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Editorial

How Do You Compare with Your Peers?



How do you define success? For me, it's achieving a proper work-life balance, where I get to spend time with my family, as well as having a meaningful and satisfying career. For others, it could be making a scientific breakthrough that will have an impact on the industry. Success has many different definitions, but many of us can agree that salary is a common benchmark by which we measure success.

In past years, AICHe conducted a biennial employment and salary survey via regular mail. This year, we have taken advantage of technology and have reached out to our membership via an e-mail survey. "Of the 1,637 full-time salaried employees who responded, the median annual salary was \$92,150, which is 3.5% more than they earned in 2004 (\$89,000), and slightly higher than the rate of inflation, which the Consumer Price Index reported as 3.3% for the same period," writes senior editor Rita D'Aquino (pp. 22-27).

It should come as no surprise that some of the highest paid engineers work in Texas (\$100,650 median salary) and New Jersey (\$101,000). In particular, those who live in Houston, Galveston and San Antonio reported receiving some of the most lucrative salaries, coming in with a median salary of over \$102,000. In New Jersey, the industrial hub of Newark reported a median salary of \$101,500. It is also interesting to note that although Ohio's overall median salary was \$86,500, those who live in the Cincinnati area had a substantially higher median salary of \$103,000.

Taking a look at the industries where chemical engineers are employed, once again, petrochemical & petroleum products and petroleum production/refining rank as two of the highest paying industries, coming in at median salaries of \$115,000 and \$105,000 respectively. Although these industries pay well, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) notes that they have experienced a reduction of 33,000 jobs from 1992 to 2002, and predicts a further decline of 18,000 jobs from 2002 to 2012. However, the BLS indicates that pharmaceutical manufacturing may provide the best opportunities for job seekers, anticipating a growth of 68,000 jobs in the period 2002-2012. According to our survey, the median salary for those in the pharmaceuticals sector is \$93,000.

It's also interesting to see how chemical engineering salaries compare with other engineering disciplines. To find this out, CEP examined the 2005 salary survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). The results indicate that starting salaries for chemical engineers (\$54,256) are still on top, with electrical (\$52,091) and mechanical (\$51,046) engineering coming in a close second and third, respectively. Meanwhile, starting civil engineering salaries lag behind at \$43,462.

Turn to page 22 to find out more employment and salary survey results. It may either bring out the competitor in you and inspire you to strive for more, or, you may be pleasantly surprised that you are ahead of the curve. If your appetite for employment and salary information still isn't satiated, visit CEP online for even more data.

Kristine Chin,
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief