

# Surveying Licensure in the United States – The Licensure Process and Efforts to Promote the Surveying Profession

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## SUMMARY

As of 2015, there are in excess of 53,000 individuals who are licensed in the United States as a Professional Land Surveyor (PLS). While the average age of a PLS in the U.S. is nearing 60, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of individuals entering the surveying profession in recent years. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the mean average wage for a PLS is \$62,000 U.S. dollars, which suggests that the surveying profession offers a competitive salary for those entering the field. Advances in technology as well as increased education requirements have certainly impacted the overall number of PLSs. However, as technologies become more complex, opportunities will be best for surveyors, cartographers, and photogrammetrists who have a bachelor's degree and strong technical skills. Increasing demand for geographic data, as opposed to traditional surveying services, will mean better opportunities for cartographers and photogrammetrists who are involved in the development and use of geographic and land information systems.

In the U.S., the surveying profession is regulated by the 50 states and 5 territories that constitute NCEES. Licensure is based on a combination of education, experience and technical examinations to demonstrate minimum competence in the field. The primary mission of the licensure of the surveying profession in the U.S. is the protection of the health, welfare and safety of the general public.

In view of the trend of fewer individuals seeking licensure as a PLS, NCEES has taken several steps to mitigate this movement. Included is the creation of the Future of Surveying Task Force to consider the factors impacting the growth of the surveying profession and steps that can be taken to reverse the trend; the creation of a surveying award that distributes up to \$100,000 annually to surveying education programs of distinction; and additional outreach activities to promote the value of the surveying profession.

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