

Graphic Designers

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

October 2026

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
 Do Not Proceed with New Program	 	 	☐ Doctorate Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☒ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Associate Degree ☐ Some College or Certificate ☐ HS Diploma or Equivalent ☐ Less Than a HS Diploma ☐ Apprenticeship
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING	NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS	
 	HIGH 	HIGH 	

The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) developed this brief to assist the region's community colleges with strategic planning and program development. According to available data, Graphic Designers in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 230 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and 13 institutions supply 958 awards for this occupation, suggesting that there is an oversupply in the labor market. Entry-level wages are below the living wage; however, median wages are above the living wage. This brief recommends that colleges do not proceed with a new program for this occupation and supports a program modification because 1) there is an estimated oversupply in San Diego; 2) this occupation's entry-level wages are below the living wage.

Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational code in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) ¹ system:

Graphic Designers (SOC 27-1024): Design or create graphics to meet specific commercial or promotional needs, such as packaging, displays, or logos. May use a variety of mediums to achieve artistic or decorative effects. Sample reported job titles include:

- Visual Designer
- Graphic Artist
- Production Artist
- Technical Illustrator
- Publications Designer
- Online Producer
- Graphic Design Coordinator
- Designer
- Brand Designer

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2025 and 2030, Graphic Designers are projected to increase by **two** net jobs or **less than one percent** (Exhibit 1). Employers in San Diego County will need to hire **230** workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example.

Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Graphic Designers (2025-2030)²

Occupational Title	2025 Jobs	2030 Jobs	2025-2030 Net Jobs Change	2025-2030 % Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Graphic Designers	3,162	3,164	2	0%	230

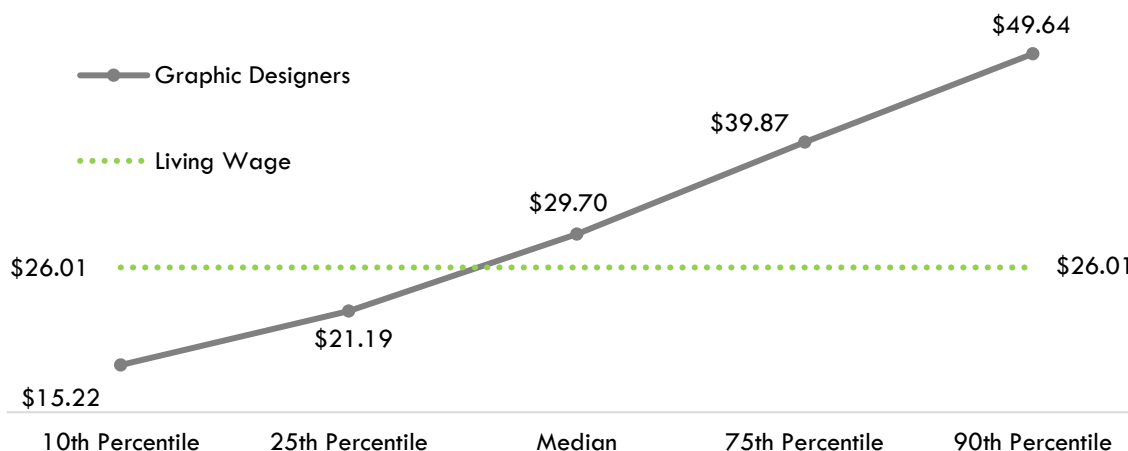
¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. [bls.gov/soc](https://www.bls.gov/soc)

²Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Earnings

According to traditional³ labor market information (LMI), Graphic Designers have entry-level hourly earnings of \$21.19—or \$44,075.20 annually⁴; this is below the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 2).⁵ The median wage of \$29.70 per hour is above the living wage.

Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings⁶ for Graphic Designers in San Diego County⁷



³ Traditional LMI is generally historical data captured by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) or the California Employment Development Department (EDD). It does not account for recent technological, economic, or legislative changes that may affect labor market demand and wages.

⁴ Annualized salaries assume a full-time position with 2,080 work hours. Multiplying the hourly wage by 2,080 yields the annual salary.

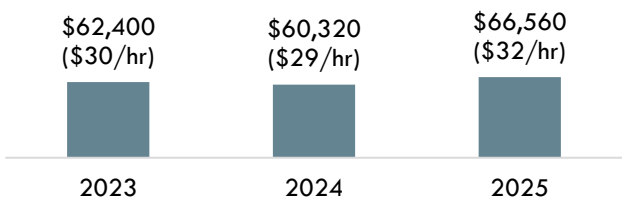
⁵ Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024. selfsufficiencystandard.org/california

⁶ 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

⁷ Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

In online job postings, employers advertised between \$29 and \$32 per hour between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 for *Graphic Designers* in San Diego County (Exhibit 3).⁸ This suggests that employer-advertised wages in recent years are higher than traditional BLS estimates.

