

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT SURVEY REPORT

This survey was delivered in Fall 2022 to all enrolled international undergraduate, graduate, professional students and scholars. A total of 245 international students and scholars responded to the survey, including 125 at the doctoral level, 53 at the master level, 53 at the undergraduate level, and 14 other (mostly postdoc, fellow, or scholars).

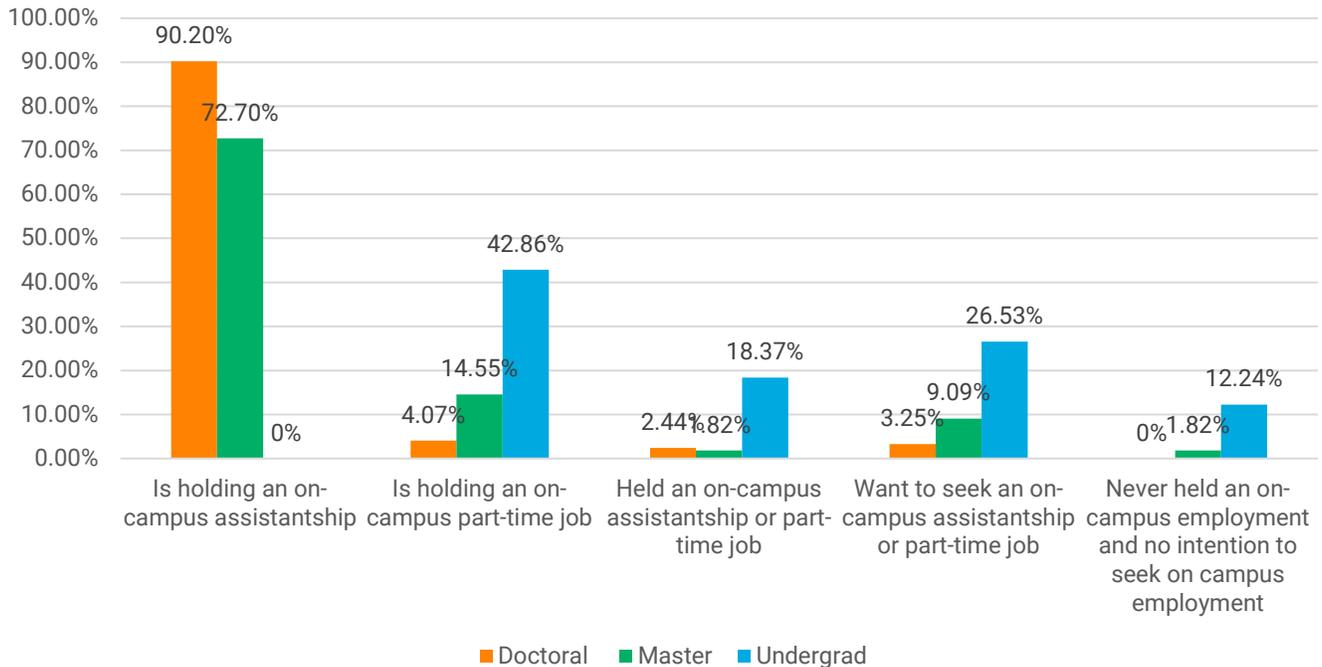
Survey Data – Fall 2022 Survey

Statistics & General Employment Numbers

In fall 2022, there are a total of 2063 international students, including **1751 enrolled students**, and 312 undertaking post-graduation practical training employment. The total number of international scholars on campus is 221. Among the 1751 enrolled international students, 415 (**23.7%**) are undergraduate students, and 1336 (**76.3%**) are graduate and professional students. Roughly **27.5% of the undergraduate international students** are currently employed on campus, versus **90.7% of international graduate and professional students**.

This table below is a summary of the employment situation based on the survey respondents:

Employment Situation



Departments/Colleges, faculty & staff, as well as Handshake are the top 3 ways that international students found their current positions regardless of their degree level. Majority of the international graduate and professional students (both doctoral and master) found their current employment through their department/colleges or faculty/staff, especially for those graduate assistantship is part of their program, while majority of the undergraduate international students found their positions on Handshake.

