THE CLASS OF 2017 JOB OUTLOOK REPORT

What college seniors expect from their first post-grad job search and how this compares to recruiters’ expectations for entry-level talent
THE STATE OF ENTRY LEVEL HIRING

In our second annual report, we evaluated the professional aspirations and expectations of the Class of 2017 along with the realities of entry-level hiring from the perspective of recruiters. Within, large entry-level employers including Southwest Airlines, NYU, SAS Institute, and Smithfield Foods offer advice for the graduating class of 2017 on how to improve their resume, sharpen their interview skills, and land their first full-time job.

This report exposes the realities for this year’s college graduates about to enter the workforce across the U.S. and highlights how prepared they are – or in some cases aren’t – and their career aspirations including industry, location, and salary expectations.

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The value of a college degree and the Class of 2017’s career goals
SECTION 1
The Value of a College Degree and Class of 2017’s Career Goals

How Far Will a College Degree Take You?

How important is graduating with a degree when it comes to getting a job? Based on our survey results, not earning a four-year degree could hurt your job search. When we asked recruiters how often they screen out entry-level candidates because they do not have a college degree, even if they have sufficient internship or work experience, 81% said frequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Required *</th>
<th>% of recruiters who screen out entry-level candidates because they do not have a college degree, by frequency, 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>19%</td>
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Source: iCIMS, Class of 2017 Survey

The majority of college seniors (88%) and recruiters (87%) agreed that a four-year college degree would make an entry-level job seeker instantly competitive in the current job market.
College Seniors Reveal the Most Popular Majors and Career Paths

**Top Majors**
The top majors for the Class of 2017 include business/finance and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).

**Top Industries**
Business/finance, communications, and STEM are the most popular industries college seniors would like to work in after graduation.

- **Business/Finance** 29%
- **Arts/Communications/Media** 25%
- **STEM** 23%
- **Healthcare/Environment** 21%
- **Education/Nonprofit** 21%
- **Law/Policy** 20%
- **Sales/Service** 19%
- **Heavy Industry** 5%
However, they may be willing to change their plans.

Regardless of what degree they graduate with, 81% of college seniors said they would be willing to accept a full-time job in a field unrelated to their college major.

This may be the norm in entry-level hiring, as 82% of recruiters say they frequently hire entry-level candidates whose college major does not directly align with or relate to the job position.

Major May Not Matter When Applying to Entry-Level Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: iCIMS, Class of 2017 Survey
Here’s What Employers are Looking for in Entry-Level Job Applicants

Beyond a candidate’s college major, recruiters look for past work experience (76%) and strong communication skills (65%) in an entry-level job applicant. Graduating without much work or internship experience? Check out the tips from Southwest Airlines on how to make your resume stand out.

Which of the following, if any, are more important in an entry-level job applicant than their college major?

- Past Work Experience: 76%
- Written or Spoken Communication Skills: 65%
- Extracurricular Activities*: 35%
- Grade Point Average: 29%
- Their University’s Prestige or Reputation: 24%

* Such as a Student Leadership Association

How to Make Your Resume Stand Out

- Make sure to include a skills section on your resume with software you have used and been exposed to, especially if applying to a technical role.
- It’s okay to include relevant capstone or class projects if you don’t have much internship experience that relates to the job you are applying for.
- Show you have a passion for your desired career by aligning extracurricular involvement to that field (e.g., if you want to be an IT Analyst, join the Computer Science or Management Information System Club on campus).
- Seek out opportunities to lead in your organizations or in class projects.

Kayla Cermak,
Recruiter – Campus Reach at Southwest Airlines
NYC and LA Are Most Popular Major Cities to Work in for College Grads

After deciding which industry they’d like to work in, the next important decision may be where college graduates will move to start their careers.

Once college seniors have moved out of student housing, many want to head for the bright lights and ample opportunities available within a major metro area. The top cities college seniors would most like to work in immediately after graduation are New York City (35%), Los Angeles (29%), and San Francisco (23%).
Section 2

How Prepared is the Class of 2017?
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How Prepared is the Class of 2017?

