

# RESOURCES FOR BIPOC STUDENTS

The Career Development Center is committed to meeting the needs of students identifying as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and to providing support as you navigate the inequities, opportunities, cultures, expectations and hurdles of employment pathways. We encourage students to embrace who they are and be their authentic, unapologetic selves. This is an introduction to resources that may be helpful to you as you enter the workplace and the job search process. If you are aware of a resource we should consider including, please email [career@oregonstate.edu](mailto:career@oregonstate.edu). Oregon State's Office of Institutional Diversity also has a great list of academic associations, local groups and many other resources at [diversity.oregon-state.edu/resources](https://diversity.oregon-state.edu/resources).

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## HOW TO EVALUATE AN EMPLOYER'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

If finding an openly inclusive and welcoming workplace environment is important to you, here are some questions for you to consider as you evaluate a new employer. You can look for answers to these in job descriptions, company websites, news about companies, reviews on websites like Glassdoor and from asking people in your network:

1. Can you find a diversity philosophy or policy on their website?
  2. Is there any mention of diversity or inclusion in the job posting itself?
  3. Are the organization's leadership profiles diverse? If there are people of color, women, etc. at the top, the organization may be more likely to support diverse employees.
  4. Can you find evidence of diversity-related programs or initiatives?
  5. In the interview process, consider asking specific questions like: "What are you doing as an organization to create an environment where everyone feels included?" "What kind of diversity and inclusion trainings are available to employees?" "What value does diversity bring to your organization?"
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## BUILD A NETWORK/COMMUNITY OF COLOR

As you begin or continue to grow your career, it can be helpful to connect with other students and alumni who share similar identities, academic backgrounds and experiences. These relationships remind us that we're not alone and that others just like us have navigated similar challenges and barriers. **To connect and be in community with others as a current OSU student**, check out the opportunities available with [OSU Cultural Centers](#), [OSU Student Clubs & Organizations](#) and the [Educational Opportunities Program](#).

**You can also connect with alumni through a variety of online tools.** We recommend that you start by exploring the [OSU Alumni Association](#) webpage where you can find [affiliated alumni groups](#), such as the [OSU Black Alumni and Friends Network](#). You can also find and message alumni, including alumni of color, on [LinkedIn](#). Look up "Oregon State University" as a school in the search bar. Click on the "Alumni" tab and search by major, keyword, etc.

## Find a Mentor

If you meet an alumnus/a, professor, student, etc. of color who you admire, don't hesitate to reach out to them and ask to meet up. You may just meet once for coffee or a phone call to talk about any tips for advancing in your career, getting your foot in the door or being a successful student or employee. Or you may consider asking them to be a more regular mentor of yours who you can contact for life advice and friendship from someone who's walked the road ahead of you.

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## WORKPLACE PROTECTIONS FOR BIPOC EMPLOYEES

Based on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it is against the law for U.S. employers to discriminate against potential or current employees on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, gender and age. (Race discrimination includes on the basis of ancestry, and physical/cultural characteristics such as skin color, hair texture or styles, or facial features.) Unfortunately, workplace and hiring biases still exist and you may encounter them in your career, but it may be helpful for you to know what your legal rights and protections are.

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## HOW TO HANDLE INTERVIEW DISCRIMINATION

Legally, there are interview questions that may not be asked. If you receive a question that makes you uncomfortable and may be illegal, here are a couple of options for responding:

- **If you feel comfortable answering**, you may choose to respond to the question asked. Consider keeping answers short and related to your skills and experience only.
- **If you do not feel comfortable answering**, you may decide to redirect or decline to answer. For example, ask the interviewer to help you understand why the question is relevant to the position or answer the parts of it you do feel comfortable with. You may be as graceful or direct with any of these approaches depending on your comfort. For example:

Interviewer: "As a person of color, how do you feel about the civil unrest that's going on with this country?" (Unrelated/inappropriate question)

- **Answering:** "There has been a lot of division in our country lately. I personally support the right to peaceful protest and hope we can create reforms that will protect Black communities."
- **Redirecting:** "Can you help me understand how the question relates to the qualification of the job? I want to make sure I'm clear before I respond." (Often an employer will realize they've asked something inappropriate and change the subject.)
- **Declining:** "I'd rather not answer this question at this time. I don't believe it relates to the position responsibilities."

For more information on illegal interview questions and employment discrimination, see:

- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (Information and how to file a discrimination complaint against an employer)
- [A U.S. department of labor presentation on illegal or inappropriate interview questions](#)(PDF)

# DRESSING IN AN INTERVIEW/ON-THE-JOB

One decision you may face in the interview or hiring process is how to express your identity, culture and race through how you dress. This is a highly personal decision. It is also influenced by the norms of your industry, the region and the specific organization.

The Career Development Center encourages people to dress according to their values. You can express your race, religion and cultural background in interview dress (e.g., wearing hijab, turbans) and wearing hair naturally (e.g., curly, twists, braids). Under federal law, an employer cannot discriminate in hiring based on an applicant's race, national origin, gender, pregnancy, age, disability or religion. That being said, the decision may give you pause.

1. A good idea is to seek advice from your community, from mentors and others in the industry. They may have some great tips to help you navigate a new workplace culture. When in doubt, err on the side of dressing a bit more formally for an interview and slowly feel out workplace dress norms in the first week or two on the job. But always be yourself! Within common dress categories like “business professional” or “business casual” there is room to show off your personal style.

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## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR

There are many professional organizations and internships that provide opportunities to gain networking and professional work experience for people with specific identities. Do a search online with keywords such as your identity and career interest (e.g. “Black” and “Engineering”) and what you’re looking for (e.g. “Professional Association” or “Internship”). Professional organizations and associations may charge membership fees. Review benefits and inquire about discounted or free student membership.

### Internships

[Emerging Leadership Internship Program](#)

[INROADS](#)

[OSU McNair Scholars Program](#)

### Professional Organization

There are professional organizations that may have students chapters at Oregon State University such as:

[Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Science \(MANNRS\)](#)

[National Organization of Minority Architects \(NOMA\)](#)

[OSU Society For Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science \(SACNAS\)](#)

There are professional organizations that may cater more specifically to employees already working in a specific industry, but which may be appropriate for a student to join such as:

National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)

National Black Nurses Association (NBNA)

Network of Arab-American Professionals

Hispanic Public Relations Association (HPRA)

Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE)