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Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of July 16, 2025

ALUMNI OUTCOMES—TOP EMPLOYERS ACROSS UC CAMPUSES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP) at the University of California Office of the President has tracked the contributions of UC alumni to the California workforce for more than a decade. Through the UC Information Center, IRAP reports data on the postgraduate earnings trajectory and employment industries, as well as how they vary by field of study and whether students go on to complete a graduate degree. This information has also enabled UC to understand the longer-term affordability of a UC degree through assessing student loan debt burden relative to postgraduate earnings.

Recently, IRAP acquired data that provides additional insight into the postgraduate employment experience by looking at the specific companies that employ UC graduates, the job titles UC alumni hold at different points in a career, and the skills UC alumni possess to obtain those roles. This information can help the University better understand the pathways from UC degree programs to the workforce and inform efforts to better align degree programs with state workforce needs. This presentation will share some of these new data, including top employers of UC alumni.

BACKGROUND

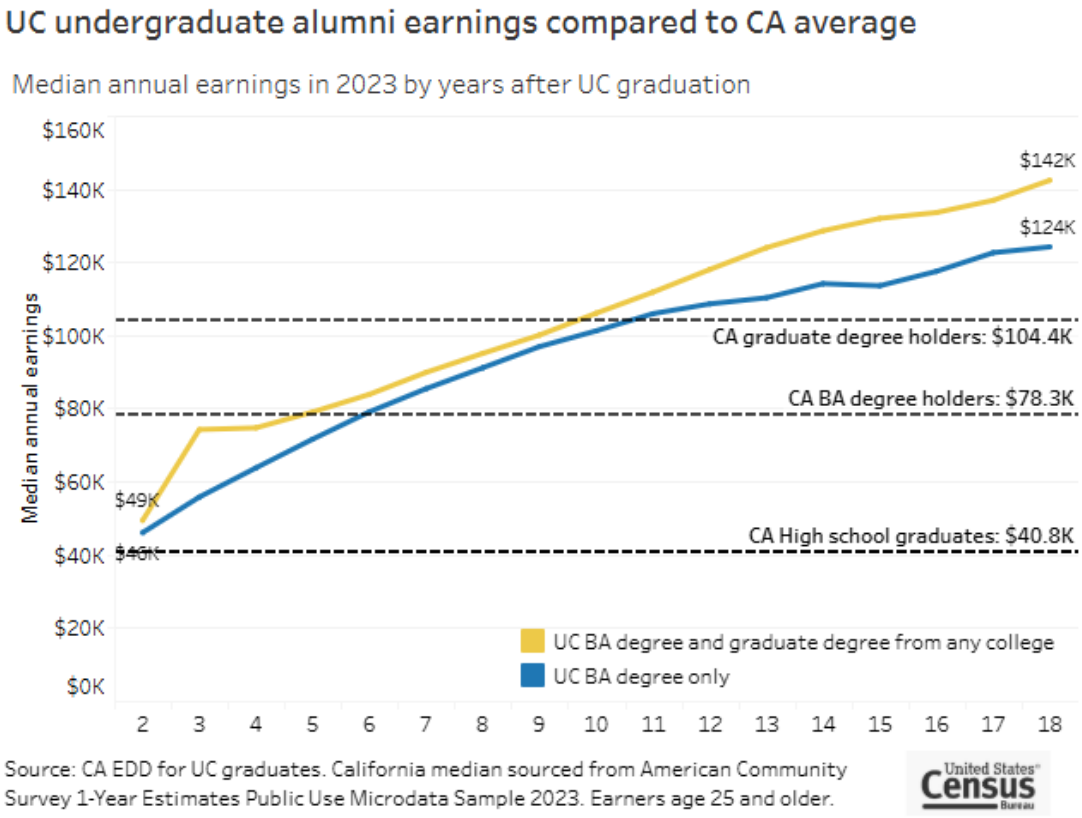
For over a decade, Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP) has utilized a variety of employment and workforce data sources—provided by partners in both government and private industry—to track the postgraduate employment and earnings outcomes of UC graduates.

IRAP tracks the postgraduate earnings trajectory and industry of employment for UC graduates by using California Employment Development Department (EDD) earnings data. This source provides around a 70 percent match rate[1] for UC alumni two years after graduation. IRAP also uses National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data to determine whether UC alumni go on to complete a graduate degree and the impact of that choice on earnings and industry of employment. U.S. Census data provide comparative information for other degree recipients in the state. Collectively this information has illustrated the following:

[1] This figure is not an employment rates as EDD does not include graduates who are self-employed, working outside California, or employed by the federal government.

Strong Earnings Outcomes:

- UC bachelor's degree recipients earning $79,000 on average six years after graduation, exceeding the median for all California bachelor's degree recipients, and $112,000 on average by year 12, exceeding all California graduate degree holders (see blue line)
- UC bachelor's degree recipients who receive a graduate degree eclipse the statewide median for graduate degree holders within ten years of graduating from UC (see yellow line)



Economic Mobility:

