

RECRUITING TRENDS

2015-16

45th Edition

BRIEF 3

Starting Salaries

Key findings from 2015-16 are presented in this research brief. We have broken the release of employer information into a series of short briefs that will be made available over the next six weeks. You can download the briefs from the [Collegiate Employment Research Institute](#).



Meet the Completers

We generated this convenience sample from employers currently seeking college talent through their interactions with college and university career services offices. Nearly 200 career service centers from around the country invited their employers to participate in this study. More than 4,730 employers provided information useful for understanding recruiting trends and practices. We also included information from respondents recruiting talent for full-time positions, internships, and co-ops. Readers can use the following key sample characteristics to determine how applicable our survey results are for their campus employer base.

Company Size		
Very small	> 9 employees	9%
Fast-growth	10-100 employees	30%
Small	101–500 employees	24%
Midsize	501–3,999 employees	20%
Large	4,000–25,000 employees	10%
Very large	> 25,000 employees	7%

Key Economic Sectors	
Professional & scientific services	22%
Manufacturing	11%
Nonprofits	8%
Finance & insurance	8%
Educational services	13%
Government	7%
Healthcare & social assistance	6%

Key States	
Michigan	8%
Massachusetts	7%
Texas	7%
California	6%
Wisconsin & Florida	5%
Illinois, New York & North Carolina	4%

Role in College Recruiting	
Full-time positions	56%
Internship or co-op positions only	16%
Short-term hiring	8%
Experienced hiring	20%

Institutions Where Companies Recruit Talent	
Two-year public college	26%
Four-year public college	51%
Four-year private college	40%
Two- & four-year for-profit institution	22%
Institution with bachelor's & advanced degree programs	67%
Institution with advanced degrees only	9%
Historically black college & university	17%
Hispanic-serving institution	15%
Asian, Asian-Pacific serving institutions	14%

Active Recruiting by Region	
International	5%
Entire U.S.	23%
Regional recruiting only	72%

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Most employers (61%) will keep starting salaries at the same level as last year. About 39 percent of employers will increase starting salaries by 2-5 percent. The average will be 4.7 percent; the median is 3 percent (18% of employers increasing starting salaries) and the mode (most common) is 2 percent (26% of employers).

Wage pressure has been minimal since the market crash. Many employers decreased starting salaries and eliminated the signing and performance bonuses new college graduates expected as part of their job offers. This year competition for qualified job candidates will be fiercer than last year. Yet, most employers seem to be holding on wages and bonuses.

Fifteen percent of employers will increase starting salaries by more than 10 percent. Most of these employers (64%) have 10-500 employees; another 15 percent have more than 10,000 employees. The employers are likely to be in the Agriculture, Information Services, or Professional, Business, and Scientific Services sectors and located in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Texas.

Before the recession, 33 percent of employers offered performance bonuses and 17 percent offered signing bonuses to new college graduates. The percentage of employers offering incentives dropped precipitously by 2010-11. Although low by historical standards, 7 percent of employers will offer signing bonuses this year (the same as last year). Twenty-two percent of employers

will award performance bonuses at the end of the first year of employment; this reflects a 6 percentage point drop from 2014-15 and may reflect the hiring situation in Manufacturing subsectors and Mining and Oil. Only a handful of employers are offering commission-based salaries; 8 percent of employers will pay a base salary plus commission.

Another way to infer the patterns in starting salaries is to examine the reported averages over the last seven years for selected academic majors. These figures have not been adjusted for inflation, and aggregate salaries may lag slightly behind inflation. Each year's sample represents a different mix of employers with only about 40 percent repeating each year. Starting salaries declined for most majors during the first few years of the recession. Salary recovery remains uneven five years later. Of the majors listed here, advertising and mathematics may still be in flux. Engineering and IT are beginning to see bigger boosts in starting offers.

Salary Offers

The average starting salaries reflect base salary only and do not include commissions, stipends, bonuses, housing and moving allowances, or other incentives. We examined extremely low and high salaries to see if they fit within an acceptable range and omitted the few extremely low salaries. We also examined the range of salaries for selected degrees, throwing out the highs and lows; the range is 6-94 percent.

Trends in Starting Salaries and Bonuses									
Percent of employers	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Increase in starting salaries	53	32	12	17	20	25	32	37	39
Percentage increase (avg.)	4.2	4.0	2.8	3.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.2	4.7
Signing bonus (%)	10	17	7	1	5	5	6	7	7
Performance bonus (%)	20	33	20	5	18	19	25	28	22
Commission-based salaries (%)	10	4	n.a.	n.a.	9	10	13	14	8

Average Starting Salaries — Industry Sector				
Selected major	Manufacturing (avg.)	Financial Services (avg.)	Professional, Business & Scientific Services (avg.)	Government (avg.)
All majors	\$49,644	\$45,621	\$48,053	\$47,894
All Technical (engineering, computer science, IT)	\$61,864	—	\$57,596	—
All Business	\$52,453	\$46,373	\$49,819	\$48,156
Accounting	\$48,732	—	\$50,732	—
Computer Science	\$55,650	—	\$61,383	—
Electrical Engineering	\$62,704	—	\$62,061	—
Finance	—	\$48,250	\$51,974	—
All Social Science, Communications & Humanities	—	—	\$44,471	\$44,795
— not available				

