

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Instead of returning to their home countries directly after graduation, many international students decide that they want to work in the United States. U.S. immigration law permits international students to engage in short-term employment for practical training under certain conditions. This training may occur during or after their academic program. As of January 1, 2005, regulations state that students on F-1 visas are eligible for a maximum of 12 months of curricular practical training (CPT) during their studies and 12 months of optional practical training (OPT) during or after completing a degree. Students on J-1 visas are eligible for 18 months of academic training during or after their studies (post-docs, up to 36 months). In any situation, employment must be directly related to the student's major. Please consult the Office of International Student Services (419.530.4229) for current details and regulations.

Looking for a job is not easy for any student. International students are prone to encountering additional obstacles that citizens do not. Conducting a job search for employment in the United States requires a great deal of persistence; sometimes the job search process gets very confusing for inexperienced job searchers. In today's slow economic growth, it is becoming more and more difficult to compete for available jobs. In order to conduct the most effective job search, it is essential for non-natives to the United States to learn about the resources available to them, the U.S. job search process, the immigration laws and regulations, and the issues that may present extra challenges when seeking employment in the U.S.

United States Employment System

International students who plan to seek employment in its need to have a good understanding of the U.S. employment system and expectations. They also need to familiarize themselves with expectations about communication, leadership, and teamwork. The first step in designing an effective job search strategy in the United States is to clearly understand the environment in which you are operating and its needs. You might not have any prior job search experience in your home country. Even if you have, you will likely find that job searching is different in the U.S., and presents unique obstacles and challenges. For further information on job searching strategies, please refer to the job search campaign document available on the Career Services website (<http://www.student-services.utoledo.edu/career/>) or visit Career Services (SU 1532).

One key to finding employment in the U.S. is by carefully researching employers that are more likely to hire international students. Some organizations like federal agencies and the Department of Defense or government contractors may not be able to hire non-U.S. citizens due to the nature of the work. As an international student with a F-1 visa, students can work as full-time employees for up to a year after graduation as part of OPT. After their optional practical training expires, their employer has to sponsor you in order to obtain an H1-B visa, which allows you to work in the U.S. for one to six additional years. Like most other countries, the U.S. has strict immigration laws aimed at maximizing full-time career opportunities for its own citizens, and the visa system can be complex.

The immigration rules and regulations developed and enforced by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service are changing constantly. International students seeking employment in the U.S. must work closely with the Office of International Student Services to stay informed of current regulations and ensuring that an adequate amount of time is allowed when filing for practical training or attempting to change visa statuses. The Office of International Student

Services is located in SU 1533 at the University of Toledo, or visit them at <http://www.student-services.utoledo.edu/international/>.

How to Approach Employers

It is important for international students to keep the employer's perspective in mind when job searching. From the employer's point-of-view, hiring an international student is more complicated, and requires more effort, than hiring an American. The process involves: petitioning the government for an H1-B, obtaining approval from the Labor Department, hiring a lawyer and fees. Many employers are intimidated by the U.S. immigration process and are reluctant to sponsor H1-B visas. Some even have a policy against hiring non-citizens.

Avoid beginning an employment interview with an inquiry regarding H1-B sponsorship. Discussions about H1-B sponsorship should come later, either when the employer brings it up or when the applicant is offered a position. The applicant's primary focus in an interview is to convince the employer of his/her suitability for the job. Only later, when an employer is close to hiring the applicant should he/she raise the issue of H1-B sponsorship. Applicants who can successfully interpret the sponsorship issue to a potential employer have an increased likelihood of being hired than those who do not understand it very well. So if you are an international student seeking employment, study the job market, what is expected of employees in U.S. corporations, and how to conduct yourself during a professional interview.

