GUIDELINES WHILE ON OPT IN F-1 STATUS

1. If your OPT was based on graduation and you DID NOT graduate, please speak with an international advisor in the Office of International Programs as soon as possible.

2. Keep your OPT card with you at ALL times. This card is your authorization to work and, along with your I-20 and I-94 card, proves your legal status in the U.S. You are not authorized to work before or after the dates on your OPT card.

3. Keep for your records the form I-797D (USCIS white mailer) in a safe place, separate from your card. The information on this sheet could be needed if you apply for any other work authorization from the USCIS in the future.

4. When your OPT card expires, DO NOT throw it away. Keep it, along with the form I-797D and all I-20s, for your records. The card will also be needed if applying for any other work authorization from the USCIS in the future.

5. **Eligible for 17-month STEM extension? Yes___ No___**

6. If eligible and you wish to apply for the 17-month STEM extension, please complete Form I-765, located at [http://www.uaf.edu/oip/international-students-sc/stem-extension/](http://www.uaf.edu/oip/international-students-sc/stem-extension/) along with your employer’s E-verify information. Item 16 on the form should read: (c) (3) (c)

   Scan and email or fax a copy of the I-765 to us along with the UAF STEM extension application also located at [http://www.uaf.edu/oip/international-students-sc/stem-extension/](http://www.uaf.edu/oip/international-students-sc/stem-extension/).

7. If you wish to transfer to another institution or begin a new academic program at UAF, your OPT authorization is cancelled effective the date you choose to have your SEVIS record released to the new institution or your new academic program begins at UAF.

8. If your employer has applied for a change of status to H-1B on your behalf, please remember to fax, scan/email or mail a copy of the “H-1B Approval Notice”, as soon as possible, to your international advisor using the contact information on this letterhead. Thanks!

9. When traveling, you must take the OPT card with you. Required documents for reentry to the U.S. while on OPT are:
   - OPT card
   - SEVIS I-20 signed within the past 6 months by your advisor.
   - Valid passport
   - Valid F-1 visa
   - Employment letter confirming you are working or will start working upon arrival.

   If you do not reside in Fairbanks, send your I-20 to:
Office of International Programs  
215 Eielson Building  
PO Box 757760  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-7760

- We will sign the I-20 and return it to you via express mail.

If you have an expired F-1 visa or no employment, please contact an international advisor before leaving the U.S.

**Notification Requirements:**

1. Update your U.S. physical (residence) address within 10 days throughout the duration of your F-1 OPT status in order to comply with F-1 regulations.

2. Notify us of your employer’s name, address and the start date of your employment. Employment information will be reported to SEVIS. If you change employers, you are required to report the new employer’s information to update SEVIS.

**Students on OPT can accumulate only 90 days of unemployment, beginning with the date on the EAD card. If you do not have a job, you must also count Saturday and Sunday as unemployed.**

If you are not working within 90 days from the effective date on your OPT card, or lose your job and cannot find another one in 90 days, you are considered out-of-status and you SHOULD plan on leaving the U.S. on day 91 or before. If you were hired on day 90 you must be working on day 91. This could impact future immigration benefits.

OPT employment does NOT have to be paid employment as long as there is no violation of labor laws (i.e. if the employer would normally pay someone to do the work, it would be against labor laws for them to have you volunteer) but you must work at least 20 hours per week. Other areas of opportunity:
- self-employed
- short-term multiple employers
- interning or volunteering in a position directly related to the academic field of study
- work for hire (contractual relationship)
- employment through an agency

In all circumstances of employment students on OPT must:
- work at least 20 hours per week (may work more than 40 hours)
- work in a job that is related to their degree program
- inform OIP of employment
- maintain evidence of all employment and be prepared to provide the information to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). If requested by DHS, students must provide evidence showing duration of employment; name and address of employer(s); if self-employed have proof of the proper business licenses.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**