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**Part II: Recruiting
Challenges, Tough
Positions, Improving
Recruiting and Major
Hiring Outlook**

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Part II: Recruiting Challenges, Tough Positions, Improving Recruiting and Major Hiring Outlook

Introduction

Evidence from national labor market statistics bear out how tough things are. In 2007 the ratio of unemployed to open positions was 1.9 and soared to 6.6 at the depth of the recession. By mid-2018 the ration stood at 0.9 (see Bureau of Labor Statistics). BLS further reports that the pace of hiring just exceeds the rate of employee separation from their organization. While Glassdoor reports about 250 applicants for every corporate position the numbers fluctuate by job function and geographic location. Open nursing positions typically receive 9 to 10 applicants (long haul truck drivers even fewer) while administrative positions receive several hundred, if not more (Department of Labor).

The sustained, often explosive, growth of the college labor market has strained the ability of organization staffing professionals to meet their yearly hiring goals. They face increased competition, lack of qualified candidates, disinterest in the types of positions available or the job's location. For some positions few applicants are available. In an attempt to engage potential candidates, college recruiting staffs are examining their practices and incorporating more transparency at each step of the process.

Part II of the Recruiting Trends 2018-2019 report focuses on the challenges hiring professionals face as they recruit college candidates, the positions proving more difficult to fill, and efforts to improve the recruiting process. Part II will conclude with a look at the hiring prospects for different academic majors.

Our employers. This year approximately 3,300 employers attempted the survey with 2,560 providing enough information to be included in our analyses. Seventy-three percent (1,859 respondents) are recruiters seeking full-time talent or hiring managers overseeing talent acquisition within their organizations. Other contributors include internship and co-op managers (11%), recruiters seeking experienced talent (10%), and those filling short-term assignments of six months or less (7%). The results presented here focus on the information provided in this and subsequent briefs by full-time recruiters, hiring managers, and internship and co-op managers.

The respondents represent the rich diversity of companies and organizations seeking new college talent. Seventy-seven percent represented organizations with fewer than 500 employees: 28%

fewer than 49 employees, 12% 50 to 99 employees and 25% 100 to 499 employees. Large organizations comprised 23% of the response: 19% 500 to 3,999 employees, 9% 4,000 to 24,999, and 6% over 25,000 employees. The number of large organizations is down slightly from levels reported the last two years.

Every major industrial sector (based on major NAIC codes) provided information for this survey. Sectors providing the highest number of respondents included: construction, educational services, finance and insurance services, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and business, professional, and scientific services.

An employer from every state and several territories appeared among the respondents. The respondents were geographically distributed across the country. States providing the highest number of respondents included: California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas, and Wisconsin. (Employers also responded from several foreign countries.)

Challenges Facing the College Recruiter

Recruiters spend a lot of time visiting college campuses, reaching out to students, and querying databases in search of viable candidates. They encounter numerous challenges from competing organizations who are seeking similar talent to lack of interest by students in their positions. Last year we asked respondents to rank order eleven challenges (cited in a recent SHRM study) that they may face. This year respondents were asked to rate how serious a challenge each of the eleven factors are. This simplified the capturing of data, especially from those responding on mobile devices. The three challenges rated very to extremely challenging include competition from other employers, candidates lack the right soft skills (critical thinking, interpersonal, communication, teamwork), and low number of candidates submitting resumes/materials. Moderately challenging factors included the lack of interest in available positions, lack of required credentials, and lack of technical skills. Respondents' average rating for competitiveness of salary offers and lack of work experience found them somewhat challenging. However, wider variation among employers suggested some employers found these two factors much more challenging than others. Finally, several factors appear to be less of a challenge, including job location, not enough diverse candidates and institutions not preparing enough graduates.

