Topics That Will Be Discussed:
1. Outline OPT Basics
2. Review Application Process & Timing
3. Questions?

*READ THE OIE OPT HANDOUT!*
What Is Pre-Completion OPT?

- Pre-Completion OPT is a form of temporary US work authorization. This work authorization is a way for F-1 students to gain practical training directly related to the student’s field of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types Of OPT</th>
<th>Pre-OPT Can Be</th>
<th>Pre-OPT Must Be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Completion</td>
<td>Part-time (PT)</td>
<td>Part-time (less than 20 hours per week) during academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (20 hours a week or less)</td>
<td>• Directly related to YOUR field and level of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Completion</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM Extension</td>
<td>Full-time (FT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (20 hours a week or more)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ONLY allowed FT during official breaks and vacations</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Important Reminders

During your Pre-Completion OPT period:
• You remain in F-1 Status (OPT is not a status, it is a benefit of your F-1 Status)
• CMU/OIE still holds your SEVIS record, so we remain your advisors
• You must still be an activate full-time student in your CMU program

What work can you do during Pre-completion OPT?
• Must be related to YOUR field and level of study
• Paid, unpaid, volunteer, contract
• Job title doesn't matter... BUT the nature of the work does
The below are types of employment that are acceptable while on Pre-Completion OPT:

- Multiple employers.
- Short-term multiple employers (performing artists).
- Work for hire.
- Self-employed business owner.
- Employment through an agency or consulting firm.
- Paid employment.
- Unpaid employment.*

*A student may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. A student must be able to provide evidence (job offer letter, etc.) acquired from the student's employer to verify that the student worked “X Hours” per week during their period of employment.*
How Is OPT Time Used/Counted?

Immigration rules state that OPT:

- **Is allowed for a period of 12 months, per higher degree level (for Pre and Post OPT combined)**
  - i.e. Students cannot have 12 months of Pre-Completion OPT, and then apply for Post-Completion OPT.
  - Once USCIS approves OPT, then the OPT benefit is considered used! Even if you do not use the full Pre-Completion OPT time requested.
  - Full-time Pre-OPT allowed when school is **NOT** in session
  - Part-time Pre-OPT allowed when school is in session (no more than 20 hours per week)
IMPORTANT! Choosing OPT Dates!

Choose OPT Dates **CAREFULLY**
- **YOU CANNOT CHANGE OPT DATES** after you have mailed your OPT Application to USCIS.

OPT Pending?
- **NO WORK** without your approved EAD Card!

NOTE:
- Full-time Pre-Completion OPT is deducted from the 12 months of total OPT time at 100%
  - can only be used in the summer/official school breaks!
- Part-time Pre-Completion OPT deducted from the 12 months of total OPT time at ½ rate
IMPORTANT! Choosing OPT Dates!

If your Pre-Completion OPT takes place during your last semester, your Post-Completion OPT application may need to be filed while waiting for Pre-Completion OPT approval.

2 SEPARATE APPLICATIONS must be filed:
- 1 for Pre-Completion OPT
- 1 for Post-Completion OPT
- Same time frame for approval
- 2 fees!
- If Pre-OPT is not approved yet, you must deduct requested Pre-OPT time when determining Post-OPT dates
# Pre-OPT Application – Three Step Process

1. Complete and submit the “Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training Request e-Form” through your MyOIE Portal.
   - The e-form request must include the “Pre-Completion OPT Academic Advisor Recommendation Form”, which must be completed and signed by your program coordinator or academic advisor.

2. OIE will create you a new I-20
   - The new I-20 will have your Pre-Completion OPT request listed on page 2.
   - Remember, new immigration documents take 5 to 10 business days for OIE to process.

3. Gather all the needed documents and mail your application to USCIS
   - After you have mailed your Pre-OPT application to USCIS, Pre-OPT dates you requested **CANNOT** be changed!
   - [Processing Times](#) for Pre-OPT applications – 3 to 5 months.
Timing of Your OPT Application

Be aware of USCIS processing times!

- USCIS typically takes 3 to 5 months to approve OPT applications...
- ...or longer if application is returned, something is missing, etc.
- Always check the USCIS website for processing times. Select “I-765...”, and “Potomac Service Center” from the drop-down menus.

NOTE: OPT APPLICATIONS CANNOT BE EXPEDITED!

“What Dates Can I Choose For My Pre-OPT Application?”

