Optional practical training workshop

International student and scholar services
What is OPT?

- Work authorization for 12 months
- Employment must be related to field of study
- Benefit of F-1 status that can be used at each higher-level degree
Who is eligible for OPT?

- International students who have...
  > Been in F-1 status at least one academic year
  > Accumulated no more than 364 days of full-time curricular practical training (CPT)
  > A passport valid for at least 6 months into the future
OPT starts & ends after the end date on your I-20

You will request a start date for OPT Employment within 60 days of the program end date.
Post-completion OPT

- F-1 status is maintained through employment (not through enrollment)
- You are allowed 90 days of unemployment
- Must report employment to International Center to track unemployment period

> Login to update information in myStatus
Post-completion OPT

- Must work full time (21 or more hours per week)
- Employment can be paid or unpaid
- Can switch employers
- Can work for multiple employers
- Can take part-time incidental courses, but cannot start another academic program
OPT timeline

OPT application period
- 90 days before
- 60 days after

Employment period
- 12 months

Grace period
- 60 days

Program end date: May 11, 2018

Work authorization for maximum of 12 months from OPT start date or 14 months from program end date, whichever is earlier

Time to transfer, start a new program, change status or exit the U.S.

Feb. 10, 2018
July 10, 2018

OPT ends
Timing tips

- Application must be received by USCIS before grace period ends (60-day).
- OPT application typically takes 90 days to be approved by USCIS.
  > To maximize 12 full months of OPT, apply as early as possible.
- You cannot begin working until you have your employment authorization document (EAD).
Timing tips

- On-campus work authorization ends on program end date
- There may be a gap in employment between program end date on I-20 and date OPT begins
- If driver’s license is expiring, you can only renew license once you have your EAD
Thesis/dissertation students

- Post-completion OPT may start before you graduate
  - Formal course work must be complete
  - Must enroll during the semester of the program end date on your I-20

- Program end date would be shortened to facilitate the start of your OPT period
  - Program end date on I-20 and graduation date might be different in this case
  - You can still enroll in research credit or exam credit if required by department
  - Thesis or dissertation must be completed by end of OPT— program extension not possible
Withdrawing/canceling

- After you apply, changing dates or canceling OPT is difficult and not guaranteed
  > So be sure about your OPT plans
  > Talk to your international student adviser if you decide to withdraw

- You cannot cancel your OPT after your application has been approved
Application: Three-step process

- Step 1: Complete and gather required documents
- Step 2: Submit OPT request to International Center
  > Receive new I-20
- Step 3: Submit application to USCIS and wait (patiently)
Step 1: Complete paperwork

Choose your OPT start date

Remaining degree requirements

Academic adviser signature

On-campus employment must end by the program end date on your I-20
Step 1: Complete paperwork

Remember to mark this top box

You can use the International Center’s address here

Eligibility code: (C) (3) (B)

Print, then sign
Step 2: Submit OPT request to International Center

- Create OPT request in myStatus
- Submit:
  - OPT adviser verification form
  - OPT workshop review
  - I-765
  - Copies of all previous I-20s (do not staple documents)
  - Copies of passport, visa, I-94 and any previous EAD cards
  - $75 OPT processing fee
Step 3: Mail application to USCIS

- Check or money order for $410 payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”
- Two passport-style photographs (taken recently)
- I-765 (original, signed and dated)
- Copy of new OPT I-20
- Copies of previous I-20s
- Copies of I-94, visa, passport, any previous EADs
- G-1145 form (optional)
After you apply

- You will receive a receipt in the mail 2-3 weeks after your application is received by USCIS
- Use this receipt to check the status of your application through the USCIS website, using “YSC” number
After you apply

- You may begin working after your EAD card arrives & on/after the date printed on it.
- If your EAD card is approved after your requested start date, the start and end dates will be adjusted to give you the full benefit of your authorized period of employment.
- You can stay in the U.S. while your OPT application is pending.
After you apply

- Rejections/Denials
  - **Application:**
    - received more than 90 days before program end date
    - received more than 30 days after OPT recommendation in SEVIS (i.e. when the I-20 was created by adviser)
    - **I-765:** not signed or box not checked
  - **Photos:** old/Previously-used
  - **Check:** wrong date, filled incorrectly, not signed, not in your name

- Request for Evidence (RFE)
During your OPT period

- You are still in **F-1 student status** with the University of Missouri and using a benefit of that status.
- Your I-20 is still valid — the 2nd page shows OPT dates even though the first page program end date has passed.
- 90 days of unemployment begin from the OPT start date listed on your EAD card.
- You can sign up for insurance through Aetna while on OPT, but it is not automatically applied unless you are enrolled in MU courses.
During your OPT period

- You must continue to maintain your F-1 status and update the International Center within 10 days of:
  - Moving to a new address
  - Finding employment or switching employers
  - Ending employment

- If employment is not reported within 90 days from OPT start date, your SEVIS record will be automatically terminated

- Report these changes through myStatus
Travel outside the U.S.

- Pending OPT app, but before graduation:
  > Travel with a letter from your department stating you have not yet graduated

- Pending OPT app, but after graduation:
  > You may re-enter the U.S. while your OPT application is pending in order to resume searching for a job
  > To re-enter the U.S., you will need:
    - Valid passport
    - Visa
    - I-20 signed for travel within the past six months
    - OPT receipt notice (proof of pending OPT)
Approved OPT, and after graduation:

- To re-enter the U.S., you will need:
  - Valid passport
  - Visa
  - I-20 signed for travel within the past six months
  - Proof of employment: i.e. letter from your employer stating that you need to return to the U.S. to resume working
  - EAD card (this will say “not valid for re-entry”)
After initial OPT
OPT 24-month STEM extension

You are eligible to apply to extend OPT for an additional 24 months if:

> Your degree is in STEM-qualifying field

> You are working in a paid position related to your major
  - You can work for multiple employers, but each must be >20 hours/week

> Your employer is registered with the E-Verify employment verification system
Application for 24-month STEM extension

- Must apply **before** initial OPT period ends
  - Work authorization continues beyond end date, if app still pending (up to 180 days)

- Log in to myStatus to request OPT STEM extension
  - Some additional documents needed, so review [online checklist](#)
H-1B cap-gap extension

- Automatic extension of your employment authorization until H-1B status begins.
  > Only applies to students selected for H-1B whose OPT ends between April 1\textsuperscript{st} and September 30\textsuperscript{th}.

- Eligibility: F-1 students working on OPT who have
  > An OPT work authorization end date between April 1 and Sept. 30
  > An employer who has filed a timely H-1B petition for you with a start date of Oct. 1
H-1B cap-gap extension

- This extension is **automatic** and allows you to continue working between your OPT end date and H-1B start date.
  - This applies to **all** students on OPT, regardless of what subject your degree is in.

- If H1-B is denied, extension is terminated and you have a grace period again before having to leave the U.S.
Summary

- When can you apply for OPT?
- What are the three steps to apply for OPT work authorization?
- How long can it take USCIS to process your application?
- What do you do after your OPT is approved?
Questions?

- International Center website: [international.missouri.edu/opt](international.missouri.edu/opt)
- Jillian Collins: [collinsjk@missouri.edu](collinsjk@missouri.edu)  
  > All sponsored students
- Chris Huh: [huhc@missouri.edu](huhc@missouri.edu)  
  > F-1 students with last names starting with A-K
- Brad Boling: [bolingbr@missouri.edu](bolingbr@missouri.edu)  
  > F-1 students with last names starting with L-S
- Mo Whitley: [whitleymo@missouri.edu](whitleymo@missouri.edu)  
  > F-1 students with last names starting with T-Z