The Hunt for... Jobs and Internships

Erez Zadok, Interim Graduate Program Advisor
Department of Computer Science
© 2017
Outline

• Before You Apply
• During Job Interviews
• After Job Interviews
Before You Apply (1)

• **Update your resume/CV**
  • Resume advice, run by adviser
  • Order of items
  • List level of skill by months/years
  • MS with work experience: 2 pages (last page >80% full)
  • Page numbers, 1” margins, 11pt font min size
  • Some details about classes, class projects, work projects
  • Lab affiliation, adviser
  • Papers, publications, theses (planned)
  • Honors, awards
  • Guest lectures, talks, posters, WiPs
  • Funding status: TA, RA, GA
  • Languages spoken/written, Citizenship status

Before You Apply (2)

- **Prepare/update your professional Web site**
  - E.g., lab affiliation, adviser
  - Avoid dependencies on Java, Flash, etc.

- **Clean up social sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)**
  - E.g., embarrassing stuff, strong opinions, politics, religion, etc.

- **Take the right courses for your expected industry**
  - Do well in courses
  - Relevant research projects help
  - Lab affiliation
  - Thesis and papers help even more
How to Find Out Where to Apply?

• SBU Career fairs
• CS Tech Day
• Special industry visitors
• Attend conferences: industry recruits there
  • CEWIT/AERTC annual events
  • Other conferences/workshops your adviser can send you to
• Ask advisers, faculty, current/ex-students
When to Apply?

• **Summer Internships**
  • Early in Spring semester (e.g., February)

• **Full-time jobs**
  • Early in graduating semester (e.g., October if graduating in December)

• **Don’t apply too early!**
  • Companies will try to pressure you
  • You get few and worse offers
  • You don’t have all your grades, projects, papers yet
  • If they like you, they’ll be back

• **Submit as many applications as you can at once**
  • Usually by email
  • Some have online HR systems (web upload)
  • Apply to few “safety” jobs just in case
What to Expect Next

• **Wait to get contacted**
  • Nice to have confirmation they got your resume
    • Emails do get lost
  • Best: you have a friendly “contact” inside the company (e.g., ex-SBU student)

• **Start to “pre-study” in anticipation of interviews**

• **Some companies contact you quickly**
  • Some can take weeks/months
Outline

• Before You Apply
• During Job Interviews
• After Job Interviews
Handling Initial Industry Contact

• You may get a “cold” call or email
  • Asking you to interview “on the spot”
  • Resist: politely ask for 1-2 days extension
    • Maybe you have deadline – this will give you time to prepare
    • Be flexible: offer weekend times
  • Pick a good time for initial phone interview
    • Minimal stress, good night sleep

• You may apply to several top choices and a few “safe” choices
  • Consider all of them very seriously
  • You may be surprised how much you dis/like a company after doing the full interview process.
Preparing for Initial Interviews

• Study the company **harder than you ever studied for any exam**
  • Little time, lots to study
  • Company people, group interested in you, products, white papers, manuals
  • Company’s relevant technologies, key research papers published recently
  • Brush up on programming skills
    • Especially those you claim to have expertise
  • Brush up on algorithms and data-structures
    • Often 1st filter (e.g., Google “scalability” questions)
• Know your resume (especially school and work projects)
• Research labs and R&D company divisions focus more on research
• Be prepared to ask interviewer a couple of questions about company
  • Demonstrates your interest
During Interviews

• **Take notes**
  • You won’t remember everything weeks later

• **Listen carefully to questions**
  • Ask for clarifications as needed
    • “So what you’re asking me is … , right?”
  • Think for 1-2 seconds before starting to answer
  • Compose your entire answer in your head before you speak
  • Don’t interrupt interviewer (over-enthusiasm)

• **OK to ask questions at end**
  • Shows you’re interested in company

• **Keep a bottle of water next you to**

• **Don’t get distracted (e.g., TXTs, phone calls)**
Interview Process (1)

1. **One or more phone interviews**
   a) Have a good headset for your phone, good connection, quiet place

