



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## The International Students' Road to Employment in the US

### ***Traits which give international students a unique advantage:***

As a result of living in different countries, most likely you offer a willingness to learn, adaptability, ingenuity, problem solving skills, language skills and cultural knowledge. Highlight on your resume ways you've used these strengths. List all languages, including English, in which you are fluent or proficient. Become confident in talking about how you've utilized these skills developed through your experiences, academics and activities. Career Services can help you articulate your strengths in your application materials (resume, cv, cover letter) and interviews. Schedule a meeting and mock interview.

### ***Advice from Swarthmore international alums who are employed in the U.S.:***

**Get a campus job and do it well.** Suggestions from former international students included jobs with public interaction and public speaking, including peer advising roles. Also, the opportunity to know your supervisors well will be an advantage when asking for references and when learning of opportunities.

**Get some work experience off campus: Optional Practical Training (OPT)** will be invaluable in making contacts within your desired field. Jennifer Marks-Gold, Assistant Dean and Director of International Student Programs, will process your OPT paperwork and she encourages you to begin this process far in advance of your planned start date. Check with her for current regulations: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/international-student-advising/campus-employment>

**OPT** provides F-1 visa holders with up to 12 months of practical (typically paid) work experience in the U.S. Most students tend to save OPT for post-graduate employment, but students who apply for paid internships must apply for OPT work authorization as well and the duration of this OPT is subtracted from the 12 months for which you are eligible. STEM Optional Practical Training Extension – additional training available to F-1 students with degrees in STEM fields; USCIS application required and must be employed by an E-Verified organization.

An internship well done gives you the opportunity to prove your ability to excel in a post-graduation position. Furthermore, former international students have found the opportunity to hone their skills in a professional environment very useful.

**Be strategic about using your OPT.** Consider unpaid internships as long as it meets the DOL rules, or summer research your freshman and sophomore summers, saving your OPT for that critically important internship the summer after your junior year, which in many cases can lead to a job offer. If you use too much of your OPT prior to graduation you won't have enough months of eligibility to last until the April following your start date, when H1B visas applications are submitted.

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** is another way for you to work as an F-1 student off-campus. CPT is defined as experience that is directly related to and integral to your degree here at Swarthmore. CPT is only available to Sophomores and Juniors and requires collaboration between the International Student Center and your advisor or the head of your department. Before any work can begin you must have specific authorization from Swarthmore's International Student Center.

**Keep your options open.** If you find it difficult to secure employment in the US, you might consider working in another country, working at a non-US company which has offices in the US, working in a career field with more openings, going on to graduate school, or volunteering in the US if possible.

### ***A word about employers sponsoring H1B visas:***

Myvisajobs.com lists the 1000 employers that have applied for the most H1B visas over the last decade. The list is searchable by city, region, industry and job title. It is by no means an exhaustive list, just a list of the employers applying for the largest numbers of visas. Be willing to "dig" for employers not on this list. Look at similar sites like GoInGlobal. Network with professionals in the field

you'd like to enter, with Swarthmore alums who were international students and with family and friends. Read news articles about your desired industry so you're aware of organizations known for hiring international students.

If an employer has reservations about hiring an international student, the following may be some of their concerns. It costs an employer several thousand dollars to sponsor an employee's H1B visa and the number of visas is limited -- in recent years the H1B visa cap was reached in just a few days. Employers may be concerned that the grantee will leave for another job after getting the sponsorship. The employer may be concerned about incurring US Citizen and Immigration Services fines for improper hiring. They may simply not know how to complete the process. **Know the H1B visa application process** and be willing to explain it to an employer.

Consequently, many employers will state that they do not sponsor international students for employment. While you should take this information into account, you should also do some research. Perhaps the employer will sponsor you if you are the "perfect" candidate for the job. Perhaps the employer is not educated about the process and assumes it's more difficult than it really is. If you are able to explain the process, you may be able to secure sponsorship.

### ***What is eVerify?***

You can find a list of employers who use the eVerify service on the US Citizenship and Immigration Services website. "E-Verify is an Internet-based system that allows companies to verify the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States. E-Verify is closely linked to Form I-9 and exists to strengthen the Form I-9 employment eligibility verification process that all employers, by law, must follow. Though all employers must verify their employees' employment eligibility with Form I 9, participation in E-Verify is usually voluntary."

### ***Key Resources in the Career Services Office:***

- If you are still deciding on a career, we offer interest, skill and personality assessments to help inform your decision.
- Our website lists some employers which have hired Swarthmore International Students. Employers' situations may change, but it's a helpful place to start.: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/career-services/job-search-resources-searchable-identity>
- **Interstride:** features the top US employers of international grads, enabling students to easily search for employers who sponsor graduates for their H-1B visas as well as CPT and OPT. Interstride also hosts webinars and curates helpful content for international students seeking employment in the US and their home countries. Alumni can also access Interstride as a resource in their job search and alumni and students can share advice and network with each other through the platform. (See Career Services website to access.)
- Resumes differ between countries – we can ensure your resume is written well for US employers.
- Mock Interviews will help you become accustomed to talking about your skills and promoting yourself to employers.
- Attend Career Services events including Dapper Dining to learn professional etiquette in the US, the Alumni-Student Networking Dinner to connect with 40+ Swarthmore alums, and the International Alumni-Student Gathering to connect with alums who were international students.
- When using job databases in your job search, be sure to read through the qualification requirements. Employers may indicate their work authorization requirements. If you meet those requirements, you can apply to the open positions of interest to you.

### ***DACA/Undocumented Students:***

Career Services is committed to providing career counseling services and resources to Swarthmore's DACA/undocumented student population.

#### **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Policy**

Updated information on the DACA policy can be found at: USCIS.gov. Some specific parts of the website which may be helpful are: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

Individuals who came to the United States before they were 16 years of age and who meet certain other conditions will be considered for relief from removal from the country or from being placed into removal proceedings. Those who can prove through verifiable documentation that they meet the criteria will be eligible to receive deferred action on a discretionary, case-by-case basis, for a period of two years, subject to renewal, and **will be eligible to apply for work authorization**. For more information about DACA, please contact Jennifer Marks-Gold in the International Student Center.