

# The Job Search for International Students

Kathy Ledwith, Tessly Dieguez, Mary Buzzetta,  
Pei-Chun Hou, and Tiona Cage

The following questions are commonly asked by students at The Career Center. The suggested answers to these questions may assist you in your job search in the United States.

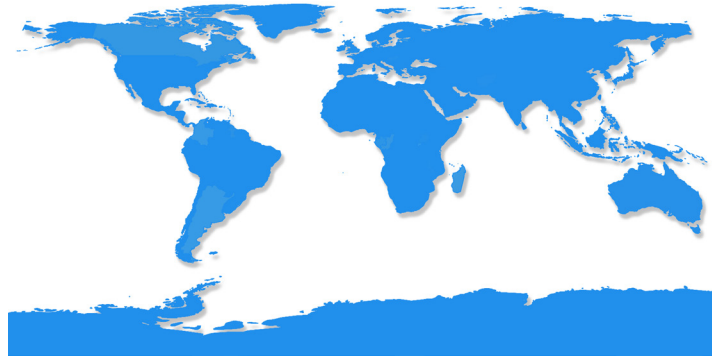
*Note: United States Immigration law makes it possible for a foreign student to obtain an immigration status that will permit either temporary or permanent residence and employment in the U.S. This depends on a number of factors. You will want to know the options that are available to you under your current immigration status. The information presented in this handout does not represent official policy of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the United States Department of Justice. This handout is intended to provide information, not legal advice. You will want to contact INS or FSU's Center for Global Engagement for specific immigration information. You may also want to visit the Center for Global Engagement's website at: [www.cge.fsu.edu/](http://www.cge.fsu.edu/).*

## **Am I able to work in the U.S. after graduation?**

- Obtaining permission to work in the U.S. can be difficult but is not impossible.
- Typically, F-1 students are eligible for up to 12 months of post-graduate employment under Optional Practical Training (OPT).
- H1-B nonimmigrant visas allow non-U.S. citizens to work at a U.S. company or organization for a period of up to 6 years. Prospective employers, not individuals, must petition for H1-B visas.
- Be sure to check the availability of research grants and fellowships from your home country for additional training in the U.S.

## **What fields are hiring international students with my qualifications?**

- Research which occupations are more likely to hire students in your major.
- Explore different occupations within your major.
- Identify organizations that hire students with



your major and/or sponsor international students.

- Research the geographical area where you want to live.
- It is important to be aware of current job market trends in the geographical area where you want to live. Employers are more likely to hire international students when few U.S. citizens meet the qualifications for the job.

## **Whom should I be talking to?**

- Making various contacts during your time at FSU is important, as these people may hear of job openings or know of employers hiring international students. International student advisors at the Center for Global Engagement can help you with immigration and visa issues related to the job search. Career Center advisors are available for walk-in advising and can help you with the resources available in the Career Center library. Check [www.career.fsu.edu](http://www.career.fsu.edu) for the most up-to-date walk-in hours. International alumni are also an important resource, as many of them can directly relate to the job search process. The Center for Global Engagement may be able to put you in touch with these alumni.

## **How can I discuss immigration issues?**

- Hiring international students is a more complex and often less familiar process to many U.S. employers than hiring an American citizen.

## **When to Reveal Your Immigration Status**

- There is no standard “best time to reveal your immigration status to a potential employer.” Do not include it on your resume. Your immigration status may be addressed in an employment interview, but do not bring up this issue yourself in the first interview. However, it is important

not to wait too long to discuss your immigration status, as you do not want to appear dishonest to employers.

### **How to Reveal Your Immigration Status**

- An effective approach requires preparation. Know the benefit and restrictions of your particular status, be able to discuss optional practical training, temporary status, and permanent residence. The more knowledgeable you are about your employment options, the more confident you will feel. Practice responses to questions such as, “Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?”
- It is crucial that you appear well-informed about your immigration status and the steps that companies or organizations would need to take in order to hire you. Since many American employers are not familiar with OPT or the H1-B process, be prepared to explain it to them in simple and concise terms. Adrienne Nussbaum’s 1999 article, “When to Reveal Your Work Status” goes into excellent detail about how to discuss your immigration status. It is available in Module File 14.1, Career Planning for International Students, in the FSU Career Center library.
- You might want to contact the employer’s HR office prior to an interview to ask about organizational policies regarding hiring non-citizens or permanent residents. Ask if the employer will help a qualified non-citizen obtain work authorization.

