OPT Workshop
(Optional Practical Training)

Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS)
Wayne State University

Presenter

Ann K. Capela
International Student Advisor
Employment Options for F-1 Students

- Off-Campus

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Types of OPT

- Pre-completion
- Post-completion
  - Cap-Gap Extension
  - STEM Extension
Optional Practical Training

OPT

- General concepts
  - OPT is defined as employment that is directly related to a student’s field and level of study
  - OPT is an employment opportunity available to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full time basis for at least one full academic year.
  - USCIS must adjudicate all OPT applications before they start working.
  - Processing time can be up to 3 months.
  - Maximum of 12 months of OPT
  - Must not have used more than 12 months of full-time CPT at that degree level

Continued....

- OPT is authorized per educational level- no OPT for second degree at the same level
- OPT is approved for each educational level and is approved in chronological order of their educational level (Bachelors, Master’s and Ph.D).
- OPT is not eligible when student moves from higher to lower levels of degree program.
- Part-time or full-time during the student’s annual vacation(spring/summer) and if the student intends to register for the next term of the session
- Part-time while school is in session
- Part-time or full-time after completion of graduate course requirements excluding a thesis or dissertation
- Fulltime after completion of the course of study
Optional Practical Training

- **Pre-completion OPT**
  - A student may apply for pre-completion OPT to work in their field of study if the program doesn't have an internship coursework.
  - A student can only work 20 hours per week while school is in session; and must be enrolled full time.
  - Over 20 hours a week can be requested for pre-completion OPT during official breaks or spring/summer;
  - After student has completed all coursework required for the degree and while the student is completing a thesis or dissertation. Contact an OISS advisor for more detail and options***(PhD)
  - Students must continue to enroll full time until the completion of course work.

Optional Practical Training

- **Post Completion OPT**
  - Application can be made 90 days prior to the completion of study or must be within 60 days of the completion of the degree program.
  - The training must be directly related to the student’s field of study and commensurate with the student’s educational level.
  - No job offer is required.
OPT Application Process

1. Students must initiate the OPT process by completing the OPT application from OISS
2. Requesting an I-20 from OISS recommending them for OPT
3. Students must file an I-765 form with supporting documents to USCIS
4. If approved by USCIS, the student will receive an EAD card and cannot start work until the student receives the card

FORM CAN BE FOUND HERE:
http://oiss.wayne.edu/immigration-visas/f1-f2-status.php
Cap-Gap Extension

- **Cap-Gap Extension**
  - F-1 students who are beneficiaries of a timely-filed H-1B petition are eligible for either:
  - An extension of their F-1 status and OPT work authorization till 9/30/---- (current year)

- **What is the H-1B cap?**
  - The cap is the mandated limit to the number of individuals who may be granted H-1B status during each fiscal year. For FY08, the cap was 65,000 with some exemptions (additional 20,000 for graduate students).

- **What is the F-1/H-1B Cap-Gap?**
  - The cap-gap occurs when an F-1 student’s status and work authorization expire in the current fiscal year, before the student can start approved H-1B employment at the beginning of the next fiscal year, October 1. In the past, the student would have to leave the U.S. and return when the H-1B authorization became effective.
STEM Extension

- What is the STEM Extension?
  - F-1 students who have completed a bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree in a STEM field (science, technology, engineering, or math) may be granted a one-time 24 month extension to OPT.
  - This gives U.S. employers two chances to apply for the H-1B process since the extension is long enough to allow for petitions to be filed in two successive fiscal years.

STEM Extension: Eligibility

- Must have a bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree included in the STEM Designated Degree Program List.
- Must be engaged in post-completion OPT based on a designated STEM degree.
- Must be employed by an employer that is enrolled in the E-Verify Program.
- Must apply before current post-completion OPT expires and the 24 month extension.
STEM Extension:
Types of Allowed Employment

- Students must work at least 20+ hours each week for an E-verify employer in a position directly related to the student’s STEM degree.
- STEM students may work multiple jobs, but all employers must be enrolled in E-Verify.
- **Students may switch jobs, but the new employer must also be enrolled in E-Verify.**
- Student must submit I-983 to OISS for each employer.

STEM EXTENSION: PROCESS

- USCIS has implemented a new procedure when applying for the STEM 24 month extension.
- Form I-983 must be completed by student & employer.
- Must be submitted along with other required documents for STEM processing.
- Must submit employment verification letters from all prior and current employers.
- Form I-983 can be downloaded from USCIS website.
1-983 FORM:
PAGE 1

1-983 FORM:
PAGE 2
OPT ONLINE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- OPT mandatory online reporting is required every 6 months from the start date on the EAD card.

- If you change employers during your OPT, you are required to report changes within 10 days:
  - Employer’s & Employee’s phone number
  - Employer’s & Employee’s address
  - Employer’s & Employee's email address
  - Employer’s & Supervisor’s name
OPT STEM ONLINE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- Same Rules apply for STEM.
- However, if you change employers during your STEM, you have to submit a new I-983 form to OISS.
  - The evaluation has to be completed on Page 5.
- New company must be e-verified.

Optional Practical Training

Final Approval

- OPT and STEM OPT extension is recommended by an OISS advisor and approval is granted by United States Immigration and Citizenship Service (USCIS)
Frequently Asked Questions:

- What is my immigration status while I am on OPT?
  - OPT is a **benefit** of being an F-1 student. Therefore, while you are on OPT you are still an F-1 student and are still subject to the rules and regulations pertaining to your F-1 status. In the eyes of immigration, your intent is to return home after you complete your studies and OPT. You still must have your I-20 signed for travel.

For More Information...

- Visit our website at [http://www.oiss.wayne.edu](http://www.oiss.wayne.edu)
- Meet with an OISS advisor during AOC hours or make an appointment.
- For additional information & resources please visit the Study in the States website: [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students)
QUESTIONS.....