

# Job Search Guide for International Students

## Career Resource Center

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The Career Resource Center (CRC) serves as a link between students, recruiters, alumni and faculty. We work directly with students to assist them in developing their career plans, seeking internships and conducting their search for permanent employment opportunities. The center does not serve as a placement agency but as an educational resource center.

This handout is designed to assist you, the international student, with the job search process, given that your immigration status presents a few unique challenges. In particular, this guide is targeted towards students in F-1 status. However, other visa holders or those with newly acquired American citizenship may find some of the information included both relevant and useful. Please note, the CRC advisors are not experts on immigration issues. The office of [International Student and Scholar Services](#) should be your first place for information with regards to visas and work authorization.

## U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Regulations (USCIS)

It is crucial that you understand the definitions, regulations, eligibilities and timelines surrounding the visa status you hold and the visa status you are trying to obtain. Explanations of work eligibility (whether it be on or off campus) for students studying with a F-1, J-1 or H-4 visa can change depending on what curriculum they are taking within a university. Therefore, attending workshops provided by UB's **International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)**, following the information at [wings.buffalo.edu/intlservices](http://wings.buffalo.edu/intlservices) and attending workshops provided by the School of Management will arm you with the necessary information about your eligibility to work or intern on or off campus. Plus, check out information from the [Internships and Experiential Learning](#) team within the CRC to learn about your eligibility to intern and steps necessary for international students to intern off campus.

Generally, to conduct any sort of internship or work off campus (unless you are volunteering in a non-career-focused capacity for a short term, such as in a soup kitchen or at Habitat for Humanity), your visa must be updated to show **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** or **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**. Definitions and logistical information about obtaining CPT or OPT are found on the ISSS website and in ISSS workshops: [wings.buffalo.edu/intlservices](http://wings.buffalo.edu/intlservices).

**To ensure you are aware of all applicable restrictions, requirements and deadlines, plan ahead. For instance, OPT approval may take 30-120 days.** Once you have graduated, you should be ready to work when an employer wants you. If the employer has to wait for your **employment authorization document (EAD) card** (known popularly as a "**work permit**," a document issued by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services that provides its holder a legal right to work in the U.S.) so you are eligible, the employer may select its second-choice candidate instead and you may miss out on that job opportunity. We have seen this happen many times.

**Non-Immigrant Temporary Work Visa (H-1B):** Some F-1 and occasionally J-1 visa holders may be eligible to change their status in the U.S. and acquire H-1B status. To qualify for H-1B visa status, the student must first have a job offer with an employer that is willing to file an H-1B petition on his or her behalf with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). H-1B visa status is reserved for individuals in "specialty occupations," or jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree. The employer usually hires an attorney to file the H-1B petition on the student's behalf. J-1 visa holders who are subject to the two-year home country residency requirement are not eligible to change to H-1B status without first receiving a waiver of the requirement.

The ISSS also shares information about how citizens of Canada, Mexico, Singapore, Chile and Australia can often find relief in these visa classifications.

**H-1B Situation:** Every fiscal year, the U.S. government allows about 65,000 new foreign nationals from around the world to gain H-1B status in the U.S. This limit on new H-1B holders is known as the "H-1B cap." There are a separate 20,000 H-1B numbers available for foreign nationals who earn at least a graduate degree from a U.S. institution. Some employers are exempt from the H-1B cap, such as higher education institutions and nonprofit research organizations associated with those institutions (not all nonprofits fall into this category). New H-1B petitions may be filed as early as **April 1** with requested start dates for the following **October 1**, which is the first day of the new fiscal year. When the economy is strong, the H-1B cap can be reached in just days. When this happens, petitions are then randomly selected for adjudication ("The Lottery").

In the last few years, the U.S. economy has been rebounding from the 2009 financial collapse. If you are able to find employment with a company willing to petition for your H-1B, you still need to go through this lottery to get your H-1B selected.

- In 2013, 124,000 H-1B petitions were submitted; 68.5 percent selected.
- In 2014, 172,500 H-1B petitions were submitted; 49.2 percent selected.
- In 2015, 233,000 H-1B petitions were submitted; 36.5 percent selected.
- In 2016, 236,000 H-1B petitions were submitted; 36 percent selected.

The good news: These statistics show more and more companies are hiring international candidates. The bad news is these stats are opening some employers' eyes to the fact that they cannot take the risk of losing employees after spending money on recruitment and on-boarding. Hiring and training is expensive. Most employers we speak to indicate it is difficult to justify petitioning for H-1B visa for entry level roles and reserve those petitions for roles in their company which are very difficult to fill.

**STEM Extension:** Two of the School of Management's programs are now qualify under U.S. Department of Homeland Security's rules and regulations for the optional practical training (OPT) extension for the F-1 students with science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degrees. This means that international graduate students in our **Master of Science in Management Information Systems** and **Master of Science in Finance** programs may qualify for an extension of their post-graduation work authorization (OPT) up to a total of 36 months. Additionally, graduate students on an international visa who earned their undergraduate degree from an accredited US institution in a STEM designated program are also STEM designated. Some employers are more willing to hire and petition for candidates who are earning a STEM designated degree because the candidate gets more chances at the lottery.