For those who are currently working on campus, here’s additional information about their prior work experience:

	Doctoral	Master	Undergrad
Have work experience prior to their first on-campus job	79.05%	73.81%	30%
Prior experience in the U.S.	28.57%	11.54%	22.22%
Prior experience outside of U.S.	71.43%	88.46%	77.78%
No work experience prior to their first on-campus job	20.95%	26.19%	70%

Pre-Employment

This section includes survey responses on motivation for work, challenges and support related to job searching on campus.

Motivation to/not to Work

The motivation to seek employment is similar among international students regardless of degree level, with the exception of having employment embedded as part of their degree program for international graduate and professionals students.

Motivation For Work	Doctoral	Master	Undergrad
#1	Finance	Finance	To gain experience
#2	Part of degree program	To gain experience	Finance
#3	To gain experience	Part of degree program	

It is worth noting that immigration regulation restriction is also part of the reasons that international students seek on-campus employment specifically.

- *"Supporting my living during my period of studies at the university, plus cannot access off-campus employment due to visa restriction."*

Other reasons for choosing to work on campus include: location, to give back to the campus community, networking/making friends, things that they enjoy doing (grads), use their free time and get involved on campus (undergrads), and learn about the campus.

For those who decided not to work, especially among undergraduate international students, **concerns about interfering with progress to graduation** and **busy with school work** are the main reasons.

Challenges and Support While Searching for On-Campus Employment

Challenges

Majority of the **international graduate and professional students** indicated there were **no challenges** seeking employment on campus, as that was part of their program of study for a majority of them. For those who did encounter challenges, available funding opportunities (for doctoral level) is the primary concern for those on the doctoral level. **Not knowing where to find information** is a shared concern among graduate and professional students regardless of degree level.

- *"I struggled to find resources. I am not sure if there is a master source including job announcements and available opportunities, but I feel the process is somewhat fragmented."*
- *"Very little information about research positions. Information is scattered along many different websites and departments."*

For **undergraduate international students**, **time and scheduling** is the primary challenge.

- *"As a student-athlete, my schedule is very hectic and changes a lot so finding a job that fit into my time available was difficult."*
- *"When I did my schedule, I wasn't considering the fact that I could work, so none of the jobs fit my schedule."*

In addition, three concerns are shared among international students across the board – **not knowing if they were eligible for a position (or their employability)**, **did not hear back from employers**, and **the perceptions of some jobs preferred domestic students than international students**.

- *"I was going to be a tour guide, but I did not had on-campus experience enough (but I do not know where to get the experience)."*
- *"Applied many jobs in handshake but many are still pending and I have got no responses."*
- *"I don't know why nobody wanted to hire me for a long time."*
- *"If being recruited, the position being offered is commonly only 25% -37.5% as they will prefer to give 50% appointment for citizens or permanent resident."*
- *"Some jobs required a driver's license with 3 years of good history, which as an international student, I don't have."*

Challenges	Doctoral	Master	Undergrad
#1	None	None	Employability
#2	Availabilit of funding	Did not hear back	Time/Schedule
#3	Employability	Did not know where to find job posts	None

Support

Most international students were able to find support from faculty, staff, and peers that they were connected with. In addition, majority of them rely on university website for information. Many expressed the wish to have a comprehensive and easy to access list of positions (for all), as well as help on resumer, cover letter, preparing for interview, etc (especially from undergraduate students), and clear and direct information about stipend, work hours, and obligation to satisfy the employment (grad & professional students).

On-Campus Employment Experience

Things students enjoy

The top 3 reasons that international students enjoy their on-campus employment are:

- **Taking into consideration that they are students first:** *"I love the flexibility, as a student that is extremely important. Having supervisors and coworkers who understand that projects and exams come up is really important to minimize stress. Everyone was always very supportive and understanding of me needing to take time off when I did. Besides that, it always felt rewarding to help improve this community and university I care so much about."*
- **The environment and the location:** *"The working environment is familiar and doesn't really require commuting."*
- **The opportunity to learn:** *"It grants an opportunity to appreciate diversity as well as contribute to the university community. It also exposes on to higher education training."*

Other things they enjoy include: the opportunity to meet people, infrastructure, connection to their study (specific to grads), the opportunity to give back, the ease of getting started, funding/cost, and promote a sense of belonging.

Cultural Differences and Challenges

The biggest cultural differences international students encountered are in these areas: **communication** (all aspects), **diversity**, and **workload**.

