

Dear International Student:

Welcome to San José State University, the metropolitan university of the Silicon Valley! We are very happy that you have chosen SJSU for this extremely important phase of your education, and want to help you make the experience a smooth and productive one.

This International Student Handbook has been prepared for you by the staff of International Programs and Services (IPS) in order to guide you in the basics of study in a new educational and living environment. Obviously, the booklet cannot answer all of your questions. It is written, rather, to augment what is introduced to you at Orientation, and to serve as a quick resource for many of your questions.

IPS, located in Clark Hall, 5th Floor, Room 543, is here to serve the needs of students from other countries, as well as students who wish to study in another country and to host students who live at the International House. We provide information and advice concerning immigration regulations to help you maintain your legal student status and to access the benefits inherent in your status; we offer advising on personal, financial, and housing matters; and we consult with you on academic concerns. If we don't have the answers you need, we are almost always able to direct you to the person or office that does.

More than just taking care of your needs, however, the staff of IPS is interested in you and the unique perspectives that your cultural experience brings to San José State. We hope that you will visit our office not only to solve problems, but also to get acquainted and to share your wealth of knowledge of the world!

Again, our warmest WELCOME!

Sincerely,

Helen L. Stevens
Director

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES STAFF

Helen L. Stevens	Director
Kati Bell	Interim Study Abroad Coordinator/ Faculty Led Program Coordinator
Leann Cherkasky Makhni	Director, International House
Louis Gecenok	International Student Advisor
Lisa Harris	International Student Advisor
Alejandra Lizardo	International Student Advisor
Khim Lok	Office Manager
Veronica Malki	Study Abroad Advisor
Kristen Pendleton	Community Operations Manager
Courtney Ronca	International Student Advisor
Yuka Sakata	SEVIS Records Coordinator

We all wish you success at San José State University and hope that we can be of help in achieving that success.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISING

The office of International Programs and Services is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Come in between 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. (Monday to Thursday) when International Student Advisors are available on a walk-in basis to assist students. The advisors will be available to provide advice about many things including immigration matters, academic and registration problems, personal concerns, or any matters related to the improvement of your educational experience at our University.

Location: Clark Hall, 5th Floor, Room 543

Office Telephone #: 408-924-5920 **Fax #:** 408-924-5976

Email: sjsuips@sjsu.edu <http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/ipss>

Mailing address: **Office of International Programs and Services**
One Washington Square
San Jose, Ca 95921-0221

THE VISA, THE I-20, AND THE I-94

An International Student, having been granted a visa in an American Consulate abroad, has three documents that govern her/his stay in the U.S. They are: the F-1 entry visa, the I-94 and the I-20.

THE ENTRY VISA

The F-1 **entry visa** is issued at an American Consulate in a country outside the U.S. Most students come to the U.S. with an F-1 student visa. These visas are marked either for a single entry to the U.S. or for multiple entries. There is a time limit for the use of the visa. Sometimes a multiple entry visa is valid for the amount of time expected to complete the program sought, and, sometimes it is good only for one or more years. If a student leaves the U.S. after the expiration date on the visa, a new visa must be obtained to return. This visa is only needed when entering the U.S. from another country. It does not control your period of stay in America. **It is legal for you to remain in the U.S. after your visa has expired** (see the Maintaining Student Status section). However, you must renew an expired F-1 visa if you leave the U.S. and wish to return in F-1 status.

The Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

SEVIS is an internet-based database administered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that allows schools to exchange required data on the status of international students with ICE and its partner agencies of the Department of Homeland Security – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Information is regularly transmitted electronically as required throughout the student's academic career. U.S. Consulates and other U.S. government agencies will have access to this information.

SEVIS I-20 CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY

The visa does not govern your stay in America. There are two documents that do govern your F-1 status in the U.S.: the **I-94** (the Arrival/Departure card) and the **SEVIS I-20**. The I-20 is the Certificate of Eligibility that SJSU issues to International Students when they are admitted. It records information that the U.S. government needs to grant an F-1 student visa to enter the U.S.

All I-20's that are issued for F-1 status are issued through SEVIS. The information entered by the school becomes part of USCIS records about the student.

The student's personal SEVIS ID number is very important. Each time a student applies for a visa at a U.S. Embassy, enters the U.S. through a Port of Entry, meets with an USCIS official at an immigration office in the U.S., or applies for any type of benefit in the U.S., such as Practical Training, the SEVIS ID number verifies and records the transactions. When you enter the U.S. your I-20 is stamped at the Port of Entry and it becomes your legal document. If you change majors, need to extend your studies beyond the I-20 completion date, or if you finish your degree earlier than indicated on your I-20 in item #5, you must update it with IPS. Failure to maintain and keep your I-20 updated may result in losing your legal F-1 status.

