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Editorial



ChE Salaries Are Looking Up

Despite today's tough economy, the financial outlook for chemical engineers is looking good. Next month's issue of *CEP* will feature a 16-page special section on career management — including a synopsis of the biennial AIChE Salary Survey, conducted by AIChE's Career Services Dept. According to the AIChE Salary Survey, the median salary among chemical engineers is \$84,000, up from \$77,200 in 1999. This represents an 8.8% increase in the last two years. Furthermore, annual raises are averaging 4.8%, almost two percentage points higher than the 2.9% increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) during the same period last year.

Confirming this upward salary trend are recent reports from the U.S. Dept. of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the American Association of Engineering Societies' Engineering Workforce Commission (EWC). The EWC reports that the 2001 median for all engineers is \$71,188, an increase of 2.6% over the previous year. Meanwhile, the BLS's median chemical engineering salary was \$65,960 in 2000.

Compensation for recent chemical engineering graduates who actually found jobs is also looking solid. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), U.S. chemical engineering graduates received the highest average offer of any engineering major in 2001–2002: \$51,254, with electrical engineering coming in a close second at \$50,387.

While money can buy you many things, it can't buy you everything. Work-life balance is a perennial issue that many engineers must contend with. The balancing act is certainly not something easily mastered. Next month's special section will include an article that traces the career path of Corrine Kupstas, global environmental director for pharmaceutical giant Pharmacia Corp., and discusses how she has successfully balanced her family life (two children) with her work life.

I believe many of us, both men and women, will be able to relate to Kupstas' struggles, as well as the choices she has made throughout her career. I know I certainly can relate, since I am preparing to take a brief hiatus from work to give birth to my second child. With that said, this is likely to be my final editorial for the year 2002. I will definitely be back writing again in 2003. It will be interesting to see if I can be as successful as Kupstas at juggling my career and family life. I will certainly use next month's special section as an inspiration.

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