US Job-Search Tips and Work Authorization for International Students and Postdocs

Anne Poduska, Cornell Career Services
Adriana Rovers, International Students & Scholars Office
Career Services: Undergraduates

- **Arts & Sciences**: 55 Goldwin Smith
- **Agriculture and Life Sciences**: 140 Roberts
- **Architecture, Art and Planning**: 103 Barnes
- **Engineering**: 201 Carpenter
- **Hotel**: 180 Statler
- **Human Ecology**: 172 MVR
- **ILR**: 201 Ives
- **University-wide**: 103 Barnes
Career Services:
Research Master’s and PhD students

- **Agriculture and Life Sciences**: 140 Roberts
- **Architecture, Art and Planning**: 103 Barnes
- **Engineering**: 201 Carpenter
- **Hotel**: 180 Statler
- **Human Ecology**: 103 Barnes
- **ILR**: 201 Ives
- **University-wide**: 103 Barnes
Career Services:
Postdocs and Graduate Students Interested in a Postdoc

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Career Exploration Process

- Understand Yourself
  - Interests
  - Values
  - Strengths
  - Goals

- Explore Options
  - Resources
  - Networking
  - Activities
  - Internships

- Take Action
  - Applications
  - Letters
  - Resumes
  - Interviews
Presentation Goals

• Discuss common challenges and issues international students and postdocs may face in their US job search
• Provide resources and suggestions to overcome these challenges
• Outline the work authorization requirements for working in the US after graduation
Which Employers Will Sponsor Me?

- CCNet
- Excel Spreadsheet on CCS webpage
- H1B databases
- Myvisajobs.com
- Goinglobal
- H1Bvisajobs
- Hear from friends, colleagues, alumni, recruiters
Potential Challenges

Which employers sponsor visas?

- Can’t find employers that sponsor visas in your field
- Can find employers
- Can find jobs
- Can’t find open job postings
- Job postings want someone with more experience
- You don’t have time or energy to do this amount of research
- Found and applied for jobs with employers that sponsor
- You’re not getting any responses

Cornell University
Potential Challenges: General Advice

• There is no easy solution—for the job or career path you’d like, you might need to work outside of the US

• Identify what skills you have that would make you the most competitive applicant: buyer/seller model*

• Talk to people

• Set aside time for job search process

• See the CIPA International Student Guide for Employment in the US

• Clarify your career goals and develop a back-up plan

* Power Ties: The International Student’s Guide to Finding a Job in the United States by Dan Beaudry
Potential Challenges

Which employers sponsor visas?

Can’t find employers that sponsor visas in your field
Can’t Find Employers Sponsoring Visas

- **Widen your list of employers:**
  - Hoovers
- **Consider working in a different area/use wider definition of skills**
  - O*Net
- **Google LinkedIn profiles**
- **Consider working abroad:**
  - Uniworld
- **Talk to people:**
  - Informational interviews
  - LinkedIn / Alumni databases
Potential Challenges

Which employers sponsor visas?

Can find employers

Can’t find open job postings
Companies Sponsor but Don’t Have Job Postings

• See if they’re on CCNet and contact recruiters

• Look through Hoovers for other companies

• Talk to people:
  Human resources representatives at companies
  Alumni
  Individuals in the field (LinkedIn)
  Representatives at Career Fairs or information sessions
  Career Services staff
Potential Challenges

Which employers sponsor visas?

Can find employers

Can find jobs

Job postings want someone with more experience
Companies Can Sponsor But Not For Entry-Level Job Postings

• Talk to individuals in the field
  Would you be competitive for higher-level jobs?
  Could you gain experience (through courses, volunteering, internships) that would improve your chances?
  Are there organizations/training programs?

• Consider working abroad, moving back to US in future
  Talk to individuals in your home country
  Do informational interviews with individuals at multinational corporations
Potential Challenges

Which employers sponsor visas?

- Can find employers
- Can find jobs
- Found and applied for jobs with employers that sponsor
- You're not getting any responses
You Found Employers and Job Postings But You Haven’t Heard Anything!

• Meet with someone in your career office; bring resume, cover letter, job posting, talk about approaches

• Do informational interviews, ask for advice

• Submit application to a person
Potential Challenges

Which employers sponsor visas?

