

Cultural Differences

This document includes information that Middlebury College’s Center for Careers & Internships (CCI) highlighted as part of its Fall 2016 presentation entitled: *The U.S. Job Search for International Students*. In November 2016, this information was posted on the Loyola Marymount University website, with credit to the University of Minnesota.

U.S. Employer Expectations	Values in Other Cultures
<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Promotion Expected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk openly about skills and strengths • Share examples of past excellent performance • Openly discuss future goals and interest in advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing specific skills, strengths and accomplishments seen as boastful • Focusing on individual experiences and goals seen as too individualistic
<p style="text-align: center;">Direct Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and direct responses to questions are expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions are often answered vaguely and constructive criticism is avoided even if feedback is requested
<p style="text-align: center;">Body Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm hand shake shows confidence • Direct eye contact is expected and is seen to show honesty and confidence • Crossing legs is common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light/limp handshake may be more common • Handshakes/touching may be inappropriate between men and women • Direct eye contact may be seen as disrespectful, rude or a sign of physical attraction • Crossing legs and/or showing the soles of your shoes may be perceived as rude
<p style="text-align: center;">Informality and Self Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions regarding likes, dislikes and hobbies are not unusual • Interviews may be conversational and include humor or joking • First names are sometimes used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about likes, dislikes or hobbies would be seen as an invasion of privacy/inappropriate • Interviews are more formal and candidates would show much respect to interviewer • Using first names would be too informal
<p style="text-align: center;">Career Plans and Direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates are expected to be passionate about the field and why they chose it • Short term and long term career goals should be clearly articulated by the candidate • Candidates may be able to request specific job responsibilities they most enjoy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers may have chosen profession due to family or government expectations • Career goals are defined by company and community needs, not individual preferences • Company or manager assign work tasks and individual must accept what is available/assigned
<p style="text-align: center;">Individual Responsibility in Job Search</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers are responsible for finding positions on their own and may use many resources to aide this including the online tools, family, friends, faculty, networking contacts, career services etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and/or government may assign you to jobs • Someone may act as an agent to “place” candidates into a job

U.S. Employer Expectations	Values in Other Cultures
<p style="text-align: center;">Time Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates are expected to arrive for interviews 5-15 minutes before the start time • Being late would be seen negatively by the employer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant lateness from scheduled meeting time is not uncommon • Relationships are seen as more important than timeliness
<p style="text-align: center;">Resumes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resumes are typically 1-2 pages and tailored to the specific job and or field • Date of birth, social security number, marital status, gender and photos would never be included 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resumes are often called Curriculum Vitae (CV) and often include a more comprehensive overview of all experience and education • Personal data is more commonly included in the resume.
<p style="text-align: center;">Company Research & Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates are expected to research the company thoroughly prior to the interview • Questions of the employer during the interview are expected and show genuine interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching the company before the interview may indicate excessive interest • Asking questions during the interview may be seen as disrespectful
<p style="text-align: center;">Follow Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following up after interviews via thank you notes and calls or emails to determine the status of an application is considered appropriately assertive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking an employer about the status of a job application would be seen as rude
<p style="text-align: center;">Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age, race, gender should not impact the interviewing relationship • Laws protect candidates from discrimination based on age, race, gender, national origin, marital status, religion, and disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males are expected to dominate interactions with females • Younger candidates defer to older professionals • Laws may not protect candidates from discrimination

Other factors to consider:

- Vacation, Sick & Maternity Leave is not guaranteed in the U.S. and is generally up to the employer.
- Health insurance is generally provided by employers. There is no government-sponsored healthcare and individually purchased insurance can be quite expensive. Remember to plan for this during the job search.

Note: These values do not represent one particular culture, but those that may be true across a variety of cultures around the globe.

Adapted from “International Students and the Job Search.” Goodman, A.P., J.A. Hartt, M.K. Pennington, and K.P. Terrell. Journal of Career Planning & Employment, Summer 1988.