



# The **Comprehensive** **Guide** to University and Early Career Recruiting

## Introduction

**“The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible, and achieve it, generation after generation.”**

– Pearl S. Buck

New perspectives, fresh ideas, and innovative change: these are some of the core benefits of hiring early career talent. And for companies looking to bolster the diversity and innovation of their technical teams, **university recruiting** is often the most productive place to start. Today's new generation of Computer Science graduates is more diverse than ever before and passionate about making an impact in their work.<sup>1</sup>

The key to connecting with diverse and talented early career candidates starts with **rethinking your approach** to university recruiting. Traditionally, companies target the most elite and well-known schools for Computer Science in their university recruiting programs; there is stiff competition for new grads from MIT, UC Berkeley, and Stanford. Meanwhile, 94 percent of computer science degrees granted every year are not from “name-brand” programs like these.<sup>2</sup>

To find and hire more diverse early career talent, it's time to look beyond the usual target schools for university recruiting. **Zoom, Asana, and eBay** are among the companies leading the way in revolutionizing their university recruiting programs to connect with a bigger and more diverse pool of new grad talent by evaluating candidates on the basis of their coding skills, not where they went to school.<sup>3</sup>

This comprehensive guide for hiring early career technical talent will show you how to create a consistent hiring process that helps you hit your hiring targets with highly skilled and diverse talent. In laying out the process, we'll explore best practices for each stage of the recruiting funnel:

### 01.

#### Building your funnel

Sourcing early career talent to build diverse teams

### 02.

#### Top of funnel

Pre-screening early career candidates

### 03.

#### Middle of funnel

Building relationships with your candidates

### 04.

#### Bottom of funnel

Assessing real-world troubleshooting skills and team fit

<sup>1</sup> What Gen Z Wants from Employers | Great Place to Work®

<sup>2</sup> Two Statistics + A Prediction on the Future of Tech Recruiting

<sup>3</sup> Top 5 Ways to Get the Most Out of University Recruiting Season



# Sourcing early career talent to build diverse teams

The first step to hiring diverse and talented new grad candidates is **knowing where to look**. Sourcing from only name-brand schools limits a company's ability to find "hidden gems" among candidates from less elite schools or who have a non-traditional background.

**Here are 4 better ways to identify top talent to build and scale diverse engineering teams:**

## 01.

Partner with nonprofit organizations like **ColorStack**, which helps Black and Latinx new grad developers in the US prepare for the job market and connect with employers

## 02.

Integrate a recruiting automation tool like **RippleMatch** that helps employers build diverse teams

## 03.

Measure candidates' skills directly using a validated assessment for junior-level talent like **CodeSignal's General Coding Framework**











## 04.

Build what Nicole Perzigian, Global Emerging Talent Program Leader at Zoom, calls a "**nurture list**" of diverse schools—rather than a narrow "master list" of elite schools—to target in university recruiting

**Key takeaway:** Building diverse engineering teams starts with looking beyond the usual elite schools when sourcing for new grad and early career hires.

## Top 10 schools for software engineering in 2022

CodeSignal's annual **University Ranking Report** identifies the top 50 colleges and universities for computer science and software engineering undergraduate programs based on students' objective coding skills. Here are the top ten schools for 2022:

- |  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| 1. <br>University of Virginia,<br>Charlottesville | 2. <br>Carnegie Mellon<br>University | 3. <br>Yale University                       | 4. <br>Massachusetts Institute<br>of Technology | 5. <br>University of California,<br>Los Angeles |
| 6. <br>University of<br>Pennsylvania              | 7. <br>Rice University               | 8. <br>California Institute<br>of Technology | 9. <br>University of<br>California, San Diego   | 10. <br>Swarthmore College                      |

### Top of funnel

## Pre-screening early career candidates

For university and early career recruiters, managing applicants at the top of the funnel can be a daunting task. In the tech industry, a single job posting can result in hundreds or even thousands of applications. Or, **if you're Google**, millions. They receive over 3 million applications per year and have a hire rate of just 0.2 percent.

So what's the best way for companies to find great future employees among this high volume of applications?

### Traditional approach:

## Resume review

Many companies choose to go with manual resume reviews to screen applicants at the top of the funnel. Recruiters quickly scan through each of the resumes submitted, **spending an average of 6 seconds per resume**, and pick out the 4 to 5 percent of applicants they believe are most qualified for the position. This results in rejection of over 98 percent of applications on average.

