

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## WHERE COLLEGE SENIORS ARE FALLING SHORT

*Expected graduates are ill-prepared for the job hunt and many coveted positions, a survey finds*

By Kelsey Gee  
April 25, 2017

Parents rejoice: 2017 is shaping up to be another healthy year for college hiring.

The latest forecast from the National Association of Colleges and Employers finds that employers expect to hire 5 percent more graduates than they brought on last year, the eighth year in a row that companies say they are increasing their college hires.

Yet a separate survey of employers and college seniors suggests that, when it comes to courting recruiters, the Class of 2017 has some homework to do.

This year's job-seeking seniors are ill-prepared for the job hunt and many coveted positions, concludes a survey of roughly 400 employers and 400 college students conducted by iCIMS Inc., a recruiting-software company. Among other things, employers reported that one-third of all applications for entry-level roles come from unqualified candidates.

More than 60 percent of employers in the survey said applicants ought to be more familiar with the company and industry, and must ask better questions in interviews. Plus, those employers say, three out of four applicants fail to send thank-you notes after interviews.

The mismatch extends to **hard skills**, too. Engineering, business and computer science majors are in highest demand, with at least two-thirds of employers seeking graduates in those fields, according to NACE. But fewer than half of the students surveyed by iCIMS majored in those subjects.

College seniors feel good about their prospects: more than 90 percent of the students surveyed by iCIMS reported feeling confident about their interview skills. They also expect to earn over \$53,000 in their first job, compared with average salary of \$45,000 that recruiters expect to pay for those positions.

While new grads have a "bloated" sense of their abilities, employers too have unrealistically high expectations for 21-year-olds, said Susan Vitale, chief marketing officer for the Matawan, N.J.-based iCIMS. "Hiring managers tend to be a little crazy in their experience requirements, speaking as one myself."

Unlike many employers, Enterprise Holdings Inc. doesn't expect college hires to arrive at work with all the exact skills they need.

The car-rental company will hire roughly 10,000 college grads for its entry-level management training program this year. Those management trainees will be put on a two-year career-development program, where they will learn on the job, said Marie Artim, the car-rental firm's head of talent acquisition.

"This is a generation that's grown up with syllabuses and structure," which makes them a good fit for such programs, Ms. Artim said.