

# ESPs: Employment and Living Wage Update

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**T**he *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently reported that five presidents and chancellors received more than \$1 million dollars in annual salary packages for FY 2015.<sup>1</sup> But substantial disparities in Education Support Professional (ESP) salaries continue to exist while more presidents are reaching the million-dollar mark. The 2015 *Almanac* presented a range of presidential salaries and regional and state ESP median salaries by the major occupational categories defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).<sup>2</sup> The report compared ESP median salaries with the U.S. Census reports of median household income (\$53,657) and of poverty thresholds: one person, \$12,071; two people, \$15,379; three people, \$18,850; four people, \$24,230.<sup>3</sup> The official 2014 poverty rate of 14.8 percent, the report added,

translates to 46.7 million people.<sup>4</sup> Poverty levels and their definitions (chronic and transient poor, for example) are important to note, but optimum levels for households to exist require fair and equitable living wages.<sup>5</sup>

This *Almanac* details states' minimum and hourly living wages, calculated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). MIT estimates the cost of living in local communities by listing the living wage and typical wages and expenses for the selected locations.<sup>6</sup> While the "minimum wage sets an earnings threshold under which our society is not willing to let families slip," notes the MIT staff, "it fails to approximate the basic expenses of families in 2015."<sup>7</sup> "Establishing a living wage, an approximate income needed to meet a family's basic needs," the staff suggests, "would

enable the working poor to achieve financial independence while maintaining housing and food security, including childcare, health care, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities.”<sup>8</sup> Many observers have “argued successfully that the prevailing wage offered by the public sector and key businesses should reflect a wage rate required to meet minimum standards of living.”<sup>9</sup>

This article updates the number of ESPs in each occupational category for public and private postsecondary institutions and reports changes in the number of ESP staff members between 2012 and 2014. It also presents regional and state living hourly wages after comparing part-time ESP occupational categories by public and private two- and four-year institutions.

### **EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES**

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes ten occupational categories: 1) business and financial operations; 2) computer, engineering, and science; 3) community service, legal, arts, and media; 4) librarians, curators, and archivists; 5) healthcare practitioners and technical; 6) production, transportation, and material moving; 7) natural resources, construction, and maintenance; 8) office and administrative support; 9) sales and related occupations; and 10) service occupations.<sup>10</sup> This article updates the employment status and change in the number of staff in each category in fall 2014.

Total employment at public and private institutions for the ten categories was 1,613,569 (Figure 1). Office and administrative support was the largest category with 464,532 or 29 percent of all employees. Then followed service occupations (245,383 or 15 percent); computer, engineering, and science (242,040 or 15 percent); business and financial operations (216,690 or 13 percent); community service, legal, arts, and media (172,664 or 11 percent); healthcare practitioners and technical (116,230 or seven percent); natural resources, construction, and maintenance (74,890 or five percent);

librarians, curators, and archivists (43,788 or three percent); production, transportation, and material moving (19,524 or one percent); and sales and related occupations (17,828 or one percent).

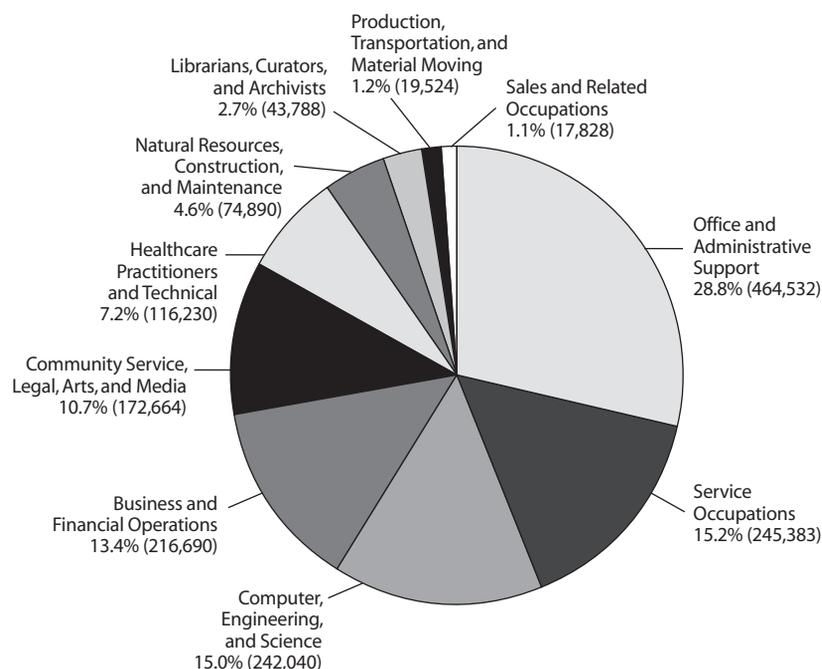
### **CHANGE IN ESP STAFF BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES**

