



**COLORADO
COLLEGE**

Career Center



Job Search Guide for International Students

Introduction

International students have very different and unique challenges when it comes to the job search process, whether they plan to stay in the US to work, return to their home country or go to another country. For those international students who do plan to explore employment opportunities in the US, they may encounter many practices to which they may not be accustomed, and obstacles that US citizens do not experience. This guide will provide information and advice to international students regarding the job search process.

In this Guide

- **Important United States visa information**
- **A summary of some cultural differences between a job search in the United States and a job search in other countries**
- **A review of job search strategies**
- **Answers to common questions international students may have**

Visa Information

- **Visa** – The visa stamp represents permission to travel to a port of entry, airport or land border crossing, and request permission of the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to enter the United States. A visa stamp is issued by the US Department of State and may be obtained only outside of the US at a US consulate or embassy. The visa expiration date indicates the last date on which the visa holder may use the visa to apply for entry to the US. The visa validity period does not indicate how long an individual may remain in the US. Instead, once an individual has been admitted to the US, his/her authorized period of stay will be indicated on his/her Form I-94 arrival record.
- **F-1** – Visa classification for an individual who is temporarily in the US to pursue a "full course of study" to achieve a specific educational or professional objective at a US academic institution that has been certified by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). While maintaining

valid status, F-1 students may be employed on the campus of the school they are authorized to attend for a maximum of 20 hours per week while classes are in session and full-time during school vacation periods if otherwise eligible and intending to enroll for the next term.

- **J-1** - Visa classification for an individual who is temporarily in the US as an exchange visitor for the primary purpose of studying full-time at an academic institution under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State and a designated program sponsor. J-1 students may be employed on the campus of the school in which they are enrolled for a maximum of 20 hours per week with the prior written authorization from the Responsible Officer of their designated program.
- **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** – CPT is an off-campus employment option available to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year and who want to pursue an off-campus training or employment experience (paid or unpaid) that is an “integral part of an established curriculum”, i.e. a degree or course requirement. Authorization for CPT is obtained from the Office of International Programs and indicated on Page 2 of the student’s Form I-20 and includes the name of the company, the beginning and ending dates of employment, and the employment status (part-time/full-time).
- **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** – OPT is temporary employment authorization that gives F-1 students an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off-campus. OPT is available to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year and who will be pursuing training or employment (paid or unpaid) that is directly related to the student’s major. Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT for each degree level. Students who obtain a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) may be eligible for additional months of OPT. OPT must be authorized by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) based on a recommendation from the Designated School Official (DSO) at the school which issued the student’s Form I-20.
- **Academic Training (AT)** – Academic training provides an opportunity for college and university students to apply theoretical knowledge obtained in an academic program to a practical work experience. This employment opportunity must be directly related to the exchange visitor’s field of study in the US. It may, in certain circumstances, be full-time or part-time and may take place anywhere in the US. A J-1 exchange student may apply for Academic Training during his/her vacation periods, during the academic year, or for when he/she completes his/her studies. Academic Training can be authorized by the Office of International Programs upon the recommendation of the J-1 exchange student’s academic advisor at Colorado College or by the student’s J-1 program sponsor if he/she is not sponsored by CC. A J-1 undergraduate student is authorized to participate in academic training for up to 18 months, or the period of the full course of study in the US, whichever is less.
- **H-1B** – Employer-sponsored visa that permits temporary employment in “specialty occupations”. A "specialty occupation" for H-1B purposes is an occupation that requires: (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States. A limited number of H-1B applications are granted every year. Exceptions to the quota are granted to some non-profit, research and educational institutions. The H-1B visa status can be authorized for an initial period of up to 3 years, with the ability for the employer to request an extension for an additional three years.

For more in-depth information on visas, be sure to visit the US Citizenship and Immigration Services' website (<http://www.uscis.gov>) or the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's website (<http://www.ice.gov>).

