International Student Employment Resources

Searching for a job can be a lengthy, complicated process that is different for each person. The job search process in the United States may be challenging for international students since it is sometimes very different from other countries. The job process requires an individual to be proactive and self-directed, as well as utilize a variety of information and resources.

**Job opportunities are dependent upon visa status. Therefore, international students must work with the International Student Services (ISS) Coordinator to ensure compliance with their visa status and follow correct procedures to obtain employment.** Career Services cannot provide employment eligibility advice.

Students are encouraged to utilize Career Services for assistance in the job search, application and interview process. Career Counselors and Peer Advisors are available by appointment. Additionally, there are numerous job search resources on the Career Services web site and in the Resources Room. Please note that Career Services does not make hiring choices, nor does it advise employers on hiring international students. All employers make their own hiring choices.

**Employment Options**

Employment options vary by visa type and are highlighted below. Remember, no matter the job, students must consult with the ISS Coordinator to make sure they comply with appropriate procedures and regulations, and are aware of their employment possibilities.

**On-Campus Employment** (F-1 and J-1 Visa Holders)
Students are authorized to work on campus 20-hours per week during fall and spring semesters and 40-hours per week when classes are not in session.

**Off-Campus Work** (F-1 Visa Holders)
Practical training authorization allows international students to accept part-time or full-time employment that is directly related to their major area of study. In order for students to be eligible, students need to have completed at least two semesters (9 months) unless enrolled in a graduate program that requires student training earlier than the completion of two semesters. There are two categories of practical training:

- **Curricular Practical Training (CPT):** Allows for employment required in the curriculum of a student’s academic major. For this reason, students need to register for UWRF courses that correlate with the off-campus work, such as internship credits. The duration of CPT is unlimited. Authorized students may work part-time (20-hours per week) or less than 365 days for full-time (40-hours per week) employment. However, a student who completes 12 months or more of full-time CPT is not eligible for the Optional Practical Training.

- **Optional Practical Training (OPT):** Allows for employment directly related to a student’s major of study. Up to 12 months of authorization is granted for each level of study (bachelor’s, master’s, etc.). No job offer is needed to apply for OPT.

Students should meet with the ISS Coordinator at least two to three months before they want the work authorization to begin. At this time, students will learn more about the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) application process. USCIS authorization must be in writing before employment starts.
There are three instances when students may be eligible for OPT (see the listing below). Students should consult with the UWRF ISS Coordinator to determine eligibility and follow correct procedures.

1. **Pre-Completion OPT (Pre-OPT):** Students may apply for all or part of the OPT period before graduation. This includes full-time or part-time employment when classes are not in session. This employment should be pre-approved in writing. Pre-OPT can also be used part-time (20-hours per week or less) when taking classes. Graduate students who complete all course requirements, with the exception of a thesis or equivalent, may be eligible to apply for full- or part-time Pre-OPT.

2. **Post-Completion OPT (Post-OPT):** To participate in Post-OPT after graduation, students must apply for OPT no later than 60 days after the completion date on their Form 1-20. Maintaining F-1 status during the Post-OPT period is dependent upon employment. Individuals may not accrue and aggregate more than 90 days of unemployment during the initial 12-months of Post-OPT. Regulations state employment must include at least 20-hours per week and be authorized in writing.

3. **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) OPT Extension:** Some F-1 students who graduate with STEM degrees may be able to apply for a 17-month extension beyond the initial 12-months.

### Preparing for the Job Search Process

**Hiring Organizations**
Larger companies are more likely to hire international students for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT). Some companies and government positions have security clearances, which prohibit or make it difficult to hire international students.

It may be helpful for students to work with professors, Career Services and the ISS Coordinator to research and explore potential employment options. Students can also review companies who recently sponsored H1B visas by going to [http://online.goingglobal.com](http://online.goingglobal.com). Log in with a username and password and then click on “H1B info” on the top menu bar. Students can search for employers by state. Instructions to create a student account are at the end of the handout.

Career Services also provides information on hiring organizations on its web site and through the Hire-A-Falcon online job system.