Table 1 shows the change in the number of staff members between 2012 and 2014 in the ten occupational categories.<sup>11</sup> Librarians, curators, and archivists experienced the largest decrease (23,490 employees or -34.92 percent). Office and administrative support workers showed a substantial decrease of 37,409 employees or -7.45 percent. Healthcare practitioners and technical had a similar decrease, 9,279 staff members or -7.39 percent. Then followed sales and related occupations (574 employees or -3.11 percent); production, transportation, and material moving (551 or -2.75 percent); natural resources, construction, and maintenance (1,811 or -2.36 percent), and service occupations with a slight decrease of 643 employees or -0.26 percent. Only three categories showed increases: business and financial operations (20,465 or +10.43 percent); computer, engineering, and science (4,698 or +1.98 percent), and community service, legal, arts, and media (2,330 or +1.37 percent).

Summing up, the number of ESPs decreased by 181,601 (11.2 percent) between 2012 and 2014, and almost 35 percent of that significant drop was the number of librarians, curators, and archivists.<sup>12</sup> When asked, these individuals said it took time for the recession to trickle down to the libraries, and the big cuts hit them in 2010. Reports have noted that personnel and collections/materials were the areas most affected by budget cuts, yet greater reliance on library services increase during an economic downturn.<sup>13</sup>

### **PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

Office and administrative support continues to be the largest occupational category at public

**Figure 1. Total Employment at Public and Private Institutions, by Occupational Category: 2014**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2014*; and *Financial Statistics and Academic Libraries, Fiscal Year 2014*, NCES 2016-005.

**Table 1. Number of ESPs, by Occupational Category and Percent Change: 2012 to 2014.**

Occupational Category	ESPs 2012	ESPs 2014	Change: Number and (Percent)
Librarians, Curators, and Archivists	67,278	43,788	23,490 (-34.92%)
Business and Financial Operations	196,225	216,690	20,465 (+10.43)
Computer, Engineering, and Science	237,342	242,040	4,698 (+1.98)
Community Service, Legal, Arts, and Media	170,334	172,664	2,330 (+1.37)
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	125,509	116,230	9,279 (-7.39)
Service Occupations	246,026	245,383	643 (-0.26)
Sales and Related Occupations	18,402	17,828	574 (-3.11)
Office and Administrative Support	501,941	464,532	37,409 (-7.45)
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	76,701	74,890	1,811 (-2.36)
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	20,075	19,524	551 (-2.75)
Total ESPs by Occupational Category	1,795,170	1,613,569	181,601 (-11.20)

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2014*; and *Financial Statistics and Academic Libraries, Fiscal Year 2014*, Table 3, NCES 2016-005.