- Start date: Start date of employment
- End date: End date of employment (can’t go past program end date listed on your I-20)
  - Summer: OPT can start after classes/finals end and must end before start of fall term

NO WORK until you have received your EAD Card and you are within start and end dates on the card!
THE GOAL?


NOTE: You can only legally work in the U.S. when:
• You have received your EAD Card, and
• You are within the dates listed on the card
IMPORTANT! The 30-Day OPT I-20 Rule!

- Your OPT application MUST be received by USCIS within 30 days of the date your OPT I-20 is issued.
- If I-20 is received by USCIS more than 30 days after its issuance date, your OPT application will be DENIED.
- You must be ready to file OPT application when you turn in your MyOIE e-Form Request!
MyOIE Portal – OPT e-Form Request

1. **REMEMBER – YOU SHOULD READ THE PRE-COMPLETION OPT INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THIS E-FORM!***

2. Login to your MyOIE Portal account:
   - Click “F-1 Practical Training”
   - Click “Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training Request Form”

3. Next complete the Pre-Completion OPT e-form as required
   - Remember, it takes OIE 5 to 10 business days to process immigration documents.
Confirm your current residential address
• If the residential address listed is incorrect, then you must STOP filling in your e-form, login to SIO, and update your current residential address – BEFORE submitting your OPT e-form request.

Next complete the Pre-OPT e-form as required
• US address, Passport Expiration (Passport MUST be valid), Pre-OPT Start and End Dates you are requesting, Department, Do you have multiple majors/degrees, Have you had OPT before, etc.

Finally, you must upload the required documents, confirm how you want to receive your OPT I-20, and you must CERTIFY that all the information you submitted is accurate and correct.
• NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, OPT I-20s will be delivered through email until further notice.

*If needed, you can save this e-form as a DRAFT*
OPT e-Form Request
Documents To Upload

1. Copy of previously issued EAD Card(s)

2. Copy of most recent I-94 Record (NOT Travel History)
   - Confirm information on your I-94 Record is correct!
   - Contact OIE if there are any mistakes!
3. Finally, you must upload a completed & signed Academic Advisor Pre-OPT Recommendation Form.

**Bachelors and Masters Students:**
Term You Will Graduate

This is to certify that [Student's Full Name] will receive the degree of [Degree Level] in [Field of Study/Major], and is expected to complete all requirements for the degree at the end of [Term] Term Or (PhD's ONLY) on this specific date: [mm/dd/yyyy *actual completion].

(Name of Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel - Print) (Telephone Number and/or email address)

(Signature of Academic Advisor/Authorized Department Personnel) (Date)

Your academic advisor completes this section.

**PhD Students:**
Exact Completion Date, if different from end of term
"I Submitted My OPT e-Form Request. Now What?

It will take OIE 5 to 10 business days to process your new Pre-OPT I-20
• You will receive an email once your Pre-OPT I-20 is ready.
• However, your Pre-OPT I-20 will not be processed more than 5 days prior to the earliest date your Pre-OPT application can reach USCIS. SEVP recommends that you apply for Pre-Completion OPT no earlier than 90 days before your requested OPT employment start date.

Remember the 30-Day OPT I-20 Rule!
• Be ready to file Pre-OPT application when you turn in your MyOIE e-Form Request (30-day rule)!

SCHOOL ATTESTATION
I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school on the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which were received at the school prior to the execution of this form. The school has determined that the above named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student will be required to pursue a full program of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(9)(6). I am a designated school official of the above named school and am authorized to issue this form.

[Signature]
DATE ISSUED
30 July 2020
PLACE ISSUED
Pittsburgh, PA
“I Submitted My OPT e-Form Request. Now What?”

✔ CHECK YOUR PRE-OPT I-20 FOR ACCURACY!

✔ You will find your Pre-OPT Requested Dates listed on page 2 of your new Pre-OPT I-20.

✔ Once your Pre-Completion OPT period has begun, the Travel Signature on your most recently issued I-20 is only valid for 12 months.
What Do I Include With My Application?
“What Do I Include With My Application?”

What To Include?:

- G-1145 Form
- *Check (payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security) OR Form G-1450 – to pay by Credit Card. The fee amount is found on the USCIS website. Click the ‘Filing Fee’ tab.
- Two U.S. passport-sized photos (No Glasses)
- Completed, signed I-765 Form
- Copies of all I-20s issued to you from your current degree level
- Copy of VALID passport
- Copy of F-1 visa sticker
- Copy of most recent I-94 Record
- Copy of previous EAD (if you’ve applied for OPT before)
G-1145 Form

- G-1145 Form:
  - Should be the 1st page of your OPT application
  - Free to file
  - More like 2-4 weeks...
  - Disregard the forms expiration date but be sure to download from uscis.gov website.

