OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING & TRAVEL ISSUES

1. **Now that I’ve applied for OPT, can I travel outside the U.S. while I wait for the EAD card to come?**

   The ICE at this time states you *can* travel while your OPT is pending in order to return and search for employment. However, this interpretation is a change from the previous operating instructions. The ISS recommendation is that you do not travel outside of the U.S. while your OPT application is pending. If you have an emergency and must travel it is uncertain as to your risk.

2. **Can I travel while on OPT with my EAD, and continue my job search upon reentry?**

   ICE has stated if your OPT has been approved, obtained your EAD and you depart the U.S. before obtaining a job, your OPT is terminated and you may not reenter the U.S.

   The ICE have changed the previous operating instructions and have narrowed the interpretation of the regulations 8 CFR.214.2(f)(13)(ii) to state that you must reenter the U.S. to “resume employment”.

   The ISS strongly recommends that you do not travel unless of emergency or you have a letter of employment or offer. Again, this has been a change in the interpretation so it is unclear how your entry will be interpreted at the port of entry.

3. **What documents do I need to reenter the U.S. with an approved OPT?**

   You will need your I-20 endorsed on the 3rd page by the ISS staff, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD), a valid visa, and an offer letter of employment.

4. **What if I still have some time left on my student program? Can I travel during that time, even though my I-20 shows that I have been recommended for OPT but the OPT application is still pending with CIS?**

   Yes, You must be returning as a student to complete academic requirements. For example, a student who has applied for OPT in May, is enrolled during the summer, but who does not graduate until August, may still travel as a student until their graduation date.

   The ISS recommends that you travel with a letter of certification showing that you are a student during the summer.

5. **My visa in my passport has expired, but I need to travel outside the U.S. while on OPT do I have a risk for denial of another F-1 visa?**

   Yes, there is a risk of denial. The risk is higher than while you are in active student status, since your stay is now working rather than going to school. The F-1 student visa requires that the applicant must intend to return to the home country at the end of the program, and if the visa issuing officer is not convinced of your intention to return home, the visa application could be denied.

   You need to take a valid passport, recently endorsed I-20, EAD card, and an offer letter of employment showing your salary, location, job duties, and beginning date. You should also be prepared to discuss how the job experience will apply to a job in your home country and how you intend to apply it.