**Fiscal Facts: Wisconsin’s Job Market Tilts Toward Higher-Wage, Higher-Education Occupations**

A decade after the Great Recession slammed the brakes on the U.S. economy, employment in Wisconsin has recovered and surged almost 72,000 jobs higher than its pre-recession peak.

However, that resurgence has not been uniform across sectors of the state’s economy, with higher-paying occupations requiring more education generally growing much more than lower-paying ones requiring less education.

A recent Wisconsin Policy Forum report analyzed 2018 occupational employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics going back to May 2008, when total employment last peaked in Wisconsin prior to the recession. This included a look at statewide trends among the 22 major occupational groups tracked by the bureau.

The overall picture is clear: employment in the 11 highest-paying occupational groups — which each pay median wages of at least $42,000 annually — has grown by a combined 114,870 statewide during that time. Meanwhile, employment in the 11 lowest-paying occupational groups paying median wages of less than $42,000 has declined by a combined 42,990.

Four of the five occupational groups that added the most jobs pay median annual wages of at least $60,000: business and financial operations, computer and mathematical, healthcare practitioners and technical, and management.

These occupations also typically require higher levels of education and training than many of the occupations in decline. One notable exception was personal care and service occupations, which have shown the most growth overall and pay relatively low wages.

On the other end of the spectrum, employment has fallen by the largest numbers in five occupational groups that each pay median wages under $36,000 annually. These include office and administrative support workers, sales and related jobs, building and grounds cleaning and maintenance positions, healthcare support jobs, and transportation and materials employees.

As our previous research has pointed out, Wisconsin lags other states in attracting the most educated workers, who tend to be more mobile than other populations. Since attracting college graduates from other states seems to be a bigger problem for Wisconsin than retaining those who grow up here, strategies for addressing that issue are likely needed.

This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at wispolicyforum.org.