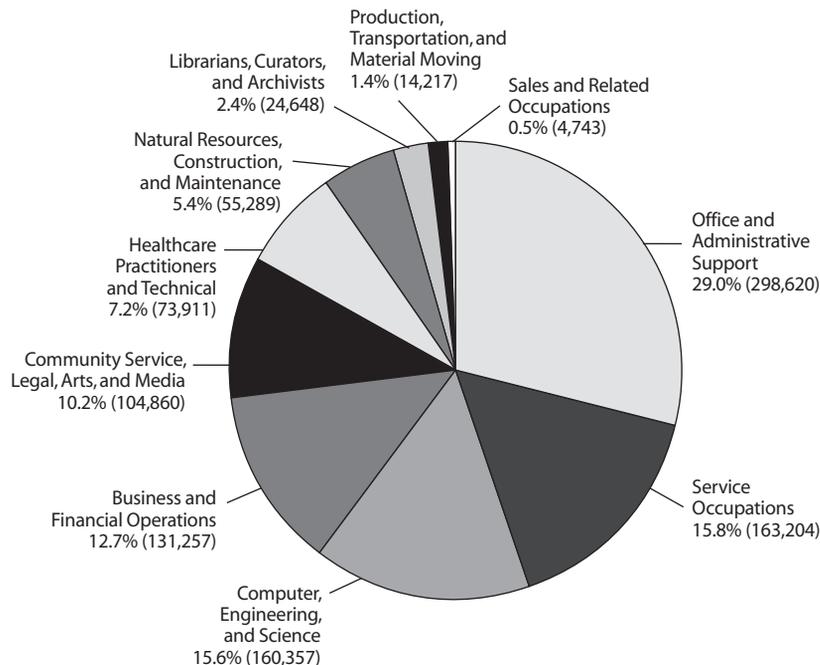
institutions, with 298,620 or 29 percent of the 1,031,106 total employees (Figure 2). Here are the other categories in descending order: service occupations (163,204 or 16 percent); computer, engineering, and science (160,357 or 16 percent); business and financial operations (131,257 or 13 percent); community service, legal, arts, and media (104,860 or ten percent); healthcare practitioners and technical (73,911 or seven percent); natural resources, construction, and maintenance (55,289 or five percent); librarians, curators, and archivists (24,648 or two percent); production, transportation, and material moving (14,217 or one percent); and sales and related occupations (4,743 or less than one percent).

### PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

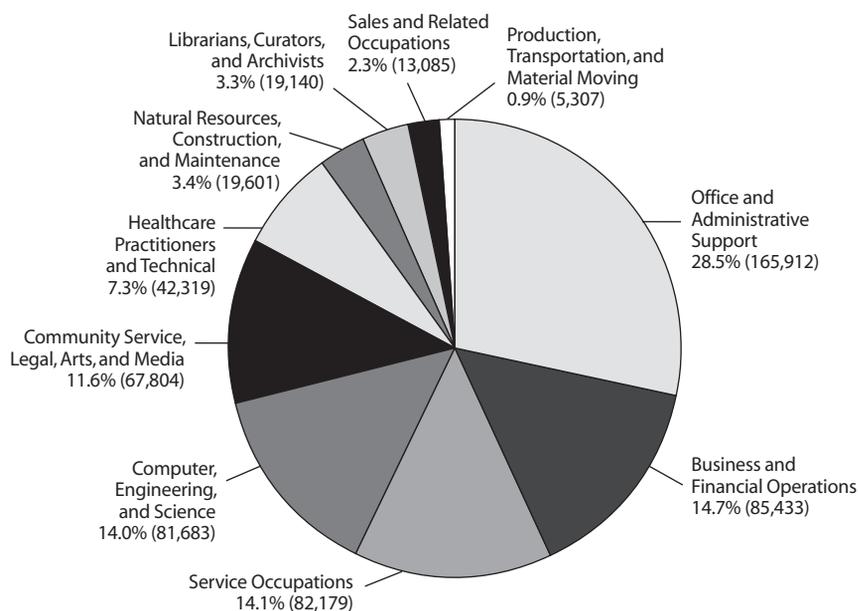
At private institutions (Figure 3), including non-profit and for-profit colleges (total

employees = 582,463), office and administrative support were 165,912 or 29 percent of all employees; followed by business and financial operations (85,433 or 15 percent); service occupations (82,179 or 14 percent); computer, engineering, and science (81,683 or 14 percent); community service, legal, arts, and media (67,804 or 12 percent); healthcare practitioners and technical (42,319 or seven percent); natural resources, construction, and maintenance (19,601 or three percent); librarians, curators, and archivists (19,140 or three percent); sales and related occupations (13,085 or two percent); and production, transportation, and material moving (5,307 or less than one percent). The shift in rank between the number of employees in service occupations and in business and financial operations in public and private institutions suggests different workforce priorities.

