



Interstride & Columbia SIPA

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How Columbia SIPA is closing the gap in international student support

Blair Dayton

Assistant Director of Student Relations at the Career Advancement Center

640+

International students

43%

International students

With Interstride since 2022

“At SIPA, we have so many international students and their questions either go beyond how we can answer as career advisors,” said Blair Dayton, Assistant Director of Student Relations at the Career Advancement Center at SIPA. “We have our international student office, which is Columbia-wide, but even for an office like that to handle the influx of international students across Columbia and the questions that they have [is a challenge].”

While the career center is deeply committed to supporting the hundreds of international students from over 80 countries, Dayton explained, “We feel like ‘I want to be doing more, but I can only do so much.’”

The career center wanted to proactively address questions that, while mostly directed to the ISSO, would still come up in their office. The career center has one advisor in particular that handles questions about internships and Curricular Practical Training (CPT), and wanted to be able to address the fuller scope of questions international students had.

The question became, “Should we have

The Challenge

Located in the heart of New York City, Columbia University is one of the top five universities by international enrollment. At the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), it’s no different.

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someone from ISSO occasionally sit in our office to be there for very specific questions from our international students?” Dayton explained, “We went back and forth [on] how can we fix this problem. [That’s when] Interstride came up.”

Why Interstride

One of the things that made Interstride stand out was its user-friendliness and comprehensiveness. “It’s more than just a job search platform,” Dayton shared.

The ability for students to access resources, network, search for opportunities in other countries, and for admins to customize the platform and make Interstride their own, stood out.

“[It has] a lot of different features on there. There’s so much you can do with it, in comparison to something like [a legacy tool], which I felt was very archaic and old school and I don’t think any students were really utilizing it.”

The Impact

By implementing Interstride, Dayton knows that they are supporting international students more. “It shows that we care. Most importantly, that we’re trying to provide the

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most up-to-date and modern resources that we can. I think in higher-ed, we have to recognize that times change. We have to go with what’s best out there, technology-wise and platform-wise — in comparison to some other platforms that just haven’t changed for many, many years. We’re investing in something that’s modern and more helpful and easier to use.”

The questions and uncertainties that international students face are unique and complex, from OPT to STEM to H-1b to whether something is STEM. “It’s just so many questions. We don’t want to leave them in the air, so if these are already available in Interstride, that’s even better.”

“We just didn’t have enough manpower to address everything,” Dayton shared. “[With Interstride, we’re] giving a significant extra resource to our international students that we weren’t providing.”

Interstride is the #1 platform to attract, engage, and retain international students

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