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Introduction

This guide has been designed to be used throughout your job search, as you craft your individual career action plan. It is strongly recommended that you stay connected to Graduate Career Services after reading this guide, and throughout your time at USC Marshall.

We’re here to partner with you. The more prepared you are, the greater your chances of success in searching for employment in the United States. There are many resources available to you as an international student at USC, and it is ultimately up to you to take advantage of all the research and resource tools. The job search process is very self-directed in the United States and you are encouraged to stay on track.

We look forward to working with you.

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The American Business Culture

The USC Marshall School of Business is proud to have students represented from more than 20 countries. This diverse population enriches our student body with its global experiences. As an international student, your unique experiences, skills, and strengths will contribute to meaningful classroom discussions as well as the global workplace. For example, many of you speak more than one language, have gained cultural competency through working with professionals from around the world, and have a strong work ethic. Your background should be effectively leveraged to differentiate you from others.

Though all of you have worked prior to beginning your graduate program, it is important to recognize that American culture may be different from your own, especially with regard to communication style and approaches to business. The following is a list of cultural norms and approaches to business that are worth mentioning so that you do not feel offended and avoid offending others. Of course, these are generalizations that describe most Americans, but not all.

Cultural Norms

**Assertive yet Sensitive:** In the United States being self-reliant and assertive is respected and appreciated. Hiring managers like individuals who can speak directly but are polite and respectful rather than aggressive or abrasive. American culture places a high value on the individual, but this does not imply that one should constantly boast about oneself or neglect someone else’s feelings or contributions. For example, when you explain your strong teamwork experiences during a job interview, it is appropriate to talk about how “you” made an impact on a situation instead of only focusing on how your “team” achieved success.

**Tolerance and Respect for Employees/Colleagues:** One of the best aspects of working in the United States is that you have an opportunity to work with and learn from people from all different backgrounds. In addition to respecting someone’s race or ethnic background, please also respect gender differences, religious beliefs, and/or someone’s sexual orientation regardless of your own personal belief system. Don’t be rude to anyone, especially publicly insulting someone or making someone feel uncomfortable.

It is important to avoid making assumptions about others based on what you think you know about an individual’s race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, etc. In many cases, it is inappropriate to discuss anything related to race, ethnicity, religion, or politics, or to ask someone about their sexual orientation, in a professional environment, including non-work hours with a colleague, supervisor, or client. In most cases, you will be terminated from your job when you discuss inappropriate topics.

**The Use of Idioms and Metaphors:** 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.” At USC, in particular, students, alumni, and the general public pay close attention to USC’s athletic teams, particularly football and basketball. When you attend networking events, make time to gain a general understanding of
what is happening with USC’s football and basketball teams so that you are prepared for “small talk” (See “Small Talk and Getting Down to Business” for more information.).

**Sensitivity to Speaking Native Language in the Classroom or Workplace:** If your classmates or colleagues do not speak your native language, either avoid speaking your native language or offer to translate to avoid offending someone or excluding others.

**The Importance of Personal Space:** While you may see Americans frequently hugging a classmate in the hallway (do not hug a professional contact, such as a recruiter or hiring manager, at a networking event), Americans typically want some space when they are speaking to someone. Pay attention to where you are standing and try to stand far enough where you can extend at least one arm and not touch the other person.

**Professional Time vs. Personal Time:** You may hear that traditional work hours are between the hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or the so-called, “nine to five job.” However, when you are interacting with your classmates, alumni, and other professionals, at any time outside of the “nine to five job,” always consider operating with a professional mindset.

**Don’t Be Late:** Be punctual for your group project meetings and, of course, to your job interview and job. This shows respect for others’ time.

**Proper Time for Cell Phone:** Put away your cell phone and laptop during meetings to be attentive to those around you. Remember, even though many of your classmates may become close friends, they may also become colleagues or professional contacts who will help you find a job. Making a good impression is critical.

**Know How to Engage:** If you successfully secure a summer internship, remember that the internship serves as an extended interview for the employer to get to know you and your ability to perform well. Please continue to operate in a professional manner at all times and be flexible and willing to take on ANY assignments to support your supervisor and/or team. Avoid using your cell phone during meetings or client engagements and avoid asking colleagues, supervisors, or clients any questions related to sensitive topics such as politics, religion, sexual orientation, race, etc. Even if you attend an event during “happy hour” or any time outside of the normal office hours, you it is important to behave in a professional manner, especially during your internship.

