International Students in F-1 status are restricted as to when, where, and for how long they can be employed. It is important that international students make sure that they have the appropriate permission from USCIS prior to engaging in any sort of off campus employment. Violation of employment regulations can put a student “out of status” and ineligible for “reinstatement to status.” This handout provides a general overview of F-1 employment but does not replace individual advising. The following are types of employment that F-1 students might be eligible for:

**On-Campus Employment** – In order to engage in on-campus employment, an international student in F-1 status must be “in-status” at the school having jurisdiction over the student’s I-20 and must be pursuing a full-course of study. Employment can be up to 20 hours per week during the semester and full-time during vacation periods. Such employment is considered “incident to status” and no special application for work permission is required. See an immigration advisor for additional information.

**Off-Campus Employment due to Severe Economic Hardship** – After an F-1 student has been in F-1 status for at least one full academic year (and theoretically has used the funding evidence used to obtain the I-20), a student may apply to USCIS for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The student must prove that employment is necessary due to severe economic hardship that was unforeseen, beyond the student’s control, and arose after obtaining F-1 status. The EAD will last up to one year. Like on-campus employment, work is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session and full-time during official vacation periods. The application includes form I-765 and fees (approximately $410) and takes approximately three months to process.

**Curricular Practical Training** – CPT is temporary employment that is directly related to a student’s major and integral to the established curriculum in the student’s course of study. Sometimes called *internships, professional practicum or cooperative education*, CPT must be for academic credit or required of all students in the particular major. Generally, CPT can be authorized by a DSO (immigration advisor) after a student has been enrolled full-time for one full academic year, unless it is required earlier of all students in a particular program. Certification from the employer and the academic department are required as part of the application process. Certain amounts of CPT may affect eligibility for OPT. See additional handout on CPT.

**Optional Practical Training** – OPT is 12 months of employment that is directly related to a student’s major and can be applied for after the student has been full-time for one full academic year. Such work can be done prior to graduation (pre-completion OPT), after graduation (post-completion OPT) and during a one-time 24-month extension for students studying in certain STEM fields. Applications include form I-765 and $410 fee and will take approximately three months to process. See additional handout on OPT.

**Special Student Relief** is an alteration or suspension of regulations by the Department of Homeland Security for students from parts of the world that are experiencing emergency situation such as wars and other crises. See an immigration advisor for details.