

JOB-SEARCH GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



UC 225 | careerservices.nku.edu | 859-572-5680

INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes smaller with the globalization of markets, there are an increasing number of international students on campuses throughout the U.S. today. International students seeking employment in the U.S. have unique and different challenges. This guide has been developed to provide assistance and advice to international students regarding the job-search process.

There are two major obstacles international students may face at the outset of the job search. The first is employment restrictions imposed by U.S. immigration regulations; the second is cultural differences that may affect a student's ability to successfully present his or her qualifications to an employer. It is important for you to be aware of these difficulties and to be prepared to deal with them as best you can. To insure that you have the proper employment authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), contact NKU International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at 859-572-6517 or at iss@nku.edu.

There are some specific strategies you can utilize as you prepare for the job search, whether you plan to remain in the U.S. or return to your home country.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The first step in a successful job search is an honest, thorough evaluation of your values, your interests, your personal and financial needs, and your short and long-term goals. As an international student, you should be aware that the goals you brought with you to the U.S. might have changed after residing here. You should be able to clearly articulate your career goals to an employer, and this can be achieved through a thorough self-assessment. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What did I hope to gain from study in the U.S.? How have these goals changed?
- What are my short- and long-term career goals?
- Am I geographically restricted for any reason?
- Are finances a consideration?
- How do my personal needs (e.g., family considerations) fit in with my goals?

Most individuals benefit from seeking assistance with the self-assessment process. This assistance is readily available, in various forms, through Career Services at UC 225.

RESUME/COVER LETTER

After you complete your self-assessment, the next step is to prepare a resume. The staff at Career Services can assist you. An American resume is different from a resume you might prepare for employment in your home country. A resume for employment in the U.S. is an advertisement for you in terms of your abilities, accomplishments, and future capabilities. It will be your chief marketing tool in your job-search campaign.

An effective resume will make a prospective employer want to meet you in person to further discuss your potential value to his or her organization. Above all, your resume should be honest, positive, concise, and easy to read. For more information about preparing your resume, please refer to the *Resume Preparation Guide* available in the Career Services Library or via the Career Services website.

A cover letter always accompanies a resume when applying for jobs. Throughout the course of your job search, you will be in constant contact with prospective employers. You will be evaluated on your ability to present yourself as a good communicator who is capable of contributing your skills to an employing organization.

Presenting yourself effectively “on paper” is an important and ongoing process during the job search. While this is accomplished in part with a well-written resume, a variety of correspondence is also necessary in most job-search campaigns. Whether you are asking for an interview or accepting a job offer, appropriate and effective correspondence will significantly enhance the likelihood of success in your job-search efforts. For more information about cover letters, please refer to the *Cover Letters and Other Job-Search Correspondence Guide* also available in our Career Library or via our website.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

After you have prepared your resume and cover letter, it is time to identify appropriate employers. Be aware that there are some employers who are interested in hiring international students whether for a practical training experience or full-time employment, and there are others who are not.

According to the Immigration Reform Control Act of 1986, employers must be willing to interview and consider for hire permanent residents, temporary residents, refugees and individuals in the U.S. under political asylum. Any question or criterion that would exclude any of these groups is prohibited. However, employers are permitted to specify that they will not consider any individuals with a non-immigrant visa (i.e., F1 or J1) who are eligible to work only for practical training purposes. This creates a challenge for international students as they attempt to identify employers who may be interested in hiring them. How do you go about identifying employers who are willing to consider you for practical training and/or full-time employment? Here are several strategies we suggest:

Companies/Organizations that Have a Relationship with Your Home Country

Companies/organizations that have an existing relationship with your home country may be particularly interested in hiring you. There is an excellent resource available to you in our Career Library that will help you identify these potential employers: The *Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the United States*. In addition, for a fee, you can access the most up-to-date information online by going to www.uniworldbp.com/. This website also offers a listing of American firms operating in foreign countries.

Going Global

NKU has partnered with **Going Global** to provide resources for both international students seeking employment in the USA and domestic students seeking employment in various cities across the USA and internationally. Going Global is the leading provider of both country-specific and USA city-specific career and employment information. The unlimited access subscription database features 40 Country Career Guides, 47 USA City Career guides, corporate profiles and **more than 600,000 internship and job listings** within the USA and around the world.

Both the Going Global **Country Career Guides** and the **USA City Career Guides** provide professional advice and insider tips on such topics as:

- **Job search tools** - online and face-to-face resources
- **Employment trends** in major industries - learn more about growing industry areas and focus your job or internship search!
- **Executive recruiters and staffing agency contacts** - great contacts for students and alumni/professional job seekers
- **Work permit regulations** - clearly explains the important details for international students and professional job seekers
- **Salary ranges and cost of living data** - take the guesswork out of planning for career moves and relocations
- **Professional and social networking groups** - get a head start on making connections for career development
- **Resume/CV writing guidelines**
- **Interviewing and cultural advice**

To access Going Global, log in to HireNKU at www.myinterfase.com/nku/student and click on the Going Global links. For questions, contact Career Services at careerservices@nku.edu.

