Guide to International Student Career Management
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Weston Career Center
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Introduction

The objective of this Guide to International Student Career Management is to provide tips and advice for international students seeking to navigate a global job search, including U.S. domestic or multinational employment. We aim to help international students better understand the challenges they may face because of their immigration status and gain an appreciation of American-style business culture.

This guide is meant to be used throughout your job search, as you craft your individual career action plan. It is not a replacement for a career advisor appointment or the Career Guide. We’re here to partner with you. You’re encouraged to make an appointment with the international student advisor and an industry career specialist in the Weston Career Center.

You play an important role in the process. Be prepared. The more prepared you are, the higher your chances of success. There are many resources available to you as an international student at Washington University in St. Louis, including OlinCareers.wustl.edu, but it is ultimately up to you to take advantage of these resources and research tools. The job search process is very self-directed in the United States, and it is your responsibility to stay on track.

We look forward to working with you. We are here to assist along the way. You are encouraged to stop by to schedule an appointment with the Weston Career Center.

Best regards,

Mark Schlafly, Interim Director
Weston Career Center
A Global Mindset

As an international student, you bring individual experiences, skills, and strengths to the global workplace that can make you marketable and competitive in the recruiting process. For example, language and technology skills, cultural competencies, international connections, adaptability, flexibility, work ethic, and motivation are all components of a global mindset. As a student with an international background, it’s vital to communicate your ability to operate and adapt in a foreign environment, whether that is in the U.S. or abroad. In order to make this impression, it’s important to first understand the culture, traditions, and customs in the workplace.

Being international is not a liability in the American workforce. In fact, your foreign background can be leveraged very effectively to set you apart and differentiate yourself from your peers. You have three main selling points:

- Bilingual skills
- Cultural background
- Work experience prior to enrolling at Olin or during summer internships

Cultural Norms

- **Culture of the Individual.** The individual is as important as the group. American culture places a high value on the individual. You may be surprised at the amount of mutual respect displayed by your coworkers – not just respect directed toward supervisors.
- **Healthy Competition.** American business language is full of sports-related metaphors, such as calling an estimated number a “ballpark figure” and calling a very positive result a “home run.” Similarly, many Americans consider friendly competition among coworkers part of a healthy workplace.
- **Respect for Employees.** It is not okay to be rude. Good managers rarely discipline subordinates in a public manner. Rather, they save criticism for private meetings. Managers focus on work results and on finding ways for subordinates to improve their performance rather than punishing them.
- **Be sensitive to coworkers when speaking in your native language in the workplace.** If they do not speak your language, do offer to translate to avoid offending.
- **Hygiene.** It is the norm in the business world to bathe or shower daily, to wash your hair regularly, and to brush your teeth at least twice a day.

“After my first group presentation, it became absolutely clear to me that I need to be highly competent in English writing and verbal communication if I want to work in the U.S. I worked really hard to improve my communication skills through practice with the WCC and MCC. More importantly, I started to have conversations with native English speakers as often as possible.”

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**MBA International Student**

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Guide to International Student Career Management
Weston Career Center, Olin Business School
Approach to Business

- **Verbal and written communication should be clear.** It is acceptable to ask questions, clarify, discuss, challenge, and argue respectfully with colleagues.

- **Non-verbal communication is important.** Direct eye contact with colleagues and superiors is perceived as positive, respectful, and honest when dealing with American business.

- **Respect for time is important.** Americans value time and are punctual. Be sure to arrive for appointments and meetings early or on time.

- **Short-term focus.** Americans tend to want near-term results. This attitude carries over to networking and business partnerships; Americans tend to pursue relationships more readily when they can see how those relationships are going to “add value” in the short term.

- **Getting down to business.** Typically, Americans start meetings of all kinds with a bit of informal chitchat, but it won’t be very long before they get to the point, and start talking business and how to succeed with the task at hand.

- **Results matter.** The ability to make good decisions quickly is considered a core strength and can play a big role in accelerating many professional careers.

- **Communication style.** It’s perfectly acceptable to say “no” – in fact, many companies and managers encourage disagreement. Saying “no” or voicing disagreement is not a sign of disrespect.

- **Just the facts.** Facts and objectivity rule business discussions. If you present the best factual argument for making a given decision a specific way, generally that’s the way the decision will be made.

- **Innovation vs. tradition.** Innovation is usually more important than tradition. While many American companies have long traditions, and tradition is a big part of many companies’ branding efforts, the focus in American business is more on finding better ways of doing things than on maintaining status quo.

You are certainly encouraged to be proud of your native culture. There is no need to hide it or to blend in completely. Your culture makes you unique and valued. Find the right balance between your native culture and your workplace.

