OPT Workshop:

In this workshop we will discuss:

• What is OPT? (Pre & Post-completion OPT)
• Eligibility for Post-completion OPT
• OPT Application Procedures
• Related Questions & Answers
What Is OPT...

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month off-campus employment authorization to gain practical experience in your field of study.
- Post-completion OPT is most frequently undertaken immediately following completion of studies* (see next slide).
- Pre-completion OPT is authorized for work prior to “completion of studies”.
**Definition of Completion of Studies**

- For undergraduate and graduate non-thesis students, completion of studies date (NOT graduation date) can be the last day of final examinations of the semester in which all degree requirements are complete.

- For other graduate students on thesis/dissertation track, the completion of studies date (NOT graduation date) can be the scheduled defense date or any specific date that you plan to complete your degree requirements and no longer enroll/register for classes.
Eligibility for Post-Completion OPT

• F-1 status for at least two complete semesters
• Successful completion of your degree program
• You have not used 12-months of full-time pre-completion OPT in any combination
• You have not been authorized for 12-months or more of full-time CPT
Application Timeline

• Timeline: You can file your Post-Completion OPT application no earlier than 90-days prior to your program completion date (e.g. 12/20/18), and must file no later than 60-days (i.e. 2/19/19) after your program completion date.

• Remember: you don’t need a job offer to apply for OPT.
Academic Verification Form

https://sun-prd.erp.umasscs.net/istart/controllers/client/login.html?serviceid=EFormPOSTCompletionOPTApp0ServiceProvider

• This form must be completed and signed before the ISSO can endorse an OPT application, i.e. Graduate Program Director (GPD) for graduate students or undergraduate student’s own signature
Select your OPT employment dates

• When applying OPT you must identify a proposed start and end date on the Academic Verification form. Your start date can be any day within 60 days after your completion date.

• Your end date should be 365-days after your start date for 12-months of OPT. This means if your start date is 12/21/2018, your end date will be 12/20/2019.
Tips to complete the I-765 form

• Complete the I-765 form online in .pdf format, print (hand written item is allowed) and sign in BLUE ink
• DO NOT submit I-765 form electronically/online to USCIS
• Address on I-765 should be valid for the next 3-months. You can consider using your friend’s or relative’s address. If you need to use ISSO address, i.e.
  • Office of Global Programs (ISSO), 100 William T. Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02125
  • please note that ISSO is not responsible for postage errors that are not the fault of the ISSO.
• Find your I-94 number for item#21a here: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home#section
• For Post-Completion OPT, on Question #27, write (C) (3) (B)
• No need to complete Q#28-31

27. Eligibility Category. Refer to the Who May File Form I-765 section of the Form I-765 Instructions to determine the appropriate eligibility category for this application. Enter the appropriate letter and number for your eligibility category below (for example, (a)(8), (c)(17)(iii)).
   (C) (3) (B)
Application Procedure

Make an appointment with the ISSO at isss@umb.edu and then bring the following documents:

1. Completed I-765
2. Academic Verification Form (signed)
3. Two (2) passport-style photos. Print your name and date of birth on the back of photos
OPT Procedures (continued)

5. Copies of the following (do not send originals!):

• Passport photo ID page
• Current previous F-1 visa stamps (in your passport)
• Current & all previously issued I-20s
• Previous Employment Authorization Document (EAD) if you had any previous OPT
• Most recent I-94 record
• https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home#section
OPT I-20

• After reviewing all your documents, the ISSO will issue a new I-20 with an endorsement of your requested OPT start and end dates (based on the Academic Verification Form)

• You will be scheduled to meet with an ISSO advisor and will be provided with additional instructions for the submission of your OPT application directly to USCIS
Frequently Asked Questions

- **USCIS Processing time to approve OPT?**
  Estimate 3-months from the date your application is received by USCIS

- **Employment Start Date?**
  You can only begin your OPT employment once you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS and the specific starting date on your authorized employment period has begun
Can I travel on OPT?

- Generally the ISSO does not recommend that you travel while an OPT application is pending with USCIS. However, circumstances differ for each individual, so speak to an IPO advisor regarding overall OPT travel questions.

- To travel and re-enter the U.S. while on OPT you need a valid passport, valid F-1 visa stamp, your updated OPT I-20, EAD, and a letter from your employer verifying your employment.
Example of an EAD card for OPT
Unemployment Limitations

• Unemployment is limited to 90-calendar days during the 12-month OPT period (weekends & holidays are counted)

• Please note that internship, unpaid/volunteer position, part-time position (20 or fewer hours a week), or self-employment in your area of study can count as “employment”
Report Employment

• For reporting employment, you must fill out and return the STEM OPT Employer Update Form (https://sun-prd.erp.umasscs.net/istart/controllers/client/login.html?serviceid=EFormOPTEmployerUpdate3ServiceProvider).

• During OPT you are still under UMass F-1 immigration sponsorship and you must report, and update, both OPT employment and residential information for the duration of your OPT, even though you are no longer on campus or living locally.
Lost or Stolen EAD?

• You continue to have employment authorization until the expiration date on the lost or stolen EAD
• You must apply for a replacement EAD as soon as possible (contact the ISSO)
• You may present the receipt for the replacement Form I-765 as evidence of employment eligibility (only in cases of lost or stolen EAD cards)
After OPT

• 60-days grace period at the end of OPT
• Additional options:
  1. Leave the US
  2. Enroll in another program of study as an F-1 student and receive a new I-20 from that university
  3. For students in a STEM field, apply for a 24-month STEM OPT extension
  4. Change to another immigration status, H-1, J-1, etc.
Cap-Gap Provision (OPT & H-1B)

• OPT work authorization will be automatically extended until September 30 for an F-1 student who has timely-filed (April 1) H-1 B petition requesting change of status and an employment start date of October 1

• The “Cap-Gap” extension automatically terminates upon rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1 B petition filed on the student’s behalf
24-Month STEM OPT Extension

• For students in dedicated STEM academic majors an additional 24-month STEM OPT extension is possible

• Your degree and diploma must specify an authorized STEM OPT field of study. Concentration, thesis or dissertation research in a particular area is not enough. Your degree must be in an authorized STEM field

• For complete information and STEM OPT application instructions see: https://www.umb.edu/academics/global/isss/employment/stem_opt

• And: https://www.umb.edu/academics/global/isss/forms#F-1%20Employment:%20CPT%20&%20OPT