**Figure 2. Total Employment at Public Institutions, by Occupational Category: 2014**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2014*; and *Financial Statistics and Academic Libraries, Fiscal Year 2014*, NCES 2016-005.

**Figure 3. Total Employment at Private Institutions, by Occupational Category: 2014**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2014*; and *Financial Statistics and Academic Libraries, Fiscal Year 2014*, NCES 2016-005.

### OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES BY PART TIME STATUS, INSTITUTIONAL TYPE, AND CONTROL

Table 2 breaks down the number of staff members by institutional type (two- and four-year) and by control (public, private).<sup>14</sup> Of the 257,592 part-time ESPs, 58,291 and 198,301 work in public and private institutions respectively. There are 57,589 and 103,880 staff members in public two- and four-year institutions, and 702 and 94,521 employees in private two- and four-year institutions.

The office and administrative support category shows the largest number of part-time ESPs 84,176 (33 percent). The proportions in the other categories, in descending order are: service occupations (41,210 or 16.1 percent); community service, legal, arts, and media (32,359 or 12.6 percent); computer, engineering, and science (32,219 or 12.5 percent); business and financial operations (29,811 or 11.6 percent);

healthcare practitioners and technical (21,769 or eight percent); librarians, curators, and archivists (6,276 or two percent); natural resources, construction, and maintenance (4,268 or 1.9 percent); production, transportation, and material moving (3,271 or 1.3 percent); and sales and related occupations (2,233 or one percent).

### LIVING WAGES PER HOUR BY REGION AND STATE

Wages and salaries may vary within states, regions, counties, and by occupational categories. So reporting hourly wages by region and state can be challenging. Table 3 reports minimum hourly wages in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The tables also report hourly wages for a single adult, a single adult with one child, two adults, and two adults with one child. All values are *per adult in a family*.<sup>15</sup>

The average minimum wage for the nine states in the northeast region is \$8.38 per hour

**Table 2. Number of Two- and Four-Year Part-Time ESP Staff, by Institutional Control: 2014**

ESP Occupation	Total Part-Time ESPs		Part-Time ESPs		Public		Private	
			Two-Year	Four-Year	Two-Year	Four-Year	Two-Year	Four-Year
Librarians, Curators, and Archivists	6,276	2.4%	1,911	4,365	1,859	1,608	52	2,757
Business and Financial Operations	29,811	11.6	1,908	27,903	1,861	8,328	47	19,575
Computer, Engineering, and Science	32,219	12.5	2,787	28,432	2,780	13,242	7	15,190
Community Service, Legal Arts, and Media	32,359	12.6	7,634	24,725	7,539	10,566	95	14,159
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	21,769	8.4	1,072	20,697	1,050	12,184	22	8,513
Service Occupations	41,210	16.1	11,447	29,763	11,270	17,252	177	12,511
Sales and Related	2,233	0.8	948	1,285	934	570	14	715
Office & Administrative Support	84,176	32.6	29,110	55,066	28,849	36,147	261	18,919
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	4,268	1.9	1,013	3,255	994	2,327	19	928
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	3,271	1.3	461	2,810	453	1,656	8	1,154
Total Part-Time ESPs	257,592		58,291	198,301	57,589	103,880	702	94,521

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2014; and Financial Statistics and Academic Libraries, Fiscal Year 2014*, Table 3, NCES 2016-005.

(\$17,430 annually), and the regional hourly wage ranges from \$7.25 to \$9.15 per hour (Table 3). The average hourly living wage for one adult is \$11.62 per hour (\$24,170); the range (r) is \$10.23 to \$13.10. A household with one adult and one child would receive \$25.41 per hour (\$50,981) with a range of \$21.45 to \$27.16. A unit with two adults earns \$9.15 per hour or \$19,032 annually (r=\$8.33 to \$9.94). The figure for two adults with one child is \$13.48 per hour or \$28,038 annually (r= \$11.91 to \$14.83), while a family of two adults and two children would receive \$16.00 per hour or \$33,280 annually (r=\$14.53 to \$18.46).

