Job Search Strategies and Resources:

A Collaborative Handbook for International Students

The Career Center (TCC)
Engineering Career Services (ECS)
International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)
at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Acknowledgements

This updated handbook has been edited in 2012 with the collaboration of The Career Center (TCC), Engineering Career Services (ECS), and International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Tori Spring (Assistant Director at TCC), Un Yeong Park (Graduate Assistant at TCC), Avanija Sarma (Graduate Assistant at ECS), and Afroza Faruque (Assistant Director at ISSS) participated in the update project.

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Work Authorization for International Students

The Office of International Student and Scholar Services advises international students on their nonimmigrant status and facilitates work authorization for students in F-1 or UI-sponsored J-1 status. Below is a brief explanation about each type of employment authorization. Because individual circumstances vary students are encouraged to make an appointment with an ISSS advisor to discuss work authorization.

On-Campus Employment
F-1 and most J-1 students are permitted to work on-campus as a benefit of their nonimmigrant status. Students may work part-time (20 hours or less) per week during Fall and Spring semesters, and full-time during all official University breaks (Thanksgiving, Winter, Spring and Summer). Jobs that can be considered on-campus are normally paid by the University. If you are unsure whether your position fits the criteria for on-campus employment, please check with an ISSS advisor.

Off-Campus (Training)
F-1 and J-1 students who would like to work off-campus must obtain work authorization prior to beginning employment. Training must be related directly to a student’s program of study. Students may pursue off-campus employment both during and after their program of study. For more detailed information about these opportunities, please visit the International Student and Scholar Services’ website at http://isss.illinois.edu/students/employment/index.html or schedule an appointment with an international student advisor.

F-1 Students

Curricular Practical Training
http://isss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1cpt.html

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization-that takes place during the program of study. It is granted to students who are enrolled in a course which requires or strongly recommends work experience. The course must be a part of the established curriculum. To apply, students and their advisors will need to fill out a CPT application and submit it to ISSS. If the opportunity is approved, then the student will receive a new I-20 with the CPT authorization.

Optional Practical Training
http://isss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1opt.html

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is granted to F-1 students after completion of all required coursework. Employment must be related to a student’s field of study and degree level. OPT is recommended by ISSS and authorized by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Students may apply up to 90 days before the program end date, and up to 60 days after. Normal processing time for OPT is 90 days. ISSS holds OPT workshops each Fall and Spring semester to help students learn more about the application process.
J-1 Students

Academic Training
http://isss.illinois.edu/students/employment/j1academic.html

Academic Training (AT) is work permission for a specific job that is related to the J-1’s program of study. It may take place during or after completion of studies. AT is granted based on the number of months a student has been in enrolled in a program and the length of the proposed job, but cannot exceed 18 months (36 for post-doctoral training). For example if a J-1 student begins a program and has completed four months of that program, they may apply for up to four months of AT. ISSS authorizes AT for UI-sponsored J-1 students; students who received their J-1 from an outside agency must consult that agency for AT policies and procedures.

Additional Job-related Immigration Issues

H-1B Status
H-1B status allows non-immigrants to work for a U.S. employer on a temporary basis. The employer is responsible for sponsoring this status, and the employment authorization is specific to the employer and position included in the H petition. There is a limit to the number of H-1Bs approved each year; this is known as the H-1B “cap.” Companies subject to the cap are eligible to begin filing H-1B petitions on April 1 each year (if approved, those Hs will begin the following October 1), and continue filing petitions until the cap is reached. Universities and not-for-profit research institutions are cap-exempt and can file H-1B petitions any time throughout the year.

H-1B status is generally valid up to six years but can be extended beyond six years in certain circumstances. An employer can request H status for up to three years at a time.

Obtaining H-1B status can be a lengthy process, and not all positions are eligible. If you are interested in obtaining H status, it is best to speak to your employer and to start the conversation early.

Permanent Residency
Another option to be eligible to work in the U.S. is to apply for Permanent Residency. This status indicates that you have the intent to immigrate to the U.S. The process to apply for Permanent Residency is long and quite complex. If you are considering applying for this status, it is recommended that you speak to your employer or to an immigration attorney.

When to discuss your immigration status in an interview
Students are encouraged to learn as much as possible about their immigration status and work authorization options, so that they are prepared to answer these questions in an interview. The nonimmigrant status does not need to be mentioned in the resume or cover letter, because these documents are meant to highlight your abilities and experiences.

The initial interview may provide a good opportunity to discuss your nonimmigrant status. However, remember that this is really an opportunity to talk about your skills and why you believe you would be a
good fit in the organization. Therefore, the question of when it is appropriate to bring up your status will depend on the situation and it may be in your best interest to wait and be asked about it, rather than bring it up as the first point of conversation. When you are asked to speak about your status, take the role of an educator and explain your status, as well as your options for permission to work clearly.
The Job Search Process

Since its founding in 1867, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has become known for the high quality of its academic programs and the outstanding facilities and resources available to its 43,000 students including 8,000 international students, ranking it among the world’s greatest universities.

In particular, UIUC has played a role as a world leader in the internationalization of higher education. In 2011, Open Doors ranked UIUC second (first among public universities) in the number of international students and 13th in the nation’s “top 20 Doctoral/Research Institution” for the total number of study abroad students.

With the sharply increasing international population, we hope that the following information will make the job search process a positive experience for you as an international student and University of Illinois graduate as you search for the right place to pursue your career goals.

