

COPPIN STATE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Welcome International Students

A Guide to Study in the U.S.A



Fall 2012

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WELCOME!

Welcome to Coppin State University!

You are beginning a journey as a student and a scholar in our diverse and thriving community of academicians and student affairs practitioners. The Office of International Student Services is dedicated to ensuring your success at Coppin. We provide assistance in maintaining your student status and adjusting to life in the United States and at the University. While we aim to be a home away from home, we also help you to meet the challenge of exploring outside the boundaries of the campus. Coppin is located in one of the world's greatest cities offering its history, arts, neighborhoods, and shopping.

This manual was prepared to familiarize you with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and to ease your transition to a new country. Please read the manual carefully and feel free to contact us if any questions arise. You may also learn more about Coppin State University by connecting to us via the internet at <http://www.coppin.edu/ISS/>.

Best wishes to you and may your time at the university be fruitful and enjoyable.

Dr. Joann Christopher-Hicks
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and DSO

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the International Student Services Program is to provide international students with the resources necessary to successfully navigate through both Coppin State University and the United States. The program seeks to accomplish these goals through maintaining relationships with federal agencies, providing a support toward attainment of educational goals, assisting with obtaining employment, fostering healthy transitions from their country of origin, and assisting with acculturation and adjustment needs.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Questions	Talk To	Location
Academic Matters	Academic Advisement	Health and Human Services 2 nd Floor Room 224
Academic Status	Records and Registration	Miles Conner – 1 st Floor Room 135
Admission	Admissions Office	Miles Conner – 1 st Floor Room 127
Add/Drop	Academic Advisement	Health and Human Services 2 nd Floor Room 224
Health Care	Community Health Center	Health and Human Services -1st Floor Room 131
Book Supplies	Book Store	J. Millard Tawes Center
Identification Card	Auxiliary Services	Talon Center- 2 nd Floor, Rm. 202
Joining a Club	Student Activities	J. Millard Tawes Center – 1 st Floor Room 190
Student Accounts	Bursar's Office	Miles Conner – 2 nd Floor Room 219
PRAXIS, NCAT, MCAT, PCAT	Individual Departments	Individual Departments
Career Services	Career Services Center	J. Millard Tawes Center – 1 st Floor Room 140
Personal Counseling	Center for Counseling and Student Development	J. Millard Tawes Center – 1 st Floor Room 160
Records, Transcript	Records and Registration	Miles Conner – 1 st Floor Room 135
Student Employment	Financial Aid Office	Miles Conner – 1 st Floor Room 104
Traffic Violations	Auxiliary Services: Auxiliary Services	Talon Center- 1 st Floor
Vehicle Registration	Auxiliary Services: Auxiliary Services	Physical Education Complex- 2 nd Floor
Registration	Records and Registration	Miles Conner – 1 st Floor Room 135

If you are unable to find an answer to any of your questions, call the International Student Services Program in the Division of Student Affairs. (410) 951-3933.

DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIALS ON CAMPUS

Each Designated School Office (DSO) has their own role in assisting you as an international student, and providing service and support to the university and the federal government. Your main point of contact will be Ms. Carla Tyree.

Student Affairs

Dr. Joann Christopher-Hicks Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
410-951-3933 jchristopher-hicks@coppin.edu

Ms. Helen Dunkley Career Counselor
410-951-3917 hdunkley@coppin.edu

Ms. Carla Tyree Coordinator of Student Life
410-951-3957 ctyree@coppin.edu

Enrollment Management

Mrs. Britt Nwaogu Enrollment Management Specialist
410-951-3583 bnwaogu@coppin.edu

Dr. Reginald Ross Vice President for Enrollment
410-951-3000 rross@coppin.edu

Admissions

Mrs. Michelle Gross Director of Admissions (PDSO)
410-951-3610 mgross@coppin.edu

Ms. Patricia Thompson Administrative Assistant/International Enrollment
410-951-3600 pthompson@coppin.edu

Ms. Lisa Thornton Assistant Director of Admissions
410-951-3600 lthornton@coppin.edu

Andrea Monier Administrative Assistant
410-951-3608 amonier@coppin.edu

Records and Registration

Gillian Hallmen Assistant Registrar
410-951-3943 Ghallmen@coppin.edu

LOCATION AND AVAILABILITY

The ISSP is located in the Division of Student Affairs-Miles Conner Administration Building on the 1st Floor in the Division of Student Affairs. The mailing address is as follows:

Division of Student Affairs
C/O: International Student Services Program
Miles Conner Administration Building – Suite 125
2500 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216
<http://www.coppin.edu/ISS/>

U.S. IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

INTRODUCTION

As an international student or scholar in the U.S., you must be aware of and abide by the U.S. immigration regulations that govern your stay here. If you are aware of the requirements and maintain your legal status, you should have few, if any, problems.

Coppin's International Student Services Program (ISSP) will assist you in maintaining status with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in the Department of Homeland Security.

We **strongly advise** you to consult with ISSP before making any decision that might impact your student status in the U.S. We also suggest that you do not rely entirely on the advice or experience of your friends and colleagues; each situation is different and varies accordingly. What was true for a friend may not be true in your case. The best advice is to ask ISSP first; if we don't know the answer, we'll help you find it.

This short chapter on U.S. immigration regulations is only a brief introduction to the regulations that may apply in your situation. In the past few years, there have been a number of very significant changes to U.S. immigration regulations and procedures. Applicants for non-immigrant visas are now required to have a personal interview, and as a result it can take longer to get a visa.

As of August 1, 2003, all persons in F and J status are included in the U.S. government's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and all visa documents have been issued through SEVIS. The SEVIS system requires Coppin State University to report certain information at certain times about persons in F and J status. You must be alert to these requirements. Make sure you pay close attention to the USCIS website, and any updates on the ISSP website <http://www.coppin.edu/ISS/>.

Remember, it is your responsibility to be aware of the laws and regulations of the US. Furthermore, it is ultimately your responsibility to stay in status.

MAINTAINING YOUR LEGAL STATUS

You must maintain your lawful nonimmigrant status at all times as outlined below. Failure to maintain your lawful student or scholar status can result in your having to end your program prematurely and leave the U.S.

