Note: Each student is ultimately responsible for filing their own accurate and complete application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

1. **Read all** the information regarding STEM OPT on the International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) website: (http://www.middlebury.edu/international/isss/employment/stem).

2. **Give your employer** the STEM OPT Employer Reporting Requirements document. It provides information about the role the employer plays in the STEM OPT reporting process.

3. **Complete and submit to ISSS** the STEM OPT Extension Intake form and supporting documents through the secure ISSS Document Submission webform. DO NOT EMAIL DUE TO SECURITY REASONS. The complete packet should include:
   a) Completed STEM OPT Extension Intake Form.
      http://www.middlebury.edu/system/files/stem_opt_extension_request_form.pdf
   b) Completed and signed I-983 Training Plan with all attestations and supporting documentation. The form and instructions can be found at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/form-i-983-overview.
   c) The G-1145 e-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance form.
   d) I-765 Application for Employment Authorization form. (See: I-765 Instructions for guidance.)
      Please see pages 3-5 for Additional Form I-765 Filing Tips.
   e) Copy of the diploma and transcripts for the STEM degree.
   f) Copy of your most recent I-94 record to be downloaded from: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home.
      You will need your passport to fill out the form to obtain the I-94 record.
   g) Copy of your passport identification page, plus your most recent entry stamp and most recent visa;
   h) Copy of your current OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and any previous EADs you’ve been issued; and
   i) Copies of all your previous I-20s (page 1 and the page with all the recommendations and travel signatures—either page 2 or 3 depending if the I-20 was issued before or after July 2015).

4. The ISSS Advisor will review all documents. If you meet all the requirements and all the forms submitted are acceptable, the ISSS Advisor will make the STEM OPT recommendation in SEVIS, and create an updated I-20.

5. **ISSS will notify you via email that the updated I-20 is completed.** You can choose to have it mailed via regular U.S. Postal Service mail or, if you want it expressed mailed to you, we will provide e-ShipGlobal instructions to you in that email.

6. **Upon receipt of the updated I-20, you will:**
   a) Sign and date the updated I-20 in the Student Attestation box on the bottom of the first page;
   b) Copy pages 1 and 2 of the new I-20 for inclusion in the STEM OPT application packet. **NOTE: Remember to keep your original updated SEVIS I-20 form with STEM OPT recommendation as your current I-20 form for travel. If you mail the original it will not be sent back to you.**

7. **Assemble the STEM OPT application packet as follows:**
   >> **DO NOT Staple ANYTHING IN THE PACKET! Use a single paper clip for the whole packet. <<
   >> **MAKE ALL DOCUMENTS SINGLE SIDED TO ENSURE ACCURATE USCIS PROCESSING <<
   
   - Check or Money Order for Filing Fee made payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security” – refer to www.uscis.gov for most current filing fee;
   - 2 Photos that meet USCIS requirements (with name and SEVIS ID # in pencil on back) – see Form I-765 Instructions for USCIS Photo Specifications;
- **Original Form G-1145** (while this is optional we recommend it so you can get text and/or email notifications about your application from USCIS);
- **Original Form I-765** with all required items completed in full and signed in black ink;
- Copy of pages 1 & 2 of the updated SEVIS I-20 form with STEM OPT recommendation on page 2 (You keep the original I-20 as your current I-20);
- Copy of your STEM degree diploma and a copy of the official transcript;
- Copy of your current OPT EAD and any previous EADs you’ve been issued;
- Printout of most recent I-94 record;
- Copy of passport ID page(s), including validity dates, and most recent entry stamp, if available;
- Copy of your F-1 visa (not required for citizens of Bermuda or Canada); and
- Copies of all previous I-20s, both sides.

8. **BEFORE mailing, make a copy or SCAN of your entire OPT packet** (I-765 and accompanying materials). Keep this duplicate packet for your personal records.

9. **Mail the completed OPT application to the USCIS.** USCIS must receive your OPT application with Form I-765 within 60 days of the date that your DSO enters the recommendation in your SEVIS record. Refer to the date by the signature of the DSO on the first page of the I-20 to determine the date.

USCIS must physically receive the completed packet by no later than your expiration date of your current post-completion OPT Employment Authorization Card (EAC).

**Note:** Mailing addresses for I-765 can change without notice. So, **before mailing**, verify the address on the USCIS website: [https://www.uscis.gov/i-765](https://www.uscis.gov/i-765) under “Where to File.”

ISSS recommends sending your application by an express mail service such as UPS or FedEx that offer package tracking. If you mail via US Postal Service (USPS), be sure to request a method with a tracking number. **DO NOT** use a “signature upon delivery” option because USCIS may not “sign” for the package.

On the front of the envelope you place inside the express mail envelope write: “I-765 - OPT Application.”

You submit the I-765 application packet based on the mailing address you use on the I-765 form in part 2. **If you use the ISSS mailing address**, you mail to one of the locations below. **If you use another address in the U.S. as the mailing address and/or you choose to use regular U.S. Postal Service, you must consult the USCIS website** for the proper mailing address.

