WAGNER COLLEGE

International Student Advisors: Ellen Navarro & Sidiq Soulemana
The Center for Intercultural Advancement One Campus Road   Staten Island, NY 10301
Ph: 718-420-4532 Fax: 718-390-9321
E-mail: ellen.navarro@wagner.edu, sidiq.soulemana@wagner.edu Website: www.wagner.edu/intercultural

What you need to know about F-1
Optional Practical Training Employment Authorization

WHAT IS IT?
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off-campus employment authorization that lets F-1 students get work experience in their major field of study. The amount of work you are permitted is a maximum of 12 months of *full-time* employment for each *higher* educational level you pursue in the U.S. You can use it during or after your studies. You can work for any employer, anywhere in the country.

HOW CAN IT BE USED?
✓ **Before completion of studies-** *part-time employment (twenty hours per week) for two years. Students must apply for OPT renewal at the end of their first year.*
✓ **After completion of studies-** *full-time employment for 12 months.*

HOW CAN YOU QUALIFY FOR IT?
1. You must have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year. This does not include English as a second language courses.
2. You must be able to describe how the type of work you are seeking directly relates to your major. You do not have to have a job offer to apply for OPT. If you are applying for before completion of studies OPT, however, it is wise that you be as sure as possible of a job so that you don't waste any of your OPT time.
3. You may apply for after-completion of studies OPT up to 90 days *before* your I-20 program end date or 60 days *after* your program end date.
4. If you have already used 12 months of full-time *Curricular* Practical Training, you are not eligible for OPT.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?
An Application for F-1 Optional Practical Training employment authorization is included in this packet, fill it out and return it to your International Student Advisor. We will review your application to make sure that you qualify. If we agree that you do, we will issue a new Form I-20 recommending your OPT which you must come in to sign. After you sign it, we will send your application to USCIS for processing of your work authorization.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?
After you return your application to the Center for Intercultural Advancement, plan that it will take about two to four months for your EAD (Employment Authorization Document) to be returned to us from USCIS.

It's important to take USCIS processing time into consideration when planning the date you want to start working! YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO WORK UNTIL YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!!

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WHAT IF YOU WANT TO TRAVEL BEFORE
STARTING AFTER-COMPLETION OF STUDIES OPT?

While your OPT application is pending with USCIS, we strongly recommend that you refrain from traveling outside of the United States. If you must travel due to an emergency, please notify your International Student Advisor. You are required to have your EAD card to return to the U.S. and should also be able to prove that you have a job or job offer.

HOW CAN YOU EXTEND YOUR OPT?

Before-completion OPT: After you have completed one year of part-time before-completion OPT, you may file for an additional year. You are not permitted to work until your OPT request has been authorized by USCIS.

After-completion OPT: After-completion OPT can be extended for 17 additional months if your major is listed on the S.T.E.M. list (S.T.E.M. = Science Technology Engineering or Mathematics). For a complete list of academic majors on the S.T.E.M. list, please visit http://www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm

STUDY AND AFTER-COMPLETION OPT

Immigration regulations state that, "Authorization to engage in Optional Practical Training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level." Therefore, you should not continue your U.S. studies until after your OPT has ended.

NEW OPT IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS FOR F-1 STUDENTS

Immigration now requires all students on OPT to report the following information to your International Student Advisor (ISA):

- Any change in name or address
- Employer's name and address
- Any break in the employment period

Note: Any changes must be reported with 10 days to your ISA by submitting the OPT Address & Employer Information Form

During the after-completion of studies OPT period, maintaining F-1 status is dependent upon current employment. Students may not be unemployed for a total of 90 days or more during the initial OPT period. Students with 90 days or more time unemployed would be considered in violation of F-1 status. Students that are on an approved 17 month STEM extension may not be unemployed for a total of 120 days.

Please note that employment is considered 20 hours or more of work per week. Non-paid work is not considered employment.

 DO NOT START WORKING UNTIL USCIS AUTHORIZES YOUR EMPLOYMENT AND YOU HAVE YOUR EAD CARD!