1. Maintain a valid passport at all times. At the time of any entry to the U.S. (or any application to the immigration service), make sure your passport is valid for a minimum of six months in the future.

2. Make certain that your permission to remain in the U.S. is always valid. The date to which you have been authorized to remain in the U.S. is recorded on your I-94 card, a small white card which is usually stapled to the visa page in your passport. It is the I-94 card, *not the visa stamp* in your passport, which is the record of your permission to remain in the U.S. The I-94 cards of persons holding F status will usually be marked D/S or 'Duration of Status'. This means that you have permission to remain in the U.S. for the length of your academic program as stated on line #5 of your I-20, as long as you remain a full-time student or scholar in that program. The I-94 cards of persons in H-1B, O-1, TN and other non-immigrant statuses will show an expiration date.

Important: When you enter the U.S. always take a look at your I-94 before you leave the immigration/customs area – it is much easier to correct a mistake at the time. If you will be staying at Coppin beyond the end date of your I-20 you must inform ISSP well in advance of the expiration date so that your stay can be extended.

3. Maintain a full course of study at all times. Federal regulations require undergraduate students to take the equivalent of 12 credit hours per semester at the undergraduate level each semester. Full-time student status in the graduate and professional schools is nine credit hours, per semester. Please consult your academic department or ISSP if you have questions about this requirement. (See #4 below for the few occasions when a reduced course load is permitted).

4. Obtain ISSP authorization prior to dropping below a full course of study. U.S. federal regulations require you to pursue a full course of study. You cannot deviate from this full course of study requirement without **prior** permission from ISSP, and that permission is possible only under very limited circumstances. If you are considering dropping below a full course of study, you must consult first with your academic adviser, but before getting their final approval you must complete the ISSP form Request to Drop Below a Full Course of Study and ISSP must approve the reduction in course load. (A reduced course load can be authorized by ISSP under very limited circumstances, including academic difficulties in the initial semester, medical reasons, or in a student's last semester if less than a full course load is required to complete the program).

5. Abide by employment regulations. Each non-immigrant status, i.e. F-1, H-1B, O-1, TN, etc. has very specific and unique limitations on employment in the U.S. You must abide by the employment regulations governing your immigration status. If you work without the appropriate authorization, it will create serious difficulties for you. Always check with ISSP well in advance of accepting an offer of employment. Students in F status may work no more than 20 hours per week on-campus while school is in session. Note that your school can set limitations on the number of hours you work, so check with your program if you are unsure.

*Students in F-1 status cannot work off-campus without receiving **PRIOR** authorization from the USCIS which can take up to 90 days.*

6. Report departure date and reason to ISSP. Occasionally a student or scholar will leave the University early or unexpectedly for personal reasons or because of an early completion or graduation, leave of absence, withdrawal or suspension. In each of these cases, you must inform ISSP that you will be leaving Coppin before the expected completion date on your immigration document, i.e. your I-20.

7. Notify ISSP in advance of transferring schools. If you are leaving Coppin and transferring to another U.S. school, you must complete an official immigration transfer by first notifying ISSP of your intention to transfer. ISSP will release your SEVIS record to your new school, which will issue a new I-20 form.

8. Make sure you have the appropriate travel documents, so that you can re-enter the U.S. after a short trip abroad. You must have a valid passport, a valid visa stamp and a valid I-20 (F) with a recent ISSP signature to re-enter the U.S. after a trip overseas. Before you travel out of the U.S., check with ISSP to make sure that all your documents are in order. If you need to apply for a new U.S. visa, make certain to allow sufficient time for the application and interview process. As interviews are now required for most visa applicants, it can take several weeks.

Some students and scholars in science or technology fields may experience additional delays because of security clearances. The best way to be prepared for possible visa issuance delays is to check the information on the website of the U.S. Consulate where you will apply (go to usembassy.state.gov) and also to contact ISSP as well as network with colleagues and friends from your home country to understand common and current practices.

9. Make sure your family members have the correct immigration status. If you are here as a student or scholar and your spouse and/or dependent children will join you in Baltimore, make sure they hold the appropriate non-immigrant status, e.g. F-2 for dependents of F-1 students. ISSP can assist you in obtaining SEVIS documents for your dependents. Persons holding F-2 status cannot work in the U.S (USCIS). Other family members or friends will most likely need tourist status to visit you here. Only spouses and dependent children are eligible for F-2 status.

10. VERY IMPORTANT! Report any change of local (current residential) address within 10 days. ISSP, in turn, is required to notify SEVIS within 21 days of your updating your address.

THE I-94 FORM

The I-94 card is one of the most important immigration documents since it is what indicates your non-immigrant status in the U.S., and how long you may legally remain in the country for that particular trip. It is a small white card (or small green card, but only if you are participating in the Visa Waiver program) that is normally stapled inside of your passport. It is the evidence that you have entered the country legally.

When entering the U.S., pay close attention to what is written on this card. Before leaving the immigration area, be sure to check the status you have been given, and the date you must depart by. It is the date written on the I-94 - and NOT the expiration date of the visa stamp - that controls how long you can remain in the U.S. A new I-94 card with a new date is issued each time a nonimmigrant legally enters the U.S.

As shown below, your immigration status should be written next to ADMITTED (e.g. F-1, F-2) and there should be a final date written next to UNTIL. F-1 students and their dependents should have D/S written as their final date, not a specific date. D/S means duration of status, which is indicated by the end dates on the I-20.

Note: This Departure Number is referred to as the Admission Number in Section 1 of the I-9

Departure Number
583268007 02 *SPECIMEN*

U.S. IMMIGRATION
250 WAS

Immigration and
Naturalization Service
I-94
Departure Record

SEP 13 1991

ADMITTED F-1 (CLASS)
UNTIL D/S

14 Family Name
STUDENT

15 First (Given) Name
JOHN

16 Birth Date (Day/Mo/Yr)
27.08.63

17 Country of Citizenship
U.K

ABOUT YOUR F-1 STUDENT STATUS

F-1 student status will allow you to remain in the U.S. as long as you are a properly registered full-time student. To maintain full-time status you must be enrolled in 12 credits (undergraduate) and 9 credits (graduate) per semester. F-1 status will allow you to work part-time in on-campus jobs and work in a "practical training" job directly related to your field of study for 12 months during or after the completion of your studies. Dependents of F-1 students will be permitted to join you in the U.S. provided you demonstrate that there are sufficient financial resources for their support. A spouse and dependent children of F-1 students hold F-2 status and may not work in the U.S.