Very Challenging	Moderately Challenging	Somewhat Challenging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from other employers • Lack of right soft skills • Low number of applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest in position being offered • Lack of needed credentials • Lack of needed technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive starting salaries • Lack of work experience

Comparisons by organizational size found several significant differences on the challenges they face. Large employers with more than 500 employees felt these challenges as more difficult than small employers: competition from other organizations ($F=6.021, .014$), job location preferences ($F= 9.720, .002$), and lack of diversity ($F=43.113, .000$). For employers with fewer than 500 employees more difficulty was finding candidates with soft skills ($F=6.656, .010$), lack of work experience ($F=4.449, .035$), and low number of applicants ($F=25.128, .000$).

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Different challenges face recruiters from different economic sectors. While any of the challenges can be daunting at a particular time, education hiring managers face an almost endless list of challenges from low number of candidates which is related to institutions not preparing enough graduates, lack of interest in teaching, noncompetitive salaries, poor location options, and lack of new graduates obtaining credentials. All this makes for very competitive labor markets. On the other hand, financial services and companies in the Professional Business and Scientific Services report fewer challenges; both report tough competition and candidates lacking soft skills. Finance and insurance face a further challenge of a lack of interest in available positions while PB&SS report issues in finding enough candidates with the technical skills they need.

Manufacturing is another sector that faces numerous challenges. Competition is intense as organizations circle around the same pool of candidates. Besides needing candidates with more technical skills they also wish they had better soft skills. One of the reasons they may have low number of candidates is that some potential candidates lack required work experience or the candidates do not desire the job locations being offered.

Non-profits main challenge stems from the lower starting salary offers these organizations make. Health services organizations not only face competition for a low number of candidates but they have to find candidates that hold the proper credentials. Candidates in health services often lack the soft skills that are required.

Difficult Talent to Find

The challenges employers face in finding talent translates into difficulty filling certain types of positions. We asked employers to indicate where they were having the most difficulty filling positions. We grouped the options by functional areas. In order to provide a response the employer had to filling a position in that category.

The most difficult positions to fill are in the skilled trades; simply, there are too few candidates and not enough candidates in the training pipeline. Skilled medical positions (nursing, physical therapist and other specialists) also are very difficult to fill. Institutions training skilled medical talent are at capacity. Estimates from several source suggest that 60,000 qualified nursing applicants are denied admittance yearly due to lack of space.



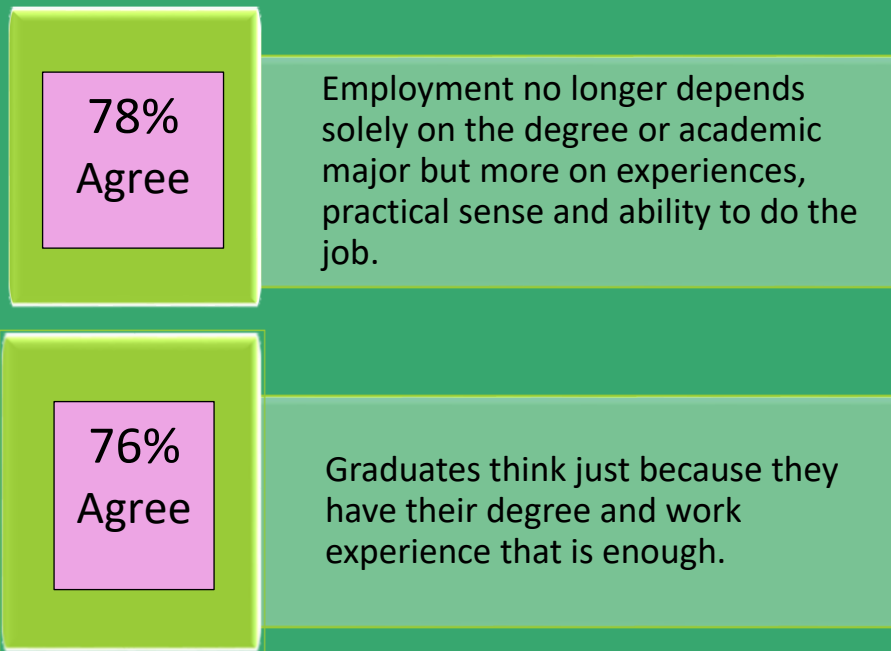
Engineers, scientists, skilled technicians, and construction positions appear to be difficult to fill this year. Somewhat difficult are open positions in computer and IT, as well as education. The remaining positions that respondents consider, including accounting, marketing & sales, human resources, PR and advertising were easier to fill.

