INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN THE U.S.

International students who seek internships and/or jobs after graduation must familiarize themselves with the "common culture" of the professional world in the United States. Conducting a job search for employment in the U.S. requires a great deal of persistence. Many international students want to work in the United States after they graduate.

Brandeis International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
The first step in the job search for international students is to ensure that you have employment permission. ISSO is a resource dedicated to helping Brandeis' international students with these issues. Please visit ISSO online at http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/iss/cur/employment/index.html or contact the office at (781) 736-3480 or isso@brandeis.edu. The more you know, the easier it will be for you to persuade a prospective employer to hire you for a period of "practical training." Unfamiliarity and discomfort with the U.S. job search process may put you at a disadvantage when competing for jobs. The following information is intended to help you understand, and thereby overcome, some of the obstacles associated with seeking employment in the United States.

Hiring Complexities
Hiring an international student requires employers to go through the following process:

- petitioning the government for an H-1B
- obtaining approval from the Labor Department
- hiring a lawyer absorbing some fees

The state of the job market impacts the willingness and ability of employers to sponsor international students. During a recession, employers tend to be more reluctant to serve as sponsors. In a thriving economy, employers may bring up the topic of an H-1B visa during a job interview and offer to sponsor a student.

Working for International Companies
The best employment prospects for international students may be with international companies. International students are great assets to global organizations desiring language skills, respect for diversity, and/or knowledge of overseas economies.

Approaching the Topic of H1-B Visas with Employers
Many employers are intimidated by the U.S. immigration process and are reluctant to sponsor H1-B visas, or simply have a policy against it. Do not begin an employment interview or letter with an inquiry regarding H1-B sponsorship. Discussions about H1-B sponsorship should come later, either when the employer brings it up or when the applicant is offered a position. The applicant's first task in an interview is to convince the employer of his/her suitability for the job. Only later, when an employer is close to making or has made an offer, should the applicant raise the H1-B sponsorship issue.

- An effective interview approach requires preparation. You need to know the benefits and restrictions of your particular status, and be able to discuss optional practical training, temporary status, and permanent residence. The more knowledgeable you are about the employment options available, the more confident you will feel about the discussion. Practice responses to potential questions such as "Are you authorized to work in the US?"

- Emphasize the positive. It is an advantage to many employers to have a bilingual employee and/or an employee familiar with work abroad. The fact that you have lived and studied abroad shows tenacity and resourcefulness. Convey to the interviewer challenges you have faced and overcome in this process. Be prepared to explain to your potential employer how hiring you offer more advantages than disadvantages. You may want to contact the employer's Human Resources office prior to an interview. Inquire about the organizational policies on hiring non-citizens or permanent residents. Ask if the employer will help a qualified non-citizen obtain work authorization. Seek out companies that have a history of H1-B sponsorship.
Additional Advice for International Students

Generally speaking, there are major differences between resumes for employers in the United States and resume formats for employers in other countries. These differences do not apply to all countries and do not attempt to account for individual differences or for changes over time.

U.S. Resume
- The U.S. resume is a concise, attractive marketing tool. It summarizes your jobs, skills, accomplishments and relevant academic background.
- Cover Letters, resumes and emails must adhere to strict grammatical rules. U.S. employers expect excellent communication skills and usually disregard applicants who have made written errors in language and grammar.
- The length of the resume is limited to 1-2 pages maximum.
- Age, marital status, race, and religion are not included in the resume.
- A photograph of the job seeker is not included.

International Resume
- Chronologically details academic and formal work experience.
- Sometimes exceeds two or more pages in length.
- May include age, marital status, race, and/or religion.
- Often includes a photograph of the job seeker.

Resume Tips for International Students
We encourage you to provide a frame of reference to help American employers understand your experience in foreign companies and schools.

Here are some examples:
- A $10 million marketing firm.
- One of the top five universities in China.
- Second largest technology manufacturer in Europe.

Emphasize strong English skills on your resume. For example: “Translated written and spoken English on a daily basis for two years.”
- Check to be sure that your resume is free from grammatical and spelling errors as well as any awkward use of language.
- Meet with a career counselor for a resume critique to achieve the best possible display of your skills and background.
- Maintain an up-to-date copy of your resume in the format and language of your native country. This will serve as a back-up for employment options in your home country.

Interview Tips with a U.S. Company
- Be punctual. Arrive 5 - 10 minutes prior to your appointment.
- Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.
- Interviewers may begin with direct questions or minimal small talk. He or she may do most of the talking or may expect the candidate to do most of the talking.
- Prepare for direct questions regarding your training, competency and experience. Your open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence.
- Specify clear self-knowledge, career goals, and long-term plans.
- The employer may seek a two- to five-year commitment.
- Self-disclosure of strengths, weaknesses, personality, leadership style, problem-solving abilities, etc. may be appropriate.
- Research the organization and demonstrate that knowledge during the interview. It is expected; this shows your initiative and interest in the firm.
- It is acceptable to ask an employer at the close of the interview where they are in the interview process. You might ask “When can I expect to hear from you? May I call you to follow up?”
- We encourage you to make that follow up call to inquire about the status of your application after the interview. This demonstrates your enthusiasm for the position.
- NOTE: Questions regarding age, race, sex, and marital status are illegal in the U.S.

