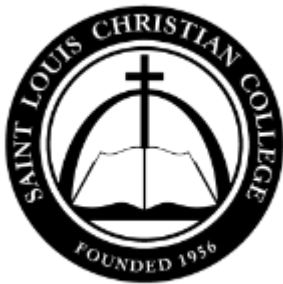

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)



**Saint Louis Christian College
Office of the Registrar
International Students**

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F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

FIRST:

- Read the application packet including the “frequently asked questions.”
- Fill in the Information Sheet (page 7).
- Have completed the Intent to Graduate Form in the SLCC Registrar’s office.
- Complete form I-765 (download from uscis.gov) and fill it out (follow directions on page two).

SECOND:

- Bring the items listed above to the Registrar’s Office
- The Registrar will print out a new I-20 for you which will include our recommendation for your OPT on page 3. You will send a copy of this new I-20 with your application.

THIRD:

- Mail the documents listed below to the USCIS at one of the addresses listed below*. They must receive your application no more than 60 days beyond your graduation date or 60 days beyond the end date on your I-20 (whichever is EARLIER). You MUST send your application within 30 days of getting the new I-20 from the Registrar’s Office.
- Be sure to keep copies of everything you mail for your own records!

<p><u>For U.S. Postal Service deliveries including U.S.P.S. express mail:</u> USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036</p>	<p><u>For (non-USPS) courier service deliveries (FedEx, UPS, DHL etc.):</u> USCIS Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>
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(*see back of this page for important instructions regarding your return address on the I-765)

- () 1. Form I-765 (which you will download from uscis.gov) (follow instruction on page 2)
- () 2. A copy of page 1 and page 3 of the new I-20 that the Registrar gives you with the recommendation for Optional Practical Training on page 3.
- () 3. A copy of both sides of your I-94 Card
- () 4. A copy of photo page (identification page) and expiration date page of your passport.
- () 5. A copy of the F1 visa page of your passport (even if expired).
- () 6. A copy of ALL previous I-20s that have been issued to you (if you do not have these, check with the Registrar to get copies of SLCC I-20s or your previous schools’ international office).
- () 7. A copy of your previous OPT card or other work card (EAD) if you have had one.
- () 8. If **you are applying for the 17 month extension** (see page 4 below), you must also include a copy of your transcripts or diploma as long as it states the degree field.
- () 9. Two passport type photographs (See www.uscis.gov/files/form/m-603.pdf). Print your name and I-94 card number lightly in pencil on the back of each photo. Put the photos in an envelope and attach it to front of I-765. **DO NOT CUT THE PHOTOS!**
- () 10. **Fee of \$380.** Checks may be made payable to the Department of Homeland Security. You may send a money order or a personal check drawn on a U.S. bank, **NO CASH**. Attach the check to the front of the I-765.

Staple all above documents together and send by **certified mail** with a return receipt OR **federal express** (so that you have a tracking number). You will receive a receipt notice (Form I-797) from the USCIS.

(Continued on the reverse side)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT FORM I-765

- Check first box “permission to accept employment”; fill out lines 1 through 16; sign and date under “certification”:**
- #2 Other Names Used:** Put other names you might use or have used such as an American name or a maiden name.
- #3 Return Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 3½ months. You cannot put in a forwarding order on this address—the immigration service’s envelopes state “Do Not Forward”. If the card is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your card will be returned to the immigration service and destroyed. If you want to use a friend’s address, you need to make sure your name is on the mailbox.
- #3 Return Address:** Note: If the return mailing address you indicate on the I-765 is not located in New York, please check the chart on page 6 for proper mailing address for your application.
- #10 Alien Registration Number:** in most cases you will use your I-94 number found on the upper left side of the I-94 card that you received when you entered the US (small white card in your passport). It is usually an 11 digit number—sometimes the last two digits are separated by a space.
- #11 Previous employment authorization:** The answer is “no” unless you have previously applied for an OPT card at this or any other institution. It is “no” even if you have had CPT or an H1B visa. If you are applying for a 17 month extension, please answer “yes” and complete the related information.
- #12 & 13:** This information is listed on the red stamp on your I-94 form.
- #14 Manner of Last Entry:** It is the status you had when you last entered the US. It is only different from #15 if you changed your status after entering the US.
- #16 Eligibility Categories:** For F-1 OPT, fill out as follows: **For POST-Completion OPT: (c) (3) (C)**
- Certification:** Remember to sign and date the I-765.