**For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:**
- USCIS
  - PO Box 660867
  - Dallas, TX 75266

**For FedEx, UPS and DHL express mail Deliveries:**
- USCIS
  - Attn: NFB AOS
  - 2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business, Suite 400
  - Lewisville, TX 75067

**IMPORTANT:** If you do not use the ISSS mailing address, please make sure you provide to ISSS copies of all USCIS notices and the STEM OPT Extension EAC for our records. We are legally required to report on your through SEVIS throughout your STEM OPT Extension period therefore we need copies of these documents.
PART 1)
>> REASON FOR APPLYING
Refer to page 3 of the USCIS Form I-765 instructions for how to complete the form based on the Foreign Students Category.

PART 2)
>> YOUR FULL LEGAL NAME
List your full legal name in lieu of any preferred names.

>> YOUR U.S. MAILING ADDRESS
Use a valid, U.S. address as this is where USCIS will send notices, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and Social Security Number (SSN) (if requested).

We encourage you to use Middlebury College’s address so we can get the card when it is approved and update our records appropriately as well as help you if there are any Requests for Evidence or errors on the card. We will notify you when we receive any mail for you and arrange with you to have it mailed to you.

5a: Middlebury College ISSS  
5b: 84 S. Service Rd.  
5c: Ste. 200  
5d: Middlebury  
5e: VT  
5f: 05753  
6: No

If you use the ISSS mailing address and want to change your address on record with USCIS afterwards, please contact ISSS first before taking action so that you have a clear understanding of the implications of this action.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you choose to NOT use ISSS’ address for mailing on the I-765 form, please ensure that ISSS gets a readable copy of any USCIS notices and the Employment Authorization Card (EAC) as we are required by law to report in SEVIS on you throughout your STEM OPT Extension period. If you do not use our address, USCIS will not notify ISSS on anything relating to your application. DO NOT email these copies due to security and privacy reasons. Please upload them through our secure Document Submission Form link: https://forms.middlebury.edu/international/isss/document-submission-form.

>> YOUR U.S. PHYSICAL ADDRESS
Use a valid, U.S. address for where you are physically living. (DO NOT PUT AN ADDRESS WITH A P.O. BOX)

>> OTHER INFORMATION
Question 8: If you have applied for a USCIS benefit before (such as post-completion OPT), then you have an A-Number. If you have one, you will find it at the top of your EAD card mailer or located under the USCIS # heading on your EAD card.) If you have not, then you can leave this question blank.

Question 9: If you have never created a USCIS On-line account number (most Middlebury College undergraduates probably have not), then you can leave this question blank.

Question 12: Since you have applied for employment authorization in the past, select YES. Provide copies of all previous EADs, front and backside. (You will also have to provide additional information in PART 6.)
Question 13a: Everyone must answer question 13a. It asks if the Social Security Administration (SSA) has ever officially issued you a Social Security card.

Question 14: Most F-1 students who are on post-completion OPT have a SSN and should answer No to this then skip ahead to Part 2, Question 18a.

>> YOUR COUNTRY OR COUNTRIES OF CITIZENSHIP
- If you are stateless, use the name of the country where you were last a citizen or national.
- If you are a citizen or national of more than one country, use the name of the foreign country that issued your last passport.

>> INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR LAST ARRIVAL IN THE U.S.

Question 21b: Use your passport information.

Question 21c: Most of you will be able to answer 21b with your passport information. In this case, you can write NONE for 21c. This is only to be used if you have a travel document other than a passport.

>> INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ELIGIBILITY CATEGORY
Question 27: The STEM OPT Extension category is (c)(3)(C).

Questions 28a, 28b, & 28c: Put the STEM degree you earned, for example: BS - Biology, and name of employer as it is listed in the E-Verify system and the E-Verify number for the employer. If you fail to include the E-Verify number (usually 6 or 8 digits), your application may be denied.

PART 3)  
>> APPLICANT’S STATEMENT
Select the appropriate box. Most students will choose 1a.

>> APPLICANT’S CONTACT INFORMATION
For questions 3 to 5, use your contact information. If you do not have a phone number for question 3, use the ISSS number at 802-443-5858.

>> APPLICANT’S SIGNATURE
Sign your name in the box (black ink) for 7a and make sure that your signature stays in the box. USCIS will not accept a stamped or typewritten name in place of a signature.