**Skills Employers Seek**
Employers are looking for individuals who possess skills, experiences and career goals that match the needs of a specific position. Therefore, it is important for students to consider what they can offer an employer. There are a number of skills and qualities employers desire in job candidates, no matter the position or industry, including:

1. Leadership skills
2. Ability to work on a team
3. Communication skills
4. Strong work ethic
5. Analytical skills
6. Technical skills
7. Initiative
8. Computer skills
9. Flexibility/Adaptability
10. Detailed-oriented skills


International students should also consider skills they have developed by studying and living in a foreign country. This valuable experience demonstrates cultural awareness, personal independence, adaptability, language proficiency and other attributes that are transferable to the work environment.
Understanding American Business Culture

Cultural business practices differ by country. It is important for international students to be aware of differences when looking for employment. Here are common “American” business practices and behaviors:

- Greetings and goodbyes are short and only include a firm, quick handshake with direct eye contact. When meeting for the first time Americans will state their name, profession and employer; business cards are often exchanged.
- During conversations, Americans prefer to have personal space. An arm’s length distance is acceptable.
- Use direct eye contact when talking and listening in a conversation.
- It is very important to arrive on time for work hours, business appointments, and lunch/dinner meetings.
- Work Schedule: Full-time employment is 40 hours per week. In some jobs, employees may work more than 40 hours per week. Typical business hours are 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Americans usually eat lunch from noon to 1 p.m.
- Dress codes vary by geographic regions and industry. Dress may range from more formal, such as a business suit to more casual clothing.
- Avoid controversial discussions or disrespectful jokes about religion, politics, gender or race.
- U.S. laws are strict about sexual harassment or discrimination based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, country of origin or religion. It is improper to make stereotypical comments or give preferential treatment to any of these characteristics. However, it is acceptable, but not expected, to offer traditional courtesies to women, such as opening doors. It should not be a surprise if a woman opens a door for a man.

For more on American business culture, go to http://online.goingglobal.com: login and click on “Country Guides” on the top menu bar. Instructions for creating a student account are at the end of the handout.


Preparing for the Job Application Process

Cover Letter and Resume Preparation

In the U.S., cover letters and resumes are typically used when applying for employment. Curriculum vitae (CV) are used when applying to master’s or doctoral degree programs and when a graduate student is seeking an academic or research position. Employers review resumes to evaluate education, skills and experiences to select individuals for interviews. Cover letters accompany resumes to further explain why candidates are interested in a position and how they are qualified. American resumes are usually one to two pages. They do not include personal information such as age, date of birth, gender, marital status, number of children, photos or other related information.

Career Services resources:

- Review the resume and cover letter handouts and resources
- Meet with a career counselor to learn more or for feedback on your resume and cover letter

Interview Preparation

Interviews are culturally based and differ by country. In the U.S., employers use interviews to evaluate job candidates in person. For job candidates, interviews are an opportunity to verbally communicate and “sell” their skills and experiences that match the open position and benefit the employer.
Career Services resources:
- Review the interview handout and resources
- Meet with a career staff to learn more about the interview process or to do a mock (practice) interview
- Participate in a Mock Interview Day, offered each semester, to practice interviewing with real employers.

**Internships**

Internships are a way for students to gain relevant work experience related to their academic area of study while enrolled in classes or during a school vacation. The short-term work experience for academic credit is also a way for students to increase their employability. More than 70 percent of employers state they prefer to hire individuals with relevant work experience, (NACE 2010 Job Outlook, 2009).

International students may be able to complete internships through campus departments, unpaid internships or Curricular Practical Training, dependent upon visa status. The internship search and application process is similar to the job search process. Students can learn more about internship opportunities by working with professors, college internship office, career counselors, the ISS Coordinator and Hire-A-Falcon.

**Permanent Employment**

*In the United States*

Many international students are interested in continuing to work in the U.S. beyond their practical training period and even permanently. This is difficult to accomplish. Student visas are granted for academic study only, not permanent employment. If individuals wish to continue employment beyond the authorized practical training period, they must petition to change their student visa status to a H-1B visa status. This is a lengthy process, which needs to be conducted by the employer. UWRF staff cannot give students advice on securing a H-1B visa.

*In Other Countries*

International students can also extend their job search to other countries. Going Global (http://online.goingglobal.com) is an excellent resource for students to research employment practices and options in other countries. Instructions for creating a student account are listed below.

**Additional Resources**

*How to Create a Going Global Account:*
1. On a campus computer, go to http://online.goingglobal.com
2. Click on “Create Personal Account” and follow the instructions to create an account
3. Once an account is created students can access Going Global from off campus computers

*Other Information*
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov): Information on visas, employment regulations
- Going Global (http://online.goingglobal.com): Resources on cultural business practices, industries and employment options in other countries, including the United States
- Two Lingo (www.twolingos.com): A job search website for bilingual job candidates
- International Student (www.internationalstudent.com): Job/resume postings, job search information
- CDS International (www.cdsintl.org): A non-profit organization focused on international practical training opportunities for young professionals, students and educators; online career resources