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Senior Business Seminar Proposal

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The University of Rhode Island

*Senior Business
Seminar*

Alex McGrainer

Sponsor: Dr. David M. Mitchell

May 4, 2017

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Inspiration Behind the Project:

My proposed honors project is something that has the potential to help many students after it's unveiling, and it was inspired by the student body itself. As I walked around campus and more specifically Ballentine Hall, I hear the students worry about landing a job after their time at URI, which was disheartening. Everyone comes here to gain an education that will increase their chances of success in the future and they pay quite a bit of money to obtain it. Of course, not all students are great scholars, but I believe that most of them are, and yet they still don't have the ability to find a desirable job for a two main reasons: a lack of time and a lack of knowledge.

A lack of time is something that every student inevitably runs into. As a student-athlete, my days are even more regimented. For example, when I started my career search at the beginning of the school year, I realized that my searching was not effective because I could only work in 15 to 30 minute increments. My work was also very prolonged. When a position that I found attractive appeared, I was often unable to follow up on the company and responsibilities of the position until a week or two later, but why? Well between practice, classes, associated homework, assignments, and tests, I find it hard to fit in eating and sleeping. I don't consider any of these to be a misfortune, but it does give a student limited free time. Even weekends are busy. For myself and many others, competitions or obligations are on Saturday and Sunday is a day for completing longer assignments like essays and projects. As the semester continued, my frustration grew because I was unable to research what will be the next crucial step in my life.

During my attempts to look at jobs, one more thing in particular struck me: I had a lack of knowledge about the jobs I was researching, which prompted me to make this course. With the guidance and expertise of selected teachers and guest speakers, the Senior Business Seminar can become something exceptional. It can help students understand the types of positions that they want to assume or at least begin to work towards when they enter the workforce. Teachers and speakers will be the most valuable asset to this class because they will provide the experiential information to the students. Rather than reading from a textbook, a student will have multiple opportunities to interact with professionals and gain a substantial amount of knowledge about his or her respective field. I plan on setting up these guest speakers through connections from URI and personally contacting them myself. The most important part is that we get these speakers frequently and in all fields of business to satisfy all students.

To me, this project is more than simply learning about my own future. Ultimately, it is about leaving an impact on the University of Rhode Island that will be able to positively influence students for many more years to come. This issue is not solely present in the college of business, but it is personally the most relevant place to start. People in all colleges at URI can use this course as benchmarking and implement my findings into a class in their respective field of study. Eventually, I would like to see a more confident student body when it comes to life after college, and this is my idea of where we can begin.

Course Objectives:

Through the Senior Business Seminar, students will have the opportunity to:

- Re-discover what they are truly passionate about,
- Find where they would like to apply their knowledge and passions,
- Weigh the attractiveness of different size firms,
- Receive support and guidance from URI staff, guest speakers, and experienced professionals,
- Properly prepare for the application process by compiling necessary documentation,
- Learn how to differentiate and market themselves,
- Learn how to follow up with potential employment opportunities,
- Expand their networks,
- Effectively prepare for late stage interviews,
- Learn how to negotiate salaries, benefits, etc. during the interview stages, and
- Relieve stress while searching for a job.

These course objectives are understood as being the necessary components of finding, applying, and following through with the job process.

Target Segment of the Senior Business Seminar:

With the help of Dr. Mitchell, the mission of the Senior Business Seminar was clearly identified. We (facilitators of the seminar) should be targeting student who are considered average performers who need to be made aware of the tasks involved with landing a post-graduation job. We chose this segment because people who are performing at higher levels will already have great awareness of their position and what they must do to find employment. Therefore, they will seek resources and move through most of the class's processes themselves.

The low performing, or otherwise unmotivated students will be unlikely to show the willingness to carry out the objectives and take genuine responsibility for the work that is necessary to complete the course. Likewise, low performing students could take away from the flow, timeliness, and impact of the course, as they are generally unprepared. This will negatively impact the success of other students and deteriorate the seminar's purpose.