Are Entry-Level Candidates Qualified for the Workforce?

Despite earning a college degree, it’s still important entry-level job seekers confirm they meet the majority of a job posting’s requirements before applying. Almost all recruiters surveyed (98%) said they receive applicants that are not qualified for a position they applied for, and on average, 32% of all entry-level applications received are not qualified.

“Read job descriptions closely and if you have 60% of the qualifications, apply.”

When Human Resource or hiring managers write job descriptions they throw in everything they would love to have, but since job functions are changing so rapidly, they are looking for trainable candidates. If you have 60% of the skills they need, they can teach you the rest.

Trudy Steinfeld,
Associate Vice President of Student Affairs & Executive Director of the Wasserman Center for Career Development at New York University

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
How Will College Seniors Fair in the Interview Process?

More than 90% of college seniors are confident in their interviewing skills, but here are the ways recruiters think they can improve.

- 62% Becoming familiar with company and industry
- 60% Asking questions relevant to the position, such as daily responsibilities
- 59% Body language, such as facial expressions or posture
- 57% Speaking clearly about their past experiences
- 55% Dressing appropriately
- 53% Staying positive, for example, avoiding negative language about a previous position

The Confidence Gap:
More Males than Females are Confident in their Interview Skills

While 96% of men feel confident in their interview skills, only 88% of females feel the same way.

- Practice articulating your answers to someone who is not familiar with your experience. This will allow them to coach you on whether or not you provided enough examples and adequately conveyed your role in the work you completed.
- Be yourself in the interview. It’s okay to let your personality show.
- Make sure you research the company you are applying to, because you will be asked to express why you are interested in that company.
- It’s a good practice to read through the job description prior to an interview, and think through ways your experience relates to the job.
- Prepare thoughtful questions for the end of the interview to ask the employer. Not having questions could communicate disinterest.

Tips for the Class of 2017

You should interview employers as much as they are interviewing you! You will be spending 40+ hours a week for an undetermined period of time at the employer you select. You should walk away from your interview process understanding the work culture, who your manager would be, the values of the company, and any other factors that would make those 40 hours more or less enjoyable.

Kayla Woitkowski
Manager of University Outreach and Recruitment at SAS Institute

Kayla Cermak,
Recruiter – Campus Reach at Southwest
SECTION 3

SALARY EXPECTATIONS AND STUDENT LOAN DEBT ARE ON THE RISE
SECTION 3
Salary Expectations and Student Loan Debt are on the Rise

Salary Expectations are on the Rise
On average, college seniors expect to earn approximately $53,483 at their first job after college. More than half of those surveyed (54%) said they expect $50,000 or more, a 12% increase from 2016.

▲ $7,452 increase from 2016

The Class of 2017 Has High Salary Expectations
% of college senior's expectation of entry-level salary, by dollars, 2017 & 2016

- $35,000 or less: 24% (Class of 2017), 33% (Class of 2016)
- $35,001 - $49,999: 22% (Class of 2017), 25% (Class of 2016)
- $50,000 - $74,999: 42% (Class of 2017), 34% (Class of 2016)
- $75,000 or more: 8% (Class of 2017), 12% (Class of 2016)
Are Their Salary Expectations Realistic?

According to recruiters, on average, entry-level employees can expect to earn approximately $45,361 with only 24% of companies paying $50,000 or more. That’s more than $8,000 less than what this year’s college seniors are expecting. The good news is the salary approximations from recruiters are up more than $1,500 from 2016.

Q: Approximately how much does your company expect to pay its average entry-level employee?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 RESULTS</th>
<th>2016 RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$45,361</td>
<td>$43,784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average

Tips for the Class of 2017

Be sure to understand the ‘total compensation’ of your job offer. It is easy to focus on base salary and sign-on bonuses, but what about other benefits such as opportunities for career growth? Or retirement contributions? How do the health and life insurance benefits stack up? These are all important aspects of a job offer that can be easily overlooked.