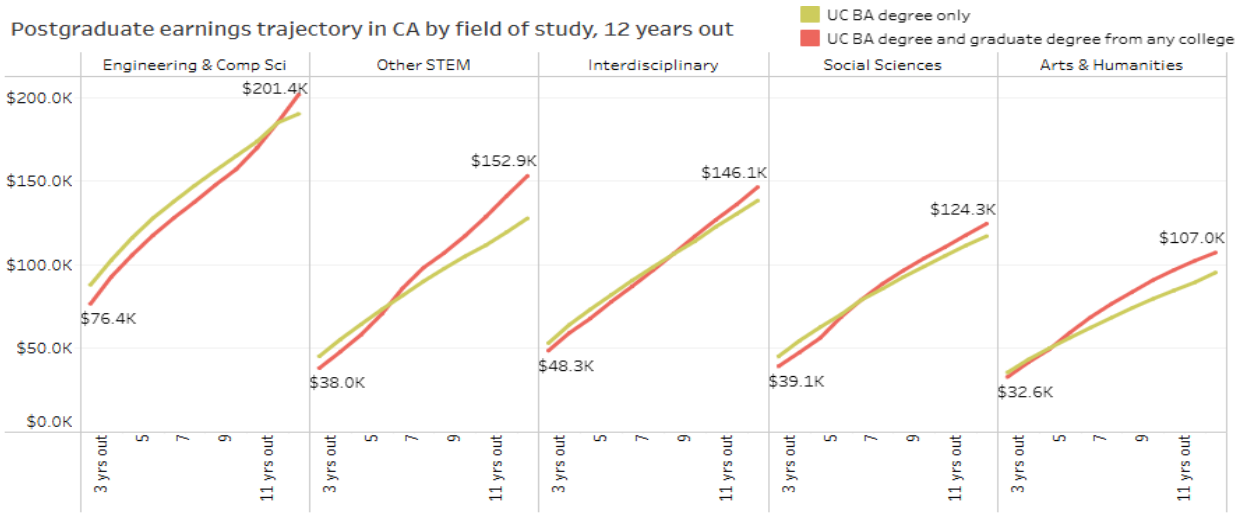
- A majority of Pell Grant and first-generation students earn more than their families within four years of graduation.

It is worth noting that these figures are even stronger than in prior years, when it took five years for Pell Grant recipients and seven years for first-generation students to surpass the earnings of their family members.

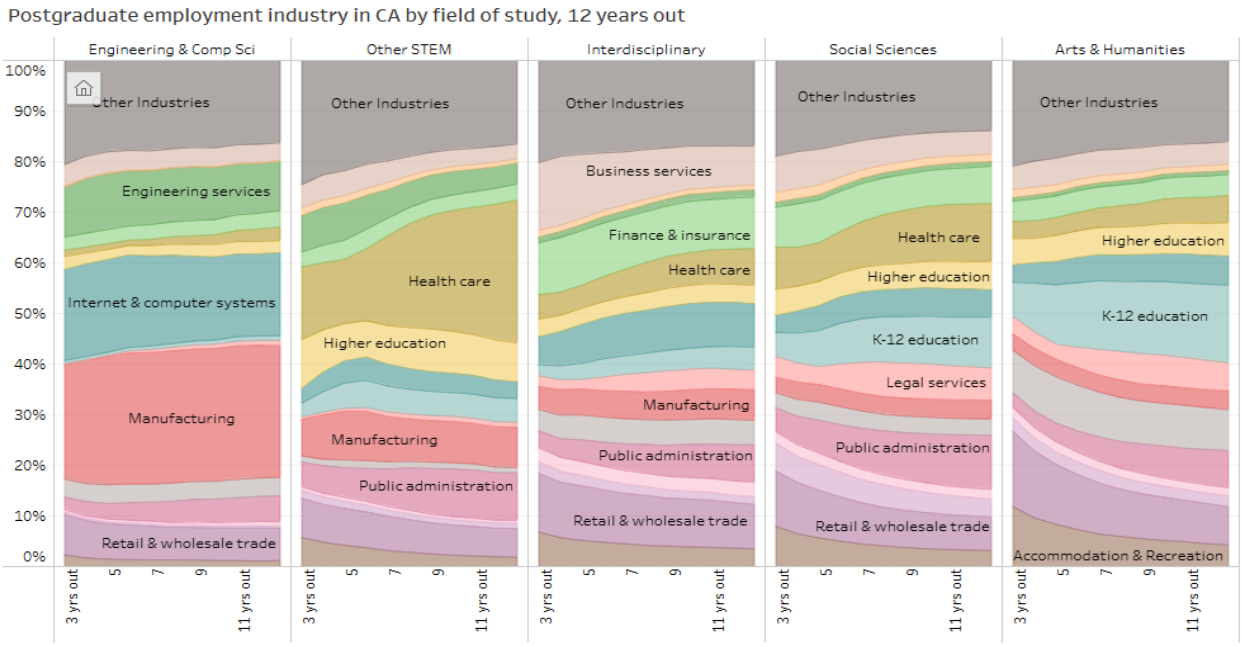
Earnings Growth Across Disciplines:

- Engineering and Computer Science graduates are among the highest paid UC alumni

- Earnings can be three to four times higher than entry level earnings across all other disciplinary areas, particularly for UC students who go on to get a graduate degree



Differentials in earnings across undergraduate fields of study are likely driven in part by industry. Engineering, Computer Science, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduates disproportionately work in technology driven industries such as engineering services, manufacturing, and internet/computer systems, while graduates from other majors are more likely to work in education, public administration, and health care.



