



Five degrees employers want the most



Want to know which college degrees get two thumbs up from employers? Check out these top degree picks from HR experts.

By Terence Loose

Are you thinking of going back to school to earn your degree, but wonder which degrees are at the top of employers' must-have lists? We wondered, too. So we talked to two human resources experts to find out what degrees they say are trending now - and will be for a while to come.

The first expert we talked to, Vicki Lynn, was straight to the point: "While I love the liberal arts, I would steer people away from majors such as history, anthropology, and sociology."

Unless you have a higher degree like a master's or Ph.D., it's hard to find jobs with those degrees, according to Lynn, who's senior vice president of Universum, a global talent recruiting company that works with many Fortune 500 companies.

"You've got to look at degrees that produce marketable skills immediately upon graduation," says Lynn. For example, she suggests degrees like engineering, accounting, computer science... well, we'll get to all that below.

We next called Susan Heathfield, a management consultant and About.com's Guide to Human Resources. She echoed Lynn's advice to seek practical degrees that result in marketable skills.

"English, literature, philosophy, they're all great. Just not if you want to be competitive in today's job market," Heathfield says. Like Lynn, she was hot on math and science-based degrees.

Sensing a theme here, we asked them about specific degrees that they think have the best shot at making you more employable.

Keep reading for five of their degree picks.

Hot Pick #1: Bachelor's in Business Administration



Looking for a degree that the hiring experts say is about as versatile as they come? Look no further than a bachelor's in business administration. In today's world you'll need business skills in any career you pursue, according to Lynn.

If you're wondering what you'll study as a business major, the College Board - an educational organization that administers aptitude tests like the SAT - says business administration and management students could learn how to "plan, organize, direct, and control an organization's activities." For that, you could take courses like financial management, business policy and strategy, business ethics and law, and human resources management.

The Expert's Take: "I meet with all kinds of companies and they hire lots of business majors," says Lynn. "They like them because they understand the value chain, they know how to read a spreadsheet, they know how to read a profit and loss statement, and they understand strategy. These are high-paying positions with terrific opportunities."

[Click to Find the Right Business Administration Program Now.](#)

Potential Career: Even better, a bachelor's degree in business administration could help prep you to pursue a career as a financial analyst, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. But be aware that some employers could require candidates to have a master's in business administration or finance.

Financial Analyst Median Annual Wage: \$75,650*

Average Wage for Workers in the 10th percentile: \$46,300

Average Wage for Workers in the 90th percentile: \$145,580

Hot Pick #2: Bachelor's in Health Care Administration



Want a degree related to an industry that both the U.S. Department of Labor- *and* our HR experts - are optimistic about? Try a bachelor's in health care administration.

For one, it's in the health care field, which - along with the social assistance industry - the Department of Labor projects will create about 28 percent of all new U.S. jobs from 2010 to 2020.

As for the degree itself, if you pursue a bachelor's in health services administration, you'll likely study current and important topics like how to make health care more affordable and universal, according to the College Board. It says common courses could include health care law (talk about topical...), human resources management, economics of health care, and accounting.

The Expert's Take: "No matter what happens politically, most Americans think we need to repair health care," says Heathfield. "So I think in any case, good health care management will be needed in the future."

Heathfield adds that because this degree also teaches skills in accounting, business, and human resources management, these graduates could also be in demand in other businesses as managers of people or finances.

[Click to Find the Right Health Care Administration Program Now.](#)

Potential Career: Talk about a hot degree: According to the Department, a bachelor's in health administration could help you gain the knowledge to prepare to pursue a career as a medical and health services manager.

Medical and Health Services Manager Median Annual Wage: \$86,400*

Average Wage for Workers in the 10th percentile: \$52,730

Average Wage for Workers in the 90th percentile: \$147,890

Hot Pick #3: Bachelor's in Accounting



Do you picture yourself one day working at a major business firm, giving fiscal advice to upper management? A bachelor's in accounting might help you gain the edge that gets you heard in the boardroom.

That's because accounting majors study something that every business must deal with: how to manage money and balance the books. According to the College Board, this major is also big on teaching students how to prepare tax filings - another function that could be important to businesses. To prepare for all these duties, accounting majors typically take courses in accounting as well as business law, auditing, and tax accounting, says the College Board.

The Expert's Take: "We work with major firms - Deloitte, Ernst & Young, and KPMG - and they can't find enough talent in accounting," says Lynn, who names accounting as one of her top hot degrees. "Plus, you could work anywhere and for a variety of different businesses," adds Lynn.

[Click to Find the Right Accounting Program Now.](#)

Potential Career: How can this hot degree prepare you for the financial world? According to the U.S. Department of Labor, "most accountants need at least a bachelor's degree in accounting or a related field."

Accountant Median Annual Wage: \$62,850*

Average Wage for Workers in the 10th percentile: \$39,640

Average Wage for Workers in the 90th percentile: \$109,870

Hot Pick #4: Bachelor's in Communications



Facebook, Twitter, Instagram... What do all these have in common - besides taking up your free time? They are all modes of communication. And as you know, they are also all super hot right now. This is a big reason why a bachelor's degree in communications - as long as it includes an emphasis in marketing - gets both our experts' endorsements.

Communications majors might learn how to communicate a company's messages to consumers, among other duties, says the College Board. They could also gain professional writing, editing, and speaking skills through classes like public relations writing, writing for business and technology, business communication, and advertising and marketing communications.



The Expert's Take: "Social media marketing is huge and will be for a long time," says Heathfield. "Every company looking for marketing people puts an emphasis on these skills."

Lynn agrees, echoing that this degree's popularity has changed with the times and is now in demand thanks to the craze for social media.

[Click to Find the Right Communications Program Now.](#)

Potential Career: Intrigued by this in-demand degree? According to the U.S. Department of Labor, one career path for this degree is public relations manager. In fact, they say a bachelor's degree in communication, public relations, or journalism is typically required to prepare to pursue a public relations management position.

Public Relations Manager Median Annual Wage: \$93,310*
Average Wage for Workers in the 10th percentile: \$50,360
Average Wage for Workers in the 90th percentile: \$176,400

Hot Pick #5: Bachelor's in Computer Science



Are you interested in learning how computer programs work? You could have the makings of a computer science major. And that could have the makings of a promising career, according to Lynn, who likes what this degree tends to teach.

According to the College Board, as a computer science major, you could study everything from the theory and design of software to the programming of computers. Typical coursework might include artificial intelligence, computer system organization, digital system design, and software engineering.

The Expert's Take: "Every company I talk to needs software engineers, and they will pay a premium," says Lynn. "They'll pay a fortune for a bachelor's degree [holder] in computer science. Some of these salaries, with perks and bonuses, are over \$100,000."

Of course, keep in mind that pay will vary by a variety of factors, including experience and location - to name just a few.

[Click to Find the Right Computer Science Program Now.](#)

Potential Career: Check out what the U.S. Department of Labor has to say about this hot degree: A bachelor's in computer science could prepare you to pursue a career as a software developer.

Software Developer, Systems Software Median Annual Wage: \$96,600*
Average Wage for Workers in the 10th percentile: \$62,470
Average Wage for Workers in the 90th percentile: \$147,030

**Unless otherwise noted, all average wage information comes from the U.S. Department of Labor using May 2011 data (visited July 18, 2012). Average wages for all careers will vary by factors such as experience and location.*

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