**Hierarchical vs. Egalitarian Organizational Culture:** Depending on the country you come from or worked in, you may view the American business culture to be either very hierarchical, where every individual is in a higher or lower position than another individual, or very egalitarian, where every individual treats their colleagues as an equal regardless of the rank of their position.

In the United States, individuals are respectful of power (authority), but it is common for individuals in higher rank positions to act friendly or engage in conversations with their subordinates about non-business related topics, such as weekend plans or family members. Therefore, even if your supervisor or colleague speaks with you in a friendly or casual manner, remember that you need to continue to respect their role in the organization and continue to act professionally with them. For example, if your supervisor jokes with you, it
does not give you the license to forget to consult with your supervisor about making important business decisions.

**Approach to Business**

**Communication:** Verbal and written communication should be clear. It is acceptable to ask questions, clarify, discuss, and respectfully disagree with colleagues. Similarly, many Americans consider friendly competition among colleagues part of a healthy workplace. For example, while it is generally rude to interrupt someone who is speaking, a classmate may interrupt you during a group discussion simply because he or she is eager to share his or her opinion on a particularly topic.

**Don’t Be Shy:** Feel free to ask a classmate to explain what an idiom or metaphor means. Americans appreciate you taking the time to learn and they are usually happy to explain what they know. You can also feel comfortable sharing your country’s business culture with your classmates so that they understand your background and experiences.

**Non-Verbal Communication:** Non-verbal communication (body language) is very important in the American business culture. Aim to make direct eye contact, give firm handshakes, be respectful, smile, and be positive during professional engagements.

**Respect for Time:** Americans value time and aim to be punctual. Be sure to arrive early for appointments and meetings. Do not underestimate the importance of being punctual with your classmates for group project meetings. Remember, your classmates are part of your professional network in the United States and you want to make a favorable impression so that they will feel inclined to refer you to professionals they may know.

**Results-Oriented:** The ability to make good decisions quickly is considered a core strength. You may often feel as if everyone is rushing to speak, share an opinion, or make a decision.

**Small Talk and Then Getting Down to Business:** It is common for Americans to begin almost any conversation with some small talk/chitchat (i.e., talking about the weather, asking about how you enjoyed your weekend, etc.). However, Americans also quickly move into talking about the task at hand and getting to the point. “Small talk” refers to the first five to ten minutes of a conversation where you are finding common interests to help each person feel comfortable talking and opening up to other topics of conversation.

**Saying “No” Isn’t Always Bad:** It is acceptable to politely say, “no,” when you disagree. Americans value someone who thinks independently and has a different opinion.

**Innovation and 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 the status quo. Therefore, try to share your ideas, but make sure you support your ideas with facts and research. Americans care a lot about accuracy.
Planning and Preparing for the Job Search

We strongly encourage you to schedule appointments with your Career Advisor in Graduate Career Services to discuss your job search strategy. Some basic tips for planning and preparing your job search in the United States follow. We expect and respect that some of you will be targeting jobs outside of the United States; therefore, it is important for you to know that these basic tips may not apply to your job search strategy abroad.

Your Target Industry, Job Function(s), and Organizations/Companies

Begin and continue to build your “brand” by developing a strong LinkedIn profile, expanding your professional network, etc. However, all graduate students are encouraged to develop a career plan that will help you narrow down the types of jobs, industries and organizations that you want to target for internships and full-time job opportunities. Developing a career plan is particularly important for international students because it will help you stay focused and guide you to target job positions and organizations that will value your unique skills, experiences and strengths.

While it may be tempting to only target organizations who previously have hired international graduate students or have a reputation for hiring more international graduate students than others, you should focus on targeting jobs that will leverage your skills, motivation, and interests. The truth is, most companies in the United States, with the exception of firms that require a security clearance and/or government defense contractors, have the ability to hire foreign nationals/non U.S. work-authorized candidates. However, there are some reasons why some organizations hesitate to hire foreign nationals/non-U.S. work-authorized candidates (See Understanding The Employers’ Perspective section.).

Business Communication

In addition to knowing yourself and the types of jobs, industries, and organizations/companies that you want to target for internships and full-time job opportunities, possessing strong “soft skills”—the ability to communicate and “sell” your unique attributes to an employer or a professional contact—is equally as important as possessing strong “hard”/academic skills.

You must demonstrate self-confidence, maturity, assertiveness, ability to make a decision while being mindful of others’ viewpoints, enthusiasm, intelligence, etc. This can be extremely challenging if English is not your native language!

