

Optional Practical Training

Talking Points

On April 22, President Trump issued a proclamation to temporarily suspend new immigrant visas. The proclamation included language directing the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, and the Department of Labor to provide additional recommendations on how to curb non-immigrant visas and work programs. CGS is concerned about how student visas (F-1, M-1, J-1) and Optional Practical Training will be impacted. H-1B visas may also be affected. CGS members are encouraged to work with their government relations staff to urge preservation of OPT as well as educate the public. Below are some talking points that may be helpful as a framework for illustrating how international students and OPT impact your graduate student community and surrounding employers.

OPT is a Competitive Recruitment Tool

- OPT attracts talented individuals from across the globe to U.S. institutions of higher education as it addresses the demand for “hands-on” work experience to complement one’s program of study.
- This is critical given that these prospective students have an array of other options outside of the U.S.

OPT Benefits Students, U.S. Employers, and the U.S. Economy

- Research forecasts that scaling back OPT would lead to short- and long-term economic consequences for both international and domestic workers, including decreased employment opportunities and depleted wage growth.¹
- International students and their families contributed approximately \$41 billion dollars and more than 458,000 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2018-2019 academic year.²
- More than ever, bolstering the U.S.’s economic and research enterprise is critical, and OPT helps connect employers with highly-educated individuals who possess the knowledge and skills to advance industry.

Preserving OPT is Essential

OPT serves both international students and the U.S. employers who offer them training opportunities. To achieve the program’s potential, the applicant, their institution, and an employer must follow the complex and time-sensitive OPT authorization process. Ensuring that timely processing of authorization will help maximize students’ and employers’ time together.

¹ Business Roundtable. (2018). The Economic Impact of Curbing the Optional Practical Training Program. Retrieved From: <https://www.businessroundtable.org/policy-perspectives/immigration/economic-impact-curbing-optional-practical-training-program>.

² NAFSA: Association of International Educators. NAFSA international student economic value tool. Retrieved from: <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2>.