

F-1: Working in the U.S.

The F-1 (student) visa is a nonimmigrant visa status issued for entry into the U.S. "temporarily and solely for the purpose of study." The status of the F-1 visa holder, by its very nature, does not include employment. Nevertheless, there are some employment benefits allowed by this visa status under certain circumstances. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) defines employment as "any type of work performed, or services provided, in exchange for money, tuition, fees, books, supplies, room, food or any other benefit. F-1 visa holders must be authorized before they may begin any off-campus employment.

Below is a summary of the most common types of F-1 employment authorizations used by Wellesley College students.

On-Campus Work Authorization:

All F-1 students who are enrolled full-time and are in valid F-1 status are eligible to work up to 20 hours per week *on-campus* during the school year full-time during official college breaks. No additional authorization is required.

Students must apply for a Social Security Number before beginning employment. F-1 international students who would like to be employed on-campus must have their hiring supervisor and their International Student Advisor/Designated School Official complete an "**On-Campus Employment Form.**" Students must then bring the form and appropriate immigration documents, in person, to the Social Security Administration to apply for a Social Security Number.

Off-Campus Work Authorization:

Authorization from either the International Student Advisor (ISA) or USCIS is required for any kind of *off-campus* employment. Below are some of the common types of employment benefits used by Wellesley College students.

- **Employment Due To Unforeseen Economic Hardship:**

In order to qualify for this type of employment, the student must: Have been in valid full-time status for a least one academic year, demonstrate that the employment will not affect her ability to carry a full course of study; demonstrate that the employment is necessary due to **an unforeseen change in her financial situation caused by circumstances beyond her control; demonstrate that on-campus employment is unavailable or that a job on campus will not pay a sufficient amount to meet the needs caused by the unforeseen circumstances.** This type of work requires a recommendation by the International Student Advisor after careful review of the situation and certification that the conditions have been met and formal approval by the USCIS.

- **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

This employment benefit is available to students currently maintaining valid F-1 status that have been enrolled full-time for at least two semesters immediately before applying for CPT. Students must be simultaneously enrolled in an internship/independent study course at Wellesley. A job offer is



required for authorization, and authorization is usually granted within one week. CPT is unlimited and does not effect the 12 month OPT benefits unless students use 12 months or more of full-time CPT. (Students can obtain information on CPT at Slater International Center).

- **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

This employment benefit is available after completion of one academic year in F-1 status and is limited to 12 months of full-time authorization. No job offer is required to apply, but **students should apply approximately three months before they wish to start working**. OPT can be used during the academic term for up to 20 hours per week, or full-time during the summer, and full-time after the completion of studies. Students can obtain information and an application for OPT at Slater International Center.

After Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Some students may wish to continue employment in the U.S. after completing OPT. One common option is the H-1B visa, which provides temporary work authorization for up to six years. This visa status requires a sponsoring employer, and in most cases an immigration attorney.

Each year Slater International Center invites immigration attorneys to campus to provide an overview of the H1-B application process and other visa options. For example, Canadians and Mexicans should investigate TN status to see if they would be eligible for this temporary work authorization and Australians should investigate E-3 status.