OFF CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT FOR F1 STUDENTS

Please note this PPT should not be copied and reproduced, this is updated every semester by the ISSS office and all of the policies are subject to change due to changing immigration guidelines. Please meet with an advisor if you have questions. Thank you.

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

F1 STUDENT WORK OPTIONS

IMMIGRATION LIMITS WORK OPTIONS AS

PRIMARY PURPOSE OF F1 IS TO STUDY

<u>On-campus work:</u> Part-time when enrolled, full-time during vacation semester

❑Eligible to work on-campus through completion of studies

- ❑ **<u>Work after completion of studies requires a valid EAD card</u>** (OPT work authorization)

<u>Off-campus work:</u>

- ❑ Curricular Practical Training (CPT)- integral to curriculum
- ❑ Severe Economic Hardship (SEH)- unforeseen financial hardship
- ❑ Optional Practical Training (OPT)- general work training

CPT- CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING

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F1 is eligible for CPT permission to pursue an internship or practical TRAINING if:

1. Enrolled full-time in degree for minimum 1 academic year

2. Coursework still required (per POS) to complete degree

    *After completion of coursework required for degree, then Pre-OPT

UAH students can obtain CPT <u>if</u>:

- Elective or required internship class listed on POS

- Participation in approved Cooperative Education program

    *Must follow Co-op policies and immigration policies

CPT is **<u>NOT</u>** a work program, the internship, Co-op or training must be tied to the curriculum and establish the work is an "<u>integral part of an established curriculum</u>"

CPT PROCESS

Step 1:

❑ Determine if your academic department has an internship class for academic credit

      1) If Class exists, then meet with your academic advisor to discuss putting the class on your POS

      2)If no class exists, then work with your Academic Advisor & Co-op to determine if Co-op is a viable option

      3)If Co-op is not an option and internship class is not available then consider using "pre-completion" OPT

*DO NOT start the CPT process by looking for an internship/job in the open market!

Step 2:

❑ Seek an internship

      *Once you have identified that co-op or internship are possible you can make arrangements with your advisor and/or the Co-op office to pursue positions & update POS

Step 3:

❑ Receive an offer for an internship position and submit complete CPT application to ISSO

CPT APPLICATION

❑ **CPT authorization (listed on the I-20) requires:**

➢ *Offer letter*

- The name of the company and be on business letterhead

- The location where the internship will be performed

- The number of hours per week

- The period of the internship (must fall within the academic semester)

➢ *Updated POS listing the Co-op or Internship*

➢ *CPT application cover page*

- Signed by academic advisor if obtaining internship credit

- Co-op will send authorization letter to ISSO for approved Co-op participants

CPT WORK GUIDELINES

Part-time (20 hours or less)

- ❑ available during the regular semester <u>or</u>

Full-time (more than 20 hours)

- ❑ available during the summer semester or
- ❑ Fall/spring if it is the Co-op "work term"

<u>*12 months cumulative FULL-time CPT will void eligibility to apply for OPT</u>

CPT PROCESSING TIME

Submit the complete CPT application to UC 116:

❑ Minimum of 1-2 weeks prior to the start date of the internship

❑ Enroll in the internship or Co-op hours

❑ A new I-20 will be issued within 3-5 days of complete application submitted. New I-20 will list the specific CPT authorization

❑ Until you have the I-20 in your hands you are **NOT** authorized to begin the internship
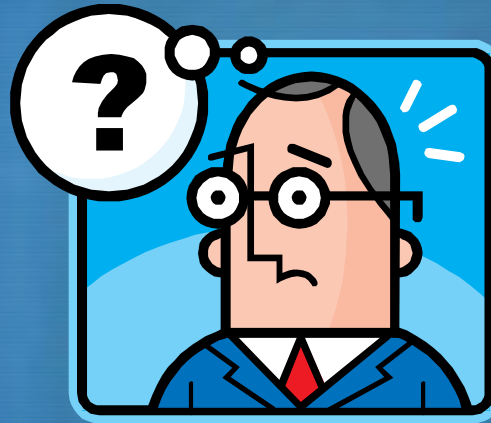
OPT- OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

