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# The Top Colleges for High-Paying Careers in Finance, Tech and Consulting

The list includes some familiar names—and quite a few surprises among both private and public universities

By [Alyssa Lukpat](#) [Follow](#)

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The U.S. Naval Academy is among the top six public colleges for graduates' salaries in finance, tech and consulting.

PHOTO: WILL OLIVER/EFE/ZUMA PRESS

The colleges putting graduates onto the most lucrative pathways in finance, tech and management consulting include many schools you'd expect—Ivy League schools, for instance, and top public universities.

But the list also includes some surprises.

Graduates with some of the highest salaries in these fields attended schools like Baruch College, San Jose State University and the U.S. Naval Academy, according to data from the Philadelphia think tank Burning Glass Institute. Their success shows that proximity to industry hubs and rigorous curricula are just as

important as strong alumni networks and prestigious degrees, says Matt Sigelman, president of Burning Glass.

The rankings—which include the top 20 public and private universities for launching graduates into high-earning jobs—aim to answer: If the chosen career and the number of years in the field are the same, what effect does the undergraduate school somebody went to have on their salary?

The effect can be huge. In the first 10 years after graduation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology alumni who go into finance average \$73,608 a year in salary more than the median college graduate in the field, according to Burning Glass. The average yearly salary for MIT grads in finance in those years is around \$175,000.

The average salary for the median graduate in finance through the first 10 years of their career is just over \$100,000, according to Burning Glass. For alumni in tech it's about \$122,000, and for consulting graduates, \$98,000.

The schools in the rankings have offered graduates an array of resources to enrich their careers, Sigelman says. Among them: Grads from Ivy League and top public schools can tap vast alumni networks. Liberal-arts alumni learned soft skills that can help them ascend corporate ranks. Service-academy graduates acquired potentially lucrative traits like perseverance and diligence. And recruiters flock to schools around Silicon Valley and Wall Street.

## **Finance**

The top five private colleges for high-paying jobs in finance are MIT, Harvard University, Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania and Dartmouth College. The top five public schools are the University of Michigan; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Virginia; the U.S. Military Academy, and William & Mary.

Gabriela Guaita Saba, a 30-year-old vice president at Goldman Sachs, says a key reason she transferred to Baruch in 2012 was that the college partnered with high-profile companies in its hometown of New York City.

“I knew nothing about finance or Goldman,” she says. “I got to know them through the student programs at Baruch.”



Baruch College graduates get a salary boost in finance and consulting careers. PHOTO: GHI/EDUCATION IMAGES/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Venezuelan native says she completed a capstone project in 2015 for her international-business major doing consulting work for a beauty and skin-care company. She later did an internship with the company and stayed on part-time afterward to do operations work.

Following her summer internship, she went to a conference for Latino professionals with a Latino student organization at Baruch. There she met Goldman recruiters who helped her secure an internship in operations. The Wall Street firm offered her a full-time job after she graduated in 2016.

Guaita Saba’s starting salary was \$60,000 and she secured annual raises, she says. She was promoted in January to vice president in the risk-management division. The salary range for the role is \$130,000 to \$250,000, with pay increasing based on performance and experience in the role.

Baruch graduates in finance get an average annual pay premium of nearly \$21,000 in the first 10 years of their career compared with the median salary of a college graduate in the field with equal experience, according to Burning Glass.

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## Top 20 Private Colleges for Finance Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in finance

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	FINANCE % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	\$ 73,608	3.8%	\$ 175,439	\$5,084
2	Harvard University	\$ 64,135	8.2%	\$ 165,966	\$13,259
3	Princeton University	\$ 61,524	8.3%	\$ 163,355	\$11,080
4	University of Pennsylvania	\$ 60,778	11.1%	\$ 162,609	\$14,851
5	Dartmouth College	\$ 59,869	8.1%	\$ 161,700	\$33,023
6	Claremont McKenna College	\$ 59,513	6.0%	\$ 161,344	\$20,114
7	Yale University	\$ 55,259	7.7%	\$ 157,090	\$16,341
8	Columbia University	\$ 53,330	8.2%	\$ 155,161	\$12,836
9	Stanford University	\$ 51,806	4.1%	\$ 153,637	\$7,200
10	Duke University	\$ 51,672	6.8%	\$ 153,503	\$31,416

< 1 2 >

10 entries per page

Showing 1 to 10 of 20 entries

Average net price reflects the average annual overall cost of attending the college for the 2020-21 academic year for students who received federal financial aid, including tuition and fees, room and board, and books and supplies, taking into account any grants and scholarships.