Kayla Woitkowski, Manager of University Outreach and Recruitment at SAS Institute
College Seniors May Be Able to Negotiate Their First Salary

Negotiation can be scary, but could be worth the risk as many employers are open to it. Only 42% of college seniors think salary negotiation is possible, but 67% of recruiters say it’s likely to happen.

**WOMEN FEEL MORE STRONGLY THAN MEN THAT IT’S POSSIBLE TO NEGOTIATE SALARY**

While 46% of women think it’s possible to negotiate salary for an entry-level job, only 34% of men feel the same way.
Student Loans Loom for The Class of 2017

Last year the average college graduate had $37,172 in student loan debt, up six percent from 2015, according to student loan expert Mark Kantrowitz.

In 2017, almost all of college seniors surveyed (96%) reported having student loans, and 68% are confident their first job’s salary will be sufficient to start paying them off without the help of their parents.

The Class of 2017 Believes They Will Make Enough to Pay Off Loans

Percent of college seniors with student loans who say that their first job’s salary will be sufficient to start paying off student loans without their parent’s help, by confidence level, 2017

- 40% somewhat confident
- 28% very confident
- 26% not very confident
- 6% not at all confident

Source: iCIMS, Class of 2017 Survey
SECTION 4

THE VALUE
OF INTERNSHIPS
SECTION 4
The Value of Internships

Internships Can Shape a Career
College seniors reported many positive outcomes as a result of an internship. While only 26% of internships led to a full-time job offer, learning better organizational skills (65%) and receiving letters of recommendation (61%) were the most common result of completing an internship.

Responses

- Learned better organizational skills, such as time or project management: 65%
- Received a positive recommendation or reference for a job at a different company: 61%
- Learned how to use a new computer program or software: 40%
- Received a full-time job offer with the company I interned at: 26%

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE OVERSHADOWS COLLEGE GPA
The Class of 2017 may have worked hard to earn an impressive college GPA, but their work outside the classroom matters more in today’s job market. In fact, 70% of recruiters and college seniors agree that internship experience is more valuable than your college GPA (30%) when applying for a job.
How Many Internships Do You Need to Get a Job?

In a competitive entry-level job market, students may benefit from completing multiple internships.

How many internships do graduates really need? In general, employers are looking for an average of three internships. However, only 18% of college seniors surveyed have completed three or more internships.

To gain experience and build their resumes before graduation, 81% of college seniors have completed at least one internship, with the average being two internships.

Most Employers Say Entry-Level Job Seekers Need Internship Experience

Minimum number of internships recruiters say students should have completed by the time they graduate to be considered a top candidate for a job, by percent, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREE OR MORE</th>
<th>TWO</th>
<th>ONE</th>
<th>NONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: iCIMS, Class of 2017 Survey
How to Land an Internship – Tips from Recruiters and College Seniors

In addition to making candidates more competitive in the job market, internships can provide students with the chance to network, learn new skills, and gain “real world” experience in the workplace.

To gain an understanding of how students can search for and land a valuable internship, we asked college seniors how they landed their last internship and employers how they recruit their interns.

**MOST COLLEGE SENIORS SECURED THEIR MOST RECENT INTERNSHIP THROUGH A MENTOR OR A CAREER FAIR**

- A MENTOR OR PROFESSOR: 33%
- A CAREER FAIR OR CAREER SERVICES AT MY COLLEGE: 28%
- FAMILY OR FRIENDS: 13%
- AN EMPLOYER’S WEBSITE: 11%
- ONLINE JOB BOARD: 9%
- SOCIAL MEDIA: 6%

**RECRUITERS LOOK FOR INTERNS ONLINE AND THROUGH REFERRALS**

- MY EMPLOYER’S WEBSITE: 62%
- ONLINE JOB BOARDS: 60%
- EMPLOYEE REFERRALS: 59%
- SOCIAL MEDIA: 37%
- CAREER FAIRS OR CAREER SERVICES AT COLLEGES: 28%
- FAMILY AND FRIENDS: 26%

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**TIPS FOR THE CLASS OF 2017**

Whether you are meeting an employer at a career fair, or having a phone interview with a recruiter – first impressions are crucial! Make sure you practice giving a firm handshake, and maintaining eye contact. If you are on a phone interview, remember how you answer the phone, your tone/energy, and the first few seconds can make or break the interview.