Exhibit 3: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for Graphic Designers in San Diego County (2023-2025)*



*Hourly wages are rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)), *Graphic Designers* have a national typical entry-level education of a bachelor's degree (Exhibit 4).⁹

Exhibit 4: National Educational Attainment for Graphic Designers¹⁰

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Graphic Designers	Bachelor's degree

⁸Lightcast Q3 2026; Job Posting Analytics, January 2023 through December 2025.

⁹Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹⁰Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 in San Diego County most frequently listed a bachelor's degree as the minimum educational requirement for Graphic Designers; employers also listed the following certifications (Exhibit 5).¹¹

**Exhibit 5: Top Certifications for Graphic Designers in San Diego County in Online Job Postings
(2023-2025)¹²**

1. N/A

Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. There are **five** TOP codes and **seven** CIP codes related to Graphic Designers (Exhibit 6).¹³

Exhibit 6: Related TOP and CIP Codes for Graphic Designers

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 0614.00	Digital Media
TOP 0614.30	Website Design and Development
TOP 0614.60	Computer Graphics and Digital Imagery
TOP 1009.00	Applied Design
TOP 1030.00	Graphic Art and Design
CIP 50.0102	Digital Arts
CIP 11.0801	Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design
CIP 11.0803	Computer Graphics
CIP 50.0404	Industrial and Product Design
CIP 50.0401	Design and Visual Communications, General
CIP 50.0402	Commercial and Advertising Art
CIP 50.0409	Graphic Design

¹¹Lightcast Q3 2026; Job Posting Analytics, January 2023 through December 2025.

¹²Lightcast Q3 2026; Job Posting Analytics, January 2023 through December 2025.

¹³Community college awards: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart, PY2022-23 to PY2024-25. Other institution awards: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, PY2021-22 to PY2023-24.

According to TOP data, seven community colleges supply the region with awards for this occupation, Cuyamaca College, MiraCosta College, Palomar College, San Diego City College, San Diego College of Continuing Education, San Diego Mesa College and Southwestern College. According to CIP data, six non-community-college institutions supply the region with awards: Ashford University, Newschool of Architecture and Design, Platt College-San Diego, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego Global Knowledge University and University of California-San Diego also supply awards. Combined, 13 institutions confer an average of 958 awards annually across the selected codes (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7: Number of Awards Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, PY2021-22 to PY2024-25

Average

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY22-23 to PY24-25)	Other Institutions 3-Yr Average Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Total Average Supply (PY21-22 to PY24-25)
0614.00	Digital Media	168	0	168
	MiraCosta	8	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	8	0	
	Palomar	12	0	
	• Associate degree	5	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	1	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	2	0	
	SD College of Cont. Ed.	148	0	
	• Noncredit 288 < 480 hrs	29	0	
	• Noncredit 192 < 288 hrs	32	0	
	• Noncredit 144 < 192 hrs	9	0	
	• Noncredit 96 < 144 hrs	78	0	
0614.30	Website Design and Development	358	0	358
	Cuyamaca	5	0	
	• Associate degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	1	0	

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY22-23 to PY24-25)	Other Institutions 3-Yr Average Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Total Average Supply (PY21-22 to PY24-25)
	MiraCosta	8	0	
	• Associate degree	3	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	4	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	1	0	
	Palomar	8	0	
	• Associate degree	3	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	4	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	1	0	
	SD College of Cont. Ed.	311	0	
	• Noncredit 288 < 480 hrs	7	0	
	• Noncredit 144 < 192 hrs	53	0	
	• Noncredit 96 < 144 hrs	56	0	
	• Noncredit 48 < 96 hrs	141	0	
	• Noncredit < 48 hrs	54	0	
	San Diego Mesa	13	0	
	• Associate degree	10	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	3	0	
	Southwestern	13	0	
	• Associate degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	1	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	1	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	9	0	
0614.60	Computer Graphics and Digital Imagery	182	0	182
	MiraCosta	33	0	
	• Associate degree	16	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	17	0	

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY22-23 to PY24-25)	Other Institutions 3-Yr Average Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Total Average Supply (PY21-22 to PY24-25)
	Palomar	10	0	
	• Associate degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	5	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	1	0	
	SD College of Cont. Ed.	139	0	
	• Noncredit 192 < 288 hrs	4	0	
	• Noncredit 96 < 144 hrs	118	0	
	• Noncredit 48 < 96 hrs	17	0	
1009.00	Applied Design	1	0	1
	MiraCosta	1	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	1	0	
1030.00	Graphic Art and Design	115	0	115
	Cuyamaca	11	0	
	• Associate degree	7	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	4	0	
	Palomar	8	0	
	• Associate degree	7	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	1	0	
	San Diego City	81	0	
	• Associate degree	35	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	34	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	12	0	
	Southwestern College	15	0	
	• Associate degree	15	0	
50.0102	Digital Arts	0	0	0
11.0801	Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design	0	84	84
	Ashford University	0	3	
	• Bachelor's degree	0	3	