Photo: Diwali, or Festival of Lights, is one of the most widely celebrated and largest student-run productions on campus.
Planning and Preparing for the Job Search

Targeting
Given all the challenges facing international students in the job search, you must exercise added care in targeting the right function/industry and organization, one where you can offer a higher degree of qualification than the employer can find in a domestic citizen or permanent resident. Consider what unique skills, experiences, and strengths you can bring to the employer, in order to target companies that need and value that combination. Don’t forget that part of your value proposition could be your cultural, linguistic, and functional expertise from international experiences.

You should plan several strategies: plan A, your most desirable function/industry combination; plan B, a stepping stone for your ultimate career goal, maybe closer to your previous experience/education; plan C to fall back on, and even a plan D.

Business Communication
In addition to knowing yourself, you must practice and hone your delivery of your value proposition. Your job search success will not be entirely based on your academic performance. You have to be able to communicate and “sell” your skills to an employer through your application documents, your networking, and your interviews. In all these circumstances, you need to demonstrate self-confidence, maturity, ability to listen and make a point, interest, and enthusiasm. These “soft” skills are at least as important to your success as “hard”/academic skills.

You must be comfortable talking about yourself and your goals in a variety of settings. You will interact with many employers and recruiters, in informal networking receptions, at career fairs, and during interviews. It is essential that you practice your “self-introduction” and “sales pitch” with friends, colleagues, and career advisors. WCC advisors and the Management Communications Center are available to help you formulate and practice your value proposition.

Self-Introduction
For job-focused situations like an interview or a career fair, it is a good idea to have a rehearsed introduction available when meeting new people. While this introduction should be well practiced, it should only be memorized as an outline, not an essay to be recited word for word. Start by creating a list of accomplishments that make you proud. Include accomplishments in a variety of contexts (e.g., work experience, school, family, community) and develop “action stories” that follow the STAR outline.

- **Situation** or circumstances that led to your action
- **Task** or challenge faced
- **Action** you took
- **Results** achieved

Be sure to identify goals that you met or exceeded, or suggestions that led to better service or a better product, or difficult situations you handled well. If you did well or overcame obstacles academically, include stories about that. Earlier experiences from high school may be included, but the focus should be on accomplishments in college and employment experience.

Determine what personal and professional qualities your accomplishment stories illustrate. Review your accomplishment stories and identify three or four attributes, behavioral patterns, or capabilities that were
important to your success. Descriptive phrases will create a clearer picture of the nature and value of your strengths than single words. For example, say “courage to pursue my idea despite my professor’s doubts,” rather than simply “courage”; or “thinking logically in the face of mass confusion,” rather than simply “thinking logically.”

Find themes or patterns. Look for qualities that are repeated or related to each other. These might include the ability to listen well, working well on a team, leadership, the ability to move projects forward, processing large amounts of information, negotiation skills, creativity, multitasking capacity, integrity, and so on. When you complete this step, you’ll have a set of statements that defines your key strengths, proven by your documented accomplishments.

[Adapted from The International MBA Student’s Guide to the U.S. Job Search – Wet Feet Press]

Your “Elevator Pitch”
At a networking reception or in an informal setting, you should adjust your two-minute self-introduction down to 30 seconds. Here is what your “elevator pitch” should address in a conversational setting:

• Who am I? What field or industry/function am I in? What can I contribute? It is important to identify yourself in terms of a job function or contribution.
• What need or issue does the employer face, and what problem can I help solve?
• What is my value proposition based on my past accomplishments?
• End with a question to encourage further conversation.

Email Tips
Email is used for most communications related to the job search: to network and set up informational meetings, to apply for jobs, to set up interviews, to follow up. There are several rules to remember when communicating through email in the U.S.:

• Always include a subject line; make it informative and compelling.
• Correctly spell recipient’s name, title, company name, etc.
• Include a formal salutation (Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name) and closing (Best regards,), as well as your electronic signature at the bottom.
• No abbreviations, no ALL CAPS, minimize contractions, use full sentences.
• Spelling and punctuation should be impeccable (turn on spell checker).
• Organize content in brief paragraphs using bullets, if needed.
• Try to keep within one screen (read without scrolling).
• Proofread before hitting “send.”

“Preparing a succinct ‘30-second commercial’ is very important if you want to make a good first impression. You must have a strong presence, confidence, and conversational skills to be the best candidate for a job.”

-- MBA Recruiter
Networking in the United States

Being new to the U.S. means you have to work particularly hard to establish a network here. Start with your peers in Olin or other Wash U programs, as well as faculty and staff. Take advantage of all opportunities to meet alumni or company representatives at recruiting events (e.g., company information sessions, career fairs, Meet-the-Firms).