EMPLOYMENT OVERVIEW

This section provides you with an introduction to employment issues and options for international students in F-1 status.

The most important employment issue that you always need to keep in mind is the issue of legal (or "authorized") versus illegal (or "unauthorized") employment. You must always make sure that any employment you plan to engage in is legal employment. Any unauthorized (i.e. illegal) employment - *even for one day - even if you did not know it was illegal* - poses a grave threat to your ability to remain in or return to the United States. And you must always make sure that you have the necessary employment authorization before you begin work, since starting work without prior authorization - *even if you receive authorization later* - constitutes illegal employment.

You should always consult with an ISSP adviser before beginning any employment. This is the only way to be sure that you won't engage in illegal employment, with all of its adverse consequences for your future in the United States.

Eligibility Requirements

Different requirements exist for each type of F-1 employment, but there are basic requirements that must be met for any F-1 employment:

- You must be enrolled for a full course of study
- You must be authorized by USCIS (former INS) or the ISSP to attend Coppin State University.

Once employment is authorized you must maintain eligibility or you will lose your right to continue employment, even if it was authorized in writing.

Definition of Employment

Employment is any type of work performed for services provided in exchange for money, tuition, fees, books, supplies, room, food or any other benefit. If you receive no pay or other benefit for the work performed, this activity is not defined as employment, but can be considered volunteer work.

CATEGORIES OF F-1 STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

I. On Campus Employment

Work on Coppin's campus is usually permissible if it meets certain requirements. The authorization for on-campus employment is obtained from ISSP. USCIS authorization is not necessary. Check with the ISSP regarding procedures governing the authorization of on-campus employment.

You may work on campus provided:

1. You are maintaining F-1 status,
2. You do not work more than a total of 20 hours per week (including any off-campus work you may have been authorized to perform) while school is in session, and
3. You do not displace a U.S. resident.

USICS makes some differentiations in the types of on campus work F-1 students can do:

Direct Employment by Coppin: On-campus work performed at Coppin State University is always acceptable, whether it is employment in your academic department, the computer center, library, or the housing office. Work required by a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship is also acceptable.

Other Employment on Coppin's Premises: Work performed on your school's grounds or premises for an outside contractor or firm is considered to be on-campus employment *as long as the employer provides direct services to students*. Examples of this might be the university's food service or bookstore, (Thompson's, etc). if they are operated not by your school but by an outside firm.

Off Campus Employment Which Qualifies as On Campus Employment: USCIS defines some types of employment that occur off campus as "on-campus employment."

Immigration regulations allow you to work at an off-campus location provided (1) the location is educationally affiliated with the school, (2) the educational affiliation is associated with your school's established curriculum or is related to a graduate level research project which your school has contracted to perform, and (3) the work is an integral or important part of your program of study. **For example, if your field of study is marine biology and your school has an off-campus marine biology research facility, you may work there and that employment will be defined as "on campus".**

Note: You must contact ISSP before beginning any "on-campus" employment. While "direct employment by Coppin" is clearly explained, the other two types of "on-campus" jobs described above are more difficult to define.

A new F-1 student who has been issued a form I-20 may work prior to the commencement of classes, but for no longer than 30 days prior to the actual start date of classes.

II. Internship with an International Organization

If you are offered employment in the form of an internship by a recognized international organization, you may accept such employment upon receipt of authorization from the Immigration Service. Examples of recognized organizations include the United Nations, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc.

III. Curricular Practical Training

Certain work experiences, which are an integral part of your program of study, may be the basis for curricular practical training employment authorization. These experiences may include alternate work/study programs, internships, cooperative education programs and practicum experiences which are either (1) a required part of your academic program, or (2) work for which you receive academic course credit.

Curricular practical training is authorized by ISSP; it does not require approval from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). A new SEVIS I-20 will be issued denoting employment authorization on page three. You must not continue employment beyond the date authorized unless you apply and are granted an extension of your permission to work. Any work undertaken after the expiration date of your CPT will be considered unauthorized employment.

Requirements:

ISSP can authorize curricular practical training for you if it can be clearly documented that the proposed employment meets one of the three following conditions:

1. The training employment is required of **all** degree candidates in the program and is necessary for the awarding of the degree. Included in this category is employment in a required internship or practicum. Graduate students in their first year of study may be eligible for curricular practical training in this category. **Undergraduates are not eligible in their first year of study.**
2. The training employment **will result in the awarding of academic credit.** Included in this category is employment for a course specifically designed to award academic credit for an employment experience. Also included in this category is employment that will result in the award of *at least one course credit for an independent study*. In both of these cases you must be registered for the course during the period that you are working under curricular practical training authorization.

FAQ's About CPT

What is Curricular Practical Training?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is an employment option available to F-1 students where the practical training employment is considered to be an integral part of the curriculum or academic program. According to the immigration regulations, this employment may be an internship, cooperative education job, a practicum, or any other work experience that is either required for your degree (as defined in the course catalog) or for which academic credit is awarded.

What are the criteria for determining if I am eligible for Curricular Practical Training?

To be eligible for curricular practical training, you must be enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year, your employment must be an integral part of your degree program or requirement for a course (as defined above), and your job offer related to your major or field of study. You must have an offer of employment offering work that qualifies as curricular practical training.

If I use Curricular Practical Training, will the time be deducted from the twelve months of optional practical training?

The time you spend on curricular practical training will not be deducted from the twelve months of allowable optional practical training UNLESS you use 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training.

What is considered part-time?

Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are enrolled for classes is considered part-time curricular practical training. The employment authorization page of your CPT/I-20 will specify permission to engage in part-time training and you must limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time curricular practical training cumulatively, but you must be simultaneously enrolled as a full-time student in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.

