The Center for Student Success-Careers

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**CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**

**CAREERS**

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JOB SEARCH TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

• As an international student you face certain challenges and restrictions regarding the U.S. job search. We suggest that you begin your search early. The Office of Career Development and International Student Services are here to help you.

• Communication skills are very important. Use every possible opportunity to strengthen your command of spoken and written English. Keep in mind that the Office of Career Development will be happy to provide you assistance with cover letters and resumes.

• When looking for potential employment, remember that you have unique assets in addition to your academic training to "sell": bi-lingual abilities, adaptability, a unique cultural background, and professional experience. Your reception will be the most positive if you focus on employers that have a strong need for all of these strengths.

• Networking is even more important for the international student than for a U.S. citizen. By networking we simply mean systematically making personal, written, or telephone contacts with relatives, friends, and alumni in the United States and back home who may be able to help you in the search. Each person whom you contact becomes a participant in your search. Fellow students from abroad who have gained some experience with the U.S. job market may be able to help you with your search for a position.

• Ordinarily, you may wish to concentrate on employers that have connections (offices, subsidiaries, marketing teams, sales forces) to your country of origin. These companies may have an interest in you working for them in this country, or to return to your home country after initial training in the United States.

• In most cases, you will be eligible for 12 months of practical training related to your studies, but you may find that some employers will be reluctant to hire international students because of their visa restrictions.

• One of the most invaluable resources you have in the U.S. is your embassy. Often foreign embassies maintain lists of contacts for employment. Contact them!

• Honesty about your visa status in all employer contacts is the best policy. Read the article "When in the hiring process do I reveal that I'm an International student?" (www.intlcareers.org/non-us.html). Discuss any concerns that you may have with a counselor.

Intl Student Job Search Guide.doc Job Search 2
Adapted from “Advice for International Students”, Hofstra University Career Center, 1999.
CULTURAL BARRIERS TO THE JOB SEARCH MAY BE...

U.S. EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS vs. CONFLICTING VALUES OF ANOTHER CULTURE

SELF-PROMOTION

- assertiveness
- confidence in openly discussing goals, personal qualities and accomplishments
- follow-up with employers (telephone inquiries regarding application status, thank-you notes)
- appropriate dress/grooming/hygiene
- aggressiveness
- unless presented as part of group activity, citing accomplishments and skills is viewed as boastful self-serving and too individualistic
- asking employer directly about status of application is rude
- appearance is not as important as technical expertise

COMMUNICATION

- open and direct responses to questions
- eye contact with interviewer and relaxed posture
- appropriate space and other non-verbal behaviors
- directness is disrespectful
- eye contact, especially with persons of higher status (e.g. employer, interviewer) is disrespectful
- body language of respect

SELF-DISCLOSURE

- personal descriptions of experience, hobbies strengths and weaknesses
- answers to questions related to personality (e.g. leadership style, problem-solving abilities)
- personal questions about likes/dislikes, etc. are considered an invasion of privacy
- items unrelated to work are unimportant

CAREER SELF-AWARENESS

- demonstrating knowledge of self, career goals and how they relate to the job
- responsible for own career development
- discussion of long-range plans
- jobs are sometimes available through government or family
- questions about role in a company indicates potential disloyalty
- company assigns work responsibilities; individual must be flexible to accept whatever is available

FINDING EMPLOYMENT

- use of wide variety of resources for identifying jobs, friends, family contacts, career services, faculty, professional journals and associations
- networking
- many jobs are found through government or family
- dependency relationships in job search are fostered; one resource (e.g. academic advisor, employment agent) will find appropriate job

INTERVIEW PROCESS

- concerned with image and professional style
- personal hygiene, shower and shampoo often
- congenial interviewing environment that encourages openness, some joking, exchange of information
- qualifications more important than image
- personal hygiene has an effect on professional and social relationships
- sitting with person of higher status requires deference; job applicant is polite and does not ask questions or provide information that may indicate lack of respect for interviewer

TIME ORIENTATION

- arrive 5-10 minutes before interview appointment
- personal relationships are more important than time; anywhere from 15 min - 2 hr. late from agreed meeting time is not insulting
INDIVIDUAL EQUALITY

• egalitarian attitude regarding wealth, social status
• gender does not affect interview relationship
• age is not a factor
• show deference to people of greater wealth, older, higher social status
• males are expected to assume dominance in interactions with females
• younger persons defer to older ones

U.S. Employment: Challenges for International Students

By Caprice Lantz

Many international students want to work in the United States after they graduate. According to U.S. immigration law, international students with F-1 visas are eligible to work full-time for one year after they graduate as part of their "practical training."

