

Syracuse University
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Important Issues

Be Aware of Scams

There are a number of scammers which target students and especially international students. When we find out about new forms of scams, we attempt to notify you through the SCIS News. However, scams are constantly changing and becoming more unique and sophisticated. If someone is demanding money from you, we recommend that you seek advice from our office or DPS before paying them or giving them any personal information.

*Scams often increase around the holidays. Be aware of offers/ sales that seem too good to be true or extremely urgent. If you have concerns about possible scam calls, emails, or other encounters, you may contact DPS to file a report.

STEM OPT Update

On August 12, 2015, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued a court decision finding that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not follow required procedures when it created the STEM extension of Optional Practical Training (OPT) back in 2008. The Court decision dictates that the STEM extension of OPT will no longer exist after February 12, 2016 but gives DHS six months (from August 12, 2015 until February 12, 2016) to submit the STEM extension regulations again following proper procedures. These six months should give DHS enough time to reissue the STEM extension regulations following proper procedures.

In the meantime, this court decision has no immediate impact on the employment authorization of students currently authorized for the STEM extension of OPT. This court decision does not prevent students who are eligible for the STEM extension of OPT from applying for the STEM extension by February 12, 2016. To be eligible for the STEM extension of OPT, you must be authorized for OPT on the basis of your program of study in a STEM field and have employment with an employer that participates in E-verify. You may apply for the STEM extension up to 120 days before the end date of your authorized OPT.

We have been informed that DHS is reviewing this court decision and will issue guidance in the next few weeks. We will inform you of any guidance we receive.

Slutzker Center News and Events

Travel

If you plan to travel over the winter break, we suggest you attend a Travel Seminar. Travel seminars are held the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 1:30 PM and every Friday at 12 noon. The next travel seminar is tomorrow at noon. The last seminar for this semester is Friday, December 18 at 12 noon.

F-1 students that received a revised I-20 this semester, should have a travel signature on the second page of the revised I-20 form. That signature is valid for 12 months from the date it was signed. SU Abroad exchange students who are here only one semester or one academic year were not issued revised I-20s.

If you did not receive a revised I-20 this semester, then you should come to the Slutzker Center to pick up your revised I-20 that will have a travel signature on it. You will need to provide a print out of your Current Address in MySlice and either your mandatory Aetna insurance card or a copy of the insurance you used to obtain a waiver from the Aetna insurance and if required, documentation of Medical evacuation and repatriation insurance (Medex).

If for some reason you need a travel signature on your I-20, be sure to bring your I-20, passport, visa, most recent I-94, and health insurance to a travel seminar to receive your travel signature.

J-1 students traveling outside the U.S. are required to have a travel signature in the lower right corner of the DS-2019 from within the last 12 months. Be sure to bring your DS-2019, passport, visa, most recent I-94, and documentation of health insurance to a travel seminar to receive your travel signature.

In order to re-enter the US, you must present a valid visa, valid I-20 or DS-2019 with travel signature, and your passport valid for 6 months into the future. You may review more information on travel and the travel seminar on our [website](#).

All students (that leave the U.S. should verify that their readmission to the U.S. is in F-1 or J-1 status. You can check your I-94 to be sure you have been readmitted as an F-1/J-1 for Duration of Status (D/S). If you discover that your I-94 shows a status other than F-1 or J-1, please visit the Slutzker Center as soon as possible upon return. This is a particular issue for Canadian citizens and those who can enter the U.S. as visitors under the Visa Waiver program (without a visa).

Cruises: please note, if you are returning to the U.S. from a cruise in the [adjacent islands](#), you are required to present your passport and I-20/DS-2019 with a valid travel signature from within the last 12 months. Whether or not you need a valid F-1 or J-1 visa to return to the U.S. depends on whether or not you qualify for automatic extension of visa validity. In many cases, you will not be allowed to board the ship for departure without the necessary documents. You should also check the Consulates of the countries in which the cruise will be stopping—most cruises make multiple stops. Depending on the country where the ship will stop, you may need additional visas to enter those countries. Review the information about cruises in our [travel seminar presentation](#).

