At Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ, the undergraduate class of 2014 did very well on the job market. Nearly three quarters of its 563 graduates are employed while 15% are in graduate school. The majority who’ve found jobs landed impressive starting salaries. Computer science majors, on average, were hired at $71,500, while the high salary for that major was $102,000. Chemical engineers also did well, with average starting salaries...
of $72,100 and a high of $100,000. One reason Stevens students get such well-paying jobs: almost the entire class majors in some subset of engineering or computer science.

Those two majors come out on top in a new large-scale survey, called “2015 State of College Hiring” by Looksharp, a company that runs an entry-level and internship jobs site called Internmatch. It got 46,000 of its users to fill out a 52-question survey about everything from whether they got jobs following their internships (students with paid internships were three times more likely to have lined up full-time jobs than those who did unpaid internships) to how they look for jobs (Google, not surprisingly, is the No. 1 tool). I asked Nathan Parcells, a Looksharp vice president and co-founder of the six-year-old San Francisco startup, to delve into the report and tell me the college majors that led to the highest starting salaries.

I’ve reported on this subject numerous times before, including three stories using data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Surveys consistently show that computer science and engineering are the surest path to the highest pay straight out of college. While NACE’s 2013 survey broke down engineering degrees into its various parts, like petroleum and chemical engineering, and also computer engineering (which focuses more on hardware than computer science), the Looksharp survey lumps engineering into one category, with a $65,000 starting salary, just behind computer science, the No. 1 major at $66,800.

Looksharp covers far more majors than NACE, 22 in all. They include one it calls “psychology and counseling,” another called “architecture and planning,” and a third called “health care.” These are rough categories and they don’t reflect all majors at all colleges. For instance, “communications,” a well-subscribed major my son is considering at UCLA, is nowhere on the list. And UCLA doesn’t have an undergraduate health care major. You can major in architecture there but not architecture and planning. Management is another popular major that lands students well-paying jobs.

Parcells says Looksharp has a database of 1,000 majors and “to make the survey results simpler and more actionable,” its questionnaire asked students about 35 majors and then clumped them into 22 “broad buckets.” In other words, like the NACE table, the survey doesn’t cover every major at every college but it does give a sense of the courses of study that are most likely to result in job offers with substantial salaries.

After engineering comes “mathematics and statistics” with a $60,300 starting salary. Then comes economics at $58,600, and finance at $58,000.

Parcells emphasizes that the list reflects average starting salaries across the country. Employers hiring computer science grads in the San Francisco Bay Area offer an average of $85,000, approaching $20,000 more than the national average and computer science majors who graduate at the top of their class can expect offers “well over $100,000,” he says. Of course the cost of
living there is among the highest in the country.

There are no surprises on this list, except perhaps the fact that “arts” ranks at No. 18 out of 22, with a salary of $41,500, above history and English, which are at No. 20 and 21, with salaries of $40,300 and $39,600 respectively. Usually arts majors are at rock bottom of such lists. This time “social services” is in last place, with a salary of just $34,700.

For all 22 majors and starting salaries, see our slideshow above or our table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Average Starting Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>$66,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mathematics and Statistics</td>
<td>$60,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>$58,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>$58,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>$52,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>$50,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>$49,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>$48,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Architecture and Planning</td>
<td>$47,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>$47,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>$45,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>$44,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>$44,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>$43,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>$42,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The College Majors With The Highest Starting Salaries

1. Harvey Mudd College

20-year ROI: $985,300
Total cost (on campus): $237,700
By this time next month, college applicants will know where they’ve been admitted. The lucky ones will be choosing between more than one school, with a May 1 deadline to put down a deposit. There are many things to consider, from academic requirements to geography to cost to schools’ rankings on various lists, like Forbes’ annual roster of top colleges ([http://www.forbes.com/top-colleges/](http://www.forbes.com/top-colleges/)). When we put together our list, which comes out in July, we take into account a range of attributes, including debt load, graduation rates and student satisfaction. Fifteen percent of our ranking comes from alumni compensation reported on the salary listing website PayScale.

But what if a student is concerned mainly with the money they will earn, compared to the amount they will have to pay to get a degree, which exceeds $200,000 at most private colleges? Today PayScale released its annual list ([http://www.payscale.com/college-roi/](http://www.payscale.com/college-roi/)) of more than 1,200 schools measured purely by the 20-year return on investment (ROI) for Bachelor’s programs.

“We want to ensure when students are making choices about how to fund their education that they have good data around earning potential so they don’t end up with a mountain of debt that they can’t pay off,” says Lydia Frank, PayScale’s editorial and marketing director.

The list is informative, if not surprising. The three schools at the top are elite private institutions that emphasize technology and engineering. No. 1: Harvey Mudd College ([http://www.forbes.com/colleges/harvey-mudd-college/](http://www.forbes.com/colleges/harvey-mudd-college/)) in Claremont, CA ([/companies/ca/](/companies/ca/)), a school with just 807 undergraduates that is part of the five-college consortium that includes Pomona and Claremont-McKenna. According to PayScale, Harvey Mudd’s annual ROI is 8.7% for a total return of $985,300 over 20 years. Harvey Mudd ranks No. 52 on the Forbes list. The total cost of a four-year degree: $237,700.


A school that’s moved up in PayScale’s ROI ranking from No. 9 last year to No. 3 is Stevens Institute of Technology ([http://www.forbes.com/colleges/stevens-institute-of-technology/](http://www.forbes.com/colleges/stevens-institute-of-technology/)) in Hoboken, NJ, with 2,691 undergrads. Focused on technological innovation
since its founding in 1870, it’s named for the Stevens family, whose members
designed the first American-built steam locomotives and the first yacht to win
what is now known as the America’s Cup. The 20-year ROI at Stevens is
$841,000 and the four-year cost for students paying full freight is $232,000.

Seven other schools in the top 25 are exclusive institutions where it’s little
surprise graduates would go on to earn well, including Stanford, MIT,
are geared toward science and engineering. One school I’d never heard of, the
South Dakota School of Mines & Technology is a state school in Rapid City
with an undergraduate population of 2,798. It appears in the top-25 list twice.
In-state grads have the best ROI, at $700,900 after paying a four-year sticker
price of $82,100, placing it in 22nd place. At No. 23 are out-of-state students at
the same school who don’t pay all that much more, at $90,100. Their ROI is
$692,900. Founded in 1885 to service the local mining industry, it now has a
total of 16 academic departments. Among the strongest: mechanical, electrical
and civil engineering. For the right student interested in a STEM education,
it’s a great investment. The school does not appear on the Forbes list of top
colleges because we use something called the Carnegie Classifications of
national universities or liberal arts colleges to make up our pool of 650
schools, a little more than half the number PayScale ranks. Carnegie doesn’t
include specialized schools like the engineering-focused Rose-Hulman
Institute of Technology in Terre Haute Indiana and the Missouri University of
Science and Technology a state school in Rolla, 100 miles southwest of St.
Louis, where the four-year cost for in-staters is $87,000
Promoted Stories

1. Forget the iPhone 7. Next Apple Sensation Revealed, a month ago
   fool.com The Motley Fool Fool.com (sponsored)

2. These weird old tips are better than a facelift, 2 weeks ago
   experienceforwomen.go2cloud.org Experience For Women (sponsored)

3.