After their practical training, international students must be sponsored by an employer in order to continue working in the United States. International students have difficulty securing postgraduate employment. Reasons include:

Hiring Complexities
After international students complete practical training, employers must sponsor them to obtain an H1-B visa, which allows them to work in the U.S. for one to six additional years.

Hiring an international student is less common, more complicated, and less familiar than hiring an American. The process involves:

• petitioning the government for an H1-B
• obtaining approval from the Labor Department
• hiring a lawyer
• absorbing some fees

For these reasons, some employers will not even interview, let alone hire, international graduates.

Perceived Lack of Commitment to the Job
Some employers are reluctant to hire international students because they fear international students will eventually want to return to their home countries. Employers do not want to invest time and money in training international students only to have them leave in a year's time.

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.

Animosity
Some Americans, and probably some employers, feel that by living and working in the U.S., international students are taking jobs away from Americans.
The remainder of the article is available online:
http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/International/US_Employment_81_01.htm

OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT JOB SEARCH WEB RESOURCES

Online Articles
• Job Search Tips for International Students
• The Challenge Facing International Students
• Cultural Barriers to the Job Search

Links
http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/International/US_Employment_81_01.htm
U.S. Employment: Challenges for International Students addresses every issue concerning international students. Provides insightful advice and guidance, as well as numerous links that address the international student job search.

http://www.intlcareers.org/non-us.html
Excellent article addressing the conflict of "When in the hiring process do I reveal that I’m an international student?"

http://www.internationalstudent.com/
Covers the multitude of issues experienced by international students in the USA.

http://www.foreignmba.com
Very useful information for both undergraduates and graduates. Book: "Finding a Job in the US a guide for international MBAs" -- found on this website for $30.00.

http://international.monster.com/
Read about other people's experiences of being part of the global workplace, transitioning to a new culture, and various tips and insights for the "international job search."

http://www.metrointl.org/
A not-for-profit organization serving international students from more than 100 countries on college and university campuses in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. *Check out their "Take an international student to..."
work day." Great opportunity to network and learn about the US workplace.
Labour Mobility Guidelines

Working abroad sounds like an adventure to many people. However, it requires thorough preparation, starting with a successful application. Expertise in Labour Mobility (www.labourmobility.com) has prepared a set of country guides describing the main routes to employment in 31 countries. This is a brief abstract of the Looking For Work in the United States of America guide, highlighting the main focus points. For more detailed information, you should consult the full guide on the United States of America.

The Application procedure in the USA

- The Internet is the main source for vacancies and information concerning job applications.
- The US application process is very commercial and you have to sell yourself.
- The US is a large country. Common practices in one region can be very different elsewhere, so be sure to find out about local formalities and customs.

Writing a Resume in the United States of America

- In the US the term “resume” is used instead of “CV.”
- The key focus of your resume should be to persuade the employer to invite you for an interview. Therefore your resume is a marketing tool, which should be adapted to the market in which you intend to use it.
- It is advisable to write a short profile of yourself, using short and punchy sentences filled with action verbs and power words.

The Cover Letter in the USA

- The cover letter should be typed in a short and professional style.
- Start with “Dear Mr./Ms X:” if you know the addressee’s name.
- Start with “Dear Sir/Madam:” if you don’t know the name of the addressee.
- End with “Sincerely”.
http://www.labourmobility.com
When in the hiring process do I reveal that I’m an international student?

Excerpted from a presentation by Adrienne Nussbaum, Assistant Dean for International Student Services, Boston College, 1999

One of the most frequent and difficult questions that I am asked in my position as Assistant Dean for International Student Services at Boston College is “When and how should I tell a prospective employer that I am an international student?” There is certainly no easy or correct answer to this question. For example, I recently heard a representative from the Human Resources Department of a multinational company state that she actually likes to see this information listed on the person’s resume so that she knows right from the start. I have to admit that I found this response quite surprising as it is not what I usually recommend to students! However, it just demonstrates that there are many approaches to how to handle this situation.

I’d like to take a few moments to share some of the advice that I tell my students on this subject. Let’s start with the “when.” I personally feel that it is not necessary to list your nationality on your resume. An astute employer may in fact deduce that you are a foreign national based on where you received your education or the location of past work experiences, but you do not necessarily want to draw attention to this fact at this early stage of the process. Your goal, of course, is to get past the initial screening and be invited for an interview. Some employers have a policy of not hiring foreign nationals and strictly adhere to it, but many start with that attitude but may be convinced otherwise when given the chance. You need to give them that chance.

