

Job market for college grads has 'legs'

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After last year's rollercoaster ride, the job market for college graduates has settled down and appears braced for slow but steady growth, according to Michigan State University's annual Recruiting Trends study.

The survey of more than 3,300 employers nationwide – the largest of its kind – found that hiring is expected to increase a modest 4 percent, across all degree levels, for the current crop of students.

And unlike last year when many employers were overly optimistic with their hiring forecasts – only to pull back on hiring – the job market for 2011-12 seems broader, deeper and more stable, said Phil Gardner, director of MSU's Collegiate Employment Research Institute.

"It looks like this year's market is going to have legs," said Gardner, principal investigator on the study. "Last year it didn't have legs; we saw some aggressive growth early on but then it disappeared."

Gardner said the expected growth cuts across nearly all categories:

BY DEGREE: Hiring for graduates with bachelor's degrees is expected to jump 7 percent, with employers adding 26 new employees on average, while MBAs will see a 6.4 percent increase (more than six new workers on average). Doctorate-degree hiring will see the biggest jump, at 12 percent (more than seven new employees on average), while professional degree holders will see an 11 percent increase (more than seven new employees). Associate's degree hiring will remain unchanged (nearly 11 new employees on average), while master's degree hiring will see a 1

percent decrease (nearly nine new employees on average).

BY COMPANY SIZE: Employers of different sizes plan to hire more grads. Those in the large company category (4,000 or more workers), for example, will increase hiring 6 percent. The exception is midsize companies (501-3,999 employees) where hiring will decrease 3 percent.

BY MAJOR: Hiring will be strong for engineering, computer science, accounting, agriculture sciences and agriculture business, and select science major disciplines. Those with degrees in communications, public relations, marketing, finance and economics also should have more opportunities.

BY INDUSTRY SECTOR: Growth areas include energy exploration, health care, retail, transportation, scientific research, finance and insurance, professional and administrative services, and information, which includes publishing, web content providers and broadcasting.

BY REGION: Hiring will increase in all regions except the Northwest. The south-central region leads the way, followed closely by the Southwest and Southeast. Also, for the second straight year, bachelor's degree graduates in the Great Lakes will see double-digit [hiring](#) growth.

Overall, 42 percent of employers said they plan to hire this year, which would be the highest mark since 2007 when it was 47 percent. Gardner noted, however, that there is still a larger supply of new and recent graduates than there are open positions.

He remains cautiously upbeat.

"I'm optimistic that the expansion of the college labor market can last all year, and can set the table for the next few years to come," Gardner said. "But that doesn't mean that the wheels can't come off. There are huge

problems out there – from the economic problems in Europe to the debt crisis in the United States to next year's election – that could really disrupt this."

Provided by Michigan State University

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