### **Where should I concentrate my job search?**

- Job opportunities for international students can come from a variety of companies, organizations, and regions. If possible, do not limit your job search too much. International firms operating in the U.S., American firms operating in other countries, and research laboratories in the U.S. all may have opportunities for employment. Occasionally, employers will be looking specifically for international students to fill positions in the U.S. and abroad.
- **Company Size:** Large, medium, and small-sized companies and organizations may have openings for which international students are qualified. Some large American companies may have openings that cannot be filled by U.S. citizens. Graduate students, especially those with Ph.D.’s, may be of particular interest to large companies. Many companies recognize the need for recruiting international students because of

the shortage of Americans with advanced degrees. Undergraduate students may have a better chance of finding jobs with smaller/medium-sized companies.

- **Company Location:** You may want to explore opportunities in regions of the country or cities with low employment rates; employers may have to extend their recruiting efforts to include international students to fill jobs. Additionally, smaller communities may have opportunities because U.S. students may wish to relocate to urban environments.

### **What kind of challenges will I face as an international student while searching for a job?**

- **Commitment:** Some employers fear international employees will return to their home country after the employer has invested time and money into hiring, training, and possibly sponsoring the international student. Show that you may be sponsored for a career with the company. Demonstrate how you are an asset to the company’s overseas locations and operations and how you are committed to the position.
- **Animosity:** Some Americans feel that by hiring an international student they are taking jobs away from U.S. citizens. Current world events may influence these feelings. Be able to demonstrate how your skills and knowledge will be an asset to the company. Also, research diversity and its benefits in the workplace.
- **Cultural Differences:** American workplace culture may be different from what you are used to in your home country. You will probably encounter situations that differ from what you have become accustomed to in an American classroom setting. Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social scientist, identified five cultural dimensions through which to understand the differences between world cultures:
  1. **Power Distance Index:** The extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
  2. **Individualism:** The extent that emphasis is placed on the individual person and immediate family.
  3. **Masculinity:** The degree of differentiation of gender roles in a society.

4. **Uncertainty Avoidance Index:** The extent of a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity.

5. **Long-Term Orientation:** Measures values such as thrift and perseverance versus U.S. short-term orientation, which values respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and "saving face."

In Hofstede's studies, the U.S. scores in each area, from highest to lowest, as follows:

1. Individualism
2. Masculinity
3. Uncertainty Avoidance
4. Power Distance
5. Long-Term Orientation

You can read more about Hofstede's studies at: [www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com).

### How should I begin my job search?

- Challenges specific to international students make it important to start preparing for the job search early! Determining a job search strategy early in your FSU career will be beneficial in the long run. Remember that searching for a job can be difficult and takes time, so don't get discouraged if you are having trouble finding opportunities.
- **Research is Key:** Research which companies are more likely to hire students in your major. Research which corporations and organizations have sponsored H1-B employees in the past. The USCIS annually publishes a list of employers who petitioned for H1-B visa and those who were approved. The list can be found in the "Reports and Studies" section of the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). Do you want to live in a certain region of the country? Research that geographical area and the types of jobs available there. Employer information and job resources are available in the Career Center library.
- **Using the Internet:** There are a number of job search websites available, and some are even specific to international students. Many of these websites are great resources. However, a word of caution: Some websites exist solely to make money off of and take advantage of students. Be wary of websites that promise H1-B visas, attorneys, or charge high fees for their services. If you are unsure of whether a website is reputable or not, ask a career advisor or international student advisor. A list of suggested websites is

included later in this guide. A more extensive list of websites can be found in the Career Center library's Career Planning for International Students Module File.