Employer Perspective on Talent Acquisition

In our interactions with employers whether it be in focus groups, break-out conversations at meetings or in personal chats after a busy day, our colleagues discuss various aspects of recruiting from a broader perspective than the nuts and bolts of resumes, career fairs, and branding events. Employers are also being probed through various surveys on their perspective on college students. We molded some of their thoughts into statements where respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed. Their responses provide some insights into recruiter thinking at this time.

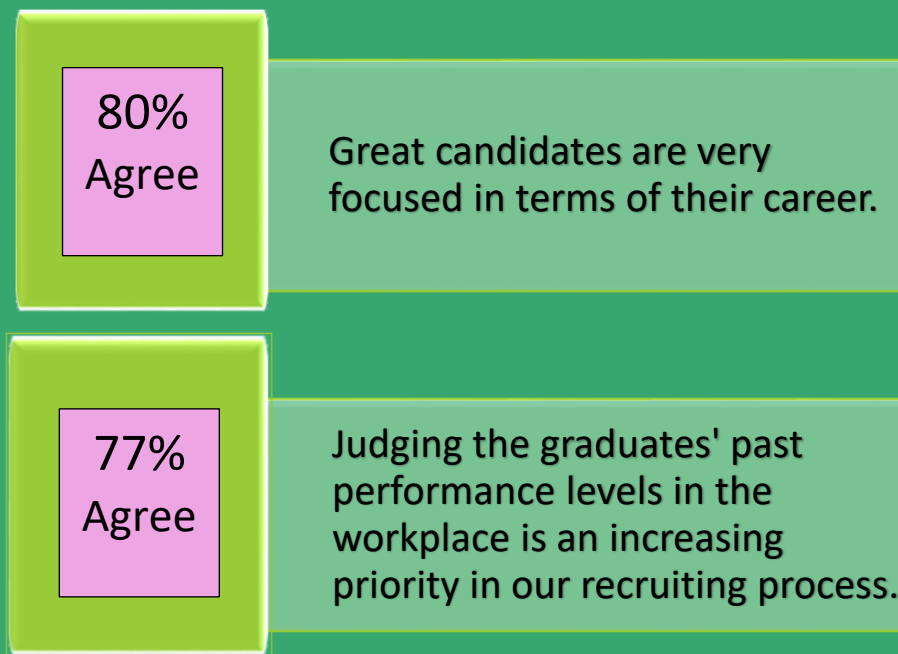
The AAC&U (Association of American Colleges & Universities) released findings from a study of organizational leaders that cast light on the decreasing focus on academic majors. Leaders placed more focus on experience and abilities than specific disciplinary knowledge. At times a gap exists between organizational leaders and the on-the-ground staff actually recruiting. Approximately, 78% agreed that less emphasis is being placed on academic major. Careful consideration is required in interpreting this finding, as recruiters cannot divorce themselves completely from academic majors as some positions require deep disciplinary knowledge. Nursing, engineering, dietetics, and clinical science are a few examples. Yet, for the majority of positions that are being filled, academic major may not be an important criteria.

A second statement covered a topic of deep concern to recruiters. The nine years of strong college labor markets contributes to candidate's believing that they simply have to show up and they will have a job. Graduates who have a degree and work experience think that is enough to obtain the position they want. Seventy-six percent of respondents agree with this statement. Unfortunately, organizations are looking for more than that. Doors may open with a degree and some experience but to grab the golden ring requires much more.