Reach out to alumni working in your targeted fields/industries/companies. It will prove to be helpful for you to connect with people who have successfully found employment in the U.S. or with multinational firms abroad who can provide insights about the process. Build a contact list. Networking is an active, ongoing process in which you identify people who can provide information, advice, and more contacts.

- Join Olin Business School, Washington University, and alumni groups on LinkedIn.
- Follow companies through social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter).
- Join a student organization related to your field of interest.
- Attend career fairs, alumni panel discussions, and employer events.
- Be sure to ask employers/alumni for their business cards to stay connected.

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 international students in the past are likely to continue to do so. Establish relationships, and then grow them in a targeted manner.

Another way to make connections is through a professional association related to your field of interest. Many can provide you with sound advice about how to find jobs in a particular field. Visit the websites of these organizations to request information on their publications, student memberships, chapters, and conferences.

How to Set Up Informational Meetings

The first “approach” email should be short and to the point. Be personable, especially if you have a common friend, and be sure to mention the mutual friend’s name early in the email. You can also mention Olin or Wash U as the connection between you. Explain who you are and why you think the contact may have insights. Mention that you would like to set up a time to meet (in person if local) for 15-20 minutes. State the goals for the meeting: information about this individual’s career path, function, industry, and/or advice about your career strategy.

Extend an invitation to coffee or lunch, and suggest several possible dates. Say you will follow up by phone to finalize (if you have the person’s phone number).

The first “approach” phone call will be initiated by you. Be prepared to talk to several “gatekeepers” and to leave a message, either in person or via voice messaging. Once connected, introduce yourself; mention your connection (i.e., Olin, Washington University, or mutual friend).

TIP: You will have less than 20 seconds on the phone before your contact gets distracted – make that time count.
Explain why you are calling and why you think his/her insights are valuable in your career research. Pause to give the person a chance to respond. Do not try to force a conversation if they seem disinterested. Extend an invitation to coffee or lunch. Request an informational interview before the conversation loses steam, but shift gears gently to minimize chances of rejection.

**TIP:** Try a line similar to this to steer the conversation toward a face-to-face meeting — “You know, this is really fascinating, and I wonder if we might be able to pick up this conversation over lunch sometime. I’m free next Tuesday and anytime Friday the following week. Is there any time you’re free then, or some other day?”

Wrap up and conclude the call. If the contact accepts your invitation, express your gratitude, set a date, mention you’re looking forward to meeting, and sign off. If the contact says no, ask whether another time would be better, or if the person might be willing to refer you to someone else. If the answer is no, thank the contact for his/her time, say goodbye, and move on.

**Conducting the Meeting**
You arranged for the meeting, so it is up to you to have an agenda, lead the discussion, and make sure you stay within the allotted time, while also being flexible, allowing the individual to take the conversation elsewhere.

First, introduce yourself; listen to the other person’s introduction, and allow the meeting to move into the main discussion. It should revolve around the topics you came to talk about. If you have asked for information about this individual’s career, function, industry, or company, then start with prepared questions about those topics. At some point, you should shift the focus to yourself, especially if you asked for advice about your situation. For example, you can ask for input on careers, industries, or specific companies that might be a good match for your skills, interests, and experience. You can ask for recommendations on professional organizations, or what further exploration or search strategies might be valuable. In conducting the discussion, keep it conversational, acknowledge the other person’s ideas, and ask follow-up questions.

If the opportunity arises to get a referral to someone else who can help in your job search, seize it. Use a remark such as, “Do you know anyone I might talk to in order to learn more?” If you get a referral, be sure to ask whether you can use the person’s name when contacting the referred individual. Even if your meeting ends without any referrals, the information, ideas, and feedback received will be valuable. Remember, you can schedule practices in the Management Communications Center to prepare for meetings.

**TIP:** Make sure you follow up within 48 hours of your meeting, thanking your contact for his or her time. Keep in touch periodically (no more than once a month). Some good things to send your contact are: articles or other information pertaining to your conversation, information on university events he or she may be interested in attending, an update on your conversation with the referral, news about his or her company/industry asking for commentary.
U.S. Résumé

A well-prepared (and proofread) résumé and cover letter are essential to getting a job interview. General résumé tips are available online at OlinCareers.wustl.edu and in the Career Guide. *Optimal Résumé*, an online OlinCareers tool provided by the WCC, will help you organize information into an American-style résumé format.