Foundation of the Job Search Process

Since so much of life is spent working, and since job satisfaction is so important to general life satisfaction, it pays to put time and effort into understanding the work world and finding oneself a satisfying place in it. Because the job search process in the U.S. is often in conflict with the cultural heritages of people from other countries it is important that international graduate and undergraduate students understand the significance of these differences as they seek practical training positions and other employment opportunities. In many of your countries, jobs might be found for you through online job search sites, your government, family, or academic advisor; however, in the U.S. it is largely the individual’s responsibility to identify and seek his or her own employment, using a variety of resources including friends, family contacts, professional associations, career services, academic mentors, etc.

The foundation of an effective job search is based upon having a clear knowledge of your skills, values, goals and the type of work you want to do. Sometimes, people think they know what kind of job they are looking for until they have to explain it to a prospective employer, at which point they realize they had only a vague idea. To see if you are ready to begin your job search, see if you can complete these sentences.

- Here is the general type of work I want and am well qualified for:
- The reasons I want this type of work are:
- The qualifications I have for this type of work include:

If you can thoroughly and easily complete these three sentences, read on.
Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing is one of the first steps in finding a job in the States. Informational interviews provide valuable information to help you decide if a particular career is right for you. It is a chance to talk with people who are currently working in your field of interest and a chance to learn more about a specific career. In particular, for international students who tend to have less knowledge in the U.S. job market and workplaces, Informational Interviews might be necessary.

You can start the Informational interviewing by making a list of your contacts. Contacts include everyone who knows you well enough to know your first and last names.

Then talk, in person, to as many of these people as you can. Tell them as much as you can about the type of work and the type of setting you are looking for. You may need to explain that the reason you are telling them this is so that they can help you if they have any thoughts to add about the type of job you describe, or if they know of anybody who might have knowledge in the area. Most people, however, will be glad to give you the benefit of whatever expertise they have, unasked. Make this as low pressure a conversation as possible.

If your contact does mention any other names (usually she/he will say something like, “I know a good person for you to talk to if you want to learn more about this”), be sure to follow up on that lead. Explain to the new person that so-and-so said he/she might know about the field you’re interested in and ask for any thoughts. Assure the person that you don’t want a well-organized treatise, just anything they can think of that might add to your understanding of your field and its possibilities. Always send a personal thank you note to any new person who took the time to talk with you.

After a while, this process will probably put you in touch with individuals who are actually working in the field of your choice. If this does not happen (and it may not, especially if you’ve just moved to a new city), you will have to take matters into your own hands and make some telephone calls to request informational interviews. You can find out who to call by searching social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook, the Alumni Association alumni database, your department at the university, or, if you are staying in Urbana-Champaign, the Career Center and other career offices on-campus.

Once you have set up an informational interview with a person in your chosen field, ask the following questions:

- How did you get into this field?
- What exactly do you do? What goals are you working toward?
- What are the things you like/dislike most about your job?
- What other people do you know who could tell me more about this field?

Follow up on all leads, asking the same questions and gradually building up your knowledge of your area and field (read professional journals or websites as well). Remember to always write a thank you note to anyone you talk to. You might want to leave your resume with them and ask to be kept in mind for any openings they hear of.
As your knowledge increases, you will become aware of organizations you might want to work in. You may want to find out which companies in your home country have branches or subsidiaries in the U.S. A knowledge of businesses and organizations that operate worldwide opens up the possibilities for practical training or work in the U.S. and future options in your home country and in a third country. Depending upon your field and your geographical area, you might find 10-20 such organizations, which we will call “targets.”

You may already know someone in some of these organizations. If the person you talked to is the person with the power to hire you, go back and talk to him/her again. Explain that you now have a very clear idea of what you want to do, and that you think your skills can contribute to that organization and others like it. Leave your resume (if you haven’t already) with the request that you be considered for a job. Also ask for the names of other “people with the power to hire” in that or other organizations.

Here are two common mistakes which are made when people are doing a job search:

1. Not giving the process enough time. Most experts estimate that finding the right job can take many months. Don’t become discouraged if you have found nothing after a two day visit or after your first week in a new city. Establishing contacts takes time. If you are looking for a job in your present city, of course, the whole process is usually easier.

2. Assuming that contacts must be either in your field or in your chosen geographical area. This is not true! Eventually you will want to meet people who meet both of these requirements. But as you begin, remember that each of your 100 contacts has 100 contacts, some of which will probably be in your field or geographical area. Research has shown that, on average, it takes only five steps for a person in the Midwest to be linked to a person on the East Coast city by a chain of people who know each other on a first name basis. It’s a smaller world that we tend to think.

Challenges in the Job Search of International Students

There are a few obstacles international students may face at the outset of their job search. The first is employment restrictions imposed by U.S. immigration regulations. Many employers may be unfamiliar with the process of hiring an international student. This is as new to them as it is to you. After an optional one year of practical training, employers may sponsor you to obtain an H1-B visa to continue working in the U.S. They may believe that it is too complicated and expensive. When you are asked to speak about your status, take the role of an educator and explain your status, as well as your options for permission to work clearly. In order to take the educator role, you may check out resources relevant to the process, fee, cap, and qualification of H1B Visa at Myvisajobs.com and Goinglobal.com.

The second is communication skills and cultural differences that may affect a student’s ability to successfully present his or her qualifications to an employer. Therefore, you need to build specific strategies you can utilize in your job search, whether you plan to remain in the U.S. or return to your home country.
The Effective Job Search Plan

The most successful strategy to obtain employment in the U.S. is to apply directly to the employer. Personalized employer contact results in successful job contacts. While obtaining the job you want may take time and hard work, your investment in time and energy will be rewarded if you are persistent and focused in your job search. An effective job search includes these steps:

STEP 1: Develop a resume which summarizes your qualifications and identifies your specific career goals and objectives.

