

20 Best-Paying College Degrees in 2011

By Lynn O'Shaughnessy | Jul 28, 2011 | [0 Comments](#)

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If you hope to earn a college degree that will qualify you for the **nation's best paying jobs**, ask yourself this question: Do you feel comfortable around these sorts of brain twisters: differential equations, vectors, harmonic functions and complex exponentials?

Why do I ask? Because once again, the nation's **best paying college degrees** require complex math skills. In fact, according to the new **PayScale** survey, every single one of the top 20 highest-paying college degrees requires advanced math.



Take a look for yourself:

20 Best-Paying College Degrees by Salary in 2011

College Degree	Mid-Career Median Salary
1. Petroleum engineering	\$155,000
2. Chemical engineering	\$109,000
3. Electrical engineering	\$103,000
4. Material science & engineering	\$103,000
5. Aerospace engineering	\$102,000
6. Physics	\$101,000
7. Applied mathematics	\$98,600
8. Computer engineering	\$101,000
9. Nuclear engineering	\$97,800
10. Biomedical engineering	\$97,800
11. Economics	\$94,700
12. Mechanical engineering	\$94,500
13. Statistics	\$93,800
14. Industrial engineering	\$93,100
15. Civil engineering	\$90,200
16. Mathematics	\$89,900

17. Environmental engineering	\$88,600
18. Management Info. Systems	\$88,200
19. Software engineering	\$87,800
20. Finance	\$87,300

Little Change from Last Year

The 2011 best-paying college degrees from PayScale's annual survey looks nearly identical to the **highest-paying college degrees in 2010**.

Last year, the highest-paying college degree was **petroleum engineering**. This year the top dog is petroleum engineering. In 2010, chemical engineering was No. 2 and this year it dropped one notch.

What About America's Most Popular Degree?

Like previous PayScale surveys, I can only hope that this salary roundup can serve as a wake up call for millions of teenagers and their parents who believe that the most lucrative **college major is business**. This conventional wisdom — which is wrong — explains why business is the most popular major. When mid-career salaries of dozens of majors were ranked, business came in as the **59th best-paying college degree**.

Students who major in linguistics, biology, fashion design, literature, urban planning, food science and philosophy are among those that make more money than business majors.

***Best-paying college degree** image by tsuda. Cc 2.0.*

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