On the other hand, you also do not want to wait until your third or fourth interview to bring it up. I personally know of a student who lost a job offer because he waited too long. American employers value honesty and directness, and if they feel you have been hiding something from them, they won’t trust you. They also might then come to think that your immigration status is a bigger “problem” than it actually is, and therefore not want to bother. I usually recommend that students address the issue in either their first or their second interview, once they have had the opportunity to “sell themselves” and feel that the employer is potentially interested in hiring them.

As for the “how” to bring it up, this is absolutely critical to your success in securing a position. As I mentioned earlier, there are employers who absolutely won’t hire foreign nationals, there are employers who do it routinely, but the majority fall somewhere in the middle. They simply do not know what is involved in the process and it is your responsibility to “educate” them. It is therefore crucial that you have complete and accurate knowledge of your options and can communicate them to an employer in a clear and confident manner. If you simply
say, “I don’t really know what has to be done,” most employers are not going to take the time to find out.

Most international students on F-1 student visas are eligible for 12 months of “practical training” upon completion of their studies, without any job offer or letter from an employer. Therefore, you can start by explaining to your potential employer that you have a one year employment authorization which requires absolutely no work on their part.

As for discussing the H-1, I do not want to turn this into an immigration lecture, but what I can tell you is that there are many myths and misunderstandings out there on the part of employers about the H-1 visa. They often confuse it with the process of applying for permanent residency and getting a “green card.” Once again, it is your responsibility to dispel those myths. I tell students to avoid using the word “sponsor” when talking about an H-1 because this term is often associated with green cards. Instead, use the phrase, “petition” for an H-1. You should also explain that employers are NOT required to show that there are no U.S. citizens available who can do the job, but simply that you meet their minimum qualifications. This small fact will often open the door to further discussion.

If the employer does not have someone on staff who is familiar with the H-1 process, it is generally advisable to hire an immigration attorney, not because it is required, but because s/he processes these applications routinely and knows exactly what the Immigration Service is looking for. A minor mistake can cause delays of weeks or even months in the process during which you will be losing salary. The legal fee associated with applying for an H-1 visa usually runs (in the Boston area) from $1,800 to $2,000. You can often negotiate with your employer who will pay the fee; if necessary, offer to pay it yourself. It is an investment in your future, and you will make up the money in no time. The process usually takes about 6-8 weeks, so be sure to leave plenty of time on your practical training so you do not fall “out of status” or have a gap in your employment eligibility.

Lastly, don’t forget that you should not try to hide the fact that you are an international student, but rather you should be proud of it. It is an asset, not a burden! International students bring with them many skills and experiences that set them apart from American students. They often know more than one language, have been exposed to other cultures and systems, are mature, flexible, adaptable, and deal well with change and ambiguity, just by virtue of having come to the U.S. to study. These are all qualities that are sought after by employers. Highlight your special and unique background! It will make you stand out from the crowd.

Please remember that all of this is simply one person’s advice from having worked with international students for the past 16 years. Ask another advisor, and you will probably get other opinions! If you haven’t already, I strongly
recommend that you visit your own international student office and learn as much as you can about practical training and H-1’s. Good luck!

http://www.intlcareers.org/non-us.html
**H-1B SPECIALTY WORKERS**

**Definition**
H1-B is a nonimmigrant classification that allows internationals, with bachelor’s degrees or higher, to work temporarily in the US within a specialty occupation.

**Annual Limit**
There is an annual limit to the number of first time H-1B visas granted. This limitation is called a “cap.” After the cap is reached, petitions (applications) cannot be approved until the next fiscal year. The fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30. (Some exemptions from the cap: certain employers from higher education institutions, non-profits and governmental organizations; and citizens of Singapore and Chile).

The cap for the FY2006 was 65,000. As of October 1, 2005, this cap was met. As a result, the next available start date of employment is October 1, 2006 for the FY2007. The earliest date of submission for a request for the FY2007 is April 1, 2006.

In addition, there are 20,000 H-1B’s available for the FY2006 and subsequent years. The additional 20,000 applies to individuals with a master's degree or higher from a U.S. academic institution.

**Options to apply for H-1B Status**
Option 1   Apply for H-1B visa at US Consulate abroad  
Option 2   File application to change status if already in US

**Application Process**
1) Conduct Job Search

2) Obtain employment offer in a specialty occupation. Discuss application process with employer. If company does not have attorney, you may offer to hire an attorney to facilitate processing.

