

The Top 5 In-Demand Majors

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What's on employer wish lists? Based on the latest job-offer facts and findings, the most in-demand bachelor's degrees may surprise you, or even have you reconsider your chosen field of study.

The following list highlights the top five in-demand [bachelor's degrees](#) according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Spring 2008 Salary Survey, with starting salaries. Job descriptions are based on details provided by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics.

1. Mechanical Engineering (\$57,821)

[Mechanical engineers](#) are curious about how things operate. Professionals in this broad discipline research, design, develop, and test tools, machines, and mechanical devices. Along with a knack for science and math, engineers need strong oral and written communication skills.

While most entry-level mechanical [engineering](#) positions require a bachelor's degree, continuing education is critical -- protecting engineers from potential layoffs or cutbacks.

Job outlook: As more engineers retire, and many professionals transfer to managerial positions, job opportunities are good.

2. Accounting (\$47,429)

For those who delight in number crunching, a [bachelor's degree in accounting](#) can lead to occupations in financial and investment planning, budget analysis, tax preparation, bookkeeping, payroll services, and auditing. Opportunities are often best for CPAs, MBAs, or professionals proficient with accounting software.

[Accountants](#) ensure that a firm is run efficiently and records are kept accurately. Expect long hours -- especially around tax season.

Job outlook: Thanks to retirees and a faster-than-average job growth due to new business and changing financial laws and regulations, accountants can enjoy favorable job opportunities.

3. Finance (\$48,616)

Financial analysts and personal [financial advisors](#) gather and analyze financials and provide investment guidance to businesses and individuals. They must feel comfortable with money markets, tax laws, and the workings of the economy, and have good communication skills to explain complex strategies and concepts.

A [bachelor's degree](#) will get your foot in the door, but additional certifications or an [MBA](#) is a plus. Many finance professionals opt to open their own business; almost a third of personal financial advisors are self-employed.

Job outlook: Personal financial advisors are projected to be among the 10 fastest-growing occupations. Though job growth is strong across the board, competition is still keen for finance positions.

4. Business Administration/Management (\$44,195)

Business administration professionals may work as contract administrators, facility managers, or administrative services managers in the private industry and government, where they keep offices running efficiently, conducting records management to administration to telecommunications to support services.

Leadership and communication skills are as valuable as flexibility, and being detail-oriented, and decisive. Experience can get business administration professionals promoted in smaller organizations, while formal education credentials -- including advanced degrees -- are beneficial to advancement in larger organizations.

Job outlook: Jobs are projected to grow as quickly as average among all occupations. Competition for top-level business administration management jobs will be high while more opportunities will exist for lower-level management jobs and facility managers.

5. Civil Engineering (\$50,940)

Civil engineering is considered one of the oldest engineering disciplines, attracting those who are analytical by nature. [Civil engineers](#) design and supervise the construction of highways and byways -- from roads and bridges to tunnels and dams -- and work in fields such as water resources and structural concerns.

These professionals must simultaneously be inquisitive, detail-oriented, and interested in the big picture. In their designs, civil engineers must consider potential environmental hazards, construction costs, and government regulations that can affect their creations. [Bachelor's degrees](#) are required for most entry-level jobs and continuing education is critical as new technologies emerge.

Job outlook: Employment growth for civil engineers is expected to move at a pace that is faster than the average for all occupations.

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