PREPARING YOUR OPT APPLICATION FOR SUBMISSION TO USCIS

NOTE: The following is intended for use by F-1 students who have been issued a recommendation for OPT by the Southern University at Shreveport and is offered by the university's Designated School Official (DSO) for informational purposes only. This document does not constitute legal advice. If you desire legal advice for your specific case, please consult a qualified immigration attorney.

Once you have obtained the new I-20 with the recommendation for OPT, you must assemble your application and submit it to USCIS. **Remember that USCIS must receive your application no later than 60 days after your program completion. Also, remember that USCIS must receive your application no more than 30 days after your DSO has recommended.** You should use an expedited shipping service which allows you to track your shipment and confirm delivery.

When you assemble your application, it is important to be as careful and complete as possible.

We suggest that you assemble your application as follows (documents are listed top to bottom). Secure all documents together with a paperclip or binder clip, do not staple:

1. The first item to be seen by USCIS should be your method of payment. You may pay the application fee with a personal check, cashier's check, money order or credit card – paperclip this to the top half of the of the Form G-1145. Be sure that the **fee is payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" (do not abbreviate!)** and that you are paying the correct amount (check the USCIS website if you are in doubt). If you are paying by credit or debit card, you will need to use the G-1450 form and place it first in your packet.
2. Form G-1145: Use this form to provide your e-mail address and/or mobile phone number to USCIS if you wish to receive an e-mail and/or text confirmation that your application has been received.
3. Form I-765 (REQUIRED): This is the form used to request employment authorization. Be sure to include ALL pages of the form, even if some pages are blank because the items on them do not apply to you.
4. Additional pages/sheets giving further explanation to items on the Form I-765 (Optional, only include if needed)
5. Copy of your most recent I-94
6. Copy of your passport showing your picture, name and date of birth
   a. If you have renewed your passport, submit a copy of both passports
7. Copy of your F-1 Visa (located inside of passport)
8. Two identical passport-style photos measuring 2 by 2 inches that was taken recently. The photos must be in color with a full face, frontal view, on a white to off-white background. See Required Documentation in the Form I-765 Instructions for more detail.
   a. Using a pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and A-Number (if any) on the back of the photo.
9. Copy of I-20 for OPT application (REQUIRED): Include page 1 and page 2.
10. Copy of previous most recent I-20 (REQUIRED): Include page 1 and page 2.

11. Documentation of all prior practical training employment authorization, both Curricular Practical Training (CPT). This may be shown through copies of previous I-20s and EAD cards.
12. If applicable: Copies of EAD cards for any previously authorized OPT or other types of employment authorization for which you were granted an EAD (such as TPS, etc.)

Additional Tips/Reminders:
- Be sure to sign the Form I-765 with a "manual" or "wet" signature – that is, sign it by hand using **black** ink. Do NOT use electronically generated signature images. Keep your signature inside of the box provided for signature.
- Do NOT submit original supporting documents with your application! The only original items/materials which should be submitted are the USCIS forms (I-765, G-1145 if you choose to include it and G-1450 if paying with a credit/debit card), the check/money order, and the two passport-style photos.
- Do not print your forms or supporting document copies on both sides of the paper – it is best to print single-sided for ease of scanning once your application arrives at USCIS.
- Be sure to make a copy of your completed application, record your tracking number and keep it in your records.
  - Send a scanned copy to MCIF at SUSLA twilliams@susla.edu
- If you received your OPT recommendation I-20 by mail, **don't forget to sign and date it before making copies for your application and be sure to send a scanned copy of the signed form to MCIF at SUSLA at email: twilliams@susla.edu**
- Once the Service Center receives your application, they will email and/or text you:
  - The text/email will include your Receipt Number. This number usually begins with YSC… Keep this number for your records. It is how you will reference your account with USCIS moving forward.
  - MCIF SUSLA will receive your formal receipt notice (I-797) usually 7 business days after USCIS has sent you a text or email. MCIF SUSLA will email you for pickup. You will always receive updates about your application via your email or text provided on the G-1145.
  - To check the status of your application, you may visit https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do
    - Enter your Receipt Number
  - It usually takes 60 – 90 days to receive an update on your application after receiving the receipt notice
    - Processing time may be longer due to COVID-19
  - You are not able to work:
    - Before you receive your EAD card
    - Before the start date listed on your EAD card
- If the start date you requested has passed and you have not received an approval/denial from USCIS:
  - Check the status of your application using the webpage listed above
  - If you are approved and it is after your start date, USCIS will adjust your start date to the date they approved your application.
    - For example, if your original start date was June 1, 2020 and USCIS did not approve your application until June 15, 2020. They will update your EAD card start date to June 15, 2020. USCIS only sends documents by US

AirMail. Therefore, it usually takes a week after receiving your approval to receive your EAD card.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TRAVEL SIGNATURES

- Once your application has been approved, USCIS or SEVP will send you an email requesting you to register for the SEVP Portal. You must act on this email within 14 days unless the link will expire.
- Once you have secured a job, you must alert SUSLA and complete the OPT Validation Form . Submit the form to twilliams@susla.edu
  - o Attach a copy of your job description and complete all fields
- OPT reporting must occur each time that you change or add a job
  - o You must report termination within 10 days of the event
  - o You may not accrue an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment

Remember to submit an update ANY TIME you have changes in employment, living address, U.S. phone number, etc. – you must report this information within 10 days of the change, even if you have submitted it in the SEVP Portal (note that if you submit the change to ISS, it is not necessary to do so in the SEVP Portal – we will update your SEVIS record for you).