Career Planning Checklist for International Students

Congratulations on being accepted into the A. James Clark School of Engineering! We welcome you and look forward to assisting you with your career preparation and job search. This checklist will help you get started:

Before the semester begins:

☐ Review information from ISSS on employment and life in the US. Learn from International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) about the possibilities and restrictions for working, on or off campus, paid or unpaid, while studying at Maryland. In addition to your Required ISSS Immigration Session, you may find these general orientation topics offered during orientation week to be helpful:
  o Academic Success and US Classroom Culture
  o Finding On-Campus Employment
  o Understanding US Healthcare
  o Adjusting to American Culture

☐ Attend a Job Search 101 for F-1 Students workshop. Looking for work as an international student can be daunting. We will review basic job search terminology, the process for enrolling in CPT, and how to use our jobs database, Careers4Engineers. Discuss some of the cultural norms of the U.S. work world and how to effectively focus your job search efforts. All new international students must attend this and the Resume Writing workshops before you may have your resume critiqued or activate your Careers4Engineers account. View schedule and sign up at http://ter.ps/engrworkshop. Offered multiple times at the start of each semester

☐ Attend a Resume Writing workshop. Writing an effective resume is essential to obtaining interviews. We will review the fundamental content and proper formatting of a U.S. resume. Learn how to make yourself stand out and how to avoid common resume mistakes. All new international students must attend this and the Job Search 101 for F-1 Students workshops before you may have your resume critiqued or activate your Careers4Engineers account. Be sure to make the suggested updates! Offered weekly throughout each semester

Once the semester starts

☐ Bring your updated resume in for a critique. Our peer and professional advisers critique resumes on a walk-in basis, Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:15. You do not need an appointment. Bring a hard copy of your resume with you. Once we confirm that you have attended the required workshops, we will activate your Careers4Engineers account and give you suggestions on how to further improve and build your resume.

☐ Update your Careers4Engineers profile. Careers4Engineers is an online database for engineering majors at the University of Maryland to apply for jobs, connect with employers, and schedule on-campus interviews. You must update your personal and academic profiles, and acknowledge the policy statements on honesty and professional integrity before you can apply for jobs.

☐ Prepare for and attend the Career Fair. The University of Maryland campus wide career fairs occur in mid-September and mid-February. Because there is not much time to prepare, it is important to attend a Career Fair Preparation workshop. Be sure to research the companies, dress for success and practice your elevator speech.

☐ Apply for summer internships. It may seem early to apply for summer jobs in September, but recruiting season begins at the same time classes do. Consider attending a workshop on Cover Letters & Professional Correspondence to help you tailor your job applications for U.S. recruiters.

☐ Create a LinkedIn profile. Create a profile that features a summary, your internships, relevant coursework and class projects. Attend a LinkedIn 101 workshop for help creating your profile. Use your LinkedIn account to connect with both classmates and professionals, and to organize and stay updated with your growing network.

☐ Develop Your Professional Network. You will have opportunities to network with potential employers including information sessions, employer-sponsored workshops and resume clinics. Attend a Job Search 201 workshop to learn how to build and maintain a professional network.
Once the semester starts (cont’d.)

☐ Impress in your interviews. Attend an Interview Techniques workshop to learn how to prepare so you really stand out in an interview. Attend a workshop on Evaluating Job Offers & Salary Negotiation so you know what to do (and what NOT to do) when you get that job offer.

☐ Prepare for life after graduation. Attend International Student & Scholar Services Office’s workshop on OPT during your last semester or year at Maryland to learn about your rights and responsibilities if you wish to seek full time employment in the U.S.

Some Notes on U.S. Business Culture

While in the United States, you will probably meet people from many places, of different races and ethnicities, and with many different religions and belief systems. Most Americans value the diversity of American culture, and may find it difficult to generalize about American culture. However, as in any country, there are some unwritten norms that you may wish to consider as you engage in academic and professional life here.

- **Direct Communication/Eye contact:** Americans are more likely to deal with conflicts directly and openly. ‘Saving face’ is still important in American society, but resolving conflicts and misunderstandings are a priority. People tend to communicate directly and openly as much as possible. Americans expect eye contact with interactions; a lack of eye contact is considered a sign of rudeness, not respect. At the same time, Americans may avoid some topics that are considered sensitive, including race/ethnicity, physical appearance, politics and religion.

- **Cleanliness/Hygiene:** Americans place a strong emphasis on cleanliness, including daily bathing, use of a deodorant, brushing one’s teeth twice a day, and wearing fresh clothing. Because they are not accustomed to it, many people in the US become uncomfortable when they are in close contact with someone who has noticeable body or mouth odor. It is important to remember that personal hygiene can play a major role in professional and social success in the United States. Excessive use of perfumes can be equally offensive to anyone who is allergic to them. As a rule, no odor is better than completely unmasked or excessively masked odors that may otherwise occur naturally.

- **Informality:** Americans are often very informal in both their dress and interactions with others. People frequently call each other by their first names, which should not be seen as a lack of respect. You may call people your own age and your colleagues by their first names. It is best, however, to address professors and adults you do not know personally with their title (Dr., Professor, Mr., Mrs., or Ms. + Last Name) unless they ask you to do otherwise.

- **Time Consciousness:** Despite their informality in other aspects of life, Americans are very concerned about time. People are expected to be on time for appointments, classes, and formal social events. Failure to be on time, especially in a professional setting, tends to create a negative impression. If you know you are going to be late for an appointment, you should call and give an explanation.

- **Personal Space:** Americans tend to stand about two or three feet apart when talking to one another, and often feel crowded when closer. A person feeling crowded may move away to create more distance. This should not be seen as a sign of rudeness, as they are just re-establishing their personal space.

- **Individuality and Self-Reliance:** American society tends to encourage people to think and act individually, to make their own decisions, and to rely on themselves. This does not mean that Americans do not also rely on family and friends for support, or that family and friends are unimportant. It means, rather, that Americans are encouraged to develop themselves and support themselves independently as much as possible. An employee who shows initiative, rather than waiting for instructions, is often valued by recruiters and supervisors.

- **Honesty/Integrity:** In the job search, this means showing respect for the employers by being truthful in job application materials (including your C4E profile, resume, etc.), being punctual to interviews, and being honest in the salary negotiation process. You should only accept a job offer when you are sure you will take the job. Consider attending the workshop on Evaluating Job Offers & Salary Negotiation to help you navigate this process.

Adapted from ISSS materials. For more tips on adjusting to American culture, see: http://www.edupass.org/culture/

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