Pennsylvania and New Hampshire have the lowest minimum wage in the northeast region at \$7.25 per hour. Pennsylvania has the lowest household living wages: \$10.23 for one adult, \$21.45 for one adult and one child, \$8.33 for two adults, \$11.91 for two adults with one child, and \$14.53 for two adults and two children. Connecticut and Vermont have the highest minimum wage, \$9.15 per hour. The household living wage in Connecticut for one adult is \$12.12, one adult and one child is \$26.41,

two adults is \$9.53, two adults with one child is \$14.44, and two adults and two children is \$16.89.

The midwest region includes 12 states with an average minimum wage of \$7.83 per hour (\$16,286 annually). The regional hourly wage ranges from \$7.25 to \$9.00 per hour. The average hourly living wage for one adult is \$10.05 (\$20,904) with a range from \$9.54 to \$11.45. A household with one adult and one child shows a wage of \$21.67 per hour (\$45,074) with a range (r) from \$19.87 to \$24.11. The wage in a two-adult household is \$8.46 per hour or \$17,597 annually (r=\$8.08 to \$9.43), two adults with one child is \$12.03 per hour or \$25,022 annually (r=\$11.09 to \$13.26), and for two adults and two children is \$14.55 per hour or \$30,264 annually (r=\$13.23 to \$16.39). Five states in the region have a minimum wage at \$7.25 per hour. South Dakota, with a higher minimum wage (\$8.50), reports the lowest household living wages. The living wage for one adult is \$9.54, one adult and one child is \$19.87, two adults is \$8.32, two adults with one child is \$11.09, and two adults and two children is \$13.23. The state

with the highest minimum wage is Minnesota at \$9.00 per hour. The household living wage for one adult is \$10.68, one adult and one child is \$23.37, two adults is \$8.86, two adults with one child is \$12.91, and two adults and two children is \$15.67. Illinois has a lower minimum wage of \$8.25, but the living wages by the various households in the state run higher than Minnesota.

The southern region includes 16 states plus the District of Columbia. The average hour minimum wage for the region is \$7.66 (\$15,933 annually) with an hourly range from \$7.25 to \$10.50. The average hourly living wage for one adult is \$10.83 per hour (\$22,526) with a regional range from \$9.50 to \$14.95. A household with one adult and one child will receive \$22.32 per hour (\$46,426) with a range (r) from \$19.71 to \$31.40. Two adults receive \$8.80 per hour or \$18,304 annually (r=8.02 to 10.80). The average wage for two adults with one child is \$12.34 per hour or \$25,667 annually (r=\$11.05 to \$16.90), and for two adults and two children is \$14.57 per hour or \$30,306 annually (r=\$12.80 to \$20.61). In this region, 11 states show a minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Arkansas has the lowest living wage for one adult at \$9.50, one adult and one child at \$19.71, for two adults at \$8.02, and for two adults with one child at \$11.05. Tennessee has the lowest living wage for two adults and two children, at \$12.80. The District of Columbia has the highest minimum wage in this region, at \$10.50 per hour. The household living wage for one adult is \$14.95, one adult and one child is \$31.40, two adults is \$10.80, two adults with one child is \$16.90, and two adults and two children is \$20.61.