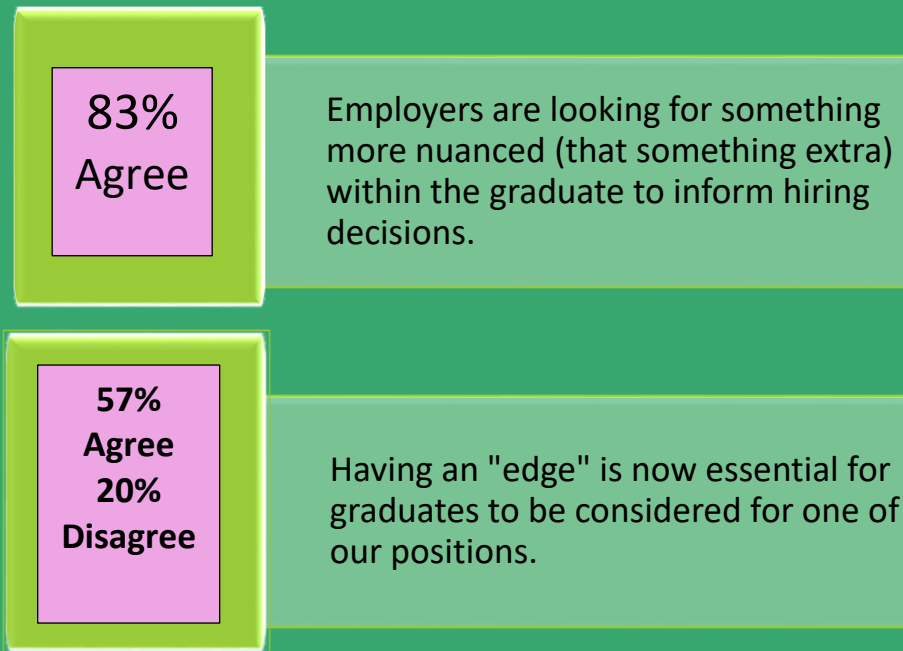


Employers report that the best candidates have direction. Once upon a time, a favorite interview question was “tell me where you want to be in 10 years?” A question difficult to ask when the workplace can change rapidly and often uncertainly. Candidates with a sense of purpose, a short-term plan, of where they are headed are in a better position to navigate the recruiting process. A candidate who just wants a job may struggle to connect with an employer.

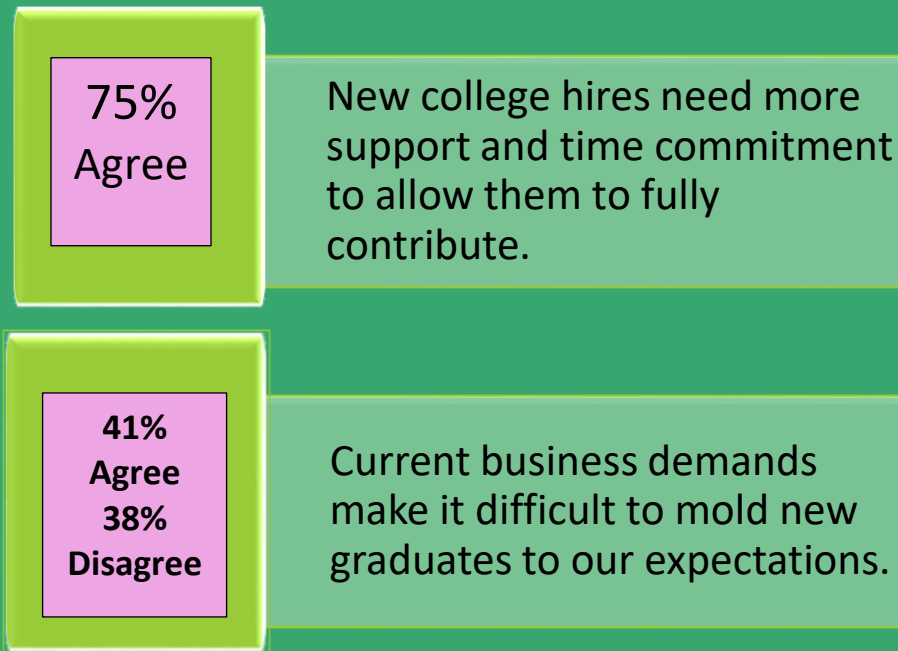
More attention is being paid to candidates’ past work experiences from that freshman cafeteria job through the internship or related professional experience. Employers are probing these experiences to determine how the candidate approaches work, the attitudes they bring, and the value they added through their work efforts. Nothing is being ignored as employers search available evidence to insure a good fit with their organizations.