**Permanent residents** (green card holders) are eligible to work in the U.S. without restriction (with the exception of government-related work that required clearance). The application process for permanent residence is time-consuming and complicated. If you believe you are eligible to apply for permanent residence, contact an immigration attorney for a consultation. J-1 visa holders with a two-year home country residency requirement are not eligible to apply for permanent residence without having first received a waiver of the requirement.

There are five other options besides an H-1B, if you qualify. The resources at [uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers](https://uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers) describe **employment-based visas**. Approximately 140,000 immigrant visas are available each fiscal year for aliens (and their spouses and children) who seek to immigrate based on their job skills. If you have the right combination of skills, education and/or work experience and are otherwise eligible, you may be able to live permanently in the U.S.

## Challenges to Overcome

Work in the U.S. is not guaranteed, nor promised, to foreign nationals entering the country on a student visa. In addition to quotas set on the number of skilled foreign workers legally permitted in the country, the following factors contribute to the difficulty you may experience trying to find employment in the U.S.

Challenge	Recommendation
<p><b>Lack of visas</b> Employers question if hiring an international candidate is worth the risk of losing him or her in one year due to the H-1B visa situation.</p>	<p><b>Be the candidate who can fill their need and be ready to be hired when they need you</b> Show them you are worth the risk. Have your EAD card on time and know yourself and what you have to offer. Be able to explain why you are <i>uniquely</i> qualified.</p>
<p><b>“Pro-American culture”</b> Some employers like to hire people who are like themselves.</p>	<p><b>Become a Buffalo Bills fan</b> ... or a Chicago Cubs fan or get a U.S.-focused hobby—whatever. But show that you have become ingrained in U.S. culture and see yourself here for the long term. If you can express that in a cover letter or interview, you will ease the employer’s reluctance.</p>
<p><b>Lack of commitment to the job</b> Employers fear that foreign nationals will return to their home country after a year or two and are reluctant to invest resources into training them. It’s common for international employees to leave for another company shortly after the H-1B is granted; the companies they leave perceive the experience as negative and are less likely to hire again.</p>	<p><b>Choose a company—not just a job</b> Show commitment to the company by doing your research and be able to explain why you want that company, not just a job. Never give the impression you want any job to get your H-1B. You should get a position with a company based on what fits your future career goals. Also, consider moving to the city you plan to live in, or even discuss the benefits of owning a home versus renting.</p>
<p><b>Hiring complexities</b> Many employers are unfamiliar with the process of hiring an international student and therefore believe it is complicated and expensive.</p>	<p><b>Become an expert</b> The more you understand what it takes and how easy it is, and the better you can communicate that, the easier it will be to convince an on-the-fence employer.</p>
<p><b>Communication</b> Employers are concerned about foreign nationals’ ability to communicate effectively in verbal and written English with clients and internal personnel.</p>	<p><b>Practice, practice, practice</b> Even if you have been speaking English most of your life, there may be nuances that can be tweaked by spending more time with U.S. classmates, participating in customary U.S. activities, practicing interviews, joining a club or attending events. Always get your correspondence critiqued before sending.</p>
<p><b>Cost</b> Fees to hire an international candidate can exceed \$6,000 per candidate to petition for an H-1B visa and if the employee is already trained and ingrained in the culture and the petition is not approved, the cost adds up to start the hiring process over.</p>	<p><b>In the budget?</b> The cost of \$6,000+ per candidate is about the same as many companies’ signing bonus and is often budgeted into the hiring plan for the year. Smaller companies and nonprofits pay much less. Do not give in and offer to pay; it’s illegal for the candidate to pay government fees.</p>

<p><b>Employment restrictions</b></p> <p>In general, as a foreign national you cannot work for the U.S. federal government, most U.S. state and local government agencies or some private companies contracted by the government. Your visa status will be less of a barrier with other industries and employers.</p>	<p><b>Focus on companies who <i>do</i> hire</b></p> <p>International students will find strong employment prospects at organizations with an international focus, such as the World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, World Bank or African Development Fund. You may have more success with U.S. companies that have an international presence. Your experiences, language and cultural fluency make you attractive. And, if your H-1B is denied, you may be able to continue work in your home country.</p>
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## U.S. Employment System

The first step in designing an effective job search strategy that will lead to employment in the U.S. is to clearly understand the setting in which you are operating. As a student, you may not have had much experience job-hunting in your home country. Even if you have, you are likely to find that job-hunting in the U.S. is a different process. The differences are culturally based, and therefore, you may have to work hard at overcoming the natural inclination to conduct yourself as you would if you were looking for a job in your home country. Different cultures have different sensibilities. Be aware of the setting in which you are interviewing.

Generally the job search for new grads, domestic or international, is very **self-directed**. The school’s involvement includes planning career events, organizing on-campus recruitment and résumé drops, connecting you with alumni at your request and preparing students for the job search through educational seminars and one-on-one advisement. However, as a student and or new grad, your responsibilities include selecting career and industry areas, perfecting your correspondences so they are ready when the time comes, staying abreast of events and opportunities, attending activities, meeting people who can help in your career advancement, searching for companies in industries or geographic regions that interest you, sending applications, following up appropriately, preparing for interviews and so on.