I-94 ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE RECORD

A CBP Immigration Inspector at the port of entry airport completes and returns your I-94 card when you enter the United States. The officer stamps an arrival date and place on the I-94 and writes the letters *F-1* and *D/S* on the I-94. *F-1* is your student status. *D/S* is an abbreviation for "Duration of Status". Duration of Status means that students may stay in the country until the completion of their program, as long as the student always maintains legal F-1 status. This is true even if the entry visa, stamped in the passport has expired. The 11-digit number on the I-94 is called your "admission number". This number and the SEVIS number are used by the USCIS to identify you during your stay in the U.S.

MAINTAINING F-1 STUDENT STATUS

As an F-1 student your primary purpose for being in the U.S. is to study. In order to remain in lawful F-1 status, you must comply with the following requirements:

- Keep your passport valid at all times (at least a minimum of 6 months beyond the expected completion date in Section 5 of your I-20).
- Attend the school you are authorized to attend; i.e. the school whose I-20 you used to enter the U.S.; or to which your last transfer was authorized.
- Remain a full time student: Complete 12 units each semester if an undergraduate student, or 9 units if a graduate student, except for summer or the last semester.
- International students will not be able to drop below full time, without prior IPS approval.
- International students who register for less than a full-time course load, without prior IPS approval, will be out of status and will be reported to USCIS.
- International students will not be able to take concurrent enrollment (taking classes at another school) without prior IPS approval before the end of the SJSU add period.
- Complete a timely transfer within 15 days of the first day of classes when you transfer to SJSU from another school in the U.S., or change the level of education being sought (undergraduate to graduate program; 2nd bachelor's to graduate program, for example).
- Maintain a valid I-20: have your I-20 updated by IPS if you have any changes on the I-20. Any changes to your major, change of name, and/or completion of degree date must be updated before it expires.
- Do not participate in any unauthorized employment at any time.
- Maintain good academic standing: 2.00 grade point average for undergraduate students

and 3.00 grade point average for graduate students.

- Have your I-20 signed by an International Student Advisor before leaving the U.S. The signature is valid for 12 months from the date signed on page 3.
- While on post-completion OPT, work a minimum of 20 hours a week, with less than 90 days unemployed, and meet reporting requirements.

Failure to comply with the regulations cited above will lead to violation of your F-1 status, which may result in serious consequences, including termination of your program, cancellation of your visa, loss of working benefits, and even possibly deportation from the U.S with a 3 or 10 year bar from re-entry in some cases. Please come in to see an International Student Advisor as soon as possible if you have any questions or concerns regarding your legal F-1 student status.

FULL-TIME STUDY REQUIREMENTS

If a student does not follow the immigration regulations, he/she will be in violation of their F-1 student status. One such regulation is that a student must be enrolled full-time. A student in F-1 status is required by USCIS to complete a minimum academic load of 12 units per semester if an undergraduate, or 9 units per semester if a graduate student. The following are certain circumstances that would allow a student to carry a reduced number of units: **all requests must be approved before the last day of the registration add/drop period.**

- **Concurrent Enrollment:** A student enrolls at SJSU for at least 6 units, and an additional 6 units or more at another university or community college. Student must obtain **prior approval** from IPS.
- **Reduced Course Load:** A student may be eligible to take less than the required number of units, if approved by IPS under USCIS regulations. For example: If it is the student's **final term**, the student need take only the courses needed for completion, if given prior approved from IPS.
- **Thesis or Project Only:** A student who has less than 9-units of coursework to complete, or has completed all coursework and is just working on a thesis or project during the semester must submit a letter to IPS from the academic advisor prior to the end of the

semester registration period on SJSU letterhead indicating that the student is considered to be a full time student while completing their project/thesis.

- **Leave of absence from the university:** an SJSU student may take a leave of absence for one semester if still considered in good academic standing. However, F-1 students must leave the country if not enrolled.
- **Medical Leave of Absence/reduced course load:** If you have a medical condition, you may qualify for a reduced course load. It is required that you also submit a doctor's note recommending you take less than full-time with your Petition Form.

Remember: You must receive advance approval (prior to the last day of the add period) from an International Student Advisor at IPS to take less than the required unit load!

EXTENSION OF PROGRAM

In order to maintain status with USCIS, international students are expected to complete their studies in a given time, as shown on the I-20. In item number 5 on the I-20, there is a place to record when a student is to complete her/his studies. If the student is unable to complete all degree requirements by this date, an extension must be issued **before** the completion date on the I-20. This is called **Extension of Program** (EOP). To applying for Extension of Program, please pick up instructions from the IPS office.

TRAVEL

F-1 students who are planning to travel to another country must have their I-20 signed for re-entry by an International Student Advisor prior to leaving the U.S. The signature on page 3 of the I-20 is valid for 12 months after the date signed.

The Designated School Official's signature on the I-20 is necessary for re-entry into the U.S. It is also necessary to have a valid F-1 visa for re-entry. The visa is the stamp in the passport, obtained at an U.S. Consulate prior to coming to the U.S. If the current visa expires before the re-entry date, or a student changed to F-1 from another visa status while in the U.S., the student must apply for a new F-1 visa while outside the U.S. **All students and their family members who will be applying for a new visa must see an International Student Advisor before travelling.**

The Automatic Revalidation of Visa benefit allows certain F/J non-immigrants to re-enter the

United States after a 30-day or less visit to "contiguous territory" (Canada, Mexico, and the adjacent Caribbean islands other than Cuba) without having to obtain a new visa prior to re-entry, and provided the student is in status and all other documents are valid: passport, I-20, and I-94. However, if the student chooses to apply for a new F-1 visa while in the contiguous territory they will no longer be eligible for the "automatic revalidation" benefit during the course of that trip, but would have to wait until the visa is granted in order to re-enter the United States. If the visa application is denied, the student may not reenter the U.S. S/he will have to return home to apply for a new F-1 visa before returning.

To avoid delays, please come see an international student advisor and have your I-20 signed at **least 3 weeks prior to your travel**. This is so that if any problems are found, IPS staff will have ample time to prepare the necessary documents for your travel.

TRANSFERRING

Transferring to SJSU

International students may transfer from one school to another to complete a degree or begin a new program. To do so, a student must acquire admission and a new I-20. The student must be enrolled within 5 months of completion of the previous program. The student is required to have the previous school release their student record in SEVIS to SJSU, and should have been enrolled full time at the previous school in the term prior to the transfer. After registering at SJSU, a student must submit the SJSU Transfer Pending I-20 for immigration registration to the IPS office within 15 days after the beginning of classes for processing with USCIS. If no SJSU I-20 was issued at the time of acceptance, please check in with the IPS office immediately.

Change of program or degree level

A current SJSU student will be issued a new I-20 for the program change. The International Admissions/Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations (GAPE) office will need to process the new I-20 within 15 days after the beginning of the new program or degree.

Reminder: These transfers to the new I-20 must be done with this deadline to avoid violation of F-1 student status.

REINSTATEMENT TO STUDENT STATUS

If a student takes fewer units than required during a semester without prior approval, neglects to process their transfer or extension, works without authorization, or is disqualified, the student will be in violation of legal, F-1 student status. If this happens, a student should come to see an international student advisor immediately. The student can apply to the USCIS for reinstatement, and may be *reinstated* only if the circumstances were out of the student's control and occurred within 5 months of applying. A student who is out of status for more than 5 months is likely to be denied reinstatement by USCIS. The student will then have to leave the country and re-enter to gain a new F-1 status.

Reminder: Students who are out of status are not eligible to purchase international student health insurance, or to continue previously authorized work.

PERMISSION TO WORK

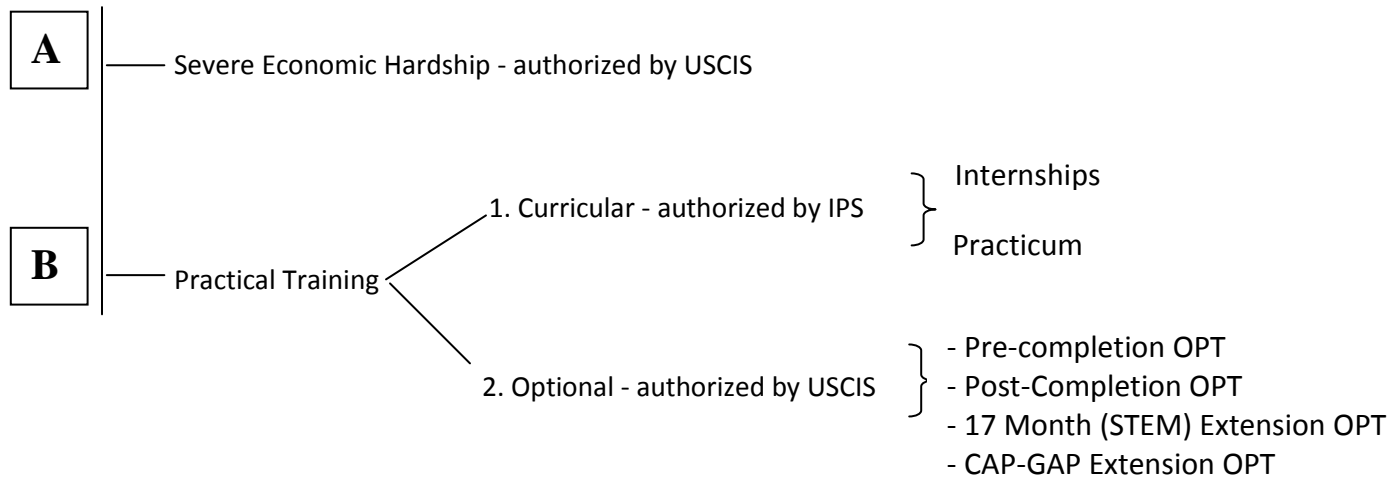
I. ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