After careful consideration and weighing multiple target segments of the CBA population, we have decided to target the segment of average performers. As Dr. Mitchell put it, "These students have the ability to become high performers, thus shifting the bell curve in a positive direction for the college. They just have to realize what is required of them in order to start performing at that higher level." In other words, the students that this course needs to influence is the majority of the student population who have the willingness to complete the task, but need guidance in the initial stages to develop competence.

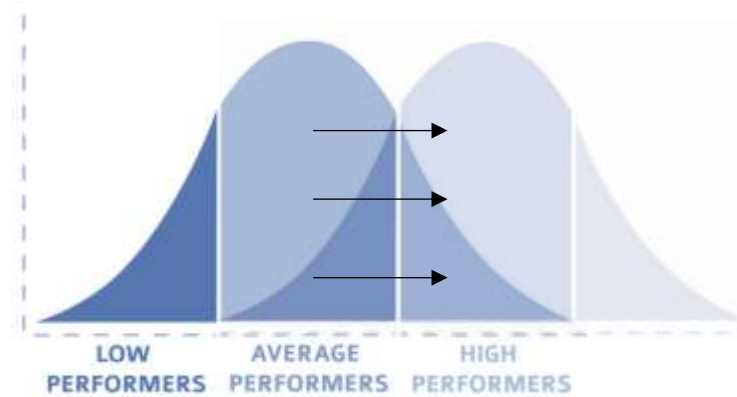
To clarify our target market selection, an example is provided below:

Let's say there is a list of 10 steps that you must complete in order to finish the employment process. The low performers will not be aware of these until it is too late and their willingness to identify and complete them will be low. High performing students will have high awareness of the steps and will have the willingness and ability to complete them in the early stages of the job cycle. Average performing students may be aware of several of the steps, but they have the willingness to complete the full 10. It is the responsibility of this course to assist these students to become high performing by making them aware of all 10 steps in the early stages of the job cycle. It is essential that we enhance their ability to complete the tasks as well

As you can see, the Senior Business Seminar could have a huge impact on the student body in the CBA by identifying the average performing students and providing this course as a means of assistance.

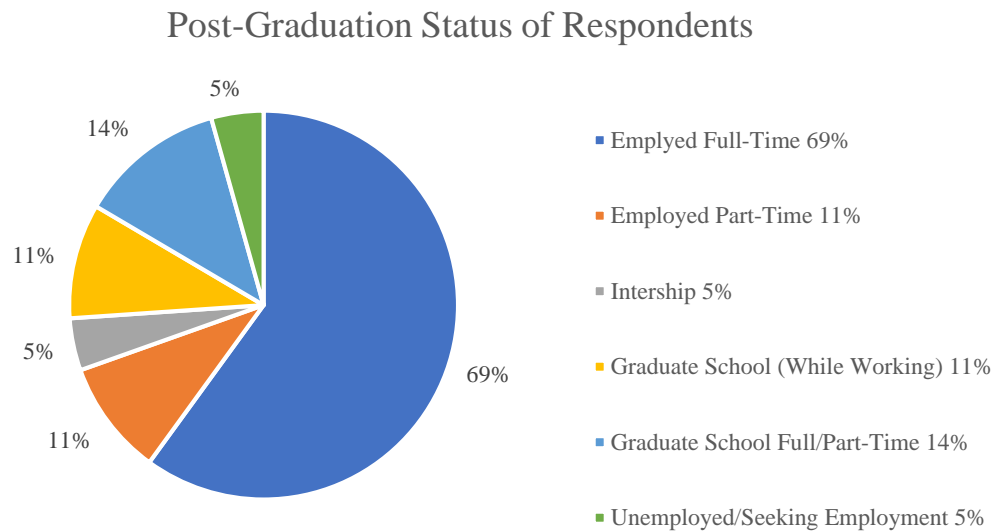
Potential Impacts of the Senior Business Seminar:

Figure 1



This bell curve above illustrates the potential impact on the student population in terms of low performing, average performing, and high performing students. With implementation of the seminar, I hope to pull more students into the high performing segment or raise the standards of each segment. For example, high performing students will continue to raise the bar, previous high performing student standards will now be average, and so on. This system relates directly to CBA student employment because higher standards for post-graduate opportunities will continue to increase, which will increase the willingness and ability of the student body to complete the necessary steps at appropriate times in the job process.