You’ll notice that a large difference between the U.S. employment market and other parts of the world is the reliance on [networking](#).

## Common Cultural Barriers in the U.S. Job Search

Often, international students experience challenges in landing jobs in the U.S. because they are competing in an environment that is completely different than the one in which they were raised. Not only can written and verbal communication skills present difficulties in attempting to translate thoughts into a non-native language, but business cultures, customs and expectations vary greatly in other countries.

In the U.S., it is important for you to be able to identify your **individual contributions** to an organization and be able to “sell” that value to prospective employers. Companies do not hire teams, projects or degrees. They hire individuals who come to the company and solve problems. Even if your work experience has been accomplished mostly in teams, identify the role you played in projects and talk about that role with ownership and confidence.

We have found that, traditionally, our international students have talents that can easily be “sold” to an employer in a cover letter or interview. Some of these characteristics include multilingual skills, geographic flexibility, proven work ethic and motivation, thirst for continual learning, adaptability to new environments and knowledge of global business practices. Capitalize on these talents, in addition to the other skills your education, past experience and extracurricular activities have given you.

Companies in the U.S. want to be assured that their employees will represent them well. The following issues have traditionally come up and can be addressed through your education before your job search commences. (Note: These conflicting values represent a cross-section from various cultures.)

	<b>Expectations in U.S.</b>	<b>Possible conflicting values of another culture</b>
<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 the status of application may be viewed as rude.</p>
<b>Individual responsibility in finding employment</b>	<p>Use of a wide variety of resources in identifying jobs, including social networks, friends, family, contacts, associations, career services and academic mentors.</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 (such as an academic advisor or employment agent) will find work for a job seeker with little proactive action from the individual.</p>
<b>Directness in communication</b>	<p>Open and direct responses to questions.</p> <p>Eye contact with interviewer, relaxed posture.</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 people of higher status (such as the employer or 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>Career self-awareness</b>	<p>Demonstration of self-awareness, as well as 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>Questioning your role in a company can come across as disloyal.</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>

	Expectations in U.S.	Possible conflicting values of another culture
<b>Punctuality</b>	Arrive 5 to 10 minutes <i>before</i> appointment.	Personal relationships are more than time. Anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours late from agreed meeting time is not insulting.
<b>Informality in the interview process</b>	Congenial interviewing environment that encourages openness, some joking and exchange of information.	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.
<b>Effective letters of application and résumés</b>	One-page, error-free, concise and attractive outline of relevant job experience, skills, accomplishments and academic credentials.  Personalized to reflect your individual strengths and capabilities.	Résumés are a detailed chronology of academic and formal work experiences and not a tool for self-promotion.  Often contain personal information about family, marital status, a photo, parent's occupation, etc.
<b>Individual equality</b>	Race, sex, age, religion and political opinions and are legally not supposed to affect the interview process.  Politeness and respect are shown to all employees a candidate meets, whether receptionist or CEO.	Males and older people may expect to assume dominance in interactions with females and younger people.  Level of organizational hierarchy may determine the amount of respect an individual is given.  Attitudes on gender, race and other individual characteristics and how they impact hiring decisions vary from culture to culture.
<b>Knowledge of organization prior to interview</b>	Obtain as much information as possible about the company before the interview. Demonstrate awareness of organization in letter of application and during the interview.	Research about organization may indicate excessive and undesirable initiative or independence.

Edited from original 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

## The Job Search Timeline

**September - November:** Prepare. Make sure your résumé is perfect and you know how to write cover letters. Start attending **educational workshops** and sign up for a **practice interview** as your baseline so that when an opportunity arises, you are ready. Don't miss early on-campus interview signups via **BizLink and Bullseye**.

Attend on-campus interviews, and go to the **Management Career Fair** and **STEM UP** fair if relevant. In the second year of your MBA, attend national fairs, such as the National Black MBA and Prospanica conferences.

Research national organizations that have **hiring programs** for new grads. Larger firms that hire several people will want candidates to apply via their websites as early as October. Do not miss these early deadlines. Even if a company visits specific colleges and UB is not on its list, you are not out of the running. Use [LinkedIn Alumni tool](#), [MentorLink](#) and [Firsthand Career Connectors](#) to identify alumni working at key companies and ask the CRC for an alumni query for the companies you are targeting and network and learn that way.

Keep in mind that most “college recruitment programs” who conduct fall interviewing are targeting domestic candidates. Statistically, the international students who gain U.S. employment offers do so via “just-in-time” hiring, or immediate hiring openings. It is easier for an employer to justify hiring an international candidate for a specific role that has defined needs and is harder to fill. Conversely, it will be easier for you, the international candidate, to demonstrate how your unique skill set satisfies this specific job opening. Targeting your skills towards the employers’ specific needs allows you to convince the employer you are the right person for the job and worthy of the company spending the extra money to petition for you and taking the risk of losing you in the H-1B lottery.

**December - February:** Continue to network and interview. Recognize that during Christian holidays recruitment is very slow. Do not take it personally if you are not called as much during this time. Attend Network New York in January and any other networking event you can.

**March and beyond:** Applying for full-time “just-in-time” positions in early March is awkward for most students, and especially for an international student whose OPT has not started because you cannot actually start working yet. Think about it from the employer’s point of view: Why would they interview you for a job that is open now when you cannot start working for three months? But do not let this discourage you. Some employers post positions for May grads at this time, and some are willing to wait. It is hard to recognize the difference from the posting itself, so just apply! However, manage your expectations. **Launch your OPT** at the appropriate time (February for June grads) so you can be available to work upon graduation. You do not want an employer to move to their second candidate because they have to wait three months for you to start after graduation because you did not launch your OPT in time.

Start your full-fledged job search in mid-spring if you do not already have an offer. Manage your time well with academics, as you should be spending a lot of time on your job search if you are still looking for employment. Spend most of your job-search time talking to people—not at your keyboard.

## The Job Search Process

Looking for a job while working hard to finish a degree can be rather overwhelming. The best way to approach this dilemma is to start organizing and using your resources the year before you graduate. Your job search strategy should include:

- ✓ Preparation (of country-specific résumés and cover letters, and for interviews)
- ✓ Exploring resources
- ✓ Gaining experience
- ✓ Networking your way to a job (start now!)

### ✓ Preparing Résumés and Cover Letters

A well-prepared résumé and cover letter are essential to getting a job interview. For a U.S. job search, your résumé and cover letter must conform to basic, generally accepted standards. International résumés are often *vitas* in comparison and very long. U.S. employers expect **one page** per ten years of *related* experience. The U.S. résumé is succinct, including only information relevant to an employer's needs.

Some students with a previous technical bachelor's degree may have two résumés ready because they may apply to both business-oriented opportunities and more technical positions as the job search progresses. Turning a technical résumé into a business résumé can be a challenge. Consider writing how you...

worked in cross-functional teams  
collaborated with clients  
compiled and analyzed data  
interviewed and selected staff  
developed public speaking skills

created results in the projects  
used technology to work internationally in teams  
audited or analyzed process and made suggestions  
trained and mentored new staff members  
prepared reports for C-level managers for business decisions

Personal information is usually excluded. The CRC has several resources on our website and in the office that can assist you. If you are creating a résumé for the first time, begin by using the guide and template provided at [mgt.buffalo.edu/resume](http://mgt.buffalo.edu/resume). This online tool designs your résumé in a way that 99 percent of the U.S. employers we work with expect to see your résumé. They want to easily find information on your academic background, accomplishments and skills, and fumbling to find that information in a difficult or unfamiliar format will just hide the content from them. The template formats are guidelines. Your style can still show through with personal edits, but let your content differentiate you in a positive way rather than being the reason you are *not* selected. Remember, it is your responsibility to ease any concerns employers may have about hiring you. Writing bullet points or listing advanced coursework that showcase your communication skills can help:

- “Translated written and spoken English daily for two years.”
- “Tutored international students in reading, writing and speaking English.”
- “Gave PowerPoint presentation on paper titled \_\_\_\_\_ to 50 C-level executives.”

Give a frame of reference for foreign employers and schools when the company or school is not widely known:

- “No. 1 research institution in India”
- “Second largest technology manufacturer in Europe”
- “A US\$10 million marketing firm”

### **International GPAs (specifically Indian)**

Most employers in the U.S. would consider a percentile of 80 percent to be a “low B” average and barely passing a graduate-level program. Yet, in many countries, 80 percent is fantastic. It is difficult and often inaccurate to calculate percentile into a U.S. GPA on a 4.0 scale. Therefore, we recommend you use other methods to show your success, such as your class rank or phrases like “top 10 percent in class” or “graduated first class.” Additionally, it is your responsibility to highlight qualities that make you unique.

International Experience:

- “Lived in Ghana for three years and the U.K. for two years.”
- “Traveled extensively throughout South and Latin America.”
- “Developed a solid understanding and appreciation for Russian culture and customs.”

Language Skills:

- “Fluent in Chinese (Mandarin) and proficient in French.”

Note: Omit that you are skilled in English. The employer will assume you are fluent, so do not give them a reason to question your English skills. Your domestic competition never lists that skill. The marketable and unique skill is the language that is foreign to the U.S.

Your [résumé](#) should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. After you have developed a résumé, bring it to the CRC for review. You should also have your cover letters reviewed by a counselor to ensure the writing style and content conform to employers' expectations. Read our cover letter guide: [mgt.buffalo.edu/coverletter](http://mgt.buffalo.edu/coverletter).

## ✓ Preparing for an Interview

The interview is your opportunity to convince the employer that you are the right person for the job. In most instances, an employer is expecting you to articulate your future career goals and past accomplishments, and how those experiences have prepared you for the position at hand. The interviewer is assessing you according to values such as self-confidence, initiative, directness, teamwork, individualism and ethical standards. You must learn to become comfortable with the idea of marketing yourself to an employer.

Nonverbal behavior may also be a barrier to successful communication with an interviewer. Eye contact, physical distance, personal appearance and manner of dress all communicate things about you to an interviewer. It is important that you understand exactly what you are communicating.