REMINDERS: REGULATIONS WHILE YOU ARE ON “OPT”

- REQUIRED UPDATES (ADDRESS AND EMPLOYMENT).** Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on OPT, you **MUST** notify the Registrar’s Office when you change your address AND/OR when you are NOT employed by filling out our OPT update form.

TRAVELING ABROAD WHILE ON PRACTICAL TRAINING:

- In order to re-enter the U.S. while you are on Optional Practical Training, you must have a valid passport, current F-1 visa stamp, I-20 signed within the last six months, the EAD (OPT work card) or the receipt notice for your OPT application **AND your job offer letter.**
- NEVER ENTER the U.S. in any VISA STATUS OTHER THAN F-1** while on your OPT (it will invalidate your OPT!)

OPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is F-1 Optional Practical Training?

Practical training is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your degree program to off-campus work in your major field (not your minor). OPT is authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.C.I.S.). This authorization can take 2 to 3 months to obtain. The maximum amount of time granted to work on F-1 OPT status is 12 months per degree level plus a possible H1B cap gap extension OR a 17 month extension for those who qualify (see info on page 4). You may use some or all of the available 12 months of practical training during your course of study or save the full twelve months to use after you graduate. You may apply for POST-graduation OPT 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.** You MUST send your application within 30 days of getting the new I-20 from the Registrar's Office.

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

To be eligible to apply for optional practical training, you must: 1) have been a full time enrolled student in the U.S. for at least one academic year by the requested start date of your OPT, and 2) be in F-1 status when you apply.

3. If I complete one degree program, take 12 months of practical training, and then begin a second course of study, am I eligible for an additional 12 months of practical training?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for another 12 month period of Optional Practical Training after changing to a **higher degree level**. This does not apply to a second master's degree.

4. How can I use optional practical training while I am still in my program?

You may use OPT while you are still in your degree program as follows: 1.) part-time while school is in session, 2.) fulltime during annual vacation periods, and/or 3.) fulltime after you completed all course requirements for the degree and have a thesis requirement remaining. These periods of OPT used before you graduate will be deducted from the total allowable period of 12 months. Part-time OPT will be deducted at one-half the full-time rate.

5. How long does it take to get authorization for OPT and when should I apply?

Authorization for OPT is granted by U.S.C.I.S. and can take 2 - 3 months to obtain. Therefore it is important that you apply long before the date you wish to start working. For post-completion OPT, you may apply up to 90 days before your graduation date and **NO LATER THAN 60 days** beyond your graduation date, end date of your I-20 or last day that you are registered if you are an advanced graduate student. You also can NOT apply MORE than 120 days before the start date that you choose. You MUST send your application within 30 days of getting to new I-20 from the Registrar's Office.

6. Do I need to have a job to apply for optional practical training?

You do **NOT need to have a job offer** before applying for the first 12 months of optional practical training. If you exceed 90 days of unemployment you will be considered out of status. You must report all employment information to the SLCC Registrar's Office.

7. Do I need to have a job while I am on optional practical training?

Yes. The new regulation requires that you do have employment while on your POST-graduation OPT period. You are only allowed to have a total of 90 days of unemployment in your 12 month period of OPT. While on POST-graduation OPT, you MUST update your employment information in the Registrar's Office.

