

Travel Information

Things to remember when you travel:

- If you are traveling outside the U.S. please check your SEVIS form I-20/DS-2019 for a valid travel signature by a Designated School Official.
- Even though regulations state that signatures are valid for 1 year we suggest getting a new signature each time you are departing the United States or at least within 6 months.
- If the signature will be valid on the date that you will re-enter the U.S. you may use it for travel.
- If the signature will be expired on the date that you return to the U.S. bring your SEVIS form I-20/DS-2019 to a DSO for a new travel signature.
- If you plan to travel to a country other than your own, you should contact the Consulate of that country to find out if you need a visa. You can access information through the [Department of State website](#). There are also Visa services in the US that can assist you. [Visa Central](#) is a company that we recommend.
- You must have the following documents to return to the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status:
 - Valid F-1 or J-1 Visa
 - SEVIS form I-20 or DS-2019 with travel signature endorsed by CSU within 1 year (we recommend 6 months)
 - Passport, valid 6 months into the future
 - Enrollment Verification or Acceptance Letter
- It is a good idea to also carry the receipt of your paid I-901 SEVIS fee
- Automatic visa revalidation: Citizens of some countries who are in the U.S. with expired F-1/J-1 visas will be able to return to the U.S. after travel to Mexico, Canada and the neighboring islands/U.S. territories under the following conditions: visit is not more than 30 days and the purpose is pleasure or vacation only, maintained full-time status at all times, has I-20/DS-2019 endorsed for travel within a year.
- If you are planning to renew your expired student visa in your home country you must apply early and expect delays. Submit your most current SEVIS form I-20/DS-2019 to a DSO for travel endorsement at least 10-14 working days prior to departure.

DOCUMENTS for visa renewal purposes:

- SEVIS form I-20/DS-2019 with updated travel signature from CSU
- Passport, valid 6 months into the future
- Financial guarantee (i.e., current semester scholarship letter, bank statement obtained within the last 6 months)
- Enrollment Verification - Acceptance Letter
- Consult individual embassy websites for periodic updates on country-specific visa processing. Lists of U.S. Embassies abroad can be accessed through this website [US Embassy web site](#).

Traveling within the US:

When traveling within the U.S. you may be asked by a law enforcement officer to show your immigration documents. Be sure you always have your documents or a copy of them with you; keep them in a safe place so as not to misplace them or have them stolen from your car.

OPT Travel

OPT travel signatures are valid for 6 months from the date of last signature. Please consult with the Center for Global Engagement before travel.

Post-Completion OPT is Pending:

If your post-completion OPT has not been approved yet (Employment Authorization Document [EAD] card still not yet issued by USCIS), and you do not have a job or a job offer, you may leave and then re-enter the U.S. to continue to look for employment. Problems may arise if your OPT is approved and your EAD card is issued while you are outside the country and cannot produce it upon your return.

In order to have the best chance of re-entering the U.S. without problems when your post-completion OPT is pending, you should be sure you have the following documents:

- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the US)
- Valid F-1 visa (except for citizens of Canada and Bermuda)
- I-20 (with a travel signature no older than six months)
- I-765 receipt notice (Form I-797)

If you need to apply for a new F-1 visa while your OPT application is pending, you should also be sure to have all of the above documents and to consult the embassy that you intend to apply at for instructions.

Post-Completion OPT is Approved:

If your post-completion OPT has been approved (EAD card has been issued by USCIS), you may leave and re-enter the U.S. in order to begin or resume employment.

After USCIS has issued an EAD card for post-completion OPT, in order to have the best chance to return without issues you should be sure you have the following documents:

- Passport (valid for six months after you plan to re-enter the US)
- Valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport (except for citizens of Canada and Bermuda)
- I-20 (with a travel signature no older than six months)
- EAD card
- Evidence that you already have a job in the U.S. or that you have an offer - if you have exceeded your 90 days of employment you probably won't be allowed to return

If you need to apply for a new F-1 Visa, you should also be sure to have your EAD card and evidence that you already have a job or job offer in addition to the usual documents required for a visa application. If you do not have a job or offer yet this may reflect negatively on you.

Summary of Guidance

Students who have an EAD card for post-completion OPT and evidence of either a job or a job offer are allowed to leave and re-enter the U.S. during their OPT period. Of course, re-entry to the U.S. is never guaranteed and the risk is greater if you do not have a job or job offer. If you have reached or exceeded your 90 days of unemployment regulations state that you should not be allowed to reenter.

Students whose EAD card has not yet been issued (OPT application has not yet been approved by USCIS) are allowed to re-enter the U.S. to resume the search for employment. While your OPT application is pending, you are not required to have a job or a job offer for re-entry to the U.S.

For more information, see [U.S. Department of Homeland Security FAQ for Travel](#).