17-Month Extension of OPT
Optional Practical Training (OPT) can be extended beyond the normal 12 months for an additional 17 months, to 29 months total, for STEM degree holding F-1 students. This applies to students who have obtained a degree in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and are currently participating in a post-completion period of OPT.

Eligibility
1. CIP (Major) field of study:
   Students may verify if their current degree is eligible for the extension by the CIP code. To determine your CIP code, look at page 3 of your I-20. The CIP code is the 6 digit numerical code (XX.XXXX) listed directly before your major at the top of the page.

   Example: Astronomy (40.0201)

   You may find a full list of STEM Eligible CIP codes by using this site: www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm.

2. Students must be currently in a period of approved, post-completion OPT.
3. Students must be currently employed by, or have a confirmed offer of employment from, an employer participating in the U.S. government’s E-Verify program. The student will be required to provide the Employer’s E-Verify number on the STEM OPT application.

E-Verify Employers Search Tool
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has just launched the new E-Verify Employers Search Tool that allows you to find employers currently enrolled in E-Verify. The search tool includes exciting features such as the capability to filter, sort, and export employer results. It replaces the lists of E-Verify employers and federal contractors which previously appeared on the E-Verify Website. View the new E-Verify Employers Search Tool.
Application Timeline
Students may apply for the extension up to 120 days before the end of their current Post-Completion OPT listed on the EAD card (Employment Authorization Document) issued by the US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). It is recommended that students apply no later than one month prior to the EAD expiration date, to allow time for formal receipt processing at USCIS. Once a receipt is received, the student is then eligible to continue working up to 180 days without having received the approved STEM EAD.

Process
1. The student must complete the online OPT workshop, found at: http://international.uga.edu/issis/opt_workshop
2. The student then submits the online OPT Recommendation Application to Immigration Services. This is an online application and is found on the iStart Portal: istart.uga.edu (detailed instructions on how to complete this form are found here: http://issis.uga.edu/docs/Student_Section/F1_OPT_application_process.pdf)
3. The immigration advisor issues a new I-20 form recommending the OPT employment and assembles documentation to mail
4. The student comes to pick up the new I-20 and packet, and then mails the I-20 and packet, plus the required filing fee check, to the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services office
5. The student waits for the approved card to arrive (up to 3 months or more) in order to begin working legally.
6. The student reports any change to employment status or to residential address to the immigration advisor as long as the OPT period is valid.
7. Within 60 days after the OPT end date, the student must depart the U.S. OR file a change of status application with the government, OR transfer the F-1 status to a new school or academic program

Requirements while approved for STEM OPT:
Students on STEM OPT employment must:

- Work in a paid or volunteer position for an E-Verify employer at least 20 hours per week
- Work in a position related to the STEM degree
- Report to any changes to Immigration Services within 10 days of the following:
  - Legal name change
  - Change in residential or mailing address
  - Change in employer (provide the employer name, address, and start date)
  - Loss of employment
- Report to Immigration Services every 6 months from the start date of the STEM period with the following:
  - Full legal name
• Current mailing and residential address
• Name and address of current employer
• Date the student began working for current employer

Students on STEM OPT must NOT:

• Work for any employer who is not enrolled in E-Verify
• Accrue more than 120 days of unemployment during the entire 29-month OPT period

The STEM employer must agree to notify the Immigration Services office within two days if the employment ends.