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This is the Weekly ISSS Newsletter that we send out every Friday. It includes very important immigration updates that you must be aware of, as well as information about events happening on campus and in the area.

Are you a part of a student organization and want to see your event advertised to your fellow students? Please send the details and/or flyer to ISSS@albany.edu.

Important ISSS Announcements

Regulatory Updates
- Information on DHS’s Proposed Rule to Eliminate Duration of Status D/S for F, J, and I statuses
- DHS Now Terminating OPT/STEM OPT Records for Excessive Unemployment Time
- USCIS Form and Filing Fee Changes taking Effect October 2nd Are Now On Hold

ISSS Event Information
- OPT and CPT Workshop Schedule
- The Basics of Academic Writing in an American Classroom Workshop - Recording Now Available
- Immigration Art (Immigration Attorney) Coming Virtually on October 27th!
- Munch with the Majors: Find Your Path!
- Graduate Students Seeking International Students for Research Survey

Upcoming Events
- Graduate and Professional School Fair - October 6
- Virtual Job and Internship Fairs
- Rockefeller College Election Series
- AdvisingPLUS Tutoring Services
- CAPS Groups - Reach out and Connect
Many of you may have seen reports regarding the DHS proposed rule to eliminate duration of status (D/S) for F students and J exchange visitors, as well as dependents of both published on Friday, September 25, 2020.

This new rule is a “proposed” rule, meaning it has not yet taken effect. When a rule is proposed, it enters a 30-day public comment period, after which comments must be reviewed by the federal agency (e.g. DHS ICE). Only after that may a final rule be published. This proposed rule does not immediately impact you or your status at this time.

As part of our continued commitment to our international students and their continued well-being, the University at Albany in coordination with the SUNY system is evaluating this new rule and will respond to advocate for the needs of our students. Other advocacy groups across the nation are also preparing a response. We will communicate any updates to students by email.

If you would like to read an overview of this proposed rule, you can find a summary on NAFSA’s website here.

Students are allowed to submit comments to this proposed rule for DHS-ICE to review. This may be a good way for you to advocate for yourself and fellow international students. Comments may be submitted through the Federal Register’s website by clicking the blue “Comment Now” button: https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=ICEB-2019-0006. If you intend to submit a personal comment, we highly recommend you read this overview on how to submit an effective comment first.
If you are interested in submitting a comment, below we have compiled some of what we consider the most salient issues for our students and suggested rationale to include in your comments. You may comment on other issues within this proposed rule as well, and you may also comment on how these changes would directly impact you and/or your studies in the U.S.:

1. Admitting F and J students for a fixed time period - 2 or 4 years: The current system of I-20 and DS-2019 extensions, which is managed by P/DSOs and A/ROS in ISSS and sponsor agency offices, is the most efficient and effective method as these professionals are in the best position to determine added or subtracted time necessary to complete a degree in collaboration with academic department advisors and faculty.

2. Requiring students to officially petition to DHS for extension of stay for continued study: This change would cause an undue burden on F and J students including cost, time, travel restrictions and possibility of denial. ISSS staff burdens would include recommending and supporting hundreds of USCIS applications for extension every single year.

3. Shortening the grace period from 60 to 30 days for F-1 students: While some F-1 students may be able to return home prior to the end of a 60 days, many have either applied for and are waiting for OPT approval, a process taking 3-4 months, or are waiting to begin a new academic program at an approved institution, which can take more than 30 days to complete.

Regardless of when, how, and if this proposed rule takes effect the ISSS office will continue to support you and advocate for your needs. If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to reach out.

**DHS Now Terminating OPT/STEM OPT Records for Excessive Unemployment Time**

It has come to our attention that the Department of Homeland Security has started to terminate the I-20s and work authorization of students on OPT and STEM OPT who have exceeded their maximum number of unemployment days. This would be unemployment in excess of 90 days for students on Post Completion OPT and unemployment is excess of 150 days for students on STEM OPT.

During Post Completion OPT, maintaining F-1 status is dependent upon full-time, qualifying employment. “Volunteer work,” or unpaid activity, counts as employment under Post Completion OPT as long as the employment meets all requirements, including that the student is working at least 20 hours per week in a position directly related to the student’s major. Any of these qualifying scenarios should be reported correctly to ISSS via the OPT/STEM OPT Reporting Eform in order to pause the unemployment counter. For STEM OPT students, the new employment must meet all STEM regulatory requirements and therefore volunteer/unpaid positions are not acceptable.

