

## **International Students: Guide to Employment in the U.S.**

This guide is designed to help you with the job search process, given that as an international student you face a few unique challenges if you want to work in the U.S. We will touch on particular areas of the job search including resumes, interviewing, networking, and applying. We have excellent guides for all of these topics at [www.husson.edu/tip-sheets](http://www.husson.edu/tip-sheets). In addition, feel free contact us to schedule an appointment as meeting face –to-face will be the most effective way to work together.

## **Employment regulations for international students**

**Husson Student Employment:** F-1 students are eligible to work on the Husson campus part-time (20 hours/week) during the semester and full-time (40 hours/week) during school breaks.

**Curricular Practical Training:** You can work off-campus and CPT is the best option for internships or work experience that is a requirement for a degree program. You need to have the International Student Advisor, Steve Eglund report your internship to Immigration and print you a new I-20 that shows your authorization for certain dates and a specified employer. CPT requires a signed cooperative agreement or a letter from your employer that Mr. Eglund needs to see.

**Optional Practical Training:** We encourage you to keep all of your OPT for work opportunities after graduation. Because authorization can take up to three months to obtain, you must apply for OPT before you graduate! You cannot apply for OPT until your final semester begins and immigration services must receive your application NO LATER THAN 60 DAYS beyond your graduation date. Technically, you need to stay in the U.S. while the authorization is being processed. If you leave and try to re-enter while your OPT is being processed, it could be cancelled. The latest the authorization can start is 60 days after graduation. OPT does not require company sponsorship and you can change jobs using this authorization. The processing time is getting very slow, so don't book plane tickets until you are certain you will receive the authorization. You must work through Mr. Eglund to request your OPT authorization. You should start this process at least 3-months before you expect to start working.

**H-1B (Non-Immigrant Temporary Work Visa):** In order to qualify for H-1B visa status, you must first have a job offer with an employer who is willing to file an H-1B petition on your behalf. H-1B status is reserved for individuals in "specialty occupations" which are jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree. The H-1B limit set by the U.S government is always reached very quickly. Usually, there is double the allotted number of petitions filed each year and then those petitions are randomly selected for adjudication. So, the lesson is that the H1-B is very hard to get. That is why it is best to use your OPT after graduation and you might then convince the employer to sponsor you for an H-1B visa.

**TN, H-1B1 and E-3 Classifications:** Citizens of Canada, Mexico, Singapore, Chile, and Australia can often use these classifications. If you will work in a specific occupation and are Canadian or Mexican, you may qualify for TN status. People from Singapore or Chile are given an allotment of H-1B numbers that is separate from others and has never been exhausted. Australians who qualify for H-1B status also qualify for e-3 status and this quota has also never been exhausted.

## **Other Important Hints**

**Social Security Number:** The only reason to obtain a social security number is if you are going to have a job. Mr. Eglund or Student Employment will give you a letter of support to request a number from the Social Security office in Bangor.

**A U.S. Driver's License:** It could be advantageous to obtain a driver's license in America. The Department of Motor Vehicles will need to see an I-94. If you don't have a social security number, they may ask you to present a letter from the Social Security Administration showing that they rejected your request for a number.

## **Challenges that you may face in the U.S.**

Working in the U.S. is not guaranteed, nor promised, just because you have a student visa. However, in addition to the quotas set on the number of skilled foreign workers legally permitted in the U.S., the factors below also contribute to the difficulty of finding employment in the U.S.

**Hiring foreign nationals is complex:** Employers have the perception that it is complicated and expensive to hire international students because they are unfamiliar with the process.

**Lack of commitment to the job:** Employers fear that foreign nationals will return to their home country after a year or two. Thus, they are reluctant to invest time and resources into the process.

**Communication:** Employers are concerned about the ability to communicate effectively in verbal and written English with their clients and co-workers.

**Employment restrictions:** In general, as a foreign national you cannot work for the federal government, for most state and local government agencies, or for private companies contracted by the government. Your visa status will be less of a barrier with other industries or employers.

**Common cultural barriers in the job search:** See appendix 1 at the end of this guide for an overview of cultural differences in the job search process for international students.

### **Recommendations for overcoming challenges**

You may want to focus on organizations that have an international focus, such as the World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, World Bank, or many others. In addition, you may have more success with U.S. companies that have an extensive international presence. Your international experience, language and cultural fluency make you a very attractive candidate to these potential employers. Furthermore, if your U.S. work authorization is delayed, you may be able to work for these firms at one of their overseas branches (i.e., your home country).

### **How to job search in the U.S.**

The first thing to realize is that this is your job search. Career Services can assist you in all aspects of this search, but we are not going to do it for you. The American job search is most likely very different from what you would do in your home country. The differences are culturally based and you may have to work hard at overcoming your natural inclination to conduct yourself as if you were in your own country.

### **Resources to find job postings**

**Strategize with Career Services:** Career Services can help you with every phase of your job and internship search. Start early and meet with us regularly to develop the best and most effective job and internship searching strategies. The resources below can help you find job postings, but networking and connecting with real people is the way to find the best opportunity for yourself.

