

## PRE-COMPLETION OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) FOR F-1 STUDENTS

Geneva College – International Student Services

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### PLEASE READ ALL OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

Application for Optional Practical Training (OPT) should be submitted three months *prior* to the beginning date of employment. The application process with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is a lengthy one. OPT must be requested prior to the completion of all course requirements for the degree or course of study. Employment **MUST** relate to the student's field of study. Students **MAY NOT** start working until they receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from DHS. If you start work before you are approved, your I-20 will be terminated and you will be asked to leave the USA.

During the period in which a student is doing OPT, they **MUST** notify **International Student Services** if his/her name or address changes, or if the student wishes to discontinue OPT.

### ELIGIBILITY

Students who have completed one full academic year may engage in OPT. An application for OPT may be submitted as early as 90 days prior to completing one academic year, but authorization will only be granted from the date the student actually completes a full academic year. A student authorized for 12 months of OPT becomes eligible for another 12 months of OPT when he/she changes to a higher education level (i.e. Bachelor's to Master's; Master's to Doctorate).

A student may be granted authorization to engage in temporary employment for OPT:

1. During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, or if the student is currently enrolled and is eligible for registration and intends to register for the next term or session.
2. While school is in session provided OPT does not exceed 20 hours per week.
3. After completion of the course of study or after completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or equivalent.
4. OPT must be requested prior to the completion of all degree requirements. (It cannot be requested during the 60-day grace period after completion of the course of study.)
5. A student must complete OPT within a 14-month period following the completion of course of study.

**Part-Time OPT:** Part-time OPT (**maximum** of 20 hours per week) is permitted while school is in session, but students must be registered for a full course load. A part-time OPT period is computed at half the regular full-time period. For example, students who choose to engage in OPT while school is in session during the fall semester (4 ½ months) would have two months and one week deducted from the total of one year.

**Full-Time OPT:** Full-time OPT (21 hours or more per week) is permitted only during school recess, after completion of all course work, or after the completion of all requirements for the degree.

### MAILING IN YOUR APPLICATION:

#### REGULAR MAIL

USCIS  
PO Box 805373  
Chicago, IL 60680

#### EXPRESS MAIL AND COURIER DELIVERIES

USCIS  
Attn: I-765 C03  
131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603-5517

## INSTRUCTIONS TO OBTAIN OPT:

### STEP I

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Geneva College's Application for Practical Training**
2. **Form I-765** Complete the entire form. (Available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) )
  - a. For question #27 you will write: (c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT
  - b. **PLEASE NOTE:** Immigration documents are NOT forwarded by the postal service if you should move while your application is pending. For this reason, enter the following address on the I-765 form:  
Geneva College  
International Student Services  
3200 College Avenue  
Beaver Falls, PA 15010  
  
Your EAD will arrive at the International Office and we will contact you. Be sure we have a current e-mail address on file. **You may not start work before receiving your EAD.**
3. **Form G-1145** (Optional) This form is if you want an electronic notification of the receipt of your application. Fill in your name, email address, and/or cell phone number.

### STEP II

COLLECT THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Official transcripts** of all grades you have earned at Geneva.
2. A **check in the amount of \$410** payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
3. Photocopies of **all I-20s** issued to you. (We can make copies for you.)
4. Photocopy of your **I-94** (front and back on the same sheet of paper) – if your most recent date of arrival in the U.S. is after April 20, 2013 you will have an electronic I-94 that must be printed at <http://cbp.gov/i94>
5. Photocopy of the information page of your UNEXPIRED **passport**. (We can make copies for you.)
6. Photocopy of your **F-1 visa stamp**. (We can make copies for you.)
7. Two (2) **current photographs** of yourself – passport specifications. The photo should be taken no earlier than 30 days before submission of application. Lightly print your name and I-94 number on the back in pencil.  
*\*The best option is to go to a CVS or other store that will take and print your passport photo for you.*
8. Photocopy of previous **Employment Authorization Document (EAD) or denial notices**, if applicable

### STEP III

MEET WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

1. Set up an appointment with Bridget to make sure the OPT application is correct and complete.
2. Bring ALL the documents listed in Steps I & II to the appointment. If you need photocopies made, we will make them at this time.

### STEP IV

ASSEMBLE YOUR PACKET FOR MAILING:

1. Application fee (\$410.00 made payable to The Department of Homeland Security)
2. Photos (In small envelope, lightly penciled name on back, DO NOT STAPLE TO ANYTHING)
3. I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization)
4. Photocopy of current I-20 with OPT recommendation (Bridget will have this for you)
5. Photocopies of all previous I-20s (in date descending order)
6. Photocopy of I-94 (or printed electronic I-94)
7. Photocopy of F-1 visa stamp
8. Photocopy of your passport
9. Photocopy of previous EADs or denial notices, if applicable
10. G-1145 (Electronic notification form – optional)

## **TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE USA WHILE ON OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

If you wish to travel outside the USA during your period of authorized OPT, your I-20 form must be endorsed for travel. If you need to apply for a US visa abroad, we will provide a letter for the consulate indicating “legal status”. However, applying for a new visa during OPT carries a measurable risk – it is more difficult to prove an intent to return to your home country when you are presently employed in the USA.

### **TO RE-ENTER THE USA, PRESENT THE INS OFFICER AT THE PORT OF ENTRY THE FOLLOWING:**

1. An I-20 that has been endorsed within the last six months
2. A valid American visa stamped in your passport
3. A letter from your employer (if you are working) indicating that you are expected to resume your duties after a brief absence
4. Your EAD (Employment Authorization) card

## **PASSPORT PHOTO DETAILS**

If you plan to take your own passport photos, they must have the following format:

1. Color photos with a white or off-white background (NOT grey, NO shadows)
2. Photos should be printed on matte or glossy photo quality paper
3. Photo should not be retouched
4. Photos should be 2x2 inches
5. Sized such that the head is between 1 inch and 1 3/8 inches (between 25 and 35 mm) from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head
6. Taken within the last 30 days
7. Taken with a neutral facial expression (preferred) or a natural smile, with both eyes open
8. Your head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong

When you take your photo, one place you can order the photo is through Wal-Mart who will help you get your photo to the correct specifications.

After going to [www.walmart.com](http://www.walmart.com) ... Shop > Digital Photo Prints > Create Passport Prints

**\*KEEP IN MIND THAT OPT APPLICATIONS WILL BE DENIED IF YOUR PHOTOS ARE NOT DONE CORRECTLY.** For this reason, we highly recommend going somewhere like CVS, Rite Aid, or Walgreens to get them done.