Employment-Based Workshop: Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Spring 2026 Semester

Presenter: Megan Lindle
Director, International Student & Scholar Services

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What is Optional Practical Training?

- *Optional practical training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.*

- *You do not need to have an offer of employment in order to apply for OPT (this is different from CPT where you will request employment authorization after you have a job offer)*

- *This type of employment authorization can be recommended by your university but must be reviewed and final approval granted (adjudicated) by U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS)*

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Types of OPT: Pre-Completion

- Lawfully enrolled full-time for one full academic year in SEVP certified university
- 20 hours or less when school is in session
- Full time work when school is not in session
- Pre-completion OPT *reduces* post-completion OPT
  - If you have already received 1 year of part-time (20 hours per week) pre-completion OPT, the total time of full-time OPT still available would be reduced by 6 months, 50% of the previously authorized year at the same education level. In this scenario, you would only be entitled to a remaining period of 6 months full-time post-completion OPT employment authorization.
  - If you have already received 1 year of full-time (40 hours per week) pre-completion OPT, the total time of full-time optional practical training still available would be reduced by 1 year, 100% of the previously authorized year at the same education level. In this scenario, you would not be entitled to any period of post-completion OPT employment authorization.

https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-opt-for-f-1-students

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Types of OPT: Post-Completion

- Most common type of OPT – allows an F1 student the opportunity to work in their field of study, after graduation (12 months to start)

- May apply up to 90 days before your program end date and up to 60 days after, for work authorization, in your field of study, starting after graduation

- Request start date within 60 days after program end date (day 1-60)

- If authorized, you must work the minimum hours for which you were authorized part time (at least 20 hours per week) or full time (typically full-time, which is at least more than 20 hours per week). Most students chose "full-time"

- Post-completion OPT is typically paid, but there are some rare instances when an unpaid position would also qualify

- Consulting/contractor work or multiple positions could be applicable, but this will vary by field of study and must still be directly related to your degree (degree examples: music, art, entrepreneurship, etc.) These positions will also need to add up to the minimum hours per week required. If you have any questions about how to report these type of positions in the SEVP portal, please contact the ISSS office/Megan for advice.

https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-opt-for-f-1-students

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What is a STEM Extension?

- If you have earned a degree in certain Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, you may apply for a 24-month extension of your post-completion OPT employment authorization if you:

- Are an F-1 student who received a STEM degree included on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List (PDF)](#);

- Are employed by an employer who is enrolled in and is using E-Verify and willing to complete the [I-983 training plan](#); and

- Received an initial grant of post-completion OPT employment authorization based on your STEM degree.

- May be eligible to use previous STEM degree (must have received degree from currently accredited and SEVP-certified institution, have not already utilized STEM extension previously, and position directly related to previously obtained STEM degree)

- May qualify for additional STEM extension at higher level (ex: used STEM extension at Bachelor's level and now applying at Master's level)

- Must apply for STEM extension during 1-year of post-completion OPT (any level) *AND* before post-completion OPT end date (can apply as early as 90 days before current OPT end date)
https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-opt-for-f-1-students

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Xavier University iStudent Portal

YOUR PORTAL FOR ALL YOUR IMMIGRATION QUESTIONS AND NEEDS

140

Students
Hosted

50

Countries
Represented

Apply

User Login

Log in to get started.

Log in with Campus ID | Log in with Portal Account

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Student Profile preview

Name: Test, Test
Visa Type: F-1
Student ID:
SEVIS ID: N01234567689

Education Level: BACHELOR'S
Campus Site: Xavier (F)
Program Dates: 02/01/2025 - 12/31/2029
SEVIS Status: Initial

Change Picture

1 Special Updates   2 Personal & Program   3 Student Request Forms

Information on this page is pertinent to you a continuing international student.

As a lawfully admitted F-1 or J-1 international student in the US, you are responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with all regulations that pertain to you. You cannot claim ignorance of the law, so please read the following immigration information very carefully. The following information is only a brief summary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State regulations and is not legal advice. Complete information and links to the forms referred to in this booklet can be found on the website of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Please contact the ISSS staff in the Center for International Education if you have questions about immigration regulations.
Do not rely on information from a friend.