APPLICATION FOR F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING
EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FORMS:

❑ **OPT Request Form:**

Item #1: Personal and Program Information. Please note that you program completion date may not be less than two weeks away. This is because, your application must be "date stamped" or receipted" at the Vermont Service Center before your program completion date. It takes at least a week for this to happen after your application is received in Vermont.

Item #2: Indicate what type of OPT you are applying for and the dates you want to work. Tell us how much of your 12 month OPT benefit you have already used for this program, if any.

❑ **Form I-765: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION.**

To obtain the I-765 Application Form, please visit the Immigration Forms section of the USCIS website. www.uscis.gov

Complete items 1-16:

Item #10: A – Number or I-94 Number: Put your I-94 number unless USCIS has previously assigned you an alien registration number.

Item #11: If you have ever applied for hardship or Optional Practical Training employment before, answer yes, where and when you applied, whether it was granted or denied and attach a photocopy of any EAD card issued for it.

Item #16: Enter (c) (3) (a) for pre-completion OPT. Enter (c) (3) (b) for post-completion OPT

Your Certification: Sign, put your telephone number and the date.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT OPT APPLICATION PROCESSING:

1. **After you have signed your new I-20 with OPT authorization, please mail your application to USCIS,** express, certified mail, return receipt requested. Your application will take 6 weeks to four months to process.
   USCIS Mailing Address for U.S. Postal Services:
   USCIS
   PO Box 660867
   Dallas, Tx 75266
   USCIS Mailing Address for Express mail and courier service deliveries:
   USCIS
   Attn: AOS
   2501 S. State Hwy 121 Business
   Suite 400
   Lewisville, TX 75067

2. **You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD Card.**

3. **We strongly recommend that you do not travel while your OPT application is pending.** You may travel once you have been approved and received your EAD card.

4. **While your OPT application is processing you are still in status.** If you are denied for OPT, you must leave the U.S. immediately. If you are approved for OPT, you must leave within 60 days of the expiration date listed on your EAD card or transfer to another school.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING REQUEST FORM

1. PERSONAL AND PROGAM INFORMATION:
Name: _____ Date: _____

          Last   First

Local address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

          Cell

SEVIS ID #: _____ College: _____

Degree program: _____ Major: _____

Expected date of Completion of Studies: _____
(Your completion date may not be less than two weeks away)

2. WHAT KIND OF OPT ARE YOU APPLYING FOR?
    ✓ *Check the space next to the session for which you are applying.*

❏ **Before** Completion of Studies:

Part-time *(Less than 20 hours a week)*
Starting on _____ **and ending** _____ .

❏ **After** Completion of Studies:

Full-time
Starting on _____ *Your start date could be as early as the expected date of completion of studies you put above, or any other date within the 60-day grace period following it.*

Ending _____ You must apply for all of the 12-month benefit you have remaining for this program of study.

How much of your 12-month OPT benefit for this program have you used, if any?

_____

What would be the job title of your proposed future employment? (For Example: Computer Programmer, Nurse, Marketing Assistant) _____

If you have already accepted a job offer, what is the contact information of your future employer?

Employer _____ Supervisor's Name _____
Address _____ Supervisor's Email _____
       _____ Supervisor's Ph. # _____
       _____

OPT CHECKLIST

Student's Name: _____

Instructions: Attach the following documents to your I-765 Application. Please include the OPT Checklist.

☐ **Form I-765: Application for Employment Authorization**

☐ **OPT Request Form**

☐ **Two Passport Type Photographs (write your name on the back)**

☐ **All Previous I-20 forms.** Photocopies of all previous Forms I-20 issued by us and other schools you have attended.

☐ **Photocopy of Form I-94**

☐ **Photocopy of your passport identification page**

☐ **Photocopy of your visa**

☐ **$410 fee** in the form of a check or money order. Please make payable to the United States Citizen & Immigration Service. If you are using a personal check, it must have your name and address on it.

☐ **Photocopy of any previous EAD Card(s).** (Employment Authorization Card)

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