Understanding and mastering appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication before an interview is essential. The CRC offers a digital video on basic interviewing at [mgt.buffalo.edu/workshops](http://mgt.buffalo.edu/workshops) and an in-person workshop each fall on advanced behavioral interviewing. Once you are feeling more comfortable with the process, **schedule a recorded practice interview** at [mgt.buffalo.edu/pip](http://mgt.buffalo.edu/pip) or use BullsEye's InterviewStream at [ub-careers.buffalo.edu](http://ub-careers.buffalo.edu). This is a baseline practice. Make your mistakes with us instead of an actual employer! The practice interviewer will make suggestions for improving your technique. Remember, the more practice you have, the more prepared and relaxed you will be when the time comes for an employment interview.

When you have an actual interview coming up, arrange a quick appointment with one of our counselors to prepare specifically for that interview. Preparation for an interview always includes doing [research about the employer](#). Also, the interviewer will expect you to have questions about the job or organization. It is helpful to have those prepared in advance. Check the CRC Web and in-office resources on [preparing for the interview](#) ahead of time.

Note: Employers may ask about your visa status, so being able to clearly, accurately and honestly explain your status during the interview is key.

After an interview, it is always appropriate to follow up with a thank-you note. In this correspondence, reiterate your interest in the position and emphasize the skills you would bring to the employer. This type of follow-up is not considered pushy. In fact, if an employer does not hear from you after an interview, the assumption may be that you are not sincerely interested in the job. Read the CRC's Web resources on [writing effective thank-you letters](#) and let us critique your letter if you are concerned about its contents.

### **“Should I list my visa status on my résumé?”**

Your visa status should not be included on your résumé. Your 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.

## Questions about Your Status / Illegal Employment Practices

Government regulations that forbid discrimination on the basis of national origin and citizenship are somewhat more complicated than regulations concerning such characteristics as race, sex and age. Before you go into an interview, and even before applying for a job, you should know what information you are not required to provide.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 prohibits discriminating against a U.S. citizen or intending citizen because of citizenship status. Intending citizens include lawful permanent residents, temporary residents under the legalization provision for pre-1982 entrants, special agricultural workers, refugees or those granted asylum.

There is no government-endorsed way for employers to distinguish applicants who are authorized for a limited time or specific employer. Some employers may approach this question in the following way, which is probably legal even though it has not been officially endorsed. The employer may ask, “Are you a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, temporary resident, asylee or refugee?” If the answer is yes, the employer should not inquire further. If no, the employer may ask if the applicant has a legal right to work in the U.S. If the answer is yes, the employer may ask the applicant to explain and can then inquire into the duration and basis of their authorization. However, an employer who uses this approach runs the risk of inquiring about citizenship or national origin.

Typically, the employer will ask one or both of the following questions in an application, of which we expect international students to answer in the following truthful ways:

- Are you legally authorized to work in the United States? **Yes**
- Are you legally authorized to work in the United States on a full-time basis for any employer? **No**
- Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for an employment visa (ex. H-1B visa status)? **Yes**

Answering no to the second or yes to the third question does not always mean the employer will not interview or hire you. Sometimes it just means they need to know they will have to petition for your H-1B in the future.

### What an employer can and cannot ask prior to a job offer

	An employer can ask	An employer CANNOT ask
<b>National origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What languages can you read, speak or write? (if foreign language ability is relevant to the job)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin or place of birth (or those of your parents or spouse)?</li> <li>• What is your native language or the language you speak most often?</li> <li>• How did you acquire your foreign language ability?</li> </ul>
<b>Citizenship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?</li> <li>• Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for an employment visa status (ex. H-1B visa status)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of which country are you a citizen?</li> <li>• Are you a naturalized or native-born citizen?</li> <li>• Can you produce your naturalization papers?</li> <li>• When did you acquire citizenship?</li> <li>• Visa type</li> <li>• Whether your parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born citizens, or the date when your parents or spouse acquired citizenship</li> </ul>

	<b>An employer can ask</b>	<b>An employer CANNOT ask</b>
<b>Name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether you ever used another name</li> <li>• Any additional information regarding an assumed name, changed name or nickname needed to enable a check on your work and educational record</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your maiden name (this helps the employer know if you are married, male or female)</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you 18 years or older?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Birth date (determines age)</li> <li>• Ages of your children (determines if you have children)</li> </ul>
<b>Color and race</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race or color</li> <li>• Questions regarding the color of your skin, eyes or hair</li> </ul>
<b>Religion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing - May state the employer's regular days, hours and shifts</li> </ul>	
<b>Sex, marital status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name and address of parent or guardian, if you are a minor</li> <li>• Names of relatives already employed by the employer</li> <li>• May state the employer's policy regarding work assignments of employees who are related</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions that would indicate your sex</li> <li>• Questions that would indicate your marital status</li> <li>• Number and/or ages of children or dependents</li> <li>• Questions regarding pregnancy, childbearing or birth control</li> <li>• Name or address of relatives, spouse or children, if you are not a minor</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Description and Abilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Height and weight, but only commensurate with specific job requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A photograph, either required or optional, at any time before an offer is made</li> </ul>
<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether you can perform the essential functions of the job, either with or without accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a disability</li> <li>• If you have ever been treated for any specific diseases</li> <li>• Whether you have, or ever had, a drug or alcohol problem</li> </ul>
<b>Arrest Record</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have ever been convicted of a crime (if yes, the employer may ask for details, but there must be a direct relationship between the job and the offense to use conviction as a basis for denial of employment)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether you have ever been arrested</li> </ul>
<b>Membership in Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership in organizations that you consider relevant to your ability to perform the job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong (determines religious groups, national origins or political beliefs)</li> </ul>
<b>Military Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions regarding relevant skills acquired during U.S. military service</li> <li>• Whether you received a dishonorable discharge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions regarding service in a foreign military</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your academic, vocational or professional education</li> <li>• Which schools you attended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dates of attendance or dates of degrees obtained</li> </ul>