The Marshall Graduate Career Services Office will partner with you during your job search process, but most of the hard work and ability to convince an employer to hire you will depend on YOU.

YOU are the only person who can get YOU a job in the United States or anywhere else in the world.
Self-Introduction

As you have experienced through your professional engagements, it is essential to be able to confidently introduce yourself in small or large group settings. Here are some things to consider as you prepare to introduce yourself to your Graduate classmates, people at networking events, prospective employers, etc.

1. Identify stories/examples that illustrate your positive personal and professional qualities.

2. Use descriptive phrases to clearly describe what you mean. For example, instead of saying “I had courage,” say, “I shared my ideas with my manager despite my colleague’s disagreement.”

3. As you think about the types of stories you will share with someone you do not know, consider using examples that highlight universal professional skills, such as your ability to be an influential leader, your ability to collaborate with cross-functional teams, your ability to be creative or multitask. For job interviews, you should highlight skills that are relevant to the particular job that you are trying to obtain. For example, some marketing roles may appreciate someone who is creative or able to work well with cross-functional teams and some marketing roles may appreciate someone who is quantitatively and qualitatively analytical.

Elevator-Pitch

An “elevator pitch” refers to how you would describe yourself during an elevator ride with someone you want to impress. Imagine yourself stepping into an elevator with the CEO of the company you are working for: how will you explain who you are, what type of work you do, what you want to do in the future, and what makes you great...in about 30 seconds.

An elevator pitch is a very condensed and deliberate version of your self-introduction (about a duration of 30 seconds to one minute). Your elevator pitch should address the following:

1. Who am I? What job function and industry have I worked in?
2. What job function am I trying to obtain? If you are speaking with someone who may potentially find a job for you, you want to be as specific as possible about the next job you want to obtain and express enthusiasm for the industry you want to work in by being knowledge about what is changing in that particular industry (i.e., healthcare industry, technology industry, etc.).
3. What can I offer to this person or company?

Written Communication via E-mail, Text Messages and Social Media

Whether you are communicating with a classmate, hiring manager, recruiter, professor, or colleague, you will be judged on your ability to communicate through writing. Here are some tips for writing effectively:

E-mail:
1. Always include an appropriate subject line; make it informative and compelling.
2. Avoid writing in all CAPS because it appears as if you are yelling at someone.
3. Check spelling and grammar. Make sure that there are no mistakes.
4. Spell the recipient’s name, job title, and company name correctly. Include a formal salutation (Dear Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.). If you are uncertain whether or not a woman is married, use “Ms.” instead of “Mrs.”
5. Avoid using abbreviations or acronyms that others may not know.
6. Send a “thank you” e-mail to someone within 24 hours of your first meeting/event or interview. Do not send a text message to thank someone for their time and consideration.

Text Messages:

1. Avoid using text messages as a form of professional communication. However, you will likely exchange text messages with your classmates who are now a part of your professional network in the United States and you should aim to make a favorable impression. In all circumstances, make sure you are using correct grammar and spelling.
2. Avoid sending a text message with inappropriate or offensive information.
3. Do not send a text message to a recruiter or hiring manager unless you are specifically asked to do so. Avoid communicating via text messages as much as possible.

Social Media

1. If you do not already have a LinkedIn profile, please create one. This is the best way for you to connect with USC alumni and other professionals. Your LinkedIn profile needs to professionally explain your past experiences and include a professional-looking photograph...not a cartoon or a question mark. Please research others’ LinkedIn profiles to see what you like or dislike. Model the profile of someone who has a job you may want in the future.
2. Make sure you remove all inappropriate pictures or texts circulating within social media.

Informational Interviews

In the United States, it is common to schedule an interview with alumni or other professionals you may know to learn more about a particular job function, industry, company, etc. While most people do NOT formally ask someone to schedule an “informational interview” (some people will not know what that is), it is usually acceptable to ask someone if he or she is willing to schedule some time to speak with you regarding his or her experiences working at a specific company or in a specific position.

1. Before you contact a person to talk, always research the person, company, job function, and industry. Recognize that everyone is busy; the person may even reply to you with a phone call and say that they are willing to speak with you immediately. Thus, do not contact someone until you are ready to speak to that person.
2. Informational interviews can last 15 minutes or longer. In general, try to keep the interview brief and
3. The purpose of facilitating an informational interview is for you to gain more knowledge about a particular company, job function, and industry to help you determine whether you want to continue to pursue this career. However, a subtle purpose of facilitating an informational interview is that the person will remember you for future positions within the company or even refer you to speak with other professionals or colleagues to help you expand your knowledge and professional network. Thus, it is very important to be professional and make a great impression during an informational interview. Even if an alumnus is very casual with you, you still want to act professionally and show that you are intelligent, valuable and prepared, and that you value his or her willingness to speak with you.

