

First-time Immigration Practitioner Masters the Application Process With Partner Envoy

Bethune-Cookman University is no stranger to change. Founded as Cookman Institute in 1872, the historically black college has come a long way, achieving its university status in 2007. Through its multiple iterations of expansion, Bethune-Cookman has relied on talent to foster the learning of its continually growing crop of students.

“We are a small research university, and we are increasing our student numbers,” says Latricia Harris, HR generalist at the university.

Diversity of thought is important to the university, which is why they recruit faculty and staff from around the world. Harris says the tenet helps their students succeed and the institution grow and compete.

The university has recently changed how it manages its immigration program. Previously, each department handled the sponsorship needs of each new hire yet now all immigration needs are handled by one department, human resources. With this shift, Harris needed to learn how to manage the often confusing and tedious application process for engineers and developers needing H-1B Person in Specialty Occupation visa sponsorship.

Adapting to Market Constraints

In organizations around the country, HR professionals have to adapt to the demands of the market, which currently has a major skills gap in technical roles. Due to the inadequacies of the U.S. immigration system, many first-time sponsors are uncertain about the process and don't understand what type of information is required to create an effective work visa petition. However, with an immigration services provider that acts as a partner throughout the process, success is possible, as Harris found while managing her first petition.

An Unparalleled Level of Employee Support

With a sound understanding of the immigration process, facilitated by Envoy, Harris is able to offer her employee's confidence and support throughout the application process.



About the Company

Background

Bethune-Cookman University has graduated more than 13,200 students and employs many alumni in the fields of education, medicine, business, politics, government, science, religion, athletics and environmental sciences.

Employees

More than 700

Visa Types

H-1B visas & Green cards

Roles Sponsored

Computer engineers, construction, software development

“On our first case, a younger gentleman was uncertain about whether or not he would be able to be processed through the company and even get the H-1B visa,” says Harris. “That was a little bit nerve-wracking. With my understanding of the process and some of the anxieties that come with it, I was able to talk the employee through that process and get everything uploaded through the online system. The visa applicant actually graduated from the institution itself,” says Harris. “Envoy going through the case with him, and getting us familiar with the resources available was an excellent help. The assistance that was provided was great for our employee, who was coming up for an expiration for his Optional Practical Training [the program offers work authorization to international students]. That process has allowed not only our employee to be helped, but for us as an institution to help our employee.”

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Employee Satisfaction

“We have an employee who is currently applying for a green card,” she says. “One of the things that he relayed to me is how reassuring it is that we have this online immigration management system.” Historically, the immigration process is shrouded in secrecy as, oftentimes, sponsored employees don’t know what’s happening with their case. With an online platform, each applicant can stay updated with the status of their application each step of the way.

Harris found it to be a life-changing experience for her sponsored employees. “Just being understanding and reassuring when the process is started really does help with employee satisfaction itself,” she says.

Immigration Guidance for Others

“I’m learning step-by-step about the different processes and requirements,” Harris says. Her customer relationship manager, Tim, has served as her partner through the visa process, allowing her to gain a thorough understanding of everything involved. “He’s actually calmed my own anxieties about making sure that I can serve my employees as best as possible.”

Each new experience is a learning opportunity, and Harris shares what helped her navigate the U.S. immigration process successfully: “Research as much as you can based off on what type of visa your employees are applying for. Research the requirements and the factors that cause someone to be denied for any type of visa, so when employees ask questions, you are able to say to them, ‘This visa would be more suitable for you.’ And then work with the attorneys and understand how they’ve done their work, so you become more familiar with the process on their end as well.”



Latrica Harris

HR GENERALIST

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES:

Verifying I-9s, visa sponsorship, onboarding and offboarding



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