On this page, you will find pertinent information about how to keep your eligibility. Follow each of the following links to get to important information.

- Staying in Status
- Health Insurance Requirements
- Employment Information

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Complete Program Request

CPT Application Packet

Change of Name and Address Form

Contact Information Update

Demographic update

Dependent Information Create

Dependent Information Delete

Dependent Information Update

Emergency Contact Information

F-1 visa withdrawal Form

Financial Information Update

I-20/DS-2019 Extension Request

Intent to Transfer Out

New Degree Level

OPT Application Packet

OPT Employer Update

Program Information Update

Reduced Course Load Request Add

Reprint I-20

Request Letter of Good Standing

Request Travel Signature

Request for Official Letter

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN) SUPPORT LETTER

Shorten Program Request

Upload your Immigration Documents

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🖨 Print   ✕

Instruction: **OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)**

Application Process

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit for F-1 visa students to work off-campus in a job that is directly related to their major of studies. You must meet certain eligibilities in order to apply and be authorized for OPT. Please meet with an International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) staff for more information about OPT. If you are eligible, please review the various steps below to learn how apply for OPT.

Phase 1 - Obtain an OPT Recommendation from ISSS

1. Completed the "OPT Authorization Request Form" included in this packet.
2. Make sure you add your Advisor Information so they can confirm you are completing your degree at the end of current semester.

Phase 2 – Assemble & digitize all OPT Application Packet to USCIS

1. Complete the USCIS form I-765. The form can be found online at www.uscis.gov. We suggest you type it online, print it, and then sign it in black ink. Follow the instructions provided by the CIE and also the read the complete instruction on the USCIS website. Indicate the correct OPT type on the form below:
   1. Pre-Completion OPT notation: (c) (3) (A)
   2. Post-Completion OPT notation: (c) (3) (B)
2. Copy of the front and back of your I-20 with your new OPT Recommendation on it. Keep the Original for yourself.
3. If you have participated in OPT or CPT at this degree level, include copies of those I-20s.
4. Print out a copy of your I-94 card online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html .
5. Copy of your passport page that shows your picture and personal information.
6. Copy of your visa (or if you changed status to F-1 in the US, a copy of the I-797 Approval Notice).
7. Copy of any EAD cards received at this degree level.
8. You will need to include two (2) passport-sized pictures of yourself taken within 30 days. You may get these at many locations, including at CIE and at Walgreen's Pharmacy.

Phase 2 – Make an appointment with the ISSS staff

Here is are some questions to ask yourself

- Will you be living at the same address for 90-120 days following your application? If you are unsure, use the address for the Center for International Education.
- You will receive your receipt as soon you submit your application. You can track the status of your application at www.uscis.gov (with your receipt number).
- Approval/denial should come within 90 days of mailing your application packet.
- **Do not travel out of the country** while your OPT application is pending.

✓ Submit   💾 Save as Draft

- OPT Employment Type
    - PRE-COMPLETION (OPT before you have graduated and will reduce your post-completion OPT)
    - POST-COMPLETION (OPT after you have graduated)
    - STEM-OPT EXTENSION
- Request Start and End dates
    - START DATE – Between 1-60 days after last date of classes (For example: May 9, 2025 is last day of classes, so you can request an OPT start date between May 10 and July 8)
    - END DATE – 365 days after requested OPT start date (For example: If you request a May 10, 2025 start date, your end date will be May 9, 2026.)
- Student Remarks
    - "OPT Type" OPT in field of study "Major" (Ex: Post-Completion OPT in Accounting)
- Employment Remarks
    - "OPT Type" OPT in field of study "Major" (Ex: Post-Completion OPT in Accounting)

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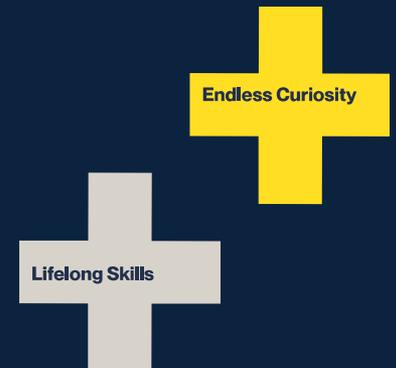
- Approver should be your academic/faculty advisor
- Please plan to follow up with your approver by email as a reminder regarding your request and connect him/her with ISSS/Megan if there are any questions

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Required Documents for OPT Application:

- I-20 updated with OPT recommendation (from Xavier ISSS office as requested through the Xavier International Portal no more than 90 days before graduation date!)