IRAP also tracks student loan debt relative to the postgraduate earnings trajectory to assess the manageability of loan debt and the longer-term affordability of a UC degree. Setting student

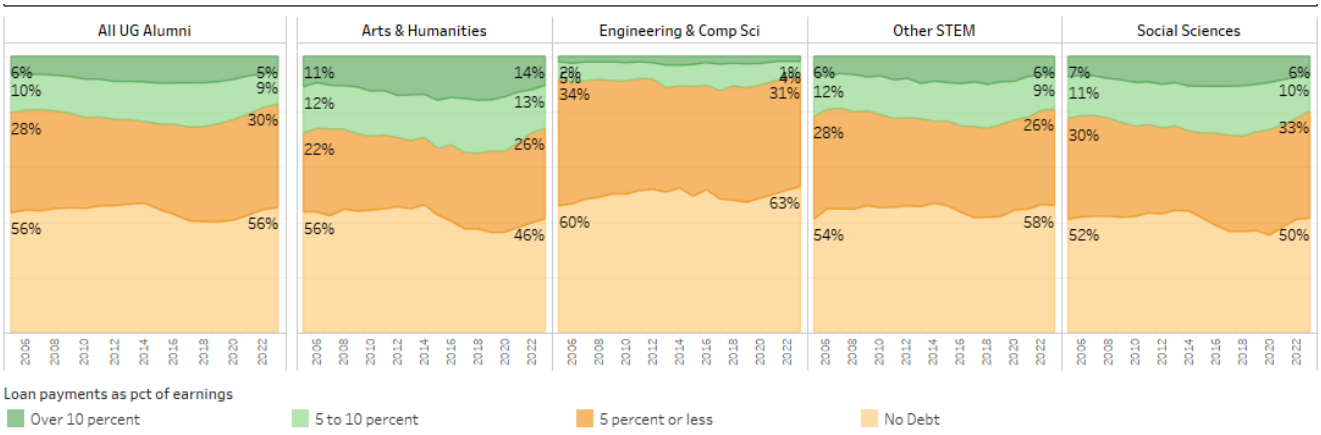
borrowing levels against the postgraduate earnings trajectory enables us to assess the manageability of the loan debt that students take on to complete a UC degree. With average postgraduate earnings ranging from about $50,000 directly after graduation to $100,000 after ten years, the average debt level of $18,000 ends up falling within the manageable range (under five percent of earnings) for most students.

Debt-to-Earnings Ratios:

- By five years after graduation, over 90 percent of students have manageable debt-to-earnings ratios of less than ten percent of annual earnings.

This debt burden ratio has remained steady over the past 15 years, with some variation by discipline. Arts and Humanities graduates are slightly more likely to experience higher debt-to-earnings ratios, and STEM graduates are the least likely to due to their concentration in higher- paying industries as mentioned above.

Distribution of UG debt-to-earnings ratios, 2006 to 2023



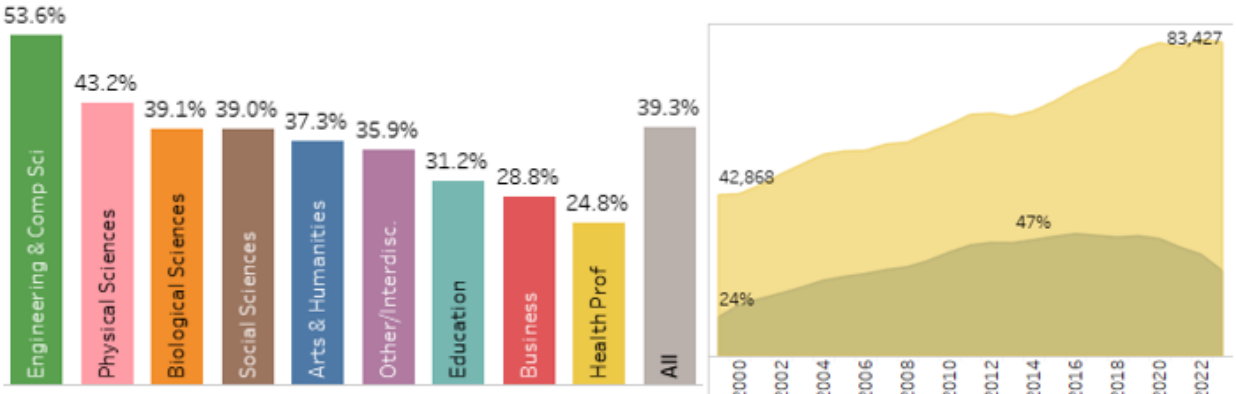
TOP EMPLOYERS OF UC ALUMNI

Recently, Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP) acquired data from Lightcast, a labor market data analysis firm, that provides even more granular information on UC alumni in the California workforce, including the specific companies that employ them, the roles they occupy at different points in their careers, and the skills they possess in those roles. IRAP also received Lightcast job postings data that indicates the direction the labor market is moving, including trends in job opportunities, skillsets demanded, geographic growth, and employer trends. This information can help UC academic leaders better align instruction and academic degree programming with state workforce needs.

About the Data

The principal source of the employment data is self-reported employment history on popular public platforms such as LinkedIn. The Office of the President (UCOP) provided 1.6 million records for UC graduates stretching back to 1999, and Lightcast successfully matched and provided employment data for 39 percent of them. Match rates vary considerably by field of study, degree program, and year of graduation, with the matched population overall displaying a bias toward more recent graduates (from the last ten years) of engineering, computer science, and other STEM degree programs. Graduates of health professional and business programs had the lowest match rates.