4. Always remember to send someone a “thank you” email within 24 hours of completing an informational interview (or any other type of interview) to express your gratitude and reiterate important points that were discussed to show that you were a careful listener.

5. Check Appendix I for examples of appropriate informational interview questions:

Networking

You will hear a lot of students and career advisors talk about the importance of “networking” during the job search process. Networking refers to individuals sharing information and developing relationships with one another. Given your professional experience, it should not be surprising to know that many people find jobs through someone they know and, therefore, it is extremely important for international students to network with a lot of people in the United States if the goal is to find a job in the United States.

1. Making eye contact, smiling, and giving a firm handshake when you meet someone is very important in the United States. These gestures demonstrate that you are actively paying attention to someone and that you are confident.

2. “Small talk” is a very important component of networking and it is an art. Small talk refers to the first five to ten minutes of conversation that you have with someone you met and the two of you are gradually and organically trying to establish some common ground/common interests. For example, you may begin small talk by asking someone what he or she likes to do for fun or, if you meet an alumnus or alumna at a networking event at school, ask him/her when he or she graduated from USC and what he/she enjoyed most about going to school at USC? The main goal for small talk is to ask “open-ended” questions instead of questions that will only result in one-word answers.

3. Never check your cell phone during a networking event unless it is an absolute emergency. If possible step into the restroom or another private area to check your phone or make a private phone call. Even if you see that other people are using their cell phones, be aware that those people will be perceived as someone who is not interested in meeting people and not happy to attend the networking event.

4. If there is food or alcohol provided at a networking event, pay attention to your consumption. Eat neatly, drink lightly, and continue to pay attention to your surroundings. The purpose of attending a networking event is to meet people and exchange ideas and resources rather than consuming food and alcohol.
5. When possible, research about the people and organizations that will be attending a particular networking event so that you may strategize on how and who you want to connect with during the event. However, networking should be GENUINE! This means that you should not aim to speak to someone simply because of his or her job title or position. You want to develop a genuine interest for meeting people and believe that almost anyone can be a valuable resource for you. For example, you can meet an administrative assistant who may not have a prestigious job title, but is kind and willing to connect you with the executives whom he or she represents.

6. Avoid talking about sensitive topics that may make a person feel uncomfortable. If you are uncertain which topics are appropriate or inappropriate, ask your Career Advisor for suggestions.

Behavioral Interview Questions

In addition to preparing for job function-specific and industry-specific interview questions, dedicate a lot of time preparing to answer common behavioral interview questions. Behavioral interview questions are questions that ask you to recount a past experience so that the interviewer can assess how you may perform in the future. When you share your stories/examples, rely on a framework to help you remember key points. For example, for each of your stories, make sure you explain the following:

C = Challenge: Explain the challenge you encountered within a particular professional situation. Remember to explain WHO was involved, WHAT happened, WHEN the situation occurred, WHERE the situation occurred and WHY the situation occurred (the reason).

A = Actions: Explain how you managed that particularly challenge. It is good to show how you collaborated with others to achieve a goal, but explain how YOU, not others, achieved something.

R = Results: When you share a story or an example of how you made a difference, also remember to explain the positive outcome that was achieved because of YOUR actions.

Your answers should demonstrate your maturity, your ability to think critically, your sensitivity towards others, and your ability to lead. Your answer should be thorough, but also address the important points. Check Appendix II for a list of common behavioral interview questions, and of course, be prepared to answer other questions as well.

Be aware that it is illegal for employers in the United States in ask the following questions:

a. What is your visa type, nationality, or place of birth?
b. What country are you from?
c. What is your native language? What language do you normally speak?

However, employers may legally ask the following questions:

a. Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?
b. Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for an employment visa?
c. Which languages do you read, speak, and write?
Work Authorizations and Work Visas for Internships and Full-Time Jobs

Working in the United States

If you plan to work in the United States, it is your responsibility to understand the laws governing employment of foreign workers. Educate yourself on the steps and costs of gaining work authorization and remain flexible with accepting various job opportunities. The global marketplace is extremely competitive and securing a full-time job in the United States is NOT guaranteed for students who hold a student visa.