Figure 2



I want the impact of the seminar to increase the amount of full-time jobs that students of the CBA acquire after graduation. Ideally, the number of unemployed students who are seeking employment will decrease, which will be attractive for prospective students and contribute to the college's prestige.

Figure 3

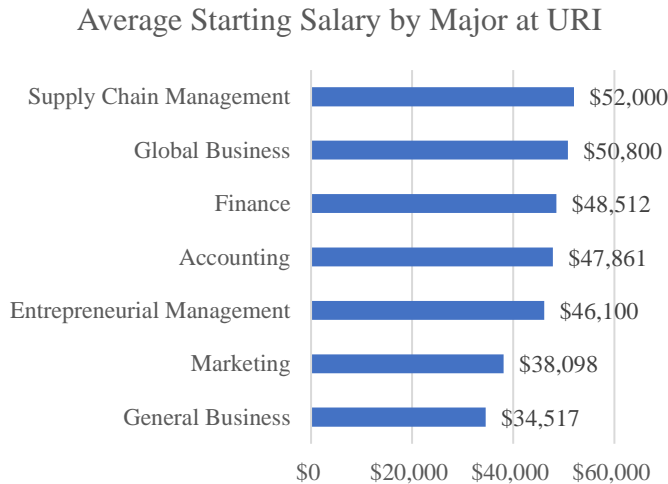
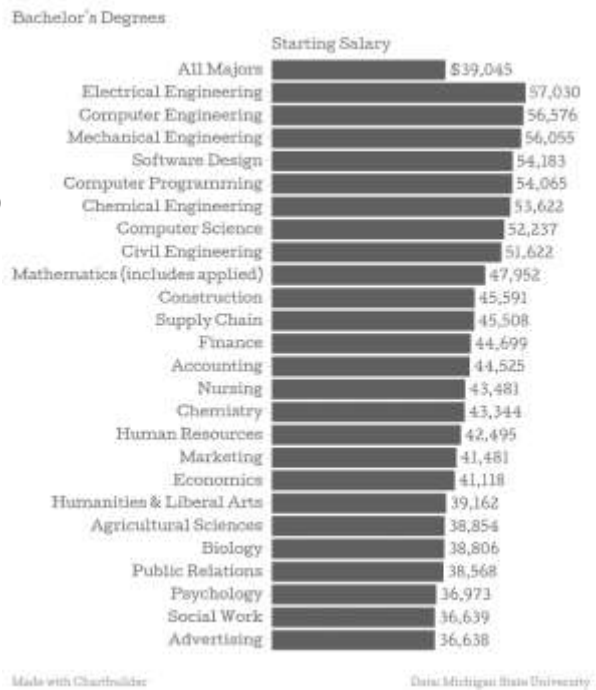


Figure 4



This information in Figure 3 is gathered from the CBA Post Graduation & Career Placement Report in 2015. The total number of graduates was 370 and the number of respondents was 191, which is a 52% response rate. Information in figure 4 was gathered by Phil Gardner, who runs Michigan State University's employment office. His data was gathered through Michigan State's Collegiate Employment Research Institute, which reached employment offices at 200 schools and collected information regarding starting salaries from 3,300 employers.