Miscellaneous		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions about financial credit</li> <li>• Questions about union membership</li> <li>• Questions about financial status</li> <li>• Can you produce your naturalization papers?</li> <li>• What type of visa do you have?</li> <li>• What is the citizenship status of your parents or spouse?</li> </ul>
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**“How do I answer when I am asked by an employer about my work authorization?” (F-1 student)**

Start by explaining that you have “the legal right to work in the U.S. for 12 months remaining in Optional Practical Training, which requires absolutely no work on your part.” Then share that “my work authorization can be renewed for another three to six years with an H-1B work visa.” Avoid saying the word “sponsor” when talking about the H-1B application process, and instead use the word “petition.” MS in MIS and MS in Finance students can get an additional 24 months after the initial 12 months if they get hired by a company who is e-verified because the MS in MIS program is a STEM program. (There legislation proposed to require all companies to become e-verified.)

**“When in the hiring process do I reveal that I am an international student?”**

This is a very sensitive question that 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 convinced otherwise. Therefore, it should be your goal to get past the initial screening measures to the interview. It is usually recommended that students wait until the employer asks, but be aware through research if the company has petitioned for visas in the past, especially in the functional area in which you plan to work. However, if you are being asked to travel for an interview, it would be wise to ask at that time: “Is this a position in which the company is willing to petition for an H-1B as I am currently on an F1 visa?”

**“If a company says they do not hire international students, should I even apply?”**

Sure. A lot of times when employers say they do not hire international students it means that they have not hired any international students *yet*. Or, it could mean that it is not their regular practice to hire internationals candidates. But you can check [www.myvisajobs.com](http://www.myvisajobs.com) to see the company’s history on H-1B petitions. To convince 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. However, use methods other than the traditional human resources and online tools. Network, network, network! Go straight to the source and find the hiring manager. But remember, be honest in your formal applications about your visa status.

**“What can I do to make myself a more attractive candidate?”**

- Get your résumé and cover letters reviewed by a career counselor, employer or alumni.
- Become thoroughly familiar with immigration regulations and benefits attached to your visa status.
- Research the employers and 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, making presentations and expanding your circle of native English-speaking friends.
- Create and actively use a LinkedIn account.
- Network, network, network: Get to know influential people at companies in your target industry.

## ✓ Exploring Resources at [mgt.buffalo.edu/internationaltools](http://mgt.buffalo.edu/internationaltools)

Identifying organizations that hire international companies is key. There are several resources to help you do this. [Myvisajobs.com](http://Myvisajobs.com) offers a list of companies—by industry and year—that have petitioned for H-1B visas, along with other details about those petitions, including the job title, level of position and salary offered. This website also offers a job search engine and the ability to search a specific company's H-1B petition history. By using this tool concurrently with other job search tools, such as LinkedIn, Indeed, BizLink or Bullseye, you can research if an organization has a history of petitioning for H-1B visas to know if it's likely your candidacy will be considered. This tactic is more feasible for larger organizations because smaller companies are less likely to have received international candidates.

### **Foreign Labor Certification Data Center**

Provided by the U.S. government, the [Foreign Labor Certification Data Center](#) discloses relevant information about recent H-1B petitions, including companies that hired internationals, jobs titles, salaries and company locations and where the hired person is working. If a company hired an international candidate before, it should be on your list to investigate. It is a very difficult tool to use, however.

[NACELink](#) is a national job search tool from the National Association of Colleges and Employers, used by hundreds of colleges and universities career centers. Certain postings will be available only in the NACELink portion of our website.

**Vault**, found through BizLink, offers customized industry profiles, job boards, integrated searches, detailed reporting, blogs and company reports, with 100 multinational corporations specifically highlighted. This is an amazing resource, updated several times per year.

**Hoovers**, through the UB Libraries (found on CRC [Job Market and Research Tools](#) page): Use this tool to get comprehensive info on companies, industries and executives, and build a list of organizations worldwide based on geographic location or industry.

### **Going Global** (Log on to UB Career Services [BullsEye](#))

Offers country-specific career and employment information including worldwide internship and job postings, H-1B employer listings, corporate profiles and career resources for more than 30 countries.