STEP 2: Develop your own personal career objective, including types of employers, specific industries, geographical preferences, functional job areas, etc. It is very important to state preferences and make choices so that you know how to present yourself to employers and to organize your job search efforts.

STEP 3: Develop employer contacts in three ways:

A: Identify job vacancies which are open, published, and advertised. Apply directly to the employer with a resume and tailored cover sheet.

B: Identify companies and organizations which might have career opportunities which match your own career objectives.

C: Identify individuals you know or would like to meet who could suggest employers or potential career opportunities.

STEP 4: Make contact with employers, stating why you are interested in them, why you are qualified, and what you have to offer them in terms of career-related skills, abilities, and experiences. Make contact in three ways:

A: E-mail contacts are a convenient way to introduce yourself to an employer in advance of a telephone call to request an interview.

B: Telephone contacts are effective because business is normally conducted by phone. Telephone contact can serve as your initial contact with an employer, or it can be used as a follow-up. Phone contacts as a result of a direct referral are the most effective: Example: “Hello, my name is _____________ and ______________ suggested I contact you.”

C: In person contact may be effective and appropriate after an initial email or telephone contact, particularly in the case of smaller organizations.

STEP 5: Whichever way you make contact, follow up is always required. Use the three primary ways of making contact with employers to your advantage. Example: An initial email contact should be followed up by a telephone call to arrange a mutually convenient personal meeting.
STEP 6: Interview for information as well as actual job opportunities. Informational interviewing is one of the best ways to increase your employer contacts.

STEP 7: Always follow a contact with a thank-you letter to the employer.

Four Ways to Find Employment

Actual Job Openings:
- Goinglobal.com, MyVisaJobs.com and other H1B visa job posting websites.
- Announcements from The Career Center and other career offices on campus.
- Career/Job fairs on campus and info sessions of employers.
- Company websites

Potential Job Openings and Employer Listings:
- International-friendly company lists (available at The Career Center’s website).
- List of companies who sponsor H1B Visas at MyVisaJobs.com, H1VisaJobs.com, and H1base.com.
- Riley Guide(rileyguide.com)
- Monster International(monster.com/geo/siteselection)
- OverseasJob.com
- Other global job search links if you look for jobs outside of the U.S. (available at The Career Center’s website).
- International magazines and newspapers.
- Telephone directories (yellow pages).
- Public and state employment agencies.
- Private placement agencies (only if employer pays the entire fee!).

People Who Could Suggest Potential Opportunities and Employers:
- Family and friends.
- Fellow job-seekers, classmates, roommates, and the people they know.
- Professors, advisors, and counselors.
- Former employers.
- People you are using as job references.
- Alumni (Database available at https://www.uiaaconnect.org/UIAA/Login.jsp).

Preferred Employers Targeted Because They Are Consistent with Your …:
• Occupational aspirations.
• Geographic preferences.
• Industry/product/service preferences.
• Mission in life or purpose you want to serve.
• Academic background and preparations.
• Experience and skills acquired from work, study, volunteer, or extracurricular activities.
• Dual career considerations (and other criteria that is specifically your own).

Career and Job Search Strategy Worksheet

General Items

A. Target Work Content: Identify the kinds of work that you want to do and concentrate your energies on these areas of the labor market. Examples: Sales Management, Marketing, Scientific Research, Civil Engineering, Accounting, etc.

_____________________________________________________________________________

B. Target Geographically: Identify the specific cities or regional areas where you would like to live and find employment. Examples: Midwest Region/Chicago, East Coast/New York City or Boston.

_____________________________________________________________________________

Specific Items

A. Write a career goals statement that defines the skills and abilities you want to use and types of employers you would like to work for:

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

B. Choose a specific geographical area – city or region:

_____________________________________________________________________________

C. Identify one of the four major employment sectors in which you would like to work: 1. Private industry, 2. Government, 3. Education, 4. Public sector:
D. Select one type of employer in the sector you would most like to work:

______________________________________________________________________________

E. Identify at least three skills or competencies you would most like to use in your work:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

F. Name at least three other types of employers or organizations which could offer you employment in your specific field:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

G. Choose a size of organization you would prefer, in terms of number of employees in a single location:

_________ Small  Number of Employees _____________________

_________ Medium Number of Employees _____________________

_________ Large  Number of Employees ____________________

H. Identify the names of at least three employer directories that seem most likely to contain organizations for your employer prospect list:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

By providing answers to these items, you will develop a useful set of information which will assist you in every stage of your job search, including writing letters of application, resume writing, the interviewing process, and identifying specific employers to contact.
Job Search Mistakes of New College Grads
(Adapted from Yahoo! HotJobs, 2010)

Relying solely on Internet job postings
In a Yahoo! HotJobs poll, 57 percent of respondents said networking was a factor in landing their current or most recent job. Brad Karsh, president of JobBound, says, "When thousands of candidates are applying to the same jobs online and posting their resume to the same job boards, candidates need to stand out by making connections and networking their way into a company." Job boards are an important tool, but Karsh says new grads also need to focus energy on networking.

Not creating wide networks
Career expert Liz Ryan agrees that your parents', grandparents' and friends' networks can help you in your job search. "Don't be shy -- reach out to any long-ago Scoutmaster, choir director, or babysitting or leaf-raking boss," she says. "There's no statute of limitations on networking."