Exceeding unemployment is considered a violation of F-1 status. Students at risk of exceeding unemployment days are advised by USCIS to either depart the U.S. before exceeding the unemployment limit or transfer/change level to begin a new full-time course of study before the unemployment limit is reached in order to avoid violating status.
USCIS Form and Filing Fee Changes taking Effect October 2nd Are Now On Hold

A federal court ordered that the new USCIS form and fees scheduled to take effect on October 2nd are on hold, meaning they will not be implemented on October 2nd. This means that the new edition of the I-765 (used to apply for post completion OPT and STEM OPT) and new associated filing fee of $550 will not take effect that day. Students applying for OPT/STEM OPT should continue to obtain the most recent I-765 form directly from USCIS’s website.

To read the court order, click Read More

OPT and CPT Workshop Schedule

We encourage all students applying for OPT to attend one of the scheduled live OPT workshops on Zoom to ask questions and hear the latest information. You can find a full schedule on our website here. But if you want a refresher, or your schedule is packed right now, you can also view a full recording on the OPT Request instructions page of our website, click on Read More below.

The Basics of Academic Writing in an American Classroom Workshop-Recording Now Available

Missed the workshop this past Tuesday? A recording is now available, please click "Read More" below.

Immigration Art (Immigration Attorney) Coming Virtually on October 27th!
Immigration Attorney Art Serratelli is back to offer advice on employment and immigration options after F-1 status (H1b, Green Cards and more!)

Tuesday, October 27th

Virtual Webinar: 5:00pm-7:00pm on Zoom. Message or email ISSS@albany.edu for Zoom meeting details.

Virtual 30 Minute Consultations (1 on 1): appointments available 9:30am-12:00pm, 1:00pm-4:00pm. Email immigration.art@gmail.com your name, preferred communication contact (phone, Skype, etc...) and availability to schedule (please use email Subject Line UAlbany Consultation Request, October 27)
Munch with the Majors: Find Your Path!

The path to your academic and professional goals starts with your major and minor. On this virtual Munch with the Majors website, you can watch videos about UAlbany’s majors and minors and find ones that match your interests! Click on "Read More" below.

Read More

Graduate Students Seeking International Students for Research Survey

Our names are Hung-Bin Sheu, Xinyun Xu, and Taylor Karnilaw, a research team at the University at Albany (UAlbany), State University of New York.

We are conducting a study on what would promote better cross-cultural adjustment and well-being among international/IELP students in the U.S. This study is approved by UAlbany (IRB#: 20X222). We would like to invite you to participate in this study by responding to an anonymous online survey, which takes approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. More information about the study is provided in the cover letter of the online survey.

Please click on this link or copy this link to a browser to access the survey: https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=190358

Please share this message with someone you think may be eligible for participating in this study. Feel free to contact us at hsheu@albany.edu if you have any questions. Thank you very much for participating in this study.

Upcoming Events
Graduate and Professional School Fair - October 6

Tuesday, October 6th from 11am-3pm. This is a great opportunity to connect with representatives from 60+ colleges and universities, explore your graduate education options, and learn about the graduate and professional school application process. Click "Read More" to register.

Virtual Job and Internship Fairs

The Office of Career and Professional Development will offer job and internship fair virtual sessions in September-October. For more information, contact career@albany.edu.

Guide to the Career Fairs: https://albany.joinhandshake.com/articles/18970

Virtual Career Fairs Schedule and Registration Information: https://albany.joinhandshake.com/events?page=1&per_page=25&sort_direction=asc
&sort_column=default&type=CareerFair

Rockefeller College Election Series

Interested in learning more about the U.S. election? Rockefeller College is hosting a series of discussions throughout this month. To register, click "Read More" below.

Advising PLUS Tutoring Services

A+ Tutoring & Academic Support is always here to help you! They are offering online tutoring and remote academic coaching sessions for undergraduate students to make sure you get the support you need.

Meet with a UAlbany peer tutor, request a tutor through TutorMatch, or use the online tutoring services. For more information on any of these services, click Read More below!
CAPS Groups- Reach out and Connect

In addition to the International Circle, CAPS offers a number of groups, including:
Introduction to Mindfulness; LGBTQ+ Empowerment and Support; Come Together: Staying Social Connected while Physically Distanced; Graduate Student Support; Managing Anxiety; Coping During COVID19; and Women of Color Empowerment and Support. Click "Read More" for more information on the groups offered.

Virtual Let's Talk (now on Zoom!)

The Virtual Let's Talk service is a way to engage in a brief 15-20 minute consultation with a CAPS clinician. A secure zoom meeting will be available Monday through Friday 1:00-3:00pm when classes are in session. Click Read More below.

Unsubscribe

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