

# Quick Question Answers!



## *Visa & Travel Issues:*

### **My visa expired, must I renew it?**

**Answer:** Only if you are already traveling outside the U.S. with plans to return. F-1 students are admitted for the Duration of Status and do not have to leave if their visa is expired. F-1 *visas may only be renewed at a U.S. Embassy outside the U.S.* Never travel outside the U.S. solely to renew your visa. Warning: If you have been arrested for DUI, then your visa has likely been revoked and travel outside the U.S. is not recommended.

### **I want to travel outside the U.S. What about getting my I-20 signed?**

**Answer:** Make sure all your financial obligations to the University are met. 2) Fill out the “Intention to travel” form. 3) Have a DSO in our office sign your most current I-20 each time you travel outside the U.S. with plans to return.

### **Family or Friend wants to visit?**

**Answer:** Our office provides visitor visa support letters. Fill out “**Visitor Visa Support Letter Request**” form and turn it in to Nighat Shah at the reception desk. Your letter will be ready for pick up the following day.

## *Employment Issues:*

### **Can I do an internship?**

**Answer:** Most academic programs provide academic credit for a paid or unpaid internship called, “Curricular Practical Training” or “CPT” by U.S. Immigration. ***Immigration authorization is required through our office before beginning any off campus internship at which time you will be issued a new I-20 with the authorization indicated on it. This new I-20 will also permit you to obtain a Social Security Card.***

### **When can I apply for post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?**

**Answer:** Up to 90 days before the completion of your academic program and up to 60 days afterwards. The earlier, the better though. It takes approximately 90 days to process this application, so late applicants will get less than the full 12 months of OPT.

### **What do I have to do to apply for OPT?**

**Answer:** 1) Attend an OPT workshop or review the online OPT information on our website and print out the certificate. 2) Collect all items on the OPT checklist. 3) Email Nighat Shah [nshah@callutheran.edu](mailto:nshah@callutheran.edu) for an OPT appointment.

### **Is the STEM OPT still available for science, technology, engineering and math majors?**

**Answer:** Yes. In fact, the STEM extension is now 24 additional months. It does however, have new additional requirements added to the application process.

## **Can I get a Social Security Card?**

**Answer:** Only if you have a job or internship for wages or an Employment Authorization Card (EAD card used for OPT). You will need an employment letter, a letter from our office and all your travel documents.

## **Where is my OPT mail?**

**Answer:** When any OPT related mail arrives for you, Nighat Shah will email to come to the office to pick it up. Your mail will be held at the reception desk. Please present your student ID! You must have a note authorizing you to pick up someone else's mail!

## ***I-20 Issues:***

### **What should I do with my old I-20s?**

**Answer:** Keep them! They are an important and necessary record of your student status. Copies of your current and all previous I-20s are required to apply for OPT or any change to your immigration status in the future.

### **What should I do if my I-20 is going to expire before I can graduate?**

**Answer:** Request an extension prior to it expiring by completing the I-20 Extension Form, located in our office or on our website.

## ***Other Issues:***

### **Can I take a term off?**

**Answer:** This applies only to students in 11-week programs. After you have completed 3 consecutive terms, you are eligible to apply for a vacation period or term off. Term release applications are available in the office or on our website. When granted a term off, you will receive a new I-20. If you are not eligible for a term off, you will need to take a leave of absence that will also require that you exit the U.S. within 15 days. Please make an appointment with Dr. Hall if you need a leave of absence.

### **Can I drop a class?**

**Answer:** Only if you will not fall below the required number of units for an international student. For undergraduates, you must be enrolled in 12 units per semester, for graduate students, you must be enrolled in 6 units or 2 courses. A reduced course load can be authorized for specific reasons only. Please seek immigration advising prior to dropping below a full course load to obtain authorization (if your situation qualifies) and to avoid a termination of your SEVIS record and student visa.