

jobs

petroleum engineering graduates earned the highest salary, \$2,539 per month. Chemical engineers average \$2,256 per month; computer science majors, \$1,908; chemistry majors, \$1,751; accounting, \$1,545; economics, \$1,543; health professions, \$1,492; business, \$1,477; and humanities and social science, \$1,283.

Statistics of starting salaries for UNC graduates support these findings. In a 1981-82 survey, math/computer science majors earned the most per month, an average of \$1,694. Accounting majors earned the next highest salary, \$1,425 monthly, followed by natural science/chemistry majors with \$1,372; nursing, \$1,324; general business, \$1,318; and medical and allied health, \$1,281. Salaries of humanities majors ranked last of the 14 majors listed, \$1,012 monthly.

"We get a whole lot of people in here who regret their liberal arts major," because of the lower salaries and job market trends, said Vicki Lotz, a counselor at Career Planning and Placement Services.

"My friends, at least, say I should be regretting my major," said Carla Lindemann, a senior political science and history major from Norfolk, Va. "They say I'll never do it (find a job). They say, 'good luck,' and tell me the only thing I'll be able to do is teach."

But some students say the recent hiring and salary trends have not discouraged them. "Money isn't the main factor," said Sung-Uk Park, a second-semester senior political science major from Raleigh. "Even if I were offered \$100,000 a year as a computer science major, I couldn't make the four years."

While there are many like Park who prefer a liberal arts education to a technical one, some feel they must defend their majors. "You're

defending yourself all the time as a history major," said Chip Lansden of Memphis, Tenn., who plans on eventually attending law school. "Most people are here to learn job skills. But I try to find a happy medium — learning for knowledge's sake and for knowledge to gain employment."

Major shift

Students' concern with landing a job has changed the focus of college, Harris said. "where before students came to college to be educated, now they want that and marketable skills," she said. For some, in fact, marketability was the major consideration in choosing a major. "I came to college to be able to come out with a skill," said Jerry Tuttle, a junior business administration major from Walnut Cove. "I figured I have a better chance to get a job that way."

The shift in distribution of majors at UNC over the past nine years indicates Tuttle is not alone. In 1972-73, 10.5 percent of all bachelor's degrees were awarded in business administration; 9.9 percent in English; 9.6 percent in political science; 6.3 percent in history; 2.9 percent in chemistry and 1.9 percent in economics.

In 1981-82, however, 18 percent of all seniors at UNC majored in business administration; 4.5 percent in English; 5.2 percent in political science; 2.3 percent in history; 4.3 percent in chemistry; and 4.3 percent in economics.

New image

Despite the trends, Harris said liberal arts majors are not doomed. "There are jobs in history and English," she said. "The problem is demand. Students will have to do everything possible to stand out."

Yet in part, humanities majors have conveyed a less than positive image. "The fear continues

among liberal arts majors," said Daryl Gless, associate professor of English at UNC and a member of a Washington-based task force to promote internships for liberal arts majors. "The problem is not that they can't do things, but that they're trained to think they can't."

Suzanne Garvey, grant coordinator at the Washington Center, an internship referral service for humanities majors, agreed. "In the application process, there's an element of apology among resumes from humanities majors," she said. "Agencies don't want to see people down on their knees, wringing their hands, begging for a job."

Humanities majors have general skills many agencies want, Garvey said. In the State Department and the CIA, two agencies where Washington Center interns are placed, these students are well received, she said. "The CIA is very interested in history majors," Garvey said. "They have a broad, historical military sense and are good at weighing and judging bits and pieces of sometimes contradictory information."

Some liberal arts majors say that while the first job might be more easily landed with a technical degree, placement will even out in the long run. "People might regret (their liberal arts major) now, and they have to work really hard to sell themselves," Park said. "But when we're 30 or 40, things will even out. In fact, humanities majors are often in higher positions by that time, since they are able to understand the broad picture of things," he said.

At AT&T, at least, this is true, Beck said. "On overall ratings of potential for middle management... nearly half (46 percent) of the humanities/social science majors were considered to have potential for middle manage-

ment, compared to only 31 percent of business majors and 26 percent of the engineers," he wrote.

Hiring advice

Before advancing in a career, though, a graduate must be offered an initial position. Recruiters and placement counselors offer some job-seeking advice.

Elder, for example, said flexibility is the key. "It amazes me how many students say, 'I want to stay in Chapel Hill, Durham or the Triangle area,'" he said. "You have to be flexible about your location and you need to think in terms of different careers."

Harris suggested securing as many internships and volunteer and extracurricular positions as possible.

She also said liberal arts majors shouldn't get too discouraged by job statistics for college graduates, since such statistics often portray an unrealistically dismal picture for liberal arts majors. "For most liberal arts majors, it takes a few months after graduation to get a job, since in many cases the job is not related to the major and the student has to look harder," she said. "Yet the statistics incorporate only those job offers received up until graduation."

Humanities majors appear to know the challenge they face. "I'm worried about a job, but I chose speech communications knowing the market was very closed," said Lenora Mitchell, a senior from Fayetteville. "I mean, you have to like what you do and what you're good at."

For Lon Pruitt, a junior political science major from Oxford, job hunting boils down to knowing what you like. "I know eventually what I'm going to do, and in that there's a latent pressure to get a job. But if you can control that pressure, it's not pressure anymore. It's motivation," he said.

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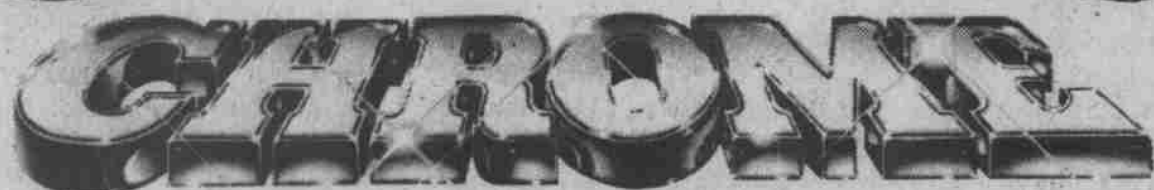
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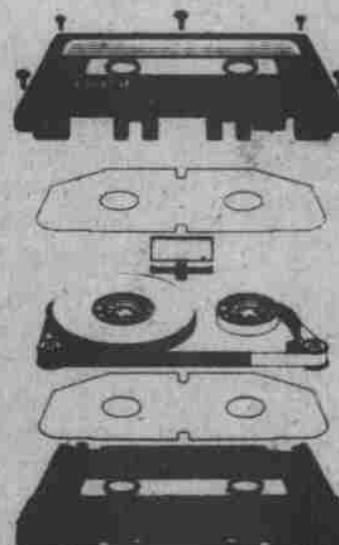
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