

Overcoming Objections to Visa Status During Job Search Process

In addition to the traditional job search challenges, international students face the additional hurdle of obtaining visa sponsorship. Students often don't know how or when to discuss visa sponsorship with employers and are often rejected for positions because they haven't adequately sold their skill set before broaching the visa topic.

How do you identify yourself in the most positive light?

Stop defining yourself as an international student. Define yourself as the recipient of your degree or as a student working on his/her degree (example, working or recipient of MBA). You have the same professional skills and abilities to compete in the job market as U.S. students.

Timing

- a. You are not legally required to negotiate anything until you have an official job offer. Visa sponsorship should not be a topic of conversation until the company has made you an offer.
- b. Do NOT introduce yourself and say, "My name is...., do you sponsor visas?"
- c. If, however, they specifically ask you if you will need to be sponsored for a work visa, you must answer honestly. Be prepared on how to answer this question. The answer should be brief and positive.

Do your research before your first interview

- a. Has the company sponsored visas in the past?
- b. Use resources such as the UMass Lowell Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education Center, http://www.uml.edu/student-services/career_services/default.html. Check out their section on "Historically Underrepresented Groups", which offers information specific to International Students.
- c. Feel free to schedule an appointment with an Advisor from the Office of Career Services & Cooperative Education, 328 Southwick Hall, North Campus, One University Ave., Lowell, MA 01854, Phone: 978-934-2355, Fax: 978-934-3073, Email: career_services@uml.edu
They may assist you with:
 - Resume preparation
 - Improving interview skills
 - Connecting to alumni database, etc.
- d. Discuss the Optional Practical Training (OPT) and H-B visa process with the International Students & Scholars office (ISSO) at least 2-3 months before your interview. You may speak directly with an ISSO Advisor during Advising Hours either in person or by phone. Please check the Advising Hours' schedule at, <http://www.uml.edu/ISSO/contact.aspx>. (You do not need an appointment during Advising Hours. Simply call in or drop in.)

You may need to meet more than once with the Career Services & Cooperative Education Center. One appointment to assist with the above-mentioned, and the other appointment(s) to guide you on how to conduct a successful job search. Although they cannot guarantee finding you a job, they can assist you to successfully network and plan. It is your responsibility to take the initiative in scheduling multiple appointments until you have achieved your goal.

Emphasize the advantages of hiring an international students vs. domestic student:

- International students on average have higher scores
- Adapt easily to new situations
- Understand cultural sensitivity

- Add diversity to an organization
- Have a better understanding/knowledge of international markets/business
- Are able to take risks
- Often speak multiple languages
- Usually students who study abroad are the best, brightest achievers in their country
- Have a network of people around the world
- Discuss how your experiences have led you to think about multiple perspectives and creative ways to solve problems not just expertise in a certain market

Common objections to hiring internationals and possible rebuttals:

- **Employer might be reluctant to hire you because they don't know how to apply for a work visa:** *You can offer to refer them to the appropriate people who can. The International Students & Scholars Office can recommend a list of reputable immigration attorneys for the employer to work with. The attorney can explain the process, the cost, the timeframe, etc. They are experienced in simplifying the process to the employer.*
- **If the employer claims that they have a policy not to hire international employees needing work visa sponsorship:** *Do your research, if they've hired internationals in the past, let them know. The hiring manager you are speaking with might be new and not know the history or perhaps they are using it as an excuse...without being combative, ask what is the real reason, where do they think your skills are lacking? Always be polite.*

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