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY22-23 to PY24-25)	Other Institutions 3-Yr Average Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Total Average Supply (PY21-22 to PY24-25)
	San Diego Global Knowledge University	0	81	
	• Award < 1 academic yr	0	81	
11.0803	Computer Graphics	0	0	0
50.0404	Industrial and Product Design	0	5	5
	Newschool of Architecture and Design	0	5	
	• Bachelor's degree	0	5	
50.0401	Design and Visual Communications, General	0	20	20
	University of California-San Diego	0	20	
	• Bachelor's degree	0	20	
50.0402	Commercial and Advertising Art	0	0	0
50.0409	Graphic Design	0	25	25
	Platt College-San Diego	0	8	
	• Associate degree	0	8	
	Point Loma Nazarene University	0	17	
	• Bachelor's degree	0	17	
			Total	958

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply¹⁴ suggests an **oversupply** for Graphic Designers in San Diego County, with 230 annual openings and 958 awards. Comparatively, California has 2,915 annual openings and 4,796 awards, also suggesting an **oversupply** statewide (Exhibit 8).¹⁵

Exhibit 8: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Total Annual Average Supply)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	230	958	-728
California	2,915	4,796	-1,881

Please note: This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

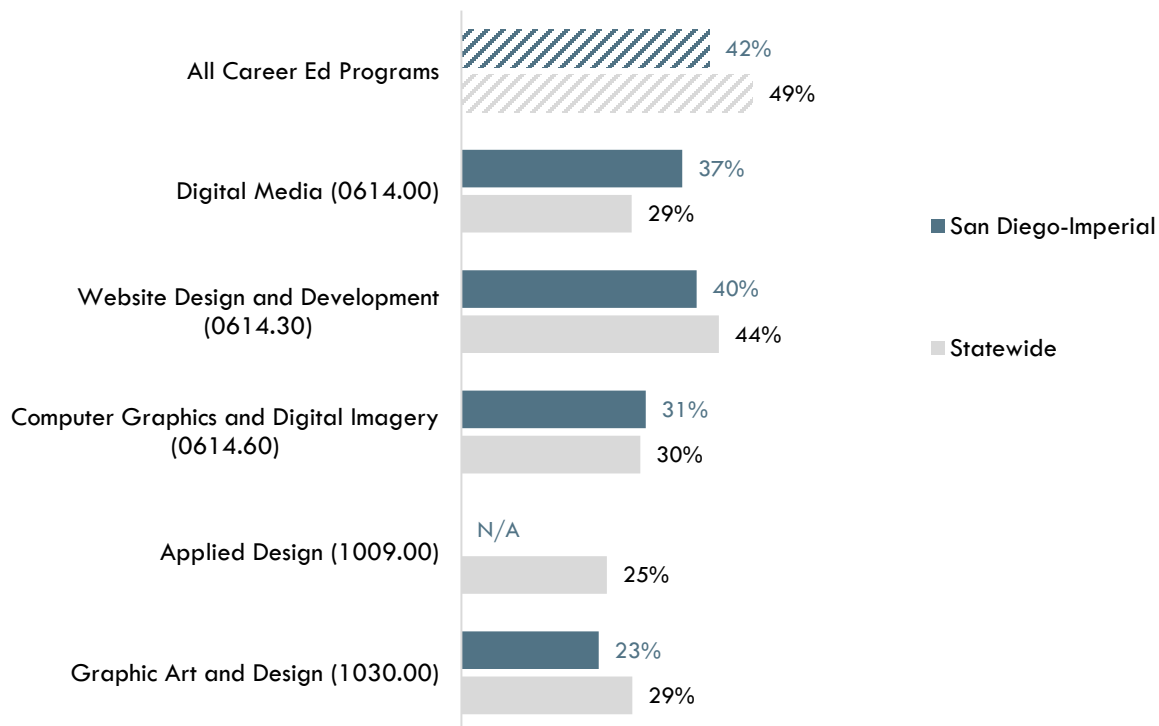
¹⁴ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

¹⁵ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coeccc.net/our-resources.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 23 to 40 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing a program related to *Graphic Designers*, compared to 25 to 44 percent statewide and 49 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 9).¹⁶

