

Engineering, Computer-Science Pay More Than Liberal Arts

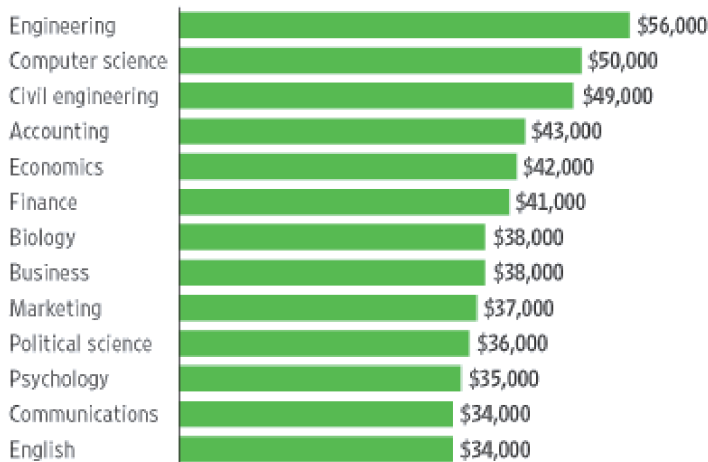
By **JOE LIGHT**

The starting pay of certain liberal arts majors generally clocks in well below that of graduates in engineering fields, according to a Wall Street Journal study.

Graduates with engineering degrees earned average starting pay of \$56,000 in their first full-time jobs out of college, topping other majors. Communications and English majors only earned \$34,000 in their first jobs.

Major Payday

Average pay for respondents' first full-time job out of college, by major



Note: Survey of about 11,000 respondents conducted between April and June of people who graduated between 1999 and 2010. Pay includes salary, bonuses, commission and profit-sharing, and is adjusted to be in 2010 dollars. Margin of error ranges between 0.5% and 5%. Respondents were in a set of jobs deemed satisfying, well-paid and with growth potential.

Source: PayScale.com/WSJ survey

The survey, which was conducted by PayScale.com between April and June of this year, was answered by about 11,000 people who graduated between 1999 and 2010. The reported starting pay was adjusted for inflation to make the salaries of graduates from different years comparable.

The clear career path of engineering and computer science degrees means students often feel pressure to move into those fields, said Katharine Brooks, director of liberal arts career services at The University of Texas at Austin and author of "You Majored In What?"

The pay advantage of graduates with technical degrees often persists throughout their careers, said Fort Collins, Colo.-based career counselor Katy Piotrowski. Although liberal arts majors have a wide range of salaries,

Ms. Piotrowski said that mid-career liberal arts majors she works with in northern Colorado make between \$60,000 and \$70,000. Those with technical degrees make at least \$10,000 more.

Technical majors even have an advantage in fields that are typically hotbeds for liberal arts majors, she said. "Technical degrees are valued in all fields. I've seen a [company] communications department actually prefer that someone have an engineering degree rather than a communications degree," she said.

In the study, among the highest-paying liberal arts majors in the study was economics, at \$42,000.

The most successful liberal arts majors either go to grad school or begin to develop their career through internships while still in school, Ms. Brooks said.

The PayScale survey was done as part of The Wall Street Journal's Paths to Professions project, which looked at a selection of jobs in careers deemed satisfying, well-paid and with growth potential. PayScale surveyed people who hold jobs in industries such as health care, finance and government.

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