

**Optional Practical Training (OPT) Guidance – Workshop Summary**

**What is Optional Practical Training**

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) permits students in F-1 status to work in the United States in their field of study, so that they may reinforce what they have learned in university and college degree programs.

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit to students in F-1 status authorized only by USCIS
- Limited to one year (12 months) per higher level of degree program completed
- A job offer is not necessary to apply for OPT
- Employment must be within the United States
- A student may work for one or more employers, change jobs, or look for work during the training period
- Only Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) majors have an option for a 24-month extension of OPT.

**Preparing Your Application**

**The following items must be delivered to the address before 30 days from the DSO signature on the OPT endorsed I-20:**

- A personal check or money order made out to the “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for \$410 (write SEVIS number on the check); OR the G-1450 authorization for credit card payment.
- Two color passport photos. (2"x2", write name and SEVIS number on back of both photos; must be taken within 30 days)
- The original Form I-765 <http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-765.pdf> (sign in blue ink)
- A photocopy of the SEVIS form I-20 endorsed for OPT (make sure you sign that I-20)
- Photocopies of all previously issued I-20s (newer SEVIS I-20s pages 1&2 or older barcoded I-20s pages 1&3)
- A photocopy of your passport number/photo/expiration date page(s)
- A printed screenshot of the I-94 record OR if you have a paper I-94, a photocopy of the I-94 card, front and back (make sure the stamp on the front shows up clearly in the photocopy)
- A photocopy of your most current F-1 visa
- A copy of previous EAD Card
- If you would like to receive e-notification about the status of your OPT, attach the G-1145 form to your application: <http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>

If your I-765 address is in:		
<b>Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia,</b> Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, , Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam, or the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.	<b>For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):</b>  USCIS PO Box 805373 Chicago, IL 60680	<b>For Express mail &amp; courier deliveries:</b>  USCIS Attn: I-765 C03 131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517

### **SUGGESTIONS BEFOR MAILING**

- Make a copy of your whole application
- Get a return/delivery receipt when mailing
- Write "I-765/Optional Practical Training" at the bottom of the envelope to ensure that it gets to the correct department.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER YOU MAIL YOUR APPLICATION**

- You should receive confirmation USCIS received your application within a month of mailing.
- The receipt number will be on the confirmation notice that you can use to track your application

### **AUTHORIZED EMPLOYMENT/INTERNSHIP:**

- You may only work/intern/train/show up at the office on the days listed on the EAD card
- You may only accept employment in your field of study
- You may not accumulate more than 90 days of unemployment during the authorized OPT period
- You may work at more than one job but must work at least 20 hours per week for that week to count as full employment.

### **Responsibilities While On Opt**

During OPT work authorization you are still considered an F-1 student sponsored by Bowie State University. Since the university continues to be your sponsor in the US, please report the following information and direct any questions or concerns to an OIES advisor. You are required to:

- Work at least 20 hours per week in your field of study.
- Report any new employment or changes to employment information within 10 days
- Report employment and address changes to the SEVP Portal System OR
- Report any new employment or changes to employment by emailing [internationaloffice@bowiestate.edu](mailto:internationaloffice@bowiestate.edu)
- Update any changes to contact information (primary e-mail, phone number, address change) within 10 days of the change using the SEVP Portal System
- Submit a copy of your EAD card to OIES by emailing [internationaloffice@bowiestate.edu](mailto:internationaloffice@bowiestate.edu)
- If you change to a different visa status, please submit supporting documentation to OIES so that an advisor can update your SEVIS record.
- If you terminate your OPT work authorization before the EAD expires, please inform OIES.

### **TRAVEL WHILE ON OPT**

You may travel while on OPT. Remember, you are still in F-1 status and thus will need the following in order to re-enter the U.S.:

- Your most current I-20 with a valid travel signature that is less than 6 months old
- Your unexpired EAD card
- A letter from your employer indicating that you currently hold a job in your field of study and will be returning to the U.S. to resume employment
- A valid passport
- A valid F-1 visa

### **AFTER OPT**

You are entitled to a 60-day grace period beyond the last day of training as indicated on your EAD. You may not work during your 60-day grace period. You will need to notify OIES if you plan to start or transfer to another program after your OPT. You do not receive any grace period if you accrue 90 days of unemployment.