Not creating customized resumes
"Don't send out any resumes that simply list your courses, the degree you've earned, and your part-time and summer jobs," Ryan says. "Use this opportunity to make a stronger statement about what you want to do with your adult life." And according to Jay Block, author of 101 Best Ways to Land a Job in Troubled Times, younger job seekers often haven't thought about what they have to offer an employer (as opposed to what they want to get from one). With this mindset, they create resumes that are "boring biographies" instead of effective marketing tools.

Underutilizing professional network sites
Tory Johnson, CEO of Women For Hire and author of Fired to Hired, says, "New grads don't use LinkedIn -- it's not sexy like Facebook or Twitter -- but it's the best resource for getting names and building a professional identity. Don't overlook it."

Failing to follow up
It's not enough to send resumes and pray the phone rings, Johnson says. She cautions job seekers not to expect their resumes to be discovered in that big black online hole. "Hustle to follow up," she says.

Setting expectations too high
Johnson says new graduates too often focus on looking for the perfect job, instead of a first job. "Especially in this economy, the first job should be about finding a position where you'll learn a great deal, you'll be super busy and you'll be surrounded by lots of people," she says.

Appearing unprofessional
Make sure you're ready for employers' scrutiny, says Tim McIntyre, president and CEO of The Executive Search Group. That means you should "sanitize your Facebook page -- right now. It will be checked," he says. He notes that many college students will need to change off-color voicemail greetings. Ryan adds, "Don't assume that Facebook's privacy settings will keep your youthful antics away from curious eyes. Rid your profile page of any photos of the 'three Bs' (beer, bongs and bikinis)."

Not taking the job interview seriously
Even when you're applying for an unpaid internship, you need to adhere to common standards of professionalism. McIntyre says those standards include demonstrating you've researched the
company and dressing appropriately. Block adds that new grads are often unprepared for tough but common interview questions, such as "Where do you see yourself in three years?" and "What are your weaknesses?"

**Not using the college's career office**

"A career office can help [students] identify networking contacts, learn important job search skills, and significantly improve their resume and cover letter," says Wake Forest University's Chan. Ryan agrees, but adds that this is just a first step. The career office's job is to "to prepare you for your job search, not to conduct it for you," she says. "Use LinkedIn, reach out to everyone you can and begin researching employers who'd be likely targets for your job search."
Resume Writing

The basic purpose of the resume is to summarize, in an impressive and appealing fashion, your skills and experiences as they relate to your desired job. A second, but no less important purpose is that a resume is designed to win interviews, not to get you a job. The resume is merely a personal document, which ideally, will create the desire for the interviewer or employer to meet with you. It is important to remember that it is people and not paper that gets jobs.

When you realize the competitive nature of a job search in the United States the quality of your resume acquires added importance. Your resume and cover letter should be personalized, concise and error free documents that you have designed to reflect your particular accomplishments and academic and professional credentials. Many people will submit their resumes in hopes of being chosen to interview for a particular position. Those few individuals who are invited to interview are picked primarily on the quality of their resume.

Difference between a resume and a curriculum vita
The resume is usually a one or two page summary of your qualifications and skills. The main aim of the resume is to highlight your key contributions in an effective and quick to read format. The CV on the other hand is a longer overview of your accomplishments. CVs are used when applying for academic positions.

What not to mention
Resumes in the United States do not require the mention of any personal information other than a functional telephone number, address and email. Other personal details like photographs, age, sex marital status and race are not mentioned as it is illegal to base employment decision on these parameters.

Commonly used resume formats
Resume writing doesn’t follow one specific format or formula. Resumes are as unique as the people writing them. However, over time three formats have made themselves common:

Functional resume
A functional resume stresses the skills and experiences you possess which qualify you for the desired job. As it highlights “what you have learned and done” rather that “what you have held”, it allows you to draw on experiences gained from organizations and course work- particularly useful when an applicant has little or no previous related job experience.

Chronological resume
A chronological resume convinces an employer of your qualifications by stressing previous employment experiences.

Combination resume
As the name suggests, a combination resume draws a little from both the functional and chronological formats. It highlights both a skills section and employment history.
Standard Resume Categories

Job Objective
A job objective statement is much like a thesis sentence in a paper; it ties the resume together giving it focus and direction. It is usually a good idea to indicate the position you consider yourself best qualified for, and also tie in related skills you can bring to bear on that position.

Educational Record
List schools in reverse chronological order. Make sure you spell out the degree(s) you received including dates and the university where they were earned, grade point average, however is optional. If you don’t include your GPA, be prepared to explain why in your interview.

Honors and Awards
Although usually considered an optional section, it includes all scholastic or outside recognition received (not more than two-three years old)

Skills/Experiences Related to Job Objective
The section on a functional resume where you relate your experience, whether it be through summer employment, activities or special projects that helps project your qualifications.

Employment History
A listing in reverse chronological order of your employment experience, i.e., name and location of employers, dates, job titles and a brief description of your responsibilities, contributions and achievements while on the job.

Relevant Coursework
Considered optional, it lists classes in your discipline of study. Never list more than four or five courses.

