There are some unique considerations for international students looking for jobs and internships in the U.S. This handout discusses job and internship search tips specifically for international students.

1. Understand and be fully informed about your work authorization and employment visa options
   Since not all US employers are familiar with hiring international candidates, it is vital that you understand your work authorization and are able to clearly communicate this information to employers. It is important to reference the regulations regarding your specific visa, as every category has different work authorizations and processes.

   In general, F-1 international students are only able to work at the school where they are studying. Students that have an academic program requiring an off-campus internship can apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT). CPT requires an application and it must be approved before beginning work off-campus. Failure to obtain permission results in serious implications for a student’s eligibility to remain in the United States.

   All F-1 students are able to apply for work authorization after graduation using Optional Practical Training (OPT). OPT also requires an application that is much more extensive and can take 90 days to process. You can apply for the OPT benefit in your final semester, and Calvin offers workshops regarding the process. Email notifications are sent out regularly inviting students to participate in the workshops. OPT is granted for one full calendar year; however, students studying in the STEM field can apply for a two-year extension. Make sure to check with Calvin’s Immigration Coordinator to see if your field of study qualifies as STEM. Both CPT and OPT must be related to a student’s field of study. There are a lot of details and regulations surrounding CPT and OPT, so be sure to check with Calvin’s Immigration Coordinator regarding your eligibility as well as the processes you need to follow.

   If your employment extends beyond the practical training period, your employer would need to petition for an employment visa, often the H-1B visa. Be aware that employers are often reluctant to do this because it costs a significant amount of money, and the petition process is highly competitive. There is a yearly cap of 65,000 visas and another 20,000 for advanced degrees; in 2023 and 2024, only 25-27% of eligible H-1B registrations were selected. However, institutions of higher education and non-profit organizations associated with a government entity or an institute of higher education are exempt from the cap, so they may have more flexibility in hiring.

   When and how you discuss your immigration status with employers is up to your discretion. Always be honest when asked about your status on applications and in other interactions. Whether you choose to reveal your status at your first interaction with a potential employer, or wait until you have gotten an interview, it is important to ensure that you discuss the topic before the end of an interview process so that employers can make an informed decision.
2. Network with Calvin alumni
   Use LinkedIn to connect with international Calvin alumni and gain their advice. Networking is the number one way to find a job in the US, and Calvin alumni typically are eager to help other Calvin students.

3. Identify companies that have hired international candidates in the past
   Use the US Visa Insights tool on Interstride (https://interstride.com/calvin) to search which employers have petitioned for H-1B visas in the past. These resources help you to see companies that are open to hiring international candidates and have some familiarity with the various employment authorizations.

   Additionally, you can search for US companies that operate in foreign countries, where your global background and language skills would be a tremendous asset. UNIWORLD (https://uniworldonline.com/search) provides a searchable directory of US firms operating in foreign countries, as well as foreign firms operating in the US.

4. Utilize resources and job search sites that are focused on international students
   This is by no means an exhaustive list, but here are a few resources that may be useful:
   - https://interstride.com/calvin
   - https://www.sojon.io/ - tech job board, developed by a Calvin alum
   - https://www.flhire.com/
   - http://internationalstudent.com/jobsearch

5. Understand cultural expectations in the US the job search process
   US culture tends to value communication that is very direct, concise, and simple, which has some important implications for the job search process:
   - Resumes need to be very brief (typically no longer than 1 page), summarizing your most recent and relevant accomplishments. Resumes should NOT be a detailed list of everything you have done in the past.
   - When interviewing, employers expect candidates to be able to speak about their accomplishments with confidence, maintain direct eye contact, and take initiative in conversations. This can feel uncomfortable to many international students because it seems boastful or even disrespectful. However, there are ways to convey confidence and initiative without sounding arrogant. Schedule a practice interview with a career coach to enhance your interviewing skills.

6. Have a Plan B
   It may be helpful to also search for opportunities in your home country, or in other places around the world. Some resources that can help with searching for global opportunities include:
   - https://interstride.com/calvin (look under Country Insights)
   - www.internationaljobs.com
   - www.myworldabroad.com