Physics bachelors at work

US physics bachelor's degree recipients from the classes of 2006 and 2007 joined the workforce and entered graduate school in proportions similar to previous years, according to a recent report by the American Institute of Physics. Those proportions were 39% and 57%, respectively, with the remaining 4% job hunting the winter after earning their degree.

Typical salaries for newly employed physics bachelors ranged from the low $20 000s to mid-$50 000s (see figure). The largest group went to work in the private sector for high-tech companies, defense contractors, utilities, and smaller companies that involved manufacturing, retail, and food. More than two-thirds of the private-sector positions were in natural sciences, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) fields. Many of the higher salaries went to the 25% of degree recipients in the non-STEM category who went to work in banking or finance.

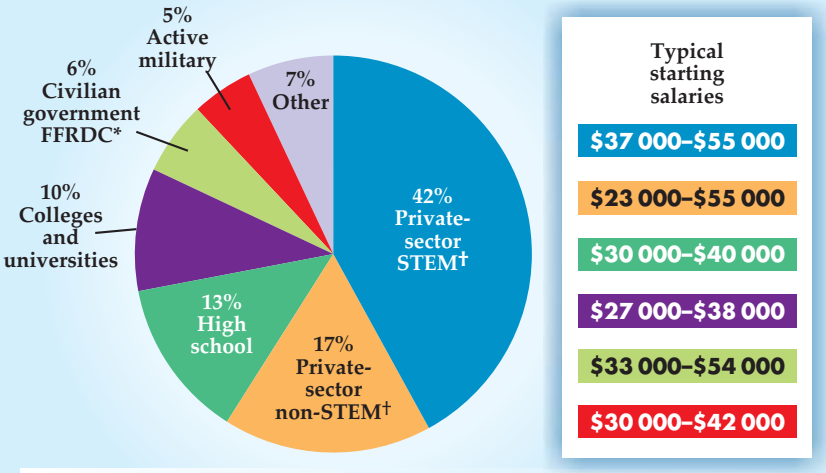
Of the degree recipients who entered the workforce, the private-sector route was taken by 59%—by 61% of men and 54% of women. The genders split the other way for the 13% of new bachelors employed as high-school teachers: 11% of men and 17% of women.

Although high-school teachers and members of the military were among the lowest paid of all physics bachelors, they were among the most satisfied in terms of salaries and benefits. New physics bachelors working in non-STEM fields reported the lowest level of job satisfaction.

About half of the employed bachelors said they intended to enroll in graduate school within three years.

These and other data on the employment of new physics bachelor's degree holders are available in the report *Physics Bachelor's Initial Employment*, which can be downloaded free of charge at http://www.aip.org/statistics/trends/emptrends.html. **Toni Feder**

Initial employment sectors of physics bachelor's classes of 2006 and 2007



*Federally funded research and development centers
†Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

news notes

Green light for ITER. After a year in limbo, big machines are back at work at the ITER site in Cadarache, France. On 28 July the seven member countries finally signed off on a schedule and committed to funding the fusion test reactor. The cost is hard to pin down because of the in-kind contributions, but the European Commission has approved €6.6 billion ($8.7 billion) for its 45% share, which puts the full cost at close to €15 billion. First plasma is slated for November 2019, with the start of deuterium–tritium fusion experiments planned for March 2027 (see PHYSICS TODAY, April 2010, page 20). Russia's Evgeny Velikhov, who chairs the ITER council, said the agreement ensures "not only the success of ITER but also the success of fusion."

The same day the schedule was approved, fusion scientist Osamu Motojima replaced Kaname Ikeda, a former ambassador, at ITER's helm. Motojima oversaw construction of the Large Helical Device, a superconducting stellarator, and formerly headed Japan's National Institute for Fusion Science. Per an agreement dating to when Japan was edged out by Europe to host the project, the director general must come from Japan.

Motojima's plans for restructuring the ITER organization have been approved by the council. They include streamlining the management to three departments—construction; administration; and safety, security, and quality control. "It's a task-oriented structure that will make decision making faster and simplify testing procedures," says Motojima. One job was cut in the restructuring, that of principal deputy director general Norbert Holtkamp. TF ■

web watch

To suggest topics or sites for Web Watch, please visit http://www.physicstoday.org/suggestwebwatch.html. Compiled and edited by Charles Day

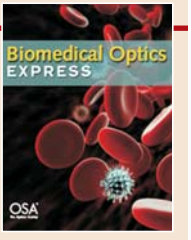
http://www.ztresearch.com

Tom Warner of **ZT Research** creates spectacular high-speed videos of lightning, including strikes that propagate upward from tall buildings. Presented in slow motion, the videos are mesmerizing.

http://www.acs.org/acsrscalliance

The American Chemical Society and its British equivalent, the Royal Society of Chemistry, have formed the **Sustainability Alliance**. The alliance's aim is to promote worldwide public understanding of the role of chemistry in creating societies that do not rely on consuming irreplaceable natural resources. Among the alliance's online offerings are the ACS podcast *Global Challenges/Chemistry Solutions* and the RSC magazine *Chemistry for Tomorrow's World*.

http://www.opticsinfobase.org/boe/home.cfm



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