

## THE JOB/INTERNSHIP SEARCH FOR WAKE FOREST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This page provides tips and advice for international students who wish to find a job or internship in the United States. The Office of Personal and Career Development provides tools, resources, and staff to partner with you in this process. However, just as for American students, it is up to you to take control of and be responsible for your job search. ***During the entire search process, you must work closely with the [Wake Forest Center for International Studies](#) to ensure that you are working within the regulations required of your visa status, as the rules are constantly changing:***

### **What strategies should I use to find a job or internship?**

In your home country, job seekers may find employment through government or family; while networking is also valuable in the U. S., job seekers must market themselves directly to prospective employers. In order to convince an employer you are the ideal candidate, you need to know yourself very well and clearly communicate the following:

- The strengths you possess, related to the position
- What differentiates you from your peers, related to the position
- Your career goals and interests.

Following are three ways to find job and internship opportunities:

#### **1) [Network](#) for information on job leads and advice.**

Approximately 70% of U. S. job openings are in the “hidden” job market, never advertised and filled by word of mouth. For this reason, it is important to contact as many people as possible to gather information about potential job openings and advice on breaking into your chosen field. This technique is called “[informational interviewing](#)”

To find contacts start with friends, classmates, professors, internship supervisors, etc.; they may be able to share information or introduce you to others working in your chosen field.

a) To begin the process of connecting with Wake alumni (both domestic and international), create a [LinkedIn profile](#). Watch the videos on this site to learn more about LinkedIn. The links on this page are an excellent resource to help you establish your LinkedIn account. Since your profile will often be the first impression a company representative has of you, it is important that you present yourself well online. It should be well-written and professional. LinkedIn profile and resume reviews are offered throughout the semester, in the Office of Personal and Career Development. See our [Calendar of Events](#) for days and times.

b) Join LinkedIn groups to begin establishing your network. ***The Wake Forest Career Connectors*** group is comprised of alumni and parents who have volunteered to provide tips and advice

to current students. Even though you have yet to graduate, you should also join the **Wake Forest Alumni and the Wake Forest International Alumni groups**. In addition, industry groups of professionals with common interests, background, and affiliations can be helpful in gathering information on industry trends and job opportunities. You can use these groups to ask questions of people who can share information.

c) Contact alumni. Use [this video](#) for tips on how to use LinkedIn to identify and contact alumni.

## **2) Make direct contact with employers of interest.**

a) Send your resume and a cover letter to the department manager for whom you wish to work. You can find contact information on [Career Shift](#).

b) Check [goingglobal.com](#) and [myvisajobs.com](#) for lists of American organizations which have requested H1B visas in the past year; you can also see the types of positions for which they were requested. Talk with Wake Forest alumni working at these organizations for information and advice (see above) on gaining employment there.

## **3) Apply to job or internship listings.**

a) Check openings listed on [DeaconSource](#) (Wake Forest's online job posting system), [wwwIndeed.com](#), [www.goingglobal.com](#), [www.Idealist.org](#) and company websites. Most employers will indicate on the posting whether they will accept applications from non-U.S. citizens or candidates requiring work authorization.

b) Talk to recruiters at on-campus career fairs and employer information sessions to gather information about their organizations' hiring needs.

## **What challenges might I face and how can I solve them?**

For most international students, there are several challenges to landing a job in the U.S.

### **1) Lack of work authorization**

Because of U. S. immigration regulations and the desire to employ U. S. citizens, many American companies are reluctant to hire international students.

### **Potential Solutions:**

a) Your best employment prospects may be with international companies, who appreciate your language skills and knowledge of overseas economies. An option may be to seek a position with a multinational company in your home country and work for a few years, before requesting a transfer back to the United States.

Use the ZSR Library databases to find international-based companies operating in the U.S. and American-owned companies operating in other countries.

- Go to the ZSR Library website, <http://zsr.wfu.edu>
- Select “Databases” tab.
- On the left side under Browse by Title, select “C”.
- Scroll down and select “Corporate Affiliations”.
- In the “Features” tab, select “Advanced Search”.
- On the first line under Criterion click on the drop down menu and select “Parent Country”.
- On the adjacent line under “Value”, type in the name of the country in which you are interested.

b) Educate yourself on the steps and costs to gaining work authorization and remain flexible in what positions you are willing to accept. Be prepared to explain to employers their role and the expenses, as well as the stages involved in the work authorization process. If needed, be open to absorbing the costs yourself. Information regarding this procedure is available through the Center for International Studies. Always be honest with employers about your authorization status; dishonesty is considered a Wake Forest honor code violation.

