

# **Guide To**

# **International**

# **Job Search**

# **Career**

# **Center**

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## **Introduction**

This packet is designed to help students understand the process of finding international opportunities. This can include summer internships abroad, short-term volunteer programs and fellowships, or full-time jobs. Before beginning, one must know that there is no job field called "international jobs." The accepted idea of this being a completely separate career category misguides many students. In reality; adding "international" to a job description, for the most part, means adding an international element to an existing domestic career. It is useless to say "I practice international;" but to say "I practice international law" makes sense.

Some students come into the Career Center and say they want to do international business. What does international business mean? This only tells the career counselor that the student wants to work in some form of business that involves international work. What form of business? Import/export, management consulting, foreign investing, marketing? There are thousands of careers under the business category.

Students are encouraged to narrow their search down to a type of business, or any other type of career, they want to explore. To accomplish this, students will want to conduct the "Self-Assessment" stage of career development. Let's face it, most of us really don't know exactly what we want to do as a career when we enter college. Some students may have notions of what they would enjoy, but don't know exactly why they are interested in a particular job. To understand your own motivations and to generate some personal career ideas, self-assessment is essential. It is also the prerequisite for a successful and coherent job search. To begin self-assessment, students should ask themselves the questions listed below and, once completed, schedule an appointment with a career counselor.

## **Internationally-Oriented Self-Assessment**

After students conduct the general self-assessment process, they must ask themselves some basic questions about their international aspirations.

- 1) Am I clear about the kind of work I want? Am I focused enough to conduct a successful job search?
- 2) In which region of the world do I want to focus?
- 3) What are my motives for pursuing this field? Language? Gaining cross cultural understanding? The excitement of working in a diverse environment?
- 4) Do I want to work in the U.S. in an internationally-oriented job, or do I want to live and work abroad?

The answer to this last question is crucial to determining what will be available to you. There are thousands of jobs that allow an individual to live in the U.S. and work on international issues. Some may include frequent travel and some may not. If you are thinking about finding an entry-level position where you live and work in another country, you will find the job possibilities far more limiting and much more difficult to obtain. International jobs that many of us have heard of are those working for the U.S. government; for example, the Foreign Service or the Peace Corps. Later in this packet, we will discuss other options available to you that involve living and working internationally. Before making the decision to work abroad, you will want to explore your answers to the following questions:

- 1) Will you be happy separated from your family, friends and the American life-style for short and long periods of time? What experience have you had living a different culture?
- 2) Are you prepared to become immersed in another culture?
- 3) In developing countries, how will you cope with a situation in which you may regularly see corruption and poverty and little or slow progress in alleviating these problems?

Once you have thought about your answers and you are still interested in working abroad, you are now ready to begin researching opportunities that might be available to you.

## Types of International Jobs and Opportunities

As discussed earlier, each student must decide what type of career field they want to pursue and then proceed exploring this type of field with an international slant. The following are five basic international areas:

**International Business:** Through research and self-assessment the international business aspirant needs to gain a good overview of the field and an understanding of the functions they want to work in. The student needs to research the various aspects of basic business functions: accounting, finance, human services, logistics, marketing, planning and strategy, research and development, production, purchasing, and sales; focus on one to three of these functions in one to three industries.

**International Development:** The main focus of this area is providing a form of technical assistance to governments, organizations, and individuals that enable them to achieve targeted goals on their own.

**International Education:** This area includes more than just teaching particular subjects or the English language abroad. It also includes the administration of study abroad/exchange programs, or working with international students in the U.S.. More than ever students are studying, interning, volunteering, and working internationally through group programs. These programs need to be regulated, coordinated, and implemented by government, nonprofit, educational, and propriety organizations. The people needed in these organizations must be competent and sensitive to other cultures and international protocol.