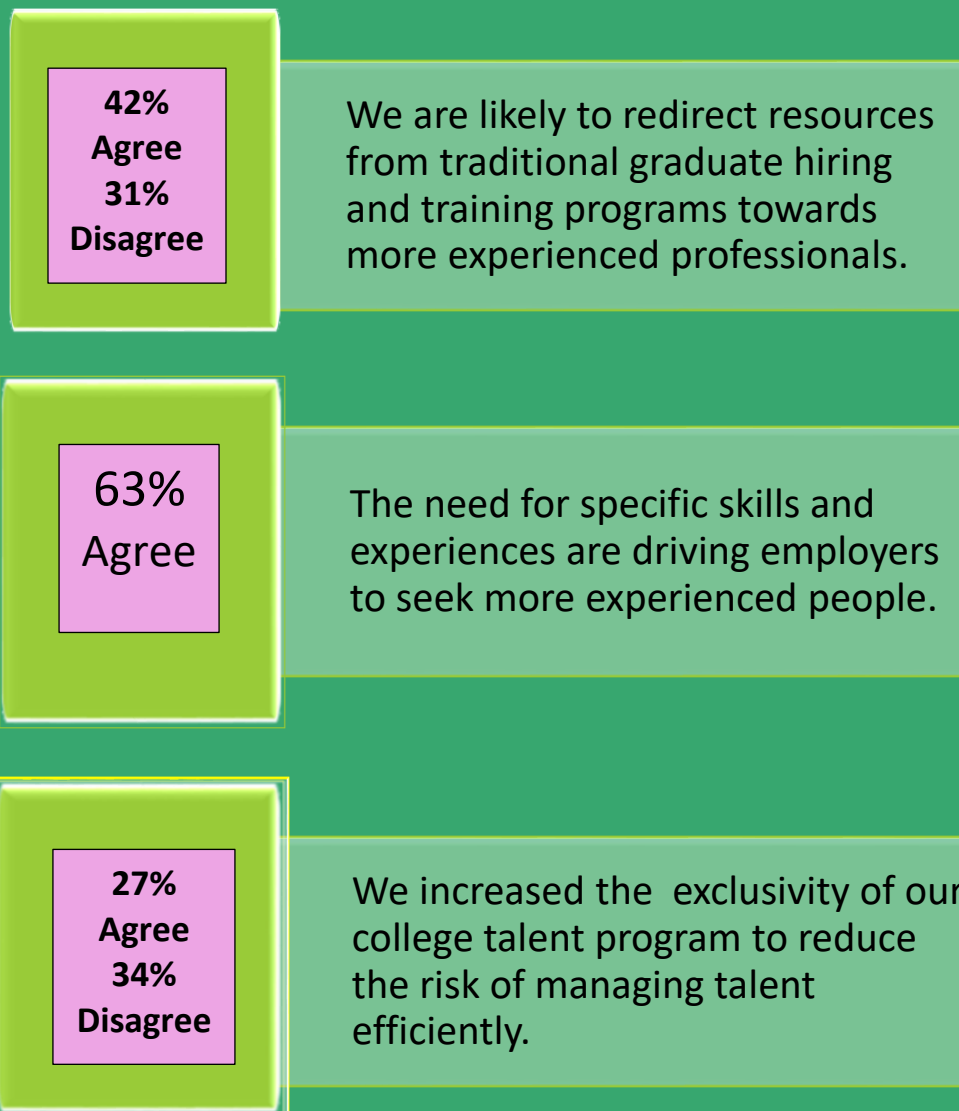
We have already mentioned that it takes more than the degree and an internship to land the job. Employers are looking for something extra in each candidate. What makes them stand out from other candidates? This difference does not have to be large and flashy – just small nuanced behaviors or actions that enhance performance or contribute to leadership.



Employers realize that new college hires require support and attention for them to be able to fully contribute. Employers use various means to bring new hires up to speed. On-boarding and rotational (transitioning through various functional positions) are common. Organizations are also turning to mentors to assist new hires in their adjustment to their assignments and the organization.