Activities and Interests
This section provides the opportunity to set yourself apart from the other applicants and to show that you are a well-rounded and accomplishment-oriented individual.
CHRISSMITH

Campus: 205 E. Illinois St., Champaign, IL 61820 • 217-555-7488 • chrissmith@illinois.edu
Permanent: 747 E. Superior Ave., Chicago, IL 60659

OBJECTIVE
Seeking a summer 2010 internship with a leading biomedical device manufacturing company

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
Bachelor of Science in Bioengineering
Illinois Leadership Certificate Program
May 2011
GPA: 3.3/4.0

RELATED EXPERIENCE

SIEMENS MEDICAL SOLUTIONS
Molecular Imaging Division Engineering Intern
Hoffman Estates, IL
Summer 2009
• Conducted performance tests on nearly 200 MRI machines
• Worked with team of 3 design engineers to create new electronic component for SPECT system and to test new software on redesigned hardware
• Documented test results and presented analysis to Division’s management team

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
Cellular and Structural Biology Research Assistant
Urbana, IL
Fall 2008
• Conducted more than 150 nuclear extractions and spread preparations
• Fractionated nuclear proteins for Western Blot analysis

ENGINEERING IN MEDICINE AND BIOLOGY SOCIETY (EMBS), UIUC
Programming Director
Urbana, IL
Fall 2007 – Spring 2008
• Developed campus-wide awareness campaign to increase student interest in EMBS, increasing membership 37% over previous year
• Created new Bioengineering Seminar Series and hosted alumni and recruiters from 5 leading medical device companies

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

THE CLYBOURNE
Manager
Champaign, IL
February 2009 – Present
• Manage $11,000 daily operation and supervise staff of 19 part-time employees

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS HOUSING
Project Manager
Urbana, IL
August 2008 – Present
• Manage network for two University residence halls consisting of more than 1,200 residents
• Assist students with technical problems related to computing and connectivity

SKILLS

Computer: SQL, MATLAB, HTML, Visual Basic, JavaScript, ProENGINEER
Language: Fluent in Spanish, Intermediate French

ACTIVITIES and HONORS
Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society (EMBS), Spring 2008 – Present
Undergraduate Materials Organization, Fall 2007 – Present
Orange Krush, Fall 2007 – Spring 2008
CHRIS G. SMITH  
205 E. Illinois St., Champaign, IL 61820  •  217-555-3834  •  chrissmith@illinois.edu

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Three years' experience designing and testing residential and commercial construction materials
- Three years of 2-D modeling experience
- Excellent communication skills and strong teamwork skills

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS at URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Master of Science in Civil Engineering  
Focus: Structural Engineering  
GPA: 3.6/4.0  
May 2011

Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering  
Primary: Structural Engineering  Secondary: Construction Materials  
GPA: 3.4/4.0  
May 2010

WORK EXPERIENCE

TREMONT & ASSOCIATES, INC  
Project Manager  
Chicago, IL  
Summer 2010

Reviewed nearly 50 subcontractor bids for projects for both residential and commercial projects
Supervised up to 17 subcontractors and part-time employees
Negotiated and won contract bid for $2.2 million commercial property project
Supervised construction of 3 commercial and 4 residential projects

CTL GROUP  
Structural Forensic Engineering Intern  
Skokie, IL  
Summer 2009

Worked with team of 5 professional engineers conducting nondestructive tests
Located PT strands in box girder bridge using impulse radar
Drafted more than 180 masonry walls using AutoCAD software
Scanned corbels and double-T stems with impulse radar at 3 parking structures

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING  
Graduate Research Assistant  
Urbana, IL  
June 2008 - Present

Estimate response of complex 2-D structural systems under dynamic loads using “equivalent” SDOF models and statistical PCA
Test brick veneer on shake table and record and analyze results
Perform research involving numerical modeling of building frames and pile foundations under seismic loads; author journal article and conference publication
Prepare presentations and posters for annual meetings and NSF reviews

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Carver Fellowship – Awarded full tuition waiver and $25,000 stipend for academic merit, 2010
- Best Graduate Research Presentation Award, Department of Civil Engineering, UIUC, Spring 2010

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP AND ASSOCIATION

- American Society of Civil Engineers, 2007 – Present
- Mid-America Earthquake Center Conference Presenter, 2008
- Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society, 2008 – 2010
Five Things to Remember

1. Overall, does this resume show how the employer benefits by hiring me?
2. Does it stress my accomplishments and skills-showing I am qualified for the job sought?
3. Is it inviting to read? Does it have a good layout, adequate white space, error free typing and emphasis on key points
4. Does it contain negative information?
5. Are all claims believable- backed up by convincing examples and measurable results?

Resume Myths

1. **Every resume must have an objective**- While the Objective part of a resume is a nice way to briefly summarize your skills and interests, it is not always mandatory. If there is any experience that speaks more about your skills, you can always choose to devote space to it over the Objective.
2. **Resumes should be printed on high quality paper**- It is a common notion that resumes must be printed on high quality paper to make a good first impression. Remember that recruiters always look for the content of a resume. Do not sweat over the paper.
3. **GPA should not be included on a resume:** There is no right or wrong answer to this question. If your GPA is good and if you want to include it in the resume do so by all means. Remember, a good GPA may be different for different majors. If you choose not to put your GPA on your resume, be prepared to discuss it in your interview.
Interviewing Techniques

Now that you have an impressive resume, have done thorough research on the companies or institutions with vacancies for which you qualify, and possess a good understanding of your own skills, values, work options and goals... it is time to perfect your interviewing techniques and strategies!