What is considered full-time training?

Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered full-time curricular practical training, regardless of whether you are enrolled full-time or part-time for classes. The employment authorization page on your I-20 will specify permission to participate in full-time training. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in full-time curricular practical training, however if you participate in twelve months or more of curricular practical training you will not be eligible for post-completion practical training (OPT).

Do I need to have a job offer prior to submitting my application?

Yes. Your CPT authorization will be employer and date specific.

Do I need a U.S. Social Security Number?

Yes, if you plan to work in the U.S. you will need a valid Social Security number. ISSP can provide you with instructions on applying for a social security number.

Do I have to pay U.S. taxes on my salary?

In general F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than six years are exempt from social security taxes (also known as F.I.C.A. tax). You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. If you need more information about the F-1 social security tax exemption, please contact ISSP. Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply, including federal, state and local.

What proof of employment authorization can I give my employer?

Your I-20 form for curricular practical training authorized by your ISSP advisor is all you will need to provide your employer. Within the first three days of beginning work you and your employer must complete a form entitled Employment Eligibility Verification (USCIS Form I-9). This form will be kept on file by your employer and must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission. Your I-20 with curricular practical training employment page (Page 3) should meet the documentation requirement of the I-9.

IV. Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorization that gives F-1 students an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off campus. You may use some or all of the available 12 months of practical training during your course of study or save the full twelve months to use after you complete your studies. Authorization for optional practical training is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) – formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service or INS - and can take at least 90 days and frequently up to 120 days to obtain. It is important that you apply for the authorization at the earliest possible date.

F-1 students are eligible for twelve months of optional practical training (OPT). Optional practical training provides an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge obtained in an academic program to a practical work experience. This employment opportunity must be directly related to your major field of study. It may, in certain circumstances, be full or part time and may take place anywhere in the U.S.

You may apply to use OPT during your vacation periods, during the academic year, or when you complete your studies. Students in masters and Ph.D. programs with thesis and/or dissertation requirements can apply for optional practical training upon completion of all coursework. OPT must be endorsed by ISSP but also requires authorization from the Immigration and Naturalization Service before you can start to work. To be eligible for optional practical training, one must be enrolled in a full course of study for at least one full academic year. Applications for optional practical training can be submitted up to 90 days prior to the completion of your program of study. As it typically takes 90 days to obtain your employment authorization, **you must apply early**. You cannot begin working until you have received the USCIS authorization.

OPT Eligibility

- must be in full time student status for at least one full academic year preceding the submission of your OPT application (only applies to bachelor level students)
- be maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of the application, and
- intend to work in a position directly related to your major field of study.

When to Apply

- If you are a student completing the first academic year of study (or are in a one year program), the earliest you can submit the application is 90 days prior to the date you complete your first academic year.
- If you are beyond the first year of study, we recommend you submit your application no earlier than 120 days prior to the start date you request for your OPT.
- If you are applying for OPT based on completion of all coursework and/or completion of your academic program, you must submit an application for optional practical training prior to your completion date. Applications received at USCIS after the completion date will be denied.
- Applications will be accepted by ISSP at your pre-scheduled OPT appointment (see below)

Dates of OPT Authorization

The OPT card is approved for a specific beginning and end date. You must identify those dates on the OPT Request Form. For OPT after completion of studies or graduation, the beginning date can be no later than 60 days after the date you complete your studies. If you have questions about your OPT dates, please discuss this with an ISSP adviser.

How to Apply

Schedule an OPT appointment at ISSP

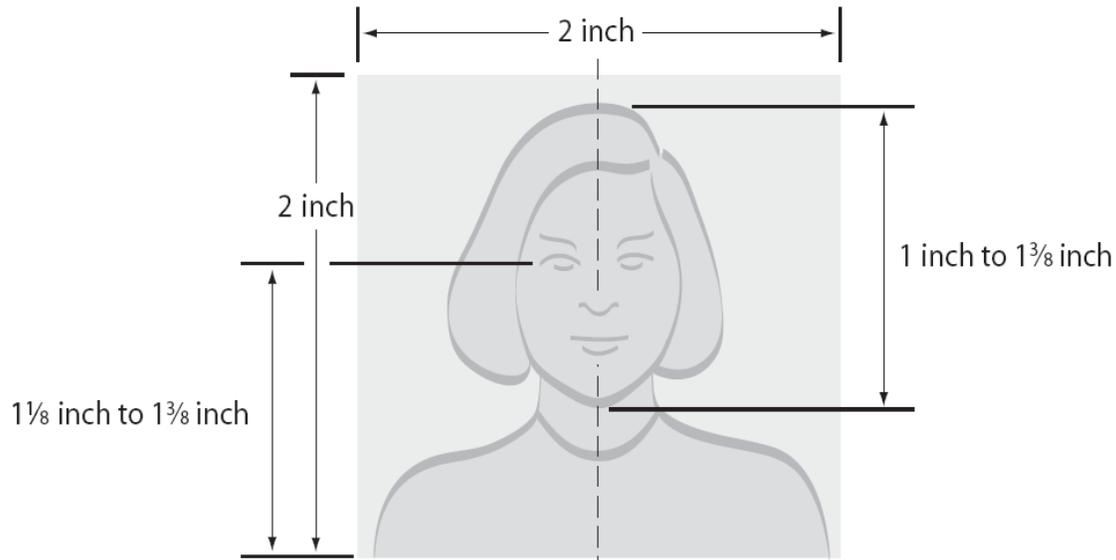
OPT must be recommended by the ISSP before submitting the application to USCIS. Your first step is to schedule an appointment with our office. To schedule, call 410.951.3933 or stop by the Office of International Student Services to make an appointment. Your OPT applications will be reviewed for completeness and accepted for processing at the close of the session.

