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April 14, 2005 (12:33 PM EDT)

## Tech Grads Face Strongest Job Market In Five Years

By [W. David Gardner](#), [TechWeb.com](#)

With college commencements approaching, graduates with computer, engineering, or IT experience have reason to be optimistic about their employment prospects, a Michigan State University survey reports.

The job market for June graduates looks bright for the first time in years, since 2000, in fact. Moreover, the most coveted gift among prospective grads is-- what else--a computer to start them off on their journey.

"Computer science and IT-related majors will see an increase in opportunities for the first time since the collapse of the dot.com sector," stated Dr. Philip Gardner, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute (CERI) at Michigan State University. "The information services sector is still facing hard times with overcapacity in the telecommunications sector and limited growth in on-line businesses."

Gardner's report on recruiting trends appears in [CollegeJournal.com](#), a career-oriented site offered free to college and graduate students.

As for the perfect gift for the graduate, Circuit City Stores polled 2,600 college students in its "Just what I needed for graduation" survey. The big box retailer found that 49 percent of college students selected a computer as the best graduation gift. Also scoring high were digital cameras, 27 percent; audio systems, 15 percent; and televisions, 10 percent.

Among college-bound high school graduates, 86% also picked computers as their commencement gift of choice, according to Circuit City.

The CERI report found recruiters in many industries planning to step up their hiring, with IT shops increasingly in need of graduates with hands-on tech skills.

In the report, Gardner explains that: "Employers across the other economic sectors are seeking computer-savvy people to help upgrade hardware and software and to assist in maintaining the information databases essential to the global economy." It notes that nearly 60 percent of employers recruiting internationally and throughout the U.S. are planning to hire college graduates this year.

There are indications that many employers have no choice but to hire. "Employers simply, out of necessity, have to hire" says Gardner. "Many companies have done little hiring in four years and are experiencing gaps in their workforce, burnt out workers who have been working long days and weeks to cover all the assignments, and pending retirements."

As for graduating engineers, demand for their skills will be modest, according to the CERI report. Still, there should be growth in engineering recruitment of between 8 and 15 percent, enough to create the best market for beginning engineers in three years.

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The biggest surprise of the report, according to Gardner, was the finding that the manufacturing sector is experiencing a 20 percent increase in hiring. Previously, many reports from this sector predicted a bleak near future for jobs.

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