International Students (F-1) are eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) as a benefit of their visa. You do not need to have a job before submitting an application. OPT allows you to work in the U.S. for up to 12 months in a position related to your major field of study. Students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) majors with an E-Verified employer may apply for a 24-month OPT STEM Extension. Ask your advisor for more information if you have a STEM major.

You may not work until you receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from USCIS. As processing of applications by USCIS takes up to 90 days, students are encouraged to apply at the earlier end of the application filing period. To be eligible, all students must have completed one academic year (2 semesters) in F-1 status and be planning to complete their degrees before the requested OPT start date.

**Pre-Completion OPT:** Students granted Pre-Completion OPT authorization may work up to 20 hours a week during the school term and full-time (more than 20 hours) during summer and semester breaks. Any Pre-Completion time will be deducted from the regular 12 months of OPT eligibility.

**Post-Completion OPT:** Undergraduate students may begin work immediately after the end of the semester of graduation. Graduate students who have only a thesis, project, etc., remaining may begin their employment immediately. However, they must be sure to complete all degree requirements before the end of their 12 months of OPT.

Post-Completion OPT applications will be accepted by USCIS between 90 days prior to the student’s actual degree program completion date and 60 days (grace period) after completion of the degree. The current completion date on the I-20 will be adjusted as appropriate. The 12 months of OPT must be completed within 14 months from the degree completion date.

**Unemployment:** You will be allowed a total of 90 days of unemployment during your initial OPT. Note that USCIS considers at least 21 per week as full-time employment during OPT.

**Application Process**

**Step 1: Student responsibilities**

- a. Take care of all university ‘holds’ you might have.
- b. Select an address to which USCIS may send communication including your EAD, if approved. The US Post Office will not forward USCIS letters.
- c. Adjunct status: Graduate students completing a thesis or project, etc., each semester must register with RCE in order to maintain status in the Graduate School and maintain status for immigration purposes.
- d. During OPT, the participant remains a student on F-1 visa and must abide by all the relevant regulations including address reporting and travel signatures.
Step 2: I-765 and Department Recommendation

a. Complete and sign form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization at https://www.uscis.gov/i-765. Question 16, for Pre-Completion OPT write (C) (3) (A) and for Post-Completion OPT write (C) (3) (B).
b. Complete and sign the OPT Recommendation form. Then request for a recommendation from your Department Chair, Faculty Advisor or Graduate Coordinator. Processing will not proceed without the Department Recommendation.

Step 3: Submissions to the International Student Advisors

a. Department Recommendation.
b. I-94 – most recent.
c. Photocopy of passport bio data page and the US visa page.
d. Proof of current health insurance coverage.
e. $410 application fee. A personal check, Money Order, Cashier’s Check payable to: Department of Homeland Security.
f. Two, (2 inches X 2 inches) passport size photos of yourself.
g. Previous EAD copy if you were authorized for OPT before.

Step 4: ISA Recommendation and process

a. The International Student Advisors (ISA) will recommend you for OPT and issue a new I-20 with the requested OPT dates.
b. After you sign the I-20, the ISA will make a copy and you will retain the original.
c. The ISA will submit your application to USCIS, or
d. You may submit the application packet to USCIS yourself.

Step 5: USCIS process

a. USCIS will contact you in approximately 3 weeks to inform you of receipt of the application. They will send you a form I-797C with the appropriate instructions.
b. You will, if approved, receive the EAD in approximately 90 days.
c. Submit a copy of the EAD to the ISA.
d. Submit the OPT reporting form (http://www.csuchico.edu/iss/documents/OPT%20Reporting.pdf)

International Student Advising, Office of International Education
Student Service Center 220
California State University, Chico
530 – 898 – 5415 Telephone
530 – 898 - 6889 Fax
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Recommendation Form

International Students with F-1 visas are eligible to apply for 12 months of work authorization in United States. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) regulations refers to this as Optional Practical Training (OPT). Typically, this is done immediately following completion of studies, post-completion, but there is also a provision for pre-completion OPT. A significant number of applications are granted and many students take advantage of this opportunity. **A job is not required in order to apply for OPT.**

### Part I: To be completed by the student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Surname</th>
<th>Chico ID:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Major**

[ ] Undergraduate (Bachelor)

[ ] Graduate (Masters)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Semester when you will graduate:</th>
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3. **OPT Dates Request**

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<th>START:</th>
<th>END:</th>
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This period is limited to a total of 12 months.

I understand that during OPT I will remain an F-1 student and must notify the International Student Advisors within 10 days of: 1) any change of my residential address, 2) the name and address of any company that employs me, 3) ending any employment, 4) changing to another immigration status. 5) Travel outside the US requires the ISA signature.

**Student Signature:**

**Date:**

### Part II: Completed & signed by Dept. Chair, Faculty Advisor, or Grad Coordinator

Because USCIS requires an academic recommendation, your assistance in completing this form will be most appreciated. If you have questions or need for clarification, please contact the International Student Advisors **James Luyirika-Sewagudde, Jr. at 898-5721** or **Cindy J. McKay at 898-5408.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Name:</th>
<th>Phone#</th>
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<tr>
<th>2. Title:</th>
<th>Department:</th>
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<tr>
<th>3. Is the student expected to complete all of his/her coursework (excluding thesis, project, or culminating activity) <strong>by the end of the current academic term</strong> at CSU, Chico? <strong>(Please check one)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. I recommend engagement in OPT in order to gain field experience in the major.</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**Signature:**

**Date:**