You must bring the following documents to your OPT appointment

- the OPT request form, part II of which is to be signed by your dean, department chairperson or academic advisor.
- a completed I765 form found at www.uscis.gov → “Immigration Forms”. (Make certain that the address you put in item #3 will be valid for the next 90 to 120 days as that is where your receipt and employment card will be sent). **Mail from USCIS will not be forwarded by the US Postal Service.**
- A copy of your I-94 form (both sides) and a copy of the visa and identification pages from your passport
- Copies, front and back, of all previous I-20s

- Two recent photographs per the attached instructions from USCIS (see sample below). Write your name and SEVIS number in pencil on the back of the photos. Do not cut to size or staple.
- A check for \$340 payable to US Department of Homeland Security

Sample Photo



After making copies of all the above documents, staple all the documents listed above and send by certified mail with a return receipt or a courier service to the USCIS Service Center that services the address listed on your I-765. Those with addresses in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, your application should be sent to **USCIS Service Center, 75 Lower Welden Street, St. Albans, VT 05479-0001**. If other, consult with ISSP to learn where to send your application.

After Mailing Your Application

Request for Additional Documentation

Occasionally a student will receive a request for further evidence from immigration at the time their application is reviewed. These requests are typically due to documentation that may have been omitted such as a copy of both front and back of I-94 or new photographs. If you receive such a request (normally a blue sheet of paper) simply reply to USCIS directly with the requested documents, including the original blue sheet placed on top. If you do not understand the USCIS request, contact OISS. Make copies of your materials before you mail them, and send the reply by return receipt mail.

Checking the Progress of Your OPT Application

USCIS will be sending you a notice (Form I-797) stating they have received your application. This is your receipt so take care not to lose it. This receipt will have your case number printed on

it in the following format EAC#####. With the receipt number, you can track the progress of your application at the USCIS website: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus.do>

Note: USCIS will use an electronic transfer when processing your payment. You will not receive a copy of your cancelled check, but will be able to track your payment on your bank statement. If the payment has not cleared your bank within four weeks please contact ISSP.

OPT Application Approval

First you will receive a paper notification (From I-797A) from USCIS. Within a day or two you will receive a small photo identification card, called an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). This card will state the type and length of the period of employment authorized. When you receive this card, you must check it to make certain all the information is correct. If there are errors, please consult with ISSP immediately to determine whether the card needs to be returned for corrections.

When OPT Employment is Permitted

Generally, you may only begin employment once you have the EAD (Employment Authorization Card) in your possession. In some cases the I-797A (OPT approval notice) may grant you permission to work for up to and only a 30 day period, pending receipt of the EAD card. The web confirmation will not suffice as evidence of eligibility for employment. You may only work within the dates printed on the card. Graduating students are not permitted to work on campus after graduation, unless the job qualifies under OPT, and falls within the dates of the EAD card.

Reporting Requirements After Graduation

During your OPT period you continue to hold F-1 status sponsored by Coppin. As such, you must follow certain regulations. Your F-1 record remains in the government database, SEVIS. Any changes listed below must be reported to ISSP, so that your SEVIS record is updated.

- your current address (where you physically reside) within ten days of a change
- changes in your name or your dependent's name(s)
- intention of transferring from your OPT to another F-1 program in the U.S.
- change of visa status (e.g. F to H, F to J, etc).

Travel After Graduation While Waiting for OPT Approval

After completion of studies, DO NOT leave the country without first receiving your EAD. Once you have graduated, you are required to show your EAD along with your other immigration documents in order to be permitted to reenter the United States. Printed on the EAD card will be the statement not valid for reentry. This statement means that you must have ALL documentation listed below in order to travel and return to the United States after graduation. In many cases students will also need to apply for a new F-1 visa stamp before they may return to the U.S. If you have an employer who has filed for H-1B on your behalf, no travel is recommended in F-1 status. The following is a list of required documents to re-enter the U.S. using OPT after graduation:

- a valid Form I-20, signed on page 3 by an ISSP advisor (the signature should not be more than six months old at the time of reentry to the United States)
- a valid passport
- a valid F-1 visa stamp in the passport
- valid EAD card, evidence of a job offer, evidence of resumption of employment, or if not yet employed, evidence that you are searching for employment

FAQ's about OPT

Do I need to have a job to apply for optional practical training?

No, but remember OPT only permits employment related to your field of study.

When May I eligible to apply for OPT?

- During vacation periods (no restrictions on hours per week)
- During the semester (limited to 20 hours/week) and student must maintain full time enrollment
- After completion of all course requirements, excluding a thesis or dissertation requirement
- After completion of a course of study (i.e. after graduation).

If I complete a degree program, take 12 months of practical training, and then begin a second course of study, am I eligible for an additional 12 months of practical training?

As of January 1, 2003, an F-1 student may become eligible for another 12 months of optional practical training when he or she moves to a higher educational level. This benefits, for example, a student who has used 12 months of optional training after completing a bachelor's degree and is now completing a masters or PhD program.

What are the guidelines for the dates I chose on the OPT request form?

The OPT card is approved for specific beginning and end dates. For OPT after completion of studies or graduation, the beginning date can be no later than 60 days after the date you complete your studies.

Can I begin working before I receive the Employment Authorization Document? (EAD card)

No. You may not begin employment before you receive your EAD from USCIS. Working before practical training has been authorized by the USCIS constitutes illegal employment and may jeopardize your legal status in the U.S. Some USCIS Service Centers send paper approval by issuance of a Notice of Approval, I-797A, in a separate mailing. If indicated on the I-797A you may be eligible to work for up to 30 days based on that notice. Notify ISSP if you do not receive your EAD within 10 days of receipt of the I-797A.

Can I travel outside the US while my OPT application is pending at USCIS?

Before graduation, for example over Spring Recess, you may travel outside the US prior to USCIS approval of your application, if you return to the US prior to graduation. **After graduation**, ISSP does not recommend travel outside the US prior to receiving OPT approval from USCIS. If you must travel outside the U.S. after graduation, but before you have been approved for your practical training employment, it is advisable to speak with an ISSP advisor about the timing of your application and the date you list as the beginning date of the proposed employment. The beginning date selected is important because it has an impact on how early you can apply, thus how early you will obtain approval.

What about traveling abroad after I have completed my studies and while I hold practical training status?