## **2) Lack of familiarity with U. S. business culture**

### **Potential Solutions:**

- a) Try to work, intern, or volunteer with an American organization, during your time in the U.S. For specific information on seeking an internship or volunteer experience, go to <http://career.opcd.wfu.edu/find-an-internship/> and <http://vsc.groups.wfu.edu/>.
- b) Make friends with American students early on and spend a lot of time with them. Become involved in campus organizations and attend their meetings and events.
- c) Tap into the knowledge of your American classmates and observe American culture through TV, movies, newspapers and colleagues.
- d) Learn about favorite American sports, current politics, and the latest business news so that you can carry on an intelligent social conversation with prospective employers.
- e) Many American employers do not understand the industries, politics, or school systems in your home country. Be prepared to put your past experiences and education into a context that Americans can understand, by using metrics or referring to an American equivalent for comparison.

## **3) Lack of fluency in the English language**

If English is not your native language, you can be at a distinct disadvantage when communicating with American employers.

### **Potential Solutions:**

- a) Make an effort to talk with Americans, at social events or by getting involved in campus clubs and activities.
- b) Make presentations, take English courses, and work tirelessly at improving your English skills.
- c) Ask an American student to tutor you and focus on oral communication.
- d) Force yourself to speak English to friends from your native country. This may seem strange at first, but it will be good practice for all of you.
- e) Use a notebook to write down succinct answers to common interview questions.

#### **4) Lack of study in a high-demand subject**

##### **Potential Solution:**

The supply of American job candidates with expertise in the areas of computer science, information technology, engineering, medicine, science, or mathematics is much lower than the demand by U. S. employers. Therefore, pursuing a technical or “specialty” career path can greatly increase your likelihood of landing a job in the United States.

##### **WHAT MORE CAN I DO?**

**1. Be aware** that your job search will likely require a lot of extra time and effort, in addition to the time you spend on your studies. Start early and remember: due to the limited numbers of visas available as well as the current political and economic environments, it will take more effort than that of American students.

**2. Leverage your previous experience, skills, and language abilities.**

For example, you may passionately want to become a consultant but have no relevant experience. You may be more successful convincing a company to hire you for an entry-level position doing business in Latin America if you speak fluent Spanish, or in China if you are a native speaker. Think about opportunities in this “big picture” framework.

You will be more marketable to companies that have operations in or are considering expansion to your home country. Even if job opportunities don’t exist in their U.S. operations, you may be able to network with a contact to get leads in your home country. Also, keep in mind your two to three year career goals; where can you gain the experience to get to the next step? Considering such options will allow you to gain that additional experience and increase the chance that the company will transfer you back to the U.S.

**3) Be memorable.**

Being notable is one of the keys to being successful in your job search. In the process of networking and interviews, being from a foreign country gives you more opportunities to share remarkable stories of your

past experiences. From the development of the European Union to the expansion of tourism in your home country, develop personal examples that highlight why your international experience is valuable and an asset to the recruiter.

### **3. Be Committed**

The fact that you are studying at Wake Forest shows you are a highly motivated person. Make sure you reinforce with employers your intention to stay in the U.S. long-term; they don't want to invest in you only to have you leave after a few years to return home. Have personal examples which illustrate that you bring tenacity and resourcefulness to a position, yet fit in well with American culture. A history of being engaged in Wake Forest activities or the community will reinforce your intention to be committed for the longer term.

**4. Talk with a Wake Forest career coach** for advice on your search and self-marketing skills, and to learn more about the resources mentioned above.

- Arts and Sciences majors should contact the Office of Personal and Career Development at 336.758.5902, to schedule an appointment;
- Undergraduate business majors can schedule an appointment by logging onto the Market Readiness and Employment staff calendar at <http://bit.ly/WFUCareerCenter>. Select your advisor (Caleigh McElwee or Mike Crespi); select your service (Reason for Appointment); select an open date (Indicated in White); and select an available time.

Adapted from the *International Student Guide to Employment in the U.S.* (Cornell Institute for Public Affairs)