There are a few specific things an international student should include in his or her résumé:

1. **English ability:**
   - Test scores (TOEFL and/or SATs, particularly verbal or writing scores)
   - Writing and English courses completed
   - Descriptions highlighting your communication skills (where applicable)

2. **Frame of reference for foreign employers and schools.** For example, you may include:
   - # 1 research institution in India
   - Second largest technology manufacturer in Europe
   - Leading manufacturer of educational toys for children with annual revenues of $1.5M

3. **Work authorization, as applicable, if important to your job search:**
   - Authorized to work in the U.S. without need of sponsorship
   - Work authorization in the European Union
   - NOTE: If you are simply an F visa holder, no need to reference it

4. **International experience/cross-cultural experience:**
   - Lived in Hong Kong for ten years and United Kingdom for seven years
   - Traveled extensively throughout South and Latin America
   - Developed cross-cultural skills by working with international teams spanning three continents

5. **Language skills:**
   - Fluent in English, native speaker of Mandarin, and proficient in Spanish

6. **Extracurricular activities and interests:**
   - Leadership and membership in student organizations
   - Affiliation with social, nonprofit organizations
   - Interests, especially long-standing and unusual ones (sports, music playing, etc.)
Résumé vs. Curriculum Vitae (CV)
Many international students are accustomed to using a CV to track their education and employment history. In the U.S., most employers will expect a résumé, unless otherwise noted, for academic, scientific, or research positions, fellowships, or grants. Here are the differences between the two.

Résumé:
- One- or two-page selective summary of your skills, experience, and education that relates to the job or company you are applying to
- Action-, results- and accomplishment-oriented; concise and to the point
- Does not include photos, age, race, religion, marital status, or any other personal information

Curriculum Vitae:
- A multiple-page document with a detailed list of your education, teaching, and research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, etc.
- Descriptive and responsibility-oriented
- May disclose age, marital status, and other personal details

Résumé Tips *(Refer to the Career Guide for examples)*
- You cannot lie or exaggerate; all facts should be accurate and verifiable
- No grammatical, spelling, punctuation, or usage errors
- Clear and consistent format; easy to scan; leaving white space around the page and between sections helps
- Bullet points are succinct, to the point, and factual (eliminate personal pronouns such as I/you/they); start each one with an action verb
- Quantify and provide results
- Avoid vague terms (many, large), and use numbers wherever possible
- Explain foreign schools and companies, if little known in the U.S.
- Select only significant experiences that demonstrate value-added, relevant skills; this is a selling tool, not an exhaustive list of your experiences
- Include community and other extracurricular experiences
- Specify permanent work authorization in the U.S., if applicable
Cover Letters

Cover letters should always accompany your résumé when applying for a job. Always write a cover letter, even if you only have time for a short one, to demonstrate familiarity with accepted U.S. business etiquette. If you apply by email, your cover letter should be in the text of the email.

There are two distinct types of cover letters: the job application cover letter and the unsolicited/broadcast cover letter. The unsolicited letter is used when no immediate opening exists, and you are approaching an employer to explore opportunities and introduce yourself. In most instances, you will be writing job application cover letters.

The cover letter should be brief (three-quarters of a page) and customized to each employer and each position. Its role is to convince the recruiter to open your résumé for a closer look at your potential candidacy. It should not repeat information on the résumé, but it should highlight those experiences, strengths, and skills that are pertinent to the job.

Pay attention to language, phrasing, and spelling. If the cover letter contains any awkward phrasing, spelling, or grammatical errors, it will hurt rather than help your candidacy. Keep it short. Have at least two other people proofread it before emailing it to the company recruiter. Refer to the Career Guide for elements of a good cover letter.

Cover Letter Tips (Refer to the Career Guide for examples)

- No grammatical, spelling, punctuation, or usage errors
- Formal business format (return address, date, inside address, formal salutation, formal closing)
- Address to the recruiting manager/contact by name wherever possible
- Have a well-researched but brief reason for your interest in the company/position (avoid generalities, i.e., you are the best/ largest/fastest growing)
- Write a different letter for each company and position, no generic templates
- Focus on your fit with the position (what strengths you bring to it, not what you would gain)
- Address specific job requirements with relevant skills/experiences you have had
- Do not copy text from your résumé

“As a global firm, we look for candidates who have a strong desire to learn, gain real-world experience, and can communicate well. Students who exemplify a winning attitude, a desire to help others, and a strong teamwork mentality tend to be stronger candidates for our firm.”

-- MBA Recruiter
Interviewing

Spend sufficient time researching the company before each interview. Know the current industry/company news, read the annual report, and talk to your classmates who interned there, as well as faculty and WCC staff.

Dress for Success

The following information is intended as a guide to help define appropriate dress for Olin activities and events.

