energize
EV

HBJ HARTFORD BUSINESS
CONNECTICUT'S BUSINESS NEWS

ECONOMY & LABOR | POLITICS & POLICY | SUBSCRIBER ONLY

Needy CT employers offer receptive job market to 2019 college grads

BY NATALIE MISSAKIAN
MAY 9, 2019

1 of 2



UConn hosted a career fair at Gampel Pavillion in April, which drew 138 employers — about a dozen more than last year, underscoring companies' talent needs. PHOTO | CONTRIBUTED

Alex Argueta earned his bachelor's degree from UConn this month, but he nailed down a full-time human resources job with Aetna in downtown Hartford back in November.

See if you qualify
energize
EV

HBJ HARTFORD BUSINESS
CONNECTICUT'S BUSINESS NEWS

In-demand skills

According to the UConn Center for Career Development, employers consider the following eight skills essential when considering new employees for their workplace, regardless of field of study or degree earned.

- Critical thinking/problem solving
- Oral/written communications
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism/work ethic
- Self-awareness and career management
- Global perspective

A new report shows he's graduating at the right time. Nationwide, members of the class of 2019 are entering the brightest job market in years, according to a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

The survey, released in April, found employers planned to hire nearly 11 percent more graduates from the class of 2019 than they did from the class of 2018, the highest increase since 2011. Just a year ago, employers responding to the survey were planning an overall 1.3 decrease in college hiring, the report said.

Officials with area universities say that positive outlook is ringing true even in Connecticut, where economic growth has lagged behind other states and unemployment remains higher than the national average at 3.9 percent.

ADVERTISEMENT

energize EV

HBJ HARTFORD BUSINESS
CONNECTICUT'S BUSINESS NEWS



Brooke Penders, Executive Director of Career Services, University of Hartford

"We are absolutely seeing the same uptick (in hiring) that the national numbers are reflecting," said Brooke Penders, executive director of career services at the University of Hartford.

Employers responding to the NACE survey cited an improved economy, company growth, anticipated retirements and a focus on early talent and succession planning as factors driving the increase in new hires. Others said they planned to convert more of their interns to full-time employees.

While Connecticut's economy grew by just 1 percent in 2018, placing it 44th in the nation, officials with area universities said the slow recovery has not affected the hiring of new college graduates, who are typically less expensive and can offer fresh ideas and innovation.



Jill Koehler, Associate Dean for Career Development, Quinnipiac School of Business

"When we saw a downturn in the economy we did not suffer with our placement. Our students were still getting jobs," said Jill Koehler, associate dean for career development at the Quinnipiac School of Business.

ADVERTISEMENT

HBJ HARTFORD BUSINESS
CONNECTICUT'S BUSINESS NEWS

Off
this year,
than they have in the past.

"This was a record year for us for employers being on campus," said UConn Assistant Vice Provost James Lowe, executive director of the university's career-development center.



James Lowe, Assistant Vice Provost and Executive Director, UConn Center for Career Development

He said there were 138 employers at the Storrs campus in April for the university's annual spring career fair, about a dozen more than last year.

At the University of Hartford, Penders said fall recruitment has been trending upward, and she's predicting companies will increase hiring activity even more for the class of 2020.

ADVERTISEMENT

Likewise, the number of recruiters participating in campus career fairs at Quinnipiac's business school was up by more than 20 percent, said Koehler.

She said the number of recruiters returning to campus to interview students also increased.

"It's like the companies are really finding that they had more needs than they expected," Koehler said.

UConn graduate Argueta landed his position with Aetna's competitive HR Leadership Development Program after first connecting with the company at a campus career fair last fall.

"I attended their information sessions on campus and connected with two of their recruiters. I think that helped me a lot in the process," said the 21-year-old from Stamford.

See if you qualify
energize
EV

By HBJ HARTFORD BUSINESS CONNECTICUT'S BUSINESS NEWS
10.

Argueta said his early job offer was not unusual at UConn, where he interned in the Office of Career Development. Most of his friends had their job plans sewn up long before collecting their diplomas. The exceptions were those choosing to postpone employment to pursue advanced degrees, travel or volunteer.

"There's not a lot of uncertainty," said Argueta, a psychological sciences major who also had offers from two other companies — a staffing firm in his home city and another in Boston.

In-demand skills

With more students receiving multiple offers, UConn's Lowe said larger companies are increasingly spending time on campus year-round, hosting meet-and-greets and other events to keep new and prospective hires interested.

"Even when their cohort is full and their hiring is done, they're staying actively engaged on campus because they want to be in front of prospective students for future hiring. There's a big focus on branding," he said. "It's something they didn't have to do 10 years ago when students were only getting one offer."

Graduates with business, engineering and computer-science degrees continue to be in the highest demand nationwide, according to the NACE survey, with finance majors sought after most in New England and the nation.

But area career counselors say employers are increasingly searching for students with internship, co-op or leadership experience, regardless of major. Companies also want students who can think critically, solve problems, communicate well and work on a team.

Penders, of the University of Hartford, said that is especially true for many of the new technology startups cropping up in Hartford.

"Manufacturing, digital technology, insurtech and fintech are great fits for those engineering and business majors, but we're finding that those employers are equally interested in making sure they have people with transferable skills," she said.

Quinnipiac's Koehler said students who are technology savvy and who know how to analyze data will have a leg up in the job market, regardless of major or industry.

"If I could encourage all my students to take a minor, it would be in business analytics," she said.

John Bau, career development director for Quinnipiac's engineering school, agreed.

"Whether it's on the factory floor or processing insurance claims, everyone's using data to drive decision-making," he said. "It's no longer becoming just a niche thing that one person does in a corner."



Lea HBJ HARTFORD BUSINESS CONNECTICUT'S BUSINESS NEWS