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CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Hiring International Students – A Guideline for Employers

Hiring the best and brightest graduates is easier than you may think. International students have several options that will allow them to work for your organization.

What international students could bring to your organization

- High caliber of academic talent and motivation
- Diversity of thought and skill
- Language and cultural skills to help you reach your global clients
- Dedicated work ethic
- Adaptable to challenge and change
- Passed rigorous standards for admission to U.S. universities

The three most common work authorizations available for international students include

- Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for internships during the academic program
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) for one year full-time employment
- H1B Work Visa for full time employment beyond the one year OPT*

Note: I-9 documentation must be completed for all employees including international students.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Employers can hire international students for full-time employment (over 20 hours per week) and part-time employment (20 hours or less per week) for multiple semesters before they graduate, with approval from the Center for Career Development's Internship Coordinator and authorization from Westminster College's Director of International Student Services.

An employer must:

- Provide co-op or internship work responsibilities related to the student's course of study.
- Confirm the CPT has been approved before the student reports to work.
- Complete the required university performance and feedback evaluations.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Upon completion of their degree most international students may work for your organization using Optional Practical Training. OPT is valid for an aggregate of 12 months.* Students can begin their OPT during their degree program and apply the balance of the 12 months after graduation. Alternatively, students may request all 12 months of OPT to start post-graduation.

H-1B Non-immigrant Visa Status

Following OPT, an international student may continue to work for your organization in H-1B status. H-1B status is generally valid for a maximum, aggregate of 6 years, with extensions beyond the 6 years allowed in some cases. Contrary to rumor, the employer does not need to show that the international student is ideally qualified for the position. No advertising is required.

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An employer must

- Offer a position that requires at least a bachelor's degree in a specific field relating to the student's area of study.
- Pay the required wage

Resources for Employers

- U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services
<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/information-employers-employees/information-employers-and-employees>
- Foreign Labor Certification Data Center Online Wage Library
<http://www.flcdatacenter.com/>
- Most colleges and universities with a sizeable number of international students have an International Student Advisor. Check the website for the university/college in which you are interested for that information.

*Students with a qualified STEM degree are able to apply for an OPT extension of 24 months. This replaces the previous 17-month extension issued in 2008. This extension will allow qualified students who have obtained an initial 12 month period of OPT to apply for a 24 month extension.

Follow the link below for a current list of STEM designated degree programs.

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>

The extension is limited to students who are employed by businesses enrolled in the "E-Verify program." E-Verify is a free internet-based system operated by US Citizen and Immigration Service, in partnership with the Social Security Administration, which determines a new employee's eligibility to work.

This document was created by the International Student Employment Initiatives (ISEI) Consortium.

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