Lightcast match rate, overall and trend by graduation year UC Graduates 1999–2000 to 2023–24

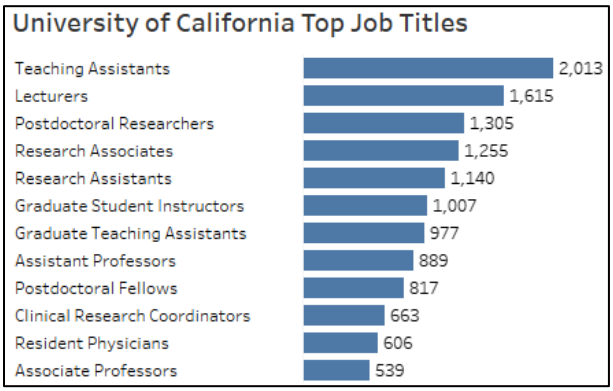


Lightcast provides postgraduate employment data on UC alumni who can be matched to their proprietary database.

Despite this variation, these match rates are higher than alternate information sources, such as alumni surveys. This information sets context on the utility of this data source and future iterations will provide demographic match rate to better understand how representative this information may be for overall degree recipients.

Below are some key findings this initial data provides.

Educational institutions often employ UC alumni. The University of California is the top employer of UC graduates, in part because occupations include teaching and research positions held while students are pursuing a graduate degree. UC is also the second largest employer in the state, so alumni can be seen holding faculty, postdoctoral researcher, and other university positions. UC alumni can be seen holding similar positions as employees at other Association of American Universities (AAU) and the California State University.



<u>Top Universities Employing UC Alumni</u>

Univeristy of California

Stanford University →

University of Southern California

University of Washington

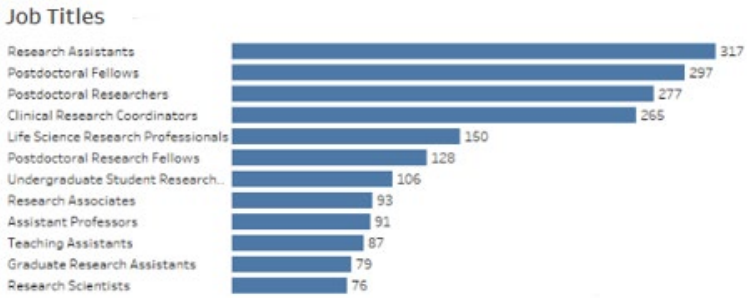
University of Michigan

New York University

Harvard University

University of Illinois System

Massachusetts Institute of Technology



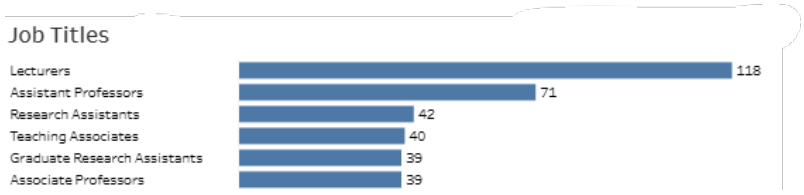
San Diego State University

San Francisco State University

San Jose State University →

Cal State University Long Beach

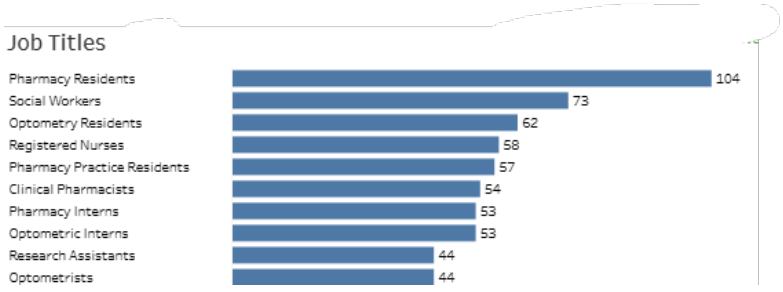
Cal State University Fullerton

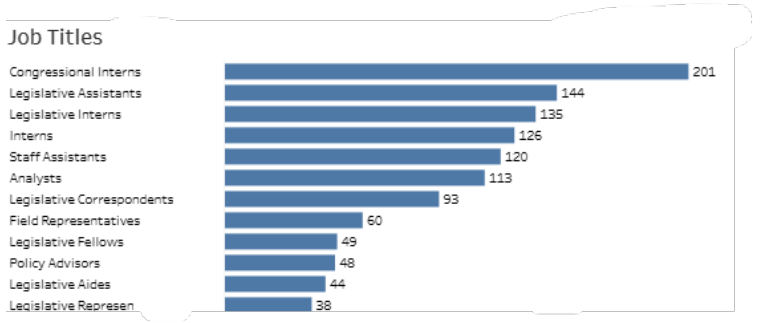


Another top employer of UC alumni are federal, State, and local agencies with multiple UC disciplines supporting different agencies. For example, UC health science, life science, and social science graduates often serve in pharmacy, optometry, nursing, and social science positions at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (a top federal employer of UC alumni). UC political science, history, economics, and other social science graduates frequently hold positions with the United States Congress. UC engineering and computer science graduates frequently hold positions with the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force and NASA. UC engineering, physical science, and chemistry majors often hold positions with the U.S. Department of Energy.