### What should I emphasize to employers?

- Emphasize the positive! Focus on the positive things that come along with your unique position as an international citizen. Employers are sometimes concerned that international students will not effectively communicate with customers and other personnel. Demonstrate that you are proficient in speaking and writing proper English. Emphasize the fact that you are bilingual or multilingual, a valuable skill to employers.
- Your familiarity with work in other countries can also be an advantage to employers. The fact that you have lived and studied abroad demonstrated your resourcefulness, openness to challenge, and willingness to interact and work with diverse groups of people. Convey to the employer the challenges that you faced and overcame in the process of moving to another country. Explain to your potential employer how hiring you offers more advantages than disadvantages.

### What about the academic job search?

- The international scholar's search for an academic job at a university can vary significantly from the search for more traditional jobs. One significant thing to note is that the national cap on the number of H1-B visas issued does not apply to university. The Career Center library has resources specific to the academic job search.

### Should I participate in workshops and career fairs?

- Workshops are another way to learn how to prepare for the job search; the Career Center provides a listing of workshops and programs that are offered throughout the year at [www.career.fsu.edu](http://www.career.fsu.edu).
- Career fairs are an excellent way to market your special talents by meeting face-to-face with prospective employers. The Career Center sponsors several fairs throughout the year; more information can be found on the website.
- Also, look for announcements relating to private career fairs that target only international students.

Information can be found in the Career Fair Information notebook in the Career Center library, kept on the Ready Reference shelves.

- The Center for Intensive English Studies [www.cies.fsu.edu](http://www.cies.fsu.edu) also offers programs to help international students with written and spoken English language skills. The Center is located on 145 Convocation Way, 644-4797.

### **Would participating in cooperative education, internship, career-related summer employment, and/or practical training be helpful?**

- The practical work experience you gain by working with an American employer could prove helpful when you seek post-graduate career opportunities.
- It is important to be as specialized and skilled as possible. You are likely to have more success attracting employers and working through the immigration system if you have documented skills and special talents. See information about the FSU Career Portfolio at [portfolio.fsu.edu](http://portfolio.fsu.edu).
- If you are interested in any type of work experience either prior to or after graduation, you will want to contact the Center for Global Engagement regarding Immigration and Naturalization Service policies and procedures. The Center for Global Engagment is located at 110 S. Woodward Avenue, 644-1702, [www.cge.fsu.edu](http://www.cge.fsu.edu).
- The Career Center can provide information about potential work experience opportunities. This office is located at the Dunlap Success Center at 100 S. Woodward Avenue.

### **What do I need to know about resumes and cover letters?**

#### **Resumes:**

- A standard U.S. resume is a concise marketing tool that summarizes an individual's experience, skills, accomplishments, and academic background relevant to one's employment objective. Resumes can vary depending on the type of employment that is being pursued. In the U.S., a curriculum vitae (CV) may be used, especially in academia.

Note:

- Usually one to two pages in length

- Do not include age, marital status, race, religion, or gender
- A form of self-promotion
- May or may not include military service, depending on whether it's relevant or makes a person a stronger candidate
- Since employers may be unfamiliar with international companies or schools, be sure to provide context for them, for example: "One of the top five universities in Europe," "A \$10 million dollar advertising firm," or "The second largest manufacturer in India."
- Emphasize your English and other language skills on your resume, for example, "Translated written and spoken English on a daily basis for three years."
- Bring your resume to The Career Center, where a career advisor can assist you with the best way to display your unique skills and background. Further information on writing resumes can be found in the "Writing a Resume" guide available at [www.career.fsu.edu](http://www.career.fsu.edu).

#### **Cover Letters:**

- Cover letters are letters usually sent to employers with your resume. There are different types of cover letters, but they typically include information about how you heard of the position, why you are interested in the position, and why you would be a good fit for the position. A career advisor can help you get started. More information on writing cover letters can be found in the "Writing Effective Letters" guide at [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm).

### **What do I need to know about interviews?**

There can be a number of differences between interviews with U.S. organizations and international ones. While interview styles vary depending on the organization, there are general things to be aware of:

- Be on time. It is best to arrive five to fifteen minutes before.
- Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.
- Employers usually begin with small talk about your day or the weather, but some may start off with direct questions.
- Questions regarding age, sex, race, marital status, and religion are illegal.
- Expect questions regarding competency,

experience, and accomplishments.