American Interview Style

As an international student it is vital that you understand the interviewing process in America and the significance of how it may differ from what you are accustomed to:

1. **Punctuality is most important** – arrive between 5 and 15 minutes prior to your appointment.
2. Individual equality requires that the interview relationship is not to be affected by the race, sex or age of the participants.
3. You should expect the interview to be held in a congenial environment that encourages openness, handshaking, some humor, and an exchange of information.
4. U.S. employers will expect you to be appropriately dressed, assertive, and confident in your ability to discuss your goals and accomplishments. They will value open and direct responses to questions and **good eye contact**. You should expect to be asked personal questions about your experiences, your hobbies, your strengths, and your weaknesses. The employers may want you to demonstrate your self knowledge by asking you about your short and long-range career goals and how they relate to the position you are interviewing for.
5. In some countries intensive research into an organization would show excessive and undesirable initiative or independence. In the U.S., however, you should obtain as much information as possible about a company before an interview to show your awareness, organization, and preparation.

Some Thoughts Concerning Interviews

1. What type of interview and job? This determines the nature of questions, what to wear, etc.
2. Research the prospective employer.
3. Know who you are: skills, interests, values. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
4. **ARRIVE EARLY** (10-15 minutes).
5. Bring several copies of your resume and some paper in a nice folder and a nice pen.
6. Be pleasant and courteous to everyone, but not to excess. Don’t be impatient if asked to wait.
7. Greet the interviewer with a smile and by his/her last name; if the interviewer is a woman, listen closely to see if she uses Mrs., Miss or Ms.
8. Sit and stand erect (but not rigid). Be seated only after the interviewer asks you to.
9. Don’t place personal items on the interviewer’s desk. Don’t smoke and don’t chew gum.
10. Let the interviewer lead (unless it is clear that the interviewer expects you to take the lead).
11. Watch for openings in the conversation to “sell yourself.” Take the opportunity to tell the interviewer about your goals and strong points, especially as they relate to the needs of your prospective employer and job.
12. Answer all questions truthfully, clearly, and completely. A pause before answering to formulate your response is acceptable. If you don’t know the answer to a question, ...say so!
13. Don’t discuss personal problems.
14. Have confidence in yourself, your background, and your education.
15. Speak succinctly and positively; be enthusiastic and sincere; maintain good eye contact.
16. Be a good listener and don’t hesitate to ask pertinent questions.
17. Salary should be left to the interviewer to raise in a first interview. If you are called back for a second interview then it is appropriate for you to raise the issue.
18. Don’t clock watch!
19. Don’t prolong the interview. Be ready to sum up your qualifications.
20. Thank the interviewer for his/her time. Re-state your interest in the job.
21. Leave promptly. Find a place where you can jot down some notes about the interview and the job.
22. Send a thank you note/letter within one or two days.
23. IT IS NORMAL TO BE NERVOUS and interviewers take this into account.

Know Thy Company/Institution/Organization

1. What products or services does the employer produce or perform?
2. How are their products or services looked upon in their industry?
3. What are some of the common industry problems with government regulation, etc.?
4. Who are their competitors? What are they doing in the same field? What advances are being made?
5. What are the most important tasks or problems facing the particular area in which you would work?
6. What major organization changes have taken place recently? How have these affected your area?
Remember!!! The employer is primarily concerned with fulfilling its organizational needs, so ...
7. List all of the tasks you can think of which are probably associated with the job in one way or another. Then match each task with a related skill, ability, or experience of your own.

Know Thyself

1. What skills do you possess and how did you acquire them? (School, work, extracurricular, volunteer)
2. Are you willing to start in an entry-level position?
3. Would you prefer a large or small organization?
4. What type of people do you work best with? Worst?
5. What working environments are best for you? Worst?
6. Which of these are important to you? (Prioritize)
   - Contribution to society
   - Security
   - Income
   - Variety
   - Independence
   - Pleasant co-workers
   - Leadership
   - Advancement
   - On the job learning
   - Challenge
   - Leisure
   - Easy commute
   - Prestige
   - Flexible hours
   - Geographic location

7. See “Most Commonly Asked Interview Questions” for additional questions.

What can I Wear to an Interview?

Dress conservatively with the appropriate business attire. Make sure to convey professionalism at all times. Here are pictures of standard job interview attire.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal or no cologne</td>
<td>Minimal or no perfume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No food or gum</td>
<td>No food or gum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanly trimmed head and facial hair</td>
<td>Controlled hairstyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative tie</td>
<td>Moderate or minimal jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean and pressed business suit</td>
<td>Clean and pressed business suit or tailored dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White long sleeve shirt</td>
<td>Light-colored coordinated blouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal shoes</td>
<td>Formal shoes with minimal heel (consider close-toed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean nails</td>
<td>Clean nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching socks</td>
<td>Matching socks or tan hosiery without runs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry a portfolio with resume and something to write notes</td>
<td>Carry a portfolio with resume and something to write notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid displaying tattoos</td>
<td>Avoid displaying tattoos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most Commonly Asked Interview Questions**

The following list represents those questions most commonly asked by college recruiters from all areas of business. The first fourteen questions in the list are probably the most commonly asked and the most important for you to be able to discuss. It is possible, however, for an interviewer to ask any questions on this list as well as any number of questions that are not on this list.

It is one thing to read through a list of questions and think what your responses might be... it is much more difficult to actually be called upon to express your thoughts. It would be wise to practice with a friend so that you are comfortable talking out loud about your thoughts, ideas, goals, and feelings. **Don’t let the interview be the first time you respond to these questions orally!**

1. What are your long range and short range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
3. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
4. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful?
5. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
6. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
7. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
8. What led you to choose your field of major study?
9. What frustrates you the most? Why?
10. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
11. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
12. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next 10 years?
13. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
14. What are your long range career objectives?
15. How do you plan to achieve your career objectives?
16. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
17. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
18. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
19. How would you describe yourself?
20. Why should I hire you?
21. How do you determine or evaluate success?
22. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
23. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
24. Why did you select your college or university?
25. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
26. What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?
27. Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
28. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
29. How do you work under pressure?
30. In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?
31. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
32. What do you know about our company?
33. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
34. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
35. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
36. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
37. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
38. Are you willing to travel?