Source: Burning Glass analysis of data from Lightcast and Glassdoor; College Scorecard (average net price)

## Top 20 Public Colleges for Finance Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in finance

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	FINANCE % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
1	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	\$ 38,191	3.8%	\$ 140,022	\$17,086
2	University of California-Berkeley	\$ 35,643	2.9%	\$ 137,474	\$15,240
3	University of Virginia-Main	\$ 34,985	5.0%	\$ 136,816	\$20,507

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	FINANCE % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
Campus					
4	U.S. Military Academy	\$ 33,012	2.4%	\$ 134,843	-
5	William & Mary	\$ 26,785	3.6%	\$ 128,616	\$18,650
6	U.S. Naval Academy	\$ 26,025	2.1%	\$ 127,856	-
7	Binghamton University	\$ 25,416	4.2%	\$ 127,247	\$19,307
8	University of California-Los Angeles	\$ 23,451	2.2%	\$ 125,282	\$11,627
9	Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus	\$ 21,296	1.6%	\$ 123,127	\$14,820
10	CUNY Baruch College	\$ 20,635	10.9%	\$ 122,466	\$1,936

< 1 2 >

10 ▼ entries per page

Showing 1 to 10 of 20 entries

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Source: Burning Glass analysis of data from Lightcast and Glassdoor; College Scorecard (average net price)

## Tech

The top private schools for high-paying tech jobs are Harvard, Princeton, Stanford University, the California Institute of Technology and Yale University. The top public colleges are UC Berkeley; the Naval Academy; the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of Washington, and Michigan.

Kevin Reed is a 32-year-old San Jose State graduate. He grew up in a community in Southern California where people didn't necessarily aspire to go to college, he

says, but he moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and made connections that led him to work at Facebook and Google.



San Jose State alumni's average annual salary in tech is nearly \$140,000 in their first 10 years after graduation. PHOTO: CLARA MOKF FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

He spent five years in the U.S. Coast Guard after high school. He then went to San Jose State in 2016 because he needed to go to a public school to use his military benefits and he wanted to be in the Bay Area. A computer electronics and networking major, he landed valuable meetings with tech companies through the school's resource center for veterans. He secured his first internship at data-center operator Equinix after going on a company tour arranged by the veterans center.

“That’s a real key to San Jose State—don’t get lost in the crowd of everybody,” he says. “Find a community where there’s leadership within the school and alumni that can connect you and show you the path to success.”

The school’s Silicon Valley location makes it a hub for tech recruiters. Reed spent a winter break driving for Uber and happened to give a ride to a recruiter at a tech company. He stayed in touch with her and after she took a job at Facebook he landed an internship working there. The internship led to a full-time job at the company, now known as Meta Platforms, where in 2019 he made a starting salary of \$106,000.

“I credit that with making a connection with someone because I was in the Bay Area,” he says.

He left Meta for Google almost four years later, where he works as a technical program manager. Reed, who lives in San Francisco, earns \$170,000 in salary plus additional compensation that includes a bonus and stock options. San Jose State alumni in tech get an average annual pay bump of nearly \$17,000 in the 10 years after graduation, according to Burning Glass.

## Top 20 Private Colleges for Tech Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in the technology industry

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	TECH % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
1	Harvard University	\$ 45,019	6.4%	\$ 167,111	\$13,259
2	Princeton University	\$ 43,405	8.9%	\$ 165,497	\$11,080
3	Stanford University	\$ 42,637	12.6%	\$ 164,729	\$7,200
4	California Institute of Technology	\$ 40,868	25.6%	\$ 162,960	\$29,279
5	Yale University	\$ 39,064	5.6%	\$ 161,156	\$16,341
6	Brown University	\$ 37,253	7.4%	\$ 159,345	\$26,308
7	Franklin W Olin College of Engineering	\$ 33,848	28.4%	\$ 155,940	\$21,474
8	University of Pennsylvania	\$ 32,479	5.7%	\$ 154,571	\$14,851
9	Duke University	\$ 31,888	8.1%	\$ 153,980	\$31,416
10	Carnegie Mellon University	\$ 31,869	21.4%	\$ 153,961	\$37,846

Showing 1 to 10 of 20 entries

Average net price reflects the average annual overall cost of attending the college for the 2020-21 academic year for students who received federal financial aid, including tuition and fees, room and board, and books and supplies, taking into account any grants and scholarships.

Source: Burning Glass analysis of data from Lightcast and Glassdoor; College Scorecard (average net price)



## Top 20 Public Colleges for Tech Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in the technology industry

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	TECH % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
1	University of California-Berkeley	\$ 32,781	12.9%	\$ 154,873	\$15,240
2	U.S. Naval Academy	\$ 23,378	1.9%	\$ 145,470	-
3	University of California-Los Angeles	\$ 22,640	7.3%	\$ 144,732	\$11,627
4	University of Washington-Seattle Campus	\$ 20,511	11.4%	\$ 142,603	\$10,933
5	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	\$ 18,567	7.7%	\$ 140,659	\$17,086
6	California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo	\$ 18,383	9.7%	\$ 140,475	\$20,633
7	San Jose State University	\$ 16,729	10.1%	\$ 138,821	\$13,874
8	University of California-San Diego	\$ 16,335	11.3%	\$ 138,427	\$14,895
9	University of California-Davis	\$ 15,928	7.3%	\$ 138,020	\$14,920
10	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	\$ 15,741	8.2%	\$ 137,833	\$15,483

< 1 2 >

10 entries per page

Showing 1 to 10 of 20 entries

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Source: Burning Glass analysis of data from Lightcast and Glassdoor; College Scorecard (average net price)



## Consulting

The top private colleges for high-paying jobs in consulting are Harvard, MIT, Yale, Princeton and Stanford. The top public schools are the U.S. Military Academy, the Georgia Institute of Technology, Michigan, UC Berkeley and Virginia.

Anthony Pinto is a 31-year-old consultant at contracting firm Systems Planning & Analysis, where he works on projects for the U.S. Navy. Pinto says his engineering education at the Naval Academy gave him crucial leadership and teamwork skills that helped him excel in his career.

He says Naval Academy students build camaraderie during intense physical training sessions and predawn wake-up calls. “That transcends into business well, because nobody can get ahead without having to rely on other people,” he says, “and being able to understand that on an inherent level puts us a lot farther ahead.”



Anthony Pinto says he gained leadership and teamwork skills at the Naval Academy. PHOTO: MARGARET PINTO

He makes \$130,000 a year at his consulting job. Naval Academy graduates in consulting get a pay premium averaging almost \$10,000 a year in the first 10 years of their career, according to Burning Glass.

Pinto graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., in 2014 and then served as a Navy submarine officer until last year. While he was in the Navy, he started his own real-estate investment firm that buys mostly apartment buildings.

Pinto, who lives in Bethesda, Md., still runs his investment company in addition to his day job as a consultant. He makes on average about \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year from his company, depending on swings in the real-estate market, he says.

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### Top 20 Private Colleges for Management Consulting Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in management consulting

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	CONSULTING % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
1	Harvard University	\$ 50,021	8.8%	\$ 148,517	\$13,259
2	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	\$ 45,087	6.7%	\$ 143,583	\$5,084
3	Yale University	\$ 42,356	8.4%	\$ 140,852	\$16,341
4	Princeton University	\$ 41,898	7.8%	\$ 140,394	\$11,080
5	Stanford University	\$ 40,735	6.1%	\$ 139,231	\$7,200
6	Dartmouth College	\$ 40,584	7.8%	\$ 139,080	\$33,023
7	University of Pennsylvania	\$ 37,474	8.7%	\$ 135,970	\$14,851
8	Duke University	\$ 34,024	7.1%	\$ 132,520	\$31,416
9	Columbia University	\$ 30,183	5.9%	\$ 128,679	\$12,836
10	Pomona College	\$ 30,158	4.5%	\$ 128,654	\$9,170

< 1 2 >

10 entries per page

Showing 1 to 10 of 20 entries

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Source: Burning Glass analysis of data from Lightcast and Glassdoor; College Scorecard (average net price)

## Top 20 Public Colleges for Management Consulting Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in management consulting

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	CONSULTING % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
1	U.S. Military Academy	\$ 17,429	4.0%	\$ 115,925	-
2	Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus	\$ 15,234	7.2%	\$ 113,730	\$14,820

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	CONSULTING % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY	2020-21 AVERAGE NET PRICE
3	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	\$ 14,857	5.5%	\$ 113,353	\$17,086
4	University of California-Berkeley	\$ 14,391	5.2%	\$ 112,887	\$15,240
5	University of Virginia-Main Campus	\$ 14,274	10.1%	\$ 112,770	\$20,507
6	U.S. Naval Academy	\$ 9,734	3.7%	\$ 108,230	-
7	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	\$ 8,969	6.3%	\$ 107,465	\$13,263
8	University of Washington-Seattle Campus	\$ 7,938	4.1%	\$ 106,434	\$10,933
9	Binghamton University	\$ 7,760	5.6%	\$ 106,256	\$19,307
10	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	\$ 7,661	6.3%	\$ 106,157	\$15,483

< 1 2 >

10 ▼ entries per page

Showing 1 to 10 of 20 entries

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Source: Burning Glass analysis of data from Lightcast and Glassdoor; College Scorecard (average net price)

—Kevin McAllister contributed to this article.

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