**F-1 AND J-1 STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER SEVIS**

This handout is to inform our F-1 and J-1 international students of their responsibilities under the immigration regulations that are now in effect under the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is a database used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to track the arrival, enrollment, and departure of international students and their dependents. Since February 2003, every institution in the United States that enrolls international students in F or J status has been required to use SEVIS. Please read through this information carefully and keep this sheet as a reference for the duration of your F-1/J-1 status.

**Data**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is required to report to SEVIS for F-1 and J-1 students:

- Name, date of birth, country of birth, country of citizenship, source and amount of financial resources, academic program, level of study, program start and end dates
- Arrival on campus, enrollment status or failure to enroll
- A change of the student or dependent’s legal name or address
- Graduation prior to the end date listed on the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019
- Academic or disciplinary actions taken by the school due to a criminal conviction
- Registration for less than a full course of study without PRIOR authorization from ISSS
- Early completion or termination of studies along with date and reason for termination
- Other data generated by standard procedures such as program extension, school transfer, change in level of study, employment authorization, and reinstatement
- Failure to complete the academic program or academic ineligibility
- Employment updates when working off campus on OPT, CPT or AT

Though SEVIS has increased our reporting obligations, ISSS and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are NOT part of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or any other federal agency. Our staff is dedicated to the University’s mission and to our international students and exchange visitors, and we want to assist you in achieving your educational goals at the University. We must also follow federal regulations in order to ensure the continued ability to bring international students and scholars to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Please help us in this goal and protect your immigration status by reading and heeding the following requirements. **Federal immigration regulations are subject to change at any time so make sure to check with ISSS before making any major decisions that may affect your immigration status; please remember that ISSS is the only on-campus office that has the authority and expertise to advise students and scholars on immigration issues.**

The following is a list of regulations you MUST follow in order to maintain your status in the United States. The ability to correct any action that results in a violation of your status has been greatly reduced in the current regulations. It is very important that you understand the following information.

- **Address Reporting:** You MUST update your physical address (no Post Office Boxes) in the United States within 10 days of any move you make within the U.S. while in F-1 or J-1 status (this includes temporary moves for the summer, if residing in the U.S.). The University of North Carolina allows you to do this address reporting online through ConnectCarolina (http://connectcarolina.unc.edu). There are multiple address fields for international students. The “SEVIS Immigration Reporting Address” is the address that will be used for immigration reporting. In order to prevent any interruption in your mailing, you must also have an address in “Local” address. This may be a duplicate entry, but both address fields must be filled in. For reporting to SEVIS, ISSS is connected to the University’s System, and will report the address listed in ConnectCarolina under “SEVIS Immigration Reporting Address” as your current address to the Immigration Service. Students who have graduated (or who are
no longer enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill) and are on F-1 Optional Practical Training or J-1 Academic Training are also required to report changes in address in ConnectCarolina.

- **Enrolling full-time:** Undergraduate students MUST be enrolled for at least 12 credit hours per semester. Graduate students must generally be registered for 9 credit hours per semester unless enrolled in research hours (992, 993, 994) for thesis or dissertation. However, regardless of the number of hours, you must be considered full-time by the University Registrar’s Office in order for you to be considered full-time for immigration purposes. Summer enrollment is not typically required unless it is the first or last semester of your program.

- **Distance and online learning:** Regulations limit the number of distance and online courses you may apply towards full-time enrollment. No more than one course or 3 credits per semester may be used to reach full-time enrollment. All other credits in that semester must be credits taken at UNC-Chapel Hill.

- **Dropping below full-time:** If for any reason you do not intend to enroll full-time during a semester (personal reasons; medical problem; initial academic difficulties such as course level placement or the English language; or if you are an undergraduate in your final semester and you do not need 12 hours in order to graduate, etc.) you MUST talk with an advisor at ISSS BEFORE you drop below full-time. No other office in the University has the authority to approve under-enrollment and report it to SEVIS. ISSS must approve this action prior to it taking place or you will be out of status.

- **Change to program of Study:** Any change to the program information contained on the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 must be updated in the SEVIS system. These changes include a change of major, program or degree level (i.e. Bachelors to Masters). *It is the student’s responsibility to make sure the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 reflects accurate information about the program of study.* Students should not assume that any changes made in the University system are automatically updated in SEVIS. Students should meet with an advisor at the ISSS office to discuss any changes to the program of study, since some changes may require additional documentation. The timing of this change may have an impact on a student’s status and plans for the future, so it is important to get information before changing degree levels.

