

SECTION 6

CAREER ADVISOR GUIDE TO HELPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The role of OISS
Frequently asked questions by career advisors
Tips for advising international students

THE ROLES OF THE OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS

Within the context of Career Services, OISS provides the following support

- Advise on international students' U.S. work authorization options.
- Member of the Career Initiatives for International Students group.
- Organize events in conjunction with the Career Services Network on international student career development.
- Serve as liaison to the Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan (GTRI), an organization focused on employer education of how to employ international students for short- or long-term employment opportunities.
- Develop and contribute to resources for international students to help them navigate Career Development within U.S. higher education.
- Collaborate with Career Services Network on BUS102: International Student Career Certificate Program.

Point of contact within OISS for Career Services

Elizabeth Matthews
Assistant Director
Office for International Students & Scholars
Email: elizm@msu.edu
Phone: 517-353-1720

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY CAREER ADVISORS

U.S. immigration regulations, under certain circumstances, allow international students to pursue part- or full-time employment during the course of their studies. Please refer to the [Work Authorization Options](#) section for a comparison of the various work authorization options.

What does OISS tell international students about finding employment?

OISS expresses the importance of having a partnership between OISS and the Career Services Network. We explain that, to be successful, students must understand both their work authorization options as well as prepare themselves for the U.S. workplace through using the large number of programs and resources that the Career Services Network has to offer.

We help to manage their expectations by explaining the difficulties one may face in finding U.S. employment, especially if the student is an undergraduate or is not pursuing a degree in any of the Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) fields. We urge them to recognize that they, ultimately, must be the best candidate for the job and are responsible for their success.

We have also turned our attention towards assisting students with networking skills. This serves not only to help them build relationships in all aspects of campus life, but we see how this is also an integral part of their career development

What do you cover in orientation?

Career Services professionals have accompanied OISS to our Pre-Departure Sessions in China to speak with incoming international students during and the Career Services Network attends our Resource Fair during orientation. Orientation leaders are also briefed on career support information, and the international parent orientation has a focus on MSU Career Services.

What does OISS tell international students about talking with employers?

Because we know this is a sensitive topic for both students and employers, OISS has created the resources: [How to Talk to Employers about Your Immigration Status](#) (page 9) and the [Employer's Guide to Hiring International Students](#) (from page 30 - 35). The resources for employers could be provided from students or Career Services staff to prospective employers. OISS is available to come to career fairs to meet with employers and has hosted information sessions for employers in the past. We welcome further collaboration in this area to assist with employer education.

What can Career Services Professionals do to educate employers?

Career Services Professionals should feel free to circulate any of the documents we have related to international student employment such as the *Employer's Guide to Hiring International Students* or work authorization information. It may be helpful to state that you're not asking them to consider international students instead of domestic students, but just for them to know they are part of the MSU talent pool. For other talking points, you can refer to the Global Talent Retention Initiative (GTRI) as just one example: www.migtri.org. OISS welcomes further conversation on this topic.

How can we train ourselves on the cultural “norms” and customs of students?

The best way to find out about international student challenges and what they would like in terms of programs and resources is to hold focus groups. OISS can help you connect with international students. Additionally, we would be happy to collaborate with the Career Services Network to facilitate intercultural communication workshops for Career Services professionals.



What does “sponsorship” mean?

International students may often refer to “sponsorship”. They are referring to a company petitioning for them to receive an H- 1B visa, which is a temporary worker visa that allows them to work in the U.S. for up to 6 years. Many students hope to transition to this visa type from their student visa. You can check the [Work Authorization Options](#) (page 4-14) section for more details.

Do you advise international students to get work authorization if they are volunteering?

Volunteering is defined by the U.S. government as work for which no one else in that position is being paid. There should be absolutely no compensation. If students are unsure if they need work authorization, they should be referred to OISS. We suggest for students to always have work authorization – even if unpaid – to protect their future immigration benefits/visa renewals. Please note that once students graduate, unpaid work is still considered employment. This is just one more reason we suggest that students receive authorization.

Do you advise international students to get work authorization if they want to start their own business?

You may refer them to OISS. This is a complicated issue and, many times, a student should seek immigration counsel.

TIPS FOR ADVISING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

If a student is unsure how their immigration status affects their employment options or which U.S. work authorization options are available to them, please refer them to OISS. We have walk-in hours Monday – Friday from 1-3 p.m. in Room 105 of the International Center.

- Be aware of cultural factors – lack of eye contact, projecting self-confidence, networking, speaking directly, or providing strong opinions in the U.S.. This American style may all be deeply challenging to international students. Sometimes simply acknowledging the root of the challenge helps the student to feel more comfortable
- Many international students are worried about their communication skills. Reassure the student that you can understand them, but encourage them to practice interviewing with others (in English, if they are planning to work in the U.S.). OISS Coffee Hours, held each Friday at 4pm in the International Center, is a great place to build communication skills.
- A non-native English speaker may have trouble understanding interview questions – whether the language, the intent of the question, or sometimes figuring out the right answer. Assure them that it's okay to ask for the question to be repeated, as long as they don't ask so often that the interviewer begins question their language abilities. Provide them with alternative ways to clarify a question or to buy time to think.
- Help students to develop their job search strategies and direct them toward resources that may be more applicable to them such as *GoinGlobal* or *MyVisaJobs*. *GoinGlobal* provides students with cultural guides and employers most likely to sponsor H-1B visas based on state and metro area. Students may also be able to look for positions in their home country. *MyVisaJobs* also provides up-to-date lists of top H-1B employers in the U.S. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/student-resources/resources-for-international-students.html>
- Help students think strategically about the types of businesses or organizations that would be interested in them – businesses trading in their home country or expanding within a geographic region is an obvious example. Others include organizations who have a history of working with international students.