The UB Library includes several resources that name American companies with divisions throughout the world: Here are a few:

- Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the United States: <http://bit.ly/1i1TeaK>
- Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries: <http://bit.ly/1N7QFPq>

For our MS in MIS students who fall under the STEM category, a list of companies that are already e-verified can be found at [uscis.gov](http://uscis.gov).

A list of companies that have hired UB graduates in recent years is also available online. If they have hired our grads in the past, they will be more likely to hire you in the future. Visit [mgt.buffalo.edu/internationaltools](http://mgt.buffalo.edu/internationaltools) for many of these resources.

## ✓ Gaining Experience

Many of our MBA students are required to complete an internship before graduation, the MS in MIS students have a capstone course that incorporates an practicum/internship and the MS in Accounting and Finance programs have an internship option in the curriculum that students are strongly encouraged to take. The MS in

Supply Chains and Operations students all work on a relevant industry project. Additionally, juniors and seniors in the bachelor's program are encouraged to intern. All international students who intern off campus are required to update their visa status to show Curricular Practice Training (CPT) status. However, some of our MS programs are rich in coursework and not set up in the curriculum to allow for CPT status. CPT is only allowed when an internship is an "integral part of the academic curriculum." Therefore, gaining a traditional internship for the MS in SCOM programs as an international student is not an option. However, MS SCOM students who spend considerable time at a company while doing their industry research should get their I-20 updated to show CPT to protect them and to follow the USCIS guidelines.

Gaining relevant work experience, in addition to your degree, will make you a more competitive job candidate. But there are many ways to get experience. Occasionally, our faculty members engage in on-campus **projects** on which students can work to develop relevant skills. You can join academic and professional **clubs** in which projects take place, such as the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, hosted annually by Beta Alpha Psi during tax season. You can participate in **competitions** sponsored by the school or by local, regional or national **professional associations** related to your concentration. And, of course, you can take a **leadership role** in team projects required during your coursework, which develop relevant business skills that can be showcased on your résumé and cover letter.

For bachelor's and MBA students, a summer internship with an organization that has a history of petitioning for H-1B visas is the ideal scenario. Larger firms that create internship programs, often to test the following year's graduates for potential hire, should be your target so you can build a relationship with an organization that is more likely to hire you for a full-time position upon graduating. Many employers favor applicants who went through their internship programs.

Note: In exploring the opportunities above, always check with the international student advisor in ISSS to confirm your eligibility for work authorization. Unlawful employment can include engaging in unpaid work.

## ✓ Networking Your Way To a Job

In seeking advice from any American career counselor, you will hear the benefits of informational interviewing and networking as ways to find a job. It's common to find employment by having the right connections. The ability to make connections with people, or *network*, is a skill you can begin developing during your degree program. Begin talking with faculty members and fellow students. Many faculty members have worked in industry and maintain professional contacts with former colleagues. In addition, start building relationships with upperclassmen and attend networking functions where alumni will be in attendance, such as Network NY. You can even use the Career Fair as a networking and educational event. It will prove to be helpful for you to connect with people who have already successfully found employment in the U.S. and can provide insight about the process. The best way to find companies that are willing to hire international students is to talk to other international students and alumni, since companies who have hired internationals in the past are likely to do so again. Joining a professional association related to your field of interest is also a wonderful way to make connections with those who can provide sound advice about how to find jobs in their field. Visit the websites of these organizations to request information on their publications, student rates, chapters and conferences. For the names of professional associations, speak with faculty members, CRC staff or members of student clubs affiliated with these groups, such as SCOM, HR and MIS.

The UB School of Management boasts more than 37,000 alumni. Many alumni volunteer to assist current students through our mentoring program and attend networking events throughout the year. We encourage you to request alumni queries from the CRC based on job titles, company name and geographic locations.

You may also find industry contacts on organizational websites or LinkedIn, in membership directories for professional organizations, in business articles or journals, and by a targeted Google search. Don't be afraid to get creative in finding the right people. In fact, calling the organization directly and asking who is in charge of marketing, operations or finance isn't a bad plan. Hoovers, LinkedIn or Glassdoor can provide names of key people at organizations as well.

Many international students are discouraged because they believe that they have no network in the United States, as their connections are with people in their home countries. It is important to understand that in the U.S. a network is actively developed and does not connote longstanding, lifelong relationships based on family ties or community status. Anyone can develop a network with some knowledge of the process. Be as creative as possible. Do you have a community host or language partner who can provide you with information or a referral? Have you joined a student organization related to your field of interest? Have you attended a career fair or alumni panel discussion and asked an employer or alumnus for a business card? Start there, conduct appropriate follow-up and let the CRC help—but don't wait until April or May to start building your network.

Join LinkedIn, the professional version of Facebook. Make sure your profile is complete and keep it up-to-date. Conduct your job search using this network and reach out to as many contacts as possible for advice and conversation via this resource. Join LinkedIn groups; when you join or update your profile, your contacts will be notified of your activity and reminded of you. Remember to keep this as professional as possible. Use the Help Center at the bottom of the LinkedIn page to learn how to create the best profile and use the tool to job search.

