

Executive Summary

Wow! The word “wow” probably does not do justice to this year’s developments in the college labor market, but wow. Employers are again reporting strong growth in job opportunities for new college graduates at all degree levels. This year extends eight years of continuous growth, surpassing the stretch between 1996 and 2000 and any other period during the 47 years this report has been produced.

Spurred by business growth, employee turnover, and retirements, job opportunities will expand by 19 percent across all degree levels. Jobs for associate’s degrees are plentiful for applied engineering, computer/IT, health, and applied technicians. Bachelor’s degree opportunities will contribute 17 percent to growth. MBAs and master’s degree graduates can also expect a good array of opportunities.

With this robust hiring outlook and a fast, highly competitive market, employers are facing extensive hiring challenges. Employers indicated they are competing with other businesses to capture qualified candidates. At the other end of the spectrum, employers are seeing too many candidates who lack the soft and technical skills required for the positions offered. Most troubling for employers is the lack of interest from new graduates in the positions offered to them, something employers usually discover after investing time and money recruiting the candidates.

The available positions will go to those who demonstrate the skills, competencies, work attitudes, and professional behaviors employers want. Those who lack experience and are unprepared will likely miss out on this year’s opportunities, no matter how many opportunities are available.

Employers rate this year’s market as a solid “very good,” some believe it is excellent. This overall rating compares to the high ratings reported in 2006-07. Eighty-two percent of our respondents hired at least one new graduate last year; 95% expect to hire at least one graduate this year. For the second year in a row over 50 percent will increase hiring for new graduates this year.

The construction sector heated up over the past year in both residential and heavy construction. Increased demand for labor will continue all across this sector given the catastrophic weather events in September.

Employers are interested in all types of majors with strong interest in those majors typically recruited on many college campuses: engineering, computer science/IT, and accounting. Employers report the greatest difficulty in finding talent in the skilled trades, high skilled medical staff (such as nursing and physical therapy), scientists, and mathematicians.

Nearly 39 percent of employers will increase starting salaries this year, a noticeable decline from last year. Starting salary offers are expected to increase about 4 percent. The number of organizations offering signing bonuses doubled over last year.

This year 3,500 employers provided information for Recruiting Trends 2017-18. Nearly 200 college and university career service offices assisted the Collegiate Employment Research Institute in obtaining participation from employers. Their survey results provided the data for seven to eight short briefs. Each brief focuses on one specific aspect of hiring for the new college labor market. The first five briefs covering the hiring outlook; hiring by sector and region; starting salaries; hiring by academic majors, and internships and co-ops are available at www.ceri.msu.edu.

