

Optional Practical Training:

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is designed to provide student in F-1 status with an opportunity to gain actual employment experience in the student's field of study, as listed on the I-20. OPT is different from CPT in the following ways:
 - A job offer is not needed before applying for OPT
 - USCIS, not OIP, authorizes the training
 - It takes 3-4 months to receive authorization
 - Student may work for one or more employers, change jobs, or look for work (up to 90 days) during OPT
 - OPT is limited to 12 months per degree level (exception for some STEM majors); it does NOT mean 12 months after each undergraduate degree or each master's degree, if you do multiple undergraduate degrees or multiple master's degree.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to apply for OPT, you must:

- Be in full-time student status for one full semester year (Fall and Spring semester). Time Be in F-1 visa status when applying;
- Be registered full time every semester (except for summer vacation or be authorized to be part-time by Becky Leevey for your final semester);
- Possess a valid, unexpired passport;
- Possess an I-20 that is unexpired and reflect current information such as major and educational level. Please note that if your I-20 is not current, you will need to provide document to reflect the changes so we can update your I-20 before processing the work authorization. This will delay the processing time of your OPT application;
- Be willing to make periodic reports to Becky Leevey regarding your employment.

When to Apply for OPT

- You may apply for OPT up to 90 days before your expected program completion date.
- You may apply for OPT no later than 60 days after the completion of the program requirements.
- Filing later will NOT give you additional OPT time. Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT, and those 12 months must be taken within the 14 months following the completion of degree requirements.
- The date you complete your program requirement is NOT the graduation date or the date you receive a certificate of diploma. In most cases, it is the last day of the term in which you finish all degree requirements, BUT for students who participate in internship or engage in thesis or dissertation programs, their program completion date may be any day during the year. In this case, the last day of an academic term may not be the date you complete program requirements.
- Processing time for OPT applications can be found on the USCIS website. USCIS can take up to 3-4 months to process your work authorization. Please apply 3 months before your desired employment start date. The OPT start date must be within your 60 day grace period.

How to Apply

- See Becky Leevey about your intentions to complete OPT
- Student should complete the attached [I-765 Form](#). Use the Office of International Programs address as your U.S. address. We will forward any mail from USCIS to you. The office address is:

Calumet College of St. Joseph
2400 New York Avenue
Whiting, IN 46394
Attn: Becky Leevey

Eligibility category: Put **(c)(3)(B)** for post-completion OPT

- Prepare two passport photographs; put your name and I-94 number on the back of your pictures.
- Call Becky at 219-473-4218 and make an appointment with her. Allow one hour for this appointment.

Bring with you:

- 1). Completed forms from the packet
- 2). 2 passport style photographs, taken within 30 days of the application
- 3). A certified check or money order (No personal checks are accepted) for the application fee (\$380), payable to Department of Homeland Security; on the memo line put your name, I-94 number, and “I-765 application.”
- 4). Your passport, I-94, all I-20’s, and Employment Authorization Document (EAD cards).
- **5) Please bring originals and copies of all documents** Including a copy of the informational page of your passport, F1 Visa, front and back of I-94, page 1 and 3 of I-20’s, and EAD cards.
- 6) If you have a job offer, bring the formal job offer letter with you, it will help expedite the application process.

Becky will review all the forms, answer any remaining questions you may have, make copies, and enter data into the SEVIS system recommending the training. A new I-20 will be issued to you with the recommended dates for OPT. This is **NOT** authorization for you to work.

While on OPT

Students are still considered to be in F-1 status while on OPT, OIP will continue to assist you if you have concerns or questions

You may begin working:

- Only upon receiving the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS.
- Only during the dates listed on the card (with the exception of the CAP-GAP PREVENTION, which will be discussed separately); and only upon completion of all degree requirement.
- Students must work in their major field of study, as noted on their I-20.
- Students may work for one or more employers, change jobs, or look for work (up to 90 days) during OPT.
- There are no maximum limits on the number of hours per week students can work while on OPT, but students must work at least 21 hours per week to be considered employed.
- You must continue to verify your information in SEVIS every 6 months.

- Report any change in name, address, employment, immigration status, any interruption of employment (including a return to studies) to Becky within 10 days of your change. Becky needs to update this information in SEVIS.

Unemployment Issues:

- You may not accumulate a total of more than 90 days of unemployment (120 days for students with STEM extension).
- Unemployment of 10 days or less when changing jobs does NOT need to be reported to Becky, and does NOT count towards the 90 day total days of unemployment.
- This 10 day exception also applies to the first 10 days from the start date on the EAD.
- Days spent outside the U.S. while unemployed count towards the 90 days of unemployment permitted.
- Students who are unemployed for more than 90 days will be considered out of status
- Failure to report interruptions of employment or accruing more than 90 days of unemployment may result in DHS not approving future benefits or request.