The Spring 2016 Salary Survey report provides actual starting salaries (not projections) for the college Class of 2015, and serves as the final salary report for the Class of 2015.

This is the first Salary Survey report that contains comprehensive salary data on multiple degree levels—associate, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral. The figures reported are for base salaries only, and do not include bonuses, commissions, fringe benefits, or overtime rates. The report provides the detailed salaries by academic major at the associate, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree levels, along with breakouts by both geographic region and Carnegie Classification at the bachelor’s degree level based upon the participating institutions. Data were gathered from Class of 2015 graduates through December 30, 2015, and reported to NACE through March 31, 2016.

The salary data presented here were reported to NACE through its national Class of 2015 First-Destination Survey by 279 colleges and universities nationwide, and represent data for almost 470,000 graduates across all degree levels. Most of the analysis provided here, however, focuses on the data provided for more than 243,000 bachelor’s degree graduates. Of those schools providing salary information, 168 provided salary data by specific program or major; this report contains average salaries for 23 majors at the associate degree level, 185 majors at the bachelor’s degree level, 130 majors at the master’s degree level, and 73 majors at the doctoral level. A list of those institutions providing salary data by program or major can be found in the appendix of this report.

Salary Survey (ISSN 1520-8648) is available to individuals holding membership in the National Association of Colleges and Employers; it is also available on a subscription basis. The Salary Survey report is published three times a year—winter, spring, and fall—by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 62 Highland Ave., Bethlehem, PA 18017-9085. For more information, see www.naceweb.org/salary-resources/index.aspx or contact NACE at 610.868.1421.

• NACE RESEARCH STAFF •

Edwin W. Koc, Director of Research, Public Policy, and Legislative Affairs
Andrea J. Koncz, Research Manager
Kenneth C. Tsang, Research Associate
Louisa Eismann, Research Associate
Anna Longenberger, Research Assistant
Class of 2015 bachelor’s degree graduates earned an average starting salary of $50,219—up 4.3 percent from their Class of 2014 counterparts’ overall average salary of $48,127. This final figure for the Class of 2015 is based upon results of NACE’s Class of 2015 First-Destination Survey.

As expected, Class of 2015 bachelor’s degree graduates in the STEM disciplines received the top average starting salaries.

Graduates in the computer sciences fields were the highest paid, with an overall average of $69,214. These graduates held their position at the top as they were also the highest paid in the Fall 2015 Salary Survey report ($65,849). Within this group, those majoring specifically in computer science boasted the highest average starting salary—$75,191—in this report.

Following closely behind with an overall average starting salary of $63,764 were engineering graduates. Out of the nearly 30 specific engineering disciplines that reported at least 50 salaries for the Class of 2015, graduates earning petroleum engineering degrees were the highest paid with an average salary of almost $75,000.

Third on the list of top-paid majors was mathematics and statistics, another STEM discipline. The overall average salary for this group of graduates was $58,554.

While graduates earning bachelor’s degrees in the business fields did not crack the top three on the “highest paid” list, their overall average salary was a respectable $51,452. Business disciplines also had the largest number of reported salaries (18,810), including the top three individual majors—business administration/management, finance, and accounting.

Registered nursing majors were also high in terms of reported salaries. With almost 2,400 individual reports, these majors had an overall average starting salary of $53,683. However, the average salary for the entire category of health professions and related program majors was slightly lower at $49,851.

For graduates who did not major in the STEM, business, or healthcare disciplines, average starting salaries were significantly lower. Social sciences graduates had an overall average starting salary of $40,964, and the average for history majors was $38,936.

Foreign languages ($38,537), visual and performing arts ($38,470), and English ($38,125) majors had very similar overall averages.

With more than 2,000 salaries reported for education majors, this group’s overall average starting salary was $35,686. Within the specific disciplines, teachers of specific subject areas averaged slightly higher starting salaries at $36,526, while salaries for teachers of specific levels and methods ($34,038), and special education majors ($33,947) were just below the overall average.

Among the majors that fell on the lower end of the scale, theology and religious vocations majors had the lowest reported average—$30,584. However, this average was higher than the overall average of $29,100 reported for these majors from the Class of 2014. Also on the modest side were parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies ($34,455), and family and consumer sciences ($32,140) majors.

The next issue of Salary Survey will be published in September 2016 and will provide actual preliminary salaries for Class of 2016 graduates. The Winter 2017 Salary Survey will include projected salaries for the Class of 2017.