For visa, OPT and CPT help visit Lisa Kosiewicz Doran, the International Student Specialist, in Armstrong 217.
 Website: <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/international/>
 Email: lisa.kosiewiczdoran@coloradocollege.edu
 Phone: 719-389-6281

Common Cultural Differences in the Job Search

(These differences represent differences between cultures of the United States and foreign cultures, not a specific culture.)

| Job Search Norms | Abroad | In the US |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Resume/Application | Detailed chronology of experience; not a method of self-promotion | Concise, one page; resume to reflect the individual's accomplishments, credentials, strengths and abilities |
| Punctuality | It may be okay to be late | Be on time. Arrive at least ten minutes early |
| Talking during an interview | Employer talks more during an interview | Candidate does most of the talking |
| Eye contact | Eye contact may be disrespectful | Eye contact shows confidence and is necessary |
| "Small talk" | Can be very extensive to showcase personality and character | Brief at the beginning of an interview, followed by direct, formal interview questions |
| Self-promotion | Citing accomplishments may be seen as arrogant or individualistic | Assertive, open discussion of accomplishments is expected and important |
| Asking questions to the interviewer | May be taken as rude, intrusive or aggressive | Expected; shows enthusiasm and interest |
| Displaying knowledge of the company | May show too much initiative; questioning may show disloyalty | Demonstrating knowledge of the organization is expected and shows initiative |
| Personality-related discussion | Discussion of hobbies, likes and dislikes may be seen as distractions from work and job performance. Questions about personality (leadership or problem solving style) may be considered irrelevant. | Discussions of personal hobbies and interests are admissible but not crucial. Discussion of leadership and problem solving traits are necessary. |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Career awareness | Questions about one's role in the organization may be considered disloyal. Discussion of long-term career goals may be taken in a negative light. | Questions about role are welcomed. Discussion of long-term plans shows goal-oriented personality. |
| Responsibility in finding employment | Possibility for job search taking place with little or no proactive action on part of individual | Job search solely individual responsibility |
| Informality in interviewing | Politeness and formality are necessary. Handshaking and casual speech may not be permissible. | Politeness and a firm handshake are necessary. Casual, friendly speech is permitted but be sure to call the interviewer by his or her title (ex: Mr. or Ms. Jones instead of the person's first name) |
| Follow-up | Questioning one's application status may be considered rude | Telephone inquiry on application's status is acceptable. A written thank-you note is highly recommended and often expected after an interview. |

Planning a Successful Job or Internship Search

Before you begin there are a few important things to keep in mind about searching for a job or internship:

- Searching for an opportunity is hard work – be persistent
- Set goals for yourself; setting small milestones will make it easier to motivate yourself
- Searching takes time – on average, it takes college students at least three months to find an opportunity
- The job and internship search is very competitive
- You do not get matched to an internship or a post-graduation job
- You need to conduct research to find opportunities – few will “come to you”

Know Yourself

Know what you are looking for in an internship or post-graduate job. Think about and prioritize your personal and career goals. The following are some questions to consider:

- What am I passionate about? _____

- If I could do anything, what would it be? _____

- What career fields and positions interest me? _____

- Geographically, where would I like to be located? _____

(Hint: When targeting a specific geographic area, research the area’s economy, the lifestyle of the community, climate, cost of living, and job opportunities in your chosen career field. You can find this type of information through the area’s online news sites, the local Chamber of Commerce or community webpages.)

- What skills do I enjoy using? _____

- What are my workplace values? _____

The Career Center has tools that can help you with the self-assessment step.
Call us at 719-389-6893 to learn more.

Gather Information

Researching industries and identifying types of jobs that are of interest to you is an important next step in your search. Here are a few ways to learn about different career fields and employers that hire international students.

Colorado College Career Center’s Website

Be sure to check out SUCCESS, the Career Center’s online job database, the Liberal Arts Career Network (LACN) and the Selective Liberal Arts Consortium. These are excellent resources to search for internships and entry-level jobs.

Also on the Career Center’s website, you will find many online resources in the Connect with Opportunities section.

To learn more about how your skills and interests might line up with different career fields, look at Spotlight on Careers, under the Explore the Possibilities; Choosing a Career Direction section.

Finally, you can see a list of H-1B employers at www.myvisajobs.com

If you need any assistance navigating the Career Center's website or have additional questions, please stop by for drop-ins or call our office at 719-389-6893 to set up an appointment to meet with a Career Coach.

