Off-Campus Employment Due to Severe Economic Hardship
For Students in F-1 Status

General Requirements
F-1 students may be eligible for off-campus work authorization due to economic hardship if:

1. In the opinion of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the need to work is caused by unforeseen circumstances not within the student’s control such as
   • Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student;
   • Substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or in the exchange rate;
   • Unusually high medical bills;
   • Other substantial and unexpected expenses; AND

2. The student has been in lawful F-1 status for 9 months, is in good academic standing (2.0 GPA for undergraduates/3.0 GPA for graduates), and demonstrates that the employment will not interfere with his/her enrollment in a full course of study; AND

3. The student demonstrates that he/she has made a good faith effort to locate on-campus employment before applying for employment based on economic hardship.

Approval Process

1. Authorization by the Immigration Service. A student’s application for employment based upon economic hardship must be approved by USCIS before the student can begin the employment. If the USCIS determines that your case meets their criteria for employment based on economic hardship, the approval will be in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by USCIS. The EAD will contain the student’s photograph and signature, and will also indicate the exact dates of the authorized employment.

2. The employment will be granted for a maximum of 12 months or up to your expected date of completion of your academic program, whichever is earlier. Students may re-apply for employment authorization before the 12 months expire. Employment based on economic hardship can be renewed only by USCIS and only if the student is maintaining full-time status and is in good standing.

3. Employment authorization is automatically terminated if a student fails to maintain full-time student status or is no longer in good academic standing.

4. Employment is authorized for 20 hours per week or less while school is in session; full-time while school is not in session or during an authorized vacation quarter.

How do I prepare my application?

• Gather all documentation that will demonstrate economic need for employment which is caused by a situation beyond your control. Include a detailed list of assets and expenses.

• Schedule an appointment with an international student advisor, and bring along with you your documentation, as well as your passport, I-94, and all I-20s.

• If the advisor supports your case, he/she will recommend employment based on economic hardship and provide you with an I-20 with a recommendation for economic hardship employment.
Mailing Your Application to USCIS

Mail the following items to the USCIS:

- Form- I-765 available at www.uscis.gov (write (c)(3)(iii) in item 16)
- $410 fee (make your check or money order payable to The Department of Homeland Security)
- Photocopy of Form I-20, with the recommendation for economic hardship employment
- Photocopies of all previously issued I-20s
- Two passport style photos
- Photocopy of I-94 card (front and back) or a printout of electronic I-94
- A letter describing your financial difficulties and why on-campus employment opportunities are unavailable or insufficient; include supporting evidence.
- Photocopy of passport identification page
- Photocopy of visa page and entry stamp
- Photocopies of any previously-issued EAD cards
- Supporting materials related to your situation

Make a copy of your completed application for your records

Mail the original application to the USCIS Lockbox facility at one of the following addresses. After the Lockbox facility processes the check and mails you a receipt notice, the application will be forwarded to the appropriate USCIS Service Center for adjudication.

**By USPS Mail:**

USCIS  
PO Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

**By Express Mail or Courier Service:**

USCIS  
Attn: AOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S  
Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Then What?
Once USCIS receives the application, a receipt will be processed and sent to the address on the I-765 (this normally takes 3-5 weeks). The USCIS has, by law, ninety days to process your application and the “standard” length of time required for processing is subject to change. If you have not received your EAD a full 90 days after the date on your receipt from USCIS, please contact the Center for International Education for further guidance. Submission of an application for employment based on economic hardship does not guarantee approval. The USCIS has launched a system for checking the status of a case pending at a Service Center online: https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard/CaseStatus.do

Social Security and Other Taxes
In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. less than five years are exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes. Their earnings are subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes. Students must file a tax return on or before April 15 each year, which will determine if any of the withheld taxes can be refunded.

A Note of Caution
While USCIS regulations provide a variety of opportunities for F-1 students to be employed, working without authorization is a serious violation of F-1 status. Students should consult their International Student Advisor before beginning any employment. It is the student’s responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations which apply to F-1 students. If students fail to comply with their responsibilities, they may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students. NOTE: Employment authorization granted under 8 CFR 214.2 (f) (9) is terminated when the student transfers from one school to another.
USCIS ANNOUNCES CHANGE IN PHOTO STANDARD TO TAKE EFFECT AUGUST 2ND, 2004


All photos must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed and must meet the specifications for full frontal/passport photos as stated on the US Department of State website:

- Frame subject with full face, front view, eyes open
- Make sure photo presents full head from top of hair to bottom of chin; height of head should measure 1 inch to 1-3/8 inches (25 mm to 35 mm)
- Center head within frame (see Figure 2 below)
- Make sure eye height is between 1-1/8 inches to 1-3/8 inches (28 mm and 35 mm) from bottom of photo
- Photograph subject against a plain white or off-white background
- Position subject and lighting so that there are no distracting shadows on the face or background
- Encourage subject to have a natural expression

For more information on photo standards visit the Department for State website at http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html.
Economic Hardship
Dates Requested

I, ________________________________ would like to request the following dates for my Economic Hardship. I understand that these dates might be altered/changed by USCIS. I also understand that once my application is recommended in SEVIS by an international student advisor, it may be impossible to change or cancel.

Preferred Beginning Date: ______________

Ending Date: ______________

Student’s Name: ________________

Today’s Date: ________________

Signature: ________________

Net ID: ________________