

AMERICA EMPLOYED

INSIGHTS FROM EXPRESS EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

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In a Tight Labor Market, High School Grads Can Make Big Salaries

Career and Vocational Tech Training Can Propel Wages to Six Figures

Welders, Plumbers, Technicians

OKLAHOMA CITY, April 25, 2018 – Across the country, high school students are making their final decisions about which college to attend in the fall. And millions of college seniors wonder if they will be able to find a job after graduation. At the same time, Express Employment Professionals experts are reporting high demand for jobs that don't require a college degree—many of those jobs pay wages that rival or exceed those of four-year college graduates.

“Young adults graduating high school have more options than just attending college,” said John A. Thomas, a professional staffing field consultant at Express International Headquarters in Oklahoma City. “They can begin a rewarding career in the skilled trades. By choosing that career path, they are filling a major void that exists in manufacturing companies today. That entry-level opportunity can turn into a lifetime career where they can earn wages similar to individuals graduating college with a degree.”

Thomas says that some common well-paying jobs for which only a high school degree is needed include:

- Welder
- Electrician apprentice
- Plumber apprentice
- Maintenance tech
- Accounts payable/receivable clerk

Workers in these fields, or similar ones, can expect to earn \$40,000 to \$60,000 and with some additional training, could possibly see salaries above \$70,000.

Nursing, banking, call center and oilfield work may not offer high entry-level pay relative to the industry, Thomas notes, but they do offer chances for fast upward mobility after some on-the-job training.

Terri Greeno, an Express franchise owner in Crystal Lake and West Dundee, Illinois, estimates with just some training after high school, employees in quality control, manufacturing, welding, computer numerical control (CNC) set up and industrial maintenance could earn more than \$20 an hour, plus overtime—or well above \$40,000 a year.

Greeno reports she has seen individuals with four-year degrees actually pursue basic technical training in order to secure jobs that do not require a college degree but offer more opportunity, particularly in the areas of welding, CNC and industrial maintenance.

“We work with several companies that offer excellent benefits and long-term opportunities for career growth,” said Jeff Rey, an Express franchise owner in Howell and Brighton, Michigan. “Many companies in our area invite us to present to high school graduates with little or no industrial experience who are willing to learn new skills.”

Although a college degree is still very valuable for many fields, many people now recognize it is not the only career path.”

Deb Gray, an Express franchise owner in West Pittsburgh, also reports that some of the best paying jobs in her area that do not require college degrees are in manufacturing. She agrees that one of the biggest misconceptions is that people without a college degree will be “excluded from opportunity” and that people do not understand “how important soft skills are to an employer.”

According the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), making six figures without a college degree is not outside the realm of possibility. Below are the jobs with *median* annual wages in the high 5-figures, approaching \$100,000.

Job	Annual Wages	Education required	Work experience required	On the job training required
Transit and railroad police	\$70,280	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Diagnostic medical sonographers	\$71,410	Associate degree	None	None
First-line supervisors of non-retail sales workers	\$71,650	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	None
Transportation inspectors	\$72,140	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Gaming managers	\$72,930	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	None
Dental hygienists	\$74,070	Associate degree	None	None
Postmasters and mail superintendents	\$74,840	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Nuclear medicine technologists	\$75,660	Associate degree	None	None
Power plant operators	\$77,180	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Funeral service managers	\$78,040	Associate degree	Less than 5 years	None
Commercial pilots	\$78,740	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Elevator installers and repairers	\$79,480	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Apprenticeship
Media and communication equipment workers	\$79,500	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Detectives and criminal investigators	\$79,970	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Nuclear technicians	\$80,370	Associate degree	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Radiation therapists	\$80,570	Associate degree	None	None
Power distributors and dispatchers	\$82,510	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Long-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of police and detectives	\$87,910	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Transportation, storage, and distribution managers	\$92,460	High school diploma or equivalent	5 years or more	None
Nuclear power reactor operators	\$93,370	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Air traffic controllers	\$124,540	Associate degree	None	Long-term on-the-job training

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

“A college degree is not synonymous with a successful career and a well-paying job,” said Bill Stoller, CEO of Express. “Despite what conventional wisdom leads some to believe, it is entirely possible to earn a good living without a four-year college education—and you can do it debt free. There is, of course, no replacing the value of hard work, a willingness to learn and good interpersonal skills, which are almost always required for professional success.”

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Karami, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 800 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Since its inception, Express has put more than 6 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.4 billion in sales and employed a record 540,000 people in 2017. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit ExpressPros.com.