Prepare for the Job Search

The most commonly used job search method is to find and apply for positions posted online or in printed advertisements. Unfortunately, this is not the most effective method. According to a study quoted in the Harvard Business Review, **nearly 80% of the openings available at any one time are never advertised.** This hidden job market consists of jobs resulting from recent retirements, company expansions and anticipated future openings. These positions are usually filled by people using direct contact methods. Most jobs are found through personal contacts or direct contacts with employers. The following are some helpful job search techniques:

Networking

What is "Networking"?

Networking is the process of gathering helpful information from personal contacts and actual professionals in your field of interest. Networking is a fantastic way to research career paths AND later to create job leads. Did you know that research shows networking is the number one way most people actually find a job or internship?

Why is networking important?

When you apply for a job through a job search website or even a Career Center SUCCESS or a Selective Liberal Arts Consortium listing, you are one of many candidates – sometimes you are one of several hundred people applying for a position. When you hear about a job opening through a contact (a member of your network), you can often cite that person in your cover letter, thus helping your application to stand out from the crowd. In some cases, your contact will even make a call on your behalf and encourage a potential employer to give you more substantial consideration....OR they may even be that potential employer! In either of these scenarios, you will be more distinctive than many other candidates because of your network. Without that contact person, you might have not been considered, as your resume would blend in with several hundred others.

When should I begin networking and when does it end?

You should begin networking early in your college career as you begin exploring careers that interest you. You can meet people while doing informational interviews to research a field that has captured your attention. You will definitely want to network once you begin looking for internships and summer employment. **You must maintain your network, even after you have secured a job.** You could lose your job or decide to leave at any point, and you will be in a much better position if you have kept in contact with the members of your network than if you need to track down and re-connect with those who helped you in the past. In addition, you should continue to add new contacts to your network throughout your career.

Is networking more relevant in some fields than others?

Networking is important in all career fields and at all professional levels. Some of your networking experiences may differ, depending on the culture of your profession and/or the culture of the organization in which you work.

Resumes and Cover Letters

Your resume is your major job search tool and should always be kept up to date. Consider developing a “master” resume that can then be tailored to each job or industry for which you apply. For additional information on developing a resume and appropriate formats, please review the *Guide to Resume Writing* on the Career Center’s website.

Resume Tip:

Consider giving extra context when describing your experiences. Qualify your experience with facts and comparisons.

- Example: “One of the *top five* universities in India.”
- Example: “A *\$10 million* marketing firm.”
- Example: “The *second largest* manufacturer in Europe.”

Once you have completed a draft of your resume, bring it in for a review at the Career Center. Depending on the level of personal service you desire, we have 15 minute drop-in reviews or you can schedule a longer appointment with a Career Coach.

Interview Skills

Prepare for interviews before they start. You need to prepare responses to common questions, including “Tell me about yourself.” Think about how you are going to talk about your skills and experiences to demonstrate your fit for each position.

For practice, schedule a mock interview with a Career Coach to get individual feedback about your interviewing skills. You can also read more about interviewing and see examples of common interview questions in our *Guide to Interviewing Skills*, which is located on the Career Center’s website.

Employer Information Sessions, Selective Liberal Arts Consortium Recruiting Events, and SUCCESS

Information sessions are our way of bringing employers and students together to fulfill a mutual employment need. Information sessions are scheduled throughout the year and advertised on the Career Center’s website and in online and print publications.

The Selective Liberal Arts Consortium is a group of 9 prestigious liberal arts colleges in the United States that join together to post full-time and internship opportunities. Students can apply for these opportunities on the consortium’s website. Employers select candidates and conduct virtual interviews on specific days. This enables a student to apply to a company in New York without having to travel for the interview. The consortium also has one day of in-person interviews in Washington DC. The link to the consortium’s website and dates for virtual interview days are on the Career Center’s website.

SUCCESS is a great database to explore whether you are looking for a summer job, internship or full-time permanent employment. You access SUCCESS from the Career Center’s homepage. Your username is your CC email or first and last name. The password is coloradocollege. (*Once you have*

logged into SUCCESS with this username and password, it is strongly recommended that you change your password to one that is unique to you.) Once you find opportunities that interest you, you can upload a resume if required.

