

International Student Career Guide

Career Services recognizes that international students have unique employment needs and often have extra steps to pursuing work off-campus. If you are an international student and will be pursuing employment in the U.S. or in another country before or upon graduation, UCS staff can assist you in all of your career development needs.

Where to Start: Exploring Career Choices

- Before beginning your internship or job search consider meeting with a Career Services advisor to help begin analyzing your skills, interests and values as they relate to your career decision making process. CS can also help with your decision of what country to work in following graduation.
- Research the reality of your career choice as it relates to allowing you to remain in the US for employment. According to the US Department of Labor, there are careers which create a greater likelihood of being employed in the US and gaining sponsorship for a H1B Visa.
- Experience your career choice through internships, research or volunteering on and off campus.

Tips for Gaining Employment in the U.S.

- As an international student at Southern Illinois University, studying under an F-1 or J-1 Visa there are many options or ways to obtain legal work in the US outside of working on campus. The Center for International Education Office offers information specifically on OPT and CPT. Please visit their office located in the Northwest Annex B building or <http://cie.siu.edu/internationalstudents/> for more information.
- Target organizations and fields that hire international students. A UCS staff member can assist in identifying key organizations.
- Be aware of any cultural differences (e.g., communication methods) that may affect your internship/job search.
- Be prepared to coach employers on immigration laws and procedures.
- If needed, work to improve your language skills. For example, use UCS to improve interviewing skills through mock interviews or contact the International Office to find ways to practice your English in the community.
- Network with those in your fields of interest or with recent alumni from Southern Illinois University who were also international students, but now are employed in the US.
- Restrict follow-ups on job applications to no more than one correspondence per week after application

Marketing Yourself

- Understand what documents you will need to apply to your targeted internship or job (Note: Know the difference between a US style resume and a CV) and meet with a CS staff member to review your materials and design in a way that best markets your skills and abilities as well as your personality.
- Create a new cover letter for each of the positions you are applying to accompany your resume. Cover letters should communicate to the employer why you are interested in their organization, what you have to offer and what you hope to gain by working with them. The letter for a US company may in some cases be more “informal” and help the employer get to know you.
- If applying to a US company work to improve your English language ability and confidence as much as possible. Also, do not undersell your abilities to communicate in multiple languages. This is just one of your unique and strong selling points.

Others include:

- Awareness and Experience Living in other cultures and countries
- Adaptability and Flexibility in adjusting to difficulties and challenges
- Strong Work Ethic and Motivation
- Bold and can make independent decisions

International Student Career Guide continued...

Interviewing

- As an international student, there are advantages to participating in campus interviewing. You possess a global perspective, understand cultural differences, and are able to adapt quickly to new situations and settings.
- Be aware, however, that some employers are not willing to interview candidates who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. When an employer registers to conduct campus interviews, they are asked to specify if they will or will not interview international candidates. Based on their response, we program our campus interview system to include or exclude international candidates from specific schedules. We do this solely based on an employer's stated willingness or unwillingness to interview international candidates.
- If you are interested in a particular employer who will not let you participate in campus interviews, we encourage you to speak with a CS staff member. The recruiter may ask you to forward your information to a specific international recruiting office or may forward your materials directly to a specific office or division.
- 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 CS to receive feedback on the interview.
- Be prepared with questions to ask the employer. The interview should be just as much a time for you to decide if this is where you want to work as it is a time for the employer to know if you are right for their organization.

Preparing to Work in the US

Challenges International Students may face

- *Hiring Complexities:* After international students complete the optional one year of practical training, employers must sponsor them to obtain an H1-B or other visas to continue employment. Hiring an international student is a more complex and often less familiar process to many U.S. employers than hiring an American. Employers may also face limitation due to partnerships with government agencies or funding. Research visa sponsorship requirements so you may help educate employers. Also, for advice on how to approach this subject with prospective employers, please meet with an internship or employment specialist at CS.
- *Commitment:* Some employers fear international employees will return to their home country after the employer has invested time and money to hire, train, and possibly sponsor the international student. Articulate to the employer that you are committed to their company. Demonstrate how you are an asset to the company's overseas locations and operations.
- *Animosity:* Some Americans feel that by hiring an international student they are taking jobs away from United States citizens. 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, and target companies that have a record of valuing diversity.

Online Resources

- **SIU Center For International Education Resources & Forms**, <http://cie.siu.edu/internationalstudents/current-students/important-forms.html>
- **US Department of Homeland Security**, <http://www.uscis.gov/eir/visa-guide/f-1-opt-optional-practical-training/f-1-optional-practical-training-opt> Information on Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- **U.S. Department of Labor's Certification Data Disclosure**, www.flcdatacenter.com (click on FLC Case Data)- This site will help you find out which companies applied for H-1B visas for one or more new employees in the past few years. This will give you some ideas of employers open to having international employees working for them. Please note that you can search by year, employer and/or state.