The secret to networking is to introduce yourself to as many people as possible. With each person you meet, use the following steps:

1. Find common ground with your acquaintance.
  - He likes basketball; you like basketball.
  - She scuba dives; you scuba dive.
  - He has been to China; you are from China.
  - She works in finance; you want to work in finance.
2. Let him or her know what you are currently doing and what you want to do.
  - I am working on my MBA and hope to break into the field of marketing when I'm done.
  - I am learning financial modeling and look forward to using those skills as an investment banker.
  - Though I am from Germany, I really want to live and work in the United States.
  - I will be graduating in May 2017, but I hope to get an internship with a marketing company for the summer before I graduate.
3. Find out as much about your new acquaintance as possible.
  - Where do you work?
  - Where did you go to college?
  - Do you have a business card I could take with me?
  - Have you read an interesting book recently?
  - What LinkedIn groups are you following that have been helpful?
4. If appropriate, ask for your acquaintance's help. (If this is a new acquaintance, get to know the person before you ask for his or her help.)
  - Could you tell me how you broke into the real estate valuation field?
  - If you know anyone looking for a summer intern with excellent analytical skills, let me know.
  - Do you know of any other people I should talk to who could answer a few of my questions?
  - May I contact you again?
5. Thank your acquaintance sincerely for his or her help.

- Handwritten notes are always appropriate, welcomed and often set you apart from others.
  - In a casual conversation, a verbal thank you may be sufficient, unless the other person has offered to act on your behalf.
  - A thank-you sent by email is quick and appropriate most of the time.
  - If you do not have contact information for your new acquaintance, find it and send your thanks. The fact that you went out of your way to track him or her down will say a lot about your resourcefulness and tenacity.
  - After meeting someone, you can also search for them on LinkedIn. While asking to connect, reference your initial meeting and thank them for the conversation.
6. Offer to return the favor. Networking is reciprocal.
    - Do not assume you don't have anything to offer your new acquaintance.
    - You may know someone your acquaintance would like to meet.
    - Reassure your acquaintance that you will return the favor when you are able.
    - Follow up on your offers to help.
  7. Follow up with your acquaintance at least every two to three months.
    - Email an article of mutual interest.
    - Invite your acquaintance to lunch or coffee.
    - If you know he or she collects something small that you could send to them, send one to them. But don't buy anything big, which can be inappropriate.

#### **General tips to follow when meeting with a contact**

- Prepare questions in advance. Read "[40 Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview](#)" on our website.
- Do your research on the company and industry before you call.
- Send a brief email, asking for "a few minutes of their time" and stating why.
- Make the phone call.
- If you leave a voicemail, leave a brief, clear message with your phone number, but say you will call again.
- Always be polite, appreciative and respectful.
- Do not monopolize their time.
- Do not ask for a job.
- Do not ask if they hire international students.
- Do not monopolize their time.
- Try to meet in person, if possible.
- Use winter and spring breaks to do your geographic-specific networking.
- Always send a thank you within two days.
- Follow up is your responsibility.
- Create an Excel tracking process.

#### **Sample LinkedIn introduction**

The below sample would be sent in October for a late November meeting. Note that contacts through LinkedIn know who has made the referral, so you do not have to reference the referral; however, if contacting someone via email, you should mention who gave you their contact information.

Dear Shawn,

I noticed on your profile that you started with Company X in its Financial Leadership program and had a technical bachelor's degree. I have a similar background and have researched Company X's program and company via the website. I would very much appreciate having a phone conversation or in-person meeting while I am visiting your city this Thanksgiving break to discuss the program, hiring process, expectations and any

advice you'd have for a May grad switching from IT to finance. I will contact you in a few weeks if I don't hear back, but you can reach me at (phone number). Thank you in advance for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Student Name

Contact information below

### **Sample elevator speech or "30-second sell"**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a first-year MBA/MS student concentrating in \_\_\_\_\_. *(Pause for breath)*

I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ clubs, where I have held \_\_\_\_\_ leadership role. I have worked at \_\_\_\_\_, where I developed strong (customer service/analytical, time management, etc.) skills, and at \_\_\_\_\_, where I developed \_\_\_\_\_ skills. **Or:** I learned from my role as a \_\_\_\_\_ that I excelled at technical and analytical aspects and the MBA/MS is now expanding my teamwork, presentation, negotiation and delegation skills necessary for future management. *(Pause for breath)*

**One example of something you can end with:** After researching your company before today's event, I learned that you have a current opening for a \_\_\_\_\_. This is the type of position I'd like to aspire to obtain upon graduation this May. I noticed that this posting asked for \_\_\_\_\_ skills and my experience in (case competitions, clubs, internships or past work) gave me the chance to develop the skills you desire. Do you often have openings like this posted? Do you tend to hire MBAs for this role? (Ask questions to start a conversation, and make sure they remember you.)

## **Conclusion**

Finding employment can be a long, time-consuming process. The information contained in this handout is meant to get you started. It is important to begin preparing early to compete in the job market after graduation. Use the resources mentioned throughout this guide. If you have difficulty understanding any part of the job search process, make an appointment to speak with a CRC counselor, your faculty advisor, the international student advisor—or all three. Don't give up!

*The guide was created based on a variety of international student job search guides from schools across the U.S., such as Rice, Texas A&M and University of Virginia. Many of the schools replicate the information provided.*