**Business Professional Attire**

When: Interviews, Professional Networking Events, Office Visits, Career Fairs

- Dark colored suit (black, blue, gray, navy) with matching jacket and skirt or pants
- Collared white or light solid color shirt or blouse
- Tie that complements the shirt and suit
- Black, brown, beige or dark blue closed toe shoes that complement the suit color
- Dark socks
- Minimal jewelry

**Business Casual Attire**

(Unless otherwise noted) Information Sessions, Informal Networking Events, Daily Wear, Etiquette Dinners

- Pressed dress pants
- No higher than knee-length skirt or dresses
- Collared shirts (with/without tie)
- Shirts or blouses, knit sweaters or sweater sets
- Sport coats or blazers
- Polo/golf-type shirts (in more casual situations)
- Black, brown, navy or beige shoes with matching belt

The following are **not** considered appropriate for Business or Business Casual events:

- Jeans (anything denim)
- Shorts
- T-shirts
- Sleeveless shirts or tank tops
- Non-collared shirts (men)
- Skirts above knee-level
- Halter tops
- Athletic shoes
- Casual sandals/flip flops

**Casual Attire**

Team building activities, social events, sporting events, no interaction with clients or important events

- Shorts and t-shirt/sweatshirt acceptable
- Tennis shoes/sneakers acceptable
- Jeans acceptable

**Other notes on appearance:**

- Hair should be clean and neat
- Shoes should be in polished condition without signs of wear
- Hands and fingernails should be clean
- Do wear deodorant, but perfume or cologne should be used sparingly or not at all
- Jewelry should be fairly conservative/minimalist with no visible body piercing (other than ears)
- Facial hair should be well groomed

**Note on Classroom Attire:**

Jeans and more casual clothing are appropriate for attending class, as is Business Casual attire. Business or Business Casual attire may be required for class sessions having guest speakers. Out of respect to your classmates and professor, however, please refrain from wearing the following:

- T-shirts with offensive slogans
- Mini- (or above knee length) skirts
- See through clothing
- Revealing halter/tank tops
- Ragged, torn or dirty clothing
General Interviewing Tips

The best way to prepare for a job interview is to schedule a practice appointment with a WCC advisor or the Management Communication Center. However, here are some general rules to remember during an interview:

- Arrive early so you can compose yourself.
- Maintain a confident appearance – enter the room like you belong there.
- Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake.
- If an interviewer is interrupted for any reason, busy yourself by reviewing materials you brought to give the interviewer a sense of privacy.
- Respect the interviewer’s personal space.
- Sit attentively, but relaxed, and lean forward slightly to convey engagement.
- Speak in a normal, modulated voice.
- Use hand gestures sparingly to highlight key points.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer while speaking.
- Read the interviewer to see if he or she is showing signs of interest (nodding and leaning forward) or boredom (fidgeting and looking at the clock).

Interview Preparation Tips

Research and practice are key to having an effective interview. These are some general rules to keep in mind in the days leading up to an interview:

- Be sure to know company financials, current stock price if public, organizational structure, company leaders, products or services, competitors, culture/values, recent company news/changes.
- Know the top two to five strengths you possess that are relevant to the company’s needs.
- Learn to talk about yourself and your accomplishments/skills, even if it is uncomfortable at first.
- Look up and practice answering common interview questions beforehand.
- Practice interviewing with friends, a Management Communication Center consultant, or a WCC advisor and get feedback.
- Prepare five to ten relevant questions to ask during the interview.
- Instigate some appropriate small talk with the receptionist and with the interviewer after you have been introduced in order to warm yourself up.
- Refer to the Career Guide for different types of interviews and insights into each type.

In the Interview

- **Show you’ve done your research.** Enhance your answers with information you’ve learned about the company, industry, and job. For example, “I understand that your company is about to acquire a European firm headquartered in Frankfurt. Having had an internship in Germany, I know some of the issues and opportunities having a presence in Europe brings, such as . . .”
- **Answer the questions.** Listen carefully to each question, and understand the interviewer’s intention. Avoid the temptation to tell the interviewer something that doesn’t address the question. If you are unsure of the question, either ask the interviewer to repeat/rephrase it, or paraphrase it yourself after saying something like: “Let me make sure I understood your question – you are asking . . .”
• **Use your two-minute self-introduction.** This is a good answer to the “tell me about yourself” question and allows you to tell your story in a succinct manner. Make sure your introduction is customized to the industry/company/job for which you are interviewing.

• **Be honest.** Exaggerations or dishonest answers are usually caught by the interviewer or later. In that case, you won’t get the job or could be fired for dishonesty. If asked something you don’t know the answer to, admit it.

• **Be enthusiastic.** Show your enthusiasm for the opportunity to talk with the company and hiring manager, and the prospect of working for them. Recruiters want to know that you have high energy and a positive outlook.

• **Be concise.** Keep your answers straightforward and to the point. Remember to use the STAR framework for answering questions whenever possible to help you stay on track:
  o Situation you were in
  o Task you completed
  o Actions you took
  o Results you got

• **Ask questions.** Be prepared to ask questions that show your knowledge of the company and also your interest in learning more than your research was able to provide. An example to ask a hiring manager would be: “What do you think are the common characteristics of highly successful people in this company?”

