



Jobs for Graduates

AVAILABLE POSITIONS FORCE STUDENTS TO RETHINK MAJORS

BY SCOTT GOLDSTEIN



College students today will find plenty of job opportunities when they graduate, if they are majoring in education or health care – in-demand fields expected to remain solid in the post-recession economy. For students majoring in finance and journalism, well, their job search may take a while.

Wall Street jobs are not expected to return to pre-recessionary levels any time soon. And as the news industry tries to redefine itself in the Internet age, the number of journalism jobs is declining.



DARIO CORTES

ley College, a school that has seven campuses in New Jersey and New York and offers Internet courses. “Education today is more career-oriented. There needs to be an outcome where the student has a clear path from degree to position.”

As for this year’s graduates, there is some good news. “It’s better to be entering the job market

now than to be 20 or 30 years in and facing layoffs,” said Carl E. Van Horn, director of the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. “There are more opportunities for people on the entry level because they are less expensive.”

Still, it doesn’t hurt today’s college students’ job prospects to major in a field expected to be hiring when they graduate. A group of college administrators, career service counselors and experts looked at the hot majors at their schools and tried to project what fields will be hiring when the recession lifts.

Those fields, they say, include education, nursing, computer science, civil engineering and accounting.

“The economy is in transition,” said Edwin W. Koc, director of strategic and foundation research at the National Associa-

tion of Colleges and Employers. “In education, there are a lot of replacement openings coming up in the kindergarten through 12th grade system, and there will be some in the college system up because of retirements. Given the fact that the percentage of students majoring in education has been declining consistently year after year, those coming out with education credentials will probably be in a good place.”

As for students with health care-related degrees, there are at least two reasons to believe there will be jobs waiting for them. More Americans will require medical attention, thanks to the aging Baby Boomers. And health care reform, if it succeeds, would result in insurance for millions more Americans.

“If you put 20 million more people into the system through insurance reform, there will be a big increase for those kinds of jobs,” said Van Horn. “I don’t know if they will be able to meet the demand.”

Computer science field professions are already hiring, and other technology fields are expected to erupt, Koc said. They include

programmers, IT consultants, cyber security experts and systems analysts.

"Clearly anything to do with computers figures to be a good opportunity in the future," Koc said. "High-tech is going through its difficulties in the recession, but it is an area with a strong future. We are not putting out enough graduates to meet the replacement needs, let alone the growth needs."

Civil engineering also is expected to be a hot field, benefiting from federal stimulus dollars going into construction projects, Koc said.

Experts say accounting firms continue to be among the top hirers, thanks to the recession-proof nature of the profession. And criminal justice and forensics are hot areas of study partly because of the popularity of television shows like the CSI series, the experts said. But "there are not as many openings in forensic work for the amount of people interested," Van Horn warned. "It can be risky decision."

The College of New Jersey, in Ewing, is seeing demand for its biology program. "We've had to close admission



BARBARA GITENSTEIN

into biology for the last two years," said R. Barbara Gitenstein, the college's president. "Graduates go on to medical school or research programs, some-

times in the pharmaceutical industry."

The school also is seeing strong enrollment in nursing, exercise science, biomedical engineering and psychology. Education and technology-related majors, such as engineering and mathematics is in demand, as well.

The news is not good for finance majors. Financial institutions cut on-campus recruiting at TCNJ from twice annually to just once, according to Debra Kelly, associate director of student employment and recruitment at TCNJ.

"In previous years, students were naming salaries in finance," Kelly said. "The economy has switched and students are no longer naming salaries. They are now expanding the locations in which they are job-seeking."

Gitenstein does not anticipate a large group of students to major in finance this fall. But then again, it's hard to tell. "If you are coming in as a freshman, the world will be a totally different place in four years anyway," she said.

For now, colleges report that the recession has led to an increase in student enrollment.

Ocean County College, in Toms River, is projecting 10,800 students this fall, up from 9,811 last year, and has beefed up both its faculty and student services team, said Mary Lee Keller, director of academic planning. "We have more returning students and we have more people who no longer have jobs and are returning to school to re-qualify for a job that is more in demand," Keller said.

She is also seeing students pursue the traditional lines of study in education and health care. Criminal justice is in demand there too, she said.

Berkeley College is also seeing a boom; enrollment has doubled to 7,000 students over four years. "We see a lot

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In July, the New Jersey State Board of Education unanimously revised high school graduation requirements, culminating a three-year effort by the BCEE.

These mandates included a requirement for algebra I, geometry and biology. Students will be required to take a third year of math that builds on the skills learned in algebra I and geometry. In addition to biology, students must take two more years of laboratory science; in one of those years, students must select chemistry, physics or environmental science. These new requirements, and assessments to evaluate student content knowledge, will be phased in over seven years.

In a related action, the board also adopted revised core curriculum content standards in six areas, assuring that the knowledge and skills obtained in high school will prepare students for college and the workplace. Together, the revised requirements and content standards reflect new demands and expectations

from employers and the higher education community.

Dana Egreczky, president of the NJCCF and the BCEE, called the new high school graduation requirements “a great first step.”

“But it is only a first step,” she said. “We must begin to build the next several steps even as these new requirements are phased in throughout the state.”

“It was gratifying for the BCEE to be a part of this landmark process on behalf of the business community,” said Egreczky. “Chamber members should be pleased to know that the state wanted to ensure that any changes to the graduation requirements considered the needs of the business community – the next destination for our young people after school.” ❖

George Koodray is the vice president of communications for the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

Enrollment is Up

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more adults coming back to take a course or two, or looking for career placement,” said Cortes, Berkeley’s president. “A lot of people are rethinking their careers.”

Some of the school’s most popular majors are fashion marketing and management; health services; criminal justice, accounting, paralegal, criminal justice and interior design.

“The areas of study emerging are very practical and career-based,” Cortes said. “They align with a particular job or marketplace. People are becoming more practical. In the kind of economy we are in today, there is an opportunity for individuals to seek out more college education and prepare themselves for the future.” ❖

Scott Goldstein is the communications manager at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

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The program is offered in cooperation with the NJ Business and Industry Association and the NJ Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development and funded by a grant from the NJ Department of Labor.



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