

RECRUITING TRENDS

2017-18

47th Edition

BRIEF 3

Starting Salaries



Key findings from 2017-18 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. Approximately 3,370 employers provided information useful for understanding recruiting trends and practices. We will use information provided by those recruiting talent for full-time positions, internships, and co-ops for these research briefs. Readers can use the following key sample characteristics to determine how applicable our survey results are for their campus employer base.

Survey respondents by organization size		
Very small	< 49 employees	27%
Small	50-499 employees	37%
Midsize	500-3,999 employees	20%
Large	4,000-24,999 employees	9%
Very large	> 25,000 employees	6%

Active Recruiting by Region	
International	8%
Entire U.S.	32%
Regional recruiting only	60%

Role in College Recruiting	
Full-time positions	71%
Internship or co-op positions only	12%
Short-term hiring	7%
Experienced hiring	10%

Key States	
Michigan	16%
Utah	7%
Illinois	6%
Massachusetts	6%
New York	6%

Institutions Where Companies Recruit Talent	
Two-year public college	31%
Four-year public college	53%
Four-year private college	43%
Two- & four-year for-profit institution	24%
Institution with bachelor's & advanced degree programs	72%
Institution with advanced degrees only	11%
Historically black college & university	19%
Hispanic-serving institution	17%
Asian, Asian-Pacific serving institutions	16%

Key Economic Sectors	
Professional, business & scientific services	19%
Manufacturing	12%
Educational services	11%
Finance & insurance services	8%
Government	7%
Healthcare & social assistance	8%
Nonprofits	8%

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Last year nearly 50 percent of our respondents indicated they would increase starting salary offers by an average of 4 percent. These figures were reminiscent of 2007 when more than 50 percent of employers increased salaries more than 4 percent.

If the college labor market remained highly competitive, we anticipated that more than 50 percent of employers would increase salary offers, and we would witness some solid growth in salary levels. Alas, this did not happen. While no employer reported they would decrease their starting salary offers, only 39 percent (a decline of 9 percentage points from last year) indicated they would increase salaries an average of 4.1 percent. Sixty-one percent stated that starting offers would remain at the same level as last year. As a result average starting salary offers did not vary markedly from last year for majors with high numbers of employers reporting offers.

Before the recession 33 percent of employers offered performance bonuses at the end of the first year of employment and 17 percent offered signing bonuses. Since the recession these figures remain at historically low levels. However, this year the number of employers offering signing bonuses nearly doubled to 13 percent (7 percent used this device in the past two years). The number of organizations offering performance bonuses also jumped 9 percentage points to 21 percent. Both these strategies may reflect a tradeoff from offering higher starting salaries (a permanent cost) to a one-time payment.

Organizations that offer compensation partially or entirely based on commissions have hovered around 8 percent for much of the period since the recession. This year commission-based compensation increased to 13 percent.

The tables report starting salaries in a number of different ways. We required two tests for salaries to be included. First, a minimum of 25 employers needed to report starting salaries for their data to be included in the survey responses (this requirement relaxed last year's minimum of 50 reported salaries). Second,

the mean and median salaries for the group must be reasonably comparable. We provide the starting salary ranges for academic disciplines from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile. The comparisons by size and industrial sector are useful as they provide greater awareness of the different factors that shape offers. However, we ask readers to exercise caution when making broad generalizations because the number of reported salaries are small in some cases. Readers should use this information with their institution's post-graduation survey, state and regional data available from state government or economic development organization, and web aggregators.

Starting salary offers

The average starting salaries reflect base salary only and do not include bonuses, commissions, housing and moving allowances, stipends, or other incentives. We removed reported salaries if they represented stipends, contract work, or lump sum payments; most of these represented salaries of less than \$10,000. We admit we may not have identified all the stipend employment reported. By reporting the range from the 10th to the 90th percentiles, we adjusted for any possible outliers. The standard deviations around the averages reported in the tables are within appropriate levels.

Starting salaries have been broken out in several ways so that the reader can see how sector and organization size influence starting salary offers. Some observations include:

- ◆ The smallest organizations offer the lowest salary.
- ◆ However, organizations with 50 to 25,000 employees offer very similar starting salaries in most cases.
- ◆ Only the very largest organizations offer starting salary offers noticeably higher than all other organizations.
- ◆ Among the major industrial sectors reporting in this survey, manufacturing offers slightly higher starting salaries than service sectors. Service sectors, finance and insurance services, and professional, business, and scientific services, for example, offer comparable starting salaries.