**International Government:** Internationally related jobs are found at international, federal, state, and local levels. At the international level, organizations like the U.N., NATO, Organization of American States, and the European Union are opportunities. (Although opportunities in these organizations are few and far between.) The federal government level provides the largest opportunities in U.S. Department of State and the Department of Commerce. The State Department is responsible for the diplomatic politics and the Department of Commerce oversees the promotion of U.S. goods and services abroad. Many of the jobs in these organizations are obtained by first taking the Foreign Service examination. Another set of Federal Government internationally-related employers are the intelligence agencies. They are generally known for their acronyms: CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency), FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations), and NSA (National Security Agency). In addition, international opportunities in state and local governments are appearing. These governments are establishing sister-city agreements involving cultural and educational exchange and pursuing potential markets for their locally manufactured products.

**International Non-Profit:** Most international non-profit organizations can be categorized by a single issue or a set of related issues that may be region specific or worldwide. Some examples of organizations include: World Wildlife Fund, Sister Cities International, Amnesty International, World Affairs Councils, and the Population Institute. Additional areas students may explore are: journalism, volunteer programs, law, and translating/interpreting. Students will want to research any area in which they may have an interest. This often requires a lot of work, but the payback can be enormous. (Talk to the Career Center staff and refer to the [Career Exploration](#) packet for more information.)

## Gaining Experience

As with all jobs your education is not the only factor that determines how marketable you are to employers. Your work, volunteer, and extra-curricular experience is vital in landing good jobs after graduation.

**Study Abroad/Language Study:** Students interested in international careers are encouraged to participate in study-abroad programs, study languages, and take international politics, economics, history, and other courses involving international topics. There are too many course opportunities at CC to name! Language programs offered at Colorado

College include studies in: Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Swedish, Russian, and Spanish. Study abroad programs that Colorado College sponsors include programs in Germany, France, Mexico, Japan, England, and Sweden. Other study abroad programs, in which many CC students participate, are offered through ACM. These programs include study in London and Florence, the Czech Republic, India, Japan, Russia, Costa Rica, and Zimbabwe. In addition, students may participate in and earn credit for programs sponsored by other colleges and universities across the country. To find out about the immense number of international programs available, stop by the Office of International Programs in the Worner Center. In addition, students may participate in and earn credit for programs sponsored by other colleges and universities across the country.

In addition to study abroad programs, the serious international aspirant should pursue some kind of international work experience. These can include: internships, summer jobs abroad, volunteer activities, and fellowships programs.

**Internships:** Internships involve a short work experience, often non-paid, in which the employer and the student have an understanding that the internship is a learning opportunity for the student. (There is a fine line between an internship and a short-term job.) Some CC students have conducted internships as part of a school program. One student worked at the United Nations Industrial Development Office in Washington, DC during her semester with an American University Program. Another CC student utilized his father's contacts to set up a summer job in a light bulb factory in Budapest following his semester on the CC German Department's program.

**Summer Jobs or Short-Term Employment:** To lay the foundation for an international career, students will want to gain experience working abroad. One possible way to obtain this experience is through some type of summer job or short-term employment situation. Most countries require that you have a work permit to work in that country. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) offers a program where you can obtain a work permit to work in certain countries. For most countries participating in this program, work authorization is for summer jobs only. However, in some countries work authorization for short-term employment can be arranged any time of the year. For details on the program, contact the Work Exchanges Department at CIEE, 205 East 42nd St., New York, NY 10017. Other possibilities for summer employment abroad can be found listed in the Directory of Overseas Summer Jobs available in the Career Center.

If you enjoy working with children, you may want to consider becoming an au pair, nanny, or mother's helper overseas. Since these are live-in positions, you can expose yourself firsthand to family life in another culture. Information on these types of positions are available in the Career Center.

**Volunteer Activities and Fellowship Programs:** Volunteer Activities and Fellowship programs are other ways to gain valuable international experience. These opportunities include programs like the Peace Corps, and the Fulbright and Watson Fellowships. If you want to do something service-oriented, you might consider volunteering to work at a work camp overseas. These camps are located in a variety of settings, from small villages to big cities, from national parks and forests to archaeological digs. They usually last 2-4 weeks. No salary is paid, but room and board are provided. Finally, fellowships (academic or otherwise) are a fantastic way to gain international experience as well as an impressive addition to your resume. One graduate participated in the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program in which he was studying German, studying international trade, and conducting an internship with a German trade organization.

