Overview of F-1 Student Employment Options

Employment is considered to be the rendering of services for compensation, financial or other (any type of reimbursement including transportation, housing, books, etc.). For students in F-1 immigration status, employment is a “benefit” for which the student must qualify and where certain rules and restrictions apply. Working in the United States without proper authorization (working off-campus without prior written approval, working on-campus for more hours than permitted, etc.) is considered to be a serious violation of the F-1 immigration status which may result in deportation from the United States. All students should consult with the Office of International Student Services (OISS) if they are considering any type of employment in the United States, and they MUST have proper authorization before they begin any employment. Included below are some general guidelines regarding the five types of employment benefits available to students in the F-1 immigration status. Additional information about these employment benefits can be obtained from the OISS website and through the special Information Sessions which are offered by the OISS each semester.

►On-campus Employment Authorization:
- “On-campus employment” includes Teaching/Graduate Assistantships, Adjunct Faculty positions, as well as employment done in other offices at Regent University where a stipend/paycheck will be issued by Regent University. (NOTE: On-campus employment does not include employment done at CBN or on the Regent campus with outside companies that issue their own paychecks and do not have a contractual agreement with the University. Always check with OISS if you are not sure what jobs are considered “on-campus employment”.)
- Restricted to no more than 20 hours/week in total while school is in session (during the fall and spring semesters and in the summer for students in academic programs that require summer enrollment).
- Must maintain full-time enrollment during the fall and spring semesters (and in the summer, if applicable).
- If the student has maintained lawful F-1 immigration status, is still working toward his/her degree, plans to enroll in the following term, and is in possession of a valid I-20, the I-20 serves as the written authorization for the “on-campus employment”.
- Upon initial entry into the U.S., F-1 students who are just beginning their academic programs can start on-campus employment no more than 30 days prior to the actual start of classes but must first register their immigration documents with the OISS.
- Working more than 20 hours/week is permitted only during vacation periods, such as Fall Break.
- Once a student completes all degree requirements, he/she can no longer work at Regent under the “On-campus Employment” benefit. He/she will need to apply for post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) and will need an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in order to work at Regent as a non-student/regular employee. (See OPT section below.)

►Optional Practical Training (OPT) Employment Authorization:
- Must be enrolled full-time and in lawful F-1 immigration status for at least one full academic year in order to qualify for OPT employment authorization.
- No job offer is needed to apply, but the application must be submitted to USCIS within 60 days after the student’s degree completion date (Term End date).
- Can apply for up to twelve months for each “higher” degree level that is pursued in the U.S., and for any number of months at one time (For example: 3 months one summer and 9 months after graduation).
- Can apply for pre-completion or post-completion OPT, which can be used before or after the completion of the degree, but must maintain full-time enrollment during pre-completion OPT.
The employment must be “directly related” to the student’s major field of study.


Two-step application process done by the OISS and the USCIS.

Costs $380 and takes approximately 3 months for the USCIS to process.

Students must first attend an OISS Information Session on OPT before they can apply, and they MUST attend the session in the same semester they plan to apply for the OPT.

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Employment Authorization:**

- The internship/employment experience must be an “integral part” of a student’s established academic curriculum to qualify for CPT (see CPT handout for details).
- Must be in lawful F-1 immigration status for at least one full academic year to qualify unless required by the academic program to begin earlier.
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while engaged in CPT.
- Requires prior written authorization from the OISS on page 3 of the I-20.
- Employer’s written offer is required before the application can be processed.
- 12 months of full-time CPT authorization eliminates one’s eligibility for any OPT at all.
- CPT applications are processed by the OISS in approximately 1-2 weeks with no fee involved.
- Students must first attend an OISS Information Session on CPT before they can apply.

**Severe Economic Hardship (SEH) Employment Authorization:**

- Must be in lawful F-1 immigration status for at least one full academic year to qualify.
- Must provide proof of extraordinary circumstances with a detailed explanation and documentation.
- Also requires an explanation of why other employment options are insufficient.
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while engaged in this type of employment.
- Prior written authorization is required in the form of an EAD from USCIS.
  (Authorization is granted in 12 month increments.)
- Limited to no more than 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters.
- This employment does not have to be related to the student’s major field of study.
- Does not affect OPT eligibility.
- Two-step application process done by the OISS and the USCIS.
- Costs $380 and takes approximately 3 months for the USCIS to process.
- Students must make an appointment with the OISS for the initial application processing.

**Employment/Internship with an International Organization:**

- Can apply at anytime after becoming an F-1 student.
- Can only be used for internships with special international organizations, such as the United Nations, World Health Organization, etc. (A list of qualifying organizations is available in the OISS).
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while engaged in this type of employment.
- Prior written authorization is required in the form of an EAD from USCIS.
- This employment can be full-time or part-time.
- Employer’s written offer is required before the application can be processed.
- This employment does not have to be related to the student’s major field of study.
- Does not affect OPT eligibility.
- Two-step application process done by the OISS and the USCIS.
- Costs $380 and takes approximately 3 months for the USCIS to process.
- Students must make an appointment with the OISS to have the application processed.

**Special Note:**

Students in F-1 immigration status are not permitted to engage in “self-employment” of any kind, and F-2 dependents are strictly prohibited from working in the United States.

(LJ, 8/6/12)