Average Starting Salary – Selected Industrial Sectors (bachelor’s level)						
Selected majors	Manufacturing	Finance & Insurance Services	Professional, Business & Scientific Services	Government	Healthcare Services & Social Assistance	Nonprofit
All majors	53,561	46,109	44,284	44,553	35,226	33,211
All technical	60,835	57,348	56,352	49,294	—	—
All business	51,556	52,690	49,355	48,029	39,435	—
All liberal arts	—	51,579	44,606	47,370	32,222	36,947
Electrical engineering	63,482	—	59,649	—	—	—
Mechanical engineering	63,562	—	59,518	—	—	—
Computer science	59,625	—	61,016	—	—	—
Computer programming	60,097	—	62,720	—	—	—
Computer info. systems	55,046	—	56,574	—	—	—
Finance	52,241	57,410	48,513	—	—	—
Accounting	49,189	50,806	49,716	47,190	—	—
Marketing	49,174	48,000	46,400	—	—	—
Human resources	49,967	57,926	46,708	—	—	—

— Insufficient data was provided to calculate a useful average.

Trends in Starting Salaries and Bonuses											
Employers offering	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Increase in starting salaries (%)	53	32	12	17	20	25	32	37	39	48	39
Average percentage increase (avg.)	4.2	4.0	2.8	3.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	5.2	4.7	4.2	4.1
Signing bonus (%)	10	17	7	1	5	5	6	7	7	7	13
Performance bonus (%)	20	33	20	5	18	19	25	28	22	14	21
Commission-based salaries (%)	10	4	—	—	9	10	13	14	8	8	14

— Insufficient data was provided to calculate a useful average.

Average Starting Salary — Organizational Size (bachelor's level)					
	< 49 employees	50 to 499 employees	500 - 4000 employees	4000 – 25K employees	>25K employees
All majors	38,127	42,288	45,143	43,294	55,913
All technical	49,512	54,333	55,657	52,870	64,243
All business	43,789	47,834	49,945	47,727	54,838
All liberal arts	36,674	39,612	43,923	39,118	—
All health	42,061	46,576	45,256	—	—
All education	34,636	37,721	41,719	—	—
Accounting	43,739	47,766	47,171	48,556	55,222
Finance	47,064	50,290	50,940	50,208	—
Marketing	43,241	45,448	45,171	—	—
Supply chain	—	48,320	48,773	—	—
Economics	45,870	52,406	52,800	—	—
Human resources	—	45,778	45,224	—	—
Communication	37,000	42,367	—	—	—
Computer science	57,265	57,292	56,064	57,625	64,611
Computer programming	—	61,857	56,250	—	—
Software design	60,609	67,100	60,069	—	—
Computer information systems	51,875	52,291	52,322	55,087	—
Computer engineering	—	60,296	57,954	—	—
Electrical engineering	—	59,479	60,767	62,454	—
Mechanical engineering	—	60,583	60,931	—	—
Nursing	—	46,348	47,333	—	—

— Insufficient data was provided to calculate a useful average.

Average Starting Salaries — Selected Majors (bachelor's level)									
	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Advertising	35,700	35,500	34,100	35,286	38,500	36,600	35,733	41,388	41,298
Computer science	50,200	47,500	47,200	47,561	52,200	52,237	56,974	57,762	57,723
Electrical engineering	53,200	51,600	55,100	52,307	57,100	57,000	61,173	62,428	60,581
Marketing	39,100	38,300	38,100	38,874	40,700	41,500	43,481	44,087	46,123
Mathematics	40,700	43,600	44,600	41,880	49,200	47,900	44,609	45,632	50,830

Starting Salaries — Associate's Degree		
Selected major	Average	Range (10 to 90 percentiles)
All engineering & technical	48,293	28K to 70K
All computer science	48,489	27K to 73K
All nursing	40,944	20.5K to 60K
All health services, technicians & technologists	37,353	20K to 60K
All business	40,031	25K to 55K
All other degrees	33,327	20K to 48K

