



Five hot career programs to make you more employable in South Florida

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If your job is in jeopardy or career at a dead-end, there's something you can do. Emerging career fields can let you become more employable, with a little retraining.

College administrators in South Florida were asked to name the hot new fields for job seekers.

Their list includes health information technology, [information security](#), sustainable construction, alternative energy engineering and mobile application development.

Training in these areas costs from \$1,700 to \$8,700 and can be completed in one or two years for full-time students. Expect it to take longer if you're attending part-time.

The payoff can be big: The average salary for software engineers who develop applications is \$81,000.

Here are some details about each of these career fields, which offer abundant opportunities for employment, college officials say.

Health information technology

Keeping charts and files on paper is obsolete. "The electronic health record is going to be required in healthcare by 2015," said Gregory Ferenchak, dean of the Health Sciences Department at Broward College.

The ideal candidate has a background in health or [information technology](#), said Monica Chiarini Tremblay, an assistant professor at Florida International University.

Nurses are particularly well positioned for this training, Tremblay said. "Nursing informatists become a liaison between IT and the clinical staff," she said. "They can make more than \$100,000 a year."

According to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, employment in this field is expected to rise 16 percent by the year 2018 in Broward and Palm Beach counties. The average entry-level salary is \$36,500.

The associate degree in health [information management](#) is available at Palm Beach State College and Broward College. The degree costs around \$6,400 and takes two years as a full-time student. FIU is adding a master's degree and a certificate program to its curriculum in 2012.

Information security

As hacker attacks increase, the demand will rise for experts in information security, said Eric Ackerman, assistant dean and director of the Graduate School of [Computer](#) and Information Sciences at Nova Southeastern University.

"Information security is the hottest area in all businesses," said Ackerman. "It has a very high employment rate."

South Florida companies such as Motorola, LexisNexis and American Express have visited the school to recruit students, he said.

At NSU, students can earn two certificates recognized by the U.S. National Security Agency.

The Information System Security certificate is for information technology professionals.

The Administration Information Security certificate is for people who don't have a background in information technology: "This is for someone who has some experience in [computers](#) but limited," said Ackerman. Security analyst is the most common job title for someone with this certificate, he said.

Each costs around \$8,700 and can be completed in a year and a half online or on campus at NSU.

The average salary for a network and computer administrator is \$73,500 in Broward and Palm Beach counties, according to the Florida workforce agency. That job category includes security analysts. Projected employment for this field is expected to rise 22 percent by 2018 in both counties.

Sustainable construction careers

Construction jobs cratered after the economic downturn, but the future is in sustainable or "green" building, said Michelle Anaya DePotter, executive director of the Associated General Contractors of America.

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Public agencies' interest has sparked demand for contractors who are knowledgeable in sustainable – or environmentally friendly and resource-efficient – building, she said.

Finding money for new construction projects is not easy, so jobs in the industry are not assured, Anaya DePotter said. Still, training in sustainable construction is a "plus," she said.

In 2010, the majority of green jobs in Broward and Palm Beach counties were in construction, according to the 2010 Green Jobs Survey by the Florida workforce agency.

Palm Beach State College offers a two-year associate degree in Sustainable Construction Management for about \$6,000. The college also offers two certificate programs, each costing about \$2,300.

Both certificates can be completed in one year, if enrolled full time.

The average entry-level salary in construction is \$37,367, according to the Florida workforce agency, which did not have information specific to sustainable construction jobs.

Alternative energy engineering

As concern about the environment grows, so does the number of jobs related to biofuels, wind and solar energy. Companies are converting existing positions into "green" jobs, ones specialized in energy efficiency and renewable energy sectors.