On-campus employment is permitted only on the campus that has issued the I-20 (SJSU). A student must be in valid F-1 status. A student is limited to 20 hours a week during the semester, but may work full-time during vacation periods (summer, winter, and holidays). To be employed, the student will need to obtain a Social Security Card. To apply for SSN # the student must have a job offer on campus; the IPS office will issue a confirmation letter to the Social Security Office. The Social Security Office will later mail you a social security card. When requested, IPS will also issue a letter to the SJSU Human Resources office certifying that students are maintaining their lawful F1 status for work authorization.

II. OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

Attendance at an F-1 Employment workshop is required before applying. Sign up at the IPS office. A student may not apply for this off-campus work authorization until s/he has been in

full-time F1 status for two academic semesters.



A. SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

Off campus employment due to Economic Hardship is permitted only in cases where there is proven severe economic hardship. The purpose of this kind of work is to enable a student to earn income that is needed to pay tuition and living expenses because his/her sponsor cannot provide sufficient funds. A student applying for permission to work off campus must prove there is economic necessity due to **unforeseen** circumstances. Permission to work off campus is granted by the USCIS. Students interested in applying must see the International Student Advisor to obtain an application.

B. PRACTICAL TRAINING

Practical training refers to employment in a student’s field of study, which adds practical work experience to the knowledge acquired in the classroom. Practical training may be obtained both during studies and after the completion of studies.

There are two types of Practical Training: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). OPT has four categories: Pre-Completion OPT; Post-Completion OPT; 17-Month STEM Extension OPT; CAP-GAP Extension (OPT).

1. Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) refers to work experience that is a required or optional part

of the curriculum. In other words, it is work for which one is receiving academic credit. Some academic majors require students to acquire practical work experience as part of their degree program. Please refer to the SJSU catalog to determine if an internship or practicum class is required for graduation in your major. International students in such majors may obtain CPT approval to satisfy the requirements for such a class.

In other cases, a student may enroll in an optional internship or practicum class as a way to obtain Curricular Practical Training. The work must be directly related to the major. A professor must approve the job and establish what academic work must be met to earn credit for what is learned on the job. In these cases, the department offers internships or practicum classes, which a student will enroll in to gain practical work experience.

Please see your academic advisor and attend the F-1 Employment Workshop to determine if you are eligible for CPT.

2. Optional Practical Training

All international students are eligible for a total of one year (12 months) of Optional Practical Training (OPT). This provides the opportunity to experience employment in the student's field of study, which adds to what is learned in class. It can be done while still a student (Pre-completion OPT), and/or after completing all course work for a degree (Post-completion OPT).

A student may wish to use some of the 12 months of OPT available while still working on a degree. He/she may do Pre-completion OPT 1) full-time during the summer break, if intending to register for the Fall semester, 2) part-time during fall and spring semesters, and 3) full-time after completion of all course requirements, with only a thesis or project remaining.

Any Pre-completion OPT used while still a student will be deducted from the 12 months total available, reducing the amount authorized after graduation. Thus, if a student decides to use Pre-completion OPT for three months full-time during summer vacation, he/she would only have nine months available at the completion of studies. Pre-completion OPT, part-time,

during the school year (20 hrs/wk) is counted as ½ time. If a student obtains authorization for Pre-completion OPT of four months during the semester (20 hrs/wk), then 2 months would be subtracted from the 12 total available months.

A student will be eligible for another 12 months of OPT if the student enrolls in a higher educational level. **A student's OPT will be cancelled if they enroll in a new degree program while still on OPT. It is a violation of F-1 status to undertake further study while on post completion OPT after graduation.**

Please note that to obtain OPT an application is sent to the USCIS California Service Center (CSC) and it typically takes two to three months to have it approved. Students may not work until the Employment Authorization Document (EAD), is received by mail. Graduating students may apply for post-completion OPT from 90 days before the completion of all degree requirements, until 60 days after completion of all your degree requirements. The application must be received at the CSC and logged in to the USCIS data system prior to the 60th day after program completion on the form I-20.

There are also the STEM and Cap-Gap extensions of OPT for some students beyond their 12 months. For more details regarding these types of authorization, please see an international student advisor.

Reminder on IPS documents processing:

Please keep in mind that it may take IPS up to 2-3 weeks to process any request. We will email you to pick-up your documents as soon as they are ready. Please plan ahead to avoid problems and delays.