

## Job Search for International Students

### Chapter Objectives

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The purpose of this chapter is to help you:

- Begin the Job Search Process in the U.S.
- Evaluate your values, interests, and goals for wanting to work in the U.S.
- Utilize the Career Center and ISSS for assistance and resources

Looking for a job in the United States as an international student can be somewhat daunting. Although the process to locate a job is challenging, it is not impossible if you do your homework and are prepared. You should work closely with the International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) for work permission guidelines and immigration regulations. The differences in a U.S. job search and a job search in your home country are culturally based, so you may have to resist the urge to conduct yourself or set expectations based on your experiences in your home country. This information is intended to help guide you and offer some tips to equip you before and during the job search process. Refer to Chapter 6, “Searching for Jobs and Internships,” for additional information.

### Self-Assessment

A successful job search is an honest, thorough evaluation of your values, your interests, your personal and financial needs, and your short- and long-term goals. As an international student, you should be aware that the goals you had when coming to the U.S to attend Vanderbilt might have changed since your time here. Below are questions that can help you articulate your career goals through your own self-assessment:

1.) What did I hope to gain from studying in the U.S.? How have these goals changed?

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2.) What are my short-term and long-term career goals?

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3.) Am I geographically restricted for any reason?

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4.) Are finances a consideration?

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5.) How do my personal needs (e.g. family considerations) fit in with my goals?

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The Vanderbilt Career Center provides an online assessment tool named “DISCOVER” that covers both career exploration (assessments) and career planning and may help you work through these questions further. [Click here](#) for more information about DISCOVER.

### **The U.S. Job Search Process for International Students**

As you begin your job search, there are several resources which can assist you in the process:

- The basic components of the job search include:
  - Employer research/exploring resources
  - Informational interviewing/networking
  - Cover letters, resumes, and other correspondences
  - Interviewing
- Visit the VCC for any help in the job search process.
- Understand the application process for positions to which you are applying. Different fields/industries will have different requirements and standards.
- Network with friends, families, professors, neighbors, and alumni who have gained employment successfully to learn how they conducted their searches.
- Be assertive and confident.
- Conduct informational interviews with individuals in the field(s) you are considering.

Refer to Chapter 6 “Searching for Jobs and Internships” for additional information.

### **Resumes for International Students**

There are several differences between U.S. resumes and resume formats from other countries. The following columns summarize those differences. Please note that the following shows only general differences between U.S. trends and those of other countries collectively. These differences do not apply to all countries and do not attempt to account for individual differences or for changes over time.

#### **U.S. Resume**

Concise, attractive marketing tool - summarizes jobs, skills, accomplishments, and academic background relevant to employment objective

One-to-two pages maximum

Does not include age, marital status, race, or religion.

May or may not include completion of military service, depending upon whether it is relevant or makes the person a stronger candidate

#### **International Resume**

Chronologically details academic and formal work experience

Sometimes two or more pages

Sometimes includes age, marital status, race, and/or religion

Sometimes includes completion of military service

### **Resume Tips for International Students Seeking U.S. Jobs**

- A well-prepared resume and cover letter is an essential component to getting an interview. Be aware of the differences between U.S. and international resumes to ensure your format is specific to the U.S.

- Typically, the terms “Resume” and “CV” mean the same thing internationally; however, in the U.S. “Resume” and “CV” refer to two different types of documents.
- Do not list English as a language skill on a resume written in English for an English-speaking country.
- Do not include personal information such as age, marital status, race, or religion.
- Provide employers a frame of reference when referring to foreign companies and schools. For example, “A \$10 million dollar marketing firm,” “One of the top five universities in Japan,” or “Second largest technology manufacturer in Europe.”
- Avoid listing an international permanent address, especially if an employer cannot reach you at that address.
- Emphasize strong English skills on the resume. For example: "Translated written and spoken English on a daily basis for two years."
- Make sure the resume is free from grammatical and spelling errors, as well as awkward use of language.
- Maintain up-to-date copies of the resume in the format and language of native countries to serve as back-up for employment in home countries or to pass on to contacts.

**Note:** There are several resume formats; find the one that best represents you. Even if you use a resume guide to create a resume, it is recommended that you meet with a VCC Career Adviser for a resume critique in order to achieve the best possible display of skills and background. Refer to Chapter 10, “Resumes,” for more information.

### Interviewing for International Students

There are several differences between the job interviews in the U.S. and job interviews in foreign countries. Please note that the following comparisons of interviewing show general differences between U.S. trends and those of other countries collectively. They do not necessarily apply to all other countries and do not attempt to account for individual differences or for changes over time.

#### U.S. Interview

Be punctual. Arrive five to fifteen minutes prior to appointment.

Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.

Interviewer styles vary. May begin with direct questions or minimal small talk.

Interviewer may do most of the talking or may expect the candidate to do most of the talking.

Questions regarding age, race, sexual orientation, disabilities, national origin and marital status are illegal.