If you have completed your course of study and have received your USCIS authorization for practical training (your EAD card), you may travel abroad and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status. You will need the following documents for your re-entry: (1) a valid passport, (2) a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport, (3) the new SEVIS I-20 recommending optional practical training (4) your original practical training Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by the USCIS and (5) proof that you have a job in the U.S. appropriate for practical training and that you are returning to the U.S. to resume or start this employment. **If you do not have all of these documents you should NOT travel abroad without first consulting an ISSP advisor.** (An expired F-1 visa can pose a problem; it may be difficult to renew your F-1 visa while you are on practical training).

Will I have to pay U.S. taxes for income earned while on practical training?

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than six calendar years are exempt from social security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer, as many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax law. You will be subject to all other taxes that may apply: federal, state and local. You should check to see if your country is one of the few that has a tax treaty with the U.S. allowing students to exclude a limited amount of earned income from federal taxation.

V. Employment Authorization Based Upon Severe Economic Hardship

US Immigration regulation stipulates:

"If other employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient, an eligible F-1 student may request off-campus employment work authorization based upon severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control." [8 CFR 214.2 (f)(9)(ii)(C)]

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for off-campus employment authorization based upon severe economic hardship; F-1 students have to meet the following conditions:

1. F-1 students must demonstrate severe economic hardship resulting from one of the following unforeseen circumstances:
 - loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student
 - substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate
 - inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs
 - unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support
 - medical bills
 - other substantial and unexpected expenses
2. F-1 students must have been in F-1 status for one full academic year
3. They must be in good academic standing and registered full-time, and the employment must not interfere with their studies
4. Employment opportunities on campus are either unavailable or insufficient to meet their needs.

Please contact ISSP for further information and application procedures.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

F-1 students are eligible for a Social Security Number (SSN) if they will be working on campus, receiving fellowships, or working off-campus with OPT or CPT. You **must** have an SSN if you will receive a salary, stipend, or any type of funding from Coppin. You will also need an SSN to file a U.S. income tax return, which all international students and scholars are required to do at the end of each calendar year. Those who are eligible for an SSN must wait 10 to 15 days after arrival in the U.S. before applying.

The following is needed to apply for a social security card:

- Evidence of work authorization from potential employer, indicating approximate start date, job responsibilities and employer's contact information
- A letter from ISSP supporting your Social Security Card application

The Social Security Administration office is located at Reisterstown Plaza. The office is open from 8:30am to 3:30pm from Monday to Friday except on public holidays. The national toll free number is 1-800-772-1213. You may find the complete address at www.ssa.gov.

When at the Social Security Administration, you will need to bring the following documents:

- I-20
- I-94
- Passport

The waiting time for SSN applications to be processed is normally 4 to 6 weeks. The card will be mailed to you.

Note: A Social Security card is not needed to open a bank account or to obtain a Maryland driver's license.

PROGRAM EXTENSION

F-1 students are admitted to the U.S. for Duration of Status Duration of status (noted on your I-94 card) includes the period of time during which an F-1 student is pursuing a full course of study, plus any periods of authorized practical training, plus sixty days to depart from the United States. The anticipated end of your academic program is noted in item #5 on your I-20.

If you will not complete your program of study by the expiration date noted on your I-20 form, you must apply for a program extension in the thirty (30) day period before the expiration date. Failure to extend your stay could jeopardize your legal status and will certainly result in your having to file an application with the USCIS (formerly INS) for reinstatement to status, which will cost \$290.

The procedure for obtaining a program extension is quite simple. Extensions are granted by ISSP if you have continually maintained your full-time student status and if the delay in completing the degree has been caused by compelling academic or medical reasons. Such reasons might be a change of major or research project, unexpected research problems or illness. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for a program extension. Under these circumstances a student will be considered out of status and may have to apply for reinstatement or a change of non-immigrant status

The following documents are required for the program extension application and should be brought to ISSP for review by an advisor.

- A completed recommendation form from your academic adviser
- Students in the Graduate School should not have this form completed, but should follow the directions below.
- Proof of your financial support (award letter, assistantship letter, bank letter, or sponsor letter).

If all the documents are in order ISSP will prepare a new I-20 with a new completion date. You should keep this I-20 along with any previously issued I-20's. If you work on campus your I-9 Employment Eligibility form will need to be updated.

Students in the Graduate School who have not completed the dissertation by the end of the sixth year of study may request a period of extended registration by submitting a one-page petition for extended registration, along with the standard dissertation progress report. The student's adviser and the director of graduate studies must certify that the student is making good progress on the dissertation, will be working full-time on it during the year and has a reasonable prospect of completing it by the end of the registration period. If approved, the student will be given a letter from the Graduate School approving the request for extension and on the basis on that letter ISSP will extend the student's I-20 and F-1 status.

TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

Who must apply for an F-1 school transfer?

If you are in lawful F-1 status and are completing or leaving your current program and plan to continue your studies in the US at a different institution in the next academic semester, you must complete the F-1 transfer process. The transfer procedure is initiated by the school you are currently attending and is completed through SEVIS.

Do I need to follow the transfer procedure if I plan to travel outside the US before attending the new program?

Yes. This will allow you to maintain your current SEVIS identification number. You will need the I-20 from your new school to re-enter the U.S, as well as a valid visa. However, if your original F-1 visa stamp is valid you can re-enter the U.S. with it, even though it indicates you will study at Coppin State University.

What criteria must be met to be eligible for an F-1 transfer?

- You must be pursuing a full course of study in the most recent semester or be within an authorized OPT period.
- You must plan to pursue a full course of study at the new school or program

When must an F-1 student apply for a school transfer?

It is your responsibility to notify the current institution of your intention to transfer or go on for a higher degree at a different school, prior to the end of the last semester of attendance, if possible, but no later than the 60day grace period following. After the 60th day, you are out of status and are not eligible for a transfer.

- students transferring out must notify ISSP. Your new school will ask you to have ISSP complete their “transfer in” form. This form will allow Coppin to release your record in SEVIS, on a mutually agreed date, to your new F-1 sponsor who will then be able to issue your new I-20.
- Students transferring to Coppin must contact the admissions office to obtain the necessary form and information.

How is the date of release determined?

Your current school must take SEVIS action to transfer out your record to the new school. This action must occur before the 60-day grace period ends but the transfer release date can be anytime within the 5 month allowable transfer period. You may want to discuss the release date with your current DSO, as travel or employment plans will effect the release date you request.

