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Nov. 20 — Recent college graduates are seeing better job prospects as they enter the labor market, although it's less encouraging for those who hold MBAs and other advanced degrees, according to an annual national survey of employers conducted by Michigan State University.

This year's Recruiting Trends report, being released today, shows an almost 10% increase in the number of employers planning to hire college graduates with a bachelor's degree. It also found a 2% increase in hiring plans for all areas, said Phil Gardner, the director of MSU's Collegiate Employment Research Institute.

“This is the fourth year in a row we've seen an overall expansion of labor market,” he said. “We're inching our way back to where we were in 2007. We're beginning to get some momentum.”

The report surveyed thousands of employers across the U.S. to ask about their hiring plans for the coming year.

The Central Midwest — which includes Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana — shows 1% growth in bachelor's degree hires, but falls to a 2% decrease overall. The Mountain West leads the nation, with a 1% increase overall and a 5% growth in bachelor's degrees.

Dragging down the overall number is a lack of hiring plans for those with MBAs and other advanced degrees, which is related to softness in the financial services market, Gardner said.

“The market for new MBAs has been hit hard,” the report said. “Since January,

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has been interested in fashion and drawing.

The apparel and textile design major, who had an internship at the headquarters last summer, will be in charge of coordinating some inventory to stores when she starts her full-time job in August.

Her secret to success? “Network, network, network,” she said. “You have to put yourself out there and talk to people.”

The report calls the increase in hiring steady but said it could be better and notes that financial services — which led recovery in the college labor market for the last two years — deeply retrenched this year. Without that sector in the calculations, the market for new bachelor's degrees would see double-digit gains, according to the report.

“The bachelor's labor market continues to improve — that's the good news throughout the regions,” the report said. “The rate of growth, however, remains modest. We need hiring to gain traction and pull forward strongly. At present, none of the regions appear poised to lead the way.”

Gardner also sounded a note of caution, saying it appears some of the jobs might dry up as the year goes on.

“Students have to be engaged in the market early,” he said.

That's what Gillespie did.

“I think it's the first time in four years I've been able to relax and enjoy being here at school,” she said.

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