

Job Search for International Students

Getting a job in the United States can be challenging, even for domestic students. As an international student, you will encounter obstacles during the job search process. The following advice is intended to assist you in overcoming these obstacles and find the perfect job.

1. Begin Your Search Early

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, it takes an average of five months to find a good paying job so please don't wait until you graduate to start looking for a position. As an international student you should also be aware that it takes 90 days for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to process and approve your OPT application.

2. Network

Only about 20% of jobs in the United States are advertised in newspapers, magazines, or on the Internet. The other 80% are not advertised. These non-advertised jobs or "Hidden Jobs" are usually filled by word of mouth. To find out about these jobs you will need to network. Visit Career Services for more information on networking.

3. Apply to Companies That Sponsor International Students

The Internet has many resources where you can find lists of companies that have sponsored foreign nationals in the past.

4. Seek U.S. Companies with Offices in Your Home Country

Multinational companies will have an interest in your cultural background and language skills because of the ties they have in your home country. Many of these companies prefer to place foreign nationals in offices in their home countries for a few years prior to transferring to an office in the U.S.

5. Become an Expert on Visas and Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Many companies are hesitant about hiring foreign nationals because they don't understand the process. It is your job to educate the employer on how easy it is to hire an OPT student. If you want to stay in the U.S. longer than the year OPT allows, learn about the H1-B Visa so you can explain the process of hiring to your employer.

6. Choose a Major/Specialization in Demand

If you want to work in the United States after graduation, choosing a profession in high demand is in your best interest. The top 5 occupations approved for H1-B Visa status were in the following areas:

- Systems Analysis and Programming
- College and University Education
- Accountants, Auditors and Related Occupations
- Electrical/Electronics Engineering Occupations
- Computer Related Occupations

Even if your major doesn't fall under any of these categories, you can strengthen your candidacy by adding a minor in one of these areas.

7. Focus On Your Attributes

Foreign students bring with them many skills that Americans may not possess. You need to show the employer that your qualifications are unique and go beyond what the other candidates can offer. Many international students know more than one language, have been exposed to different cultures and systems, are mature, adaptable, and deal well with change. These are all qualities that employers value highly.

8. Strengthen Communication Skills

Communication Skills (verbal and written) is the number one quality desired by employers in job candidates. If your English needs improvement, take ESL, English Composition, or Public Speaking classes, or contact the Tutoring department for assistance.

9. Complete an Internship

Employers want to hire people who have experience and can perform the essential job duties. The more experience you have, the better your chances are of getting a job. If you want a job after graduation, spend at least a year at your internship site. This doesn't necessarily mean working for free as international students can get a paid internship for up to 20 hours per week if it is part of the curriculum (meaning you must register for the internship class). This is known as CPT (Curricular Practical Training).

10. Perfect Your Resume and Cover Letter

A well-prepared resume and cover letter is essential to getting a job interview in the United States. The U.S. resume is different from resumes from other countries. If you are not familiar with the standard U.S. resume, visit Career Services to attend a workshop. Also, have your resume reviewed by a professional.

11. Practice Interviewing

If you are interviewing with a U.S. company, you will be expected to conform to certain cultural norms. Your dress, manner of speaking, and the answers to questions will be expected to match certain norms. Because interviews are different in the U.S., it is important that you practice your interviewing skills.

12. Don't Give Up!

Our last piece of advice is to not give up! Finding a job in the United States, while difficult, is not impossible. In fact, more and more employers are seeing the benefits of hiring international students. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers 2007 Job Outlook Survey, 31% of employers responding to their survey anticipated hiring international students for full-time permanent positions during 2006-07. This is up from 24% the previous year!