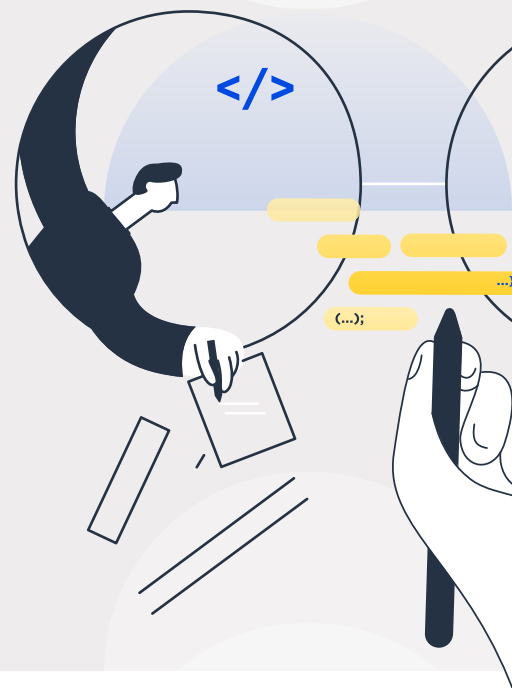
In an ideal world, recruiting teams would have the capacity to thoroughly review each resume submitted and hold a conversation with each applicant to gain a holistic understanding of their qualifications for the job. The reality, however, is that companies need to sift through a large volume of applications, fast, to narrow down their pool of candidates to interview.

# Resumes, bias, and the rise of self-taught developers

It's well documented that resume review is subject to a high degree of bias and subjectivity. Even highly trained recruiters have **unconscious biases** that may shape how they evaluate a resume.

**One example:** people tend to notice educational institutions that are prestigious or which they themselves attended, opening up room for bias toward these candidates. This is especially problematic today, when many of the most highly-skilled developers attended less prestigious universities or, increasingly, learned to code through a bootcamp or with free online resources.

A **recent study** of new grad developers found that some of the best technical talent, when measured by objective coding skills, comes from universities that are often overlooked by university recruiting teams: Arizona State University and North Carolina State University, for instance, are among the top 30 schools named in the report.



Changemaking approach:

## Top-of-funnel skills screening

**Skills screening** provides a more objective measure of a candidate's qualifications, rather than the subjective impression of the person who reviews their resume. While bias can still creep into other parts of the recruiting process, **objective skills screening limits the extent to which unconscious bias can shape decision-making** at the top of the funnel. It also allows recruiting teams to identify top candidates who have non-traditional employment or educational backgrounds.

Research-backed skills screening is used at the top of the funnel to evaluate core programming skills shared across many roles—especially early career roles. Pre-built screens are developed, validated, and maintained by the vendor, and can save engineering teams time they might have spent developing a custom assessment or conducting a technical phone screen. **CodeSignal Pre-Screen** assessments are developed using validated **skills evaluation frameworks** that accurately and consistently measure candidates' coding skills. Many assessment vendors **integrate with applicant tracking systems (ATS)**, which makes it easy to send assessment invitations to candidates in bulk.

**Key takeaway:** Our recommendation is to send research-backed skills screens to all new grad and early career applicants to efficiently identify top talent among a large pool of applicants.

# What are **skills evaluation frameworks**?

Skills evaluation frameworks are at the heart of CodeSignal's validated approach to designing research-backed technical skills screens.

A **framework** is a set of requirements and guidelines that define an assessment. The framework enables the assessment design team to create many different versions of an assessment that are similar in difficulty and topic area. These versions are highly consistent with each other in terms of key difficulty measures like solve rate, but dynamic question rotation mitigates the impact of leaked questions and prevents candidates from collaborating on solutions.

**[Read the research on CodeSignal's skills evaluation frameworks here.](#)**



Middle of funnel

## **Building relationships with your candidates**

Using a research-backed skills screen at the top of the funnel gives recruiting teams a strong signal of which candidates possess the technical skills needed to succeed for the job. It also **saves recruiters hundreds of hours** they would have spent poring over resumes.

With a clear view of who has the skills for the job and time freed up by eliminating manual resume review, we recommend that you **have a recruiter reach out** to do what they do best: build connections with early career candidates, gauge their interest, and assess for culture fit. Building connections with top-scoring candidates will help move them along more quickly in the hiring process and create a positive candidate experience.