Federal Employers

US Department of Veterans Affairs
United States Army
United States Congress
United States Government
United States Navy
United States Air Force
NASA Jet Propulsion Lab
Peace Corps
US Department of State
US Federal Judiciary
US Department of Energy

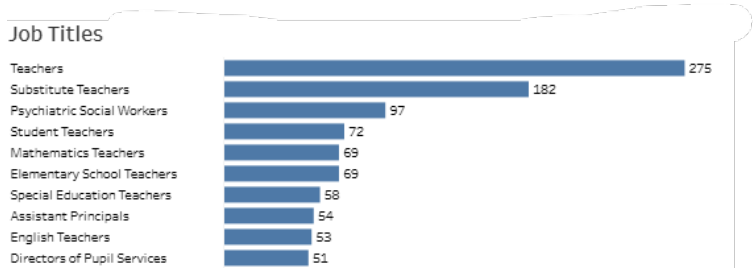


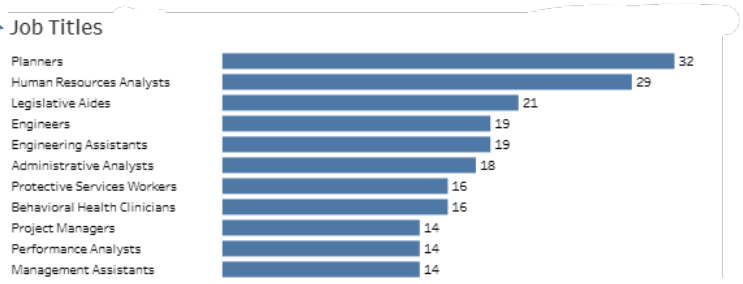


UC alumni who studied education, social sciences (e.g., sociology, political science, history), and arts and humanities majors (e.g., English, arts, foreign languages) are employed as teachers and principals in the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland Unified School Districts. UC social science, engineering, public administration, business, and English majors work for the State of California and cities and counties of Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Hope. UC life science and public health graduates are working for the California Department of Public Health, and UC engineering graduates are working for State and district Caltrans offices.

State and Local Employers

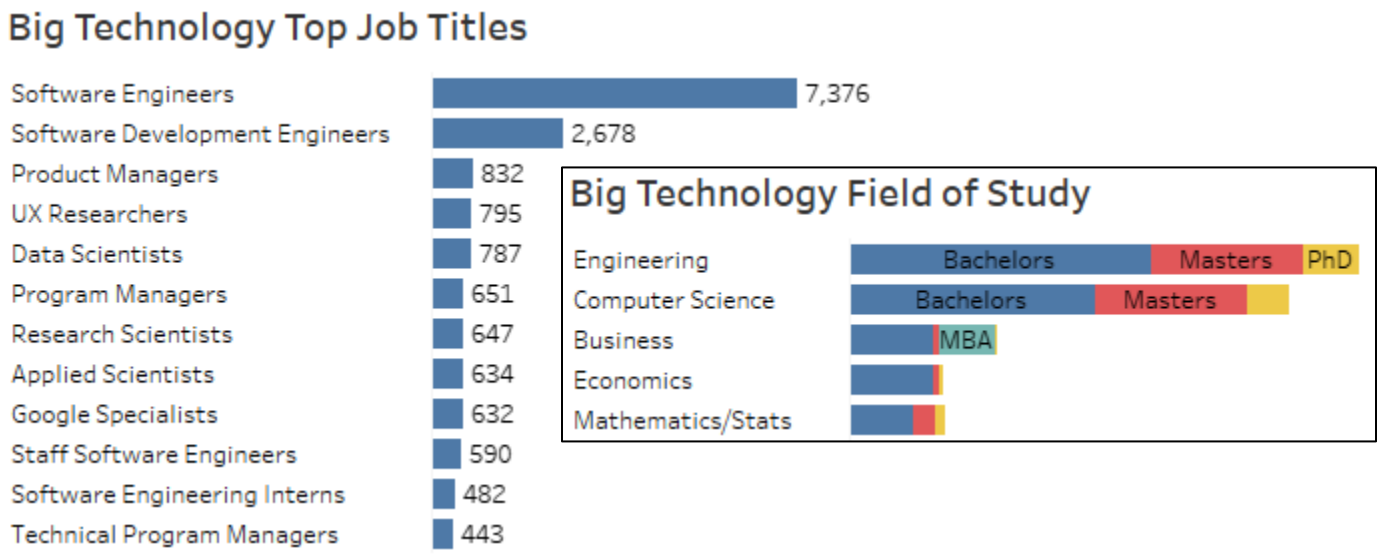
Los Angeles Unified School District
City of Los Angeles
State of California
City of Hope
City & County of San Francisco
San Francisco Unified School District
CA Department of Public Health
County of San Diego
Oakland Unified School District
Caltrans





