

International Student Career

Guide

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While international students are known to bring diverse talents and skills to the workplace, they still face some challenges in gaining access to working in the United States. That's why we are here to support you in your journey from CPT to OPT and hopefully the attainment of your H1B-Visa. Since not everyone will be able to stay in the states after graduation, we provide some tools to navigate the experience.

Oftentimes it is easier to gain employment in the United States when you are more experienced. If at first you do not get an H1B Visa, do not be discouraged. You can apply at a later time when you can be more competitive. In the meantime you can consider working with American-based companies in your home country. This will enable you to make a great first impression, gain skills and experience.

Gaining an understanding of the United States workforce culture will help you adapt and succeed in your internship, job or volunteer opportunities. The job search is self-directed in the United States so it is important to stay organized.

Take advantage of the resources available at Pratt:

- Meet with a Career Strategist by scheduling an appointment on Handshake
- Connect with OIA regularly so you are up to date on current immigration policies
- Access GoinGlobal under the resources tab in Handshake to learn more about H1B employment opportunities
- Attend career workshops and networking events

Meeting Industry Professionals and Alumni

Remember the acronym S-H-E, which stands for Smile, Handshake and Eye Contact. All three are important parts of a formal introduction.

In the US it is considered good practice to 'put on a happy face' and engage in 'small talk.' Typically when asked "How are you?" it is most appropriate to respond with "Good, and you?" as it is an opener to a conversation and not an opportunity to actually share personal problems. Small talk topics include weather, travel, sports, entertainment and local art. Try to avoid controversial issues such as capital punishment, gun control or abortion. Instead, stick with social pleasantries. Watching US television can help you get more familiar with American culture.

Job Search Action Plan

It is best to talk to other students and alumni who have been through the process and learn from their varied experiences.

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GoinGlobal can be accessed in the Resources section in [Handshake](#). The platform provides and H1-B database created directly from the Department of Labor. There are also country and city career guides for the United States and globally.

Employment discrimination isn't just unfair. It also prevents institutions from becoming as successful as they could be. Hiring and supporting a diversity of employees benefits everyone. Remind employers that these are the skills you bring:

Creativity: Different identities lead to different perspectives, which can mean more creativity in brainstorming and problem-solving sessions.

Innovation: Work environments with more diversity are 1.7 times more likely to be innovation leaders in their fields.

Efficiency: A Harvard Business Review study showed that diverse teams are able to solve problems faster than cognitively similar people.

Revenues: A McKinsey & Company report showed that diverse work environments were more likely to outperform their rivals.

Engagement: A Deloitte analysis showed that employers with diverse, inclusive employees had higher engagement, and were better able to retain talent.

When do I disclose my immigration status?

There is no one answer to this question, so it is best to evaluate your specific situation. You want to get past the initial screening and also not wait until an offer has been made. Your immigration status does not belong on a résumé, but can be discussed in a cover letter or first round interview. Many employers are unclear about how to hire a foreign national so it is best to educate yourself so you can inform the employer.

Résumé Pointers for International Students

- Remove any photos or overly personal information (marital status, birth date or age, social security number)
- Target your resume to the specific roles you are applying for (remove irrelevant experience)
- Keep it to one page if you are entry level
- Each bullet should start with an action verb, highlight a skill and follow the PARS formula: Problem → Action → Result → Skills
- Keep references on a separate page

Cover Letter Pointers for International Students

- Target each letter to the specific employer
- Research employers and demonstrate your interest and fit with the company
- Use the job description to decide which skills to discuss and prove you have been successful in other contexts

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Interviewing Action Plan

- Research employers one step beyond the cover letter so you have a thorough understanding of the organization, why they exist, what they do and how they do it.
- Develop a thorough understanding of the position from the job description.
- Follow up with a thank you letter within 24 hours.

Networking Action Plan

Visit the [Pratt page on LinkedIn](#) to search for Alumni and see where they are working. Pratt has over 60,000 alumni and 50,000 are on LinkedIn! The importance of networking can not be stressed enough for international students. Otherwise, your résumé will be another paper in the pile. However, by connecting with industry professionals and alumni you can gain a wealth of information and some valuable leads to additional professionals and maybe even job and internship opportunities.

Sample script to reach out to alumni and industry professionals on LinkedIn/via email:

Dear _____,

I am currently a fashion student at Pratt Institute hoping to get an internship this summer. I noticed you are a Pratt alumnus with experience at some of my favorite brands. I would like to connect with you and learn more about your career path.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

Resources

[US Department of Labor](#)

[US Citizen & Immigration Services](#)

[Cultural Vistas](#)

[InternationalStudent.com](#)

[MyVisaJobs](#)

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