You don’t have time or energy to do this amount of research.
You Don’t Have Enough Time for This

• Decide how much time you realistically have to spend on this and set goals and a timeline

• Know your OPT timeline

• Talk to people (sometimes more efficient)

• Schedule appointments with Career Office, friends, colleagues

• Attend on-campus career events and workshops
Final Advice

• This is not a straightforward process, so you’ll need to dedicate time to your job search
• Develop a backup plan either abroad/your own country
• Learn more about the job-search process
• Visit your career office—we’re here to help you!
• Talk to the ISSO about visa regulations
Work Authorization for F-1 & J-1 Students
Work Authorization for F-1 & J-1 Students

- “Maintaining” status
- F1 Practical Training
- J-1 Academic Training
“Maintaining your status”

To maintain valid status
F1 & J1 students must:

• Enroll full time
• Update your address when you move
• Keep your documents valid: extend I-20!
• Do NOT work off campus without authorization
F1 Off Campus Work Authorization

• After being enrolled full time for 1 full academic year

• Practical Training in your field of study
  – Curricular Practical Training
  – Optional Practical Training
F1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)
F1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- After being enrolled full time for 1 academic year
- Practical training in your field/major
- Not employer-specific so you may change jobs during that year
- You are still in F1 status while on OPT
F1 OPT Timing Issues

- 12 months total per degree level (but not cumulative)

- May be used before you graduate or after graduation

- Time used before graduation is deducted from the 12 months

- There are two ways to extend OPT beyond the 12 months
F1 OPT Application

Procedures: Apply Early

- Do NOT need job offer to apply
- Pick up application from ISSO or download from our web site.
- Bring completed application to the ISSO. We will create a new I-20 and you will send your application to USCIS.
F1 OPT Application
Procedures: Apply Early

You CAN apply:

- No more than 3 months ahead of graduating
- No later than 60 days past graduating
- Not more than 120 days before the start date you choose
- The OPT cards are currently taking 3 months to come to you
• **May not start working until you receive the EAD card**

• **And may not start working until the start date listed on the EAD card**
Program end date
05/25/2014

60-day grace period
7/25/2014

You choose your OPT start date—any day within the 60 days after you complete program
Example: 7/1/2014

12 months OPT
6/30/2015

- Apply no more than 3 months before you graduate,
- Not earlier than 120 days before your chosen start date,
- And no more than 60 days after graduation!
- Also must send app within 30 days of getting I-20 from the ISSO
Extending OPT?

• As you near the end of your OPT, there are two possible ways to extend your OPT time:

  • “STEM” extension (Science, Technology, Engineering or Math), or
  • “H1B Cap Gap” extension
One Time 17 month extension of OPT

- If you graduate in a “STEM” field (Science, Technology, Engineering or Math—more detailed list is available on our website)
- AND, your employer is enrolled in the “E-Verify” program
- You will be eligible to apply for a 17 month extension of your F-1 OPT (may only apply for this within 3 months of the end date of your first 12 month period of OPT)
One Time 17 month extension of OPT

• May only apply for this within 3 months of the end date of your first 12 month period of OPT)

• “one time” meaning you can only get this 17 month extension once… if you go back to school for a higher degree, you will have 12 more months of OPT but not another STEM extension
H1B Cap Gap Extension

• If you are on OPT,
• and your employer applies for an H1B for you,
• And you get a receipt notice or an approval notice
• And your OPT ends prior to October 1st
• Your OPT will be AUTOMATICALLY EXTENDED until October 1st of that year
Reporting Requirements while you are on OPT

- You will be required to notify us of the following information while you are on OPT:
  - your residential address
  - your employer’s name and address
  - your start and end date of every job
If you get the 17 extra months of OPT, you will be required to provide additional information:

- job title and your email address
- supervisor’s name and contact info
- 6 month updates of everything
Limit on days you can be unemployed!

- Only allowed a total of 90 days of unemployment on 12 months of OPT

- Only allowed a total of 120 days of unemployment if you get the 17 month extension
What counts as Employment?

- Unpaid employment counts !!! (can be part time = 20 hours per week) e.g. research for your advisor!!!!

