that affect earning potential.

Richmond County, home of two University System of Georgia schools, MCG and Augusta State University, was among the Georgia counties that gained the most educational value from the University System of Georgia. The figure was listed as \$23.4 million for Richmond County for the study period.

Projections from the Georgia Department of Labor indicate that occupations requiring a higher-education degree will make up 25 percent of all the state’s jobs by 2010, a figure that has increased from 23 percent in 2000. The labor department forecasts that the top three occupations requiring higher education, based on numeric employment increases, will be registered nurses, computer support specialists and accountants and auditors. In terms of percentage increase, demand will grow the most for survey researchers, computer support specialists and physician assistants.

Full copies of “The Value of University System of Georgia Education” may be downloaded from the ICAPP Web site at: <http://www.icapp.org/publications.htm>.