As you can see from the graphs above, URI CBA has several majors (Supply Chain, Finance, and Accounting) that rank higher in terms of starting salary, and others, such as marketing, that fall short of the national average. My intention is to raise our average starting salary in each discipline by giving student better opportunities for more quality jobs. Better opportunities could come in the form of negotiation tactics or building connections within a company early in the application process just to name a few examples.

Figure 5

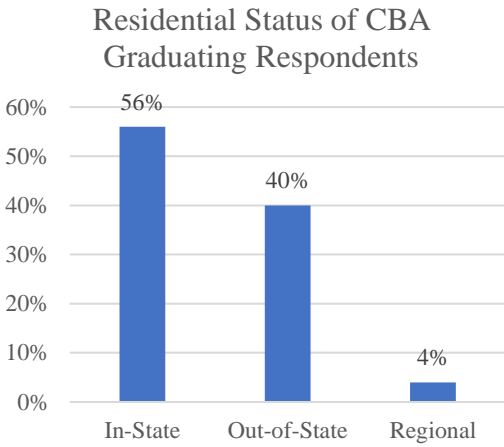
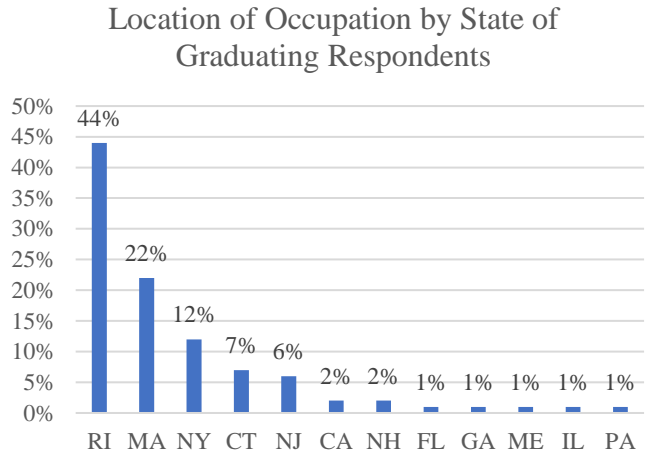


Figure 6



Both graphs above show a correlation between in-state and out-of-state students vs. occupational location. As the graphs indicate, more people leave the borders of Rhode Island once they graduate than stay in their home state. Whereas 56% of the respondents were from RI, only 44% of them accepted positions in the Ocean State. This could be the result of varying student priorities and desires. Some students may be willing to relocate and others may want to stay close to home. It is important for Senior Business Seminar instructors to understand where each student stands so that proper action can be taken to set the students up for success. The impact of the seminar will be increased support for those looking at locations outside of Rhodynet’s capabilities and more focused research on certain geographical locations.

Determination of the SBS's Success

Since the Senior Business Seminar looks to impact students in the long run, that is how it should be measured. The administration who put this proposal into action need to give the class time to work itself out. Throughout the semesters, we will be able to find the kinks in the program. Better yet, we will have the ability to see how we can improve the structure of the class from both an internal and external perspective.

Externally, teachers will be able to share their thoughts on how the class should be orchestrated. Likewise, continuous probing and information retrieval from industry professionals will help this program increase its ability to influence the lives of the students who put in the work. Following the most recent trends in entry level employment will be critical to the course's success, as well. Therefore, the network of professionals that we tap into must have the proper depth and breadth to assist all majors. When we gather such important information as a college, such as what makes a job candidate desirable, we give our students an advantage over the competition.

Internally, students will need to be reassured and confident in their futures for the class to be deemed successful. The obvious metric for us to study is the level of employment of the graduating seniors and the internship placement of the incoming seniors in the CBA. We can also have them indicate the comfort and support that this seminar provided on any kind of scale.

One of the most important factors that will determine the success of this course will be something that is very hard to measure: the drive of the students. When this class is in session, students should have the urge to tap into every resource available to them. At first this may not be the case, and students may have the same lethargic actions they do in their other courses, but toward the end of week 1, I want students thoroughly engaging with the seminar. By doing so and encouraging this action, graduating and rising seniors will become more driven and have more dedication toward the start of their careers.