- Copies of all I-20s with any CPT authorizations or previous OPT authorizations (if applicable)

- Copy of unexpired passport (bibliography page/expiration page)

- Copy of I-94 record (https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html)

- Copies of any previously authorized EAD cards (if applicable)

- Photo meeting government specifications (passport style and can be taken for free by ISSS office with appointment or utilize phone app such as "Passport Photo" (do not use any touched up/edited photos of yourself) – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

- $470 (will be paid online to USCIS with your OPT application I-765 form)

Other Important Items as you prepare to Apply for OPT:

- Include your Academic advisor's full name and email contact in your e-form request. Your academic advisor will confirm you are graduating in the current term

- Send follow up email to academic advisor after submitting the e-form request

- Xavier ISSS will review your e-form request and issue you an I-20 with an OPT recommendation within 5 business days from when completed request is received

- Xavier ISSS will also send you a link to the I-765 online application required to apply for OPT approval and your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) from USCIS

- You can choose to complete the application on your own OR schedule an appointment with Megan:
  - Book a virtual appt (through Teams)- please send a quick email to indicate if you prefer to meet in person or virtually (in-person is recommended for OPT appointments)

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Important Address Reminder:

- Plan to include address with your OPT application that will not expire. For example, if you think you may be moving before your OPT is approved by USCIS/EAD card will arrive by mail, we recommend you use the Center for International Education address when applying for OPT. The CIE Address (in Gallagher Student Center building) is as follows:

  c/o Xavier University
  Center for International Education
  3815 Saint Francis Xavier Way
  Cincinnati, Ohio 45207

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OPT Application Steps

- Create a USCIS log-in.

- If you have already applied for OPT, or another status, in the past, you should already have an account created (you may just need to reset your password)

- Complete the I-765 form

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What is your reason for applying?

○ Initial permission to accept employment
○ Replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged employment authorization document or correction of my employment authorization document NOT DUE to US Citizenship and Immigration Services error
○ Renewal of permission to accept employment

Have you previously filed Form I-765?

○ Yes
● No

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Is someone assisting you with completing this application?

○ Yes
● No

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What is your current legal name?

Your current legal name is the name on your birth certificate, unless it changed after birth by a legal action such as marriage or court order. Do not provide any nicknames here.

Given name (first name)   **Middle name**

[redacted]   [redacted]

Family name (last name)

[redacted]

Have you used any other names since birth?

Other names used may include nicknames, aliases and maiden names.

○ Yes

◉ No

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How may we contact you?

Daytime telephone number

[redacted]

Mobile telephone number (if any)

☑ This is the same as my daytime telephone number.

[redacted]

Email address

[redacted]

What is your current U.S. mailing address?

We will use your current mailing address to contact you throughout the application process. We may not be able to contact you if you do not provide a complete and valid address. Please provide a U.S. address only.

In care of name (if any)

[redacted]

Address line 1

[redacted]

Street number and name

Address line 2

Apartment, suite, unit, or floor

City or town   **State**   **ZIP code**

[redacted]   [redacted]   [redacted]

Is your current mailing address the same as your physical address?

◉ Yes

○ No

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What is your country of citizenship or nationality?

List all countries where you are currently a citizen or national.

▼

+ Add country

What is your Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Number (if any)?

12345678910

When did you last arrive in the United States?

List your arrival date, place of arrival, and status at arrival.

Date of arrival

01/01/2021

Place of arrival

LOS ANGELES INTL ▼

Status at last arrival

F1 - F1 - Student, Academic Or Language Program. ▼

What is the passport number of your most recently issued passport?

What is your travel document number (if any)?

What is the expiration date of your passport or travel document?

05/01/2028

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What country issued your passport or travel document?

[▔▔▔▔▔▔▔ ▾]

What is your current immigration status or category?

F1 - F1 - Student, Academic Or Language Program. ▾

What is your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Number (if any)?

Use the "Additional Information" section to include all previously used SEVIS numbers.