**Husson Eagle Career Link:** This is Career Services job posting database which includes, internships, part-time jobs, full-time jobs, and Husson student employment jobs in one easy to use resource. All you have to do is register by using this link: <http://husson-csm.symphlicity.com/students>. You can use this database for free for the rest of your life.

**Husson Career Services website:** Our website at [www.husson.edu/careerservices](http://www.husson.edu/careerservices) has many resources to search for jobs and internships by field of interest. In addition, all of the career related guides we have created for job search help can be downloaded from our site.

**LinkedIn:** We highly recommend that you create a professional profile on LinkedIn to promote your skills and abilities. Many jobs are being shared and posted on LinkedIn before they get posted anywhere else. Career Services can help you create the most effective profile on LinkedIn.

**Maine Career Centers:** The Maine Career Centers are free for all people in Maine. They have a statewide job posting database that you can sign up for and it is free as well. Just go to [www.mainecareercenter.com](http://www.mainecareercenter.com) to start the process. In addition to the jobs database, if you go to [www.maine.gov/portal/employment/jobs.html](http://www.maine.gov/portal/employment/jobs.html) you will find a list of Maine related job search databases that are very good.

### **The importance of connecting with people**

**Potential Contacts:** Your parents, siblings, relatives, friend's parents, supervisors, professors, teachers, etc. are all potential contacts that might help you connect to an opportunity. Career Services can help you effectively manage how to approach contacts.

**LinkedIn:** This networking media is the single best resource to find potential contacts all over the world and in almost every field. Career Services can help you individually create the strongest profile to get yourself noticed. ***We also have a tip sheet on our website and in our office on how to most effectively use this amazing resource.***

**Networking Tip sheet:** In addition, we have developed a helpful guide on how to best network with people. The most important thing to remember is to not ask about jobs up front and use your connections to understand how to go after the job you want the most. Networking is about establishing longer-term friendships in the professional world and even developing mentors that can help you throughout your career path.

**Think before you communicate and do it professionally at all times:** Be sure to communicate really well at all times. You don't address an e-mail with "Hey Jimbo, can you get me that stupid job?" You need to think before you write, proofread what you have

written, and think again before you send the final copy. Generally, texting is not the way to go, unless somebody tells you that is the best way to reach them. One small mistake can cost you that interview opportunity.

## **Developing resumes and cover letters**

We are not going to go in-depth here on how to create a resume and cover letter because we also have tip sheets on the best way to create an americanized resume and cover letter. You must take this seriously and Career Services can work with you every step of the way on developing the best materials for your job search. You can find the tip sheet at [www.husson.edu/tip-sheet](http://www.husson.edu/tip-sheet).

## **Preparing for an interview**

Career Services can once again help you with the interview stage of the job search. The interviewing tip sheet is available at [www.husson.edu/tip-sheet](http://www.husson.edu/tip-sheet) and it gives you really good ideas on how to approach an interview. In addition, we do individual mock interviews with students to prepare for a real interview. Practicing live is the best thing you can do to prepare for your interview. We recommend that you practice for each interview because every company and job is different.

## **Following up with potential employers**

After having an interview it is always critical to send hand written thank you notes to all with whom you spoke. You can reiterate your interest and emphasize briefly one or two skills that you bring to the job. This is not pushy and if you don't do it, employers think you are not interested. Finally, following up with your networking connections with thank you notes is also critical.

## **Frequently asked questions**

**Should I list my visa status on my resume?:** No you shouldn't. Your permanent address, educational background, and work history may hint that you are an international student. Hiring managers should ask appropriate questions during the process to determine your status. Never lie about it, but don't draw attention to the issue.

**Aren't there illegal questions in the interview process?:** Employers cannot ask what nationality, visa type, citizenship, or place of birth. Employers may ask, "Are you legally authorized to work in the U.S.?, or Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for an employment visa? They can also ask what languages you speak, read or write if that is a skill related to the job posting.

**How do I answer if an employer asks me about my work authorization?:** You can explain that you have the legal right to work for 12-months in student status with your OPT and this requires no work on their part. Then you can share that your work authorization can be renewed for another three to six years with an H-1B work visa. Avoid the word "sponsor" with the H-1B application process and use the phrase "petition". ***Finally, you should also explain that it is not required for the employer to show that there are no U.S. citizens qualified for the job, only that you meet the requirements of the job. This often misunderstood issue can open the door to further conversation.***

**When should I reveal that I am an international student in the hiring process?:** This issue needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis. Some employers have strict policies against hiring foreign nationals and others may be convinced if you have the requisite skills for the job. Therefore, your goal is to get past the initial screening in the interview process. It is important to broach the subject before the employer has spent a significant amount of money and time in recruiting you. Usually, you address the issue in the first or second interview, but no later than the time of the job offer.

**Should I even apply if a company says they don't hire international students?:** Definitely. Most employers who say this just don't understand the process or have never hired international students. You may convince them with your awesome skills and ability and be the first one to be hired. The recommendation is generally to try to target companies with a history of hiring employees on work visas.

