

2008 grads in bright job-hunt picture; area universities cite recruiting

By Ted Fackler

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Despite a weak economy, recruitment of college graduates for jobs is as strong as ever.

Graduates in the Class of 2008 can expect 8 percent more hiring than last year, most in health care, engineering, computer science, and business, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, a nonprofit organization in Bethlehem, Pa.

The influx of jobs stems in part from significant retirements predicted in the workforce.

"We've had an exceptional year [in recruiting], lots of student getting interviews and getting placements," said Terribeth Gordon-Moore, a University of Toledo business school associate dean. "Even though I was concerned with the slowdown of the economy, I didn't see any slowdown this year [in recruiting]."

Eighty percent of 407 graduating students at UT have job placements, she added.

Recruiting has gone well at Adrian College in Michigan, said Shannon Martineau, director of career planning there.

But some national experts said hiring will be tough this year, as some firms have scaled back because of the struggling economy. The increase in national unemployment to 5.1 percent in March led some economists to contend the country is in a recession.

Graduates whose grades aren't especially high, experts said, may not land the jobs they want. Government hiring remains robust, some experts said.

Much of the hiring is expected from large firms. Such companies are to increase jobs for engineering majors by 12 to 14 percent, business majors by 13 percent, and social science and humanities majors by 20 percent, according to a recent survey by Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich.

"Major corporations are seeing significant retirements coming. Half [of their workforce] will be retiring in the next five years so they have to ramp up recruiting significantly," said Kelley Bishop, executive director of career services at the school.

At UT, the most-recruited-for jobs involve science, technology, math, and medicine majors. In its business school, recruiting for supply chains, professional sales, and accounting was particularly strong this year.

An official at the University of Findlay said that school experienced more recruiting efforts for its 763 graduates in 2008. Notable firms included Marathon Oil Corp., Cooper Tire & Rubber Co., the Cleveland Clinic, Rite Aid Corp., and Walgreen Co.

As for pay, the National Association of Colleges and Employers predicts that new graduates will make an average of \$49,300 a year, up 4 percent from last year's \$47,400.

Those with engineering degrees can expect about \$56,000, but liberal arts graduates will have to settle for an average of \$33,000.

Career planning has changed and job recruiting has generally become more electronic, experts said. Students are plotting career plans much earlier in their collegiate life, experts said. Many are supplementing their classroom work with practical experience or are participating in internships.

"There's more than just having the diploma these days," said Mrs. Gordon-Moore. "You have to intern, network, get your name out."

More than half of businesses, she said, hire from their internship pool, and some employers now require applicants to have internship experience.

Students are also taking interest in out-of-state jobs more than before, college officials said. Education recruiters, particularly from the southern United States, have been active in soliciting education majors from local colleges.

Recruiting on the Internet has been popular the past few years, and initial screenings and interviews are often done online.

"It's very expensive for a company to send a recruiter," explained Mrs. Nicholson. "They're looking for more economical ways to reach candidates. One may be a virtual job fair."

Information from other news services was used in this story.