PARTS 4 OR 5 are used only if the applicant uses an interpreter or preparer (i.e. attorney).
PART 6)

** FOR ANYONE FILING A RENEWAL (i.e. a second request for employment at the same educational level):
List all previously issued SEVIS numbers (the N number found on your Form I-20s), all periods of CPT and all periods of OPT as well as the educational level at which they were authorized. Since there are no clear USCIS instructions on how to list this information, consider the following method:

1. Family Name, Given Name, Middle Name (as listed in your passport and on the I-765)
2. A-Number (if any)—you can find it under the USCIS # on your EAD card or at the top of the EAD card mailer.
3a. Page Number: 2  3b. Part Number: 2  3c. Item Number: 12  3d. (provide the additional information):
   - SEVIS ID N000000000000 (use your specific number)
   - MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY
   - Bachelors Level
   - Pre-completion OPT (or if CPT, list that as the type of employment authorization)

FINAL REMINDERS:
Answer all questions fully and accurately. If a question does not apply to you, type or print N/A, or NONE for questions requiring a numeric response, unless otherwise directed. If the form will not allow you to type N/A, you can type NOT APPLICABLE.

If there are any fields that do not contain sufficient space or for which you would like to provide additional information, such as your full name as it is on your passport please put it on this page reference the page, part, and item numbers for which you are providing additional information.
What Happens Next?

Within a few weeks, USCIS will send a “Notice of Action” with a case number to confirm receipt of your application. With the “Notice of Action,” you can check the status of your case online.

- If your application is incomplete or requires further information, USCIS will send a Request for Evidence (RFE).
  - If you use the ISSS mailing address, the RFE will come to ISSS and we will alert you.
- If you respond to an RFE or for any other further correspondence to USCIS about your OPT application, **always put a copy of your Notice of Action on top of your correspondence** to ensure that it goes directly to your file.
- **If you receive an RFE, consult with ISSS to confirm that you are responding appropriately.**

As long as you file your STEM OPT application and it is received by USCIS before your current OPT authorization expires (i.e. the end date of your current Employment Authorization Document), your employment authorization is considered automatically extended for up to 180 days while the STEM OPT application is pending.

Once you receive the EAD, you are authorized to work during the time period specified on the card. Your employer will need to see the card to prove that you are eligible for employment.

Compliance with STEM OPT reporting requirements rests primarily with the student and the sponsoring school. The employer also has reporting obligations. To maintain your status, be sure to comply with the necessary reporting.

Note: You **cannot** be unemployed for more than an aggregate of 150 days (during your combined 36 months of Post-Completion OPT and STEM OPT). It is important to update ISSS with any employment changes right away.

Travel During the STEM OPT Period

You may travel outside of the U.S. after your STEM OPT is approved and you have the new EAD.

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You should NOT travel while the STEM OPT application is pending. It will be seen as abandoned by USCIS and denied.

To return to the U.S. during the F-1 Student STEM OPT period and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 student status, you must carry:

1. A valid passport.
2. A valid I-20 with your STEM OPT recommendation and a valid travel signature **no older than 6 months** at time of re-entry to the U.S. on page 2
3. A valid F-1 visa stamp (that permits multiple entries) in your passport.
   *(Note: Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not require visa stamps.)*
5. PROOF OF EMPLOYMENT such as a job offer letter or employment verification letter is also recommended.
Your visa status will be determined by the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) official at time of admission (or through USCIS via the adjudication of a change of status petition). When you attempt to re-enter, the U.S. border official may inquire as to whether you are returning to the U.S. to resume employment. You should be prepared for this question. If you have the documents listed above, you will have what you need to be eligible to re-enter the U.S.

Immigration regulations state that you may return to the U.S. to “resume employment after a period of temporary absence” (less than 5 months). **If you are absent from the United States for more than 5 months, your F-1 status is broken and your OPT automatically comes to an end.**

**If your F-1 visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate to re-enter the U.S.** We recommend that you do this in your home country per Department of State guidance. You may be required to show documentation that you have a job to return to and sufficient income or funds to cover your living expenses.

> **Note:** *If you apply for a new visa, please be sure to check your passport to ensure that an F-1 visa has been posted. In some cases, Embassies have granted a B-1/B-2 (Business/Tourist) visa in error! You will be able to correct this error relatively easily if you notify the Embassy immediately. If you leave the Embassy without making the correction, it is very difficult to correct at a later date.*

**Travel to Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent islands with an expired F-1 visa for less than 30 days:** Because immigration regulations are constantly changing, if you consider traveling to one of these places with an expired F-1 visa, please consult with ISSS before you make such a trip. ISSS will advise you about current F-1 visa regulations regarding automatic visa revalidation, and whether any other changes in regulations would affect such travel.

**If you re-enter the United States through the Visa Waiver program or with a tourist visa, you will not be authorized to work even if you have an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).** You must be in F-1 status in order for the EAD and your authorization to remain valid. Your I-94 card is proof of your status; it reflects the status you were granted when you last entered the U.S. or when you changed your status from within the U.S.

**If you apply for a change of status** from F-1 to another visa category: Before making travel plans to leave the U.S., be sure to consult with the person handling your status change for guidance about the implications of travel on your status or pending application.

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### U.S. Income Taxes

While you are authorized to engage in STEM OPT, you continue to be in F-1 status. **All individuals in F-1 status are required to file Federal income tax forms, and may also need to file state tax forms.** The amount of income tax you are liable for depends upon your tax status and upon the tax treaty (if any) that exists between your country of citizenship and the United States.