3) Employer submits Form ETA 9035 Labor Condition Application (LCA) with Department of Labor (DOL). The purpose of the LCA is for the employer to demonstrate that “prevailing wages and working conditions will be offered to the employee.” The LCA can be filed no earlier than 6 months prior to the employment start date. Processing time is approximately 30 days.

4) After the LCA is returned to the employer, the employer submits Form I-129 to USCIS. The purpose of Form I-129 is for the employer to demonstrate that the foreigner is qualified for employment under the “specialty occupation” category. Form I-129 can be filed no earlier than 6 months prior to the employment start date. Processing time is approximately 8
weeks. Petitioners may request the expedited processing of Form I-129. To request “Premium Processing,” Form I-907 must be submitted as well. Processing time is within a 15-day period.

Processing Fees:

- I-29 Base Fee $190
- Training Fee $1,500 or $750; $1,500 for employers with 26 or more full-time employees or $750 for employers with 25 or less full-time employees
- $500 Fraud Prevention and Detection Fee
- $1,000 for Premium Processing (optional)

Some companies may pay the fees. However, if a company is reluctant, you may offer to pay the fees yourself.

**Choosing an Immigration Attorney**

It is highly recommended that an international and/or employer seek an attorney’s assistance in filing an H-1B petition. It is important to hire an immigration attorney that will provide accurate information on immigration regulations. Before hiring an attorney, here are some questions to ask:

1) How many years have you and your firm practiced immigration law? What type of status do you specialize in processing?
2) Are you a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association? How many years?
3) How many H-1B petitions have you processed? What were the outcomes?
4) What are your fees? What services are associated with those fees?

**Travel**

If an international travels abroad, while a petition change to H-1B status is pending, the application will be considered abandoned.

**The OPT Gap**

For F-1 students on Optional Practical Training (OPT), the duration of status is determined by the start and end date on the Employment Authorization Document (EAD). In addition, F-1 students are granted a grace period of 60 days, after the end date. As a result, F-1 students on OPT (typically) are eligible to stay in the US until July, August or September. Therefore, those particular students face a gap in maintaining their status until October 1.

**Bridging the Gap**

Department of Homeland Security has the authority to grant F-1 students on OPT an extension of status until October 1. This summer, some students were eligible
for an extension of status (after meeting certain requirements). This may be an option for next year’s petitioners; however, this is not certain.

**Options after H-1B is met**

1) Leave US to apply for H-1B visa at US consulate--and reenter later.

2) Extend current F-1 status by pursuing additional studies.

3) Apply to change to another status temporarily.
   In the past, students changed to B-2. However, it is best to consult with an attorney to learn about potential risks. Some additional options include changing to F-2, J-2, H-4.

4) Apply to change to another status that allows you to work:
   • E-1, E-2 *Treaty trader or investor*
   • I *Foreign information media representative*
   • J-1 *Exchange visitor*
   • K-1 *Fiancé of US citizen*
   • L-1 *Intra-company transferee*
   • M-1 *Foreign vocational student*
   • O-1,O-2 *Temp. worker in sciences, arts, education, business, athletics*
   • P-1,P-2,P-3 *Temp. worker in arts or athletics*
   • Q-1,Q-2 *Cultural exchange visitor*
   • R-1 *Temp. religious worker*
   • TC *Professional business work under US-Canada Free Trade Act*
   • TN *Professional business worker admitted under NAFTA*

**Duration of H-1B Status**
The duration of status for initial petitioners is 3 years. Afterwards, the petitioner may apply for an extension. An international may be eligible for a maximum of 6 years at a time.

**Employers**
H-1B internationals can only work for the employer who filed the petition. The work must be consistent with the job responsibilities as listed in the petition. It is possible to work for multiple employers; however, all employers must authorize Form I-129.

Likewise, if the H-1B international wants to change employers, the new employer must submit a new Form I-129 before the start of employment.

**Study**
Individuals maintaining H-1B status are eligible to engage in part-time or full-time studies.
Permanent Residence
Unlike other nonimmigrant classifications, internationals applying for H-1B visas do not need to demonstrate that they do not have intentions to immigrate to the US. Therefore, it is possible to pursue a petition for permanent residency while a petition for H-1B is pending.

Special notice
Please be advised that regulations for the various classifications may change. Therefore, it is highly suggested that individuals consult with a qualified immigration attorney to be informed of current immigration regulations.

Resources
List of classifications: http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/visas.htm
Department of Labor: http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/foreign/h-1b.asp