Local Chambers of Commerce

It is important to realize that there may be job opportunities for you in medium- to smaller-sized companies that have established trade relationships with various countries. Most major cities now have companies that are establishing trade relationships with foreign countries, and you can identify chambers of commerce through the *World Chamber of Commerce Directory*.

On-Campus Interviewing Program

As mentioned earlier, employers have the right to specify whether or not they will interview international students on an F1 or J1 visa. Although Career Services always asks employers if they are willing to interview our international students on visas, the majority respond that they are not. However, we recommend that you correspond directly with employers who recruit at NKU. We have found that although an employer may tell us that they are not interested in interviewing international students on campus, there are times employers will grant interviews to international students who take the initiative to make direct contact.

International Companies

Some of 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 knowledge of overseas economies. The Career Library and Stealy Library have various international employer directories and resources.

Workshops and Career Fairs

Career Services sponsors a wide variety of workshops that can help acquaint you further with the American perspective on the job-search process. In addition to workshops on resume writing, interviewing techniques, and job-search strategies, our office sponsors career/job fairs during the year which offer you the opportunity to obtain career advice and explore career opportunities with employers representing business, industry, government and public service. You can also take advantage of our “mock interview” service to improve your interviewing skills. All you need to do is call and make an appointment.

Networking

You probably have heard something about “networking” as a job-search strategy. In the U.S., the primary way people get professional positions is through networking. Networking involves informing as many people as possible that you are looking for a job. You can begin the networking process by meeting with ISSS staff, your academic advisor, professors, and friends. They may be aware of job openings for which you may be eligible or know of organizations interested in hiring international students. Remember to provide your contacts with a copy of your resume so they know what you are looking for and what experience and background you have. If they have contacts in any organizations for which you may be interested in working, ask for their permission to contact these individuals using their name. They might also have lists of international students or alumni working temporarily or permanently in the U.S. or alumni who have found employment in their home country. Don't forget about people in your home country who may be of assistance to you.

Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing is a form of networking and is another technique that can help you establish further contacts. Informational interviewing involves talking with individuals in your field to gain first-hand career information and advice about the job-search process. The informational interview is never used to ask for a job, but rather is a means to gain helpful information and develop contacts with other individuals in your field. For more information on informational interviewing, refer to the *Job-Search Strategies Guide* available in our Career Library or via our website.

Employment Agencies

Be wary of any employment agency that promises you the job of your dreams in an American company for which you always wanted to work. Any agency that charges you a fee to help you identify job opportunities should be avoided. There are many organizations that prey upon the vulnerability of international students — **BE CAUTIOUS**. Those agencies that are fee-paid, that is, the company pays the agency to find qualified individuals for jobs, are the better choice. Although there may be exceptions, normally employment agencies are of little help to inexperienced graduates seeking entry-level positions.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Any job search, whether it be that of an American or an international student, is time-consuming and, at times, frustrating. However, by following the strategies outlined in this guide and the other publications we have suggested, your job search will be more productive. Keep an open mind and utilize all the resources available to you. Here are some additional tips:

Market Yourself Positively

It is very important for international students to turn employers' objections into positives. By virtue of living and studying abroad, international students demonstrate tenacity and resourcefulness. Tell employers about the challenges you faced in studying abroad and how you overcame them. You should also be prepared to convince employers that hiring you offers more advantages than disadvantages.

Consider a Co-op or Internship

According to one recent report, more than 53 percent of international survey respondents received a job offer from the sponsoring American company after completing a co-op or internship with the company. Therefore, co-ops and internships can sometimes lead to full-time employment. Since co-ops and internships usually count as Optional Practical Training (OPT) time, please check with International Student and Scholar Services before pursuing a co-op or internship to determine whether it is right for you.

Explore Occupations in Need of International Students

According to a study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE Research: Job Outlook 2010), employers who plan to hire international students focus on graduates with degrees in electrical engineering, computer science, chemistry, chemical engineering, and business administration/management. Of the employers who participated in the NACE study, manufacturers expressed the highest interest in hiring international students (28.1%), followed closely by service-sector employers (21.4%) and government/nonprofit employers (16%). These statistics suggest that international students who wish to work several years in the United States would be wise to study technical subjects in order to increase their chance for employment.

Possible sources about occupations, employers, and companies with a history of H1-B sponsorship include www.ForeignMBA.com and www.H1VisaJobs.com.

Carefully Approach 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 you are offered the position. Your first task in an interview is to convince the employer of your suitability for the job. Only later, when the employer is close to making, or has made an offer, should you raise the H1-B sponsorship issue.

Be Flexible

You may need to expand your job search by considering jobs outside your desired career field. For example, a major who would like work in Web development may want to search for jobs in Web development as well as other areas of information technology/computer science.

NEED HELP?

If you would like individual assistance, do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with a Career Services advisor by calling 859-572-5680. For additional information about our services and other pertinent Internet websites, please refer to the Career Services website at <http://careerservices.nku.edu>.