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- Temporary work permission granted to F1 students to work in major area of study
- Maximum of 12 months; per higher degree level
  - 12 months allowed for Bachelors, Masters and PhD degree obtained in the U.S. (advanced degree only)
  - 17 month extension possible for STEM students

- OPT is NOT an immigration status, still F1
- Must follow F1 immigration laws during OPT
- Violation of F1 status <u>invalidates</u> OPT

OPT ELIGIBILITY

F1 students who are:

✓ Maintaining F1 status at UAH

✓ Making progress on the degree listed on I-20

✓ Not used 12 months full-time CPT or OPT for that degree level

✓ Completed a minimum of 1 academic year of classes full-time (2 academic semesters) in their current degree

✓ Intensive English Program (IEP) not eligible

TYPES OF OPT- POST COMPLETION

❑ Permission to work begins after completing all degree requirements

- Most students apply for Post-completion OPT
- Completing all degree requirements is different from participating/walking in graduation ceremony.
- The program end date is the date you are conferred your degree from UAH. May, August or December

- Is only issued full-time
- Failure to complete degree as planned is a <u>big</u> problem and waste of precious OPT time
  - If you are unsure of completion date then WAIT
- I-20 shortened to actual completion date
- Post-completion OPT work permit serves as an extension of the I-20 end date
- Reporting requirements (address & employment) using SEVIS update form

TYPES OF OPT- PRE-COMPLETION

❑   During the school's annual vacation
    ▪   full or part-time
❑   Prior to completion of <u>coursework</u> and while school is in session
    ▪   Must maintain full-time enrollment in classes with pre-completion OPT
❑   Pre-completion OPT requests reviewed carefully to ensure academic progress toward completion of ALL degree requirements is occurring

PRE-COMPLETION OPT CAUTIONS

1) It's a good idea to have a firm job offer
2) Have a clear plan for completion of studies within I-20 period. If I-20 expires before graduation from UAH it is a violation of F1 status and will void OPT authorization
3) Can't have graduate assistantship & OPT
4) It's possible that there will be no remaining OPT work permission after completion of studies

While authorized for Pre-completion OPT:

➢ **Employment in a UAH faculty or staff position is permitted as long as your EAD card is valid.**

➢ **You are NOT eligible for a traditional GRA or GTA because this type of employment requires you to be enrolled full-time in coursework.**

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY? I WISH I HAD A CRYSTAL BALL….

FIRST, know when you will be completing your degree requirements… Being unsure of completion of your studies will only complicate your OPT planning

✓OPT application must be received by immigration within the 60 days after completing your degree "grace period"

✓"Immigration processing time can vary from 60-90+ days, plan for 90 days not less since they have been taking that long since summer

✓If you must have EAD early in May then, apply as soon as you are at the 90 days before graduation

Example: Spring 2017 completion

Spring 2017: read PPT and handouts from ISSS website and see an advisor at walk-ins if you have questions
February – May: OPT application to ISSS for review – get two I-20's and send on your own (we will provide instructions)
February– July: immigration processes OPT work permit
May 7 – July 6, 2017: OPT starts during this time (60-day grace period)

Spring completion of studies- May 7, 2017

❑OPT must start within <u>60 day grace period:</u>
<u>(regardless of what date you apply)</u>
<u>May 7 – July 6, 2017</u>

- ❑ The timing of a Pre-completion application is NOT fixed
- ❑ Remember all Pre-completion OPT applications are reviewed carefully to determine eligibility and to ensure clear plans for degree completion
- ❑ The true driving factor is the OPT start date you request
  - ▪ the earlier you apply the more quickly work permit will be issued prior to the requested start date

