The purpose of this e-newsletter is to provide our international students and scholars in F-1 and J-1 status with timely information to ensure that you maintain valid legal immigration status and submit all applications for employment and changes in a timely fashion.

As always, for detailed information you should refer to the OIP website at http://www.shu.edu/offices/oip-index.cfm.

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**NEWS AND EVENTS:**

**International Fair 2008**
Please join us in the Main Lounge on November 12, 2008 for our 2nd Annual International Fair. The fair will feature food and performances from the many countries and cultures represented by the Seton Hall community.

**Department of State Diversity Visa Lottery**
From October 2, 2008 through December 1, 2008 the U.S. Department of State will be accepting applications for their annual Diversity Visa Lottery. For more information or an application please go to http://www.dvlottery.state.gov/.

**OIP Flickr and SHU Tube Galleries**
The Office of International Programs is seeking pictures and photographs showing your experiences as an international student at Seton Hall. If you have any items you would like to contribute to our Flickr and SHUTube Galleries please email them to oip@shu.edu. Please include “Flickr/SHU Tube” in the subject heading.

**IMPORTANT GUIDELINES AND REMINDERS:**

As you are planning your schedule for the Fall 2008 semester please remember these important tips below:

- **Reminder to maintain full-time enrollment status**
In order to maintain your F-1 visa status, you must be registered as a full-time student during the academic year. For graduate students this means registering for at least 9 credits per semester. For undergraduate or ESL student, this means registering for at least 4 classes (3 credits each) for a total of 12 credits per semester.
Please note that ESL & remedial classes count toward full-time enrollment but may be non-credit bearing or credits which do not apply to your degree. Please also note that auditing or repeating a class does NOT count towards full-time status. Also, making up incompletes from a previous semester does not count in current or future semesters as credits towards full-time status.

➢ Are you eligible for part time enrollment approval?

Students in F-1 and J-1 status are eligible for part-time enrollment approval in the limited circumstances below. It is not enough for your academic advisor to approve your less than full time enrollment; you must obtain PRIOR approval from the OIP.

- Last semester: If this Fall 2008 will be your final semester and you only require less than full time status in order to graduate
- First Semester: it is your first semester in the U.S., and your department recommends part-time study in addition to English-language courses (Academic coursework must be at least half-time)
- First Semester: it is your first semester in the U.S., and you need to adjust to American teaching methods or the U.S. educational system
- First Semester: it is your first semester in the U.S., and you were improperly placed at the wrong course level
- Medical Reasons: you have a medical problem accompanied by medical documentation which requires temporary reduction in course load (may be used up to 2 semesters)

If you fall into any of the above categories you must complete the Part Time Enrollment Form and have your academic advisor sign it. You must submit the form to the OIP for review for prior approval to dropping below a full course-load.

➢ Completing Thesis, Dissertation or Practicum?

Doctoral students who have completed all coursework and are currently working on their dissertation (matriculation continued status) are considered pursuing full-time equivalent status. Please have your advisor submit documentation of your current status via oip@shu.edu. Graduate students are also considered full time if they are:

- A teaching or research assistant
- Working full time on thesis after completing all coursework
- Taking coursework and doing required internship or fieldwork which constitutes a full course of study according to the graduate catalogue
➢ Do you have international student or scholar health insurance?

Federal Regulations require that all international students and scholars have comprehensive health insurance during their time at Seton Hall. This coverage is required of all members of the community on Seton Hall sponsored F and J visas. The Office of International Programs is now offering international students and scholars the opportunity to purchase HTH Worldwide Health Insurance. This is especially recommended to J-Visa holders who are not eligible for Seton Hall health insurance policies and students on post-completion OPT. HTH Worldwide also has greater coverage and benefits for students who would like to waive their Seton Hall health insurance. For more information please email oip@shu.edu.

➢ Traveling overseas for the holidays?

Are you traveling overseas for the holidays? Don’t wait until the last minute to ensure you have the proper travel signature. Please obtain or renew your travel signature on your I-20 or DS-2019. Travel signatures are valid one-year from the date or the end of your status whichever is sooner. If you need a travel signature, please be sure to bring your I-20 / DS-2019, passport and I-94 card to the OIP.

➢ Graduating this semester or completing early?

If you will graduate this semester and will not apply for Employment Authorization, please complete the Departure Form. If you intend to apply for Post-Completion Optional Training follow directions below. If you complete your stay prior to the date indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019, please inform the OIP by completing the Departure form.

➢ Interested in Applying for Post Optional Practical Training?

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

If you are interested in pursuing professional level work in your field after you complete your studies you must apply PRIOR to the completion of your program. However, we strongly suggest that you do so at least 90 days prior to completion of your program to avoid any processing delays.

Please visit our website to find Optional Practical Training Instructions for further information on the application procedures, required fees and forms that must be submitted to the OIP for review.
**New Regulations Concerning OPT:**

On April 3, 2008, The Department of Homeland Security announced the publication of an Interim Final Rule that makes significant changes to Post-Completion Optional Practical Training for F-1 students.

This rule took effect upon publication of the rule in the U.S. Government's Federal Register of April 8, 2008.

**Highlights of the New Rule:**

- The current 12-month limit on OPT will be extended by 17 months, for a total of 29 months for certain STEM degree holders ONLY
- The H-1B “Cap Gap” is eliminated by extending OPT employment and status for those who are beneficiaries of an H-1B petition with an October 1 start date (available to ALL OPT participants)
- The filing deadline for initial OPT applications is changed (applies to all OPT participants)
- There are new reporting requirements for students and employers (applies to all OPT participants)
- Post-Completion OPT will now be dependent on employment. Only limited periods of unemployment will be permitted (applies to all OPT participants)

**What is STEM?**

S = Science  T = Technology  E = Engineering  M = Mathematics

For more information on New Regulations Concerning OPT please stop by the Office of International Programs or email oip@shu.edu for detailed guidelines and instructions.

➢ **Check your documents!**

Please be sure to review your immigration documents regularly. Is all of the information current? Have you changed your name, country of citizenship, major, program level, source of funding or program end dates? Is your passport valid at least six months into the future? If you are traveling is your visa stamp expired? If any information has changed please visit the OIP during our immigration advising hours for assistance.
We hope that you have found this issue of the OIP I-NEWS helpful. Your adherence to the immigration regulations and important deadlines will assist us in serving your needs in a more efficient manner.

We welcome your questions and comments at oip@shu.edu.

-The OIP Staff

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