Internships, summer jobs, volunteer programs and fellowships are ideal for gaining international experience. Any type of international work experience will provide you with: first-hand knowledge about a specific career field, contacts in an international area, and the type of experience employers will require from applicants. Often it is difficult to find these international opportunities. When students are unable to find an opportunity in an international field, they should attempt to find its domestic counterpart. One student interested in international law worked as an office assistant in a Denver law firm. Although the firm did not practice international law, he still learned a great deal about law and accomplished many of the same things he would have in an international law firm. In addition, students should participate in on-campus groups like living in the German or Asia Houses.

## **Career Center and Other Resources**

The Career Center receives information about all of these types of opportunities daily. Refer to the internship notebooks, the fellowship notebooks, and summer job notebooks. Also, ask the Career Center staff and faculty whose work is related to your field of interest, about any opportunities they are aware of that are international. International resources available in the Career Center that will be helpful for you with your international search can be found in Appendix A. Tutt Library is also an excellent resource for finding information about international companies and organizations.

## The Job Search

For detailed information about searching for jobs, refer to the Job Search packet. This will provide you with the general information you will need for any kind of job search. All the information included is pertinent to the international job search.

Like most searches, you will need to develop a resume that is targeted to a specific career. When developing your resume, it is helpful to highlight your international experience. When developing your resume, you will want to consider what types of skills you have gained from previous international experiences. These may include the ability to:

- establish rapport quickly
- function with a high level of ambiguity
- achieve goals despite obstacles
- take initiative and take risks
- manage time
- identify problems, use resources to solve problems
- accept responsibility
- communicate despite barriers
- learn quickly
- handle difficult situations
- handle stress
- manage/organize
- lead others in formal and/or informal groups
- conduct research despite cultural differences
- cope with rejection
- adapt to new environments
- understand an organization's culture
- learn through listening and observing

Qualities you may want to highlight on a resume or in an interview that reflect your international experience include: self-reliance, high energy level, appreciation of diversity, multi-cultural perspective, perseverance, flexibility, tolerance, open-mindedness, assertiveness, inquisitiveness, self-confidence, self knowledge, independence.

The Career Center offers a number of other informational packets for writing resumes, job-related letters, and interviewing. The Career Center staff will be able to help you with all of these issues. Keep in mind that resumes and cover letters should emphasize all international experiences, including courses with an international component and foreign language proficiency. If you are sending your resume and cover letter abroad, you may want to include information on citizenship, dependents and other pertinent information necessary for governmental purposes. Also, find out how resumes and cover letters are done in that particular country.

## Research the Country

It is extremely important to research the culture and social conditions in the location of your potential employment. (Especially when applying with a foreign owned company abroad.) Read the literature from the location. You should come to understand the economic and socio-political environment. Analyze what you learn and how it will affect you. In researching a country or conducting a job search, you may wish to contact Colorado College alumni/ae living abroad. Check the Career Center's Career Referral Network for the names of alumni volunteers who live abroad.

## Working Abroad

Before making a final commitment to a job overseas be sure to consider the following factors:

1. Visa Restrictions- For a list of entry requirements by country, see <http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreas.html> or visit the OLP.
2. Contracts - What about housing life-style considerations, etc.?
3. Salary - Learn about the details of: currency, exchange rate, and standard of living.
4. Taxes - What are the details? Consult an accountant.
5. Housing - Is housing included? Are there any housing allowances?
6. Transportation - Do they provide for the transport of your belongings? Do they provide an automobile?
7. Benefits - Health, life insurance, and retirement etc.

Once you have decided on a career focus that is international, we recommend that you establish a plan of action on how you are going to achieve your goals of working internationally. This plan may include study abroad, travel abroad, volunteer and fellowship opportunities, internships, summer work abroad, and work in the U.S. that is international in focus. We encourage you to stop by the Career Center and let us help you achieve your international career goals.