**Job Search Strategies for International Students**

**TIPS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT JOB SEARCH**

**Determine what you want before you begin your job search.**

Are you going to seek employment in the U.S., your home country, or globally? Are you interested in corporate, non-profit, educational or governmental work? Do you plan to live in the U.S. temporarily or permanently? Is your main intention to make a great deal of money, build a professional network, or gain experience and information so that you will be well prepared to make a significant contribution when you return home?

**Begin your job search early.**

If you are seeking employment in the U.S., you should expect that your job search will take as long as a year, whether you are seeking CPT or OPT opportunities. In addition to the legal issues, you will likely find that it takes longer to find companies that are interested in hiring international students. Also, note that a great number of employers recruit and hire one year in advance of the anticipated employment start date.

**Understand that you will likely know more about immigration laws than your potential employer.**

Make sure you fully understand your employment options, such as your eligibility forpractical training. Practice how you will explain your work eligibility to anemployer. Be clear and accurate with the information you provide. The more knowledgeable you are about your employment eligibility, thebetter able you will be to discuss your options with a prospective employer.

**Enhance your communication skills.**

To develop your communication skills, it is important that you contribute to class discussions, do presentations, and have conversations with your Americans friends. You can also take communication courses for credit, watch YouTube videos such as TEDTalks, and read newspapers. Additionally, be sure to fully utilize UH’s many resources designed to aid international students in this area:

* The **UH Writing Center** provides assistance to multilingual writers through one-on-one consultations to assist students with their writing assignments. For more information, see http://www.uh.edu/writingcenter/about/about-uh-writing-center.html
* Practice your public speaking skills in a low stress environment by participating in the **UH “Seriously Speaking” Toastmasters Club**. Seriously Speaking meetings are held on the first and third Saturdays of each month from 12 pm-1:30 pm in Room 219 of the Stephen Power Farish Hall. For more information, please contact Ida Thompson, Counselor for International Students (713-743-5065; ithompson@uh.edu)
* The University Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic offers an **Accent Modification Program** for foreign-born individuals who wish to refine their pronunciation of English for career and social interaction purposes. For more information, see <http://www.uh.edu/class/comd/slhc/speech-svcs/>
* Consider taking an **Intensive English Program** offered by the UH Language and Culture Center (LCC). For more information, see <http://www.uh.edu/class/english/lcc/intensive-english-program/>
* Participate in one of the many **multicultural student organizations** at UH, such as the Indian Students Organization and the Chinese/American Language and Culture Organization. See <https://uh.collegiatelink.net/organizations>

**Learn how others pursuing your career field or industry have been successful.**

Talk with international students and alumni about the jobs they have obtained, as well as faculty and academic advisors who can tell you about the types of jobs graduates have landed. Be sure to join professional associations and the student chapters of professional organizations to meet professionals in your areas of interest. LinkedIn is an excellent tool for researching alumni with whom you can do informational interviews. Meet with a career advisor who can teach you research methods and help you connect with professionals. Do not limityourself -- utilize multiple sources to research careers and find leads.

**BENEFITS OF HIRING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT**

A diverse cultural background and multi-language fluency are highly valued attributes by U.S. employers. Living and studying abroad enables international students to develop skills such as tenacity, responsible risk taking, decision making, and resourcefulness. These skills come into play as you successfully master a foreign language and culture. It is important that you are able to effectively communicate how you have overcome these challenges, as these skills are important in the kinds of roles business students seek.

**COMMON CULTURAL BARRIERS TO THE JOB SEARCH**

American job search conventions can be a challenge to international students as the expectations may conflict with their culture’s conventions. However, adapting to these conventions will almost certainly lead to a more successful job search.

**Self-Promotion**

You must be confident in discussing your goals and accomplishments, and assertive in initiating calls to employers and following up with all contacts.

**Directness in Communication**

In business, professionals will expect open and direct questions and answers, a firm handshake, excellent eye contact, and a confident, relaxed posture. If these are uncomfortable for you, practice with American friends and career advisors.

**Self-Disclosure**

Many non U.S. cultures consider personal questions about “likes and dislikes” or “strengths and weaknesses” to be an invasion of privacy by all except family and close friends. However, you will almost certainly be asked to disclose such personal information in interviews. Preparation and practice will enable you to do this with more ease.

**Career Self-Awareness**

In the U.S. you are expected to demonstrate knowledge of yourself, your career goals and how they relate to the job. Informational interviewing will help you prepare for these conversations. Speak to a career advisor for tips on informational interviewing.

**Individual Responsibility in Finding Employment**

Personal andprofessional networks are the key to learning about job opportunities in the U.S. Often, in other cultures these networks come through family, government or educational connections. In the U.S., it will be important that you extend much effort into building this professional network, which will allow you to identify multiple job opportunities.

**Language Barriers**

It is important to practice interviewing. If you are not confident about your English speaking skills, you must practice seriously and regularly with English-speaking friends, with tapes, in classes, or with a tutor. The Rockwell Career Center offers mock interviews to help you practice.

**Job Search Strategy**

It is important to provide a convincing argument for wanting to remain in the U.S. for career reasons. Most employers will be biased against hiring and training you for only one year. You will therefore need to assure the employer that your intention is to remain in the U.S. and that the USCIS process is manageable. It is also crucial that you convey your unique strengths and the special contribution you can make because of your international background.

**FINAL THOUGHTS…**

**The ISSS can help:**

* Determine the type of employment you are seeking – practical training (CPT/OPT), or beyond one year of practical training (H-1B visa).
* Become knowledgeable about the immigration laws and regulations that affect your employment eligibility.
* Verify your employment status and eligibility based on your visa.
* Attend the ISSS Fall/Spring Employment Seminars.

**Rockwell Career Center Career Advisors can help:**

* Resume reviews
* Job search skills and strategies
* Employer research tools
* Mock interviews
* Career workshops
* Networking opportunities