Depending on your company's applicant volume and **hiring bar**, you may also use the middle of the funnel stage to **conduct additional screening** of candidates who didn't quite meet your technical bar but may still turn out to be good fits.

### 3 tips for building connections with early career candidates

You've identified a candidate with strong technical skills and are excited to move them onto the next stage. What can you as a recruiter do at this stage to get this candidate excited about the role, so you can prevent drop-off and increase the likelihood of offer acceptance? Here are 3 tips:

- 01. Connect with candidates on their purpose

Learning what a candidate cares about and what drives them in their work not only helps you gauge their culture fit—it also shows them that you care about their career aspirations.



- 02. Communicate transparently and often about the recruiting timeline

Ease candidates' anxiety about next steps and when they can expect to hear back from your team by erring on the side of over-communicating with them. They will appreciate your attentiveness and personalized outreach.



- 03. Use automated scheduling tools to free up time to connect

If you spend a quarter of your day scheduling interviews and onsite, you likely won't have time to engage in personalized outreach to top candidates. Let tools like **GoodTime** handle repetitive tasks so you can focus on what you do best.



**Key takeaway:** Don't underestimate the power of building meaningful connections with your top candidates to improve candidate experience and your offer acceptance rate.

#### Bottom of funnel

## Assessing real-world troubleshooting skills and team fit

You now have a select pool of qualified early career candidates that have moved to the onsite stage of your recruiting process. How do you make the most of this touchpoint to ensure your interviewers home in on the candidates best suited for the job while maintaining a positive candidate experience?

The answer: **structured interviews**. Structured interviews ensure fairness and consistency when conducting virtual or in-person onsite interviews. This is a win-win for both hiring teams and candidates.

## Tips for conducting **structured interviews**

Here are a few ways that **structured interviews improve candidate experience** in technical onsites:

- **Reducing bias in the interviewing process** by creating a consistent interview process for all candidates. Candidates who go through a structured interview process will feel confident they are being assessed fairly.
- **Improving interviewer preparedness.** Interviewers who are prepared for the interview and aligned on their roles during the interview will leave a much better impression with a candidate than interviewers who are obviously “winging it.”
- Encouraging interviewers to ask questions in a thoughtful progression. **Research** shows that question order matters for a candidate’s performance and experience in an interview. Starting with easier questions helps put the candidate at ease and warm them up for the more challenging questions you’ll ask later.

For early career roles where core programming skills matter more than specialized knowledge of languages or frameworks, we recommend using the technical onsite to dig into two areas best assessed by human interviewers: **real-world troubleshooting skills** and **team fit**.

Both candidates and interviewers have the best experience when they can collaborate and talk through a problem together. Consider **coding interview tools** that allow interviewers to quickly pull up real-world programming problems for candidates to solve and to assess candidates’ communication and collaboration skills as they work through the problem together. Candidates will appreciate and perform best in a platform that provides a **comfortable, realistic development environment**.

**Key takeaway:** Conduct your onsite technical interviews in a realistic development environment that allows live collaboration and troubleshooting opportunities while providing a top-notch candidate experience.

# Conclusion

This guide has taken you through research-based best practices for optimizing your technical recruiting funnel for early career hires. We've broken down our recommendations by each level of the funnel, as well as building the funnel through sourcing. Here's a summary of the key takeaways from this guide:

## For recruiting new grad and early career developers:

- Source candidates from a wider and more diverse pool of target schools.
- Send research-backed assessments to all junior-level applicants as your first stage of screening to efficiently identify top talent among a large pool of applicants.
- Don't underestimate the power of building meaningful connections with your top candidates at the mid-funnel stage to improve your offer acceptance rate.
- Conduct your onsite technical interviews in a realistic development environment that allows live collaboration and troubleshooting opportunities.

## Case study

### Saving hundreds of engineering hours with validated skills screening

A high-growth technology startup that recently went public decided to implement CodeSignal's Pre-Screen solution after determining that their in-house assessment solutions were limiting their ability to scale their engineering team quickly.

The company saw the results below within 10 months of implementing Pre-Screen:



A consistent and research-backed process for university and early career recruiting empowers you to:



**Achieve** engineering hiring goals



**Reduce** engineering time spent on interviewing



**Increase** diversity on the engineering team



**Improve** hiring with structure and consistency



## Ready to become a **university or early career recruiting changemaker** at your organization?

Talk with our technical recruiting experts to quantify the savings your organization can expect by implementing best practices for technical hiring.

**GET STARTED**

