Hiring International Students – FAQs

Approximately 11% of Amherst College students are international students. They face the same rigorous application process as domestic students and are therefore some of the most accomplished and promising students from around the world. Opening your search to include international students expands your pool of strong candidates and can bring a new, more global perspective to your team. With distinct cultural backgrounds and experiences, international students offer something truly unique to employers.

What can an international student offer to my team?

- **A global perspective on the work you do.** You can gain an entirely different viewpoint from an international employee who can help you zoom out to see the bigger picture of global markets and trends or zoom in on the specific practices of a particular country or region.

- **Motivation, maturity, and adaptability.** Most international students have worked hard, taken risks, and left behind the comforts of home to study and live in the U.S. This persistence combined with the adaptability and maturity required to survive and thrive in a new and foreign environment speaks volumes about the probability they will do well in a work setting.

- **Diversity and cross-cultural fluency.** Knowledge of multiple languages and cultures can add a depth and awareness to your team. International employees can help bridge cultural gaps after studying in the U.S. and living for many years in their home country(ies).

Are international students authorized to do an internship in the U.S.?

Yes. The majority of Amherst College international students are studying here on an F-1 visa, and they have two options for doing internships over the summer or throughout the year:

- **Paid by you, the employer:** If the student receives a stipend or wage/salary from your company, she will need to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). OPT allows the student up to 12 months of work authorization in the U.S. as long as the work is related to his/her academic major(s). If the internship is deemed an integral part of the College or major’s established curriculum, an international student may also qualify for a maximum of 12 months of work authorization under Curricular Practical Training (CPT). The benefit of CPT is that the student can receive approval and work authorization within 5-10 days, whereas OPT processing can take 1-3 months. If the CPT is less than 12 months of full-time work, the student would also qualify for the full amount of OPT. Very few Amherst students qualify for CPT since the College has few departments that require an academic internship for degree completion. Neither OPT or CPT require any extra work or fees on your part, the College helps the student apply and all you have to do is submit the I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification as you would with any new employee.

- **Receive funding from the college for unpaid internship:** For certain types of unpaid internships, the intern may be eligible to receive funding from the college. In this case, the student does not need to apply for OPT or receive work authorization from the USCIS.
Are international students authorized to work in the U.S. after graduation?
Yes. International students with an F-1 visa have various options for working in the U.S. legally:

- **Optional Practical Training (OPT):** Through their F-1 visa, international students are eligible for a total of 12 months of employment through internships and/or jobs that must be related to the student’s major(s).

- **OPT STEM extension:** Students with degrees related to the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) are eligible to extend their 12 months of OPT by another 17 months of post-graduation employment, as long as the employer is in the E-Verify system. During this time, they would remain under F-1 visa status.

- **H-1B visa:** An international student’s F-1 visa does not allow them to stay and work legally in the U.S. after the 12-29 months permitted by OPT & STEM. Employers who would like to hire international employees for a longer period of time can file a petition for an H-1B temporary worker visa with the USCIS. This visa is tied to employment at your company and permits the international employee three years in a specialty occupation related to his field of study. The visa can be renewed for three additional years (for a total of six years of employment).

- **Other temporary worker visas:** There are other options for temporary worker visas, including TN-1, E-3, L-1 and many more. If you want to learn more, please visit the USCIS website or contact an immigration attorney.

Do I have to prove that the international employee is not taking the job or internship away from a U.S. citizen?
You do *not* have to prove that there are no qualified American applicants who have applied *unless* you are sponsoring the international employee in an application for permanent residence, a green card.

Are there any fees or extra paperwork to hire an international student?

- **OPT/CPT:** There are no extra fees or paperwork to hire an international student under OPT or CPT. You only need to file the Form I-9, *Employment Eligibility Verification*, as you would for any new employee. All other paperwork is managed by the student and the College.

- **OPT STEM extension:** If you extend a student’s employment 17 months through STEM, your company or organization must be in the E-Verify system, an Internet-based system that compares information from an employee's Form I-9 to data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration records to confirm employment eligibility. There is currently no fee to register with E-Verify.

- **H-1B visa:** If you file a petition for an H-1B for an international employee you would like to hire for up to six years, you have to pay for the USCIS filing fees which total approximately $800-$2,300, depending on the size and nature of the employer. For premium two week processing through the USCIS, there are additional filing fees. You must also cover the cost of any attorney processing fees which can add $1,500-$2,500 if you do not do it in house.

What will the international student have as proof of work authorization?
If the student applies for and is granted OPT by the USCIS, she will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) for the duration requested (up to 12 months). She does not need to receive the EAD before she is hired, but she does need to receive the EAD before she can begin to work. If the student is granted CPT by the USCIS, she will have CPT work authorization noted on her I-20, the form issued to her by the College once admitted. If an H-1B visa is granted, the applicant will receive an approval notice.
**What if I want to hire an international employee permanently?**

If you want to permanently hire an international employee, you can sponsor the employee in an application with the USCIS for lawful permanent residence, a *green card*. In most cases, you must prove to the Department of Labor through recruitment efforts that there are no qualified American applicants who you have turned down for the position.

**Who can I talk to for more information?**

We recognize that work authorization for international students can be confusing. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Career Center at (413) 542-2265 or Dan Berger, Immigration Attorney at Curran & Berger, LLP (413) 584-3232.

**List of Acronyms**

- USCIS: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- OPT: Optional Practical Training
- STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
- EAD: Employment Authorization Document
- CPT: Curricular Practical Training
- H1-B: Non-immigrant visa for skilled workers