Interview Skill Preparation for International Students
- Enhance your communication skills by attending career services workshops.
- Study commonly asked interview questions; write answers to those questions; practice your responses in front of a mirror as well as with friends.
- Schedule a mock interview with a career counselor to receive feedback on interview skills, telephone interviews, on-campus and firm interviews.
Frequently Asked Questions

Should I list my visa status on my resume?
Your visa status should not be included on your resume. Your permanent address, educational background and work history will display that you are an international student. Hiring managers will ask the appropriate questions during the recruitment process. You should never lie about your visa status, but given the reservations employers have about hiring an international student, it is not to your advantage to draw attention to it.

Aren't there some illegal questions?
An employer MAY NOT ask:
- What is your visa type, nationality, place of birth? or, Of which country are you a citizen?
- What is your native language? or, What language do you most often speak?

An employer MAY ask:
- Are you legally authorized to work in the United States? or, Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for an employment visa?
- Which languages do you read, speak or write? (provided that foreign language skills are job related)

When in the hiring process do I reveal that I'm an international student?
This is a very sensitive question which needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. While some employers adhere to strict policies against hiring foreign nationals, others may prefer to hire U.S. citizens, but can be otherwise convinced. Therefore, it should be your goal to get passed the initial screening measures to the interview. On the other hand, you should probably broach the subject before the employer has spent a significant amount of time and money trying to recruit you. It is usually recommended that students address the issue of their work status during the first or second interview, but no later than the time of the job offer.

If a company says they don’t hire international students, should I even apply?
Sure. A lot of times when employers say they don’t hire international students it means that they haven’t hired any international students, yet. You may be the first! In order to convince these prospective employers, it is your responsibility to educate them about the process of hiring a foreign national. Be mindful that they still may not hire you, and this can become frustrating. It is recommended that you first target organizations with a history of hiring employees on a work visa.

What can I do to make myself a more attractive candidate?
- Get your resume and cover letters reviewed by Career Services, an employer or alumni
- Become thoroughly familiar with immigration regulations and benefits attached to your visa status
- Research the employers and the positions in which you are interested
- Participate in a mock interview
- Practice speaking confidently about your skills, interests and career goals
- Improve your English skills by speaking up in class, conversing with your advisor, or any other opportunities to speak.
Things to Remember About the U.S. Job Search

1. As an international student you face certain challenges and restrictions regarding the U.S. job search. We suggest that you begin your search early.

2. Communication skills are very important. Use every possible opportunity to strengthen your command of spoken and written English.

3. When looking for potential employment, remember that you have unique assets in addition to your academic training to "sell": bi-lingual abilities, adaptability, a unique cultural background, and professional experience. Your reception will be the most positive if you focus on employers that have a strong need for all of these strengths.

4. Networking is even more important for the international student than for a U.S. citizen. By networking we simply mean systematically making personal, written, or telephone contacts with relatives, friends, and alumni in the United States and back home who may be able to help you in the search. Each person whom you contact becomes a participant in your search. Fellow students from abroad who have gained some experience with the U.S. job market may be able to help you with your search for a position.

5. Ordinarily, you may wish to concentrate on employers that have connections (offices, subsidiaries, marketing teams, sales forces) to your country of origin. These companies may have an interest in you working for them in this country, or to return to your home country after initial training in the United States.

6. In most cases, you will be eligible for 12 months of practical training related to your studies, but you may find that some employers will be reluctant to hire international students because of their visa restrictions.

7. One of the most invaluable resources you have in the U.S. is your embassy. Often foreign embassies maintain lists of contacts for employment. Contact them!

Your First Days on the Job: A Few Tips for Working in the U.S.

1. Punctuality and attendance are very important in U.S. businesses:
   - Arriving on time to work in the morning and returning from lunch breaks on time are expected. Tardiness usually results in consequences if it becomes a habit.
   - Especially in the private sector, companies in the U.S. do not offer as generous a vacation benefit as businesses in other countries. Taking several unscheduled days off or using more vacation or personal days off than given, is considered poor work ethic.

2. Business is done at lightning speed in the U.S.
   - Deadlines are an important to meet and it is expected to do whatever it takes to meet that deadline

3. Technology plays a large part in business in the U.S.
   - Appointments are made by email, conferences are broadcast live over the web and some employers expect that employees are accessible with a cell phone or PDA, should an urgent matter come up.
   - U.S. society is striving for paperless systems so employees are expected to be proficient in Microsoft applications, in browsing the web for specific information and in navigating all software intuitively.

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