

Get Them While They're Hot

Study Reveals One Dozen Hot Career Trends

By Henry DeVries

"Who knew that data modeling could be such an attractive career?"



Illustrations by Rich Rogo

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All is not bleak on the job front. At a time when U.S. unemployment has risen to a 25-year high, a new trend study from the top academics at UC San Diego Extension reveals some of the hottest career options for recent and mid-career college graduates in this recession. The study is based on enrollment figures, national employment statistics and interviews with San Diego business executives.

The overall advice of the study is that to enrich your job prospects, go niche. Knowing where to look and honing your skills just might be the right strategy for finding the career that is best for you.

The top dozen trends to consider (in alphabetical order) are:

1. Casual game development. One of the fastest growing segments of the video game industry is casual gaming. Every month, an estimated 200 million consumers play casual games online, many of whom do not normally regard themselves as gamers, or fans of video games. Casual games are typically played

online on a personal computer (within Web browsers), although they now are starting to become popular on mobile phones and game consoles, too. San Diego is home to not only big companies like Sony and Qualcomm, but also gaming firms like Mad Catz and Last Day of Work. "Employers are looking for people who have artistic skills as well as programming skills," says Susan Varnum, director of the Digital Arts Center at UC San Diego Extension. "They'll often pair an artist with a programmer, so they can each bring their own skills to the game." In addition to a need for people to design the games, there are also employment possibilities for people in marketing, project management and business development.

2. Clinical trials design and management for oncology. Pharmaceutical drug and medical device development is one of the premier industries of the 21st century, and the success of this vital industry depends upon the complex process of studying new products to verify their effectiveness and safety. The goal of

oncology studies is to find better ways to treat cancer and improve the overall standard of cancer care. Clinical trials take place in doctors' offices, cancer centers, other medical centers, community hospitals and clinics, and veterans' and military hospitals across the U.S. and throughout the world.

3. Data mining. The recession has boosted the importance of data mining as more businesses search for clues to increase revenues and decrease expenses. For decades now, an increasing volume of information is being collected about users of services and products that enable organizations from hospitals to corporations to better tailor their offerings. The analysis of the data collected requires the development of new techniques that get more out of the information collected. Data mining and predictive analytics are becoming fundamental components in areas as diverse as scientific discovery, national security, medicine, product development, as well as facets of business commerce.

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4. Embedded engineering. Software design and development finished number two in a survey published by Jobfox of the “Top 20 Most Recession-Proof Professions.” According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Computer software engineers are expected to be among the fastest-growing occupations through 2016.” At the same time, static wages caused by a glut of skilled coders and the often-dull nature of much enterprise development has many wondering if their current skills would let them take on the new opportunities. The good news is that the world of embedded development may provide an edge that is already well within their reach and is becoming more so every day, opening new career options for those willing to learn some new tricks. The big move in embedded systems is now towards more generic development tools capable of targeting more types of hardware to simplify development and is requiring good software engineers with embedded expertise.

5. Feature writing for the Web. Journalism is in flux as traditional print newspapers are in decline. As more and more publications go online, it’s vital to understand writing for emerging media. According to media tracker The Nielsen Company, the Web offers opportunities for growth like no other chan-

nel. While readership of traditional offline newspapers has decreased significantly, visitors to informational Web sites continues to rise dramatically. To attract visitors to Web sites, there is an adage that “content is king.” Online attention spans and space restrictions require new approaches to feature writing on the Internet.

6. Geriatric healthcare. There are many trends driving the healthcare career boom, and these trends have made healthcare one of the biggest and fastest growing industry sectors in the United States. In addition, the expanding population of seniors will have a major impact on careers in healthcare. As the numbers of aging baby boomers increase, so does the demand for certain healthcare jobs and services, including nursing, personal care and home healthcare.

7. Mobile media. Graphic designers with Web site design and animation experience are especially needed as demand continues to increase for interactive media design projects – from Web sites, to next generation cell phones and mobile gaming. One in 10 Americans now access mobile Internet or video weekly, a segment of the population that are avid users of new and traditional media. They spend 30 percent more time with media than the general population



It was then that Charlotte decided it was time to leave Web design for casual game programming.

(ages 12 to 64), and they also have higher incomes, travel on business regularly, and are more likely to have made an online purchase.

8. Occupational safety and health. There is a steady need in California for safety workers because state law mandates that every company with over 10 workers must have a written job-safety program. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of occupational safety and health specialists and technicians is expected to increase 8 percent annually during the coming years. Emergency preparedness will continue to increase in importance, creating demand for these workers. More specialists will be needed to cope with technological advances in safety equipment as well as threats, changing regulations, and increasing public expectations. In private industry, employment growth will reflect overall business growth and continuing self-enforcement of government and company regulations and policies.

