OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENTS
Saint Leo University – International Student Services Office
Phone 352-588-8489
PLEASE READ ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS

Application for Optional Practical Training (OPT) should be submitted 3 months prior to the beginning date of employment, since the application process with USCIS is a lengthy one. OPT must be requested prior to the completion of all course requirements for the degree or prior to the completion of the course of study. Students may not start working until they receive from USCIS their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to engage in practical training related to their field of study. During the period in which a student is on OPT, a student must notify INTERNATIONAL OFFICE if his or her name or address changes, or if the student wishes to discontinue OPT.

ELIGIBILITY

Students who have completed one full academic year may engage in Optional Practical Training. An application for OPT may be submitted as early as 90 days prior to completing one academic year, but authorization will only be granted from the date the student actually completes a full academic year.

A student authorized for 12 months of OPT becomes eligible for another 12 months of OPT when he/she changes to a higher educational level (ie. Bachelors to Masters; Masters to Doctorate).

A student may be granted authorization to engage in temporary employment for OPT:
1. During the student’s annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student is currently enrolled, and is eligible for registration and intends to register for the next term or session;
2. While school is in session, provided that OPT does not exceed 20 hours a week.
3. After completion of the course of study or after completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or equivalent.
4. OPT must be requested prior to the completion of all course requirements for the degree or prior to the completion of the course of study. (It cannot be requested during the 60-day grace period at the completion of the course of study.)
5. A student must complete OPT within a 14-month period following the completion of study.

Part-time: Part-time OPT (maximum of 20 hours per week) is permitted while school is in session, but students must be registered for a full course load. A part-time OPT period is computed at half the regular fulltime period. For example, students who choose to engage in OPT while school is in session during the fall semester (4-1/2 months) would have two months and one week deducted from the total of one year.

Full-time: Full-time OPT is permitted during the school recess, after completion of all course work, or after the completion of all requirements for the degree.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S. WHILE ON OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

If you wish to travel outside the U.S. during the period of authorized Practical Training, your I-20 form must be endorsed for travel. If you need to apply for an U.S. Visa abroad, we will also provide a letter for the Consul indicating “legal status.” However, applying for a new visa during OPT carries with it a measurable risk, since it is more difficult to prove an intent to return to your home country when you are presently employed in the U.S.
To re-enter the U.S., you should present to the DHS Officer at the Port of Entry the following documents:
1. An I-20 that has been endorsed within last **six** months.
2. A valid American visa stamped in your passport.
3. A letter from your employer indicating that you are expected to resume your duties after a brief absence.
4. Your EAD (Employment Authorization) card

**TO OBTAIN OPT, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:**

**STEP I**
Pick up from the International Student Office:
1. **Form I-538**: Complete Part A of this form. Student Admission # appears on the I-94 Card- also be sure to write the date you will complete all coursework at Saint Leo.
2. **Form I-765**: Complete entire form. Under #16, write (c)(3)(B)

**STEP II**
1. Obtain a letter from your Academic Adviser, specifying anticipated date of completion of your studies, addressed to Paige Ramsey-Hamacher
3. Make out a $380 check payable to USCIS.
4. Bring your original I-20, as well as any previous I-20’s issued to you.
5. Bring your I-94 card.
6. Bring your passport (to update your information in our files)
7. Bring two current passport photographs of yourself.

*Photo Instructions:* Lightly print in pencil your name and your I-94 Admission Number on the back of photos and place in small envelope.

*Guidelines for photos:*
-- white background
-- taken no earlier than 30 days before submission to USCIS
-- unmounted, printed on glossy, un-retouched paper
-- facing front shot
-- not larger than 1½ x1½, with distance from top of head to just below chin about 1¼”
-- Head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by your religious order.

**STEP III**
1. Bring all the documents listed in STEPS I & II to the International Student Services Office.

PLEASE NOTE:
Immigration documents are not forwarded by the postal service if you should move. For this reason, we have entered the address of INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OFFICE on the Form I-765. Your EAD will arrive at the International Office, and we will contact you. Be sure we have a current e-mail address in your file.

You may not start working before receiving your EAD.
Each OPT application follows the same procedure as listed above. *(Revised 10/2010)*

*Adapted from the University of Louisville documentation*