The west includes 13 states with an average minimum wage of \$8.16 per hour (\$16,973 annually) and a regional hourly range from \$7.25 to \$9.47. The average hourly living wage for one adult is \$11.04 (\$22,963) with a regional range from \$9.89 to \$14.23. A household with one adult and one child is \$23.56 per hour (\$49,005) with a range (r) from \$20.52

to \$28.52. The living wage for two adults is \$9.11 per hour or \$18,949 annually (r=\$8.41 to \$10.89), two adults with one child is \$13.07 per hour or \$27,186 annually (r=\$11.50 to \$15.58), and for two adults and two children is \$15.75 per hour or \$32,760 annually (r=\$13.80 to \$19.12). In this region, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah show a minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Idaho has the lowest living wage for one adult at \$9.89 followed by Wyoming at \$10.03. Idaho and Wyoming have the lowest hourly wage for one adult and one child at \$21.51 and \$20.52, respectively, both have the lowest for two adults at \$8.46 and \$8.41, two adults with one child at \$12.07 and \$11.50, and the lowest for two adults and two children at \$14.55, \$13.80, along with \$14.30 for New Mexico. Washington has the highest minimum wage at \$9.47 per hour and Hawai'i has the highest living wages for one adult at \$14.23, for one adult and one child at \$28.52, two adults at \$10.89, two adults with one child at \$15.58, and for two adults and two children at \$19.12.

## CONCLUSION

Most Americans are no longer in the middle class; they are now the minority income group, numbering 120.8 million. Another 121.3 million now live in either upper- or lower-income households.<sup>16</sup> The total number of ESPs by occupational category decreased from 2012 to 2014, leaving little optimism for ESP growth or sustainability. The number of part-time employees has increased, but not enough to make up the decrease in full-time employees. Moreover, the annual salary based on average minimum wage for all states is \$16,655, compared to an annual poverty rate of \$18,850, and an annual living wage salary of \$26,478 for two adults and one child in a household. Salaries are therefore insufficient by 12 percent and 37 percent respectively. Our society is allowing our hard working ESPs and their families to slip into poverty.

**Table 3. Minimum and Living Hourly Wages, by Region and State: 2016**

ESP Occupations, by State	Minimum Wage	Living Wage One Adult	Living Wage One Adult and One Child	Living Wage Two Adults	Living Wage Two Adults and One Child	Living Wage Two Adults and Two Children
<b>Northeast Region</b>						
CT	\$ 9.15	\$ 12.12	\$ 26.41	\$ 9.53	\$ 14.44	\$ 16.89
MA	9.00	12.30	26.16	9.44	14.26	16.35
ME	7.50	10.38	22.19	8.68	12.36	14.76
NH	7.25	11.16	23.81	8.84	13.09	15.15
NJ	8.38	12.64	25.38	9.67	13.93	16.08
NY	8.75	13.10	27.16	9.94	14.83	18.46
PA	7.25	10.23	21.45	8.33	11.91	14.53
RI	9.00	11.17	24.26	8.89	13.35	16.08
VT	9.15	11.49	23.80	9.04	13.15	15.67
Hourly Mean	8.38	11.62	25.41	9.15	13.48	16.00
(Annual Mean)	(\$ 17,430)	(\$ 24,170)	(\$ 50,981)	(\$ 19,032)	(\$ 28,038)	(\$ 33,280)
<b>Midwest Region</b>						
IA	7.25	9.78	21.40	8.27	11.92	14.37
IL	8.25	11.45	24.11	9.43	13.26	16.39
IN	7.25	9.92	21.10	8.34	11.74	13.80
KS	7.25	9.71	21.32	8.39	11.86	13.65
MI	8.15	10.05	21.71	8.39	12.05	14.44
MN	9.00	10.68	23.37	8.86	12.91	15.67
MO	7.65	10.02	20.85	8.48	11.64	13.76
ND	7.25	10.05	21.24	8.26	11.80	14.25
NE	8.00	9.63	21.21	8.29	11.83	14.72
OH	8.10	9.58	20.87	8.08	11.62	14.14
SD	8.50	9.54	19.87	8.32	11.09	13.23
WI	7.25	10.20	22.94	8.46	12.69	16.16
Hourly Mean	7.83	10.05	21.67	8.46	12.03	14.55
(Annual Mean)	(\$ 16,286)	(\$ 20,904)	(\$ 45,074)	(\$ 17,597)	(\$ 25,022)	(\$ 30,264)