2. **Likely followed by a Skype/GTalk video interview**
   a) Have a good headset for your computer, good connection, quiet place
   b) Do a mock test of A/V quality
   c) Be presentable visually (dress, shave, hair)
Interview Process (2)

3. On-site interviews (often for jobs, not internships)
   a) Intense, long multi-day series of interviews
      i. Each day 10-12 hours straight
      ii. Stay alert: good rest/travel (12+ hours min to settle in)
      iii. Food/drink choices: plain, known, light
           • http://www3.cs.stonybrook.edu/~ezk/grad-res/eating.html
   b) Don't let your guard down
      i. Many people will ask you same questions: don’t get bored
         • Some companies give all interviewers “veto” power
      ii. A “casual lunch” is still an interview
          • Assessing your personality
   c) Study the facilities and people (e.g., do employees seem happy)
Outline

• Before You Apply
• During Job Interviews
• After Job Interviews
Job Offer Packages

- Base annual salary
- Health benefits (more important in your future)
- Stock options
  - Quantity, strike price vs. market price
  - Vesting schedule: 4 years, 1st year vested after 12 months, then 1/48th
  - IPO plans
- Year-end bonuses (guaranteed, merit based, etc.)
- Day-care facility, transportation/parking, meals/snacks
- Green Card sponsorship (and covering costs)
- One time benefits
  - Sign-up bonus
  - Relocation costs
Evaluating Offers and Companies

- **Consider entire package, plus**
  - Study location of company (housing/rental prices, transportation/gas)
  - Study company’s market success/plans (public vs. private)

- **Consider size and growth of company**
  - ”Google” size vs. 10-person startup
  - **Big company**: Job security, lateral movement, but narrower focus
  - **Startup**: more “excitement”, potential, and ability to work on everything, but no “working hours”

- **How long do you plan to stay?**
  - Minimum one year (stock options, resume)

- **Advancement possibilities**
  - Options to move to different location and/or group
Handling and Negotiating Offers

• If only one offer, “easy” choice
  • Take it, or stay in school longer, then try again
  • One more semester in school: significant impact on lifetime earnings

• Multiple offers?
  • Discuss with adviser pros/cons of different offers
  • Consider entire package (e.g., health benefits, location, more)
  • Usually 2-week deadline to accept offer
    • Can ask for one short extension, no more
  • Ok to negotiate one offer against the other
    • No more than once
  • Resist pressure to accept offers too quickly
Accepting an Offer

• Inform company by email, phone call, or signed contract
• Wait for acknowledgment
  • At this point, you have **committed** to the offer!
• Then politely tell all others you “decline”
  • “It was a hard decision”
  • “I really liked you”
  • “I will consider you in future”
  • Cancel any pending interviews/trips
Reneging on an Offer

• Reneging: go back on your word, back out, break agreement

• Some companies may pressure you to break signed contract
  • Even if you just accepted a company’s offer by email
  • Working for a company that encourages you to break the law?!

• NEVER, EVER, RENEGE ON AN OFFER YOU ACCEPTED!
  • Even if it was over the phone or email only (i.e., no signed contract)

• Reflects poorly on you, advisers, department, school, and university
  • You/dept./all could get black-listed

• You can get legally sued for breach of contract
  • Possible visa problems

• May impact your graduation
Turning Internships to Jobs

• A foot in the door for a full time job offer
• Show you're a team player, willing to work hard, long hours
• If you do well, your boss will call you in your last week and ask “So, when are you graduating?”
  • that means: we want to give you a job offer now
• Unless you love the company, politely tell them you need more time
  • If they like you that much, they’ll hold your offer open for months
• Even if you’re almost sure about one company, good idea to interview elsewhere
  • Often a pleasant surprise
  • Get to meet more people, impress them, future connections
Long Term

• **2-3 years later, ask adviser for:**
  • Green card support letters (confirm studies and employment)
  • H1B visa support letters (“exceptional merit”)

• **Lifetime earnings correlate strongly with amount of education you have**
  • Ph.D. >> MS with Thesis >> MS >> B.Sc.
  • Get through economic downturns better
  • Improved promotion chances in long run
Q&A

Jobs and Internships

Erez Zadok, Interim Graduate Program Advisor
Computer Science Department

© 2017