**How can I be the best candidate for jobs?:** Meet with Career Services early and often. Doing this can help you develop a clear career goal that will make it easier to market yourself and job search. Get some experiential education in your field of interest (internships). Work with Career Services to develop your top-notch materials. Do a mock interview and prepare really well for every interview. Improve your English skills by participating in class, doing presentations, and expanding your circle of native English speaking friends.

## **Contact Career Services**

James Westhoff, Director  
203 Peabody | 207.992.4909 |  
[westhoffj@husson.edu](mailto:westhoffj@husson.edu)  
[www.husson.edu/careerservices](http://www.husson.edu/careerservices)

## **(Revised June 2014)**

**Important Note:** This document was adapted from the University of Virginia Career Services and Cornell University guides for international students.

### Appendix 1: Common Barriers for International Students in the Job Search

Common Cultural Barriers	Expectations in the U.S.	Possible Conflicting Values of Another Culture
<b>Self-Promotion</b>	<p>Assertiveness, openly discussing accomplishments</p> <p>Follow-up with employers (telephone inquiries, thank you notes, etc)</p>	<p>Unless presented as part of a group activity, citing achieved goals, accomplishments and skills is viewed as boastful, self-serving, and too individualistic</p> <p>Asking employers directly about status of application may be viewed as rude</p>
<b>Directness of Communication</b>	<p>Open and direct responses to questions</p> <p>Eye contact with interviewer, relaxed posture, and other appropriate nonverbal behavior</p> <p>Discussion of salary and benefits only when initiated by interviewer or at time of job offer</p> <p>Candidate asks questions about the job at the end of the interview</p>	<p>Eye contact, especially with persons of higher status (e.g., employer/interviewer), is disrespectful</p> <p>Appearance of criticism must be avoided to save face</p> <p>Asking open-ended questions about the job may be seen as rude and inappropriately direct</p>
<b>Self-Disclosure</b>	<p>Personal descriptions of experiences, hobbies, strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>Answers to questions related to personality (e.g., leadership style and problem solving abilities)</p>	<p>Personal questions about likes, dislikes, etc. are considered an invasion of privacy and are discussed only with close friends and family</p> <p>Or, these kinds of questions sometimes are seen as totally irrelevant to a candidate's job qualifications</p> <p>Revealing outside interests may be considered a threat to the time, energy and other resources invested by a candidate into the job.</p>

<b>Career Self-Awareness</b>	<p>Demonstration of knowledge of self, career goals and how they relate to job</p> <p>Discussion of long-range career plans</p> <p>Ability to be self-directed in one's career development</p>	<p>Questions about role in company indicate potential disloyalty</p> <p>Jobs are assigned by government or family or determined by school or test score</p> <p>Individual must be flexible to accept whatever job becomes available without regard to their own career goals</p>
<b>Individual Responsibility in Finding Employment</b>	<p>Use of a wide variety of resources in identifying jobs (e.g. friends, family, contacts, associations, career services, academic mentors, etc.)</p> <p>Networking by candidates; personal referrals can carry great weight in evaluating a candidate's potential</p>	<p>Jobs are found for the individual by government, school or family</p> <p>Dependency relationships in job search are fostered. One resource (e.g. academic advisor or employment agent) will find work for job seeker with little proactive action on the part of the individual</p>
<b>Informality in the Interview Process</b>	<p>Congenial interviewing environment that encourages openness, some joking and exchange of information</p>	<p>Sitting with a person of higher status requires deference. The job applicant is very polite and does not ask questions or provide information that may indicate lack of respect for interviewer's position. Handshaking, touching, using first name, crossing legs, etc., are inappropriate</p>
<b>Punctuality</b>	<p>Arrive 5-15 minutes before appointment</p>	<p>Personal relationships are more than time. Anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours lateness from agreed meeting time is not insulting</p>
<b>Effective Letters and Resumes</b>	<p>One page, error-free, concise and attractive outline of relevant job experience, skills, accomplishments and academic credentials</p> <p>Reflect the individual's strengths and capabilities</p>	<p>Resumes are a detailed chronology of academic and formal work experiences and not a tool for self-promotion</p>

<b>Individual Equality</b>	<p>Race, sex, and age are legally not supposed to affect the interview process</p> <p>Politeness and respect are shown to all employees a candidate meets, whether receptionist or CEO</p>	<p>Males and older persons may expect to assume dominance in interactions with females and younger persons</p> <p>Level of organizational hierarchy may determine the amount of respect an individual is given</p> <p>Attitudes on gender, race, and other individual characteristics and how they impact hiring decisions vary from culture to culture</p>
<b>Knowledge of Organization Prior to Interview</b>	<p>Obtain as much information as possible about the company before the interview.</p> <p>Demonstrate awareness of organization in letter of application and during the interview</p>	<p>Research about organization may indicate excessive and undesirable initiative or independence</p>

(Source: "International Students and the Job Search." Goodman, A.P., J.A. Hartt, M.K. Pennington and K.P. Terrell *Journal of Career Planning & Employment*, Summer 1988).



(Check out this awesome webinar about the job search for international students)