

Continuing Education: Resources for Getting Started and Moving Forward

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The health information management (HIM) field is growing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has identified medical records and health information technicians as one of the 20 fastest growing occupations in the country, with between 12,000 to 15,000 new HIM jobs expected in the market in the next five years. While an associate degree or certification program is enough to get started as a practicing coder, there is an increasing demand for individuals with both four-year and advanced degrees. According to a recent article in *US News and World Report*, HIM now ranks among the top developing majors in the US.

Continuing education represents the next chapter for professionals at the forefront of the evolving HIM industry. A master's or bachelor's degree can open the door to new opportunities and can even lead to higher salaries commensurate with education levels. According to an internal AHIMA salary survey, HIM professionals generally earn about \$15,000 more per year for each additional degree obtained.

Learn More Online

Whether one is just starting out or looking to continue a formal education while developing an HIM career professionally, provided below are a few online resources to help research, plan, and implement the next steps. (Note: This list is not comprehensive and does not endorse any particular program.)

Health Information Careers

www.hicareers.com

Health Information Careers is AHIMA's all-in-one destination on the Web for information regarding HIM career paths, education programs, and any and all related questions. The Web site includes information and advice on picking a program, financing education, and possible career paths.

Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM)

www.cahiim.org/accredpgms.asp

The CAHIIM Web site includes an accredited program directory that allows prospective students to search using criteria based on education level, institution name, state, and method of learning (online vs. in person). The Web site also acts as a resource for details regarding the requirements for a program to meet accreditation.

Other Resources

There are a number of resources available online to aid research on continuing education considerations and next steps, as well as locating programs related to the HIM field.

PayScale

www.payscale.com

PayScale is an online resource that uses a database of employee profiles and salaries to provide users with an idea of the current job market in varying roles. By inputting factors such as job title, years of experience, and level of education, users can evaluate current and hypothetical market expectations based on personal qualifications.

FinAidwww.finaid.org

FinAid is a comprehensive online source for information on financial aid planning for higher education. The Web site is available at no charge to users, and offers advice on scholarships, loans, aid applications, and other forms of financial aid or savings.

Hack Collegewww.hackcollege.com/school-finder/

The school finder feature of the Hack College Web site is a particularly valuable resource for information on undergraduate programs related to HIM. The Web site includes statistics and quick facts regarding popular programs and trends in HIM studies. The tool lists both online and on campus programs and allows prospective students to search multiple levels of education.

The Greater Washington College Info Centerwww.collegeinfo.org/adults.pdf

This document is a good checklist for continuing education students planning a return to the formal education environment. The list outlines important areas to consider, from the availability of transfer credits to choosing the right program format.

Education-Portal.comwww.education-portal.com

This Web site provides an overview of what to expect in a career in HIM and the pursuit of higher education related to the field. Information details education prerequisites for various degree levels, examples of coursework, concentrations within the different degree levels, and advice on choosing a program.

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