WHAT WILL I LEARN TODAY?

- Frequently asked questions about OPT and eligibility

- General application information
  
  More details in our workshop tomorrow or February 27!

- Reporting requirements while on OPT
WHAT IS OPT?

• **Optional Practical Training**

• **Temporary employment authorization** for work directly related to an F-1 student’s major area of study (as listed on your I-20)

• **Benefit of the F-1 visa** when the F-1 visa holder has successfully completed a degree program at a United States institution

• **Work authorization approved by USCIS** for F-1 graduate to work in their field for 12 months (with an additional 24 months possible for graduates of STEM programs based on your I-20’s CIP Code)
AM I ELIGIBLE FOR OPT?

Have you...

- Maintained your F-1 status?
- Been enrolled full-time for at least 1 fall and spring semester?
- Applied for graduation?
- Are you getting a Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate from UMKC?
- Do you have a valid, unexpired passport?
AM I 100% SURE I WILL GRADUATE?

• Study hard and pass all of your classes
• Know your department’s rules about required GPA for graduation
• Once you have applied for OPT authorization, it is almost impossible to cancel
• If you find out you will not graduate this semester, LET ISAO KNOW ASAP
WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

• You do not need to have a job offer in order to apply for OPT

• You can apply for OPT after each degree level (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate)

• You are only eligible for OPT once at each degree level
  – If you’ve already done OPT at the Masters level, you cannot earn another year of OPT after a second Masters degree.
  – If you only used part of your OPT after a previous degree, you cannot use the rest of it after your next degree earned.
DOES CPT AFFECT OPT ELIGIBILITY?

• **PART-TIME** CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT in any way

• **FULL-TIME** CPT *might* affect your eligibility for OPT
  
  – 12 full months (365 days) total of FT CPT = **NOT** eligible for OPT
  
  – Less than 12 months total of FT CPT = Still eligible for OPT!
WHAT WORK QUALIFIES AS OPT?

- Employment MUST be directly related to your field of study
- You can work for multiple employers
- You MUST work at least 20 hours per week ("full time")
  - Working below 20 hrs/wk is counted toward unemployment
- Internships or other unpaid work IN YOUR DEGREE can count as OPT
WHEN CAN/SHOULD DOCTORAL CANDIDATES APPLY FOR OPT?

• Once you have completed your required coursework and comprehensive exams, you can apply for OPT

  – Only work that DIRECTLY impacts your ability to complete your dissertation research can be considered for CPT authorization.

  – This means that if you want to work in your field, but that work is not essential to completing your dissertation, you will need to apply for OPT work authorization.

  – You can continue to work toward your dissertation defense while working on OPT. It is best if you can defend your dissertation by the end of your 12-month OPT authorization period.
HOW DO I APPLY FOR OPT?

1. Visit our website (umkc.edu/isao) to find the OPT Application Checklist

2. Prepare your application packet and submit it to ISAO for review. ISAO will:
   - REVIEW your packet and recommend any changes
   - SHORTEN your I-20 to **May 15, 2020**
   - PREPARE your OPT recommendation I-20 to include with your packet
   - SEND AN EMAIL when your packet is ready to be picked up from ISAO

3. Mail your completed packet with OPT recommended I-20 to USCIS
   - Packet must be received by USCIS within **30 DAYS** of I-20 issuance
WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED FOR THE OPT APPLICATION?

**MINIMUM DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY ISAO FOR REVIEW**

- OPT Application Packet Checklist
- ISAO OPT Application Fee - $100
- OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form
- Form I-765 (USCIS Application for Employment Authorization)
- Form G-1145 (USCIS E-Notification of Application Acceptance)

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE IN PACKET TO USCIS**

- Payment of $410 to US Department of Homeland Security
  - Check, money order, or Form G-1450 to pay by credit/debit card
- Two passport-style photos
- Printout of your I-94
- Copies of your passport and F-1 visa(s)
- Previous I-20s ONLY IF they show prior CPT authorization
- Copies of any/all previous EAD cards
HOW DO I CHOOSE MY START DATE?

• OPT start date = date your employment authorization will begin

• Must be between 1 and 60 days after your graduation date
  – Spring 2020 graduation date = May 15, 2020
  – Therefore, start date must be between 05/16/2020 and 07/14/2020

• Remember that it takes 3-5 months for USCIS to process applications
WHEN CAN I APPLY FOR OPT?

• Apply for OPT during your graduating semester at UMKC

• Application must be received by USCIS:
  – Not earlier than 90 days before your graduate (for spring 2020 grads: 02/15/2020)
  – Not later than 60 days after your graduate (for spring 2020 grads: 07/14/2020)

• You do NOT need to wait for a job offer in order to apply

• Remember that it takes 3-5 months for USCIS to process applications
CAN I EXPEDITE MY APPLICATION?

**ISAO – 1 WEEK**

- No, we do not accept expedite requests
- ISAO will process your application in the order it was received
- Submitting an incomplete application will delay processing
- CHECK YOUR EMAIL in case we are missing any required materials for your application
- Repeatedly emailing our office for status updates delays processing time for ALL applicants

**USCIS – 3-5 MONTHS**

May consider an expedite request only if it meets one of the following criteria:

- Severe financial loss to a company or person, provided that the need for urgent action is not the result of the petitioner’s or applicant’s failure to:
  - File the benefit request or the expedite request in a reasonable time frame, OR
  - Respond to any requests for additional evidence in a reasonably timely manner;
- Urgent humanitarian reasons;
- Compelling U.S. government interests (such as urgent cases for the Department of Defense or DHS, or other public safety or national security interests); OR
- Clear USCIS error.
HAS USCIS RECEIVED MY OPT APPLICATION?

- Send your packet to USCIS with a TRACKING NUMBER

- You will receive an I-797 Receipt Notice from USCIS roughly 1-2 weeks after you send your application
  
  - This notice includes a Receipt Number which you can use to request updates with USCIS:
  
  - [https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do) or Google “USCIS Case Status”
**PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!!!**

- Do not email/call our office asking for updates on your OPT application unless it has been pending (I-797 Receipt Notice received) **MORE THAN 90 DAYS**

- If it has been more than one month and you have not received an I-797 Receipt Notice, you should contact USCIS or visit the KC Field Office for an update

- If you plan on changing your address in the next **6 MONTHS**, please use ISAO’s address on your OPT application to avoid address change complications

- If you use ISAO as your mailing address, we will email you as soon as we receive your EAD card by mail
  - Tracking your EAD card will tell you when your card is delivered to the **Kansas City Post Office**, NOT when it is delivered to ISAO. **If you see your card shows as “delivered” but you have not received an email from our office, it is because we do not have your EAD card yet.**
OPT RULES & REGULATIONS

OPT INFO SESSION – SPRING 2020
HOORAY! I HAVE MY EAD CARD!

To begin working, you must:

1. Have your EAD card IN-HAND
2. AND it must be ON or AFTER the START DATE printed on the card

Remember that you are still an F-1 Student!

• You are still required to report any/all changes to your address, name, visa status, etc.
• You will no longer be enrolled in classes, so you will no longer have UMKC health insurance
WHAT IS THE SEVP PORTAL?

• This is where you will update your OPT employment

• You MUST report any/all employment updates DIRECTLY in the SEVP Portal

• Failure to report employment could cause delays or denials for future OPT/STEM or H-1B applications

• F-1 visa regulations require that you report all of your OPT employment

SEVP PORTAL: https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/
WHEN WILL I HAVE ACCESS TO THE SEVP PORTAL?

• You will have access starting on your first day of OPT authorization as printed on your EAD card

• You will receive an email from do-not-reply.sevp@ice.dhs.gov to your UMKC email account

• The link in this email will expire in 14 days
  – Check your junk mail if you don’t see the email
  – Email ISAO if your link has expired and you need a new one sent to you
MORE SEVP PORTAL INFORMATION

• The SEVP Portal is FREE. SEVP will never ask for money in an email.

• do-not-reply.SEVP@ice.dhs.gov is the ONLY email address SEVP will use to contact you regarding your portal account.

• The portal login page is different from the account setup page! Once you have your account set up, please be sure you log in on the main SEVP Portal page.

• Updates made in the SEVP Portal will NOT update your UMKC Pathway record
  – This means you should update your address in both Pathway and the SEVP Portal.
  – Any employment updates made by ISAO will take 2-3 business days to reflect in your SEVP Portal.
WHAT DO I UPDATE IN THE PORTAL?

• Mailing/local/physical address in the U.S.

• Telephone number

• Employer information: name, address, dates, supervisor, etc.

• View, edit/update, or delete your current and past OPT employers
  - ONLY delete employers if they were entered into your record in error. Otherwise, you should keep all OPT employment history in your record.
WHAT ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT?

• F-1 students on OPT are given 90 days of unemployment

• The unemployment clock starts on the start date printed on your EAD card

• We have been notified by SEVIS that at some point they will begin automatically terminating students who exceed 90 days of consecutive unemployment

• Exceeding 90 days of unemployment could affect future STEM or H-1B applications
# CAN I TRAVEL?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>travel?</th>
<th>TRAVEL RISK LEVEL</th>
<th>WHAT YOU NEED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Applied for OPT  
• OPT app is PENDING  
• Still a student  
(I-20 end date has not yet passed) | OK | **Very Low**—You should plan to re-enter the US at least a couple of weeks before the end date on your I-20. | Travel Endorsed I-20  
Valid passport  
Valid visa |
| • Applied for OPT  
• Application is PENDING  
• No longer a student  
(I-20 end date has passed) | NO. Do not leave unless it is an emergency. | **HIGH**—If you leave the US while an application is pending, USCIS may see that as abandonment and cancel your application. | Travel Endorsed I-20  
Valid passport  
Valid visa  
I-797 Receipt Notice  
Letter of Support from ISAO |
| • OPT is APPROVED  
• You have your EAD card  
• You do NOT have a job offer | NO, unless you are still a student (meaning your I-20 end date has not yet passed). | **HIGH**—If you decide to travel, you should take proof that you are actively looking for a position (i.e. proof that you submitted resumes, upcoming interviews, etc.). *Even if you have this proof you may be denied re-entry.* | Travel Endorsed I-20  
Valid passport  
Valid visa  
EAD card  
Proof that you are actively looking for a job |
| • OPT is APPROVED  
• You have your EAD card  
• You have a job offer but the job has NOT started | PROBABLY OK | **Moderate to Low**—If you decide to travel, make sure that you take a job offer letter on official letterhead which should include your expected start date. | Travel Endorsed I-20  
Valid passport  
Valid visa  
EAD card  
Job offer letter |
| • OPT is APPROVED  
• You have your EAD card  
• You have begun work | OK | **Very Low**—If you decide to travel, request a letter from your employer indicating that they approve your travel and listing the date they expect you back. | Travel Endorsed I-20  
Valid passport  
Valid visa  
EAD card  
Letter from employer |
FREQUENT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS ON ISAO’S WEBSITE

• What is the current USCIS processing time estimate for my I-797?

• What types of unique employment situations are accepted on OPT/STEM?

• What do I do if I’ve lost my EAD card?

• What about health insurance?

• What do I do if I receive a Request for Evidence (RFE) from USCIS?

• Am I eligible for a STEM extension? (and STEM OPT application info)

https://info.umkc.edu/ISAO/current-students/opt/
QUESTIONS?

OPT INFO SESSION – SPRING 2020
OPT Application Workshops

Friday, Feb 14
11:00 AM - ASSC 237

Thursday, Feb 27
3:00 PM - ASSC 237