



# **COVID-19 Information for NSU F-1 International Students #2**

March 30, 2020

# AGENDA

- **OIA Operations**
- **Online Coursework**
- **Summer Term**
- **Travel**
  - **Signatures**
  - **Visas**
- **I-20 Concerns**
- **OPT**
- **Taxes**
- **Economic Hardship**
- **Reminders**
- **Q&A**

# DISCLAIMER

- **The Office of International Affairs (OIA) is able to provide general guidance. Any advice provided by OIA, including the information in this presentation, should not be construed as legal advice.**
- **Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, DHS, USCIS, SEVP and other governmental agencies may change their interpretations of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. OIA is committed to providing advice based on the most current guidance.**
- **Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that students contact an experienced immigration attorney with questions regarding individual situations.**

# **DISCLAIMER – COVID-19**

- **This situation is entirely unprecedented at NSU, within the United States, and within our modern world.**
- **University officials may only present factual statements based on existing knowledge. We may not provide information to students that relies on anticipations, guesses, wishes, or other uncertainties.**
- **NSU and all DSOs are legally bound to fulfill SEVIS reporting requirements, respond to governmental directives, and adhere to the F-1 regulations.**
- **NSU will continue to prioritize the best interests of all NSU students – including F-1 international students – in decision-making related to COVID-19 and beyond.**

# **NSU's COVID-19 UPDATE 3/27/20:**

- **NSU will remain fully online through remainder of winter 2020**
- **Unknowns / unable to be answered by OIA:**
  - **Summer 2020**
  - **Commencement**
  - **Pass/fail grading**
  - **Refunds**
  - **Obtaining items left on campus**
  - **Remaining on campus if unable to return home**

# OIA OPERATIONS



- Fully remote staff
- Email: [intl@nova.edu](mailto:intl@nova.edu)
  - Includes document processing
- Phone: (954) 262-7240
- Advising by Zoom:
  - Monday-Friday: 10am-12pm & 2pm-4pm
  - <http://bit.ly/nsuoissadvising> (or from [nova.edu/internationalaffairs](http://nova.edu/internationalaffairs))

# ONLINE COURSEWORK & F-1 STUDENTS

A stylized world map in the background, rendered in various colors including blue, green, yellow, and red, with a textured, watercolor-like appearance.

- **SEVP 3/9/20 Broadcast Message**

- *“SEVP intends to be flexible with temporary adaptations. In all cases, schools and students should document any decisions made and be able provide this information to SEVP upon request.”*

# ONLINE COURSEWORK & F-1 STUDENTS

## • NAFSA 3/13/20 SEVP Statement

- *“SEVP is committed to remaining flexible in allowing schools to make temporary procedural adaptations so nonimmigrant students can continue to make normal forward progress in their program of study. They can temporarily engage in distance-learning, either from within the U.S. or outside the country, in light of COVID-19. SEVP will provide updated guidance as the scope and length of this situation becomes more clear.”*



# ONLINE COURSEWORK & F-1 STUDENTS

- **FAQ for SEVP Stakeholders about COVID-19:**

- *“Under current conditions, if an active F student leaves the United States to complete the spring term online, their SEVIS record should remain in Active status and not be terminated. ... For that reason, the five-month temporary absence provision addressed in 8 C.F.R. 214.2(f)(4) will not apply for students who remain in Active status.”*

# **SUMMER COURSES**



- **From an immigration perspective, students who have valid F-1 status this term do not have to take summer courses.**
- **Academic programs may require summer enrollment.**
- **Currently, summer enrollment modality is unknown.**

# TRAVEL



- **Returning home is a personal decision**
- **Consider:**
  - **Personal & community health**
  - **Resources available (in US and in home country)**
  - **Availability of flights**
  - **Quarantine requirements**
- **Encouraged to consider CDC and WHO recommendations for travel.**

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



- **A reminder of the required documents to re-enter the country:**
  - **Valid, unexpired passport**
  - **Valid, unexpired visa**
  - **Valid, unexpired I-20 with a valid travel signature**

# TRAVEL SIGNATURES



- **Travel signatures validity:**
  - **Students: 12 months**
  - **On OPT: 6 months**
- **If you will re-enter the US outside of these dates, request a travel signature to be shipped to you (two weeks minimum).**
- **Less than two weeks? Request electronic support letter. Not a guaranteed method.**

