



# PATHFINDER

A CAREER CENTER NEWSLETTER SERIES  
FOR SUFFOLK'S GLOBAL STUDENT COMMUNITY



## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

BY AKI VIVEKANANDAN

Something has shifted, and students are noticing it before anyone is naming it.

I have been meeting more students lately who describe feeling unseen. Some go further and say they feel unwanted. What strikes me is that this feeling tends to be strongest among the students I am meeting for the first time, the ones who have not yet found consistent support or a person inside the institution who genuinely sees them.

That is not a coincidence. When you do not have that anchor, you start reading the broader environment instead. Right now, the broader environment is sending a particular kind of signal. Students are not imagining it. They are calculating it. They are adjusting their expectations, their timelines, and in some cases, their sense of what is possible. This issue is for the ones who see the forces clearly and are still choosing to build forward.

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# POSITIONING YOUR POSSIBILITIES

## Where Do You Stand Now?

In the last issue, we explored what you have been building internally. The skills, the thinking, the ability to hold complexity without panicking. Much of that growth is quiet. It does not announce itself. It is real, and it is compounding.

Now the question shifts outward.

Graduation is not just a milestone. It is a visibility event. You are entering a system that is actively sorting, evaluating, and making decisions based on what it can see and understand about you. That system does not always operate on fairness or complete information. It rewards legibility. It rewards presence. It does not wait for you to be ready.

This is where positioning begins. Not as a performance, but as a practice.



## The Landscape is Changing

Early advice was built for a more stable context.

Work hard. Build skills. Apply strategically. Network intentionally. That advice is not wrong. It is incomplete.

When policies shift, timelines compress, and access is uneven, the same inputs do not produce the same outcomes. Intentional applications require time and stability. Not every student has both. That asymmetry matters. When the standard approach does not work, the gap is not your ability. It is the conditions. Incomplete advice under high-stakes timelines fails quickly.

At the same time, the nature of entry-level work is shifting. Employers are using AI to automate tasks that were traditionally assigned to junior roles. Screening is faster and more selective. Fewer roles are designed as training grounds. The bar for “entry-level” increasingly includes prior experience, proof of impact, or immediately usable skills.

This does not eliminate opportunity. It changes what gets rewarded. Clear signals, visible work, and demonstrated capability matter earlier than they used to. There is also a values tension. U.S. career development rewards visibility and outreach. For students from contexts where position is earned through demonstrated excellence, outreach can feel transactional. Asking for help can carry a cost.

The students who navigate this best understand what the system rewards and choose how to engage.

This often involves code-switching. It means communicating and signaling value in ways the system recognizes, even when those expectations are not neutral or equally accessible. That requirement is not equitable. It adds load to students already managing constraints.

Clarity matters. You are not changing who you are. You are deciding how to be understood in a system that was not designed with you in mind.

## **Expanding Your Range**

We limit ourselves by defining success too narrowly. "I need a job in the U.S. immediately." "I need to get this right the first time." "If this does not work, I have failed." When success collapses into one outcome, every obstacle becomes existential. Your possibilities are constrained by context, not defined by it. They expand or contract based on how you define them.

This is not about lowering ambition. It is about refusing to let one outcome hold your future hostage. What you are building travels with you. Where you build is a decision you can keep making. That is strategic clarity.

## **Operating Under Compression**

Not everyone has the same flexibility. Some can explore. Others must decide while moving. That is not a deficit. It is a different operating model. You are not behind. You are working under compression. Build accordingly.



## **Parallel Planning Is Not a Backup**

Parallel planning is not a concession. It is risk management.

Build multiple paths at once:

A primary path aligned with immediate goals.

A secondary path that maintains field momentum.

A third path that builds skills, experience, or income.

If one path slows, you shift lanes. You do not reset. This protects momentum.

## **Visibility Is a Strategy**

The market does not operate on merit alone. It operates on visibility. It cannot choose you if it cannot see you. This is not performance. It is reducing invisibility. It is making your work legible to decision-makers. You are not asking for permission. You are making your work easier to recognize. Ask yourself each week: Who new knows I exist? Where did I show up? What signal did I send?

# VOICES FROM THE JOURNEY: RIDDHI PATEL

## ACTIVATE YOUR CAREER PLAN

The Activate Your Career Plan (AYCP) Program stands out as an invaluable opportunity for international students. This six-week, in-person cohort provides the structure, tools, and confidence needed to strengthen career direction, explore opportunities, and prepare for the U.S. job market. What might take months to figure out independently is guided step by step in just a few weeks, making the entire process feel more manageable and focused.

The program walks you through every stage of career planning in a way that feels both practical and personal. It begins with defining your direction, reflecting on your strengths, interests, and long-term goals, and then helps you translate that into action.

From building an American-style resume and cover letter to creating a strong LinkedIn profile, AYCP shows you how to present your experiences in a way that resonates with employers. Each session left me with something tangible I could immediately apply.



