



SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI OPT EXPERIENCE



Center for Career and Calling

TAI TRAN

Computer Science '18



Home Country: **Vietnam**

Year started OPT: **2018**

Company: **Subsplash, Inc.**

Current Position:

**Software Development
Engineer in Test**



[linkedin.com/in/taitran2301/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/taitran2301/)

Q: How did you find your current job?

A: "Around a month before I graduated from SPU (03/2018), I reached out to my connection at Subsplash; whom I met and connected at the **SPU STEM Mega Meet-up** in 2017. I then got an interview and later an offer for an engineering intern position for 6 months at Subsplash. I got promoted to a full-time position after the internship."

Q: What would you have done differently as a student preparing for OPT?

A: "I wished that I had had at least 1 or 2 related internships during my junior or senior year. That would've helped me a lot in finding a first job after graduating. Please review your OPT application carefully before sending it to the USCIS. One small mistake on the OPT application can drastically delay the arrival of your EAD card or even disqualify your application."

Q: How many jobs did you apply? Which job board did you use the most?

A: "I applied around 30 software engineer positions and only got about 10 phone-call interviews and 4 on-site interviews. I mostly used Indeed and Glassdoor to search for Software Engineer positions around the West Coast."

Tai's Advice:

"Don't just apply for a job at companies that you like or know. You'll be competing with a lot of people for a position that you applied for, so **apply as many major-related positions to increase your chance of getting a first job after college.**

Try to **maintain a good GPA** as well as trying to get as many major-related internships as you can. **The more internships you have during college means the more valuable experience about the job, the higher the chance you can get a first job in the U.S after college.**"

LUER WANG

Physiology '16



Home Country: **China**
Year started OPT: **2016**
Company:
Grace Dental Seattle
Current Position:
**Graduate Student at
Midwestern University**
Email: Wle0127@gmail.com

Q: How did you find your current job?

A: "A friend was working as front desk at the clinic, and since they were hiring new dental assistant, my friend connected me to the clinic. The other one was a tutoring position at a tutoring center. I found that job through the SPU job link and applied through emailing the contact person."

Q: Have you been asked "Do you need work sponsorship in the future?" in your application process? If so, how did you respond?

A: "I have not been asked that question. However, I was asked "How long can you commit to this position?" I answered them honestly by saying that I can have a two-year extension because of my STEM major so I could commit to my position for three years in total."

Q: Is there anything relate to OPT/jobs that you wish you'd have done differently when you were a student?

A: "I wish I started applying for OPT earlier and had done more networking with my peers. They did not help me apply for jobs, but definitely helped when I was applying for graduate school."

Luer's Advice:

"I know it is difficult for you to be here by yourself but remember that the school is your strong support: **seek for help whenever you need to, and they will be there for you.** Also, try your best to **step out of your comfort zone.** Keep **challenging yourself and keep moving forward.** **Don't be shy.** Good luck to you guys!"

ADDISON LIN

Nursing '14



Home Country: **Taiwan**

Year started OPT: **2014**

Company:

**Seattle Keiro; Bayview
Retirement Community**

Current Position:

Graduate Student at UW

Email: lint1@uw.edu

Q: How did you find your current job?

A: I'm currently not working because I'm a full-time student on an F-1 visa now. But, when I was applying for my registered nurse job right after graduation, I applied to nursing homes and hospitals throughout the Greater Seattle area. I knew Seattle Keiro because a nursing friend who graduated 1 year before me worked there and recommended the place. Also, a retired SPU faculty has close connection to that nursing home.

Q: Is there anything relate to OPT/jobs that you wish you'd have done differently when you were a student?

A: "The most reliable way for BSN nurses to get sponsorship is through nursing staffing agencies. Hospitals and nursing homes usually can't sponsor nurses because nurses usually don't qualify for H1B. Staffing agencies usually sponsor you for EB3 green card. Many staffing agencies don't sponsor nurses born in specific countries due to the process that would take years to complete. But, please do your research to protect yourself!"

Q: How did you network? Which platform did you use the most?

A: "I started looking for jobs since my freshman year by asking hospitals around the Greater Seattle area and attended all the job fairs on campus and sometimes off-campus. I would go to Center for Career and Calling for resume editing. Take advantage of CPT (may be available in the summer) to work as nurse technician because nursing work experience is the most important thing employers look for. If not, try to arrange a clinical volunteer or work position in your home country over summer vacation.