# VISA CONCERNS



- **Students who leave the country will need a valid F-1 visa to return.**
- **3/20: All routine visa services temporarily suspended.**
- **3/27: Dept of State indicates in webinar that there is no known date for visa appointments to resume.**

# **Electronic Signatures on I-20s**

- **3/21: USCIS will accept reproduced original signatures**
- **3/26: SEVP has approved scanned versions of I-20s and digitally signed I-20s**
- **3/27: Dept of State states in webinar that original signature still required for visa issuance**
- **Unknown: Will CBP honor I-20s without original signatures.**

# **I-20 CONCERNS**

- **Notify us if your CPT will end so that we may update your record. We can always re-authorize for new dates, if necessary.**
- **Ensure your I-20 will not expire prior to your return! If your I-20 will expire in the next few months and you will not finish your program, apply for a program extension now!**



# **I-20 CONCERNS**

- **F-1 students are required to still update their address.**
- **All students required to complete COVID-19 Updates for F-1 Students Form:  
[bit.ly/nsuf1covid19updates](https://bit.ly/nsuf1covid19updates)**
  - **Also use this form to report further address changes.**

# OPT

## • FAQ for SEVP Stakeholders about COVID-19:

- *“DHS is evaluating [OPT] issues and may issue additional guidance. USCIS adjudicates OPT employment authorization and status requests for F and M students and yes yet to issue official guidance on these issues.”*

# OPT

- **Zero guidance has been provided regarding:**
  - **Students currently on OPT**
  - **If OPT applications will be accepted from outside of the US**
  - **If students attempting to re-enter the country with a pending or approved OPT will be permitted entrance without job offer.**

# OPT

- **Our current recommendations are:**
  - **Students who wish to apply for OPT should do so from within the US and should remain in the US until:**
    - **OPT has been approved**
    - **EAD card has been received**
    - **Proof of employment can be provided**

# OPT APPLICATIONS

- **Students who wish to apply for OPT should:**
  - **Attend an OPT workshop or watch a record version (registration and recordings available at [nova.edu/internationalaffairs/covid19](https://nova.edu/internationalaffairs/covid19))**
- **Send fully completed NSU OPT Application and fully completed I-765 to [intl@nova.edu](mailto:intl@nova.edu).**
- **Processing time for all documents: 7 business days.**

# OPT APPLICATIONS



- Students may anticipate that OPT processing by USCIS will be delayed and should apply ASAP.
- Students do not need to send copies of other documents (photos, check, etc.) to [intl@nova.edu](mailto:intl@nova.edu) for processing.
- OPT I-20s will be shipped to the student, who will be responsible for submitting all items to USCIS.

# TAXES

- All F-1 students who were physically present in the U.S. during 2019 are required to file taxes.
  - If you did not work and did not receive a scholarship that was for something other than tuition, you will likely only have to file Form 8843. Very fast.
  - Tax filing deadline moved to 7/15/20.
  - Use Glacier Tax Prep to file your taxes.

# **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**

- The regulations allow for F-1 students who have experienced unforeseen circumstances beyond their control to apply for economic hardship which allows for off-campus employment.
- **Eligibility:**
  - Must have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year.
  - Must provide documentation of your economic hardship.



# **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**



- **Application Process:**
  - **\$410 filing fee (even if denied)**
    - **Fee waiver requests are available but are almost never approved**
  - **Approximately three month USCIS processing time**
  - **If approved, limited to 20hrs during classes, full-time during university breaks.**

# **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**

- **Notes:**

- **USCIS has been increasingly strict in their review of economic hardship applications.**
  - **Student cannot claim COVID-19 alone as a reason to file.**
- **Currently no examples of successful or unsuccessful COVID-19-related petitions.**
- **Please consider the U.S. job market you will enter, if approved.**

# REMINDERS

- **Set up multi-factor authorization using the Authenticator app to prevent interruptions to access for NSU email, Canvas, and other SharkLink**
- <https://www.nova.edu/oit/office-365/help/multi-factor-authentication.html>

# REMINDERS



- **Sign up for NSU Alerts**
- <https://www.nova.edu/emergency/notification/registration-process.html>.
- **Official method of communication with students is via NSU email address!**

# Q&A



## Unknowns / unable to be answered by OIA:

- Summer 2020
- Commencement
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- Refunds
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- Remaining on campus if unable to return home

# THANK YOU

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