**Table 3. Minimum and Living Hourly Wages, by Region and State: 2016 (continued)**

ESP Occupations, by State	Minimum Wage	Living Wage One Adult	Living Wage One Adult and One Child	Living Wage Two Adults	Living Wage Two Adults and One Child	Living Wage Two Adults and Two Children
<b>South Region</b>						
AL	\$ 7.25	\$ 10.17	\$ 20.52	\$ 8.36	\$ 11.44	\$ 13.99
AR	7.50	9.50	19.71	8.02	11.05	13.52
DC	10.50	14.95	31.40	10.80	16.90	20.61
DE	8.25	11.75	24.01	9.39	13.19	15.40
FL	8.05	10.89	23.78	8.99	13.02	15.25
GA	7.25	10.88	21.90	8.76	12.14	14.37
KY	7.25	9.81	20.67	8.09	11.52	14.22
LA	7.25	10.24	21.18	8.53	11.76	13.27
MD	8.25	13.05	26.58	10.18	14.46	16.66
MS	7.25	9.80	20.02	8.46	11.19	12.84
NC	7.25	10.53	21.93	8.64	12.15	14.42
OK	7.25	9.74	20.57	8.25	11.46	13.69
SC	7.25	10.50	20.48	8.63	11.44	13.20
TN	7.25	9.81	20.02	8.29	11.14	12.80
TX	7.25	10.15	21.56	8.54	11.90	13.78
VA	7.25	12.48	24.80	9.59	13.58	15.57
WV	8.00	9.88	20.37	8.16	11.36	14.10
Hourly Mean	7.66	10.83	22.32	8.80	12.34	14.57
(Annual Mean)	(\$ 15,933)	(\$ 22,526)	(\$ 46,426)	(\$ 18,304)	(\$ 25,667)	(\$ 30,306)
<b>West Region</b>						
AK	8.75	11.57	24.35	9.27	13.41	16.27
AZ	8.05	10.38	22.67	8.73	12.62	15.64
CA	9.00	12.62	26.83	10.20	14.74	16.85
CO	8.23	11.33	24.97	9.33	13.77	16.25
HI	7.75	14.23	28.52	10.89	15.58	19.12
ID	7.25	9.89	21.51	8.46	12.07	14.55
MT	8.05	10.08	22.05	8.51	12.34	15.60
NM	7.50	10.24	21.74	8.74	12.16	14.30
NV	8.25	10.44	23.04	8.76	12.75	15.94
OR	9.25	10.92	23.68	9.15	13.17	15.57
UT	7.25	10.56	22.18	8.78	12.38	15.19
WA	9.47	11.23	24.26	9.19	13.36	15.61
WY	7.25	10.03	20.52	8.41	11.50	13.80
Hourly Mean	8.16	11.04	23.56	9.11	13.07	15.75
(Annual Mean)	(\$ 16,973)	(\$ 22,963)	(\$ 49,005)	(\$ 18,949)	(\$ 27,186)	(\$ 32,760)

Sources: Region defined by the U.S. Census Report, 2014. Minimum and living wage calculations by MIT, 2016. Regional hourly and annual means calculated by authors.

Note: The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an *individual* must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full-time (2,080 hours per year). All values are *per adult in a family* unless otherwise noted. The state minimum wage is the same for all individuals, regardless of how many dependents they may have. The poverty rate is typically quoted as gross annual income. We have converted it to an hourly wage—save for “annual mean” row for each region—for the sake of comparison.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Bauman, 2016.
- <sup>2</sup> Rosser, 2016.
- <sup>3</sup> DeNavas-Walt and Proctor, 2015; Rosser, 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Hulme and Shepherd, 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> Nadeau and Open Data Nation, Inc., 2016; Nadeau, Open Data Nation, Inc., and Glasmeier, 2016; Glasmeier, 2016.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> IPEDS, 2012-13. Information on the “other teaching and instructional support” category is unavailable.
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Education, 2015.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Guarria and Wang, 2011; Hazen, 2014.
- <sup>14</sup> See the Living Wage Calculator on the MIT website for additional scenarios and variations.
- <sup>15</sup> Geewax, 2015.
- <sup>16</sup> Henderson, 2015.

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