The Journey from F-1 to H-1B

International Center
The University of Texas at Dallas
Objectives

- Educate F-1 students on an optional journey after graduation.
- Highlight key elements in maintaining F-1 status on this journey.
- Clarify travel requirements and challenges.
- Clarify requirements for a Driver’s License or Social Security Number.
The Journey Begins

- Your journey from F-1 to H-1B begins with your program completion date.
- For F-1 purposes your program completion date and your I-20 end date are the same thing.
- For most students it is the last day of finals of their graduating semester.
Options after Program Completion

• You will have a 60 day grace period after your program completion date.

• During the 60 day grace period you can:
  – Apply for Optional Practical Training.
  – Start a new academic program.
  – Apply for a Change of Status.
  – Depart the U.S.
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is off campus work authorization that is directly related to your major.

Post-Completion OPT is 12 months of off-campus work authorization that begins after your program completion date.
You may apply for post-completion OPT:

• As early as 90 days before your program completion date.

• As late as 60 days after your program completion date.
During Post-Completion OPT

• You are eligible for 90 days of unemployment.

• You must report to the ISSO any change of name or address, or change in employment within 10 days.

• You can take any job in the United States that is at least 20 hours a week and directly related to your major and educational level on your current I-20.
17-Month STEM OPT Extension

- A one time extension of your post-completion OPT.
- You must have a major in science, technology, engineering or mathematics.
- You may apply during the last 120 days of post-completion OPT.
- You must be employed by an employer registered with the federal E-Verify system.
During 17-Month STEM OPT

• You are eligible for an additional 30 days of unemployment.

• You must report any change of name or address, or change in employment to the ISSO within 10 days.

• You can take any job in the United States that is at least 20 hours a week and directly related to your major and educational level on your current I-20.
In August 2015, a US District Court decided that the current STEM OPT and Cap Gap OPT employment benefits which allow F-1 graduates of certain STEM degrees additional time remain in the US and work in their fields would expire in February 2016. That court has now extended the expiration date of those employment benefits until May 10, 2016. The extension was granted to allow DHS time to finalize new rules about employment benefits. DHS plans to publish a final rule on this topic in March 2016.

**Current Status of OPT STEM Eligibility:**
F-1 alumni may continue to file, if eligible, for the 17-Month STEM OPT Extension. There are still no changes for students pending or approved for this extension of employment authorization.
Most F-1 students on OPT seek H-1B sponsorship to continue employment in the U.S.

H-1B Status is for individuals who wish to perform services in a “specialty occupation”.

H-1B Cap is an annual fiscal-year limit of 65,000 regular cap and 20,000 Master’s exemption.

David Swaim will explain H-1B status in greater detail in his presentation.
Cap-Gap OPT can help you bridge the gap between your F-1 status end date and H-1B start date.

An automatic extension of F-1 status and/or work authorization to September 30th.

You must be the beneficiary of an H-1B petition requesting a start date of October 1st.
If you would like an I-20 that documents the Cap-Gap extension you can obtain one from the ISSO. Please follow instructions at http://www.utdallas.edu/ isso/h1b-visa/.

If you would like copies of your previous I-20’s or OPT Employment Reporting Forms please submit the Immigration Document Copy Request form to the ISSO.
• The 90-day limit on unemployment during post-completion OPT and 120-day limit during the 17-month STEM OPT period continues.

• You must report any change of name or address, or change in employment to the ISSO within 10 days.
H-1B Application Approved

• Submit your final OPT reporting form with your I-797 H-1B approval notice and indicate you are changing status.

• ISSO will update Orion and check SEVIS to ensure that your F-1 record is completed.
Travel

- Post-Completion OPT
- STEM OPT
- Cap-Gap OPT

- It is more difficult to renew an F-1 visa while on OPT rather than while in school, plan accordingly.
Driver’s License

• Post-Completion OPT
• STEM OPT
• Cap-Gap OPT

• It is important to renew your (and your dependent’s) Driver’s License before your I-20 expires. Plan ahead.
Social Security

• Post-Completion OPT: You must have received your EAD card and the start date must have been reached.

• STEM OPT: You should already have an SSN.

• Cap-Gap OPT: You should already have SSN.
E-mail Advising - ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu
Best method for:
• General F-1 status and application questions
• Submitting requests for letters and OPT, reporting changes in OPT employment, etc.

Phone and In-Person Advising
First-come, first-served during advising hours:
• Monday - Thursday, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
• Friday, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
• Call the ISSO at 972-883-4189
Resources

• http://www.utdallas.edu/ isso/h1b-visa/
• http://www.utdallas.edu/ isso/opt-post/
• http://www.utdallas.edu/ isso/opt-extension/
• http://www.utdallas.edu/ isso/opt-reporting/
• http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify
• http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/student.html