For more details on using the Selective Liberal Arts Consortium or SUCCESS databases, please contact the Career Center.

The Career Center strongly encourages students to have their resumes reviewed before uploading into any database!

Other Methods for Applying for Internships and Jobs

Employer's Internship Program – Interns may receive offers for full-time employment before graduation, especially when the experience has been positive and the employer has a current open position.

Faculty Contacts – Some employers announce job and internship opportunities to faculty members in specific academic departments. Faculty can also be a great resource for learning more about organizations related to their field and possible contacts.

Direct Targeting – Direct targeting involves identifying organizations or companies where you would like to work and marketing yourself directly to them, regardless of whether the organization has a current job opening listed.

- This search tactic is often best coupled with informational interviewing and networking.
- Many organizations' websites have a "careers" section featuring job and internship listings.
- Develop a list of organizations you want to target; you can use websites and organizational literature to narrow your choices.
- Identify individuals who have hiring authority. You can send a resume first and follow up with a phone call.
- If mailing or emailing your resume to a company, always address the letter to a specific person, not a title or "to whom it may concern." Customize it as much as possible and follow up with a phone call.
- Indicate your desire to meet with them even if they have no positions currently available. This is a good way to learn about possible future opportunities and the company or organization in general, as well as get your name out to them. *Do not expect to be interviewed for a job in this case!* Once you have had a personal interaction with an employer, they may or may not think of you the next time they have an appropriate opening.

Sending an Unsolicited Resume and Cover Letter – This is a very impersonal approach and, unfortunately, most employers do not look at unrequested resumes and cover letters. It is better to find a networking contact at the organization and ask if you can send your resume and cover letter.

Professional Associations – Professional associations often provide job listings for their members, and in many instances non-members may be able to access job vacancies as well. Student memberships are often offered at a discount.

Follow Up

Follow up with employers and contacts.

Persistent job hunters follow up with a visit or a phone call. The personal touch is still the most effective way of marketing oneself.

Send thank you notes to whomever you speak to.

Sending a personal letter of thanks is a forgotten form of job-hunting etiquette. It can reaffirm your interest in the position and highlight your qualifications one last time. It is also a great way to stand out among other job hunters. In fact, some people who conduct interviews and make hiring decisions have used this as a deciding factor on whether to hire a particular candidate. If you know the interviewer is going to make a hiring decision very quickly, you can substitute a professionally-worded and formatted email in place of a typed letter.

Evaluate offers as they come.

Remember that when you evaluate job offers, you need to ask yourself if you would truly be happy at this job.

Job Search Ethics

Resumes:

Do not lie. If a potential employer learns you have misrepresented yourself it is perfectly reasonable for them to terminate your candidacy or revoke any job offers made. Do not overstate your GPA or accomplishments. It is likely you will be asked to expand on elements of your resume during your interview, so make sure you can back up everything on your resume.

Applying for a Job:

Only apply for jobs you are truly interested in. Do not accept an interview just to get practice. Chances are good that the employer only has a limited number of interview timeslots. If you accept an interview for a position you have no intention of accepting, you are taking up another job seeker's possible interview. Electronic job postings have added to this problem. Applying to many jobs just because it is easy can clog a company's candidate search system and result in a significant loss of time.

Initial Interview:

Show up for all interviews you accept. An unused interview time costs someone else a chance at that job. Cancelling at the last minute is considered the same as not showing up at all. If you need to cancel an interview due to an unexpected illness or emergency, contact the employer as soon as possible. This is not unethical. However, deciding to cancel an interview because you feel unprepared or a better opportunity came up is considered unethical.

In the interview, everything you say needs to be true. It is likely that anything you state about your past experiences will be followed by more questions. Every answer you give should be straightforward and thoroughly honest.

Follow-Up Interviews:

If there is some possibility that you might want the job, then absolutely attend the on-site interview. You can learn a lot from seeing the company or organization in person. However, if you know you are not intending to accept the position if it's offered to you, do not accept a follow-up on-site interview. These interviews are usually very costly for employers in terms of staff time and travel costs. Accepting the interview for practice, the trip or a stay in a hotel is unethical and likely costs another candidate the chance to interview for the position.

