



Finding A Job During the COVID-19 Era

EVENT SUMMARY

Online via Zoom

Thursday, June 25, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Moderator

[Scott D. Webb](#) | *Career and Academic Advisor, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS)*

Speakers

[Lily Lopez-McGee](#) | *Director, Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Program, Howard University*

[Zahabya Mama](#) | *Project Management Unit (PMU) Associate, Europe and Eurasia, Chemonics International*

[David J. Smith](#) | *President and Founder, Forage Center for Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Education, Inc.*

Event Description

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the global economy in many ways, especially when it comes to the job market. Some organizations have had to downsize, close temporarily, or freeze hiring. As organizations adjust to this new way of operating, those entering the job market for the first time may wonder how this pandemic has affected the job market.

SID-Washington — in partnership with the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) — facilitated an interactive discussion on how the international development job market has changed in the past few months, offered practical tips for making your application stand out, and discussed what skills are most important in this new virtual working world.





Key Takeaways

1 Networking

Zahabya Mama (Chemonics International) shared her experience with the job search process during the pandemic, from networking in person to beginning a new position remotely. Ms. Mama stressed the importance of leveraging connections, meeting new people through existing relationships, and using informational interviews to broaden the scope of the search. Networking is not easy, as noted by **David J. Smith** (Forage Center for Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Education, Inc.), and it takes practice to improve. He noted that international development professionals often want to be contacted and to give back to young people. **Scott D. Webb** (Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey) recommended clarity and directness when reaching out, whether through email, LinkedIn, or a Zoom meeting chat box.

Online networking can be a useful tool for building your narrative. During the conversation, **Lily Lopez-McGee** (Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Program, Howard University) emphasized having a defined brand or narrative that tells a story, outlining skills, experiences, and goals. An updated LinkedIn profile that matches your resume is an opportunity to showcase yourself.

2 Getting a Job Remotely

The panelists offered various tips for interviewing remotely and representing yourself online. To have a virtual interview mirror an in-person interview, Ms. Mama suggested opting for video calls when possible, and looking out for non-verbal cues such as nods and smiles that might be more obvious in person. Candidates should be mindful of their background – Zoom offers green screen options – and try to troubleshoot connectivity issues beforehand. However, Mr. Smith noted that people tend to be more forgiving about technology during the pandemic. As the remote work environment evolves, Ms. Lopez-McGee also discussed the possibility of non-interview activities such as writing assignments or group dynamic exercises to distinguish candidates. The panelists agreed that one advantage of a video interview is the opportunity to prepare notes or a cheat sheet in advance. Some options included:

1. A list of five or so anecdotes to integrate in the conversation
2. Examples of your skills and aptitudes, specifically pulled from the posted job description
3. A central value proposition surrounded by key points that you want to communicate about yourself.

Once on the job, the panelists recommended maintaining open lines of communication, setting boundaries, and integrating self-care into your routine.



Key Takeaways

3 Other Paths

While candidates may be more focused on the job market, the panelists encouraged attendees to be open-minded about other opportunities such as graduate school, fellowships, or non-degree courses. Ms. Lopez-McGee highlighted two main benefits of a fellowship:

1. Fellows can gain training and experiential learning in a long-term program, usually between six months and a year.
2. Fellowship applications, which are usually detailed and require a personal narrative, offer a chance for introspection on your career goals.

A masters or other graduate-level degree may also offer a chance for learning and introspection. The panelists recommended considering factors including program type, cost, faculty, and alumni outcomes when choosing a program. However, job searchers should not rule out other forms of education such as project management training, language learning, and professional certifications.