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## Class of 2007 Gets Plenty of Job Offers

by Erin White  
Monday, January 29, 2007  
provided by



This year is shaping up as the strongest for college recruiting since the downturn earlier this decade, colleges report. Traditionally heavy recruiters, including management consulting firms, investment banks and accounting firms, are intensifying college recruiting efforts. They're also facing more competition from other employers in such fields as technology, consumer products, government and even nonprofits.

Employers plan to hire 17 percent more graduates from the class of 2007 than they got from the class of 2006, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

That would make this year the strongest job market since 2000-2001, the association says. More than half of the surveyed employers said they planned to increase hiring; only 5 percent planned a decrease. Salaries were forecast to rise 4.6 percent, according to another survey by the same group.

"We now again have the nice problem of having to help some of our students choose among multiple job offers," says Jack Tinker, director of recruiting at the career office of Connecticut College.

Mike Hendel, interim director for the career center at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., says he, too, is counseling students deciding among "two or three really good offers."

Behind the increased recruiting are a relatively strong economy, growing business demands and heady corporate profits. Employers created about 1.8 million additional jobs in 2006. Average weekly earnings rose 4.5 percent, compared with a 3.2 percent increase in 2005.

Some companies are also planning for future work-force needs as the baby boomers' retirement looms. Employers "are finally starting to get the message that [they] really need to do more" with college recruiting as baby boomers age, says Dan Black, director of campus recruiting for the Americas at Ernst & Young LLP.

At New York University, close to 40 percent of seniors have job offers, which is more at this point in the year than in any year since 1998-99, estimates Trudy Steinfeld, executive director of career development. Salaries are up about 5 to 10 percent since last year, and companies are offering bigger signing bonuses -- up to \$10,000, she says.

At the University of Chicago, 119 companies conducted on-campus interviews with seniors during the fall quarter, compared with 93 a year earlier. Employers posted 180 jobs in that quarter, up from 135 a year before. Recruiting mainstays such as management-consulting and financial-services firms are active at Chicago, but so are nonprofits and public-service groups: About 15 such organizations have expressed interest in an April career fair, compared with none at this time last year, says Meredith Daw, co-director of career advising and planning services.

At a November job fair in Boston, the 12 sponsoring schools turned away at least five employers clamoring for space. At the University of California, Los Angeles, officials squeezed 10 additional employers into a job fair last week that they had initially limited to 100 employers. Many of the companies attended a fall fair but need more recruits.

Christopher Bothur, a Connecticut College senior, in the fall accepted a job in an analyst-training program at Deutsche Bank AG. Earlier, he had spoken briefly with the bank about a possible summer internship, but he spent the summer working for the United Nations in China.

When he returned to school, the bank called him, whisked him to New York for interviews and offered him a position that will include stints in New York, London and China. "The job kind of fell into my lap," he says. Mr. Bothur says his base salary alone will be roughly twice as much as it would have been at the think-tank jobs he was considering.

College career counselors say the tone of campus recruiting doesn't approach the dot-com era frenzy, among employers or students. Students saw older friends and siblings suffer through the downturn earlier this decade, and they understand that the job market could tank again. And while the economy as a whole is strong, sectors such as

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\$60,000 in certain markets. Signing bonuses for new college hires in consulting range from \$6,000 to \$10,000 this year, up from \$4,000 to \$8,000 last year, Ms. Borhani says.

Employers also hit campuses earlier. Yum Brands Inc., which markets restaurant chains including Taco Bell and KFC, sent students welcome-back postcards and emails in August, the earliest it has ever started campus recruiting efforts.

"We tried to be there literally the day that they got to school," says Misty Reich, Yum's vice president of global talent management. Recruiters and senior executives soon followed.

Companies are also trying to make their recruiting efforts more personal. The management consultancy Boston Consulting Group sent more young employees to campus this fall to talk one on one about life at the firm.

Personal outreach went a long way to recruit Wayne Vonder Heide, a 21-year-old senior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who recently accepted a management-training position at Kraft Foods Inc. He interviewed with about a dozen companies last fall, mostly for sales positions.

"Just seeing how many jobs are out there was really encouraging," says Mr. Vonder Heide, an advertising major with a business minor. He was confident enough in his prospects that he spurned follow-up interviews with about four companies.

Around Thanksgiving, Kraft offered him a post in Cincinnati. Management trainees contacted him and the company invited him to tour the office there. He met his would-be co-workers; one took him around the city, including neighborhoods popular with young professionals.

"I could really see myself getting up every day and going to this office and getting along well with all of these employees," Mr. Vonder Heide says. "That was a deciding factor."

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