**Behavioral Interviewing**

One of the most common tools used to assess competencies is the Behavioral Interview. The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. These structured interviews focus on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. Keep in mind that the interviewer is usually evaluating you against a profile of desired behaviors considered necessary for success.

STAR is a strategy to respond to behavioral interview questions.
**Situation:** Set the stage for the interviewer by providing an overview of this situation and any relevant background information. Be specific and succinct.

**Task:** What goal(s) were you working toward?

**Action:** Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don’t describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word “I”, not “we” when describing actions.

**Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions and don’t be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Your answer should contain multiple positive results whenever possible. Statistics and financial numbers are great, so be prepare to cite them in your answer.

**Sample STAR response**
(Adapted from www.drexel.edu/resources/STAR Method.pdf)

- **Situation:** Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, *The Daily Illini*, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

- **Task:** My goal was to generate new ideas, materials and incentives that would result in at least a 15% increase in advertisers from the year before.

- **Action:** I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of *The Daily Illini* circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a College of Business professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

- **Result:** We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent over the same period last year.

**Questions Students Might Ask an Interviewer**

**NOTE:** Research your organization. Never ask questions you could easily have answered through a little research. It is often a good idea to pick 3 or 4 questions and ask them at each interview. This is a good way to compare companies and their opportunities and attitudes.

**Job Description**

1. What characteristics do you look for in a potential employee?
2. Are promotions from within the organization?
3. How flexible are advancements?
4. Can the job description be altered?

Job History
5. Why was this position created, and how long has it existed?
6. Where do people go after this position?
7. How long do people usually stay in this position?

Personnel
8. Could you briefly describe the company hierarchy? How does this department relate to others?
9. Could you describe the atmosphere of the department? How do the people relate to one another? Do they tend to form personal relationships?

The Department
10. Does the company have any long-range plans for this department?
11. What new projects or ventures are being contemplated in the near future?
12. What type of activities keep the staff morale high?
13. What is its reputation in the company?

Orientation and/or Job Training
14. How is the training program or orientation program for new employees structured?
15. How can I become familiar with company policies?
16. Are employees encouraged to take courses or graduate study? Is tuition reimbursed?
17. Does the company participate in management association? Industry conferences? Professional associations? Are employees encouraged to do so?

The Company
18. Does the company have a growth plan?
19. Are new markets anticipated in the future?
20. Does the company have periodic employee performance review? How do you evaluate employee performance?
21. Do you have an international division and are there opportunities for transfer into this division?

The Community
23. Where might I be working if hired by this corporation?
24. Does the company encourage employees to participate in community activities?
25. How committed is the company to its immediate community?

Negative Factors in an Interview

Here are some special areas that may cause an interviewer to reject the job applicant.

- Poor personal appearance
- Inability to express self clearly – poorly thought out answers, poor voice, diction, grammar
- Overbearing - over aggressive – conceited “superiority complex,” “know-it-all”
- Lack of planning for career - no purpose or goals
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm – passive – indifferent
Lack of confidence and pose – ill-at-ease
Over-emphasis on money – interested only in best dollar offer
Poor scholastic record – just got by
Makes excuses – evasiveness – hedges on unfavorable facts
Lack of tact
Lack of maturity
Lack of courtesy – ill mannered
Condemnation of past employers
Lack of social understanding
Marked dislike for school work
Fails to look interviewer in the eye
Limp, weak handshake
Allowing nervous laughter or verbal tics (um, oh, yeah, ok-ok, yup, like)
Indecision
Lack of knowledge of field of specialization
Failure to express appreciation for interviewer’s time
Merely shopping around
No interest in company or industry
Emphasis on whom he/she knows
Cynical attitude
Intolerant – strong prejudices
Inability to take constructive criticism
Late to interview without good reason
Never heard of company
Asks no questions about the job
Ambiguous response to questions

Note: In addition, it is important for international students to avoid an over-emphasis on the possibility of sponsorship for permanent residence.

Interview Tips for Non-native Speakers

International students, particularly those not perfectly fluent in English, face some additional challenges when applying and interviewing with employers in the U.S. Nonetheless, many have successfully been able to frame their international experience into a selling point during interviews.

Practice is even more important
Try to practice with native English speakers. To improve your English, there is no time like the present to start to speak English with native speakers.

Don’t assume the interviewer knows about your university or the education system in your country
If the university where you studied in your country before coming to UIUC is the best or among the top in your country, say so. Providing too few details may confuse the interviewer. Having said that, giving too many details will bore them. Try to read the interviewer’s body language and tone.

**Become familiar with some of the industry terminology**
Keep reading the news (Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, Bloomberg News, The Economist, etc.) so that you get familiar with business talk and expressions.

**Be more direct and succinct**
Interviewers tend like to be direct and to the point, whereas some international students and professionals have been criticized for being too long-winded in their answers. Avoid putting the answer of a question at the back of an explanation - just give the answer first and explain later.

**Provide positive rather than negative answers**
For example, "I love Barcelona" is better than "I don't like Real Madrid".

**If you don't understand, ask for clarification**
Seeking a clarification on a question is much better than providing an answer that does not match the question. Useful ways to ask for clarification are "Could you please clarify your questions?" or "Could you please be more specific?", or "Could you please re-phrase the question?"