Can I work on campus in the summer between two programs?

You can work on the campus that currently has jurisdiction over your SEVIS record. Prior to the date of release from your current school, you may work on your current campus. (Graduating students who are not transferring to another U.S. college or university may not continue to work

on Coppin's campus after commencement). After the date of release, you may work on the new school's campus, even if that employment is prior to the start date of the new program.

How is the transfer completed in SEVIS?

You must report to the DSO / international student office at the transfer (new) school within 15 days of the program start date on the new I-20, at which point you will be issued a new I-20 for continued attendance with a notation in the remarks section that the transfer has been completed. The transfer is formally affected when the new school notifies SEVIS that you have enrolled in classes within the 30 days required.

REINSTATEMENT TO STUDENT STATUS

A student who has failed to maintain F-1 student status and who wishes to return to or transfer to Coppin, must apply for and be granted reinstatement to F-1 student status by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Maintaining F-1 student status means that you have been a full-time student and have not overstayed the authorized period of stay as identified on your I-20 form. If you have taken less than a full course of study, not extended your I-20 or not completed the F-1 transfer procedure, you are likely out of status and must apply for reinstatement before you can be granted any additional benefits from the USCIS (e.g. authorization to accept practical training). A student who has worked without authorization is also out of status, but is not eligible for reinstatement. If you think that you may be out of status, please consult with ISSP immediately. The longer you wait to address the problem the more difficult it can become.

The reinstatement application includes the following documents:

- a completed I-539 form with the \$290 filing fee (the check should be made payable to the **Department of Homeland Security**).
- a newly obtained I-20 form issued by Coppin State University
- your original I-94 form
- a copy of your previous I-20 form
- evidence of continued funding
- a written statement requesting reinstatement which explains that the violation of student status resulted from circumstances beyond your control and/or that the failure to be reinstated would result in extreme hardship. Any documentation that supports your claim should be attached.

(ISSP will review your letter prior to your submitting the application. Do not apply for reinstatement without first speaking with an ISSP adviser).

Applications for reinstatement are sent to the USCIS district office in Vermont. The address is:

**USCIS Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden St
St.Albans, VT 05479-0001**

As with all USCIS applications, you should keep copies of all documents submitted. A decision to reinstate an individual to F-1 student status is completely at the discretion of the USCIS. If the application is approved, USCIS adjudicates the new I-20 form, makes appropriate entry in SEVIS and returns the I-20 to you along with the I-94 form. F-2 dependent status is automatically reinstated with the reinstatement of the F-1 student.

BANKING INFORMATION

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION

Federal law requires all financial institutions to obtain, verify, and record information that identifies each person who opens an account. This means that when you open an account, banks will ask for your name, address, date of birth and other information that will allow them to identify you. Banks will ask to see your driver's license and other identifying document.

If you do not have a Social Security Number, one of the following IDs must be presented as one of the two forms:

- Permanent Resident Card
- Current Passport
- Mexican Matricula Card
- Alien Registration Card
- Employment Authorization Card
- Armed Service Card

Primary
Valid U.S. Driver's License
U.S. Department of State Driver's License
Employment Authorization Card
State Issued ID for Non-drivers
Mexican Matricula Card
Current Passport
Permanent Resident Card
Armed Services Card/Merchant Mariner ID
Handgun Permit
Veterans ID
Alien Registration Card

Secondary
And Credit/Debit Card
Utility Bill
ATM Card
Voter Registration Card
Mortgage Bill/Statement
Student ID
Birth Certificate
Independence / Cardinal / EBT Card
Employee Pay stub
Social Security Card – for 62 years and older
Medicaid/Medicare Card – for 62 years or older or for disabled person

TRAVEL

All F-1 international students should report to the ISSP Coordinator prior to traveling outside of the United States. The DSO endorsement is required on the I-20 document travel. In addition to the endorsed I-20, a reminder checklist will be provided to students (listed below).



**2500 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21216**

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES**

International Student Services Program

Checklist for a Traveling F-1 Student

- _____ Valid Visa
- _____ Valid Passport
- _____ Identification
- _____ DSO endorsement on page 3 of
SEVIS I-20
- _____ Student's Initials and date _____

CULTURE SHOCK

Source: *Beyond Language: Cross-Cultural Communication*; Levine, Deena R. and Adelman, Mara B., Prentice Hall, 1993.

When moving to a new culture, you will eventually experience a period of ups and downs as part of the adjustment process. The onset of symptoms can occur almost immediately or sometimes it can take up to a year before the individual in the new culture feels the effects of culture shock. Moreover, the severity of the symptoms can vary from person to person. A newcomer may go from elation to depression in a short period of time, or may simply feel a general sense of discomfort, sometimes emotional, sometimes physical.

The feeling of being a fish out of water, occasionally confused or disoriented — is to be expected. Some students and visiting scholars, in their struggles with the new language and culture, have expressed the feeling of being like a child. In some of the more difficult moments of the cultural adjustment period, an individual may have unusually strong emotional reactions to what in the native country would be everyday, normal frustrations.

A person may go through periods of extreme loneliness. Sometimes students will have physical reactions and may cry, or feel like crying, or there may be other symptoms such as stress, fatigue, headaches, stomach problems, or difficulty with sleeping. The important thing to remember is that even though everyone experiences culture shock in some way, it will be different for each person. Some people find it more difficult to adjust than others.

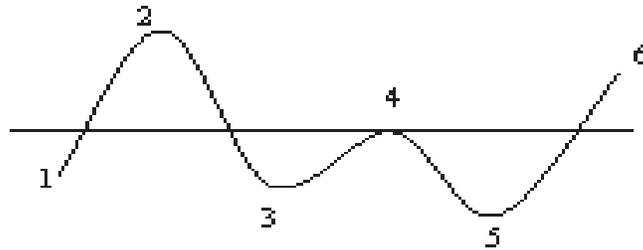
Culture shock is to be expected. It is a normal part of the adjustment process, and with time, the symptoms will dissipate as the newcomer integrates into the new culture. However, anyone who feels he or she is having difficulty coping, or experiencing severe symptoms of culture shock, should seek counseling immediately.

