Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Eligibility requirements:
- Be enrolled at AUM for at least one full year
- Be in active status
- Be making normal progress towards a degree

There are only 12 total months available and any training done before the degree is completed will count against the 12-month total and reduce time available after the degree is awarded.

Each time you apply for OPT you will pay the application fee again.

OPT before completion of course of study (not recommended)

1. A student is able to apply for full-time authorization during annual vacations.
2. Degree candidates who have completed all course requirements for degree, but thesis can apply for full-time OPT to be used while they continue to make normal progress towards completing the thesis requirement.

OPT after completion of the course of study

1. Will only be granted for full-time use.
2. Students must apply before the completion date on their course of study
3. 12 months of OPT must be used within 14 months of the completion of a course of study

Limited Period of Unemployment to Maintain Status

During the 12 month post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. Students may not accumulate a total of more than 90 days of unemployment during any period of authorized post-completion OPT. If the 90-day unemployment limit is reached, a student is considered out of status and no additional 60-day grace period is allowed at that time. Volunteer work does count as employment under OPT, but it should be at least 20 hours per week and still be related to a student's major.

Travel While on OPT

Travel while on OPT is a not an easy issue. In most cases, re-entry to the U.S. will not be possible once students complete their program unless they have been approved for OPT, received their EAD card and

have a valid offer of employment letter. **Travel outside of the United States while an application is pending with USCIS is strongly discouraged.**

APPLICATION PACKET
1. $410.00 personal check or money order made payable to Department of Homeland Security (DO NOT abbreviate)
2. Two recent passport photos – within past 30 days (see below)
3. Copy of all prior I-20 forms, pages 1 and 3
4. Form I-765 – typed is preferred, but legible printing is acceptable. The I-765 form can be found on the following website: www.uscis.gov
5. Copy of I-94
6. Copy of passport and visa page
7. Copy of previous EAD card (if applicable)

NEW PHOTO REQUIREMENTS
Two photos must be submitted with all OPT applications. The photos must be the type known as **"passport" photos.** Lightly print and sign your name on the back of the photos with pencil.

The photos must meet the following requirements:
1. Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
2. Photo must present full head from top of hair to bottom of chin and measure 1" to 1-3/8"
3. Center head within frame
4. Background should be plain white or off-white
5. Have a natural expression
6. Contain no distracting shadows on face or background

The application processing time is usually 3 months. You should apply no earlier than 90 days before the completion date on your I-20 but you should apply as early as possible.

Within approximately 21 to 30 working days after the Service Center receives your application packet, you will receive a "Notice of Action" (Form I-797C), verifying they have received your application for OPT. In the top left hand corner, you will see an SRC number that can be used to track the processing status of your application using the following link: https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus.do