- Communication, whether that is the English language, or ways of communication, is expressed as the biggest cultural difference international students encountered across the board.
 - o *"Bosses are not direct. They always smile and I never know if everything ok or not."*
 - o *"Language barrier. It took rather long to learn how to teach in English."*
- Depending on where the students are from and the work that they engage in on campus, they might have different views on either diversity and workload.
 - o Lack of diversity: *"The campus lacks diversity."*
 - o The campus is diverse: *"UIOWA is also an extremely diverse campus, so I had the opportunity to work and interact with a variety of cultures, making the experience unique."*
 - o Workload is heavy: *"Unhealthy work practices such as eating while working, claiming to be busy all the times as a matter of pride whereas others are useless creatures."*
 - o Workload is more manageable: *"We can finish work and go back home on time."*

The biggest challenge for international students working on campus is **time management, or balancing different priorities**. In addition, for international graduate and professional students, availability of funding opportunities, and understanding how to navigate the campus can be challenging.

- *"The assumption that everyone knows what to do (e.g., how classroom technology works) is a wrong assumption especially when it comes to international students. The systems instabilities also affect the execution of assignments."*

Support, Recognition, and Feedback

When asked what their supervisors can do to support them, here are some of the top themes emerged:

- **Providing training and ongoing guidance:** *"Provide structured trainings to improve skills." "Give detailed explanation of assignments."*
- **Understand and help with balancing multiple roles and/or time management:** *"Recognizing that we have other roles to play in our lives other than being an employee for that position."*

In addition, there are some areas of support can be especially beneficial for international students:

- **Travel:** *"I would appreciate if my supervisor can give me some time off to visit my family at least once a year."*
- **Paperwork:** *"I need two: Ensure I have funding lined up from within our department. Sign off on CPT so I can supplement the on-campus employment."*
- **Emotional support and patience:** *"To appreciate that international students may need some time to understand certain processes as they cope up since the first few weeks students are faced with anxiety of settling in."*

When asked how they would like to be recognized for their good work, the top 3 themes emerged are: **public recognition, words of appreciation, and trusted with more responsibilities**.

- *"Be exposed to the main page of the university websites to get the acknowledgement."*
- *"I would like to hear "thanks" from them, but no one says this."*
- *"Verbal recognition, being trusted with more difficult tasks"*

When asked about how they would like to receive constructive feedback for improvement, method of delivery (in person meeting or written form), frequency, and solution-based are among the top comments.

- *"Constructive criticism is always helpful. I like to be told the truth with compassion, even if it may be painful, so I can learn and grow."*
- *"In-person and as soon as possible. I don't like when things are pushed aside or supervisors wait to see if the issue repeats or worsens. If there is something I could improve, I would like to know right away."*
- *"As long as the feedback comes with the possible solution, it should be ok"*

From Iowa Growth & Division of Student Life Student Employee Survey

Here's additional data from the Iowa GROW report from Division of Student Life:

Iowa GROW Outcomes	International	US Citizen
My job has helped me develop more effective time management skills.	88%	91%
Because of my job, I am able to work effectively with individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.	92%	89%
My job has helped me improve my verbal communication skills.	84%	93%
My job has helped me use critical thinking skills to form opinions and solve problems.	80%	87%
My job has helped me develop conflict negotiation skills.	80%	86%
My job has helped prepare me for the world of full-time employment.	76%	70%
My job has helped me learn more about career options.	72%	54%
My supervisor helps me make connections between my work and my life as a student.	76%	76%
I can see connections between my job and my academic major/coursework.	60%	62%
My job has helped me improve my writing skills.	48%	35%

When being asked to describe one specific way the work has positively influenced their experience at UI, international students mentioned:

- *“Working with people at my age is a good way to make friends, especially when you have no friends when you first come to a new environment.”*
- *“Aside from all the relationships I made working as a student employee, I learned a lot in terms of managing time, organizing work effectively and improve my communication skill (mainly word choice) as an international student.”*

When asked about one specific skill that they have learned as a student employee that contributes to their success as UI student, international students answered:

- *“Since I am working as a lead at the marketplace, it has helped me grow my leadership and **time management skills** which I apply to my schoolwork.”*
- *“I learned a lot from the student managers, especially their **communication/leadership skill**. I was able to apply that within small group work in class and the result was great!”*