

The Geosciences as an Employment Opportunity

Each quarter, the National Association of Colleges and Employers publish a listing of "Average Yearly Salary Offers" for Bachelor's degree candidates. The data presented in the graph below were taken from their Salary Survey for Fall 2005 and is derived from a total of 20,607 job offers compiled over seventy-nine employment categories. The salary data are displayed in rank order.

Interestingly, students graduating with a Bachelor's degree in geology and related sciences reported an average annual offered salary of just under \$40,000 ranking this job category at a respectable 52nd percentile. For comparison, biological/life sciences (\$31,713, 26th percentile) and chemistry (\$38,635, 48th percentile) fell below geology. Conversely, physics majors received significantly higher offers (\$44,700, 71st percentile).

Environmental science/studies majors fell far below students in the other sciences in attracting competitive starting salary offers (\$29,920, 12th percentile). From the data, it is unclear to what extent this low average salary is driven by students with non-technical degrees that focused on public affairs or public policy.

Education majors with secondary certification received an average offer of \$31,845 falling at the 26th percentile - nearly identical to biology majors. Perhaps not surprisingly the highest salaries were predominantly in the fields of computer and chemical engineering, with the highest average salary offer going to petroleum engineers at \$62,236.

Of course, when considering data of this type it is important to look not only at the average salary offered, but also the number of employment opportunities within the job market. From the data compiled by NACE, there were 48 job offers for geology majors, compared to 34 for physics, 73 for chemistry, and 279 for biology. Environmental sciences/studies majors for the institutions represented received 43 offers, while there were 161 opportunities for secondary educators across all disciplines.

While the job market for science majors is soft relative to those students studying in the professional schools of business and engineering, it is clear from these data that students majoring in geology can look forward to the possibility of a competitive starting salary.

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