OPT INFORMATION SESSION

FALL 2020
WHAT WILL I LEARN TODAY?

- Frequently asked questions about OPT and eligibility
- General application information
  - More details in our workshop tomorrow or September 17th!
- 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.
THE OPT APPLICATION

OPT INFO SESSION – FALL 2020
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 using the Secure Document Upload tool in your Pathway Student Center. ISAO will:
   - REVIEW your packet and recommend any changes
   - SHORTEN your I-20 to December 18, 2020
   - PREPARE your OPT recommendation I-20 to include with your packet
   - SEND AN EMAIL with the corrections indicated on the CHECKLIST. Your I-20 will come later. DO NOT SEND THE PACKET INTO USCIS WITHOUT THE OPT I-20.

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?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINIMUM DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY ISAO FOR REVIEW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• OPT Application Packet Checklist</td>
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<td>• ISAO OPT Application Fee - $100</td>
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<tr>
<td>• OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form</td>
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<td>• Form I-765 (USCIS Application for Employment Authorization)</td>
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<td>• Form G-1145 (USCIS E-Notification of Application Acceptance)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE IN PACKET TO USCIS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Payment of $410 to US Department of Homeland Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Check, money order, or Form G-1450 to pay by credit/debit card</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Will increase to <strong>$550</strong> effective October 2, 2020</td>
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<td>• Two passport-style photos</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Printout of your I-94</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Copies of your passport and F-1 visa(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Previous I-20s ONLY IF they show prior CPT authorization</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Copies of any/all previous EAD cards</td>
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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
  – Fall 2020 graduation date = December 18, 2020
  – Therefore, start date must be between 12/19/2020 to 02/16/2021

• 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 Fall 2020 grads: **09/20/2020**)
  – Not later than 60 days after your graduate (for Fall 2020 grads: **02/16/2021**)

• 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.
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>
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</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/
OPT Application Workshops

FRIDAY, SEPT. 11
3 P.M. VIA ZOOM

THURSDAY, SEPT. 17
2:30 P.M. VIA ZOOM