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By Barbara Bean-Mellinger Updated October 26, 2020 Electrical Engineers Do Not Need to Be Licensed to Begin Their Careers; in fact, it is not possible to do so. After taking a bachelor's degree, they become engineers in training (EITs), which means they must be monitored by experienced engineers who have obtained professional engineering (PE) license by passing the Professional Engineer Exam. They remain EITs for at least four years as they learn at work, and when they are ready, they can also take the PE exam. All engineers must earn a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, electrical engineering or similar major from a college or university accredited by their state licensing board, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Electrical engineering programs include classroom learning, laboratories and fieldwork. The courses include differential equations, design of digital systems and electrical circuit theory, explains BLS. Some colleges offer collaborative programs that combine classes with – or alternate with – periods of work, so you gain experience as you learn. Some students attend schools that offer a five-year combined bachelor's and master's degrees; This gives you even more knowledge and possibly an advantage when applying for jobs. A master's degree can also command a higher starting salary and allow you to teach or work in research and development. But earning a degree is just the beginning. With degree in hand, you can take the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam, and with a passed score, you can be hired as an engineering intern (EI) or engineer-in-training (EIT), which are just different names for the same job; many states that previously used the title EI have changed to EIT, which is the most common title. In this important role, you will spend four or more years learning from PEs that have many years of experience. While a degree gives you a broad education, you need to learn how to use it at your specific job and according to the company's methods. After the training period, when you are ready, you can take the PE exam and become a PE yourself. Although becoming a PE is usually not a requirement, it is a credential that shows that you have the experience and knowledge to lead other engineers and that you are serious about your career. Only PEs can log off, seal and send technical plans and drawings to public or private clients, explains the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), which offers the PE exam. NSPE compares the PE credentials to an accountant who becomes a CPA. It shows customers and colleagues that you are among the best in your field. If you want to own your own engineering company one day or become a consultant, you need to become a PE to lead other engineers, approve their plans and charts, and attract top customers. Each state, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories have licensing requirements for engineers, which may differ slightly or much from another state's Learn the rules early for the state you're going to work in, so there are no surprises when you apply for a license to make sure you've met all the requirements. Many states also require you to continue learning the latest techniques and methods in the field by taking further education courses to renew your PE license. BLS provides a median electrical engineering salary of \$98,530 as of May 2019. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$63,020 while the highest 10 percent earned over \$155,860. A median salary is the centerpiece of a list of salaries, where half earned more and half earned less. The independent, reliable guide to online education for over 22 years! Copyright ©2020 GetEducated.com; Approved colleges, LLC All rights reserved from batteries for mobile phones to computers, electrical engineers touch on the technologies that affect people's lives. Electrical engineers design, study and operate devices and systems that use electrical and electromagnetic energy. They are behind improvements in communication technology and computers. Employers in the field require varying levels of education, depending on the job. The United States had 154,250 electrical engineers who earned a median annual income of \$85,920 as of May 2011, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. To get an entry-level job in the industry, you need a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from a program accredited by ABET. Electrical engineering studies in the classroom, laboratory and field. In college, electrical engineering students take courses in engineering mathematics, electronic circuits, electromagnetic fields and waves and digital signal processing, as well as written communication. To prepare for the lower major, high school students should take drafts, physics, trigonometry and calculus. To work in research and development or as a university instructor, electrical engineers need a master's degree in the field. Graduate students take courses to acquire deeper knowledge of specific areas, such as hardware and software systems, electronic devices and fields, waves and radioscience. Graduate students can earn their master's degree through courses or by researching and writing a thesis. Some schools require students to have programming skills before they start classes. Earning a Professional Engineer license can boost your job prospects. Some employers encourage licensing and consider their credentials a serious show about the field. Although engineers don't need the P.E. designation to work for some businesses, most states make it illegal to start your own engineering business or work as an independent consultant without P.E. credentials. In addition to education, electrical engineers need specific characteristics to do so in the industry. They must be able to apply classroom knowledge to new technology. They need communication skills to explain design and reasoning, and to give instructions to employees under technology and production. They must be detail-oriented to track several design elements and technical characteristics during research and testing of electronic components. They must also be able to use mathematics for analysis, design and troubleshooting. Electrical engineering is not a high-growth field. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects the number of manufacturing jobs to increase by 7 percent from 2010 to 2020, slower than the average for all U.S. occupations. Although companies will need engineers to invent new technology, the number of manufacturers hiring engineers for development will fall. The best opportunities will be in engineering companies, rather than for manufacturing companies, because many companies will cut the cost of contracting for technical needs rather than directly hiring engineers. Computer systems design and wireless telecommunications are two sectors that will continue to need electrical engineers. Are you interested in learning about your career opportunities with an electrical engineering degree? If you currently have a degree in the field, there are a number of different in-demand positions you can qualify for. Electrical engineers can work in many different public and private environments, from a production facility to an industrial plant. This is primarily because engineers specialize in designing, developing and testing electrical devices, and electricity plays an important role in almost all industries. If you want to scope out your options, here are some sought-after career options that you should consider: Research engineers can work for companies that develop products, but they work more often in the labs of scientific research and development firms. If you are a creative scientist with great patience, this can be a good choice for you. A research engineer is working with a team of other specialists to develop new electrical devices, test existing devices and design better overall products during the discovery phase of product development. Design engineers After a team of research engineers has invented a new product, the models and simulations are passed on to design engineers. These electrical engineers are responsible for making the models and simulations constructed by the research team into an actual, mass-producing product. Electronics have several small parts that need to work together, and the design team is responsible for the internal design layout so that these separate parts work together. Project engineers If you have strong leadership skills, you may want to consider becoming a project engineer. Once you have gained experience in the field, you can land a position where you will be responsible for monitoring research and design teams that have been commissioned to develop a new technology or prototype. Project engineers need to motivate teams, make recommendations, and lead the team. They must also demonstrate their skills in the field. Test Engineers A test job is to troubleshoot a device when it is not working properly. If something goes wrong, the test engineer will be responsible for identifying the problem and finding solutions to ensure the technology is working properly in the future. This job requires you to spend long hours performing routine tests, which means you need to be able to stay focused for long periods of time. As you can see, electrical engineering is not a limited career field. With many different professionals needed at different stages of product development and testing, there is a place for each electrical engineer. Decide which position you want to enjoy most, reach the level of education you need to pursue that position, and do what you can to become a valuable resource in a growing field. Field.