- Show clear self-knowledge, career goals, and long-term plans.
- Be able to self-disclose strengths, weaknesses, and personal style.
- Demonstrate your research about the company.
- Questions about the company and position are expected.
- Inquiring about the status of an application after the interview is acceptable and demonstrates interest in the position.

The Career Center offers practice interviews through the Mock Interview Program. More information can be found at [www.career.fsu.edu](http://www.career.fsu.edu) or from a career advisor. Guides such as “Preparing for the First Job Interview” are also available at The Career Center.

### **Top 10 Tips for International Students**

#### **1. Meet with a career advisor at The Career Center.**

- Visit The Career Center on a continual basis - not just once or twice. For more information, ask a career advisor or visit The Career Center’s website ([www.career.fsu.edu](http://www.career.fsu.edu)).
- Career Center resources available to you include mock interviews, workshops, career fairs, on-campus interviews, and employer information sessions.
- No appointment is necessary to meet with a career advisor. Drop by between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

#### **2. Understand how the job search process in the U.S. works.**

- Building a resume is one component of the job search process. Job searching includes researching potential employers, understanding how potential employers align with your values, interests, and skills, preparing the necessary documents for the application process, and enhancing your interview skills.

RESOURCE: Module XIII, “Launching Your Job Campaign,” found at: [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/modules.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/modules.cfm).

- Resumes in the United States are commonly

a concise and attractive marketing tool which *summarizes* your job experiences, skills, accomplishments, and academic background. Always tailor the resume to the job description, and highlight how your skills and qualifications match the job you are seeking.

- Resumes in the U.S. commonly do not include personal information, such as age, marital status, race, religion, height/weight, and a photo.

RESOURCE: “Writing a Resume” guide: [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm) or visit the FSU Career Center to meet with a career advisor.

#### **3. Have a basic understanding of the cultural expectations in the U.S. or the country in which you are seeking employment.**

- You can access a database, known as “Going Global,” through The Career Center website. This database provides country-specific career and employment information and can be accessed through either 1) your student SeminoleLink account or 2) your Blackboard “Secure Apps” tab ([campus.fsu.edu](http://campus.fsu.edu)).
- The Going Global “Country Guides” include information on cultural advice, interviewing, professional and social networking, and resume/curriculum vitae guidelines for a variety of countries across the world.
- From an employer’s perspective, it is important to have a basic understanding of the organizational culture in the country in which you are seeking employment because you want to be able to effectively communicate with your colleagues and demonstrate your ability to perform well on the job.

#### **4. Network as much as possible!**

- Approximately 70% of jobs are obtained from networking. Some examples of possible ways to network include attending career fair events and employer information sessions, joining student organizations on campus, and attending professional conferences.

RESOURCE: Career Center calendar of events: [www.career.fsu.edu/calendar](http://www.career.fsu.edu/calendar).

## 5. Review the etiquette for dress and appearance in the U.S.

- Proper dress during interviewing and business situations is a critical component of the job search process.
- Making the best possible impression is paramount when seeking employment. Even though we would like to think that our skills and abilities get us the job, appearance does count.

RESOURCE: "Dressing to Impress" Guide: [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm).

## 6. Enhance your interview skills.

- Interviewing is a very important component of the job search process. There are several ways in which The Career Center can assist students in enhancing these skills
  - 1) Students can sign up for a mock interview through their SeminoleLink account. Mock interviews occur during the fall and spring semesters, and a variety of formats are offered, including face-to-face, phone, panel, and Skype. For more information, please visit The Career Center's website and select "Mock Interviews."
  - 2) Review the career guides related to interviewing at [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm). These include the following:
    - Preparing for a Telephone Interview
    - Preparing for the First Interview
    - Preparing for your Second Interview
    - Interviewing for a Faculty Position
  - 3) Visit the Career Center library, section 5 (Preparation), which includes additional materials and resources on interviewing.
  - 4) Review the "interviewing advice" included under the "United States" country guide on the "Going Global" database.
- Important Tip: When interviewing and networking with employers, do not focus on your international student status. Instead, focus on your skills, strengths, qualifications, and experiences.
- Preparation is a key component of the interview process. Research the organization you are interviewing with, practice interview questions, and prepare questions that you intend to ask the employer during the interview.