N-

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What is your A-Number?

☑ I do not have or know my A-Number.

A-

What is your USCIS Online Account Number?

Providing your unique USCIS Online Account Number (OAN) helps us manage your account. You may already have an OAN if you previously filed certain paper forms and received an Account Access Notice in the mail. You can find the OAN at the top of the notice; it is not the same as an A-Number.

☑ I do not have or know my USCIS Online Account Number.

Has the Social Security Administration (SSA) ever officially issued a Social Security card to you?

◉ Yes
○ No
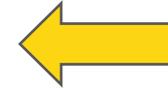
Note: You will only have an "A- number" if you previously applied for OPT or another Work Authorization or immigrant status (COS pending, for example).

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What is your Social Security number (if known)?

123-45-6789

Do you want the SSA to issue you a Social Security card?

○ Yes

○ No

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What is your father's birth name?

Given name (first name)

Family name (last name)

What is your mother's birth name?

Given name (first name)

Family name (last name)

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2 X 2 Photo Of You

Upload a recent color photograph of yourself that measures 2 inches by 2 inches, with your face measuring 1 inch to 1 3/8 inch from your chin to the top of your head. Your eyes should be between 1 1/8 inch and 1 3/8 inch from the bottom of the photo.

Make sure your whole face is visible, you are facing the camera directly, and the background is white or off-white. Your head must be bare, unless contrary to your religious beliefs.

If you need help understanding the photo requirements or want to resize, rotate, or crop your photo, you can use to the Department of State's photo composition tools. Please note that we cannot approve your application without your photos.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, or PNG
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

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I-94, Arrival And Departure Record

Upload a copy of one of the following:

- Your Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record (front and back);
- A printout of your electronic Form I-94 ; or
- Your passport or other travel document.

If you were admitted to the United States by CBP at an airport or seaport after April 30, 2013, CBP may have issued you an electronic Form I-94 instead of a paper Form I-94. You may visit the CBP website to obtain a paper version of an electronic Form I-94. CBP does not charge a fee for this service. Some travelers admitted to the United States at a land border, airport, or seaport, after April 30, 2013, with a passport or travel document, who were issued a paper Form I-94 by CBP, may also be able to obtain a replacement Form I-94 from the CBP website without charge.

If your Form I-94 cannot be obtained from the CBP website, it may be obtained by filing Form I-102, Application for Replacement/Initial Nonimmigrant Arrival-Departure Record, with USCIS. USCIS does charge a fee for this service.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

Employment Authorization Document Or Government ID

Upload a copy of your last Employment Authorization document (EAD) (front and back). If you were not previously issued an EAD, you must upload a copy of a government-issued identity document (such as a passport) showing your picture, name, and date of birth; a birth certificate with photo ID; a visa issued by a foreign consulate; or a national ID document with photo and/or fingerprint. The identity document photocopy must clearly show your facial features and contain your biographical information.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

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Note: Not required if you have not completed any previous CPT or OPT.

Previously Authorized CPT Or OPT

Upload evidence of any previously authorized CPT or OPT and the academic level at which it was authorized.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

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I-20, Certificate Of Eligibility For Nonimmigrant Student Status

Upload a copy of the Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status endorsed by the Designated School Official (DSO). For the (c)(3)(B) eligibility category, your DSO must have entered the recommendation for OPT into your SEVIS record within 30 days of you submitting Form I-765. If you fail to do so, we will deny your OPT request. For the (c)(3)(C) eligibility category, the Form I-20 must have been endorsed by the DSO within 60 days of submitting Form I-765.

File requirements

- Clear and readable
- Accepted file formats: JPG, JPEG, PDF, TIF, or TIFF
- No encrypted or password-protected files
- If your documents are in a foreign language, upload a full English translation and the translator's certification with each original document.
- Accepted characters: English letters, numbers, spaces, periods, hyphens, underscores, and parentheses
- Maximum size: 6MB per file

Choose or drop files here to upload

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Pay for and submit your application

The final step to submit your Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization is to pay the required fee.

Your application fee is: $470

Refund Policy: By continuing this transaction, you agree that you are paying for a government service and that the filing fee, biometric services fee and all related financial transactions are final and not refundable, regardless of any action USCIS takes on an application, petition or request, or how long USCIS takes to reach a decision. You must submit all fees in the exact amounts.

