Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is permission for off-campus employment granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). OPT enables students to gain work experience in their field of study.

F-1 students may apply for OPT during the semester they will complete their program of study. Students may apply for OPT up to 90 days before their program end date and 60 days after their program end date. OPT may be used for a maximum of 12 months of full-time employment after each degree program. For example: a student could do 12 months of OPT after their Bachelor Degree, 12 months of OPT after their Master’s Degree.

An offer of employment is not required to apply for optional practical training. However, once OPT is authorized it cannot be voided or restored even if the F-1 student does not work during the authorization period. F-1 students must either be employed in a position related to their degree, volunteer in a position related to their field, or be actively seeking employment during their OPT authorization.

Application Instructions

To be eligible to apply, students must have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year, be in good academic and legal standing and carry a full-time course of study.

1. Please download and assemble the USCIS application forms and documents in the OPT Application Package. Complete Form I-765 and application forms.

2. A check or money order made out to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” for $380. **Notice: $380 is the new fee as of November 23, 2010**

3. Have two passport style photographs taken. Please label the back of each photograph with your name and I-94 number.

4. Decide the start date of your OPT

5. Contact your international advisor at kathy.hawks@mcnallysmith.edu or 651-361-3450 to schedule an appointment to process your OPT application

6. The International and Graduate Recruitment office will mail your completed OPT application package to the following address:

   U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services
   PO Box 21281, Phoenix, AZ 85036