



The Job Search for International Students

Objectives

1. Explore ways international students can navigate the U.S. job search process.
2. Review resources to assist in the U.S. job search.

How Can I Work in the U.S. After Graduation?

If you are an international student who would like to continue working in the United States after graduation, it is very important to start preparing for this transition early. Obtaining permission to work in the U.S. can be difficult but is not impossible. There are three common ways international students typically acquire permission to stay and work in the U.S.:

- F-1 students are generally eligible for up to 12 months of post-graduate employment under Optional Practical Training (OPT) provided they follow necessary guidelines and deadlines to register.
- For long-term work in the U.S., the H1-B non-immigrant visa allows non-U.S. citizens to work at a U.S. company or organization for a period of up to 6 years. Prospective employers, not individuals, must petition for H1-B visas.
- Research grants and fellowships from your home country may allow for additional training in the U.S.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I go for help at FSU?

International student advisors at the Center for Global Engagement (cge.fsu.edu/) can help you with immigration and visa issues related to the job search. Career Center advisors are also available for walk-in advising and can help you with resources available in The Career Center library. Check career.fsu.edu for the most up-to-date walk-in hours.

How can I discuss my immigration issues with employers?

Many international students express concerns about having immigration status conversations with

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potential employers. Hiring international employees is a more complex, and often less familiar, process to many U.S. employers than hiring an American citizen, which can make some employers less eager to hire international employees than others. Some employers will openly discuss their willingness or limitations regarding hiring international employees. For some employers, all you may need to do is assist in filling out necessary paperwork. Other employers may have more limitations, and it will be your responsibility to share your immigration status and facilitate conversation about potential options. It is helpful in these situations to know as much as you can about work authorization in the U.S. and your specific situation so that you can help the employer explore options and feel comfortable with the process. Some employers will not hire international employees at all, but try not to take this personally as it is generally not a reflection of the employer's feelings about your abilities. The process is challenging, and the important thing is to find an employer who is willing to work with you to find work options that benefit you both.

There is no standard "best time to reveal your immigration status to a potential employer." Your immigration status may be addressed in an employment interview, but it is best not to bring up this issue yourself in the first interview. Do not include your immigration status on your résumé, but if asked to fill out an application where you must disclose work authorization, it is best to be honest. While it is best not to disclose status on your application materials if possible, it is important not to wait too long in the interview process to discuss your

immigration status. Failure to disclose immigration status prior to a job offer may be perceived as dishonest and result in a revocation of the offer.

How do I reveal my immigration status?

An effective approach requires preparation. Know the benefit and restrictions of your particular status, be able to discuss optional practical training, temporary status, and permanent residence. It is crucial that you appear well-informed about your immigration status and the steps that companies or organizations would need to take in order to hire you. Since many American employers are not familiar with OPT or the H1-B process, be prepared to explain it to them in simple and concise terms. The more knowledgeable you are about your employment options, the more confident you will feel. Practice responses to questions such as, "Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?"

You may want to contact the employer's HR office prior to an interview to ask about organizational policies regarding hiring non-citizens or permanent residents. Ask if the employer will help a qualified non-citizen obtain work authorization.

How/when should I begin my job search?

Challenges specific to international students make it important to start **preparing for the job search early!** Remember that searching for a job can be take time, so try not to be discouraged if finding opportunities feels challenging.

Utilize your network of friends, family, faculty members, peers, FSU alumni, and connections you have through organizational affiliations (like student groups or professional association memberships) to locate available positions. This network can help you to make important connections that may be able to assist you in your search. You can also use the Internet as a job search tool. A word of caution: some websites exist solely to make money and take advantage of students. Be wary of websites that promise H1-B visas or attorneys or charge high fees for their services. If you are unsure of whether a website is reputable or not, ask a career advisor or international student advisor.

For help executing a job search, visit The Career Center and speak with a career advisor. You may also want to review the "Searching for a Job" guide available at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides.

What should I emphasize to employers?

Emphasize the positive benefits of international experience! Focus on your unique background and valuable relevant skills. If you speak another language, highlight the fact that you are bilingual or multilingual. Your familiarity with work/life in other countries can also be an advantage to employers. The fact that you have lived and studied abroad demonstrates your resourcefulness and willingness to interact and work with diverse groups of people.

Top 10 Tips for International Students

1. Meet with a career advisor at The Career Center – more than just once or twice!

Visit The Career Center on a continual basis. No appointment is necessary to meet with a career advisor. Drop-in appointments occur between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, in the Dunlap Success Center. Visit career.fsu.edu and "like" The Career Center's Facebook page to stay updated on career events and information.

2. Understand the job search process in the U.S.

The process of finding a job in the U.S. may be quite different from the process in other countries. For example, job seekers in the U.S. do not include photographs of themselves or personal information (like marital status or ethnicity) on their résumés as they do in some countries. For information on how to write a résumé/cover letter and execute a job search in the U.S., visit The Career Center and speak to a career advisor. You may also want to review the "Writing a Résumé" and "Writing Effective Letters" guides available online at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides.

3. Have a basic understanding of the cultural expectations in the U.S. or the country in which you are seeking employment.