• **Be courteous.** Remember that everyone you meet at the company where you are interviewing is going to assess you. Be sure to be courteous to everyone you meet, including the administrative assistant, receptionist, and food server.

• **Ask about next steps.** At the conclusion of the interview, be sure to ask such things as when the company expects to make its hiring decision and therefore when you can expect to hear from the hiring manager.

• **Thank all interviewers.** Ask each person you interview with for his or her business card or contact information so you can send a follow-up thank-you note or email, and thank them for the opportunity to interview. Reinforce your interest by reiterating your enthusiasm for the job/internship.

• **Follow up.** Send thank-you notes or emails to each person who interviewed you to demonstrate your continued interest or to clarify things you said in the interview.
Working in the United States

If you plan to work in the U.S., you need to learn the system governing employment of foreign workers. You need to educate yourself on the steps and costs for gaining work authorization, and remain flexible in what positions you are willing to accept. The appendix at the back of this supplement includes a brief explanation of how you can legally work in the U.S. as an international student and graduate.

There are fewer job opportunities and greater competition for employment in the United States and around the globe. Securing a job in the United States is not guaranteed to international students on a student visa. There is a quota for the number of foreign workers who are legally permitted to work long term in the U.S.

For more in-depth information or special cases, contact Washington University’s Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) and an immigration attorney. In all cases, you must contact OISS to obtain employment authorization before starting work.

Discussing Your Visa Status
While there is no set rule on when to disclose your status, the best way to approach this is to assess how much the employer values you as a candidate. Be knowledgeable about the visa process in case you need to educate the employer about what is involved.

- Disclosing your status right away in the interview or on your résumé may cause employers to remove you from the applicant pool if their hiring practices do not include international candidates. It is not recommended to include visa status on your résumé, unless it can help; for example, if you have permanent work authorization in the U.S. or in other countries.
- Waiting too long to disclose your status could frustrate an employer who has invested time in the interview process. He or she may view you as dishonest or assume you are trying to hide something.

Your main goal should be to get past the screening process and be offered a full interview. The interview will give you a chance to show the interviewer your fit for the job. Be sure to disclose your status before you receive an offer, and when you do, be ready to explain how simple the process is for an employer to hire you.

There is often a misunderstanding in U.S. business that visas are expensive and complex to obtain. Be prepared to dispel this misunderstanding. If the interviewer asks about your work status, use the opportunity to explain why sponsoring you would be worth the effort. Focus on your abilities such as multilingualism, understanding of global business, and flexibility in adapting to other cultures.

Illegal Interview Questions
There are some questions employers may not legally ask in the U.S. Below are just a few examples; refer to the Career Guide for a complete list:
- What is your visa type, nationality, or place of birth?
- What country are you from?
- What is your native language? What language do you normally speak?

However, employers may legally ask these questions:
- Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?
- Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for an employment visa?
- Which languages do you read, speak, and write? These skills should be listed on your résumé.
Useful Resources

OlinCareers.wustl.edu offers resources to assist international students who want to work globally or in the U.S. These resources include:

Office of International Students and Scholars – The OISS is on the Danforth Campus and keeps track of your F-1 or J-1 visa requirements. Every time you consider employment off campus you need to consult the OISS and ensure that you have the proper authorization.

Companies Hiring International Students – A 16-page list of U.S.-based companies that have made offers of employment to Olin international students.

U.S. Offers for F1 Students from 17 MBA Programs – A multipage listing of companies that have hired first- and second-year MBAs from 17 top MBA programs.

GoinGlobal – H-1B Info – The most recent lists of companies sponsoring H-1B visas, searchable by metro area, state, industry, and title.

QS Global Workplace – Contains actual job and internship postings for MBA-level positions and networking opportunities.

Global Offers to MBA Students from 17 MBA Programs – A multipage listing of companies that have hired first- and second-year MBAs from 17 top MBA programs for positions outside of the U.S.

WCC Asia-Pacific Trip Report – The Weston Career Center sponsors an employer relations and fact-finding trip to Asia-Pacific. In addition to company visits, Washington University alumni and current students are invited to participate in dinner receptions in each home country. This report details the most recent visit and discusses employment opportunities in Asia.

H-1B Visa Sponsor and Database – My Visa Jobs – Site with information on all types of visas and how to obtain them, visa sponsors, top H-1B employers, and job postings.

Management Communication Center – The Olin Management Communications Center offers communication-based coaching and practice. Consultants help students expand their ability to communicate. Students develop strategies through practice and critique sessions for English language enhancement and presentations.