Discussing Your Visa Status

While there is no specific rule or process for discussing your visa status with an employer, you should approach this topic with an understanding of how your employer values you as a candidate and the challenges your employer will encounter in trying to hire you.

1. When meeting with a recruiter or a hiring manager, NEVER immediately ask whether the company hires and/or sponsors international students. Companies want candidates who are genuinely interested in the company and the position.
2. Avoid disclosing your visa status on your résumé unless you want to highlight that you have an H-1B visa or permanent residency instead of a student visa.
3. Your main goal should be to get past the initial screening process and complete the initial interview so that you have an opportunity to demonstrate your relevant skills, experience and how you may be valuable to a company.
4. Most international students will eventually require an employer-sponsored visa called, H-1B visa, to continue to work in the United States. Some employers are unfamiliar with the process of sponsoring a foreign employee, but others are familiar with the process and are worried about hiring someone who may not be able to receive an H-1B visa. Be knowledgeable about the process of obtaining work authorization in the United States so that you will be prepared to help an employer understand how they can hire you or dispel any misunderstandings that employers have about hiring a foreign national.
F-1 Visa Students – Paid Internships

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of work authorization that allows F-1 international students to participate in paid off-campus academic internships during their degree program. The purpose of CPT is academic, not just for employment purposes, and the internship must be considered an integral part of a student’s degree program.

Note for Marshall Graduate International Students: The USC Marshall graduate programs DO NOT require the completion of an internship, but USC Marshall offers the option of enrolling in an internship course, when an international student receives a paid off-campus internship offer. When you are ready to pursue a paid internship during your degree program, you will need to complete the CPT application (ois.usc.edu) and obtain a Social Security Number (SSN), and (or) a tax identification number that all employers will require you to provide when you are hired. Please contact your academic advisor for more information.

Internships are a great way to learn about a particular job function, industry, and company, but it is also a great way for the employer to get to know you and determine whether you deserve to receive a full-time job offer amongst other competitive candidates. During the internship, aim to make a good impression by working extra hard, offering to take on additional responsibilities without overwhelming yourself, and making yourself extremely valuable.

You should expect that all internships are different. Some internships are very structured, where the employer offers housing accommodations, training, mentorship, performance feedback, etc. However, others may be unstructured and your manager may expect you to create your own internship projects. Make sure you speak with your career advisor about what you should expect during an internship.

To learn more about CPT, please visit the OIS website on CPT.

F-1 Visa Students – Paid Full-Time Jobs

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of work authorization for F-1 students who have completed a bachelor’s or graduate degree the United States. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for employment experience in a student’s field of study after graduation. OPT is approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

To learn more about OPT, visit the OIS website on OPT.

*Note: Typically, the Office of International Services (OIS) can begin accepting OPT applications 90 days before your program end date. Sign up to receive OIS’ newsletter and also check their website in December and January to learn the exact date that OIS will be accepting OPT application.

*Note: You will be able to set your own start date on the OPT application. While some students prefer to set a later start date so that they may have more time to find a job after graduation and then use OPT, this may prevent you from accepting a job offer immediately after graduation because you can only begin your full-time employment after the start date indicated on your
Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) and after you receive a Social Security Number (SSN). For example, if you indicate July 1 as your OPT start date and a company wants to hire you to begin employment on May 30, you will not be able to begin employment because your EAD card will indicate your OPT start date as July 1.

**STEM OPT Extension** – as five of the Marshall graduate programs (FT-MBA, MSF, MSMKT, MSBA, MSGSCM) have received STEM designations / has a STEM designated track or specialization, graduates of these programs and on their post-completion OPT may be eligible for a 24-month extension of their work authorization as an advanced degree (master’s) holder, as designated by USCIS. The STEM OPT Extension allows graduates the opportunity to gain an additional 24 months of work experience, resulting in up to 36 months of total work eligibility in the United States following graduation from USC.

To learn more about STEM OPT Extension, please talk to your MS academic advisor or MBA Program Office to understand the academic requirements related to STEM. You can also visit the OIS website on STEM OPT Extension.

**Tax Exemption**

Some countries are eligible for varying amounts of income exemption from taxation under tax treaties between their home government and the United States. IRS Publication 901 lists current U.S. tax treaties. If a student or scholar needs to set up a tax treaty withholding exemption with an employer other than USC, they would use IRS form 8233. Please note that tax treaties only pertain to federal and not state or local taxes.

To learn more about tax exemption, visit the OIS website on Tax Exemptions.