It is important to understand that cultural expectations of behavior differ from country to country, region to region, and even employer to employer! It is important to have an understanding of the organizational culture in the country you are seeking employment to effectively communicate with your colleagues and demonstrate your ability to perform well on the job. It is helpful to do some research on cultural expectations for both the area you are planning to work, as well as the organization(s) you are interested in working for prior to conducting your search.

The Career Center Library has several resources available to help you conduct this kind of research on employers and cultural expectations. One especially helpful resource is GOINGLOBAL, an international career information subscription available to FSU students through both The Career Center Library website (career.fsu.edu/library) or under Secure Apps through the myFSU portal. The GOINGLOBAL “Country Guides” include information on cultural advice, interviewing, professional and social networking, and résumé/CV guidelines for countries across the world. Additional resources are listed at the back of this guide.

4. Network as much as possible!

Approximately 70% of employment opportunities are obtained from person-to-person networking. Start building your network now by attending career fair events, visiting employer information sessions at The Career Center, joining student organizations on campus, and joining professional organizations relevant to your field. You may consider building a free [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) profile to build your online professional network (for more information on LinkedIn, see the “Building Your LinkedIn Presence” guide at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides). To connect with alumni and professional friends of FSU, visit career.fsu.edu/ProfessioNole to access The Career Center’s *ProfessioNole* Mentors online database. Use these contacts to learn more about career and employment opportunities.

5. Review professional dress standards in the U.S. Proper dress during interviewing and in business situations is a critical component of the U.S. job search. Even though we would like to think that our skills and abilities get us the job, appearance does count. Review the “Dressing to Impress” career guide at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides.

6. Enhance your interviewing skills.

Interviewing is an important component of the job search process. There are several ways The Career Center can help students to enhance these skills:

- Sign up for a mock interview through Handshake at career.fsu.edu/handshake. Mock interviews occur during the fall and spring semesters, including face-to-face, phone, panel, and Skype mock interviews. For more information, visit career.fsu.edu/Students/Prepare-for-the-Next-Step/Mock-Interview-Program
- Review the career guides related to

interviewing at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides.

- Review the interviewing advice included under the “United States” country guide on the “GOINGLOBAL” online database.

7. Understand the interview questions an employer can and cannot ask you.

Employers are not legally permitted to ask you “Are you a citizen or not?” However, employers have the right to ask you the two questions below, so be prepared to have a response for them. Make sure to be as knowledgeable as possible about your employment options as an international student.

- *Are you authorized to work in the United States?* F-1 and J-1 students may work in the U.S. (on campus) and may be eligible to apply for off-campus work authorization. If you are graduating, be sure to take the appropriate steps to ensure you can answer “Yes” to this question. Visit the FSU Center for Global Engagement if you have questions about how to do this.
- *Do you need sponsorship?* You should answer yes to this question if the position you are applying for is expected to last longer than the duration of your student visa status work authorization (i.e., OPT, academic training).

If you have additional questions, speak with your Center for Global Engagement international student advisor.

8. Determine which employers in your industry have previously hired international students.

The GOINGLOBAL database contains state, metro, and U.S.-wide H-1B records gathered directly from the United States Department of Labor (the government agency responsible for all H-1B submissions). Once a year, the Department of Labor publishes a listing of all organizations who have submitted H-1B visa applications for the prior 12 months. Once you have access to the GOINGLOBAL database, use the “H-1B” tab to search for a listing of organizations.

9. Utilize multiple job search resources.

The Career Center offers a variety of resources for international students to utilize in their job search process, including Handshake, NACElink, GOINGLOBAL, and CareerShift. All of these databases are available by logging in to Handshake at career.fsu.edu/handshake. Tap into the hidden job market (jobs that are not posted online or advertised) through networking in-person and online.

10. View the workshops offered online through The Career Center, as well as through the Center for Global Engagement (CGE).

Workshops are hosted by The Career Center on topics such as job search strategies, negotiating job offers, career fair preparation, researching potential employers, and much more. To view information regarding Career Center workshops and events, visit the "Students" tab on career.fsu.edu. Visit the "Events" tab in your Handshake account to find out about employer information sessions. The Center for Global Engagement hosts OPT workshops and immigration attorney talks on work visa options. For more information, please visit the CGE website, cge.fsu.edu.

Summary

Finding a job as an international student may seem daunting at first, but it is not impossible. It is essential that you perform thorough research on the areas in which you want to work in addition to becoming an expert on your own immigration status. This guide has provided you with some helpful tips, but also know that The Career Center and the Center for Global Engagement are available and willing to assist you in navigating the job search process.

Additional Resources

Select Career Center Library Resources:

Looking for more information on your job search for international students? Visit The Career Center Library for books and other resources on this topic.

Select Online Resources

- Office of Foreign Labor Certification
www.foreignlaborcert.dol.gov
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
www.uscis.gov
- My Visa Jobs
www.myvisajobs.com
- VIF International Education
www.vifprogram.com
- GOINGLOBAL (accessible through SecureApps in myFSU)
www.goinglobal.com
- Council on International Educational Exchange
www.ciee.org
- Idealist.org
www.idealst.org
- Uniworld Business Publications, American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries and Foreign Firms Operating in the United States (Directories)
www.uniworldbp.com
- International Careers Consortium
www.intlcareers.org

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