8. Does the job I have while on OPT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?

For the first 12 month period of post-completion OPT, the employment does NOT have to be paid employment. Therefore, a student who is self-employed (including performance majors with regular “gigs”), interning or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field would be considered “employed” for the purposes of OPT employment..

9. Can I begin working before I receive the Employment Authorization Document?

You may **NOT** begin employment before you receive your EAD from U.S.C.I.S.; working before practical training has been authorized by the U.S.C.I.S. constitutes illegal employment that will jeopardize your legal status in the U.S.

10. Do I have to do anything with the Registrar’s Office while I am on OPT?

Yes! Immigration regulations REQUIRE that while you are on POST-graduation OPT, you **MUST** report your employment and address information to the SLCC Registrar’s Office by filling out our OPT update form at the Registrar’s Office.

11. Can I extend my OPT after the 12 months?

There are two types of extensions available: 1.) a 17 month extension for those in certain fields (discussed below) and 2.) an “H1B Cap Gap Extension” which extends your work authorization through to the start of your cap subject H1B visa if your OPT ends after your cap subject company has applied for a H1B for you but before the H1B starts on the following October 1. This cap gap extension is available to all F-1 students using OPT in any field, as long as you have a pending or approved “cap subject” H1B application and the employer applied for in with a request for change of status as part of the application. The extension is automatic; you do not have to do anything at all to get the extension. “Cap Subject” refers to any H1B application that must be counted against the quota on H1B applications.

12. Will I have to pay U.S. taxes for income earned while on practical training?

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than five calendar years are exempt from social security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer, as many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax law. You will be subject to all other taxes that may apply: federal, state and local. You should check to see if your country is one of the few that has a tax treaty with the U.S. allowing students to exclude a limited amount of earned income from federal taxation.

13. What is “E-Verify”?

E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA). E-Verify is currently free to employers and is available in all 50 states. E-Verify provides an automated link to federal databases to help employers determine employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their Social Security numbers. More information is available at: www.uscis.gov.

TRAVEL and OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

14. Now that I’ve turned in my application, can I travel outside the U.S. while I wait for the card to come?

After you graduate, in order to re-enter the U.S. you must have the following: OPT card (or receipt notice for the OPT application), your valid passport, a **current F-1 visa stamp**, I-20 signed within the last six months, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment**. **Before you graduate**, you should be able to get back in to the U.S. without the OPT card as long as it

is still long enough in advance of your graduation (at least one month). If you have to travel, talk to an advisor in the Registrar's Office before you leave.

15. I want to leave the U.S. for a short time while my OPT application is in process, but I need to return before the card will arrive. I have a tourist visa (B2) that is valid for 10 years. Can't I just enter the U.S. on my tourist visa while I'm waiting to get the EAD card, then start work with the card once I get it?

NO!! If you intend to continue working on your OPT, **NEVER** enter in any other immigration status except F-1. If you leave the U.S. and re-enter with a B status, and you will have lost your F-1 status and your OPT will be **invalid!**

16. What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S. while on OPT?

You will need your I-20 that has been endorsed in the Registrar's Office within the last 6 months; the OPT card from the U.S.C.I.S. (or the receipt notice for your OPT application), your valid passport, a **current F-1 visa stamp, AND your job offer letter or proof of employment.**

17. The visa stamp in my passport has expired, but I need to travel outside the U.S. while on OPT. Do I need to get a new visa stamp at an embassy?

If you are going to Canada or Mexico, and staying for less than 30 days, you could re-enter the U.S. on your expired F-1 visa stamp, with your I-94 card, a valid passport, your EAD card (or receipt notice), an I-20 that has been signed by the Registrar's Office within the last 6 months, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment** as long as: 1.) you do not apply for a visa while in Canada and 2.) you are NOT a national of Iran, Syria, Sudan, Cuba or North Korea. **If you are traveling elsewhere**, you will need to go to a U.S. embassy or consulate and seek a new visa stamp. **Please come in to the Registrar's Office** to discuss your visa application with an advisor as the consulates often change the requirements for visa applications for students on OPT.