We will send you to Pay.gov — our safe and secure payment website — to pay your fees and submit your form online.

Here are the steps in the payment and submission process:

1. Provide your billing information on Pay.gov
2. Provide your credit card or U.S. bank account information
3. Submit your payment

When you have paid your fee, your form will be submitted.

Pay.gov will redirect you to a uscis.gov confirmation screen, which will include your receipt number. Please keep a copy of your receipt number for your records. You can track the status of your application through your USCIS online account.

Pay and submit

After You Apply

1.
- Your receipt notice will come electronically and via mail, within 30 days of USCIS receiving your application. You can track the status of your application at www.uscis.gov (with your receipt number). Please forward a copy of the receipt to international@xavier.edu.

2.
- Once you receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD), please bring it to our office so that we can make a copy or scan and email a copy to international@xavier.edu

3.
- Once employment is updated, you must request an updated I-20 from ISSS office to provide to your employer

4.
- Maintain your current address, phone and emergency contact within your SEVP portal/with Xavier ISSS office/XU international portal http://international.xavier.edu (Email to international@xavier.edu)

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Reminders

- Approval/denial or request for more information ("RFI") should come within 90 days of mailing your application packet (this could vary).

- DO NOT TRAVEL OUT OF THE COUNTRY while your OPT application is pending.

- YOU MAY NOT BEGIN WORKING UNTIL YOU RECEIVE YOUR EAD CARD (and within this approved date range)

- Xavier ISSS office can assist you with updating your employment information and resetting your SEVP portal log in, if needed. Email this information or requests to international@xavier.edu

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Unemployment Limit (post-completion OPT)

- You have **90 days cumulative of unemployment during your post-completion OPT work authorization period.**

- It is important you report your employer information and start date within the SEVP portal right away.

- If you do not report a job within these 90 days (or go beyond this limit cumulatively), you will need to either depart the U.S. or request I-20 update for new program level if you have admissions to another degree program that will start within 5 months or less from your last date of unemployment (ex: graduate school admissions at Xavier or elsewhere).

- Please either depart or transfer *before the 90th day of unemployment* to avoid being out of status/overstaying your immigration status. Overstays could also affect your ability to return to the U.S. in the future.

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Travel (post-completion OPT)

Travel when OPT is pending

- Travel is not recommended when OPT is pending. In the case of emergency travel, please contact the CIE-ISSS office for guidance

Travel after OPT approved

- Request a travel signature at least 2 weeks prior to travel through the Xavier International Portal (http://international.xavier.edu)
- Carry your signed I-20 endorsed with travel signature no older than 6 months and updated with employer information and dates, unexpired F1 visa, valid passport (that will not expire at least 6 months into the future), EAD card, and proof of OPT employment (offer letter, contact information, etc).

60-Day Grace Period at end of OPT

- 60-day grace period at end of OPT should not be used for travel OUTSIDE of the US, but you can travel within the U.S. during this timeframe.
- You are not eligible to work during the 60-day grace period at the end of post-completion OPT or OPT w/STEM extension, but you are eligible to transfer to another institution if your admission start date is within 5 months of your OPT end date.
- You are not eligible to apply for STEM extension during your 60-day grace period.

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Employment and Networking Resources

- Xavier's Career Development Center
  - Update your resume, cover letter, other app materials, mock interviews
    - Phone: (513) 745-3141
      Email: career@xavier.edu
      Appointment Scheduling (*Matescia Stroud/Cheyenne Edo-Asagie*): Handshake
  - Handshake, Alumni Resources
  - Jesuit Network Resources (could visit career center at another Jesuit University if you move out of Greater Cincinnati area)

- Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber of Commerce
  - Networking events
    - CINC – Cincinnati Intern Network Connection
  - International Chambers

- Cincinnati COMPASS
  - Networking events

- Greater Cincinnati World Affairs Council

- African Professional Network (APNET)

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Questions about OPT?

ISSS Contact Information
international@xavier.edu
(513) 745-2864

Megan Lindle
Director, International Student and Scholar Services
lindlem@xavier.edu
(513) 745-4374

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