

# Job Outlook for College Graduates

2010



*"It's The Economy."*

College graduates this year will have to work very hard to find a position in their career field.

If you Google job outlook for grads you will find articles that say the outlook is bad. Although there are some tiny green shoots pointing to an economic turnaround, improvement won't happen in the next few months or this year. Even with the economy starting to grow, it's only at a tepid rate and that doesn't mean that the number of jobs will be growing anytime soon. There is always a lag between economic growth and job growth coming out of a recession. Sometimes it's just a few months, sometimes years. All this gloom and doom means that graduates this year have got their job-search work cut out for them.

With a slumping economy, unemployment high and job losses continuing, firms are reacting cautiously. Overall, companies are cutting back their hiring, waiting for the economic pendulum to swing through the bottom of the business cycle. This means businesses perceive that consumers are not starting to spend and create the demand that fuels economic growth. It's really about perception of the consumers.

If they feel the economy is improving, they spend and borrow more. This creates demand for businesses to expand to meet the demand, and away the economy goes in a growth cycle. It's apparent that this phenomenon hasn't happened yet to any large degree, so employers aren't calling back laid-off workers or hiring new workers to meet the demand. That's the market the college grads are facing this spring. Recruiting activity may be down in Utah

and the nation, however this doesn't mean that no jobs will be available.

## Major Majors

According to Michigan State University's Collegiate Employment Research Institute (CERI), the majors employers are seeking include E-commerce, entrepreneurialism, environmental sciences, information science, information systems (management and computer), interactive computer design, statistics, nursing, and social work.<sup>1</sup>

Remember, job demand is driven by the industries where there is demand. Currently these include technology, healthcare, and government (primarily federal government). Other than specific majors, a survey from National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reports the top skills for top candidates.

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Starting salary offers to 2010 graduates are less than last year, according to the (NACE) survey.<sup>2</sup> Bachelor's de-

**STUDENTS** seeking employment will face fierce competition. Hiring levels per company are at the lowest levels in several decades, even after adjusting for the number of small employers who responded.

Companies expect to hire about 30 individuals per company. Our newest grads might not face competition from experienced labor, as many companies are focusing on new college grads rather than candidates with more experience. Still, there are simply not enough jobs to go around. Students need to continue to be **FOCUSED, DIRECTED, and CONNECTED.**

*Source: Michigan State University's Collegiate Employment Research Institute*



gree starting figures were off two percent from the average offer made to the class of 2009. That's a decline from \$49,353 to \$48,351. Another interesting finding from the survey was that just 29 percent of employers in 2010 planned to increase their salary offers for the 2010 class. Business-related degrees' starting offers were down but not by much. Computer occupations listed about a six-percent increase compared to 2009. Engineering disciplines also felt an increase, albeit small. Liberal arts degrees' starting salaries were heavily affected by the recession with average offers of eleven percent less than last year.

### What's a Graduate to Do?

Finding a job is a job. Do the legwork focusing on the kinds of companies that employ your major. Use the placement center of your soon-to-be alma mater to find out which companies are coming to town. Remember, some companies may not physically visit the college but recruit electronically through the school.

Use every contact you know to identify firms that are, or soon will be, hiring. This means using your contacts with employees currently working for companies of interest. Seek referrals through college mentors. Certainly, get on the Internet and explore opportunities listed with individual companies or through larger recruiting sites. Use social media, like Facebook or LinkedIn, as a method of connecting.

One more sure-fire leg up in the job-hunting process is to go into a job interview with some job-related experience on your application. Employers seek educational attainment but the tie-breaker will be experience. This can come from part-time work, internship, volunteer work, work-study, or any way you can get some real-world on-the-job experience.

### Where to Go to Work

You must be mobile; you have to go where the jobs are. That may mean you have to leave the state. Also, in an "employer's" job market, you may not be able to start at the great salary you wanted, or in your prime location. You may have to accept something less to get started in your career. Also, remember that not all job opportunities are equally distributed across the USA. For example, the majority of jobs in corporate business and finance are concentrated on the coasts, but primarily in the East. Major engineering/construction activity is in major metropolitan areas. Art, advertising, and design businesses are also concentrated on the coasts, as is international trade.

### Now and Beyond 2010

Remember, the economy is in the bottom of a business cycle, or close to it. It's not the last recession you will see. The economy doesn't run on a smooth and steady track. It's more like a roller coaster over time. There is some economic security in a good education. In general, the more you learn, the more you earn, and the more you learn the less unemployment you will experience. 

<sup>1</sup><http://www.ceri.msu.edu/recruiting-trends/>

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.nacweb.org/Press/Releases/Early\\_Report\\_Shows\\_Lower\\_Average\\_Salary\\_for\\_College\\_Class\\_of\\_2010.spx?referral=pressroom&menuid=273](http://www.nacweb.org/Press/Releases/Early_Report_Shows_Lower_Average_Salary_for_College_Class_of_2010.spx?referral=pressroom&menuid=273)



## Top Skills for Top Candidates

Besides the right major and a good GPA, what do employers prize in potential employees?

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|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Communication skills   | Flexibility/adaptability |
| Strong work ethic      | Computer skills          |
| Initiative             | Detail-oriented          |
| Interpersonal skills   | Leadership skills        |
| Problem-solving skills | Technical skills         |
| Teamwork skills        | Organizational abilities |
| Analytical skills      | Self-confidence          |

*Source: Job Outlook 2010, National Association of Colleges and Employers*

## We have fared far better

in the Intermountain West with lower unemployment rates and many new companies either locating new centers of operation or expanding in Utah. Career fairs have been well-attended across the state in both fall and spring. Many employers shifted their focus to internships rather than full-time hires, as a way to hedge against flat hiring projections. Local employers report that several factors at the federal level are making them cautious about hiring, such as the impact of health insurance reform and the possible effects that cap and trade could have on manufacturers at it relates to energy consumption. Over all, the strength of the Utah economy has allowed local employers to continue to hire new graduates and interns.

*Stan Inman, Director—Career Services, University of Utah*