18. In what ways is my application to the embassy for a new visa stamp affected by being on Optional Practical Training?

The risk of denial of an application for a renewed visa stamp for Optional Practical Training is somewhat higher than while you are in your active student program. The F-1 student visa requires that the applicant must intend to return to the home country at the end of the program, and if the embassy official is not convinced of your intention to return home, the visa application will be denied. It is possible and many students on OPT get their F-1 visa stamps renewed. You do have to be careful to demonstrate non-immigrant intent. Please see the Registrar's Office to discuss in more detail.

19. What documents do I need to show at the embassy for a new visa stamp under OPT?

You need to take a valid passport, the EAD card or receipt notice for your application, an I-20 created by the Registrar's Office for your OPT application, **AND your job offer letter or proof of employment.** The official job offer letter should sound temporary and not permanent. You should also be prepared to discuss how this job experience will apply to the job market in your home country, and how you intend to apply it there.

20. Do I still need to get the travel line on my I-20 signed by the Registrar's Office during the year of OPT?

Yes, during the OPT year, if you travel outside the U.S., you need to have the travel line signed every six months.

Where to File:

<p>If you live in (return address on I-765): Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, or West Virginia</p>	<p>Mail your application to USCIS Dallas Lockbox: For U.S. Postal Service deliveries: USCIS PO Box 660867 Dallas, TX 75266 For Express Mail: USCIS, Attn: AOS 2501 S. State Hwy, 121, Business Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067</p>
<p>If you live in (return address on I-765): Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington(state), Wisconsin, Wyoming, or Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands</p>	<p>Mail your application to USCIS Phoenix Lockbox: For U.S. Postal Service deliveries: USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036 For Express Mail: USCIS, Attn: AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034</p>

APPLYING FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

Students must have a Social Security card to work in the U.S. This is NOT the Student ID number that was given to you by SLCC. To apply for a Social Security card, you must bring the following to any Social Security Office:

- Valid Passport
- Original I-94 card
- Original I-20
- Job Offer letter from Employer
- EAD

You should receive your Social Security card in 2- 8 weeks. They will mail it to your local mailing address.

The nearest office to SLCC is located at 11753 West Florissant. You may find other offices at:

www.socialsecurity.gov/locator



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cbingamon@slconline.edu
Web: <https://slconline.edu/>

We will enter our SLCC recommendation for your OPT in the SEVIS database and print out a new I-20 with our recommendation and your requested dates printed on page 3. We need the following information:

NAME: _____

SEVIS ID# (upper right hand corner of your I-20, starts with "N"): **N** _____

OPT START DATE: _____ * OPT END DATE: _____

*Please read section below on choosing your start date.

Email Address that you will keep while on OPT: _____

Graduation Date: _____ Major: _____

Choosing your Start Date

You are allowed to pick a start date any time within the 60 days following the date of your program completion.

There are many overlapping time constraints which affect your OPT application:

1. You can apply up to 90 days prior to graduation, and up to 60 days after.
2. The card can take an estimated 45 days to arrive in the mail
3. You may NOT begin working until you get the card and the date on the card has started
4. You should have the OPT card and job offer letter along with your usual F-1 documents (including a current F-1 visa stamp) in order to re-enter the U.S. after graduation

When choosing your start date, the most important priorities to weigh are:

1. **Choose the earliest day that you might want to start working.** What if someone offers you a job with the stipulation that you start the day after graduation? Plan for any possibility.
2. **If you want to travel out of the U.S. before you start working,** choose a day that is at least early enough to allow you to apply as soon as possible. This will give you the best chance of receiving the card before you need to leave the U.S.
3. **If you want the latest possible day to start working** (you will not start working right away), the latest day is 60 days after your program end date or I-20 form expiration (whichever is earlier).

REMEMBER: You may not change these dates after you apply for OPT.

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