Exhibit 9: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage, PY2023-24¹⁷



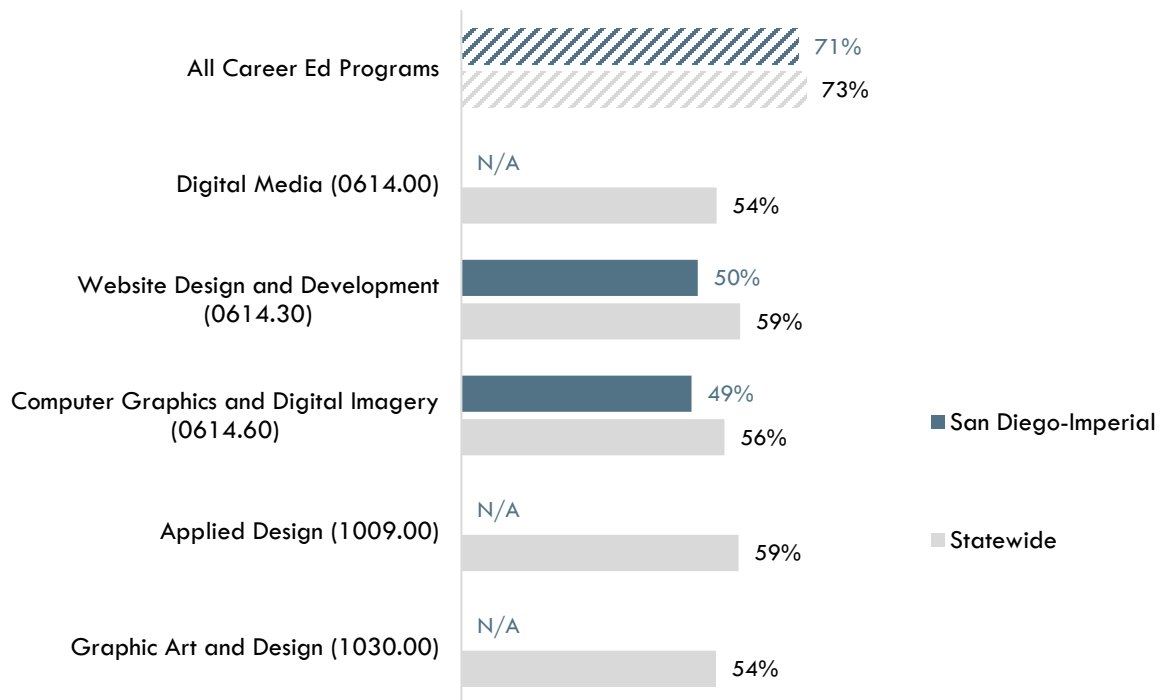
"N/A" indicates data unavailable in the supplied workbook

¹⁶California Community Colleges DataVista. datavista.cccco.edu. Accessed 5/22/26.

¹⁷Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2023-24. The measure reports the percentage of exiting completers and skills builders who attained a living wage. Accessed 5/22/26.

According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 49 to 50 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a program related to *Graphic Designers*, compared to 54 to 59 percent statewide and 73 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).¹⁸

Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study, PY2022-23¹⁹



"N/A" indicates data unavailable in the supplied workbook

¹⁸California Community Colleges DataVista. datavista.cccco.edu. Accessed 5/22/26.

¹⁹Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2022-23. The measure reports the percentage of respondents working in a job closely related to their field of study. Accessed 5/22/26.

Employers

Between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025, the top five employers for Graphic Designers in San Diego County were [Real Marketing](#), [C Squared Social](#), [Jakks Pacific](#), [University of California-San Diego](#) and [Callaway Golf Company](#) (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11: Top Employers for Graphic Designers in San Diego County²⁰

Top Employers	
• Real Marketing • C Squared Social • Jakks Pacific • University of California-San Diego • Callaway Golf Company	• Vineyards Management Group • San Diego State University • T Shirt Mart • On Premise Products • University of California

Skills

Exhibit 12 lists the specialized, soft, and software skills most frequently requested in unique online job postings for Graphic Designers in San Diego County between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025.

Exhibit 12: Top Skills for Graphic Designers in San Diego County²¹

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
• Graphic Design • Marketing • Typography • Photography • Branding • Brand Management • Project Management • Marketing Materials • Brochures • Social Media	• Communication • Detail Oriented • Ability To Meet Deadlines • Presentations • Time Management • Sales • Organizational Skills • Innovation • Creativity • Multitasking	• Adobe Illustrator • Adobe Photoshop • Adobe InDesign • Adobe Creative Suite • Microsoft PowerPoint • Microsoft Excel • Microsoft Office • Adobe After Effects • HyperText Markup Language • Design Software

²⁰Lightcast Q3 2026; Job Posting Analytics, January 2023 through December 2025.

²¹Lightcast Q3 2026; Job Posting Analytics, January 2023 through December 2025. Skills appear in at least 10 percent of unique online job postings.

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All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. This study examines the most recent data available at the time of the analysis; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the report findings; however, neither the California Community Colleges Centers of Excellence (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.