- “Self” employment counts
F1 OPT & TRAVEL

ONCE YOU HAVE APPLIED:

• Can travel out of U.S. at spring break and re-enter with usual F1 documents

• After graduation or close to graduation, you MUST have either the OPT card OR the receipt notice for your OPT application

• AND proof of employment in ADDITION to all the usual F1 travel documents
F1 OPT & TRAVEL

Documents required for travel while on Post-completion OPT:

• valid passport
• current unexpired F-1 visa stamp (Getting a new F-1 visa can be a challenge on OPT!)
• I-20 signed within the last 6 months
• EAD (OPT card) or receipt notice
• job offer letter or letter confirming current employment
F1 OPT extensions & TRAVEL

Traveling while on the STEM extension… wait until you receive your extended OPT card

Travel while on the OPT “cap gap” extension… very complex and need to discuss the specific situation with your employer and Cornell at that time…
F1 OPT & TRAVEL

DO NOT re-enter U.S. as a TOURIST (B1/B2 status) or any other visa status, or your OPT will be invalid!

• MUST ENTER AS F-1 STUDENT
J1 Work Authorization

• “Academic Training”
  – For practical training in your field
  – Either in summer vacation or after graduation

• Download or pick up application at ISSO

• Come to the ISSO to with application
J1 Academic Training

• ISSO issues you work authorization letter for “Academic Training”

• Total time available is 18 months. (It may not exceed the total time it took you to complete your full course of study.)

• Additional 18 months may be possible for postdoctoral research positions
Other Visa Categories

Come to the workshop

“Visas After Graduation”

February 11th in Hollis E. Cornell Auditorium
Goldwin Smith Hall

- E  Treaty trader/investors
- H  Temporary Worker
- J  Exchange Visitor
- L  Intra-company Transferees
- O  Persons of Extraordinary Ability
- TN NAFTA professionals (Mexico and Canada)
H-1B Temporary Worker Visa

• H1B questions?
• H1B Basics:
  – 6 years
  – Employer specific
  – Portable
  – Dual intent
• U.S. Permanent Residence
H-1B Application Procedures

- File Labor Condition Application (LCA) -- Employer must pay higher of prevailing or actual wage; no adverse work conditions for US workers

- File H-1B petition (Form I-129)

- Overall processing time frame:
  - 3-4 months normally
  - Premium processing possibility: 2 weeks
H-1B Advantages

- Duration:
  - 6 year maximum
  - 1 year stay outside U.S. refreshes 6 yrs
  - additional H extensions if green card started by end of 5th year

- Time to work toward green card
- No advertising or test of the U.S. labor market
- H-1B portability when change employers
H-1B Disadvantages

- Tied to one employer
- Not flexible like F-1 OPT
- Paperwork, cost and delay
- October 1st start date + cap race
- “Self-sponsorship” can be difficult
- Must work to maintain status
- Fees:
  - $825 – cap-exempt
  - $2,325 – cap-subject
  - $1,125 – expedite
  - $3,000 – legal fee
What is the H-1B “cap”? 

- 65,000 per fiscal year 
- Of 65,000, 6,800 carved out for Chile and Singapore 
- Separate 20,000 for graduates with U.S. master’s degree or higher 

**Race for H cap visas** 
- Quota year: October 1 to September 30 
- Apply Earliest: April 1 (6 months before) 
- Past years’ H-1B quota filled:  
  - June 11, 2012 (FY 2013) 
  - April 5, 2013 (FY 2014) 
  - If needed, USCIS conducts “lottery” to select cases to be considered for H-1B approval
H-1B Cap Exemptions

- Lower filing fees/apply any time
- College/university employees
- Related or affiliated nonprofit entities (i.e. university teaching hospitals)
- Nonprofit research organizations
- Government research organizations
- Prior cap H-1B holders
- J-1 shortage area waiverled doctors
TN Visa
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
For Canadians and Mexicans

Requires at least a baccalaureate (bachelor's) degree or appropriate credentials demonstrating status as a professional see list of professional occupations).

- Visa issued for a maximum of three years at a time depending on the job offer dates, and is renewable indefinitely

Canadian citizen applies at a port of entry with the following:

- evidence of Canadian citizenship
- documentation of professional qualifications, (diplomas, degrees, transcripts). These must show that the educational requirements for the above professional occupations have been met.
- letter or contract from hiring company that includes: a description of the professional-level activity in which the visitor will be engaged; a full description of the nature of the job duties that the visitor will be performing; the anticipated length of stay; and the salary
- $50 fee.
- the visitor must be otherwise admissible under U.S. immigration law.
International Students & Scholars Office
B-50 Caldwell Hall

Hours: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: 9:00-4:30;
Wed: 1:00-4:30

On the web: www.isso.cornell.edu

By email: isso@cornell.edu
What Are Your Questions?