A Social Security number does not give a student the legal authority to work. Work authorization is dependent upon a student's visa status and a student should always consult with ISSS regarding work authorization. Working without appropriate authorization is a serious violation of your immigration status which can result in the following: loss of status; accrual of unlawful presence and a potential bar on reentering the US; the need to depart the US; and/or the loss of eligibility for future benefits and statuses.

Students and scholars in F-1 and J-1 visa status, and other non-immigrants who are legally employed are required to obtain a Social Security Number for payroll identification purposes. Students who are not employed, but have scholarship or fellowship income, are not permitted to obtain a Social Security Number.

In order to obtain a SSN number, you must appear in person at the local Social Security Office and present all of the following documents:

1. Form SS-5: Application for a Social Security Card (available in the Social Security Office or download online at: http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf )
2. A valid passport
3. I-94 card (print out at www.cbp.gov/I94)
4. Valid I-20 or DS-2019
5. An employment letter (must be on company letterhead stationery and include the following: that you are or will be employed, nature of the work, the number of hours per week you are expected to work and that you will be receiving income, anticipated actual start date, employer contact information, including telephone number, name and title of immediate supervisor, signature, and date)
6. A status letter from International Student & Scholar Services

If you have an Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), you will need to present this document as well.

As a non-immigrant student, you should not have Social Security or Medicare (also known as FICA) deducted from your regular paycheck. If your employer is having either of these withheld from your pay, you should inform them that you are not required to make these contributions.

The local Social Security Administration office is located at:

Room 430, O'Brien Federal Building
11 A Clinton Avenue
Albany, NY 12207

Local Phone Number: (866) – 253 – 9183
Website: http://www.ssa.gov

The Social Security Office is located in the O'Brien Federal Building at the end of Clinton Street, between Broadway & Pearl Street. The entrance is on Pearl Street, across from the Palace Theater. https://goo.gl/maps/yk9E9

For additional information, please go to the following website: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10181.html. When you are finished applying at the Social Security Office, if you get a verification letter, please consult your employer and their Human Resources Office regarding when you are eligible to start work.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this form is provided as a service to international students, faculty and staff at the University at Albany. It does not constitute legal advice. We try to provide useful information, but we make no claims, promises or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of the information contained in or linked to any associated site or form. Neither the University at Albany nor ISSS is responsible for any errors or omissions contained in this form, or for the results obtained from the use of this information. Nothing provided herein should be used as a substitute for the advice of competent legal counsel; students may wish to consult an immigration attorney on the specifics of their case as needed.