Syllabus:

University of Rhode Island
College of Business Administration

Senior Business Seminar

Spring 2017

Class Day/Time: Monday 4:00 - 6:50

Instructor: Professor Alex McGrainer

Email: amcgrainer@my.uri.edu

Phone: 856-669-4054

Website: Sakai.uri.edu

Office: Room 401

Office hours: Please schedule a meeting time via email

Course Materials:

Textbook: *** No textbook is required for this course, however, we will complete a final portfolio. You will simply need a binder and page covers for this. ***

Additional Reading: Articles and short readings will be assigned throughout the course. Please see the schedule for assigned dates.

Communications: Each student must subscribe to Skype. We will use this program on several occasions. Additionally, if you use it for interviews, it will be nice to have practice.

Course Description:

The Senior Business Seminar compliments a brand-new strategy being implemented by the College of Business Administration as a beta for the entire university. It is designed to increase the number of students placed in employment positions once they graduate from URI. While it is a great indicator for institutional success, the instructors who will be running this semester's SBS care more about the professional success of the students that they have taught over the course of several years. A range of powerful resources will help students begin their careers. The lessons and insights will be important, but it is up to the student to determine how much effort they put forth to take advantage of them.

Course Learning Objectives:

Through the Senior Business Seminar, students will have the opportunity to:

- Re-discover what they are truly passionate about,
- Find where they would like to apply their knowledge and passions,
- Weigh the attractiveness of different size firms,
- Receive support and guidance from URI staff, guest speakers, and experienced professionals,
- Properly prepare for the application process by compiling necessary documentation,
- Learn how to differentiate and market themselves,
- Learn how to follow up with potential employment opportunities,
- Expand their networks,
- Effectively prepare for late stage interviews,
- Learn how to negotiate salaries, benefits, etc. during the interview stages, and
- Relieve stress while searching for a job.

Course Format:

- Before the course begins, each student should have a completed resume and begin looking for a letter of recommendation. The resume will be edited during the class as required and cover letters will be addressed in class.
- Stage Progression:
 1. The first stage of the Senior Business Seminar will cover the pieces related to locating jobs that not only relate to your skillset, but also your interests. The first step we will take is a self-assessment of what your passions are (This does not mean which industry or company you want to work for). Once we find these, it will be easier to move forward.
 2. The second stage includes the preparation stage. Once we find our passions, professional goals, etc., we will begin to look at the industries that offer opportunities that match each student. This is a broader search, but key to narrowing in on opportunities.
 3. The 3rd stage is about researching the companies within the industry and geographical regions of student interest. This will include client lists, employee benefits, employee growth and satisfaction, etc.
 4. The 4th stage is the application process. Here, students will gather completed paperwork and develop skills to effectively market themselves to recruitment. Application sites will vary, which is why it is so important to finish documents by the assigned due date.
 5. The 5th and final stage includes following through with applications, supporting students during interviews, and closing the deal with salary negotiations and associated benefits.
- Within the progression stages, students will have the opportunity to network with guest speakers from a variety of CBA disciplines.
- Classes will be designed around student engagement with multiple resources. Through the development of the course, it is crucial that you use these resources. They could make a significant difference in the outcome of each student's experience.
- Written assignments and presentations: Students will have work that is to be completed and turned in on the appropriate dates.
- Since the class is once per week, students are expected to come to class prepared. This includes readings, documents, and associated work.
- *****Please Note: this course is designed to help CBA students increase their chances of employment. By no means does it automatically give you one.**

Academic Standards: The course is governed by URI's regulations and procedures regarding Academic Standards, Cheating, Plagiarism, and Documentation of Written Work. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism and what are a professor's explicit duties relative to student cheating, please read sections 8.27.10 – 8.27.20 of the URI Academic Regulations at: <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/8.20-8.27.html>