Starting Salaries — Bachelor's Degree		
Selected major	Average	Range (10 to 90 percentiles)
Electrical engineering	60,581	40K to 74K
Software design	62,541	48K to 82K
Chemical engineering	58,780	35K to 75.9K
Computer engineering	61,326	45K to 77.4K
Mechanical engineering	61,083	50K to 74.8K
Industrial engineering	58,282	45K to 70K
Applied engineering	56,467	36.8K to 70.4K
Materials engineering	61,100	47.1K to 74.4K
Bio. Engineering/BioMed. Eng.	55,533	30.4K to 79.5K
Aerospace engineering	62,345	30K to 52K
Computer programming	58,771	40K to 70K
Information security systems	58,363	40K to 75.9K
Computer science	57,723	35.9K to 78K
MIS (computer science)	59,970	35K to 83K
Engineering technicians	47,986	33K to 63.8K
Computer information systems	53,186	35K to 75K
Civil engineering	56,854	45K to 66.7K
MIS (business)	53,239	35K to 70K
Construction management	50,949	30K to 70K
Engineering technology	53,986	34K to 69.1K
Finance	50,805	35K to 65K
Supply chain	51,185	32.4K to 66.6K
Risk management	53,919	31.8K to 79.4K
Human resources	47,070	34K to 60K
Accounting	47,482	34K to 60K
Sport/entertainment mgt.	48,481	31.6K to 76.2K
Hospitality business	41,481	29K to 53.4K
Merchandizing mgt.	50,607	31.9K to 92.3K
Multimedia and Graphic design	50,781	34K to 75K
Nursing	48,783	35K to 65K
Mathematics (includes applied)	50,830	30K to 80K
Economics	51,154	34.8K to 70.2K
E-commerce/entrepreneurial	53,949	35K to 89K
Marketing	46,123	32.7K to 60.3K
Agricultural business	41,229	26.2K to 53.4K
Chemistry	44,667	30.7K to 65.9K
Environmental sciences	44,300	31.1K to 61.6K
Plant & Crop Sciences & Hort.	41,229	26.2K to 53.4K
Advertising	41,298	24.3K to 52.1K
Public relations	43,808	30K to 58.4K
Film & video production	39,138	27.8K to 52.1K
Interactive media and design	41,107	31.7K to 53.2K
Political science & Public admin.	42,454	30K to 54.2K
Biology	43,679	27.9K to 74.4K
Physics	48,952	34.2K to 78K
Biochemistry	47,682	27.9K to 74.7K
Statistics	51,892	31K to 69.2K
Music/drama/visual arts	38,857	25.4K to 52K
Communication	41,728	32K to 55K
Criminal justice	38,289	29.5K to 53.0K
Foreign languages & linguistics	40,786	25K to 56.3K
Math teachers	39,096	30K to 50K
Science teachers	38,552	30K to 50K

Starting Salaries — Bachelor's Degree		
Selected major	Average	Range (10 to 90 percentiles)
English, language arts, literature teachers	37,598	30K to 46K
History & social studies	38,733	30K to 47.2K
Foreign language teachers	39,075	30K to 50K
History	39,250	25.9K to 52.1K
English	37,070	26.6K to 48.8K
Psychology	37,186	24K to 50K
Law & legal studies	47,323	26.3K to 78K
International relations & Public policy	39,667	20K to 53K
Interior design	38,880	18.2K to 51.2K
Special education teachers	39,010	30K to 50K
Elementary education teachers	37,372	29K to 46.6K
Anthropology/sociology	35,156	20K to 49.4K
Social work	39,167	24K to 55K
Pre-K & kindergarten education	35,856	25K to 46K
Health care administration	48,222	22.2K to 74.3K
Clinical lab scientist/Med tech	38,043	20.8K to 54.2K
Health information systems	48,208	25.5K to 74.5K
Family & child services	36,107	23.6K to 53.4K
Counseling	41,317	30K to 55.8K
All majors	42,691	26.4K to 60K
All technical (engineering, computer science, IT)	54,412	35K to 73K
All business	48,135	32K to 63K
All social sciences/humanities/ liberal arts/science	40,951	25K to 59.5K
All health sciences	44,935	25K to 66K
All Education	39,457	26K to 52K
All Ag & Natural Resources	42,405	26K to 60K

Starting Salaries — MBA & Master's Degree		
Selected major	Average	Range (10 to 90 percentiles)
Computer science	69,537	41.1K to 100K
Engineering	67,636	41K to 95K
MBA	64,338	39K to 100K
Physical & biological sciences	58,628	31.9K to 85.9K
Accounting	60,888	40K to 86K
LIR/HR	62,042	36K to 90.8K
Health sciences MS & MSW	53,044	31.2K to 79.6K
Social sciences MA & MS	48,791	31.2K to 72.8K

Starting Salaries — PhD & Professional		
Selected major	Average	Range (10 to 90 percentiles)
Pharmacy	56,540	22.4K to 101.2K
Engineering & computer science	76,000	37.4K to 120K
Law	62,738	30K to 94.4K
Physical & biological sciences	70,125	33.1K to 109.9K
Business	68,891	31.4K to 120.2K
Social sciences & humanities	56,603	30K to 97.4K
Physical Therapist	55,707	20.5K to 86.3K