**Continuing Employment After OPT Expires**

If you currently hold an F-1 visa, you will need to obtain an employment visa if you plan to stay in the United States after your practical training permit expires. We recommend you speak with an immigration attorney to explore all visa options that are suitable for your particular situation.

**H-1B Specialty Worker Visa**

An H-1B visa is one of the most popular visas you will hear about during your graduate program. This 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, which involves a commitment of the employer’s time and money. The employer applies through the U.S. Department of Labor and USCIS. Employers may wish to seek expert advice to complete the process.
Every fiscal year, the U.S. government allows 65,000 new foreign nationals from around the world to gain H-1B status in the United States. 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.

Other Visa Options for Employment

- 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 never has been exhausted. Australians who qualify for H-1B status also qualify for E-3 status, and this quota also never has 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 United States.

- O visas apply to foreign nationals with extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, athletics, or the motion picture or television industry and 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 United States.

- For more information regarding nonimmigrant and immigrant visa options, please contact OIS to speak with an immigration advisor or contact the Graduate Career Center to be connected with an immigration attorney. You can also visit The U.S. State Governance Travel Page or Foreign Embassies in Washington, D.C. for more information.

Here are some job search sites that may be useful to you, aside from resources you will receive from the USC Marshall School of Business Graduate Career Services Office:

- **Top 100 H-1B Visa Sponsoring Companies 2020**
- **MyVisaJobs**
- **MBA-Exchange** (check MCSO > Online Resources > GCS Document Library > International Student Resources section for “How to Use MBA Exchange”)
Understanding the Employers’ Perspective

When employers decide to hire new employees, they are searching for the best talent, people who can “fit in” with the company's culture, people who can generate results, and people who will take charge while also being a team player. Therefore, as you create your own brand and think about your value proposition to the company.

You will need to understand your strengths and weaknesses and know how to explain how you will add value to an organization in a way that no other candidate will be able to do. Remember, an employer is NOT hiring you to help you grow. The employer is hiring you to help the company/organization grow.

You may meet many companies/organizations in the United States who will say that they do not hire non-U.S. work authorized candidates (usually, F-1 visa students) and so it is important for you to understand these companies/organization apprehension to hire non-U.S. work authorized candidates so that you can be prepared to address their concerns during informational interviews and networking events.

The following information, retrieved from GMAC’s Corporate Recruiters Survey in 2018, will provide you with a better understanding of employers’ concerns:

“Last year, 55% of US companies planned to hire international business school grads. This year, that figure is only 47%. Over one-third of US firms said that the drop is because they can find the talent domestically instead. 42% said it’s because of issues surrounding legal paperwork. And 25% said it’s because they are uncertain about future policy or law changes.

These figures may be discouraging, but they can also be helpful in understanding why some U.S. employers are unwilling or unsure about whether to hire foreign candidates who require visa sponsorship. Anticipating employers’ objections is necessary to address their misgivings.

In addition to their concerns about the visa sponsorship process itself, recruiters may harbor a number of other reservations about hiring non-U.S. citizens. Below are some of the most common concerns among employers and our tips for dealing with them.
Employers may worry that the visa sponsorship process will take too much time or money. If you’ve done your homework, you’ll be able to let the employer know exactly how much effort and money will be required to complete the visa sponsorship process, eliminating some of the fear of the unknown associated with hiring you. Your willingness to research, understand, and explain your visa options should also reassure potential employers that you’re prepared to make the process as easy as possible. It may also convince them that you’re likely to apply the same tenacity to resolving problems at work.

Employers may anticipate that international employees will bring unforeseen problems to the workplace. This can be especially true of companies that have never hired a non-U.S. citizen or sponsored an employee’s visa before. Some employers may have little experience with non-U.S. workers. They may prefer not to work with you because they’re unfamiliar with your culture. Will you have beliefs that are too different from their own? Will you have customs that make them uncomfortable? Your job is to reassure the employer that you understand and accept the U.S. way of doing business, and that you will not disrupt the workplace because of your background in any way.

Employers may be concerned that you won’t be committed to the job. Because work-visa applicants must certify that they intend to return to their home country at the end of their visa, some employers believe that such employees are less committed to their job than others. You need to convince the employer otherwise. Talking about your desire to establish roots in the community and showing interest in the company’s long-term plans will go a long way toward demonstrating your commitment. “The most important thing for an international graduate student to show us is long-term interest in working in the U.S.,” says a recruiter from a top investment banking firm. “We want to know they’re not just taking the job for a year or two to get U.S. work experience.”