Accepting or Rejecting a Job Offer:

You should accept a job offer in good faith. This means that when you accept an offer you have full intention to carry it out. Once you have accepted a position, you are expected to contact all other organizations you have applied to and are interviewing with to withdraw your candidacy. You should also withdraw from any future interviews. Whatever your decision, try to contact employers as promptly as possible so they can notify other candidates that the position has been filled or that they are still being considered.

It is unethical to accept a job offer while continuing your search or waiting for a better offer. If you receive a better offer from what is not your first-choice employer, use the offer as an opportunity to contact your first-choice and see if and when they can make an offer. A Career Coach will be able to assist you in preparing for these conversations. You can make an appointment with a Career Coach by calling 719-389-6893.

Reneging on an offer does not just affect you. The employer faces hardships such as being understaffed, losing second-choice candidates to other organizations, and costs involved with conducting another search. If an unforeseen event causes a dramatic change in what you know about the company or in your personal status, meet with a Career Coach to discuss how to best handle the situation.

If you decide to reject an offer, you are ethically bound to notify that organization. They need to continue on with their hiring process and notify other candidates. Remember, these decisions affect many people.

Common Job Search Questions

What are some employers that hire international students?

- www.myvisajobs.com (this website lists the top sponsors of H1-B visas)
- International corporations
- Organizations with an international focus
- You can try contacting your home country's embassy or consulate to ask which of your home country's firms do business in the US and which US firms do business with your home country

Is it a good idea to list visa status on a resume?

No. Your permanent address, and educational and work background, will show that you are an international citizen. In addition, you should never lie about your visa status.

What are some questions that are ILLEGAL for an employer to ask?

Under US law, an employer may NOT ask:

- What is your nationality?
- What is your place of birth?
- Of which country are you a citizen?
- When did you become a citizen?
- What is your visa type?
- What is your native language?
- What language do you most often speak?
- Questions about race or ethnicity
- Questions about age, birth date, or age of your children
- Questions about marital status or number of children/dependents

- Questions about religion
- Questions about service in a foreign military
- Questions about financial credit or financial status

An employer may ask:

- Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?
- Will you require sponsorship for an employment visa?
- Which language skills do you possess?
- If you have been known by other names, what are those names?
- Questions about service in the United States military.

How to best answer questions about work authorization

If you are an F-1 student, explain that you have the legal right to work in the United States for twelve months while remaining under student status (this is the Optional Practical Training). Then tell the employer that you can renew your authorization to work for a further three to six years with an H-1B visa. Avoid the word “sponsor” in this conversation; use the term “petition”. Explain that the employer does not have to show that there are no US citizens qualified for the job; only that you meet the requirements.

If employers have further questions about hiring international students, please have them contact Lisa Kosiewicz Doran at 719-389-6281 or the Career Center at 719-389-6893.

When should a candidate disclose if he or she is an international student?

While this is best answered on a case-by-case basis, usually it is advised to wait until after the first screening measures of the interview process. Employers will appreciate it if you discuss the subject before they spend a large amount of effort and time to recruit you. Usually the best time is during the first or second interview and not after the job offer.

What to wear to an interview

Business professional attire is most appropriate. Career Coaches can help you determine the most appropriate attire for the particular employer you are meeting.

- Dark suit (jacket and slacks or a skirt; dark grey or navy is best)
- Dress shirt with a collar or blouse
- If you wear pants, be sure to wear dark socks; if you wear a skirt, wear pantyhose
- Close-toed, polished dark shoes
- Easy on the cologne, perfume or aftershave

Best ways to make yourself appealing to employers

- Use the resources of the Career Center; especially resume review and mock interview practice.
- Become knowledgeable in the immigration process and visa information.
- Research the employers you are interested in.
- Practice English by speaking up in class, talking to faculty, joining clubs and associations, and making more friends who are native English speaking.
- Practice speaking confidently about your skills, interests, and goals.

On-Campus Resources:

Lisa Kosiewicz Doran
Office of International Programs
Armstrong 217
<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/international/>
lisa.kosiewiczdor@coloradocollege.edu
719-389-6281

Career Center
Morreale House
1130 N. Cascade Ave.
<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/careercenter/>
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