When Will I Be Notified?
We will send the e-Notification within 24 hours after we accept your application

USCIS
Form G-1145
Expires 9/26/14
A Personal Check
Prepare Your Check Following the Format of the Image Below

• NOTE: There are different options for paying the I-765 Fee. You can find additional information about this on the USCIS website.

• Checks must be issued by a U.S. bank.

• Confirm the fee amount on the USCIS website. Click ‘Filing Fee’
A Personal Check
Prepare Your Check Like The Image Below

Leave the back of the check **BLANK**
If you wish to pay by credit card – please fill-out attached the G-1450 Form to your application.

US Banks ONLY!
Type or Print in Black Ink

“Petitioner” is person applying for the OPT.

Card Holders Information
• Can be your information or a friend’s → enter that information here.
• Make sure “Card Holder” SIGNS the form!
Photos

**OIE Cannot Check Photos!**

- Write your name **AND** I-94 # on the back of the photos!
  - Write lightly – don’t damage the photo!
- Make sure they are the correct size!
- **Photos taken within past 30 days!**
- NO glasses!
- White or off-white background with no shadows!
- You can include your check & photos in a white envelope, marked with your name and I-94 number.
  - Attach envelope to application
  - Do not staple photos!
Form I-765

https://www.uscis.gov/i-765

Complete This Form By:

- Form fillable pdf
- Combination of form fillable and Handwritten in black ink

*NOTE: Use the most recent/updated I-765 Form ONLY. If you use an old I-765 Form, your OPT Application will be denied. Download the new form on the uscis.gov website.

*Then Print and Sign in BLUE ink*
Form I-765

Part 1. Reason for Applying

I am applying for (select only one box):

1.a. □ Initial permission to accept employment.

1.b. □ Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document, or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) error.

Note: Replacement (correction) of an employment authorization document due to USCIS error does not require a new Form I-765 and filing fee. Refer to Replacement for Card Error in the What is the Filing Fee section of the Form I-765 Instructions for further details.

1.c. □ Renewal of my permission to accept employment. (Attach a copy of your previous employment authorization document.)

Check the box:

• “Permission to accept employment...”
Form I-765

Part 2. Information About You

Your Full Legal Name

1.a. Family Name
   (Last Name)

1.b. Given Name
    (First Name)

1.c. Middle Name

Only complete this section if your name has legally changed. i.e. You updated your passport with a new name, etc.

Other Names Used

Provide all other names you have ever used, including aliases, maiden name, and nicknames. If you need extra space to complete this section, use the space provided in Part 6. Additional Information.

2.a. Family Name
     (Last Name)

2.b. Given Name
     (First Name)

2.c. Middle Name

3.a. Family Name
     (Last Name)

3.b. Given Name
     (First Name)

3.c. Middle Name

4.a. Family Name
     (Last Name)

4.b. Given Name
     (First Name)

4.c. Middle Name
Follow the below instructions **ONLY** if you will use a friend or family member’s address on the I-765.

- If you will change addresses within the next 3 to 5 months, you are advised to list the address of a trusted friend or family member.
- If you choose to enter your friend or family member’s address, you **MUST** fill in 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 5.d, 5.e with this person’s U.S. name and address.
- **You would then check box “NO”**

- You will enter **YOUR** current U.S. address to where you are living at the time you submit your application to USCIS.
- **NOTE: YOU CANNOT USE OIE’S ADDRESS!**
If you know that you **WILL BE** at your current address for 3 to 5 months after submitting your OPT application to USCIS – then follow the directions below.

- Enter a US address (where you will be located in the next 3 to 5 months)
- You would check box “YES” – if this is the same as your current physical address.

- Leave Blank – **ONLY** if address is the same as listed above!
Form I-765

8. If you have an **A-Number**, enter that information here. If not, or if you lost this information, then you can leave this blank.

