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# Computer science grads fielding 'multiple job offers'

## Open tech jobs outnumber the current crop of computer science graduates, industry watchers say.

By [Ann Bednarz](#), Network World  
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It's a good time to be a [computer science major](#). Job prospects are rosy for today's graduates, who are entering the workforce at a time when tech hiring is on the rise and talent is hard to find.

"We've calculated that there are about two to three open jobs for every computer science grad this year," says Alice Hill, managing director at job site Dice.com.

"We're job-rich, candidate-starved right now," says Stephen Kasmouski, partner and general manager of the software technology group at recruiting firm Winter, Wyman. "The supply and demand has shifted dramatically, and it has shifted very quickly relative to what happened coming out of the last dot-com recession."

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Tech unemployment today is hovering around 4%, while the national unemployment average across all industries is 9%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Moody's Analytics is forecasting that 138,000 technology jobs will be added between the fourth quarter of 2010 and the fourth quarter of this year. Combined with earlier gains, that means tech companies will have created 164,000 new jobs since the job count stopped falling in the first quarter of 2010. (There's still a ways to go before returning to pre-recession job levels, however. Between mid-2008 and early 2010, the tech industry shed 309,000 jobs, according to Moody's.)

With more than 80,000 current listings, the number of tech and engineering jobs posted on Dice.com is up 60% compared to two years ago. New blood is needed to help fill these positions, but the supply of talent graduating with computer and information sciences degrees is inadequate.

In 2004, roughly 60,000 computer-related bachelor's degrees were conferred, says Hill, citing U.S. Department of

Education statistics. That number fell to about 38,000 in 2008.

Over the last two years the trend has reversed. The Computer Research Association reports that the number of undergraduate degrees earned in U.S. computer sciences departments has been rising for two years, climbing 9% in 2010. The total number of new students enrolling in U.S. computer science programs also increased for the third straight year.

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Even though the number of people opting for computer science degrees is rising, "it's still a small population compared to the need," Hill says.

Across college campuses, professors and academic representatives painted a picture of growing demand for new graduates in Dice.com's latest research report, titled "[America's Tech Talent Crunch](#)."

"I can't tell you the last time I had a student, even some of our poorer students, tell me they had trouble finding a job," said Dr. Tim Lindquist, a professor of computer science and engineering at Arizona State University's Polytechnic College, in the Dice.com report. "None of our graduates have trouble getting jobs, and we have weekly requests, very consistent, looking for people."

"There are easily two or three jobs for every computer science grad. Easy," says Anne Hunter, academic administrator for the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "There's definitely an emerging tech boom."

For its research Dice compared the number of open tech jobs to the number of computer-related graduates and found that 18 states and Washington, D.C., have fewer graduates than open jobs. (See also: [Where are all the tech jobs?](#))

These talent shortages are not only in tech-centric areas such as Silicon Valley but also in states that aren't obvious tech magnets, such as Arizona. "The recovery, which started in the big areas like Silicon Valley, has now spread to all of these other places," Hill says. "That's true for new grads as well as for any tech pro looking for a job."

This gives new grads an advantage that has been scarce in recent years: leverage.

"If you're a computer science degree holder, this is probably the best year to negotiate hard and maximize that first starting salary," Hill says. "The jobs are there, and it's really a good position to come from when you're negotiating."

That hasn't been the case in recent years. Nationwide, the average salary of a technology professional with less than two years experience fell 3% in 2009 and another 3% in 2010. This year the average entry-level technology salary is \$47,000 - and likely to climb. "We definitely think the decline will stop," Hill says.

There's also some good news for experienced tech workers, who haven't fared very well on the salary front in recent years, either. The average technology professional's salary has been [essentially flat for the last two years](#), inching up from \$78,845 in 2009 to \$79,384 in 2010, Dice reports. On the positive side, 49% of tech pros received a salary increase and 29% got a bonus in 2010, compared to 36% who got raises and 24% who got bonuses in 2009.

## Poaching season

The technology talent gap isn't likely to shrink this year or anytime soon - which puts companies at risk of having their best [IT people poached](#).

The majority of candidates who are working with recruiters like Winter, Wyman are tech professionals who have

jobs but are looking for better positions.

"Ninety percent of our candidates are passive job seekers. They're hunkered down somewhere working," says Winter, Wyman's Kasmouski. "There are enough opportunities out there, and enough of a variety of them, that all of a sudden people are realizing they could get a job closer to home, or they could work with a technology they've wanted to work with."

Dice.com's Hill agrees.

"A lot of people rode out the recession - they didn't see their salaries go up, they didn't really get to do a lot of the cool projects that companies put on hold, and they're also often doing the job of a couple of people because of deferred hiring. Now they've got a chance to look and see what other greener pastures are out there," Hill says.

Now that employers have the green light to do some hiring, they're scrambling to attract the right talent. "It's a big climate for poaching and an opportunity for employees to negotiate some [additional perks](#) or get involved in a better project," Hill says.

For new computer science grads, the timing couldn't be better. "We're starting to see a lot of computer science grads getting multiple job offers. A couple of years ago, people were worried if they would ever be able to start paying off their student loans," Hill says. "It has really turned around."

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