Addison's Advice:

If you really want to work in the US, **pursuing a degree in the STEM field or accounting** (if you can pass the CPA exam) would give you the best chance to stay because the STEM degrees can mostly qualify for the STEM OPT extension. But, make sure you **check with the international student service about whether your major qualify for the STEM field**. For graduate school and future work, maybe also **consider countries** like Canada or Australia that has more straightforward work and immigration policies.

CANDICE XIA

Nursing '18



Home Country: **China**
Year started OPT: **2018**
Company: **International
Community Health Services**
Current Position:
Registered Nurse



[Linkedin.com/in/candicexia/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/candicexia/)

Q: How did you find your current job?

A: I was hired back to work at my current clinic as a registered nurse after my clinical practicum course. I was required to complete a senior clinical practicum during my last quarter. This practicum is designed for nursing students to provide an immersion experience under the direct supervisor of a professional nurse preceptor. At that time, I was passionate about community health and working with vulnerable populations. One of my mentors also worked at this place and believed that it would be a good fit for me. I learned more about this community health center; I asked my program to find out if they are accepting any nursing students.

Q: Have you been asked “Do you need work sponsorship in the future?” in your application process? If so, how did you respond?

A: “Yes. I felt obligated to respond honestly. Though I reassured the employers that there is no sponsorship needed the first year and I am authorized to work via OPT. Therefore, this will not influence and impede my ability to perform and provide services.”

Q: Is there anything relate to OPT/jobs that you wish you’d have done differently when you were a student?

A: “I wish that I’ve had more resources or have reached out to more people I know. Looking back to this journey, I had a challenging time finding mentors or peers who grew up in different cultures and had a similar path to me, especially in Nursing. Though when I started to talk about my journey, later on, I found people out there were like me. It would have been more helpful to hear those stories and experiences earlier.”

Candice's Advice:

Be open-minded and flexible. These will be the tools that serve you well as a new grad. **Share your stories and ask for help proactively.** Don't be afraid or feel intimidated. There are many people (your peers, colleagues, professors, even alumni) willing to support and champion new grads out there. Share with them your stories, and **you'll be surprised about how experiences and stories intersect.** I will be cheering you on!

ANGELINA KIMAN

MS Data Analytics '20



Home Country: **Indonesia**

Year started OPT: **2020**

Company: **Microsoft**

Current Position:

Program Manager

Q: How did you find your current job? How many jobs did you apply for?

A: "I found my current job through employee referral or staffing agency. I applied more than 200 jobs. I used company career portals in addition to the staffing agencies."

Q: Is there anything relate to OPT/jobs that you wish you'd have done differently when you were a student?

A: "I wish I had attended the OPT workshop earlier. So, once I got an offer, I can just submit the packet instead of waiting for the next workshop!"

Angelina's Advice:

Q: Have you been asked "Do you need work sponsorship in the future?" in your application process? If so, how did you respond?

A: "Yes, I am currently on CPT (as of Spring 2020) and will transition to OPT in the summer. Since I am a STEM major, I have 3 years for OPT."

"STOP OVERTHINKING, INVEST YOURSELF IN POSITIVE ENERGY. I applied for more than 200+ jobs, I thought to myself that I was never enough; but always be BRAVE, PERSISTENT, and DETERMINED.... And YES YOU CAN!! "



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WHY WE CREATED THIS PROJECT?

"I created this project is because I want to help fellow international students **navigate life after college**. I want international students to know that there are other options after college than just going back to their home country.

One of the biggest lessons I have learned during my time in SPU is **to take a chance on each opportunity**. I also want SPU's international students to **take advantage of the resources we have on campus** - that there are different departments that can help with their needs. **Center for Career and Calling** has helped me in more ways other than career counseling. I hope that you would take some time to visit and **learn more about your future opportunities as international students in the US!**"

DANIELLE WIDJAYA
Event, Marketing Intern



Home Country: **Indonesia**

Education: **Sociology & Criminal Justice '20**

Email: widjayad@spu.edu



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WHY WE CREATED THIS PROJECT?

“As a Career Counselor at SPU and a former international student who went through the whole OPT process, I hope to **become a mirror** of SPU international students to relate to, **a window** of faculty/staff to further understand our international students, and ultimately, **a bridge** to connect and support the international student community.”



Center for Career and Calling

INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR OPT STORIES?

Contact Veronica Zhu
(veronicazhu@spu.edu) or
Center for Career and Calling
for more information!

VERONICA ZHU Career Counselor



Home Country: **China**

Education: **MS & MEd**

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THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR STORIES!



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