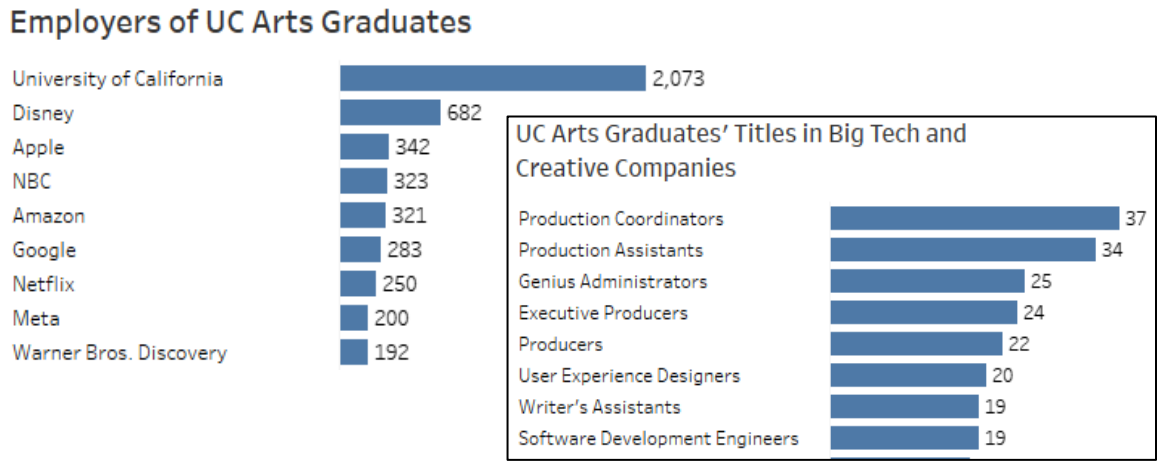
UC alumni are also major contributors to critical California industries and businesses, including Google, Amazon, Meta, Apple, and Microsoft. These big technology companies rely on graduates of UC STEM programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels for roles such as software engineering, data science, and research and design.

Top job titles of UC graduates employed at Google, Amazon, Meta, Apple, and Microsoft 2000–01 to 2023–24 graduates, Two to 25 years after graduation



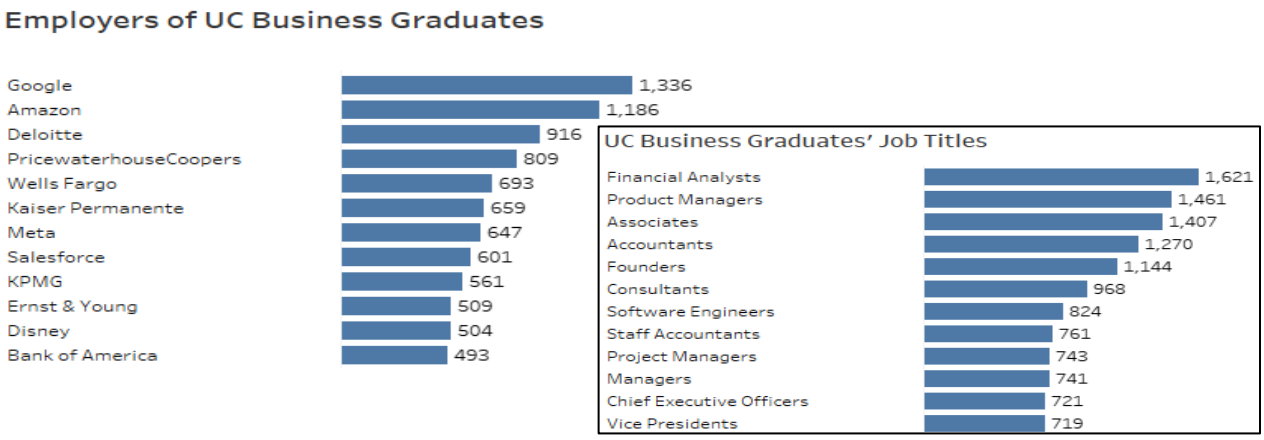
Many of the same big technology companies, as well as other companies in the creative industry, employ graduates from UC's undergraduate and graduate arts programs. Companies including Disney, Apple, NBC, Amazon, Netflix, and Warner Brothers employ UC arts graduates in a range of production and writing roles, as well as technical roles such as software development.

Top job employers and job titles of UC arts graduates employed at Disney, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Warner Brothers, and Sony, 2000–01 to 2023–24 graduates two to 25 years after graduation



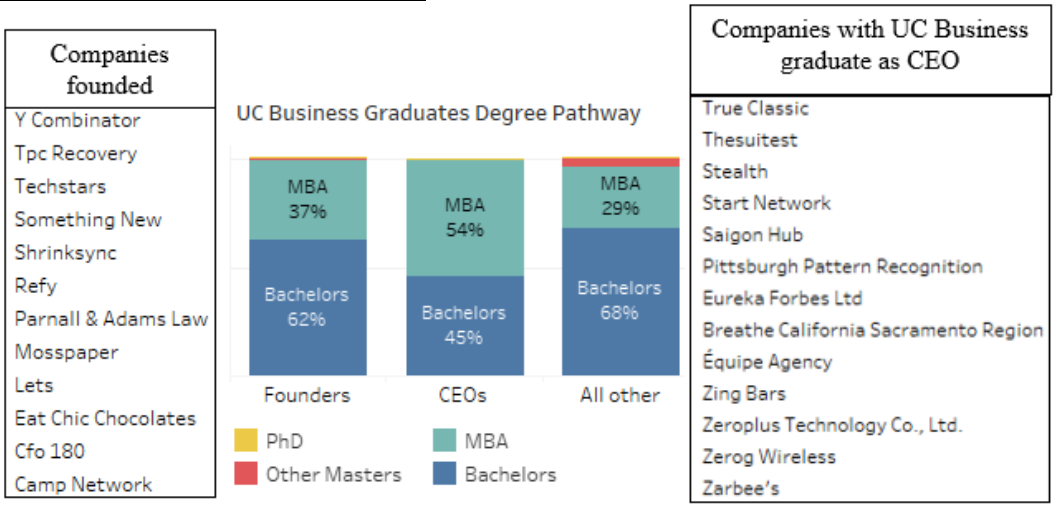
Graduates of UC business programs go on to work for a range of technology companies, banks, and major consulting firms in a wide range of roles. Accountants and financial analysts represent the top occupations of UC business graduates, while others work as consultants or have founded and lead their own companies.