Employers show no intention of directing resources away from college hiring efforts in favor of efforts to recruit more experienced hires. Organizations appear to favor expanding the number of colleges and universities they reach rather than becoming more exclusive. Their comments suggest they continue to find highly qualified candidates in places they have ignored in the past.



Improving the Candidate Experience

Qualified candidates can be picky this year, dising an employer for the slightest discretion during the recruiting process. Taking too long to follow-up from a career fair – dropped from consideration. Lack of transparency through the interview process – dropped from consideration. Stalking candidate on social media – dropped from consideration. Many organizations are focusing on improving the candidate experience during recruiting to respond to changing candidate expectations and developing better rapport with their talent pool. The employer discussion groups we follow have offered a number of suggestions on enhancing their recruiting process. We prepared a list based on these suggestions and asked employers to check off the areas they were making efforts to strengthen their college relation programs.

Communications: Students do not hesitate to show their ire when they submit a resume through the college's employment system or directly through the organization's career portal and then never receive a response, nothing, from the employer. The same criticism occurs after career fairs when employers, for whom they may have waited in line all night to meet, never connects afterward. Employers are making efforts to enhance their communication with candidates via: (percentage engaging in the activity in parentheses)

- Improving communication with candidates through the recruiting process and after it is completed (38%)
- Shortening the notification time of the applicant's status even if no longer considering the candidate (29%)
- Presenting a well-designed career site (20%)
- Creating a mobile assisted online experience (11%)

Strategy. Strategies that focus on keeping candidates engaged or respond to candidate's expectations are clearly the focal point of several improvement efforts. While it may seem that employers are contracting with third parties to review resumes, conduct initial interviews, and provide assessments, about one-fifth are actually spending more time reviewing applicant material. Attention is also being given to benefit packages and workplace wellness.

- Making benefit packages more transparent (27%)
- Emphasizing workplace wellness and organization well-being initiatives (23%)
- Spending more time reviewing applicant materials (21%)
- Using social media to provide realistic job previews, on-boarding process, and recruiting procedures (17%)
- Re-engaging candidates initially rejected to build talent pool as well as enhance employer brand (15%)

Technology. If you pick-up any business periodical (Wall Street Journal, Fast Company, and Fortune for example) you cannot miss seeing an article on the advancement of technology in HR. These articles are extremely optimistic that advances in AI, platform integration and software will solve many of the problems plaguing the recruiting process. This optimism needs to be tempered a little as few organizations have demonstrated the value-added by their pursuit of AI and other technologies. Yet, early adopters are out there.

- Relying on new emerging technologies that minimize overlooking qualified candidates (13%)
- Employing augmented reality and virtual reality in recruiting to provide realistic tours and examples of job assignments (4%)
- Using virtual reality at career fairs for employer branding (4%)

- Using YouTube to present information on recruiting process, profile positions, and preview on-boarding (3%)
- Ask applicants to complete AI driven assessments (gaming) to improve organizational fit (3%)

Data. It is surprising for as important as talent acquisition is to an organization, how little information is obtained from candidates on their experiences. Organizations tend to rely on third parties for their information – checking Glassdoor for example. Few organizations document the steps in their recruiting process.

- Checking Glassdoor or similar social network site for insights on candidate experience (20%)
- Quantifying and measuring current candidate experience (12%)
- Mapping/tracking location of events, staffing patterns and technology used (8%)
- Map each step in the recruiting experience as to how candidates' feel (7%)

Hiring Intentions across Majors

The hiring outlook across disciplines with similar academic majors appears strong, especially among organizations that are accepting applicants from all academic majors. We organized this section differently than in the past. Respondents were asked to provide a profile of their new hires according to the academic disciplines they expected to tap into. This profile was built by indicating the percentage of hires expected from each group. Options ranged from not hiring anyone from this group to all hires (100%) from this group. In the next table we have collapsed the composition units into five categories.