Optional Practical Training

If you are graduating in December, you are now within the 90 day window to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). We recommend that you apply early because it can take 60 – 90 days for USCIS to process your applications.

Step 1: You must attend an OPT Seminar before you apply for OPT. OPT seminars are the first and third Wednesday, and second Friday, of each month at 3:45 PM in the Slutzker Center. The next OPT seminar is Friday, December 11 at 3:45 PM. The last OPT seminar for this semester is Wednesday, December 16.

Step 2: Once you have attended an OPT seminar, you need to bring all required documents to the Slutzker Center during our Practical Training processing hours (Mondays from 3PM – 5PM and Thursdays from 10 AM – 12 Noon).

For more information please refer to our [website](#).

*Note: University offices including the Slutzker Center will close at 5PM on Wednesday, December 23 and will not reopen until 8:30AM on Monday, January 4, 2016. It is important that you process any time sensitive paper work before December 23.

Orientation Volunteers Needed Spring 2016 International Graduate Student Orientation

If you would like to help new students when they first arrive in Syracuse, we are looking for volunteers to help run Graduate Student Orientation on Friday, January 15, 2016 from 8AM -5PM.

If you are interested, please email midzior@syr.edu with your contact information.

Peer Assistant Volunteers Needed Spring 2016 International Student Orientation

We are seeking [Peer Assistants](#) to help new students who will arrive in Spring 2016. If you are interested, please see the information on our website and complete the [form](#).

You may also contact, Fariba Rahmanzdeh, farahman@syr.edu for more information.

Syracuse University Events

Christmas at La Casita/ Fiesta de Navidad en La Casita

December 11, 6PM
La Casita Cultural Center
109 Otisco St

La Casita invites you to join their celebration with live music, dance, and a traditional Caribbean Holiday dinner. The evening features, PLENÉROS D' BORIKEN, LA CASITA DANCERS, the COSMIC PINEAPPLE all-student rock band, and more.

For more information, click [here](#).

Free and open to the public. Complimentary transportation provided to and from SU main campus before and after the event.

Pancake Breakfast 'Stressbuster'

December 13, 10PM
Schine Dining

Join Orange After Dark and snack on warm, syrupy pancakes to help you get through finals.

Free for students with SUID.

For more information, click [here](#).



Cultural and Community Events

Armory Square Holiday Happenings

December 12
Various locations

Participating businesses near Armory Square will offer events and specials like live music.

For a complete list of participating locations, events, and times, click [here](#).



Festival of Trees
December 4 – 13, see schedule for times
Everson Museum of Art
401 Harrison St, 13202

The Everson Museum of Art Members' Council presents the 30th annual Festival of Trees, which will bring the sights and sounds of the holidays to the galleries and gathering spaces of the Museum. Each decorated tree, wreath and unique display is generously donated, all items are sold to benefit the Everson. Take in the beautiful sights, purchase items to decorate your home or office, and pick up tips for your own creations. The presentation of art and décor alongside activities and musical entertainment will make the Festival truly special.

For more information or tickets, click [here](#).

Important Reminders

[Full-Time Course of Study](#)

[Meeting Your Health Requirements](#)

[HR notice for on-campus employees](#)

[Is it your last semester of study?](#)

[Transferring from SU to a new U.S. school](#)

[Optional Practical Training EAD cards](#)

[Address Change Reporting Requirements](#)

[Keeping Good Rental Records](#)

[Protecting Your Property](#)

[US Embassy Announcements](#)

[Check your VISA Application Status in India](#)

[E-Verify Employers & Federal Contractors List](#)

[Copycat "Immigration Help" Sites](#)

[CPT/OPT Seminars](#)

[Studying Abroad](#)

[International Student Arrests & Public Safety](#)

"The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today." - **H. Jackson Brown, Jr.**



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If you would like to submit news or events for the SCIS Newsletter, please send your information and any related graphics to ejvoigt@syr.edu with subject line as "Article for SCIS Newsletter"