- **Program Extension:** It is very important that student’s Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 remain valid at all times. *Your F-1 and J-1 status end dates are determined by your Form I-20 (see item 5) or Form DS-2019 (see item 3).* If a student’s document will expire soon they should notify ISSS immediately. A student will be out of status if they allow these certificates of eligibility to expire and have not completed their degree program (even if a student is on F-1 OPT). ISSS is here to help answer questions; however, knowing the date of expiration is ultimately the student’s responsibility. *Failure to extend an Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 is a violation of the student’s immigration status and work on or off campus with an expired Form I-20 or DS-2019 may be considered illegal employment (even if you have an EAD for F-1 OPT).*

- **Transfer of schools:** In order to transfer from one school to another, students must first inform ISSS of their intention to transfer. Students must know which school they will transfer to, and in what session they will start at the new school so that the transfer can be set via SEVIS. Students should discuss the transfer process with an advisor if they intend to request a transfer out.

- **Leaves of absence or withdrawal from school:** If students are planning to take a leave of absence or to withdraw from school completely, they must notify ISSS before withdrawing from classes. The preparation to depart “grace period” is different for F-1 and J-1 students. F-1 students who withdraw from school in the middle of a term without PRIOR authorization from ISSS must depart the U.S. immediately, and are not entitled to any grace period. F-1 students who notify ISSS and receive authorization from ISSS BEFORE withdrawing from UNC-Chapel Hill are allowed a 15-day grace period. Only F-1 students finishing their program are afforded the 60-day grace period for departure. For J-1 students, a 30-day preparation to depart “grace period” is allowed, though if your program is terminated by the University, there is no grace period allowed.

- **Employment regulations:** Students in F-1 status are allowed to work on-campus no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session but may work full-time on-campus during the summer and winter vacations between semesters of study. *(On-campus does NOT include positions paid by UNC Hospitals, the Carolina Inn, or businesses on Franklin Street.)* All off-campus employment for F-1 students must be approved prior to beginning
employment either by ISSS, or in the case of F-1 Optional Practical Training or F-1 Economic Hardship, by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). International students in J-1 status must have prior approval in SEVIS from their sponsor (i.e. ISSS or the other institution or organization that issued your DS-2019) for on-campus or off-campus employment including Academic Training. Unpaid internships or practicums may still be considered “employment” depending on certain factors and so they may still require employment authorization. Please discuss any “work” or “volunteer” opportunities with an advisor at ISSS before beginning the opportunity.

- **Additional note on Curricular Practical Training (CPT):** F-1 CPT work authorization must be an integral part of an established curriculum - either required by all students in your program for graduation or fulfilling a specific academic objective such as a thesis or dissertation component. If your degree program has an academic engagement that requires you to work off campus (i.e. practicum, internship, or field research), students must talk to an advisor at ISSS about CPT before beginning this work. More detailed information regarding CPT is available on our website. Exchange/non-degree students are not eligible for CPT.

- **Additional note on Optional Practical Training (OPT):** Off-campus work that is related to your field of study but not required by your academic program would be considered OPT. Students may use OPT during or after the completion of a course of study. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services must receive applications for post-completion OPT no later than 60 days after the program completion date; students may apply as early as 90 days before their completion. Students have 12 months of OPT per academic level. Students in a STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) field as denoted in SEVIS, may be eligible for a 17-month extension of OPT if they meet certain eligibility requirements. More detailed information regarding OPT is available on our website. Exchange/non-degree students are not eligible for OPT.

- **Dependents:** SEVIS will create separate records for all F-2 and J-2 dependents. For the purposes of address reporting, it will be assumed that dependents are residing with the F-1 or J-1 student. If dependents live separately the address of the dependent must be reported directly to ISSS by sending an email to oisss@unc.edu. Please put “DEPENDENT ADDRESS” in the subject heading, and be sure to include the name of the F-1 or J-1 student as well.

- **Dependent Travel:** Besides creating a separate record for F-2 and J-2 dependents, SEVIS creates a separate Form I-20 for each dependent. If the dependents travel outside the U.S., their Forms I-20 or DS-2019 must be signed prior to travel. If the dependents depart the U.S. for a considerable length of time, ISSS must be notified so that we may inactivate the SEVIS record for the dependents. Contact ISSS if those dependents wish to return, so that we may reactivate their SEVIS records to enable their re-entry to the U.S.

- **Note for F-2 dependents:** Beginning May 29, 2015 an F-2 dependent may study part-time in any certified program at an SEVP-certified school. Dependents in F-2 status may not study full-time unless they are minor children studying in K-12 schools.

- **Note for J-2 dependents:** Dependents in J-2 status are eligible to apply for employment authorization through USCIS. At this time J-2 dependents may also pursue a full-time degree program.

- **Travel:** All travel requires a valid and unexpired Form I-20/DS-2019, signed for travel by ISSS (or J-1 program sponsor), valid passport and visa for re-entry to the country. Students should travel with a certificate of enrollment (available from the Registrar’s office), and proof of funding. Visa and travel requirements change often, so always check with ISSS before you travel outside of the U.S. to make sure that you know the latest travel requirements.

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