9. Leave Blank

10. Check Gender Listed On Your Passport

11. Check Marital Status

12. Have You Filed an I-765 Before?
   • Check The Appropriate Answer

**Other Information**

8. Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any)
   - **A-**

9. USCIS Online Account Number (if any)

10. Gender
    - [ ] Male
    - [ ] Female

11. Marital Status
    - [ ] Single
    - [ ] Married
    - [ ] Divorced
    - [ ] Widowed

12. Have you previously filed Form I-765?
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

13.a. Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

**NOTE:** If you answered “No” to Item Number 13.a., skip to Item Number 14. If you answered “Yes” to Item Number 13.a., provide the information requested in Item...
Agenda

Form I-765

13.a: Do you have a Social Security Number?  
*Check Appropriate Answer*

- If you check **YES** → then go to 13.b: Enter SSN Number.

- **ONLY** If you check **NO** for 13.a, and would like an SSN Number/Card → Then complete questions 14, 15, 16.a to 17.b
  - **NOTE:** The SSN Number/Card will be mailed to the address input on “Part 2, questions 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 5.d, 5.e” after your EAD Card has been approved.
Form I-765

18.a: Enter Country of Passport

18.b: Leave Blank – *Unless* – You Hold Two Passports

19.a: to 19.c: Enter Needed Information

20: Enter Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)
Form I-765

21.a: Write in I-94 Number
https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home
21.b: Passport Number
21.c: Leave Blank
21.d: Enter Country on Passport
21.e: Passport Expiration Date (Passport MUST BE VALID)
22 and 23: *Refer to your latest POE stamp in your passport

NOTE: U.S. Point of Entry (POE) outside U.S. is allowed!
This is where you entered through immigration.
*Can be the full city name or the abbreviation!*

24: **“F-1 Student”** *(This could be different if you changed your status inside the US. Contact OIE with questions.)*
25: “F-1 Student”
26: SEVIS Number
Form I-765

27: Write Pre-Completion OPT code: (c)(3)(A)

- SKIP Questions 28 through 31.b
- Check Options 1.a to 2 As They Apply To You

3: Current US Phone Number
4: Current US Mobile Number
5: Current “Personal” Email Address (NOT an Andrew Email Address)
Sign within lines in dark blue ink after printing the completed form.

NOTE: You will sign your I-765 Form in Part 3 (Page 5), but you should **ONLY** complete Part 4, Part 5 and Part 6 **IF** they apply to you! If they **DO NOT** apply, then leave Part 4, Part 5 and Part 6 **BLANK**.

For Part 6 -> See next slide for an example.

**NOTE:** You **MUST** INCLUDE all 7 pages of the I-765 Form in your OPT application to USCIS.
If you have ever had ANY of the following:
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Previous SEVIS ID Number

Then, complete 1.a, 1.b, and 1.c → Leave #2 Blank and then follow the example picture with YOUR information.

(if applies to you) 3.a. and 4.a write:
- Page Number – 3
- Part Number – 2
- Item Number – 27

(if applies to you) 5.a write:
- Page Number – 3
- Part Number – 2
- Item Number – 26

If none of the above applies to you, then leave pg 7 blank and draw a diagonal line across pg 7.

REMEMBER, YOU MUST INCLUDE ALL 7 PAGES OF THE I-765 FORM IN YOUR OPT APPLICATION TO USCIS!
Additional Required Documents – *Photocopies*

- I-94 Record **Printout**
- *OR* a photocopy of White I-94 Card (front & back)

- Photocopy of your **VALID** passport photo page **AND**
- Photocopy of your most recent F-1 Visa Sticker

- **ALL** I-20s from your current degree level, including your new OPT I-20. Remember to **Sign** all I-20s before photocopy them!
Optional Cover Letter

Cover letter *NOT* required, unless something is missing, or further explanation is required:
- Missing I-20
- Missing EAD

Sample OPT Cover Letter

[DATE OF REQUEST]

[STUDENT NAME]:
[SEVIS ID NUMBER]:
[OPT REQUESTED: PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM]
[OPT DATES REQUESTED]:

Dear USCIS Officer:
Please accept this cover letter for my F-1 [PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] Practical Training request. I am writing this letter because [REASON FOR LETTER].

Enclosed, please find my [PRE or POST-COMPLETION or STEM] application materials

Please contact me if you require additional information or documentation to process this request.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE OF STUDENT]

[NAME OF STUDENT]
Dependents in F-2 Status

- F-2 dependents will receive a new I-20 as well
- F-2 documents **DO NOT** need to be submitted in your OPT application

F-2 dependent(s) **Must ALWAYS Travel** with:
- Their F-2 OPT I-20, and copies of the F-1’s immigration documents:
  - OPT I-20
  - EAD card(s)
  - Job Offer Letter
Double Check Your OPT Application!

