

NEWSLETTER:

This monthly newsletter is intended for students on F-1 and J-1 visas. If you received this in error, please disregard.

This newsletter contains important information regarding your student visa status and relevant announcements for your international student experience. Please read it carefully and completely.

International Student and Scholar Services News - January 2021

Announcements:

ISSS Office Closure and Bennion Center Volunteer Opportunity!

ISSS will be **closed** on Monday, January 18, 2021 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we will resume normal business hours the following Tuesday morning!

Check out the [Bennion Center Volunteer activities](#) for opportunities to get involved during the week of MLK Day for volunteer opportunities!

REMINDER TO SUBMIT THE REPORT SPRING 2021 FORM!

If you have not already submitted the Report Spring 2021, please do so NOW! You can find this form in your UAtlas login, or here:

<https://uatlas.issss.utah.edu/istart/controllers/client/ClientEngine.cfm?serviceid=EFormGroupProvider&eformGroup=62>.

Please be reminded that all active (non OPT) F-1 students are **REQUIRED** to submit this form by **Monday, January 18. Failure to submit this form may result in the termination of your visa, so please do this as soon as possible.**

Report Spring 2021 Status E-form Potential Error Issue

ISSS is aware of an error message that some of you might be encountering when submitting the Report Spring 2021 Status E-form through UAlas.

The error will indicate, “*Error-You must correct your errors below and resubmit. Unable to process this request. There was an issue with your browser session. Please close all browser tabs and windows. Then relaunch, log back in, and try submitting the request again. If you continue to have difficulty submitting this request then please contact the international office for assistance.*”

ISSS is aware of this issue and working to rectify it as soon as possible. IF you receive this error and are unable to submit the form, then please email our tech inbox at tech_issues@ic.utah.edu with the following information:

1. Your full, official name:
2. Your UNID:
3. Your plan for Spring 2021 semester (choose ONE):
 - a. Currently inside U.S. and will be inside U.S. for Spring 2021
 - b. Currently outside U.S. but will be returning to U.S. for Spring 2021
 - c. Currently outside U.S. and will continue outside U.S. for Spring 2021
 - d. Initial (new) student planning to enter U.S. for Spring 2021
 - e. Initial (new) student planning to start studies outside U.S. for Spring 2021
 - f. Initial (new) student on Utah Global pathway program
 - g. Currently on post-completion/STEM OPT or have an OPT application pending with USCIS

Spring 2021 CPT and OPT Workshops

Our Spring 2021 CPT and OPT workshops have begun - check out our [workshops webpage](#) for the full schedule and registration information. Our next workshop is for OPT and will be hosted Thursday, January 28th from 10-11 AM. Sign up in [UAtlas](#) today!

Travel

ISSS does not recommend traveling outside of the U.S. at this time, since we are unable to predict how current travel restrictions may change in the future. Please continue to check the [COVID-19 FAQ](#) page on the ISSS website for updates as they become available. We do not know how long [COVID-19 travel restrictions](#) will last and what additional countries may be added or removed from the restrictions already in place. Both current travel restrictions and visa processing delays at U.S. consulates, for students who need a new F-1 visa, might make it impossible for some students to enter the U.S. and return to campus.

If you are reentering the U.S. please be aware of [travel guidance](#) domestically or internationally at this time. ***Any travel you choose to do during this time is at your own risk.*** Due to COVID-19, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol as well as USCIS are allowing the use of digitally signed forms of I-20s.

If you need a travel signature, you can complete the E-form “*I-20 reprint request*” in UAtlas and we will process a signed *electronic* copy of your I-20. Once the I-20 has been processed you will be able to access the completed document in your UAtlas portal. You will need to **print** your I-20, and complete the “Student Attestation” section of the I-20 for it to be valid.

As a reminder, travel signatures are valid for 1 year for enrolled students, and 6 months for those on OPT or STEM OPT.

Please refer to our [COVID-19 FAQ](#) for further details on travel recommendations at this time.

Resources

During this unprecedented time, we continue to encourage you each to reach out to the [ISSS office](#) if you have concerns. This can be due to immigration questions, financial concerns, feelings of loneliness and isolation, struggling in classes with grades or keeping up with online courses, or maybe you are just looking for something to do in the local community! There are many resources our office can put you in reach with. Here are a few resources that might be helpful:

- [Resources During COVID-19](#). A comprehensive list of financial, educational, food, fitness, things to do, wellness, and UofU resources.
- [Student Success Advocates](#): Meet with an advocate to help you in creating success on campus! Their office also has a helpful list of UofU [Tools for Success](#).
- Wellness resources:
 - If you are in need of real-time 24/7 crisis intervention, then you can text [SafeUT](#) by using their app.
 - Local 24-hour crisis line by calling 801-587-3000 anytime day or night and connect with the [Utah Crisis line](#).
 - Interested in free and guided meditation then check out the UofU's [The Mindfulness Center](#) for virtual drop-in visits.
 - Check out tips on [Coping with COVID-19 Uncertainty](#).
 - Make an appointment with the [University Counseling Center](#) for free & confidential virtual meetings with a counselor!

Past Reminders:

COVID-19 and Immigration Updates:

Refer to our updated [COVID-19 FAQ](#) Page for the most up to date announcements concerning COVID-19 for the University of Utah as an F-1 or J-1 student for the upcoming Spring 2021 semester!

Updates on WashTech Litigation Against OPT

The case *Washington Alliance of Technology Workers Union v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (“WashTech”) was filed in 2016. The Washington Alliance of Technology Workers Union filed this lawsuit against The U.S. Department of Homeland Security claiming that DHS did not have the proper authority to enact and implement the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, as well as DHS’s 2016 rule to allow for STEM OPT Extensions. The plaintiffs (WashTech) asked the court to deem the OPT program, and the STEM OPT Extension, unlawful for F-1 students.

On November 30, 2020, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia granted summary judgment in favor of DHS's 2016 STEM OPT program rule, thereby upholding DHS's legal statutory authority over the OPT program and DHS's 2016 rule to allow for a STEM OPT Extension.

Next steps in this process: The court will issue a final judgement, **which is expected to go against WashTech and rule in favor of DHS**. At that point WashTech could choose to appeal the decision by filing a notice of appeal, which must be done within 60 days of the issuance of the final judgement.

For now, this is good news for F-1 students who would like to pursue OPT. Further information on this case can be found on [NAFSA's webpage](#) which highlights the litigation, and also [Forbes](#) has an article on the recent ruling from the courts.

ISSS will continue to do update our [U.S. Immigration News](#) webpage about U.S. federal immigration policies that may affect international students. If you have questions or concerns on this please contact ISSS.

Participate in a Research Study

One of our international graduate students is looking for participants to participate in a research project with a focus on language difficulties and cultural support services for international students at the University of Utah. International students often do not have a support community that helps with communication in English and cultural differences. This research aims to develop a supportive group to address these problems. Participants will take a survey to measure stress and anxiety level and engage in online sessions to share their study abroad experiences in the U.S.

Eligibility: International student currently enrolled in the University of Utah and 18 years or older

If you are interested in this research and wish to participate, please go to the link and enter your email address. <https://forms.gle/thshTP2MGtjqz9ZK8> If you have any questions, please contact Yumeho Hashimoto. yumeho.hashimoto@utah.edu