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“The novel is so last year. Now I’m writing the great American Web site.”

9. Specialized Spanish/English translation.

For those completely bilingual in Spanish and English, these language skills are highly marketable and can open the door to a new career. The key to success is to gain experience through practical internships in fields such as law, medicine and business, which need specialized expertise.

10. Sustainable business practices and the greening of all jobs.

Organizations today must address potential compliance and regulatory changes and look for business growth opportunities in the new era of “green” environmental economics. In effect, every job is going green. Smart companies are encouraging a bottom-up emphasis on sustainability, letting the people who really know how things work figure out how to incorporate green practices in the daily workplace. “Almost every single profession is turning green these days,” says Vicki Krantz, UC San Diego Extension’s director of business and professional programs. “If you’re in accounting, you learn about carbon accounting. If you’re in purchasing, you emphasize your ability to buy smarter and work with a ‘green supply chain.’ If you’re in marketing, you focus on responding to the public demand for green.” According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, there are already about 12,000 green jobs in San Diego County. That number is expected to grow, thanks in part to federal government funded training programs.



“I’d like to speak French and she would like to speak English.”

11. Teaching adult learners. While the challenging economy undoubtedly has a negative effect on employment, it also provides a few select industries with opportunities for growth. One of these industries is adult education. In 2009 private education was one of two industries that saw job growth, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Enrollment is increasing because job seekers are unable to find work in their preferred fields and as a result are going back to school to gain experience in other areas.

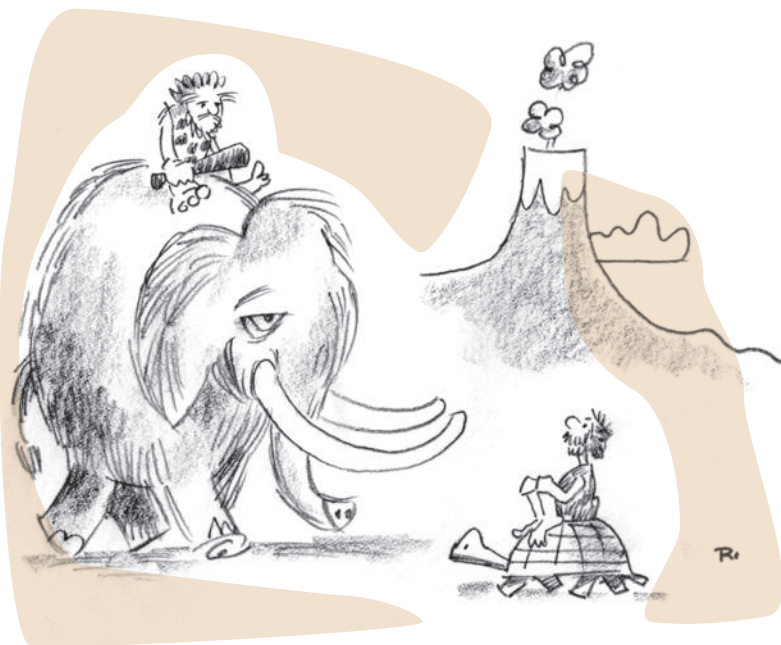
12. Teaching English as a foreign language. Interest in English teaching positions abroad has recently spiked. College graduates can find lucrative teaching jobs abroad and it is a smart alternative for those who want to work and travel. Because English is the international language of business, engineering, aviation and other fields, there is high demand for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL), both domestically and abroad.

About The List

The hot careers list was developed by the University’s continuing education academic directors, based on enrollment trends, an analysis of national employment statistics and discussions with some of UC San Diego Extension’s more than 750 business, community and professional association curriculum advisors. Many certificate programs have been created or updated based on the information.

At UC San Diego Extension, most certificates can be earned in one to two years at a cost of around \$1,875 to \$3,200. Of the approximately 90 certificates offered at UC San Diego Extension, 18 can be accessed totally online. Students from nearly all 50 states and 45 foreign countries are enrolled in UC San Diego Extension courses.

Last year an all time high of 22,600 students enrolled in UC San Diego Extension programs, with approximately 30 percent participating in certificate programs. Continuing education certificates are becoming an increasingly attractive way to transition to employment areas that are in higher demand for recent and mid-career college graduates facing a difficult job market and a troubling economy. ■



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