Additional roadblocks for international students may include:

- **A perceived lack of commitment to the job** – Employers might have a concern that international students will eventually want to return to their home countries. Hiring and training is an expensive process and employers sometimes hesitate to invest time and money towards international students that are likely to leave.
- **Communication** – Strong communication skills are critical for prospective employees. Employers are often concerned with international students' ability to communicate effectively with their clients and/or internal personnel.
- **Lack of relevant work experience** – An employer has to prove that an international student has skills necessary for the job that were not found in a U.S citizen in order to sponsor for permanent residence.
- **Animosity** – Some might feel that international students are taking jobs away from U.S. citizens.
- **Size of company** – Sometimes smaller companies in rural areas who are experiencing population drain may have more time to spend handling Visa issues, and may be more willing to sponsor an international job candidate to fill a need.
- **Slowing economy** – In a tight economy, employers are more apt to find a U.S. citizen with the skill set needed for a particular job.

IMPORTANT REMINDER – Contact the Office of International Student Services (SU 1533) to clarify employment eligibility in the U.S. Understanding employment options will help students make sound decisions as they implement their job searches. This understanding will also enable him/her to successfully explain to potential employers, during an interview, how he/she will be able to obtain work authorization in the U.S.

Professional Interviewing

Successful interviewing begins with preparation. You can make a better impression during your interview by doing a little homework beforehand, including researching the organization with which you are interviewing, brushing up on your professional etiquette, and practicing interview questions.

Know Yourself

- Identify your skills, interests and work values.
- Identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- Think about, and be able to communicate, your long and short-term goals.
- Review the job description, if available, and examine your background to identify related skills and knowledge.
- Be able to articulate why you are interested in the position and the organization.
- Be prepared to expand on any item on your resume.
- Practice answers to sample interview questions using concrete examples, and prepare a few questions to ask the employer. Find practice questions at <http://www.student-services.utoledo.edu/career/studentsalumni/Interviewing.htm>.
- Rehearse your interview with a friend. You should be able to convey all pertinent information about yourself in 15 minutes. If possible, record yourself on video to check your diction, speed, and body language.
- Prepare your interview materials before you leave. Bring up-to-date copies of your resume, a list of references, and any work samples (or portfolio).

Professional Image

Dress professionally – you will be judged by your appearance. Companies may relax the internal dress code for current employees, but interviews still follow the conservative standard: a business suit. Wear the best quality clothing you can afford. When preparing a professional wardrobe, consider the following guidelines:

For Women

- Conservative business suit or dress with jacket
- Blouse should coordinate with suit
- Natural tone hose (no runs!)
- Pumps – shoes covering the toe; maximum 2 inch heel
- Conservative belt and purse
- Be moderate with make-up and perfume
- If you wear nail polish, use clear or a conservative color
- No more than one ring on each hand
- One set of earrings only, and no other visible body piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, tongue rings, etc.)
- Hair and fingernails should be well groomed

For Men

- Simple jacket or business suit in blue, brown or gray (small pattern or flecks of mixed colors are fine)
- A clean, ironed shirt
- Conservative tie with no more than four colors
- Hair and fingernails should be well-groomed
- Use cologne or after-shave sparingly
- Face should be clean-shaven; facial hair should be neatly trimmed
- Coordinate sock color with the color of your pants or shoes
- Black, brown or cordovan shoes; tie or slip-on; well-polished
- Belts, handkerchiefs, suspenders must match or complement your suit
- Overcoats should be in dark or neutral colors
- Wedding and/or college rings are acceptable
- No earrings or visible body piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.)
- Empty pockets – no bulges or tinkling coins
- Hair and fingernails should be well groomed

Take notice of your body language. Your attitude and non-verbal behaviors can communicate your qualifications as strongly as the words you use to describe them:

Posture: should be well balanced, erect, relaxed, straight on and open.

Eye Contact: should be open and direct when listening, asking, and responding to questions.

Handshake: should be firm, i.e., not wimpy or painful.

Voice tone: should be firm, warm, well modulated and relaxed. Be comfortable with silence and pauses.

