

The OmIs

BLOCK VI

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Apply for Work Authorization EARLY!!!

In order to use the Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment benefit of F-1 status, the immigration service must RECEIVE your application NO LATER than 60 days after the end date of your status (your status ends on your date of graduation or last day as a registered student--whichever is earlier). Once you apply for OPT, the documents required for re-entering the U.S. are slightly different than while you are in school. See page 4 for more details.

Spring break travel Reminders!

Dear International Students,

We are writing to provide important travel information (attached). It is crucial for you to proactively prepare for your return to the US to avoid travel delays/problems, such as an I-515A, etc.

If you have any questions, we recommend that you meet with an OMIS advisor to review your immigration status and documents before leaving the United States.

If you need a new travel signature on your I-20, please visit Karen Klein, PDSO, Armstrong 100 (or OMIS) before leaving the US. F-1 travel signatures are valid for one year (Note: 6-month validity for Optional Practical Training).

HAPPY SPRING BREAK!

Documents Needed for F-1 Travel

F-1 students who leave the United States must have the following documents (to be eligible to re-enter the U.S. in F status):

- Valid passport (6-months into the future from re-entry date)
- Valid (unexpired) U.S. visa stamp in the passport (Canadians are exempt)
- Valid I-20 form for F-1 status, signed for travel on page 3 by a PDSO/DSO within the last year - (six) months for Canadian students and students on Post-Completion Optional Practical Training
- Evidence of financial funding (bring a copy of whatever funding is mentioned on your I-20: bank statement(s)/sponsorship letter(s), CC Financial Aid letter, etc.
- Proof of enrollment (print off of course schedule or transcript).

Traveling within the U.S.

If you will be traveling within the U.S., driving on major highways, riding on buses, trains, or planes, we recommend that you carry with you your passport, I-94 card and I-20.

Five-Month Rule

An F-1 student who remains outside the US for five or more consecutive months (**not on an approved CC study abroad program**), even with a valid travel signature, will need a new initial attendance I-20 for re-entry. A common example is a leave of absence when the SEVIS record has been terminated. The previous I-20 is no longer valid for re-entry. Payment of SEVIS fee is required for new initial attendance I-20.

Social Security Number

In order to work in the US, you will need a valid Social Security Number (SSN). Your CC ID number is not a valid Social Security number. Students may apply for an SSN only after they have been offered a job or upon receipt of work authorization. The Social Security Administration will process your application and a number will be sent to you. For more information, see OMIS.

Need to Renew Your Visa?

If the visa stamp in your passport has expired, or you think you might need a visa to visit the country of your destination, please stop by OMIS and speak to an Immigration Advisor. Please note that even though border posts in Mexico and Canada are taking appointments for visa renewal for third country nationals (see below), it becomes a complicated issue if you are subject to a security check or your visa is denied. Please come to OMIS and speak with an Immigration Advisor **BEFORE** you make the decision to go to Ciudad Juarez or any other border post to renew your visa.

General check-list (renewals)

- Valid and unexpired passport, with validity date at least six months beyond date of re-entry (unless [country-specific agreements](#) provide exemptions).
- Valid and unexpired I-20 form for F-1 students, signed for travel by PDSO (Karen Klein) within 6-months of your re-entry date
- If you are an F-1 student on OPT after graduating, also bring your EAD card and job offer letter
- Evidence of financial funding (bring a copy of whatever funding is listed on your I-20: funding letter, bank statements of personal funds, affidavit of financial support, etc.)
- Unofficial copy of Colorado College transcripts
- Proof of enrollment for the next semester - **letter from the Registrar's Office**
- Travel letter issued by OMIS stating that you are maintaining your F-1 student status

“Third Country National” Visa Renewal

It is sometimes possible to receive a US visa at a US consulate in Canada or Mexico. This method is often unsuccessful and therefore not encouraged; students are strongly advised to apply for the F-1 visa from their home country. If you are interested in traveling to Canada for this purpose, see <http://www.nvars.com>. If you are denied a visa as a Third Country National applicant, you will NOT be allowed to re-enter the US and will have to return to your home country to apply for the visa.