Twenty-four percent of employers will be filling 85% to 100% of their hires with candidates from all majors while 29 percent will not have positions open to all majors. Most employers do not exclusively hire from one major. Those seeking to fill engineering and education positions are more likely to focus exclusively on those majors. Yet, among those seeking engineers nearly 30 percent report that engineers comprise 59 percent or fewer of their total expected hires this year. The patterns suggest that employers, regardless if they primarily come to campus for business or engineering candidates, are seeking talent across a wide range of disciplines.

Table 1. Distribution of Potential Hires by Academic Group

Composition of Hiring Pool	Candidates from All Majors (%)	Candidates from Business Majors (%)	Candidates from Computer Science & IT Majors (%)	Candidates from Engineering Majors (%)	Candidates from Communication Majors (%)
Do not hire from this group	29	43	39	46	48
< 29%	29	29	41	19	37
30% to 59%	10	11	10	10	8
60% to 84%	8	8	5	10	3
85% to 100%	24	8	5	15	4

Composition of Hiring Pool	Candidates from Arts & Liberal Arts Majors	Candidates from Science Majors (%)	Candidates from Social Science Majors	Candidates from Health Science Majors	Candidates from Education Majors (%)

	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Do not hire from this group	53	55	63	70	61
< 29%	32	31	23	16	16
30% to 59%	8	7	6	4	4
60% to 84%	3	4	3	3	6
85% to 100%	4	3	4	7	13

Composition of Hiring Pool	Candidates from Data Analytics Programs (%)	Candidates from Ag & Natural Resources Majors (%)
Do not hire from this group	55	71
< 29%	34	19
30% to 59%	6	3
60% to 84%	3	2
85% to 100%	2	5

The next table presents the hiring outlook based on the composition of the talent pool from that academic group. The number of employers becomes too small in some cells to report results. In these few cases the direction of hiring is indicated by UP or DOWN. Also readers should note that large average hires indicate presence of larger organizations represented in the cell compared to very small averages that reflect a larger number of small employers. Small employers are more likely to pull all their hires from a limited number of specific academic groups.

**Table 2. Hiring Intentions by Composition of Hiring Class across Academic Groups
(average hires per organization and percentage change from last year)**

	Candidates from All Majors (%)		Candidates from Business Majors (%)		Candidates from Computer Science & IT Majors (%)		Candidates from Engineering Majors (%)	
	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change
Do not hire from this group	17.9	-3	24.6	16	9.5	5	21.9	17
< 29%	29.7	13	75.6	7	63.8	16	98.8	10
30% to 59%	14.2	NC	23.1	4	18.3	-28	25.7	-17
60% to 84%	25.4	16	19.3	19	115.9	1	42.52	16
85% to 100%	116.9	8	7.9	52	19.4	25	7.1	-3

The only areas of concern show up in the technical areas of engineering, computer science and data analytics for a small group of employers. Positions are being shrunk among employers where this majors comprise 30 percent to 59 percent of the hires.

	Candidates from Comm. Majors (%)		Candidates from Arts & L.A. Majors (%)		Candidates from Science Majors (%)		Candidates from Social Science Majors (%)	
	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change
Do not hire from this group	15.8	11	19.4	2	13.9	9	20.0	8
< 29%	74.2	9	57.4	10	83.5	5	76.9	6
30% to 59%	11.7	19	55.6	11	94.9	34	66.7	25
60% to 84%	7.2	21		UP	12.4	2	27.2	41
85% to 100%	7.6	50	9.7	-7	7.6	2	37.2	6

	Candidates from Health Science Majors (%)		Candidates from Education Majors (%)		Candidates from Data Analytics Programs (%)		Candidates from Ag & NR Majors (%)	
	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change	Av. Hires	% Change
Do not hire from this group	22.3	3	26.4	1	15.6	10	23.7	8
< 29%	93.1	11	44.5	9	72.4	15	93.9	9
30% to 59%	100.2	30	24.5	32	15.5	-45		UP
60% to 84%	19.5	25	133.8	24	187.0	4		UP
85% to 100%	39.8	14	49.6	14		UP	3.4	15