Course Evaluation

Assignment	Breakdown
Current Resume for the first class	P/F
Class engagement: Graded in-class exercises and activities	P/F
Preparation for guests	P/F
Compiled report of action taken to further career	P/F
Additional work throughout the semester	P/F
PPT presentation of intended career path and information obtained to date	P/F
Total	P/F

Grading

This is a Pass/ Fail class. Final grades will be determined by adding the number of passes earned and the effort by which each assignment was completed. The Senior Business Seminar is by no means a GPA booster, and will be treated as such. Student who have the opportunity to take the class will understand its significance, put forth the effort, and receive a passing mark.

Attendance and Class Engagement

Attending class is essential, but I find it both discouraging and distracting when students are in class but they are disengaged (e.g. they have their laptop open to the sport pages or Facebook, they are messaging with friends, or they are studying for another class). Similarly, I reserve the right to ask you to leave if I feel your behavior is distracting to me or to other students. **IF YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BE ENGAGED DO NOT COME.** I will evaluate your engagement through your involvement with guest speakers, weekly classes, and relevant topics discussed in each class. If you do not come to class, your grade will be an F after 2 unexcused absences. It is crucial to attend each session, so this rule will be strictly enforced.

Group participation and in-class teamwork

Occasionally, we will work in groups with students in our majors to determine what we would like to see added to the course, where students are trying to begin their professional careers, and to narrow the focus of the lessons pertaining to each major. We want these group discussions to occur early on in the semester, so that we cover the most relevant material for each student in the class.

Preparation for Guests

When guest speakers join our class, which they regularly will since there are multiple majors to cover, students are expected to collect some background knowledge about the speaker. This information could be where they worked previously, what their job entails in terms of day-to-day operations, and similar topics. Students who are in the major that the guest speaker is coming for will be expected to have more of this background knowledge or prepare additional questions.

Compiled Report of Action Taken

This report will show where you have applied to, who you have contacted, and additional information that will help you track your involvement with certain companies. Staying connected with employers throughout the application process and networking with those individuals will be invaluable. The report will simply help you track your actions and show you that you may need to reach out to a given person or company again or for the first time.

Presentation

Your final presentation will illustrate the path you have taken, the knowledge you have gained, and the position you have attained or hope to attain in the near future. Long-term goals will comprise the final piece of the presentation. Lastly, work from the semester, such as your compiled report should be included somewhere in the presentation. The rubric will be handed out in class during week 1.

Academic Enhancement Center (AEC)

The AEC offers a comfortable environment in which to work alone or together, with or without a tutor. AEC tutors are your peers they have taken your courses, and can answer questions, clarify concepts, check your understanding, and help you to study. You can make an appointment or walk in anytime during office hours -- Monday through Thursday from 9 am. to 9 pm, Friday from 9 am to 1 pm, and Sunday from 4 pm. to 8 pm. For a complete schedule -- including when tutors are available specifically for this class -- go to www.uri.edu/aec, call (401) 874-2367, or stop by the fourth floor in Roosevelt Hall.

Title IX makes it clear that **violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses** subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find help at The Center for Gender and Sexuality: 874-9277; The Women's Center; 874-9131 (anonymous) or online <http://web.uri.edu/womenscenter/interpersonal-violence-on-campus/>. In an emergency call 874-2121.

Schedule of classes (maybe modified during the semester to fit the needs of the class).