#### International Interview

Personal relationships may be more important than time. Being late may not be a problem.

Eye contact, especially with persons of higher status, may be disrespectful.

Interviewers commonly start with small talk and look for information regarding character or personality.

Interviewer may talk for the majority of the interview.

Age, race, sex, or marital status may be issues in the interview. Males may be expected to dominate interactions with females. Younger people may be expected to show deference to older people.

Anticipate direct questions regarding competency and experience.

Expect indirect questions regarding competency and experience.

Open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence.

Citing accomplishments and skills might be considered boastful, self-serving, or too individualistic.

Show clear self-knowledge, career goals, and long-term plans. NOTE: It may be important to be flexible, however, to obtain employment initially.

Jobs may be assigned by government or family. Questioning one's role in a company may be seen as disloyal. Companies sometimes assign work and expect individuals to accept what is available.

Interviewer may expect immediate competence and look at each new employee for a two-to-five-year commitment.

Interviewer may not expect immediate competence and instead be looking for a long-term employee.

Self-disclosure of strengths, weaknesses, personality, leadership style, problem-solving abilities, etc. may be appropriate.

Personal questions regarding such issues might be considered an invasion of privacy.

Researching the organization and demonstrating that knowledge during the interview is expected and shows initiative and interest.

Researching an organization in advance may show too much initiative and independence.

It is acceptable to ask an employer at the close of the interview where they are in the interview process and when the candidate can expect to hear back from them.

Asking an employer during an interview where they are in the interview process and when you can expect to hear back from them may be seen as too forward.

Inquiring about the status of an application after the interview is acceptable and demonstrates interest in the position.

Inquiring about the status of an application after the interview may be seen as rude.

### **Interviewing Tips for International Students**

- After the interview, you should send employers a thank you letter. This type of correspondence is expected and is not over-zealous.
- You can enhance your communication skills by:
  - Talking and speaking up in class
  - Making presentations
  - Making friends and talking with Americans
  - Taking communication courses for credit
  - Attending workshops at the Career Center
  - Joining and participating in multinational clubs
  - Watching television
  - Reading newspapers and academic publications
- Study commonly asked interview questions, write answers to those questions, and practice your responses in front of a mirror as well as with friends.

- Schedule a mock interview with your VCC Adviser or during mock interview week to receive feedback on interviewing skills for traditional and telephone style interviews.

Refer to Chapter 14 on “Interviewing” for more information.

### **Things that are Important to Consider:**

- Before you begin your job or internship search, please consult with ISSS for information on work permission regulations and immigration requirements.
- Allot at least 4 months to petition for internship approval.
- In general, you cannot work for the U.S. federal government, for most U.S. state and local government entities, or for private employers who receive government contracts.
- Some of the best employment opportunities in the U.S are with international companies/global organizations.

### **Benefits of Hiring an International Student**

- Diverse cultural background and the ability to speak more languages are especially appealing to companies that are planning to globalize their business.
- Living and studying abroad enables international students to demonstrate a number of skills such as tenacity, responsible risk taking, decision-making, and resourcefulness. All of these skills come into play as you successfully master a foreign language and culture.
- Be able to communicate how you have overcome some of the challenges you faced, as these types of skills can be directly linked to the skills desired for the position you are seeking.

### **When to Discuss Visa Status with an Employer**

- Often an employer will ask verbally or on an application if you are eligible to work in the U.S. If the employer requests the information, you should inform them of your visa status. For Example, “My visa allows 12 months of work.”
- If they do not ask you, and you are seeking long-term employment, you should bring it up before an offer of employment is made, possibly during second or third round interviews. Be sure the employer is aware so that he/she can make a decision about whether or not to sponsor your visa petition.

### **International Student Web Resources**

- **Vanderbilt's International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS):** ISSS fosters the education and development of non-immigrant students and scholars to enable them to achieve their academic and professional goals and objectives. ISSS provides advice, counseling, and advocacy regarding immigration, cross-cultural, and personal matters to Vanderbilt University students. <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/>
- **H1VisaJobs.com:** This site contains a database of American firms, in all disciplines, who have known openings, are willing to hire non-US citizens, and have actually offered H-1B jobs to international professionals in the past. Contact the VCC for the username and password. <http://h1visajobs.com/>
- **International Affairs Resources:** This site provides a comprehensive guide to resources, contacts, and other information relevant to International Affairs on the Internet. It includes career-related resources and postings of new positions. <http://www.etown.edu/vl/>
- **InternationalStudent.com:** Internationalstudent.com was started by a group of international students living in New York City with the goal of helping other students

deal with American immigration authorities and the American education system.

<http://internationalstudent.com/>

- **Y-Axis.com:** This jobsite is for international IT professionals looking in the US.

<http://www.y-axis.com/>

- **WiseStep.com:** WiseStep is a specialized H1 visa job agency for international talents who want to work in the United States.

<http://www.edvisors.com/ads/adclick.cgi?manager=adcycle.com&gid=13&cid=58&mid=74&id=662>