

Survey Results: Practice, Experience Keys to Employment

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As part of the Association's far-reaching work force study, AHIMA commissioned a survey of students about to graduate from accredited HIA and HIT programs. Conducted by the Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, University at Albany, the survey was sent to program directors of all 224 AHIMA-accredited HIA and HIT education programs in late spring 2002. Of an estimated 1,964 graduating students, 893, or 45 percent responded. The survey collected a host of demographic information as well as data about students' previous, current, and future education, professional credentials, employment during and after education, and experiences in the job market.

Among the survey findings are the students' satisfaction level regarding their program content and how it prepared them for the workforce. The Professional Practice Experience (PPE) portion of the curriculum was very well received with 83 percent of HIT students and 79 percent of HIA students agreeing that the PPE met their interests and needs, and that it is helpful in deciding about future employment.

In terms of computer-related content, 65 percent of HIT and 51 percent of HIA students agree or strongly agree that they received adequate exposure in this area. Many HIT (35 percent) and HIA (43 percent) students would like to see education programs place a greater emphasis on technology.

Overall, the graduating students are optimistic about the job market in a time when many industries are down. At the time these students were surveyed (approximately three months prior to graduating), 64 percent of the total group felt that there were as many or more job opportunities available than candidates to fill them and 34 percent of HIT and 30 percent of HIA students had begun their job search. Of this group, 53 percent of HIT and 45 percent of HIA students had already been offered a job and 23 percent of HIT and 21 percent of HIA students had received multiple offers.

In many cases, the hands-on PPE portion of the curriculum resulted in future job opportunities. For 44 percent of HIT students and 39 percent of HIA students, the PPE led the sponsoring organization to make the student a job offer. More than 30 percent of the total respondents had finalized their post-graduation employment at the time of the survey. Of this group, 64 percent of HIT and 51 percent of HIA students reported being highly or very highly satisfied with the job opportunity that they had secured.

The Work Force Assessment Study is funded by the AHIMA Foundation of Research and Education (FORE), and is supported in part by generous grants from 3M Health Information Systems and MedQuist, Inc. The study is also supported by component state associations and individual members through gifts to the Fast FOREward Campaign.

For more on the work force study, see "Who We Are: Findings from the 2002 Member Survey".

Article citation:

"Survey Results: Practice, Experience Keys to Employment." *Journal of AHIMA* 74, no.5 (May 2003): 38.

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