Transit Visa Requirements:

Students “transiting” through a third country to get to their home country may need to obtain a transit visa from that particular country. For example, if you need to transit through England on your way to India, you should find out about any visa requirements by checking with the British government’s immigration section.

Traveling Issues

Travel has a way of stretching the mind. The stretch comes not from travel's immediate rewards, the inevitable myriad of new sights, smells and sounds, but with experiencing firsthand how others do differently what we believed to be the right and only way.

Ralph Crenshaw

I submitted my OPT application with my current address but now I am moving!

If you submitted your OPT application with your current address as the return address on the I-765 form, and now you are moving, you should do both of the following **IMMEDIATELY**:

- Call the NCSC (National Customer Service Center) at 800-375-5283 and give them your change of address information. Be sure to explain that you need to change the return address on your I-765
- AND ALSO: Complete the [on-line change of address form with USCIS](#).

Be sure to 1) call and 2) complete the online address change form!

Travel Outside the U.S. before Completion of

Studies – You may leave the U.S. at any time. You are permitted to return in F-1 status if you have a valid passport, valid F-1 visa stamp and a current Form I-20 that has been signed for travel on page 3 by an authorized staff member (PDSO/DSO). A travel signature is valid for one year except for travel to Canada, Mexico and adjacent islands, in which case the signature is valid for six months.

Travel Outside the U.S. after Completion of Studies -

The date you officially complete your studies is very important to your ability to travel and re-enter the U.S. If you attempt to return to the U.S. in F-1 status after your completion date, you may be denied the right to re-enter the U.S. unless you have been authorized to engage in Optional Practical Training and have received your Employment Authorization Document and obtained a written offer of employment in your field of study.

If you depart the U.S. and wish to return after the date of your completion of studies, you must present the following documents to the CBP inspector upon arrival back in the U.S.:

1. Your valid OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card (USCIS Form I-766)
2. Your Form I-20 which has been endorsed for travel within the last six months by a PDSO/DSO.
3. Your valid passport
4. Your valid F-1 visa stamp
5. Proof of employment in the field of study

Important OPT note for Seniors:

As a senior, you are probably in the process of deciding what to do next year, whether that means going home to work, attending graduate school, or looking for employment within the US.

As you consider your options, the purpose of my note is to let you know about the OPT (Optional Practical Training) application process for May graduates. OPT is work authorization which allows a student to work in a job directly related to the student's major area of study either before or after degree completion. OPT authorization is provided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.C.I.S.) and is usually granted within 2-3 months after the student submits an application.

Need to Apply for OPT?

Contact Karen Crews, Administrative Assistant, Office of Minority and International Students at: Karen.Crews@ColoradoCollege.edu or x6338 to schedule your OPT appointment. **If you plan on applying for a work permit, it is critical that you schedule your appointment with me as soon as possible.**

Before the appointment, please navigate through the attached OPT Tutorial.

When to Apply:

You may apply up to 90 days before your graduation date and the immigration service **MUST RECEIVE** your application **NO LATER THAN 60 days beyond your graduation date** or 60 days beyond the end date of your I-20 (WHICHEVER IS EARLIER).

What are the Eligibility Requirements for F-1 Optional Practical Training?

- Students must have been enrolled in a degree program for a full academic year and be in valid F-1 status at the time of application.
- You do **NOT** need to have a job offer in order to apply for OPT
- Employment while on OPT **MUST** be directly related to your major area of study.
- The maximum amount of time granted to work on F-1 OPT status is 12 months per degree level plus a possible 17 month extension for those who qualify (STEM Majors).
- You may not begin working until you receive the OPT card **AND** the start date on the card has been reached.