Employers may worry that foreign employees won’t be able to communicate effectively with coworkers or clients. The best way to quell this fear is to be fluent in both written and spoken English. All your job search communications must be as strong as possible. Make sure letters and emails are well written. While you’re still in school, practice interviewing and participate in extracurricular and social activities. You want to feel at ease with English. You might also mention to potential employers your plans to continue your English studies, especially if your language skills aren’t quite what you want them to be. Employers may believe that it’s easier to hire a U.S. citizen. The best way to counteract this notion is to convince employers why they must hire you rather than anyone else, U.S. citizen or otherwise. Knowing what an employer will have to do to sponsor your visa will help you convince recruiters their efforts will be worthwhile.

Some employers may harbor animosity toward non-U.S. citizens in U.S. jobs. At some point during your job search, you may encounter an employer that believes non-U.S. citizens should not be able to take jobs away from U.S. citizens. Your best response is to emphasize your unique qualifications for the target position. Still, if you encounter this sentiment in a potential employer, you may want to consider whether you want to work there.

Employers may fear that foreign candidates do not have the interpersonal skills to succeed in a U.S. work environment.
Because the U.S. corporate culture differs from that of many other countries, employers may worry that international employees lack the necessary assertiveness or directness. You can address these concerns by noting in your interviews that you are conversant with U.S. ways of conducting business.

You might cite examples of when you have been assertive or direct in a businesslike setting. Because the U.S. corporate culture differs from that of many other countries, employers may worry that international employees lack assertiveness or directness. Since many students are transitioning from another career, such as engineering or science, it is important to recognize the differences between job cultures, too. For example, the cultures of investment banking firms and high-tech companies differ. Get comfortable not only with U.S. culture, but also with the subculture of specific fields.

Many U.S.-based companies recognize the benefits of hiring workers from other countries. Keep the following points in mind during your application and interview process, and remember, accentuate the positive!

- International candidates may speak more than one language. A recruiter at a top investment banking firm says Spanish-speaking employees are in growing demand because the firm’s U.S. offices deal with so many Latin American businesses. Of course, whether an employer needs your language skills will depend on where and with whom it does business.
- International candidates may have knowledge of markets, business practices, and cultures outside the United States. This is especially attractive to companies that do business or have operations in the graduate students’ home region.
- International Students may bring valuable new perspectives to the way companies do business. They’ve already learned how to live in a culture other than their own, and have brought that knowledge to the workplace.
- Because it can be a major challenge for work-visa employees to change jobs, international employees are less likely to quit unexpectedly.
- International Students’ ability to study and work in the United States demonstrates tremendous adaptability, and an ability to follow through.
- An international student who has skills or experience the employer desires may be a better fit for the position than U.S. candidates.
- International employees make it easier for companies to attract and retain a diverse workforce.
Building Your Career Success On A Global Scale

USC and Marshall have set a truly global platform for international students to succeed. With such resources from the school, you want to “think big” and “eye far” when you launch a successful career or target your next job opportunities. Besides, with the education from a business school, you’d like to be equipped with a mindset of “in what market can you better demonstrate your values and leverage your strengths and advantages”. During your job search, ask yourself:

- What language do I speak or can my language skills support my job search?
- What culture do I understand better than my peers?
- What market do I have a profound insight about?
- What part of the global economy exhibits more and better opportunities for me?
- In which market do I enjoy a competitive advantage - in terms of growth opportunities, networks and resources, as well as benefits?

In order for you to launch a successful career, it is highly recommended that you:

1. Keep close connection with your Career Strategists, so they remain informed about your career interest and can recommend appropriate job opportunities for you;
2. Stay connected with your professional network in your home country, even though you have physically moved and are studying in the U.S.
3. Ask your home country connections, including your previous colleagues, supervisors, friends, professors, advisors, and also family members, to recommend their U.S. connections, or ask your U.S. professional connections to refer their overseas connections to you. The global network that you enjoy can be something very powerful to enhance your job search.
4. Some companies, especially Fortune 500 companies, offer global rotation programs for students; as an international student looking for opportunities outside the U.S., pay special attention to these types of programs.
5. If you are targeting a mid to senior level position, it is likely that a U.S. employer will place you in one of their overseas offices for a minimum of 1 year and then bring you back to the U.S.. Keep an open mind to these types of opportunities as it not only gives you a global exposure, but also qualifies you for the managerial type of visa (i.e., L-1). Applying for an L-1 visa will exempt you from the H-1B visa lottery, therefore, increasing the probability of working for a U.S. employer.