Week	Reading	Class activities	Homework/assignments
Week 1	Readings will be assigned as necessary for the benefit of the students.	Guest speaker to start, resume overview, discovering your career goals, and self-exploration	Current resume
Week 2		Guest speaker of a different CBA discipline, how and where to search for career opportunities	
Week 3	No filler readings will be added for the sake of assignments	Guest speaker of a different CBA discipline, further activities will be added at the discretion of the instructor	Preparation for each guest speaker will be necessary as stated in earlier sections
Week 4		Guest speaker of a different CBA discipline	
Week 5	Readings will be current news/trends in the respective industries of the students	Guest speaker of a different CBA discipline	Additional work will be due based on instructor preferences
Week 6			
Week 7	Readings should be focused around current class teachings, guest speakers, etc.	The pace at which the class moves through the stages is determined by the instructor	Preliminary report of action taken to date
Week 8		Guest speaker for later stages of the application process	
Week 9		Guest speaker for later stages of the application process	
Week 10			
Week 11		Guest speaker for even later stages of the application process	
Week 12		Guest speaker for even later stages of the application process	
Week 13		Seminar Conclusion	*** Projects will be shown during finals time ***

Appendix:

Figure 1:

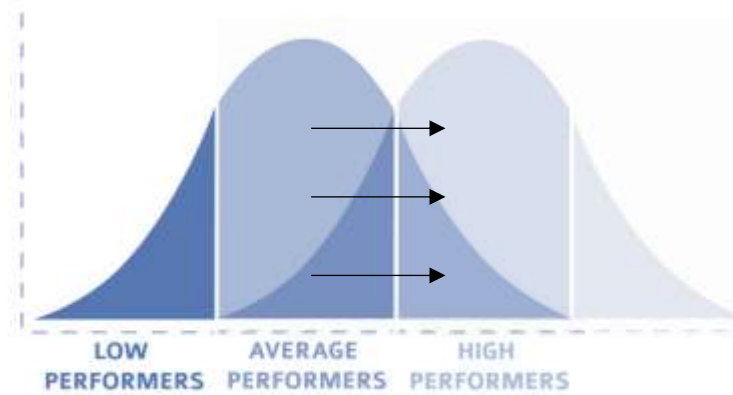


Figure 2:

Post-Graduation Status of Respondents

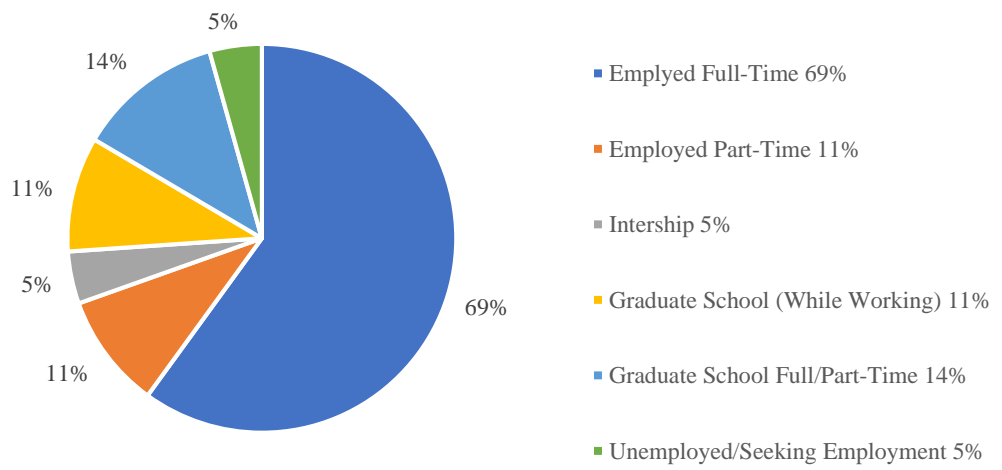


Figure 3:

Average Starting Salary by Major at URI

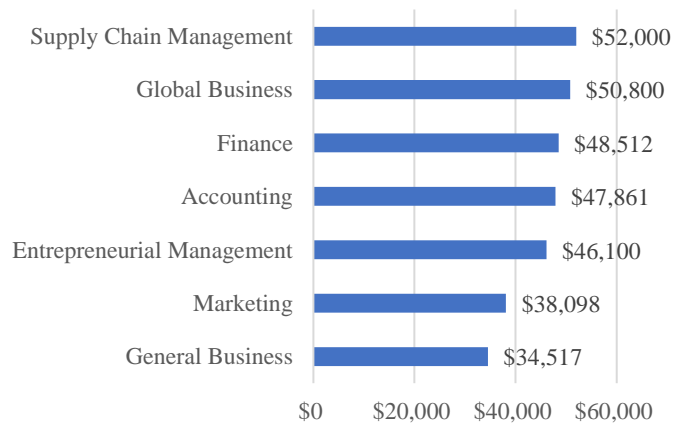


Figure 4:

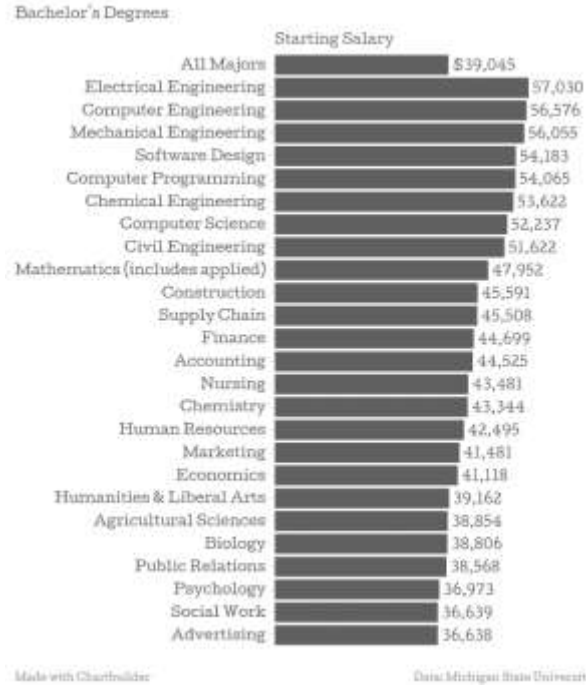


Figure 5:

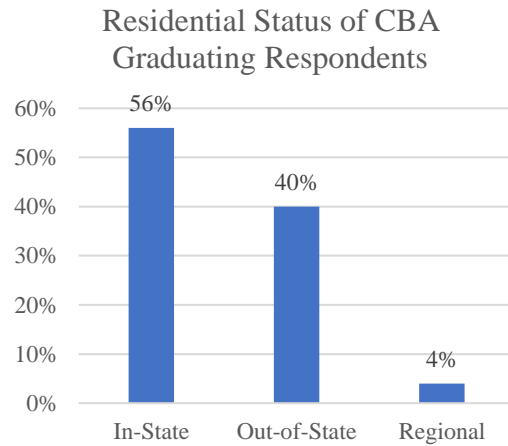
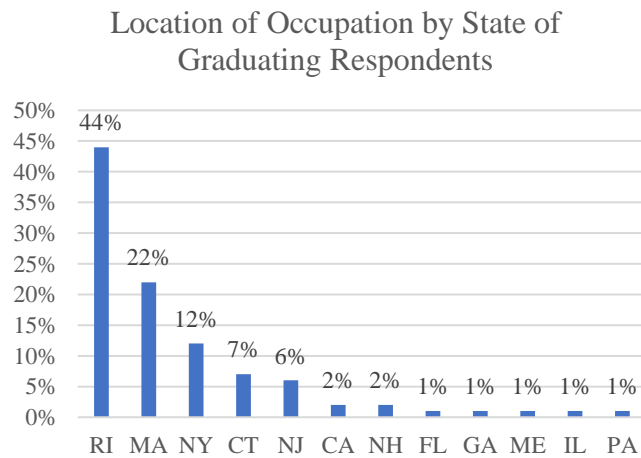


Figure 6:



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<https://www.thejobnetwork.com/best-time-to-apply-for-jobs-2017-112016/>

prelim work also: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/10/16/the-best-time-to-start-a-new-job-search/#15a098e14789>