Gestures: hands should be used in a relaxed way for animation, communicating excitement, and showing interest. Make sure gestures are natural.

To avoid negative body language, identify your nervous habits and practice controlling them. Try to reduce or eliminate the following behaviors:

- Frequently touching your face
- Biting your lip
- Swinging or tapping your foot or leg
- Folding or crossing your arms
- Slouching
- Picking at invisible bits of lint
- Playing with rings or other jewelry

Know the Company and Position

The more information you have about the company and the position for which you are applying, the more impressive you will be in the interview. An interviewer will be impressed by your interest and motivation, and you will be more prepared to explain what you can do for the company.

- Research the employer by reviewing mission statements, annual reports, recruiting literature, and web site.
- Find out about the firm's competitors, clients or customers.
- Learn the range of products manufactured or services provided.
- Learn the structure of the organization – opportunities for professional development.
- Know the name, role and level of responsibility of each individual with whom you are to meet.
- Be able to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and how your skills specifically relate to the position.
- Conduct an informational interview with someone who is currently working in, or who has knowledge of, the position.
- Read recent articles about the profession or organization in local newspapers.
- Consult periodicals and trade journals to learn about current trends in the field.

An invitation to interview with an organization demonstrates that you meet the basic requirements for the position. Interviews will be offered to several others who have exhibited similar qualifications. The employer will offer the job to the candidate who is able to communicate that he or she is the best person for the job. Here are some strategies that can increase your interviewing success:

- Be on time for your interview. Arrive at least ten minutes before the interview to give yourself time to check in and relax.
- Be positive and try to make others feel comfortable. Show openness by leaning into a greeting with a firm handshake.
- Remember to smile.
- Be confident. Make eye contact with the interviewer and answer questions in a clear voice. Work to establish rapport with the interviewer.

- Practice good posture, clear speech, and appropriate eye contact.
- Relax. Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation. You are interviewing the organization, too.
- Do not chew gum, eat candy, or smoke.
- Share information about yourself using concrete examples/stories that emphasize your strengths and demonstrate your skills, competencies, attitudes, and values.
- Quantify your answers by using facts (percentages, volume, frequency) and emphasizing results (increased profit, improved student scores, solved a problem).
- Listen. Communication is a two-way street. If you are talking too much, you may miss cues concerning what the interviewer feels is important.
- Take a moment to think about your responses before you speak. If you are unsure how to answer a question, ask for clarification.
- Incorporate the information from your research into your responses to demonstrate that you really want the position.
- When it is your turn, ask the questions you have prepared in advance. Keep your questions focused on the responsibilities of the job – ask for more information about the company and the position that was not answered in your own research.
- Do not ask inappropriate questions. For example, asking, “Is relocation a requirement?”, or “How much vacation time do employees get?” may cause the interviewer to assume that you do not want to relocate or that you may be more interested in time off than making a positive professional contribution to the organization.
- Be prepared to summarize and confirm your qualifications for the job in the closing stage of the interview.

For sample interview questions, consult the Career Services website at <http://www.student-services.utoledo.edu/career/studentsalumni/Interviewing.htm>.

After The Interview

End the interview with a handshake and thank the interviewer for his or her time. Reiterate your interest in the position and your qualifications. Ask if you can telephone in a few days to check on the status of your application. If they offer to contact you, politely ask when you should expect the call.

Make sure you send a brief thank-you note within 48 hours of your interview. Feel free to mention any topics discussed during your interview and confirm your interest in the position.

You should also evaluate your performance in the interview. Were you able to describe your skills and abilities clearly? Did you leave anything out about yourself that could have improved your chances? What questions were difficult for you to answer and how did you answer them? Assess your fit for this position. Is the job a good fit with your professional goals? What was your impression of the work environment? What is the potential for growth and advancement?