CLASS OF 2026  
MS BUSINESS  
ANALYTICS  
HOME COUNTRY: INDIA



Beyond that, AYCP provides tools that make a real difference during the job search process. From job application trackers to curated lists of platforms for jobs, internships, and volunteer opportunities, I felt equipped with resources that helped me stay organized and proactive instead of overwhelmed. What really sets AYCP apart is that it does not just tell you what to do.

It helps you understand how to approach your career strategically. I learned how the job market actually works, how to evaluate opportunities, and how to align my skills with what employers are looking for. Instead of guessing, I began making more informed and intentional decisions.

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Another key takeaway was learning to treat networking as a skill that can be developed. AYCP emphasized using LinkedIn not just as a profile, but as a tool for research, outreach, and building meaningful connections. It also highlighted how many opportunities exist beyond job postings and how to access them.



AYCP also introduced how to use AI tools thoughtfully and provided clarity around important timelines, which was especially helpful for international students navigating the process.

More than anything, AYCP gives you the confidence to move forward. It provides the tools, structure, and mindset needed to approach your career with clarity and purpose, while making sure you do not feel like you are figuring everything out on your own.

For international students navigating their career path in the U.S., AYCP offers a clear and structured starting point. The impact goes far beyond the six weeks. It stays with you as you take your next steps.

## CAREER INSIGHTS CORNER

### BUILD YOUR SEARCH AS A SYSTEM, NOT A CHECKLIST

Treat your search as a system with timelines, signals, and parallel paths. Below are the components of a systemic working model

- Strategic Timeline (Plan Backward)
  - Define your start constraint (OPT/EAD or target start date).
  - Subtract hiring cycle length (industry dependent) to find your peak application window.
  - Subtract preparation time (resume, portfolio, outreach) to set your start date.

Output: A clear start date, peak window, and weekly targets.

- Parallel Paths (Risk-Managed Ambition)
  - Path A: Primary roles aligned to your target function.
  - Path B: Adjacent roles that use 60-70% of your skills.
  - Path C: Skill-building or networking to learn more about your industry.

Reminder: This can also be applied to your visa planning options. Plan for all three paths parallelly and shift lanes when a path is becoming unviable.

- Visibility System (Reduce Invisibility)
  - Weekly targets: Tailored applications, 3-5 outreaches, 1 visible artifact.
  - Artifacts: project, case write-up, GitHub repo, portfolio page, or LinkedIn post.
  - Engage with peers/ others at least 3 times per week on LinkedIn.

Reminder: Signal > volume. Show how you think, not just where you applied.

- Outreach Template (Adapt to your Needs)

Subject: [Shared context] + [Specific interest]

Hi [Name],

I came across your work on [specific project/team]. I am building toward [role/function] and recently worked on [relevant project or outcome]. I would value 15 minutes to understand how your team approaches [specific problem].

Thank you,  
[Name]

- AI Prompt (Refine Positioning)
  - Role: You are a strategic career advisor who specializes in job search planning for international students with OPT work authorization.
  - Context: I am a Suffolk University graduate with [degree] in [field]. My OPT start date is [date] and I have [X] days remaining before my 90-day unemployment limit. I am targeting [industry/role type] in [preferred locations].
  - Task: Create a 4-week job search action plan with specific daily and weekly targets. Include a mix of direct applications, networking activities, and skill-building tasks.
  - Constraints: Account for my OPT timeline constraints. Include both online and offline strategies. Set realistic daily targets that are sustainable.
  - Format: Week-by-week plan with daily action items, weekly goals, and success metrics.
- Weekly Check In
  - What did I build that is visible?
  - Does someone new know that I exist?
  - Which path did I advance?

Clarity over intensity. Consistency over sprints.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORKING PANEL

Thursday, April 2nd | 4:00 PM-5:30 PM |

120 TREMONT STREET, SARGENT HALL

Connect with international alumni who have been in your position and understand the realities of building a career in the U.S.

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CAREER DROP-IN SESSIONS WITH AKI

Tuesday, April 7th | 2:00 PM- 4:30PM

INTO LOUNGE, 4th Floor, Stahl Building

A flexible space to get quick, targeted support on your career strategy. Bring your resume, questions, or next steps, and leave with clearer direction and actionable feedback.



**AKI VIVEKANANDAN, MS**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF  
GLOBAL CAREER STRATEGY AND  
PARTNERSHIPS, CAREER CENTER

[EMAIL ME](#): To be featured in the next issue and for feedback.

## **TECHSTARS x STARTUP WEEKEND**

**Friday, May 1st- May 3rd**

**Tech Superpowers, 500 Harrison Ave Suite 108, Boston, MA 02118**

**A fast-paced, hands-on weekend where you form teams, validate real problems, build working prototypes, and pitch to experienced judges in just 54 hours.**

**Student Discounted Registration link below: \$25**

**DISCOUNTED**  
**REGISTRATION**