Companies Hiring Olin Students Abroad – An eight-page listing of offers made to Olin students in recent years for jobs and internships outside the U.S.
Appendix

Work Authorization and Visa Information

This is a brief explanation of how you can legally work in the U.S. as an international student and graduate. For more in-depth information or special cases, contact Washington University’s Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) and an immigration attorney. In all cases, you must contact OISS to obtain employment authorization before starting work.

On-Campus Employment

F-1 and J-1 students are eligible to work on campus for Washington University part time (20 hours/week) during the spring and fall semesters and full time (40 hours/week) during school breaks. J-1 students must first obtain permission from their program sponsor before beginning any employment. Contact OISS if you are in Wash U’s J-1 program.

Internships and Part-Time Employment before Graduating

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) allows students with F-1 status to be employed off campus by U.S. employers through the Practical Training Program during the summers between your school years, or part time during the academic year starting with your second year in school. In order to do so, you must obtain authorization for either Curricular Practical Training (CPT) through your Olin Business School program office and OISS, or Optional Practical Training (OPT) from USCIS, through OISS. J-1 students also can usually work in their field of study through the Academic Training Program. Applications are made through OISS for those in Wash U’s J-1 program.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

- F-1 students may obtain authorization for off-campus work by making a CPT application through their Programs Office and OISS. The employer does not have to do anything for you to obtain CPT work authorization. CPT is not an open work authorization; it is employer-specific, so you must secure an offer first.
- You can apply for CPT after your first academic year in the U.S. on F-1 status. You can apply for part-time CPT during the school year, or full-time CPT during school breaks, after your first year of study.
- Your application must be made before a school semester starts and needs to be renewed if you want to continue employment after the semester ends. In order to qualify, you need to be a full-time student, and you need an employment offer in hand.
- Through the CPT application, you will enroll in a specific for-credit course stipulated by the Programs office. Once the application is approved, OISS will issue a new I-20 with the CPT authorization dates and location on the third page.
- You may work only for the period authorized; you cannot start early and cannot continue to work beyond the end date.
- CPT is not an option for postgraduation employment. We recommend that all students use CPT for off-campus employment during matriculation as students, and preserve the full 12 months of OPT for postgraduation employment.
Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- F-1 students may apply for and receive full-time OPT during school breaks or part time during the school year following the first year of university study (not recommended) and/or after the program/course requirements are met. Students wishing to apply for OPT should begin the process with the OISS at least three months before they expect to begin working.
- Your F-1 student status entitles you to apply for up to 12 months of full-time OPT.
- OPT employment must be directly related to your major field of study and appropriate to your educational level.
- You are not required to have a job in order to apply for OPT employment authorization; you will have to specify a start date for your OPT at the time of the application.
- Before starting work in a practical training position, a student must have received employment authorization, in the form of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD), from the USCIS.

Economic Hardship – If there is an unexpected hardship such as death of family member, war in home country, currency crisis, or another unforeseen situation that changes your financial situation significantly, you may be able to work in the U.S. You need to present your case to the USCIS for approval. If awarded, you can work anywhere, unrelated or related to your degree program. Consult an OISS advisor if you think you qualify.

Volunteer – An international student can volunteer if it does not violate U.S. labor laws. An acceptable example would be volunteering with a charitable organization by doing yard work for the day, feeding the homeless, or playing with children. Working for a business employer and not getting paid does not qualify. Any ongoing volunteer work should always be approved by the OISS.

Full-Time Employment after Graduation – First Year

OPT – F students

- You must secure authorization for postgraduation full-time OPT from USCIS, through OISS. See OPT section above.
- You can start full-time OPT after completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding the thesis or dissertation or after completion of the degree program.
- You will be eligible to work in your field for up to 12 months after graduation without having to change your visa status. The time you spend on OPT for summer internships and/or part-time employment during school will be deducted from this total.
- There is a 60-day grace period after graduation before you must start your OPT. However, because the USCIS may take up to 90 days to process an application for employment authorization, students are urged to apply early. You may apply for post-graduation employment authorization up to 90 days before and anytime during the 60-day grace period.
- There is a 90-day limitation on unemployment during the initial postgraduation OPT authorization period.
- If your OPT application is approved, you will be issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), a card bearing your photo and the period during which you are authorized to work.
- You must not start work before the receipt of the EAD card and before the first day of the period of validity indicated on the card.
J-1 students in Wash U’s J-1 program can usually obtain approval from OISS for up to 18 months of training in their field of study. Contact OISS for more details. There is no grace period for J-1 holders. You must secure an offer before graduation.

Continuing Employment after OPT Expires

H-1B Specialty Worker Visa

If you have F status now, after your practical training permit expires, it will usually be possible for you to obtain a temporary specialty worker (H-1B) visa.

