

And the Highest-Paid College Majors Are...

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Lauren Weber | The Wall Street Journal – Mon, Apr 29, 2013 5:28 PM EDT

Christine Evans, 22, has wanted to be an engineer since before she can remember.

Her father, a mechanical engineer, encouraged her to attack school projects with a systematic mindset from an early age, and she eventually followed in his footsteps, studying mechanical engineering at the University of Alabama.

The choice has paid off. After graduating this weekend, she'll take a few months off before starting a job at the development company of Exxon Mobil Corp. (XOM) in Houston, Tex., where she'll be earning nearly six figures, she said.

[More from WSJ.com: [Your College Major Is a Minor Issue, Employers Say](#)]

While college majors may seem irrelevant to employers who mainly want to hire young people who can think critically and communicate well, that doesn't mean all majors are created equal.

Engineering grads of 2013, like Evans, will still earn far higher salaries, on average, than the typical new college graduate, according to the latest salary survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers, which releases reports on the earnings of new graduates three times a year.

The average starting salary for a member of the class of 2013 is \$44,928, up 5.3% from the previous year, driven by big gains in fields such as health sciences and business.

But these figures are relevant only for those grads lucky enough to find a job during college-recruiting season or soon after. A recent report from the Department of Labor looked at data from 2007 to 2011 and found that 13.5% of bachelor's degree holders were unemployed a few months after their 2011 graduations (Bleak, but far better than the 17.6% unemployment rate among that group in 2009).

[More from WSJ.com: [Is This How You Talk? Voice and Perceptions](#)]

Engineers took seven of the top ten spots in NACE's April survey, with petroleum engineers—a category added this year—earning the most, with average starting salaries of \$93,500.

The survey is based on data from 400,000 employers, gathered from government and private sources. The data reflects actual starting salaries, not offers.

Other than engineering majors, the list of highly paid grads includes computer science majors, management information systems/business majors, and finance majors.

Engineering salaries rose, on average, 4% over the previous year to \$62,535, but other industries saw larger increases. Those

majoring in health sciences will see a 9.4% increase over last year, while business majors' salaries will rise 7.1%.

The grads seeing the smallest pay bump are humanities and social-science majors, whose starting salaries inched up 1.9%, to \$37,058.

[More from WSJ.com: [Why Annie's Charges More for Mac & Cheese](#)]

In the industry with the most hiring – educational services, which includes teaching and special education, among other professions – employers pay average salaries of \$39,992 to the 455,000 new graduates they hire.

Here's the list of top 10 majors, with starting salaries:

Petroleum Engineering: \$93,500

Computer Engineering: \$71,700

Chemical Engineering: \$67,600

Computer Science: \$64,800

Aerospace/Aeronautical/Astronautical Engineering: \$64,400

Mechanical Engineering: \$64,000

Electrical/Electronics and Communications Engineering: \$63,400

Management Information Systems/Business: \$63,100

Engineering Technology: \$62,200

Finance: \$57,400

Copyright © 2013 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved. /