**Don't be apologetic for your accent**
If the interviewer has not understood your answer because of your accent, simply re-answer making a greater effort to be clearer.

**Make the fact that you are an international student a selling point**
Most employers are looking for diversity of thought, languages and experience and, as such, want to hear about your relevant international experience. Make an effort to find the right spin for your story and then practice delivering your message with confidence. Don't be seen as shy or unsure of yourself - particularly as it relates to being an international student. There are a lot of very successful foreign-born professionals in the U.S., so you can make it there too.

(Adapted from [http://www.askivy.net/content/interview-tips-international-students-and-bankers](http://www.askivy.net/content/interview-tips-international-students-and-bankers))

**Illegal Questions: Guidelines for Pre-Employment Inquires**
The following are items of information that employers may not inquire about in pre-employment discussions or interviews or on application form. Your resumes and applications should not contain this information.

1. **Age**: Inquiries about age are prohibited except where age can be proven to be job related.
2. **Arrest Record**: Unlike convictions, inquiries concerning arrests are not permissible.
3. **Citizenship**: Proof of citizenship, birth certificate or naturalization papers may not be required.
4. **Degrees**: inquiries about high school diplomas, college or other degrees are not permitted unless they are job requirements.

5. **Financial Status**: Inquiries concerning an applicant’s financial status, such as home or car ownership, credit ratings, arrangements for financing education or training, social security, bank accounts, and past garnishments of wages are not permissible.

6. **Handicaps**: Inquiries as to an applicant’s mental and physical condition and questions such as “Are you handicapped?” or “Do you have any physical disabilities?” are not permissible. However, a question like “Do you have any physical condition which may limit your ability to perform the job for which you applied?” is permissible.

7. **Height & Weight**: Inquiries as to height and weight may not be asked unless they are job related and relevant to safety standards.

8. **Marital/Family Status**: Inquiries concerning marital status, number and age of children, childcare arrangements, or pregnancy are not permitted. Refusal to hire an applicant because of pregnancy is not permitted.

9. **Military**: Inquiries as to type of discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces cannot be required. Inquiries concerning experience in Armed Forces other than the U.S. Armed Forces are not permissible.

10. **National Origin**: Inquiries about ancestry or native language are not permitted.

11. **Photograph**: May be required only after hiring.

12. **Race/Color**: Inquiries as to the color of an applicant’s kin, eyes, hair, or other questions indicating race or color are prohibited.

13. **Religion/Creed**: Inquiries as to an applicant’s religious affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed are not permissible.

14. **Gender**: Inquiry or restriction of employment is prohibited except in special situations where gender is a **bona fide** occupational qualification (BFOQ), e.g., actress, model.

15. **Social Commitments**: Inquiries about membership in social clubs, religious groups, non-professional organizations, or other non job-related activities are not permitted. It is permissible, however, to ask if an applicant is a member of a job-related organization.

*If asked an illegal question you will quickly realize that it is difficult to respond in a way that allows the interview to continue. One option may be to state that the information/issue/etc. would have no effect on your ability to perform well in the position being discussed. ONLY YOU can decide if you really want to work for an entity that asks illegal questions of prospective employees during an interview.*

**The Follow-Up Letter**

A follow-up letter is important because it provides:

1. An opportunity to show that you understand your prospective employer’s needs and responsibilities.
2. A second chance to relate your past experiences to your prospective employer’s needs and responsibilities.
3. An opportunity to show genuine interest in the job.
Sample Follow-Up Letter

Mr. /Mrs. /Ms. Interviewer’s Full Name
Interviewer’s Title
Interviewer’s Place of Business

Dear Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. Interviewer’s Family Name:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you date you met with interviewer to discuss a career with Interview’s place of business. After discussing the many opportunities for research, travel, and advancement in my field of structural engineering, I was most impressed by your positive approach and continuous solicitation of new ideas in this area.

My university course work/research and my pre-completion practical training employment experiences have given me an excellent perspective on this field.

The combination of my education, research, and employment has solidified my career goals and will allow me to mesh well with your organization’s optimistic philosophy. I look forward to further discussion of the opportunity to achieve these goals with your organization.

Again, Mr. / Mrs. /Ms. Interviewer’s Family Name, many thanks for the time we spent together.

Sincerely,

(Your written signature)

Your Name
Your Local Address

Interview Checklist

1. BE ON TIME.

2. The most important aspect that an interviewer gets out of an interview is a subjective feeling about the interviewee.

3. Listen to the questions.

4. If the question is ambiguous, ask for a clarification.

5. Don’t worry about thinking a moment before answering.
6. Assume that every question is asked for a purpose.

7. Be ready for the blockbuster question… “Tell me about yourself”

8. Tactfully decline to answer questions about your private life, offensive, or illegal inquiries.

9. Don’t talk negatively about a former employer or fellow interviewee.

10. If you must discuss a bad situation with a former employer, do so dispassionately.

11. Even if you don’t believe in yourself, try to make the interviewer think that you do.

12. An interview is centered on the subject you know best…yourself.

13. If you’ve done your preparation, you know more about the interviewer and his/her company than he/she knows about you.

14. Go into an interview with one of your objectives being that you are also interviewing the company to find out about it.

15. Trust yourself to react properly.

16. If you see something you want, go after it.

17. Look at the situation realistically… before the interview you don’t have an offer, the worst that can happen is that after the interview you still won’t have an offer.

**Note:** Be certain that you are serious about a company because of the employment opportunities and not because of the possibility that the company will sponsor your application for permanent residence.