

MN COLLEGE JOB OUTLOOK 2009

SURVEY BACKGROUND

Every year, college career centers throughout Minnesota receive many inquiries regarding the job market for new college graduates. For many years, the only source that colleges had to draw on for this information was the annual study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Since the NACE study, which is routinely cited in many major national publications, typically includes responses from less than 10 Minnesota employers, the MN College Job Outlook Survey was begun in 2004. This year, we received responses from 221 organizations actively recruiting four year college graduates in Minnesota.

The following is a summary of the research of our fifth annual survey, conducted by Andrew Ditlevson, Associate Director, SCSU Career Services Center. The “Comment” sections of this document are statements written by Mr. Ditlevson.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To develop a forecast of hiring intentions of employers as they relate to new college graduates, an email list of employers actively recruiting new college graduates in Minnesota was compiled. The employers in the survey sample were participants in at least one of the three largest four year college consortium job fairs held in MN during the past year. The three job fairs were the MN State Universities Job Fair, the MN Private Colleges Job Fair, and the University of MN Job Fair. The employer lists from these three events were combined and duplication and unreachable email addresses were eliminated. In July 2008, the Job Outlook survey was emailed to 380 contacts. Two follow up emails were sent to non-respondents between late July and mid-August. By the end of August 2008 responses had been received from 221 employers, a 58% response rate.

HIRING PLANS

Plan to increase hiring	35.0%
Plan to maintain hiring	58.4%
Plan to decrease hiring	6.5%

Comment: “While the number of employers planning to decrease hiring is more than double that of last year – the good news is that, for every employer planning to decrease hiring – there are nearly six planning to increase. Based on this, the job market for new college graduates looks to be much stronger than the overall job market.”

HIRING PLANS BY INDUSTRY (for industries with 8 or more respondents)

Industry (employers per industry)	Respondents To Question	Increase Hiring	Maintain Hiring	Decrease Hiring
Business Services	15	13.3%	80%	6.7%
Retail	13	38.5%	53.8%	7.7%
Healthcare	21	33.3%	66.7%	0%
Technology	23	30.4%	56.5%	13%
Financial Services	21	52.4%	38.1%	9.5%
Government	20	30%	60%	10%
Manufacturing	21	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%
Non Profit/Human Service	25	40%	60%	0.0%

ON CAMPUS RECRUITING PLANS

Firm plans to recruit on campus	49.5%
Tentative plans to recruit on campus	29.0%
No plans to recruit on campus	7.0%
Unsure of plans	14.5%

Comment: “With nearly 83% of the employers indicating firm or tentative plans to recruit on campus, college students will be well advised to take advantage of their campus career services office and on campus career fairs.”

SALARY PLANS

Plan to increase salary	27.1%
Plan to maintain salary	72.9%
Plan to decrease	00.0%

Of the employers who plan to increase salaries, 76.3 plan a 1-3% increase, while 22% plan a 4-6% increase and only 1.7% plan to increase salaries 7% or more.

Comment: “While the majority of employers plan to maintain salaries, the good news is that more than one quarter plan to increase salaries this year.”

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HIRING

Employers were asked if their organization would consider hiring international students who were authorized to work up to one year after graduation, i.e., had a work permit good for only one year. Of the 209 respondents to this question, 31.6% said yes compared to last year when 32.5% said they would consider it.

Comment: “With less than one third of all employers willing to consider hiring international students not authorized to work beyond one year after graduation, it will continue to be a challenging job market for these new graduates.”

SKILLS MOST IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO POSSESS

When asked for the skills they felt were most important for students to possess, here were the employers’ top 10 (rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = not at all important and 5 = extremely important):

Top 10

1. Honesty/Integrity	4.78
2. Communication (Verbal and Written)	4.76
3. Interpersonal (relates well to others)	4.56
4. Teamwork (works well with others)	4.53
5. Strong Work Ethic	4.52
5. Motivation/initiative	4.52
7. Flexibility/Adaptability	4.35
8. Professionalism/Etiquette	4.27
9. Customer Service	4.23
10. Detail-oriented	4.12
10. Organizational Skills	4.12

Items ranked 12-17 in descending order of importance included: self-confidence, leadership, computer skills, analytic skills, sense of humor, and sales.

Comment: “It is interesting to note the increasing value employers are placing on honesty and integrity as it has risen in importance since the survey began and is ranked number one for the second consecutive year. Interpersonal skills and Work Ethic exchanged places this year as did Teamwork and Motivation, but overall the top 10 skills sought has been amazingly consistent over the years.

SKILLS STUDENTS MOST NEED TO IMPROVE UPON

When employers were asked what skills new college graduates most needed to improve upon, here were the results.

Top 10

1. Realistic job expectations	4.29
2. Work Ethic	4.01
3. Communication (written and verbal)	3.99
4. Knowledge of company/work environment	3.93
5. Lose sense of entitlement	3.91
6. Professionalism/etiquette	3.85
7. Motivation/initiative	3.82
8. Interviewing skills	3.67
9. Flexibility/adaptability	3.63
10. Interpersonal communication	3.63

When speaking about candidates needing more realistic expectations, employers indicated several areas including the need for more realistic salary expectations, understanding they need to start at entry level and work their way up (which might take some time) and that not all jobs have 8 to 5, M-F work schedules.

EMPLOYERS SEEKING “ANY” MAJOR

When asked “Do you recruit for any college degree required positions for which you will accept “any” major (no specific major required) – 44.1% of the employers responded “Yes.” This should be exciting news to most graduates, as it indicates that more than one in four employers have a least one position in which they would consider any college graduate, regardless of their major.

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS WHO OFFER INTERNSHIPS

Seventy-six point one percent (76.1%).

Comment: “More and more employers are offering internships and using them as their first option for hiring new grads into full-time positions so college students would be well advised to plan on completing at least one internship prior to graduation.”