- An H-1B visa is a temporary nonimmigrant visa reserved for “specialty occupations,” which are jobs requiring at least a bachelor’s degree; you must meet the requirement for a “specialty occupation,” and the position must be closely linked to your degree.
- An H-1B visa is intended for professional employment for three to six more years.
- Your employer must be willing to apply for the H-1B visa process involving a commitment of the employer’s time and money. The employer applies through the Department of Labor and USCIS. Employers may wish to seek expert advice to complete the process.
- The employer does not have to advertise the position or prove there is no qualified U.S. worker.
- Every fiscal year, the U.S. government allows 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 20,000 separate H-1B visas available for foreign nationals who earn at least a master’s degree from a U.S. institution. Some employers are exempt from the H-1B cap, such as institutions of higher education and nonprofit research organizations associated with those institutions.
- New H-1B petitions may be filed as early as April 1 with requested start dates of the following October 1, which is the first day of the new fiscal year.
- 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.

Other Visa Options for Employment

Nonimmigrant Options

- TN, H-1B1, and E-3 classifications – Citizens of Canada, Mexico, Singapore, Chile, and Australia can often find relief in these classifications. If you will work in a specific listed occupation and are Canadian or Mexican, you may qualify for TN status. Citizens of Singapore and Chile are given an allotment of H-1B numbers that is separate from other foreign nationals and has never been exhausted. Australians who qualify for H-1B status also qualify for E-3 status, and this quota has also never been exhausted.
- L visas, for multinational executives/managers, may be a better option for intracompany transferees for an employer transferring a manager to a U.S. location after one year outside the U.S.
- O visas apply to foreign nationals with extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, athletics, or the motion picture or television industry who have been recognized nationally or internationally for those achievements.
- J-1 intern/trainee visas may apply to individuals looking for short-term internships/training in the U.S.
• Employers such as designated nongovernmental and international organizations, and specific employers from treaty countries may be able to sponsor foreign nationals for alternative visa statuses such as G-4, E-1, or E-2.

• While you need to be aware of these other options, they are less common and much harder to obtain than H-1B visas. You must consult an immigration attorney to determine if you qualify.

**Immigrant Visa Options**

• Permanent residency through employment: five categories: EB-1, EB-2, EB-3, EB-4, and EB-5, are visas for priority workers (persons of extraordinary ability in sciences, arts, business, education, or athletics), advanced degree holders, skilled workers/professionals and others, certain special immigrants and investors, respectively.

• Permanent residency through investment: To qualify as an immigrant investor, a foreign national must invest, without borrowing, a minimum qualifying capital dollar amount in a qualifying commercial enterprise and within two years create a specified number of full-time jobs.

• Permanent residency through the Diversity Visa Program: Visas are drawn from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. Unlike other immigrant types, Diversity Visas do not require a U.S. sponsor.

• Permanent residency through immediate family.

• Permanent residency for special immigrants from Iraq or Afghanistan, or religious workers.

• Obtaining permanent residency is a complex process that requires expert advice.

**Documenting Employment Authorization**

Engaging in employment before receiving the appropriate proof of work permission is a violation of status and could constitute irreparable damage to your immigration record. To avoid working illegally, be certain that you hold one of the following documents by the time you commence with your practical/academic training or post-graduation work experience:

(F-1) Optional Practical Training (**OPT**): An Employment Authorization Card/Document (“EAC” or “EAD”), a driver’s license-sized card issued by USCIS bearing your photo, name, and employment authorization start/end dates.

(F-1) Curricular Practical Training (**CPT**): A new I-20, issued by OISS, bearing the employer name and address as well as the employment authorization start/end dates.

(J-1) Academic Training (**AT**): A letter, issued by the program sponsor (OISS, for those in Wash U’s J-1 program), bearing the employer name/address and the employment authorization start and end dates.

More information on employment authorization/visa issues:

• OISS [http://oisshome.wustl.edu/](http://oisshome.wustl.edu/)
• USCIS [http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis](http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis)
• Visa Services [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html)

Career Management Checklist

☐ Have you scheduled time during your week to devote to your search?

☐ Have you acquired a professional wardrobe?

☐ Have you written a U.S.-style résumé and reviewed it with the WCC?

☐ Have you registered on LinkedIn, and are you participating actively?

☐ Have you completed industry research using WCC resources?

☐ Have you identified your target companies and their competitors?

☐ Have you prepared a spreadsheet to track companies, contacts, and appointments?

☐ Have you identified the search methods you will use, such as networking and online job boards?

☐ Have you written a cover letter and checked it with a WCC advisor?

☐ Have you joined Olin student clubs?

☐ Have you joined the professional societies in your industry?

☐ Have you reached out to new networking contacts and maintained existing ones?

☐ Have you scheduled informational interviews?

☐ Have you scheduled mock interviews?

☐ Have you established a backup plan?

☐ Have you secured references?