Job Visa / Sponsorship Application

Dear International Student,

Greetings!

Welcome to UNC CLS program! This is Phoebe Xu. I am a CLS student of Class 2018. I am also an international student (I am from China, and I came to US just prior to entering college). I totally understand the anxiety and the need to worry about many extra things as an international student here. I hope this document could help you a bit in job application and visa sponsorship!

*Important: the information below only applies to F-1 visa holder!

CPT (Curricular Practical Training):
        To simplify, CPT is for off-campus employment while you are still in school. To apply for CPT, there are two routes.
1) The off-campus employment is part of your course and required for graduation (i.e. you have to take it, otherwise you cannot graduate)
2) You have to sign up for a class and receive academic credits (some majors have summer classes such as "internship"; students will sign up for the class, pay for the credits and start the internship / employment)

Here is the UNC OISSS (Office of International Student and Scholar Services) website for CPT application: https://isss.unc.edu/student-employment/cpt/

        For UNC CLS program, we cannot do either of these two routes. If you do want to apply for jobs during school year, please make sure it is on-campus. UNC Hospital is considered as OFF-campus. Dr. Beck is working with other professors to set up course for internship, but if you want CPT sponsorship from CLS department, please check with her before applying.

OPT (Optional Practical Training):
　　Similar to CPT, OPT also allows off-campus employment. However, for OPT, it is not restricted by those two routes for CPT. OPT takes much longer to apply and process (usually 3 months to get approved) than CPT. There are two forms of OPT: pre-completion and post-completion.

General timeline of OPT application:
Decide to apply for OPT; may submit application up to 90 days prior to the program completion date (for post-completion OPT) or requested start date of employment (for pre-completion OPT)

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Prepare documents (checklist can be found here http://isss.unc.edu/files/2014/02/OPT-Checklist-updated.pdf)

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Go to UNC OISSS office to get a new I-20 recommending OPT (usually take about 1-3 weeks)

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After getting a new I-20, mail required documents to USCIS; USCIS must receive application within 30 days after the new I-20 has been issued

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USCIS will mail you notice of receipt once the application materials are received

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Wait for OPT to get approved and EAD (Employment Authorization Document); usually take about 3 months or even longer

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Once you receive the EAD, you can legally start to work!! Congratulation!!!

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You will have to update your employment status within *90 days* of receiving EAD (otherwise your status will be auto-terminated); update SEVP portal and UNC ISSS

Pre-completion OPT:
　　As the name suggests, pre-completion OPT can be used when you are still in college. It allows you to work full time (40 hours per week) during break and part time (<20 hours per week) during school semesters.
　　It sounds great. However, one thing to keep in mind is that any OPT used before completion of your degree will be deducted from the 12-month total. OPT, regardless of pre or post completion, is valid for 12-month long. If you use 10 months for pre-completion OPT, you will only have 2 months left for post-completion OPT.

I personally did not apply for pre-completion OPT, but if you really want the off-campus employment during school year, I think this would be a good option. Just keep in mind that the process could take months, so apply early! Please find detailed instruction here: http://isss.unc.edu/student-employment/opt/pre-completion-opt/

Post-completion OPT:
Most importantly, think ahead and apply early!! For international student, your I-20 will expire soon after graduation. If you do want to work in US after graduation, apply for OPT early! After graduation, you will have 60-day grace period (i.e. you can still stay in US for 60 days after graduation; if you have not applied OPT or entered into another school by 60 days, your visa will expire and you will have to leave). If you want to start to work as soon as possible after graduation, consider applying to OPT in March. As I mentioned above, OPT can take about 3 months or even longer to process. However, the earliest time you can apply for OPT is 90 days before the graduation date.

The timeline above provides you with a general guideline of application. Detailed instruction can be found here: http://isss.unc.edu/student-employment/opt/post-completion-opt/ UNC OISSS has walk-in hours and they are great resource to ask for help!!

OPT is only valid for 12 months. However, there is a 24-month extension for STEM majors (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and our CLS program is considered as a STEM major! With the extension, you can legally work in US with OPT for 3 years (although you do need to apply for the STEM extension separately towards the end of original OPT period).

There are three major steps for applying and completing OPT. First of all, you will need a new I-20 recommending OPT. To get this, you will need to prepare following documents and submit it to UNC OISSS (Office of International Student and Scholar Services), located at FedEx Global Education Center, Room 2004: Academic Advisor's Certification Form (signed by Dr. Beck), and Memorandum of Understanding (can be found here http://isss.unc.edu/files/2014/02/OPT-Checklist-updated.pdf). Once you have these two documents, you can submit them to OISSS and wait for the new I-20 (it usually takes 1-3 weeks).

The second step is to submit documents to USCIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Services).

Here is the list of required documents (you can find up-to-date checklist on UNC OISSS website):

☐ **COMPLETED FORM G-1145** (E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance).

☐ **COMPLETED FORM I-765**. (Get help filling out the I-765 form).
- It is strongly recommended that you TYPE information into the form, check carefully for errors, then print and sign it. If you choose to complete it by hand, print neatly in BLOCK letters using black ink.
- Complete item #20 with the appropriate code as follows:
  - ▽ For Pre-Completion OPT: (c)(3)(A)
  - ▽ For Post-Completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)

☐ **FILING FEE PAYMENT OF $410.00** (See full USCIS guidelines for paying fees).
- Option 1: Personal Check or Money Order, payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"
- Option 2: Credit Card Payment (Form G-1450)

☐ **TWO (2) PHOTOGRAPHS**. These must meet the requirements outlined on page 13 of USCIS's Instructions for Form I-765.
- It is recommended that students write their **full name, date of birth and I-94 number** in pencil or felt pen on the back of each photograph. The photos should be cut by the photo establishment.

☐ **PHOTOCOPIES OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING**:
- Form I-94 (I-94 card copied front and back OR I-94 electronic record printed from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov)
- F-1 visa stamp (OR I-797 Approval Notice from USCIS if applicable)
- Passport personal information page(s) and passport validity page showing expiration date
- Previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs), front and back, if applicable
- All previously issued Forms I-20 (including the newest I-20 recommending OPT)

✦✦**MAKE A COPY OF YOUR COMPLETE APPLICATION FOR YOUR OWN IMMIGRATION RECORDS BEFORE MAILING IT TO USCIS** ✦✦

Once you have all the document, you can mail it to USCIS. Mailing address can be found here: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses#Lockbox%20Addresses. The USCIS mailing address depends on the address you put on the application. Keep in mind that USCIS needs to receive the complete application material no later than 30 days after new I-20 recommending OPT has been issued.

After USCIS receives your application, they will send a notice of receipt, on which you can find the case number / receipt number. You can use this number to check you case status on USCIS website (https://www.uscis.gov/).

After a long waiting time, if your OPT is approved, you will receive an email with the instruction of creating an SEVP portal account. The SEVP account is crucial in reporting employment and other pertinent personal information.

Once you receive your employment authorization card, remember to send a copy of the EAD card to UNC OISSS. To maintain OPT status, you will have 90 days to report employment. If you couldn't secure a job within 90 days, your OPT and F-1 status will expire. If you have already had a job offer, remember to report employment activity in SEVP portal account and to UNC OISSS using OPT Employment Reporting Form (https://isss.unc.edu/files/2015/11/OPT-EMPLOYMENT-REPORTING-FORM.pdf) within this 90-day period.

Congratulations on making it through the complicated process!!! I hope this document can help a little bit in this tedious process☺ If you have any question, please remember to contact UNC OISSS or visa office at your working place! Best of luck with your visa and career here at US!