Catherine Panagopulos,
Human Resources Specialist at Smithfield Foods
STEM DEGREES ARE IN HIGH DEMAND
SECTION 5

STEM Degrees are in High Demand

Recruiters Reveal They are Most Interested in Hiring STEM Majors

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors are in high demand, as 61% of recruiters say that are most interested in hiring majors in these fields.

Q: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COLLEGE MAJORS ARE YOU MOST INTERESTED IN HIRING?

- STEM: 61%
- BUSINESS / FINANCE: 55%
- ARTS / COMM. / MEDIA: 48%
- HEALTHCARE / ENVIRONMENT: 36%
- EDUCATION: 19%
- LAW / POLICY: 19%

STEM majors are in great demand, so they often have many choices. They need to cut through the noise and decide what type of STEM job fits them the best. I also think they need to start earlier as the process of talent identification begins in Sophomore year. Working on their soft skills is key, as they typically have the technology skills, but will usually have to work on teams and they need to make sure they can demonstrate these skills and competencies in an interview.

Trudy Steinfeld,
Associate Vice President of Student Affairs & Executive Director of the Wasserman Center for Career Development at New York University

However, only 23% of college seniors surveyed will be graduating with a degree in the STEM industry.

Additionally, STEM industries may need to work harder to close the gender gap. Significantly fewer female college seniors (20%) than male college seniors (29%) would most like to work in STEM after graduation.
STEM Graduates Expected to Be Top Paid in Class of 2017

**STEM Majors Can Expect to Earn More Than Peers**

College seniors earning STEM degrees expect an average of $62,247 versus the overall average of $53,483.

In fact, 97% of college seniors and 88% of recruiters agree that STEM majors will earn more than non-STEM majors for an entry-level job.

While college seniors believe STEM majors will get paid an average of over 40% more, recruiters estimate they would pay 29% more than a non-STEM major.

**STEM Majors Are Expected to Land Jobs More Easily Than Peers**

College seniors (87%) and recruiters (88%) agree STEM majors will have an easier time finding a job after graduation than non-STEM majors.

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**TIPS FOR THE CLASS OF 2017**

We are most interested in hiring STEM majors, specifically those who have strong programming skills. Typically, we find these individuals in computer science, management information systems, business IT, and mathematics/statistics fields. We also hire for business functions as well (sales, marketing, HR, finance, etc.), but these roles are in lesser quantities.

Kayla Woitkowski, Manager of University Outreach and Recruitment at SAS Institute
SECTION 6

HOW TO STAND OUT
Don’t Forget to Follow Up

Job search techniques have changed over the last few decades, but there’s one thing that never goes out of style: the post-interview thank-you note. Sending a thank-you note can make a job candidate stand out and here’s why:

74% of entry-level applicants don’t send a thank-you note after completing a job interview.

“Find a way to follow up. If you think you are qualified and excited about a job, reach out to your network through LinkedIn and other channels and see if anyone works for the company. Send them a note or call them and see if they would be willing to let the recruiter know that you are interested in the job and that they know you. That is usually enough to have them search the applicant tracking system and find your resume.

Trudy Steinfeld, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs & Executive Director of the Wasserman Center for Career Development at New York University

New York University
ABOUT iCIMS
HIRING INSIGHTS

iCIMS Hiring Insights is an online resource for labor market insights and hiring trends. Our team of researchers and writers uses iCIMS’ exclusive data, as well as proprietary and secondary research, to create reports and articles that cover the most recent developments in the workforce. Featuring iCIMS’ Chief Economist, Josh Wright, iCIMS Hiring Insights helps its readers stay well-informed about the latest in recruiting, technology, and the labor market. To learn more visit: www.icims.com/hiring-insights.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This iCIMS Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 401 U.S. college seniors and 401 U.S. HR recruiting professionals between March 6th and 17th, 2017, using an email invitation and an online survey.