Interior Design and Merchandising

Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties)

This workforce demand report uses state and federal job projection data developed before the economic impact of COVID-19. The COE is monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available. Please consult with local employers to understand their current employment needs.

Summary

- Community college interior design and merchandising programs provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities that prepare students for employment in the bachelor's degree-level interior designers occupation.
- Interior designers are projected to have 58 annual job openings through 2025, increasing employment by 7%.
- The median hourly earnings for this occupation are $30.17 per hour, above the regional $24.36 per hour self-sustainable wage standard for a single adult with one child.
- Over the last three academic years, one community college issued 22 annual average awards in interior design and merchandising programs.
- The COE cautiously recommends expanding interior design and merchandising programs. See the [recommendation section](#) for further detail.

Introduction

California Community College interior design and merchandising (TOP 1302.00) programs prepare students for employment through instruction related design and its functional application to the environment, housing, furnishings, accessories, and equipment to provide commercial and residential environments that meet the psychological, sociological, emotional, and psychical needs of the users and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the general public (Taxonomy of Programs, 2012). The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by the interior design and merchandising program leads to the interior designers occupation.

Interior Designers (SOC 27-1025)

Plan, design, and furnish the internal space of rooms or buildings. Design interior environments or create physical layouts that are practical, aesthetic, and conducive to the intended purposes. May specialize in a particular field, style, or phase of interior design.

Sample job titles: Decorating Consultant, Designer, Interior Design Consultant, Interior Design Coordinator, Interior Designer

Entry-Level Educational Requirement: Bachelor's degree

Training Requirement: None

Work Experience: None

Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 27%

Job Counts and Projections

In 2020, there were 565 interior designer jobs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. Interior designers employment is projected to increase by 17% through 2025 and is expected to have 58 annual job openings. Job openings are the combination of new jobs and replacement job opportunities (e.g., retirements and existing workers leaving the occupation). Exhibit 1 displays the job counts, five-year projected job growth, job openings, and the share of incumbent workers age 55 years and greater in the region.

Exhibit 1: Five-year projections for interior designers, 2020-2025

Occupation	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	5-Yr % Change (New Jobs)	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
Interior Designers	565	603	7%	288	58	28%

Source: Emsi 2021.3

Exhibit 2 shows the number of job ads posted during the last 12 months and the statewide average time filling each occupation. Over the previous 12 months, there were 27 job ads for interior designers in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. This job advertisement search was expanded to the state level to ensure the job advertisement information provided in this report is generalizable. On average, employers in California fill online job advertisements for interior design workers in 41 days.

Exhibit 2: Job ads and time to fill

| Occupation	Job Ads	Statewide Average Time to Fill (Days)
Interior Designers	1,377	41

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Earnings and Benefits

Community colleges should ensure their training programs lead to employment opportunities that provide self-sustainable income. The University of Washington estimates that a self-sufficient hourly rate for a single adult with one school-age child is $24.36 per hour or $51,452 annually in Riverside County; $23.73 per hour or $50,119 annually in San Bernardino County (Pearce, 2021). For this study, the higher hourly earnings requirement in Riverside County is adopted as the self-sufficiency standard for the two-county region.

Exhibit 3 displays the hourly earnings for interior designers. The median hourly earnings for interior designers surpass the regional self-sufficiency standard, indicating that the top 50% of workers earn a self-sustainable wage.

Exhibit 3: Hourly earnings by percentile for interior designers
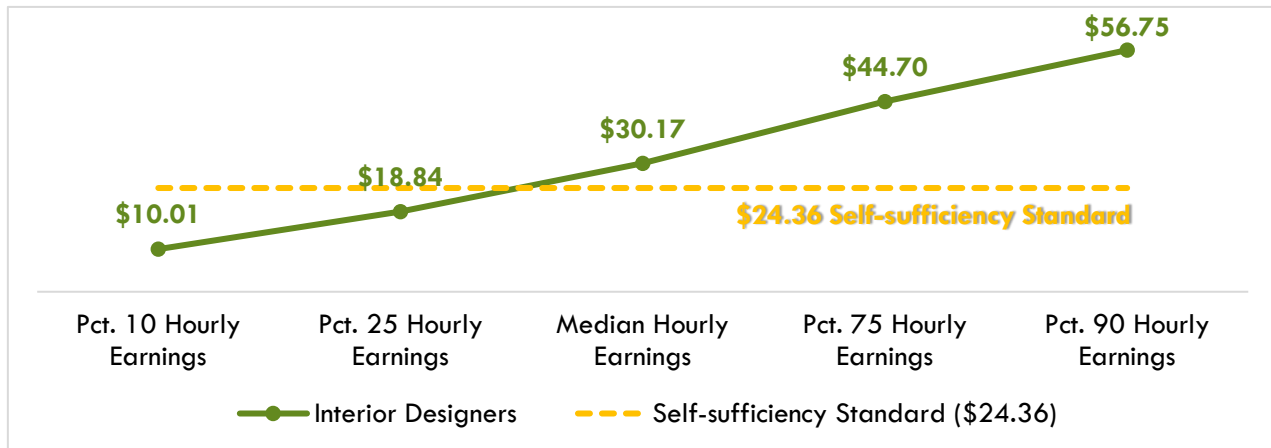
Source: Emsi 2021.3