Informational Websites

www.jobweb.com/resources/library/international/default.htm

www.GlobalCareerCenter.com

www.careerosaicindia.com/JS/CRC/CA/CA6.htm

www.rileyguide.com/internat.html

www.transitionabroad.com

<http://internationalstudent.com>

http://istudentcity.com/career/career_tips_basic.asp

www.ubalt.edu/careercenter/careerlink/00_fall/feature_intl_resume.html

www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/career/CareerBriefs/jobint.html

www.campuscareercenter.com/students/visa.asp

<http://intlcareers.org/non-us.html>

<http://workabroad.monster.com>

Different Types of Visas

| | |
|--------|---|
| | Nonimmigrant Visas |
| | Nonimmigrant Classifications and Visas |
| | Academic Students |
| F-1 | Academic Students |
| F-2 | Spouse or child of F-1 |
| | Temporary Workers |
| H-1B | Specialty Occupations, DOD workers, fashion models |
| H-1C | Nurses going to work for up to three years in health professional shortage areas |
| H-2A | Temporary Agricultural Workers |
| H-2B | Temporary workers: skilled and unskilled |
| H-3 | Trainees |
| H-4 | Spouse or child of H-1, H-2, H-3 |
| | Exchange Visitors |
| J-1 | Visas for exchange visitors |
| J-2 | Spouse or child of J-1 |
| | Fiance(e) of US Citizen |
| K-1 | Fiance(e) |
| K-2 | Minor child of K-1 |
| K-3 | Spouse of a U.S. Citizen (LIFE Act) |
| K-4 | Child of K-3 (LIFE Act) |
| | Intra Company Transferee |
| L-1A | Executive, managerial |
| L-1B | Specialized knowledge |
| L-2 | Spouse or child of L-1 |
| | Vocational and Language Students |
| M-1 | Vocational students or other nonacademic students |
| M-2 | Spouse or child of M-1 |
| NAFTA | North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (see TN, below) |
| | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NATO-1 | Principal Permanent Representative of Member State to NATO and resident members of official staff or immediate family |
| NATO-2 | Other representatives of member State; Dependents of a Member of a Force entering in accordance with the provisions of NATO Status-of-Forces agreement; Members of such a Force if issued visas |
| NATO-3 | Official clerical staff accompanying Representative of Member State to NATO or immediate family |
| NATO-4 | Official of NATO other than those qualified as NATO-1 and immediate family |

| | |
|--------|--|
| NATO-5 | Expert other than NATO officials qualified under NATO-4, employed on behalf of NATO and immediate family |
| NATO-6 | Member of civilian component who is either accompanying a Force entering in accordance with the provisions of the NATO Status-of-Forces agreement; attached to an Allied headquarters under the protocol on the Status of International Military headquarters set up pursuant to the North Atlantic Treaty; and their dependents |
| NATO-7 | Servant or personal employee of NATO-1, NATO-2, NATO-3, NATO-4, NATO-5, NATO-6, or immediate family |
| | Workers with Extraordinary Abilities |
| O-1 | Extraordinary ability in Sciences, Arts, Education, Business, or Athletics |
| O-2 | Aliens (support) accompanying O-1 |
| O-3 | Spouse or child of O-1 or O-2 |
| | Athletes and Entertainers |
| P-1 | Individual or team athletes |
| P-1 | Entertainment groups |
| P-2 | Artists and entertainers in reciprocal Exchange programs |
| P-3 | Artists and entertainers in culturally unique programs |
| P-4 | Spouse or child of P-1, 2, or 3 |
| | International Cultural Exchange Visitors |
| Q-1 | International cultural exchange visitors |
| Q-2 | Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program (Walsh Visas) |
| Q-3 | Spouse or child of Q-2 |
| | Religious Workers |
| R-1 | Religious workers |
| R-2 | Spouse or child of R-1 |
| | North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) |
| TN | Trade visas for Canadians and Mexicans |
| TD | Spouse or child accompanying TN |
| TPS | Temporary Protected Status |

Adapted from <http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/visas.htm>