- ❑ Do NOT need a job to apply for Post-completion
  - ❑ It is a <u>VERY</u> good idea for Pre-completion
- ❑ During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment;
  - ▪ More than 90 days (cumulative) of unemployment within 12 month OPT period
  - ▪ More than 120 days (cumulative) of unemployment within 29 month OPT extension period
- ❑ OPT employment authorization can help the transition to H1B sponsorship, NEVER A GUARANTEE
- ❑ Any time a new I-20 is issued for the purpose of starting a new degree the OPT authorization is voided (change of level or transfer to a new school)

OPT REVIEW & CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ Still an F1 student while working with OPT permission
- ❑ Required to update <u>employment details</u>, <u>address, status, and other changes</u> to UAH international student advisor
- ❑ OPT processing takes time and planning, consider all options before applying
- ❑ Cannot work until EAD work permit is issued and in your hands
- ❑ Not eligible for post-completion OPT unless you graduate; complete degree requirements successfully
- ❑ **<u>No limit on the jobs you can have, hours you can work, or amount of money you can make!</u>**

TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ While OPT application is being processed it is best not to travel outside of the U.S.
- ❑ If you travel while authorized for OPT:
  - Valid passport
  - Valid F1 visa stamp (renewal more risky)
  - I-20 with current travel signature (< 6 months)
  - Valid EAD work permit
  - Verification of current employment
- ❑ <u>Travel is not advisable to travel if you do not have a job</u> because maintaining F1 status is dependent on being employed while on OPT

OPT APPLICATION PROCESS

1) Submit application cover sheet, I-765 (with supporting materials if you would like an advisor to review)
2) Advisors review eligibility (3-5 business days)
3) Advisors request OPT in SEVIS, issue new I-20,
4) Email you to come to SSB 218 to sign BOTH I-20s –
5) You keep one new I-20 and send the other with all materials to USCIS
6) Immigration issues a receipt notice (10-14 days); Use the SRC number to track processing on-line and ensure name is spelled correctly and DOB is listed on receipt
7) Immigration processes OPT request and issues EAD work permit (60-90 business days from receipt date)
8) Once you receive the EAD card please scan and email copy to isss@uah.edu for your immigration file, you can begin working once card is in hand and the date has started and you've been granted a degree from UAH

OPT EXTENSION ELIGIBILITY

- Degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) discipline (UAH degrees listed on application)
- Must be currently participating in a 12-month period of OPT, working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to major area of study
- Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify program & must agree to notify UAH of termination of employment
- Student must make "validation report" to ISSO two times starting with the date of OPT extension (employment details & address) (An advisor will send you two report dates – mark your calendar!)
- Extension application process should be discussed with an International Student Advisor

OPT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ❑ UAH OPT Application (Pre, Post, or Extension)
- ❑ I-765 immigration form
- ❑ Two passport style pictures
- ❑ Copies of I-94 (if you have white card) or electronic I-94, passport and visa stamp
- ❑ Fully signed program of study (POS) and application for degree/graduation*
- ❑ Check for $410
- ❑ * If applying for OPT prior to actual graduation date

I-765 FORM

❑I am applying for: Permission to accept employment

❑Use your personal address for mailing ensure you will be at that address 4 months at least from time you apply

❑Make sure to write name in the proper form

❑#10 is the number printed on the I-94 card

❑#11 is yes ONLY if you have been issued an EAD card previously (not including CPT or on campus work)

❑Immigration eligibility code for F1 OPT based on type of OPT request (Pre, Post, and Extension)

    ❑Pre-completion OPT (c)(3)(A)

    ❑Post-completion OPT (c)(3)(B)

    ❑17 month STEM extension (c)(3)(C)
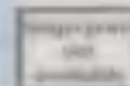
- SEVIS update form- on **ISSS website**
- STEM Extension- Failure to report will result in automatic I-20 termination by SEVIS
- Likely there will be an automatic termination function for 12 month OPT students who fail to report
- **If you fail to update ISSS we will record you as "unemployed" in SEVIS until you submit a SEVIS update form indicating your employment**

QUESTIONS??????

It's QUESTION TIME!!