OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) INFORMATION

International Studies Program
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LAKE LAND
C O L L E G E

OPT is temporary employment authorization allowing F-1 students the opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study. OPT is most often awarded upon completion of an Associate's degree, for a 12-month period. However, OPT may be requested on a pre-completion basis.

The following are points to remember when considering OPT:
- A total of twelve months is available per academic level; you can complete OPT at Lake Land at the Associate's level and again at the Bachelor's level after you transfer.
- An offer of employment is not required to submit the application for OPT.
- Any pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the twelve months allocated.
- Post-completion OPT is awarded on a full-time basis only.

ELIGIBILITY
In order to be eligible, a student must meet the following criteria:
- In lawful full-time F-1 status for full academic year.
- Good academic standing with the university.
- Training must be related to the student's major area of studies.

CONDITIONS
The following conditions apply to OPT:
- Students are limited to one 12-month period of OPT per educational level.
- You may apply for OPT without a job offer*.
- You may NOT pursue a new "course of study" while on OPT.
- Students CANNOT begin employment until receipt of the EAD card, and are permitted to work ONLY during the period specified on the card.

*Even if you have not yet secured employment at the time of application, your intention in applying for PostCompletion OPT is to be employed in your field of study. Once you receive employment authorization, USCIS considers it a violation if you neither start nor actively seek employment.

WHEN TO APPLY
F-1 students may apply for post-completion OPT no earlier than 90-days before the I-20 expiration date and no later than 60-days after the I-20 expiration date. The application must be properly filed with the correct USCIS Service Center within 30-days of the date the Designated School Official (i.e. Director) recommends the OPT in SEVIS.

You should submit your application to the USCIS Service Center as early as possible, thus increasing your chances of receiving the EAD card in a timely manner. USCIS may take 3-4 months to process OPT applications, regardless of when the application was received. It is a good idea to plan ahead.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Step One - In order to apply for OPT, make an appointment with the Director of the International Studies Program and bring the following:

1. Completed Form I-765. This form is available for download from the USCIS website. Please visit www.uscis.gov and search for I-765. There are detailed instructions for the I-765 form on the USCIS website.
2. Your most recent original I-20.
3. Passport with I-94 card attached.
4. Two passport-style photographs (like the kind you'd get from Walgreens).
5. Departmental Certification of completion of work/studies.

If your documents are okay, the Director will enter a recommendation for the OPT into SEVIS and create a new I-20 for you.

Step Two - Mail your application for OPT to the Phoenix Lockbox facility. Be sure to keep photocopies of all documents sent to the USCIS for your records. Paperclip the documents listed below in the order that they appear, and send them to the USCIS by *certified mail with a return receipt requested, registered mail, or express/overnight mail:*

1. Personal check, cashier's check, or money order in the amount of $380.00, payable to "Department of Homeland Security"
2. Two photographs. (see detailed information below)
3. Form I-765
4. Photocopy of SEVIS I-20 with the notation recommending OPT, and photocopies of any prior I-20(s) or other immigration documents showing another nonimmigrant status
5. Photocopy of I-94(s), front and back
6. Photocopy of identity page and US entry visa page from your passport, including passport expiration date
7. Photocopy of your last Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and I-797 Notice of Action (if applicable)

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:
USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express mail and courier deliveries:
USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S.
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034