RESOURCE: "Researching Potential Employers" guide: [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm)

## 7. Understand the interview questions an employer can and cannot ask you.

- Understanding which interview questions an employer can and cannot ask you will help you feel more confident in interviewing with a potential employer.
- Employers are not legally permitted to ask you, "Are you a citizen or not?"
- Employers do have the right to ask you the two questions below, so be prepared to have a response for them. Make sure to be as knowledgeable as possible about your employment options as an international student.

1) *Are you authorized to work in the United States?* Please be prepared to answer yes. F-1 and J-1 students may work in the U.S. (on campus) and may be eligible to apply for off-campus work authorization.

2) *Do you need sponsorship?* You should answer yes to this question if the position you are applying for is expected to last longer than the duration of your student visa status work authorization (i.e., OPT, academic training).

3) If you have additional questions, speak with your CGE international student advisor.

## 8. Determine which employers in your industry have previously hired international students.

- The "Going Global" database contains state, metro, and U.S. wide H-1B records gathered directly from the United States Department of Labor (DOL), the government agency responsible for all H-1B submissions. Once a year, the Department of Labor makes available a listing of all organizations who have submitted H-1B visa applications for the prior 12 months. Once you have access to the "Going Global" database, use the "H-1B" tab to search for a listing of organizations.

## 9. Identify and utilize various job search resources.

- The Career Center offers a variety of resources for international students to utilize in their job search process, including SeminoleLink, NACELink, Going Global, and CareerShift.
- Students and alumni can explore and apply for career opportunities through their SeminoleLink account. For more information on how to gain access to SeminoleLink *Plus!* services, please view page 2 of the “SeminoleLink User’s Guide” at [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm).
- Students can access the “Going Global” database. By using the “Jobs/Internships” tab, students can search by multiple criteria, including location (country, state, or city), job title, industry, academic degree, and job type.
- Students can access the “CareerShift” database through their SeminoleLink account to conduct and organize their job search. Students can search, select, and store job listings from all job boards and postings. Also, students can find current job connections, store correspondence, and make meaningful new connections by choosing specific areas and job positions.
- Tap into the hidden job market - jobs that are not posted online or advertised. Join relevant professional organizations, create a LinkedIn profile, attend networking events, and utilize social media sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, blogs) to market yourself.

RESOURCE: “Using the Internet in Your Job Search” guide: [www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm](http://www.career.fsu.edu/advising/guides.cfm)

**10. View the workshops offered online through The Career Center, as well as through the Center for Global Engagement (CGE).**

- Workshops are hosted by The Career Center on topics such as job search strategies, negotiating job offers, career fair preparation, and researching potential employers.
- To view a listing of online workshop videos, please visit [www.career.fsu.edu/workshops](http://www.career.fsu.edu/workshops).
- The Center for Global Engagement hosts OPT workshops and immigration attorney talks on work visa options. For more information, please visit the CGE website, [www.cge.fsu.edu](http://www.cge.fsu.edu).

**Helpful Websites:**

- [www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov](http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov)
- [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)
- [www.myvisajobs.com](http://www.myvisajobs.com)
- [www.vifprogram.com](http://www.vifprogram.com)
- [www.goingglobal.com](http://www.goingglobal.com)
- [www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)
- [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)
- [www.uniworldbp.com](http://www.uniworldbp.com)
- [www.intlcareers.org](http://www.intlcareers.org)

**Career Center Library Resources:**

- Careers for Foreign Language Aficionados and Other Multilingual Types.....IIB 27-309152
- Careers in International Business.....IIB 13-1000.01 H3
- Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the United States.....VIC D5
- Hoover’s Handbook of World Business.....VIC H6
- Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in 60 Countries.....VIC M56
- Work Your Way Around the World.....VIC G7
- The World Factbook.....VIC C41

**Adapted from:**

- Employment for International Students*, Northern Illinois University Career Planning and Placement Center
- International Students and the Job Search*, Rice University Career Services Center
- International Students and the Job Search*, University of Miami
- International Students Employment Guide*, University of Cincinnati Career Development Center
- Mock Interview Mentor Training Manual*, Florida State University Career Center



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