Top job employers and job titles of UC business graduates 2000–01 to 2023–24 graduates two to 25 years after graduation



The Lightcast data can also shed light on the entrepreneurship and executive leadership of UC alumni. Graduates of UC business programs make up the bulk of individuals reporting founding a company or serving as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the Lightcast data. While still only a partial record of UC alumni employment, the data can highlight examples of companies founded by UC alumni and those in which they serve as executive leadership. The list below includes companies that UC alumni report founding, as well as the specific UC business program degree pathways that alumni took to those roles. Alumni possessing a bachelor's degree comprise the bulk of company founders, while those with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree are more likely to serve as CEO.

Top startups and companies of CEO leadership among UC business graduates 2000-01 to 2023-24 graduates 2 to 25 years after graduation

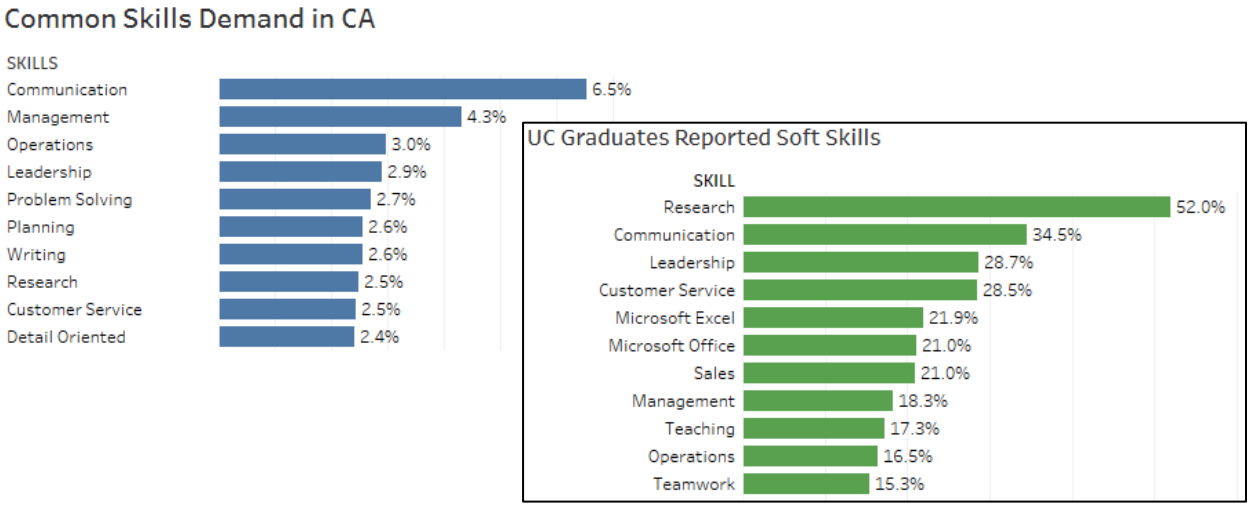


SKILLS AND LABOR MARKET DEMAND AND SUPPLY

The Lightcast data also allows us to zoom in further on the postgraduate employment experience-to the specific types of skills graduates possess and the skills in demand in the labor market. The former comes from graduates self-reporting their skills on public profiles such as LinkedIn, while the latter comes from the skills and required qualifications mentioned in job postings collected from platforms such as Indeed and provided to the Office of the President (UCOP) by Lightcast.

The job postings data show both the common (soft) skills and specialized skills required by recent jobs posted in California that require a bachelor's degree. Communication tops the list of common skills required while management and leadership skills are not far behind. Other top skills include problem solving, writing, and research.