Average Starting Salaries — Organization Size				
Selected major	<100 employees	101-1,500 employees	1,501-10,000 employees	>10,001 employees
All Majors	\$40,155	\$43,204	\$44,812	\$48,798
All Technical (engineering, Computer science, IT) majors	\$52,878	\$55,143	\$56,227	\$61,963
All Business majors	\$45,786	\$46,659	\$48,073	\$52,330
All Social Science, Communications, Humanities	\$37,614	\$39,976	\$44,216	\$47,366
Accounting	\$46,623	\$46,614	\$50,833	\$50,029
Computer Science	\$54,371	\$54,911	\$57,657	\$66,868
Electrical Engineering	\$56,878	\$58,842	\$62,762	\$73,883

Average Starting Salaries for Selected Majors							
	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Advertising	\$35,700	\$35,500	\$34,100	\$35,286	\$38,500	\$36,600	\$35,733
Computer science	\$50,200	\$47,500	\$47,200	\$47,561	\$52,200	\$52,237	\$56,974
Electrical engineering	\$53,200	\$51,600	\$55,100	\$52,307	\$57,100	\$57,000	\$61,173
Marketing	\$39,100	\$38,300	\$38,100	\$38,874	\$40,700	\$41,500	\$43,481
Mathematics	\$40,700	\$43,600	\$44,600	\$41,880	\$49,200	\$47,900	\$44,609

Starting Salaries — Associate's degree		
Selected major	Average	Range ^a
All Engineering	\$46,581	\$23,000-\$74,000
All Computer Science & IT	\$45,893	\$20,000-\$78,000
Nursing	\$38,489	\$15,000-\$62,600
All Business	\$38,397	\$20,000-\$60,000
All Healthcare	\$36,369	\$15,000-\$60,000
All other Associate's degrees	\$33,977	\$15,000-\$55,000
a. Range = 6-94%		

Starting Salaries — PhD and Professional		
Selected major	Average	Range ^a
Engineering & Computer Science	\$76,702	\$30,000-\$140,000
Physical & Biological Sciences	\$63,809	\$30,000-\$145,250
Business	\$62,454	\$28,900-\$128,000
Law	\$61,280	\$32,400-\$125,000
Pharmacy	\$59,898	\$25,500-\$156,000
Social Sciences & Humanities	\$51,494	\$26,000-\$89,000
a. Range = 6-94%		

Starting Salaries — Master's degree		
Selected major	Average	Range ^a
Engineering	\$68,134	\$34,400-\$105,600
Computer Science & IT	\$67,735	\$32,700-\$116,600
MBA	\$62,345	\$31,000-\$110,000
LIR/HR	\$56,627	\$30,950-\$105,100
Accounting	\$56,321	\$30,700-\$83,600
Physical & Biological Sciences	\$53,933	\$30,300-\$86,500
Health Sciences	\$49,380	\$28,250-\$84,350
Social Sciences & Humanities	\$45,250	\$28,000-\$67,900
a. Range = 6-94%		

Starting Salaries — Bachelor's Degree		
Selected major	Average	Range ^a
Chemical Engineering	\$63,389	\$34,850-\$100,600
Computer Engineering	\$63,313	\$34,800-\$100,200
Electrical Engineering	\$61,173	\$32,800-\$97,900
Software Design	\$60,104	\$33,200-\$94,000
Mechanical Engineering	\$59,681	\$33,900-\$82,250
Computer Programming	\$58,995	\$34,450-\$86,650
Computer Science	\$56,974	\$34,000-\$86,000
Civil Engineering	\$55,879	\$34,700-\$89,650
All Technical (Engineering, IT, Computer Science)	\$55,465	\$30,000-\$82,050
Management Information Systems	\$51,690	\$30,000-\$85,000
Construction	\$49,672	\$23,850-\$76,050
Finance	\$48,785	\$30,000-\$75,950
Accounting	\$47,834	\$30,000-\$73,900
All Business	\$47,459	\$28,000-\$72,200
Supply Chain	\$47,147	\$30,000-\$65,000
Economics	\$46,270	\$29,000-\$75,000
Human Resources	\$45,737	\$30,000-\$80,000
Chemistry	\$45,209	\$30,800-\$75,400
Mathematics (includes applied)	\$44,609	\$32,700-\$65,000
Marketing	\$43,481	\$27,300-\$68,000
Biology	\$43,404	\$30,000-\$71,400
All Majors	\$43,292	\$23,650-\$68,700
Agricultural Business	\$43,214	\$23,000-\$55,000
Agricultural Sciences	\$42,929	\$22,250-\$100,000
Nursing	\$42,913	\$24,800-\$65,550
Environmental Sciences	\$42,167	\$27,750-\$59,050
All Social Science, Humanities, Liberal Arts	\$40,674	\$22,750-\$60,250
E-Commerce/Entrepreneurial	\$40,468	\$22,200-\$72,200
Political Science	\$39,407	\$22,800-\$67,600
Social Work	\$39,100	\$22,100-\$66,450
English	\$39,000	\$25,850-\$60,250
Pre-K and Kindergarten Education	\$38,387	\$25,000-\$49,950
Special Education	\$38,354	\$25,000-\$49,950
High School Education	\$38,055	\$30,000-\$51,900
History	\$37,788	\$23,300-\$52,200
Foreign Languages	\$37,647	\$24,750-\$52,250
Elementary Education	\$37,480	\$28,050-\$50,000
Middle School Education	\$36,836	\$23,800-\$50,600
Music/Drama	\$36,744	\$25,850-\$60,250
Psychology	\$36,327	\$21,650-\$63,350
Public Relations	\$36,235	\$17,000-\$60,000
Advertising	\$35,733	\$17,000-\$70,000
a. Range = 6-94%		