USC Marshall has a numerous international students who secure career opportunities either in their home country or in other parts of the world each year. We all cherish for their success and share their excitement of working at a different location. Should you also wish to explore a career outside of the United States of America, Graduate Career Services can also support you with your endeavor. We encourage you to look through and pay attention to the following resources:

- LinkedIn – use the “Alumni Search” function to look for alumni outside of the U.S.
• **USC Alumni Association** – explore USC alumni chapters around the globe, join SSN groups and subscribe to newsletters to stay connected with alumni

• **The Network** – explore Marshall alumni chapters around the globe, join social network groups and subscribe to newsletters to stay connected with alumni

• **MBA-Exchange** – access through MCSO for Fortune 500 companies global job opportunities

• **GoinGlobal** – access through ConnectSC for visa guides, global internships and full-time job boards

• **Cturtle** – job opportunities for international graduates who have returned to home countries in East and South Asia after studying in the U.S., Canada, Australia, UK, and Europe

• The “Marshall Global” Newsletter – newsletter created by Marshall GCS to inform students about global job opportunities, and topics related to international students’ job search; the Newsletter is sent every Monday and international students will automatically receive these newsletters

• “Marshall GCS” public Wechat account (Mandarin) – subscribe to “USCMarshallGCS” on Wechat to follow Greater China job opportunities

• Marshall sponsored global career fairs in Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing - if you are an international student who speaks Mandarin and is looking for opportunities in China, please pay attention to these career fairs during your summer and winter breaks

We look forward to discussing with you and supporting you with your global job search strategies!
Appendix I

Examples for Appropriate Informational Interview Questions

About the Person

a. What attracted you to this industry, your company, and your job?
b. What do you enjoy most about this industry, the company, and your job?
c. What do you see as possible next steps for you? What career expectations do you have in the short and long term?
d. What are you most excited/concerned about for this industry/company in the future?
e. What do you wish you’d known before you entered this field?
f. Can you tell me about the most challenging projects that you have worked on?
g. What is the biggest challenge you’re facing right now?
h. Could you give me some examples of teamwork and the support that you get from your peers and superiors at the firm on projects?
i. What was your career path and what made you decide to work for this firm?

About the Job

a. What do you find unique about your career field?
b. What are the duties performed during a typical day? Week? Month? Year? Do you have a set routine?
c. Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?
d. What are the most valuable skills in your job? Which experiences enabled you to develop these skills?
e. How do you keep skills current? What do you read?
f. What professional associations do you belong to? What seminars or continuing education do you consider useful?
g. What projects have you worked on that have been particularly interesting?
h. Where do you and your supervisor fit into the organizational structure?
i. What do you do if you can’t solve a problem on your own?
j. What have been your biggest surprises in this field?
k. What are the common misconceptions about working in this field?

About the Company

a. What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
b. What do you see as the biggest competitive challenge for the company?
c. How does the company recognize outstanding accomplishments of its employees?
d. What does the company do to foster innovation and creativity?
e. What kind of training program does the company offer? Is it highly structured or more informal?
f. Is the company’s management style top down, or do frontline employees share in decision-making?

g. What are the strong areas/practices for this firm and which areas and practices does the office specialize in?

h. What are the opportunities for personal development/continuing education at the firm?

Final Questions

a. Can you recommend others with whom I can talk about this field?

b. What are some of the classes you took at USC that really helped prepare you for what you’re doing now?

c. What were some of the classes that you wish you would have taken to help you with your job?

d. What are the three most important skills you need to excel at your job?

"Bad" Questions

a. Never ask about salary and compensation UNLESS the interviewee says it’s okay to ask. However, even if the interviewee offers to discuss salary and compensation, be prepared that this question can lead to other questions for YOU (i.e., How much do you want to make? What kind of compensation are you looking for?)

b. How often do you travel (for consulting)?

c. Any complex questions about the firm’s strategic direction/growth etc. (usually junior-level people do not have much information to share in this area)

d. Try to keep the questions related to his/her experience with the firm. You are trying to learn about the company from his or her perspective. All other information is usually available online or at the company presentation.
 Appendix II

Common Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about yourself and/or walk me through your resume.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you had to work under pressure or extreme conditions.
- Tell me about your best/worst team experience -- and your role in it.
- Give an example if a difficult situation you've faced and how you handled it.
- Have you ever had a disagreement with a co-worker or boss? How did you handle it?
- Give two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- Some people consider themselves to be "big picture people" and others are detail oriented. Which are you? Given an example that illustrates your preference.