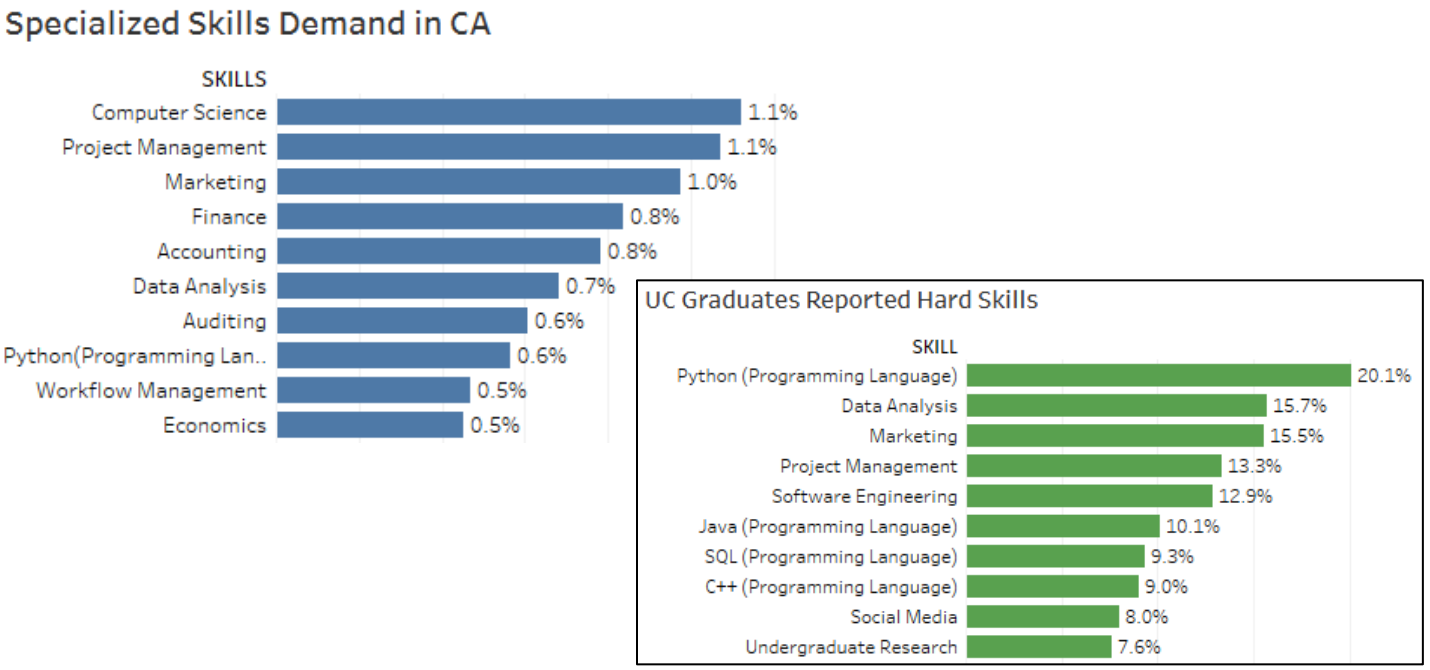
Common skills demand and supply Lightcast job postings and UC alumni self-report 2020 to 2024



The soft skills that UC graduates report possessing largely overlap with those in demand in the California labor market. High demand skills such as communication and leadership also feature among the top skills cited by UC graduates. Research is the most commonly cited soft skill among recent UC graduates, following from the research university experience, but is somewhat further down the list among skills in demand.

Specialized or hard skills in highest demand among jobs requiring a bachelor's degree in the recent California job market focus on technology, data analysis, and finance. Recent UC graduates report skillsets largely in sync with job market demand, with computer science, programming, software engineering, and data analysis featuring prominently in their skillsets. This skill profile also likely stems from the disproportionate representation of computer science and engineering graduates in the Lightcast matched alumni database.

Hard skills demand and supply Lightcast job postings and UC alumni self-report 2020 to 2024



Occupational projections from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) show the direction the state job market is moving for entry-level roles for recent college graduates. The fastest growing bachelor's degree level occupations over the next seven years include a mix of roles in technology, health care, and finance/business operations. Software developers, nurses, data scientists, and management specialists are all expected to see significant growth.

Projected growth in occupations requiring a BA degree in CA, to 2032

	jobs	pct chng	Est. salary
Software Developers	74,300	24%	$171K
Registered Nurses	43,200	13%	$138K
General and Operations Managers	22,900	8%	$119K
Market Research Analysts and Marke..	17,100	14%	$78K
Accountants and Auditors	14,200	8%	$85K
Business Operations Specialists, All ..	12,200	7%	$77K
Management Analysts	12,000	9%	$87K
Data Scientists	11,100	33%	$132K
Project Management Specialists	11,000	9%	$106K
Computer Occupations, All Other	9,000	9%	$116K

Institutional Research and Acacemic Planning (IRAP) will be producing more labor market data, merging California EDD and Lightcast job postings data to share trends on occupations and new markets, along with necessary soft and hard skills to help inform UC academic planning, including the Five-Year Planning Perspectives that proposes new and discontinued programs for the near future.

CONCLUSION

The data gathered by Institutional Research and Academic Plannig (IRAP) offers a detailed and encouraging picture of University of California alumni outcomes, showcasing strong earnings trajectories, manageable debt burdens, and meaningful contributions to both public and private sector employers. UC graduates, especially those in STEM and business disciplines or with graduate degrees, tend to outperform statewide income medians, while Pell Grant recipient and first-generation students demonstrate notable economic mobility within a few years post-graduation. Furthermore, the University's focus on aligning academic programs with workforce needs is underscored by alumni employment at top technology firms, government agencies, and educational institutions, as well as their significant presence in entrepreneurship and executive leadership roles.

The newly integrated Lightcast data enhance this view by illuminating the specific companies and roles UC alumni occupy, and the skills they leverage in their careers. A strong alignment is observed between alumni-reported skills and employer demand—particularly in communication, leadership, and technical competencies like software development and data analysis. This congruence points to the value of a UC education in preparing graduates for a dynamic labor market. Continued investment in tracking and analyzing alumni outcomes will allow UC to refine its academic offerings and sustain its role as a vital contributor to California's workforce and economy.

IRAP plans to incorporate this data into the UC Information Center to better support students, campus career centers, academic programs, and UC leadership. Feedback from the Board would

be especially valuable in identifying which insights most effectively convey the University's return on investment to the public and resonate with the business community. This input can help build broader support for UC while guiding efforts to enhance academic programs that prepare graduates for the workforce and contribute to the strength of California's industries and economy.

KEY TO ACRONYMS

AAU	Association of American Universities
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EDD	Employment Development Department
IRAP	Institutional Research & Academic Planning
NSC	National Student Clearinghouse
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
UCOP	UC Office of the President