AND

Make a copy of your ENTIRE OPT Application! (Including Your Payment!)

You may need this information in the future! Scan, copy, etc.
BEFORE You Mail Your Application...

DOUBLE CHECK EVERYTHING!

- Did you check that you are using the most recent/updated I-765 Form?
- Did you check the box at the top of the I-765 Form (page 1) indicating what you are applying for?
- Did you sign and date your I-765 Form on page 5?
- Did you include all 7 pages of the I-765 Form?
- Did you check the USCIS website to make sure that your application fee is correct?
- Did you check the F-1 I-765 mailing instructions on the USCIS website?
Mailing OPT Application – FedEx/UPS

NOTE: OPT Applications **MUST** be mailed from within the United States!

- Make sure that you checked the F-1 (I-765) mailing instructions on the USCIS [website](#)?
  - Click on “Foreign Students” and see the row with
  - ‘F-1 Optional Practical Training’ for the most up to date mailing address.
  - Note the distinct mailing address for FedEx, UPS deliveries.
- OIE recommends using Express Mail (FedEx or UPS).
  - That you mail your application packet with **Tracking**.
  - That you save a copy of the Express Mail receipt that you receive from FedEx and UPS.
  - This can help you prove that your application arrived at USCIS.
What Happens After You Mail In Your OPT Application to USCIS?
What Happens After...

You should receive from USCIS:
• Text message or email with your receipt number
  • (within 2 to 4 weeks)
• Paper Receipt Notice
  • (within 4 weeks)
• Paper Approval Notice
  • (within 3-5 months)
• EAD Card
  • (within 3-5 months)
What Happens After...

“I made a mistake on my OPT Application... Now what!?"

Contact OIE!

And NEVER Mail In Duplicate Applications!
Once you receive your Receipt Number from USCIS, you can check your OPT case status on the USCIS website.

NOTE: This website is not 100% accurate

Case status will stay/remain in “received status” until your OPT has been approved.
YOU MUST MAINTAIN YOUR IMMIGRATION STATUS!

To maintain your F-1 status, you must remember to keep good records, and continue to report any changes to SEVP.

- Pre-Completion I-20 is your new I-20, and it is valid even after Pre-Completion OPT period is over
- KEEP all I-20s! Needed for Post-Completion OPT
- ALWAYS Keep good documentation of your employment for your immigration records (i.e):
  - Employer/company name, employer address, # hours per week worked, job description, supervisor contact info, etc.
  - For Paid Employment: Paystubs, W-2 forms, etc.
  - For Unpaid Employment: Employer letters, etc.
- NOTE: Employer MAY NOT be able to write letter for unpaid work – check before starting job!
Maintaining Your F-1 Status During Pre-OPT

1. You **MUST** maintain a valid passport
   - If you need to renew your passport, this can be done from inside the US. You will need contact your Embassy/Consulate for additional information.

2. Follow **ALL** the [OPT rules and regulations](#)
   - The type of ‘qualifying employment’ you can participate in on Pre-Completion OPT is extensive.
   - Employment during OPT **only** requires that your work be directly related to your degree/major field of study.

3. What does SEVP (immigration) view as ‘qualifying employment’?
   - Immigration defines “qualifying employment” as working for multiple employers, self-employment, employment through a temp or staffing agency or consulting firm, paid employment, or unpaid employment.
   - *Unemployment days do not “count” on Pre-Completion OPT*
Social Security Number (SSN)

If you don’t have a Social Security Number (SSN), you will need to apply for it:

- Use Pre-completion OPT I-20 and EAD to apply for an SSN (Instructions on OIE website)
- Apply in person at SSN office
- Card mailed in 7-10 days – keep in safe place!
- Do not apply more than 30 days before the EAD start date
- Apply anywhere in the US!
- SSN is NOT work authorization – you can start work without it as long as you have your EAD.
Travel *Before* & *After* Pre-Completion OPT

If you have applied for Pre-OPT and travel outside the U.S.:

- Valid passport (valid for 6 months into the future)
- Valid F-1 visa sticker (not expired)
- I-20 (most recently issued)
- Enrollment Verification Letter from The HUB
  - NOTE: Your I-94 Record will change after your re-enter the US – This is expected and **DOES NOT** impact your OPT Application.
Questions?

Office of International Education
Cyert Hall, Suite 101
(Atrium Level)
412-268-5231

www.cmu.edu/oie