In U.S. culture where individuals often live apart from the social support network of family and friends, it is normal to seek counseling services in times of emotional distress. There are many qualified professionals such as social workers (MSW), psychologists (Ph.D. or Psy.D), or psychiatrists (M.D. in psychiatry) who have excellent training in mental health services. Contact the Center for Counseling and Student Development 410-951-3939 to schedule an appointment. For emergency mental health care after normal business hours call Urgent Care at (443) 955-1649.

THE SIX STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

Source: Beyond Language: Cross-Cultural Communication; Levine, Deena R. and Adelman, Mara B., Prentice Hall, 1993.

Culture shock can be described as having six stages. After arrival in the new country, everyone normally experiences two low periods (stages 3 and 5) before finally reaching the final level of adjustment. It is possible for some people to skip some of the stages or move through them rather quickly. It will depend greatly on the individual's personality and previous experience. Change is more difficult for some than others. It is important to be patient and with time everyone reaches the final stage of adjustment and integration into the new culture.



Stage 1 - Anxiety about leaving home and what you will find in the new country.

Stage 2 - Sometimes referred to as the “honeymoon”stage. Everything is so exciting and fascinating. You may feel elation in this period. Everything is new and different. You can't believe you are really here. Wow!

Stage 3 - The first low symptoms of culture shock. The individual realizes that everything is quite different in the new culture. There are so many things to cope with: language, setting up house, shopping, transportation, classes, homework, lab work, and more. You may feel lonely, or you could feel exhausted from constant struggle to understand a new language and culture.

Stage 4 - Initial adjustment period. You begin to feel better as you learn to cope with everyday routines and problems. Language may or may not still be a problem, but you can now handle basic interactions, and have no problems conducting daily business such as shopping, banking or going to the post office. You should feel initial satisfaction and a sense of overcoming problems.

Stage 5 - This second low stage is normally the most severe stage of culture shock. The individual typically experiences a loss of self-esteem. The language is not as easy as you thought, and you may feel like a child. Your sense of loneliness and isolation has deepened as you have been away from family and friends for a long time now. There is often the feeling of being an outsider, and everything may be viewed in a negative light. You don't like the new culture. People are unfriendly. You are not what you were before, and you may feel angry and resentful.

Stage 6 - Your sense of well-being and humor begins to return as you establish comfortable routines and learn to understand the habits, customs, foods and characteristics of the people in the new culture. You have made some friends, and are beginning to enjoy things about your new life. You realize that the problems, and negative aspects of the new country are not reserved for foreigners, but that even natives find certain things difficult. Your perspective becomes more balanced as you have now begun to see that there are good things and bad things about your new life. Some things you may never like, but you accept it as part of life, the same as we accept both the positive and negative aspects in any relationship.

ADJUSTMENT AND COPING

Here are twelve suggestions for adjustment and coping in your new life at Coppin.

1. Gather information. You might begin by observing the new culture as much as possible. “When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” is a common saying in English. Watch how the natives do or don’t do things.

2. Get to know the community. Learn about your environment through exploration. Get a map and find out what’s beyond the campus. Take a walk in the park. Do some window shopping. Try a local restaurant. Go to the movies. Sit in a local coffee shop and people-watch.

3. Ask questions, and don’t be afraid to try. To experience a new culture and learn from it, it’s important to be open to new experiences, try new things, and be curious about the way things are done. If you are confused by something, ask how it is done in the U.S. Most people will be pleased to teach you about their country and customs.

4. Find a balance. Cross-cultural adjustment and integration means adapting to the new culture while retaining your own identity. Extremes of completely giving up one’s own culture or refusing to accept anything about the new culture and clinging fearfully to old ways are unhealthy. Learn to recognize cultural differences and modify the behaviors that are necessary to live comfortably in the new culture.

5. Find people to interact with. Don’t live in isolation from others. Give them a smile or a small gift. Invite them to have coffee or take a walk outside. By taking an interest in other people, you shift the focus from yourself to the outside world.

6. Put your situation in perspective. Many international students and scholars have come to Coppin and not only survived, but have learned to be quite happy here. With time you will adjust too.

7. Talk with experienced members of the international community. They have been where you are and can offer advice and support. Ask them what has helped them the most, and what they have found to be most difficult.

8. Establish a routine. There is comfort in the familiar. Eat and sleep normal hours. Have regular mealtimes. Join a sports club or a discussion group or do at least one activity you look forward to on a regular basis at the same time each week.

9. Get physical exercise. A healthy body promotes a healthy mind.

10. Take it easy. Slow down and make your daily tasks as simple as possible. Don’t overwhelm yourself with too many details. Get used to all the newness. Take things one day at a time.

11. Work on improving your English. Small successes with the new language can boost your confidence. Try to find time for a language exchange partner or even take English as a Second Language course.

12. Visit the International Student Services Program. The ISSP staff is here to help answer your questions and concerns. This is your office.

USICS CONTACT INFORMATION

Baltimore District Office
Fallon Federal Building
31 Hopkins Plaza 1st Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201
800-375-5283

The Baltimore District Office is open to the public Monday through Thursday from 7:30AM to 4:00 PM, and Fridays 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM. The office is closed on Saturday and Sunday and all Federal holidays. Cashier hours are the same.

Walk-ins:

All visitors should visit Station Nine at the Information Counter where forms are dispensed and quick general information is provided. For application filing, complex issues, etc. the custom is given a number and referred to another station via the Q-Matic system. There is no limit on the number of tickets available. Customer with appointment letters should proceed to the First Floor and give their notice to the receptionist there.

EMBASSY INFORMATION

The most up-to-date US Embassy information is located at the U.S. Department of State. The web address is <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Adapted from Yale University Office of International Student Services (OISS)
<http://www.oiss.yale.edu/visa/f1opta3.htm>

Also adapted from Harvard University International Office (HIO) <http://www.hio.harvard.edu/>

Also adapted from Ball State University Center for International Program – Office of Immigration Services (OIS) <http://www.bsui.edu/immigration/>

SPECIAL THANKS



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