According to the California Labor Market Information Division's occupational guides, benefits for interior designers at large firms generally include paid holidays, vacation, sick leave, health insurance, and retirement plans. Self-employed interior designers must provide their own benefits and retirement (Detailed Occupational Guides, 2021).

Advertised Salary from Online Job Ads

Exhibit 4 displays online job ad salary data for interior designers over the last 12 months in California. Online job ad salary information reveals that employers are willing to pay interior designers $59,000 annually, above the region's $51,452 annual ($24.36 hourly) self-sufficiency standard. Consider the salary information with caution since only 57% (780 out of 1,377) of online job postings for this occupation provided salary information. The salary figures are prorated to reflect full-time, annual wage status.

Exhibit 4: Advertised salary information

Occupations	Real-Time Salary Information					
	Number of job postings	Less than $35,000	$35,000 to $49,999	$50,000 to $74,999	More than $75,000	Average Annual Salary
Interior Designers	780	7%	32%	41%	20%	$59,000

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Employers, Skills, Education, and Work Experience

Exhibit 5 displays the employers that posted the most job ads during the last 12 months in California. Displaying employer names provides some insight into where students may find employment after completing a program. RH, formerly known as Restoration Hardware, posted the most job advertisements for interior designers in California.

Exhibit 5: Employers posting the most job ads for interior designers

Occupation	Top Employers	
Interior Designers (n=1,337)	• RH • Dunn Edwards Paint • HGA Architects & Engineers	• Stantec, Inc. • Gensler

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 6 lists a sample of specialized, employability, and software and programming skills employers seek when looking for workers to fill interior designer positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills that employers request for industry or job competency. Employability skills are foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is often referred to as "soft skills." The skills requested in job postings may be utilized to guide curriculum development.

Exhibit 6: Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads

Occupation	Specialized skills	Employability skills	Software and Programming Skills
Interior Designers (n=1,328)	• Budgeting • Scheduling • Space Planning • Project Management • Project Design	• Creativity • Organizational Skills • Communication Skills • Teamwork/Collaboration • Detail-Oriented	• AutoCAD • Adobe Photoshop • SketchUp • Microsoft Office • Adobe InDesign

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 7 displays the typical entry-level education, educational attainment, and minimum advertised education requirements for interior designers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 27% of incumbent workers in this field hold a community college-level of educational attainment; "some college, no degree" and an "associate degree." Most employers (81%) seeking interior designers workers were looking for a candidate with a bachelor's degree. Community college considering interior design and merchandising should partner with a four-year insititution to create a transfer program.

Exhibit 7: Typical entry-level education, educational attainment, and minimum advertised education requirements

Occupation	Typical Entry-Level Education Requirement	CC-Level Educational Attainment*	Real-Time Minimum Advertised Education Requirement			
			Number of Job Ads	High school or vocational training	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
Interior Designers	Bachelor's degree	27%	979	11%	8%	81%

Source: Emsi 2021.3, Burning Glass – Labor Insights
*Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework

Exhibit 8 displays the work experience typically required and the real-time work experience requirements from employer job ads.

Exhibit 8: Work experience required and real-time work experience requirements

Occupation	Work Experience Typically Required	Real-Time Work Experience		
		Number of job postings	0 – 2 years	3 – 5 years	6+ years
Interior Designers	None	824	38%	46%	16%

Source: Emsi 2021.3, Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Programs Completions and Student Outcomes

Exhibit 9 displays student completions from interior design and merchandising (1302.00) programs over the last three academic years. Program completion and student outcome methodologies can is found in the Appendix.

Exhibit 9: 2017-20, Annual average community college awards for interior design and merchandising programs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region

TOP 1302.00 – Interior Design and Merchandising	Associate Degree	Certificate requiring 30 to < 60-semester units	Certificate requiring 16 to < 30-semester units	Total CC Annual Average Awards, Academic Years 2017-20
Chaffey	8	13	1	22
Total	**8**	**13**	**1**	**22**

Source: MIS Data Mart

California program outcome data may provide a useful insight into the likelihood of success for the proposed program. Community college student outcome information based on the selected TOP code and region is provided in Exhibit 10. Among the students exiting interior design and merchandising programs in the region, the median annual earnings were $26,348, and 50% attained a living wage. The outcome methodology is available in the appendix section of this report.

Exhibit 10: 1302.00 – Interior design and merchandising strong workforce program outcomes

Strong Workforce Program Metrics: 1302.00 – Interior Design and Merchandising Academic Year 2018-19, unless noted otherwise	Inland Empire/Desert Region	California
Unduplicated count of enrolled students (2019-20)	126	4,125
Completed 9+ career education units in one year (2019-20)	39%	35%
Perkins Economically disadvantaged students	87%	64%
Students who attained a noncredit workforce milestone in a year (2019-20)	-	44%
Students who earned a degree, certificate, or attained apprenticeship (2019-20)	14	235
Transferred to a four-year institution (transfers)	-	152
Job closely related to the field of study (2017-18)	-	74%
Median annual earnings (all exiters)	$26,348	$29,012
Median change in earnings (all exiters)	13%	14%
Attained a living wage (completers and skills-builders)	50%	39%

Sources: LaunchBoard Community College Pipeline and Strong Workforce Program Metrics

Recommendation for Interior Design Programs

Community college interior design and merchandising programs provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities that prepare students for employment in the bachelor's degree-level interior designers occupation. Interior designers are expected to have 58 annual job openings and increase employment by 7% over the next five years. The median hourly earnings for interior designers are $30.17 per hour, above the $24.36 per hour self-sustainable wage standard. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 27% of incumbent workers in this field hold a community college-level of educational attainment; "some college, no degree" and an "associate degree." Most employers (81%) seeking interior designers workers in online job advertisements were looking for a candidate with a bachelor's degree.

Regional community college interior design and merchandising programs have issued 22 awards annually over the last three academic years. Among the students exiting interior design and merchandising programs in the region, the median annual earnings were $26,348, and 50% attained a living wage.

The COE cautiously recommends expanding interior design and merchandising. While regional demand exceeds the supply from community colleges, there are not many job opportunities for these workers in the region. Additionally, community college program completers will likely need to transfer to a four-year educational institution to obtain a bachelor's degree before entering employment. Colleges considering this

program should partner with four-year educational institutions and local employers to ensure their training provides the skills needed to transfer to a four-year educational institution and obtain a job in this field.

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Appendix: Methodology

Exhibit 9 displays the average annual California Community College (CCC) awards conferred during the three academic years between 2017 and 2020 from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart. Awards are the combined total of associate degrees and certificates issued during the timeframe, divided by three in this case to calculate an annual average. This is done to minimize the effect of atypical variations that might be present in a single year.

Community college student outcome information is from LaunchBoard and based on the selected TOP code and region. These metrics are based on records submitted to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) by community colleges, which come from self-reported student information from CCC Apply and the National Student Clearinghouse. Employment and earnings metrics are sourced from California's Employment Development Department's Unemployment Insurance database records. When available, outcomes for completers are reported to demonstrate the impact that earning a degree or certificate can have on employment and earnings. For more information on the types of students included in each metric, please see the web link for LaunchBoard's Strong Workforce Program Metrics Data Element Dictionary in the References section (LaunchBoard, 2021a). Finally, employment in a job closely related to the field of study comes from self-reported student responses on the CTE Employment Outcomes Survey (CTEOS), administered by Santa Rosa Junior College (LaunchBoard, 2021a).

Job postings data is limited to the information provided by employers and the ability of artificial intelligence search engines to identify this information. Additionally, preliminary calculations by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that "just 30 to 40 percent of openings for candidates with some college or an associate degree, and only 40 to 60 percent of openings for high school diploma holders appear online" (Carnevale et al., 2014). Online job postings often do not reveal employers' hiring intentions; it is unknown if employers plan to hire one or multiple workers from a single online job posting or if they are collecting resumes for future hiring needs. A closed job posting may not be the result of a hired worker.

Table 1. 2020 to 2025 job growth, wages, entry-level education, training, and work experience required for interior designers

Occupation (SOC)	2020 Jobs	5-Year Change (New Jobs)	5-Year % Change (New Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Entry-Experienced Hourly Wage (10th to 90th percentile)	Median Hourly Wage (50th percentile)	Average Annual Earnings	Entry-Level Education & On-The-Job-Training	Work Experience Required
Interior Designers (27-1025)	565	38	7%	58	$10.01 to $56.75	$30.17	$75,500	Bachelor's degree & None	None

Source: Emsi 2021.3